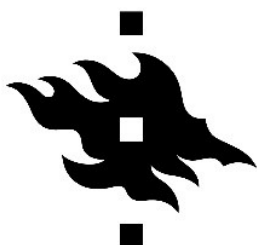


# ABSTRACT BOOK: SYMPOSIA, ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS & WORKSHOPS NERA 2025 HELSINKI

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



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



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## Symposium: Towards Quality and Equity in Arts Education. An In-depth Look at Ongoing “SKAPA-projects” for Children and Youth

Chairs: Lauri Väkevä, University of Helsinki, Finland & Ria Heilä-Ylikallio, Åbo Akademi, Finland

Discussants: Frida Marklund, Umeå University, Sweden & Lorentz Edberg, Umeå University, Sweden

This 120-minute symposium provides insights into ongoing efforts to embed arts-based pedagogy within Swedish-speaking educational settings in Finland. It brings together projects from Finland to explore how arts education can foster a more hopeful, equitable, and sustainable future.

Through an in-depth look at ongoing SKAPA (Strategisk satsning på konstundervisning för barn och unga) projects funded by The Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland, the symposium examines the transformative and disruptive potential of arts education within Nordic educational and cultural settings. Wellbeing, creativity, and structure are keywords in SKAPA, and the overall aim is to improve the quality and equity of arts education in and outside of school. Grounded in the Nordic commitment to democratic values and social responsibility, each project addresses unique pathways in teacher education to broaden arts education and enhance accessibility for children and young people to study the arts. Together, they contribute to a broader dialogue on how quality arts education can cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and resilience, equipping students to confront the complex cultural, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st Century.

The symposium opens with a short introduction to how the overarching themes of the conference are met in the projects, presented by Professor Lauri Väkevä (University of Helsinki). Following this introduction, the projects are introduced as follows:

**SKAPA KRHZOM** (Hannah Kaihovirta, University of Helsinki, Leena Knif, University of Helsinki, Seija Kairavuori, University of Helsinki, Johan Vikström, Åbo Akademi, Tomi Slotte Dufva, Aalto University, Tiina Pusa Aalto University) reimagines visual arts within teacher education programs to strengthen the role of visual arts in education and create innovative and translanguaging platforms for arts-based, -informed, and -led research and practice in teacher training programs.

**SKAPA SMIL** (Nina Dahl-Tallgren, Åbo Akademi) explores how performing arts can be integrated into primary school curricula and basic arts education, with a focus on enhancing student engagement and creative expression.

**SKAPA Ordkonst** (Sofie Lundell, Åbo Akademi, Ria Heilä-Ylikallio, Åbo Akademi, Mia Österlund, Åbo Akademi) focuses on expanding access to and quality in Literary Art for children and young people across Swedish-speaking regions developing Literary Arts in comparative literature and teacher education at Åbo Akademi University.

**SKAPA Musik i klasslärarutbildningen** (Mikael Pennanen-Dahlbäck, Åbo Akademi, Minna Muukkonen, University of the Arts Helsinki, Aleksi Ojala, University of Helsinki) enhances pathways for Swedish-speaking classroom teacher students to integrate music subject studies into their degree programs and **SKAPA Behörighetsgivande utbildning i musik** (Minna Muukkonen, University of the Arts Helsinki) organizes qualification training in the subject of music for Swedish-speaking teachers in Finnish basic education.

The symposium concludes with comments from the discussants Frida Marklund (Umeå University) and Lorentz Edberg (Umeå University) and a moderated discussion led by Professor Ria Heilä-Ylikallio (Åbo Akademi), inviting participants to actively engage and reflect on the implications of these projects for developing art(s) education in

the whole Nordic region. Together, these presentations underscore how the arts can inspire hope, nurture diversity, and foster a sustainable future, making a compelling case for the continued investment in quality-conscious arts-based educational frameworks.

### **SKAPA KRIZOM: Rhizomes as Collaborated Agency in Arts Education.**

Hannah Kaihovirta<sup>1</sup>, Leena Knif<sup>1</sup>, Johan Vikström<sup>2</sup>, Tomi Slotte Dufva<sup>3</sup>, Tiina Pusa<sup>3</sup>, Seija Kairavuori<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland. <sup>2</sup>Åbo Akademi University, Finland. <sup>3</sup>Aalto University, Finland

In a recent discourse, value-based realism has been introduced to the global political stage (Stubb, 2024) as a democratic value. This perspective recognizes that the boundaries between ideological alignments are fluid, allowing shared practices among divergent viewpoints. Also known as the ontology of democracy.

Approaching democracy through a rhizome research mindset is a delicate challenge in education. Such an approach to arts education in teacher education and schools, combined with diffractive research, reveals non-linear, wave-like patterns of education as a practice of hope, especially when exploring arts-based, arts-informed, and arts-led research and practice.

The **SKAPA KRIZOM** project's primary aim is inquiry into the quality and positioning of multilingual arts education in teacher education across three universities in Finland. In the last decade, national arts education strategies have emphasized the importance of arts education in advancing equality and social justice (cf. Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014; Arts Equal Research Initiative, 2015–2021; National Visions for Arts Education 2030). Current research and practice in arts education show a shift in approach, emphasizing art's role in fostering well-being, resilience, and hope—values resonating with sustainability (cf. Agenda 2030). This shift in educational approaches, particularly in teacher education and basic education (grades 1–9), warrants research into the changing emphasis on democratic values in education.

Currently, **KRIZOM** focuses on mapping and articulating available teacher education practices in terms of quality and value. The first mapping has generated discussions that blur the definitions of art education while enriching practical approaches. The quality of arts education in teacher education often shifts between debates on the quality and value of education and the quality and value of arts. In practice, however, these elements are deeply interconnected in arts education.

Through critical reading of reports and exploratory research in and on practice, **KRIZOM** aims to develop a multi-voiced approach to the quality and value of arts education in teacher education. The methods used are process-based inquiry into arts teaching and learning as becoming, and arts teaching and learning as relational waves. How can we live democracy, reimagine traditions, and create future visions of arts education in a diffractive and sustainable way, beyond prolonged paradigm shifts or constructed discourses? And why is this re-envisioning essential?

Three research strategies frame **KRIZOM**: the University of Helsinki investigates translanguaging in art education within teacher education; Åbo Akademi University, in collaboration with Pro Artibus Foundation, explores how an artist-in-residence program fosters engagement between contemporary artists, teacher educators, and student teachers; and Aalto University investigates multilingual pedagogical possibilities and explores innovative approaches to arts education.

The three **KRIZOM** universities and Pro Artibus are committed to sharing knowledge on the conditions for arts education, ultimately impacting arts education in both formal and informal learning contexts. Anchored in democratic values, the **KRIZOM** project persistently asserts that education is a bastion of hope, now and in the future.

Agenda 2030 <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/agenda2030>

Artsequal Research Initiative 2015-2021. <https://www.artsequal.fi/about>

Finnish National Agency for Education 2014 <https://www.oph.fi/en>

National Visions for Arts Education 2030. <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/national-visions-for-arts-education-2030/>

Stubb, A. (2024). Inauguration Speech. <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/inauguration-speech-by-president-of-the-republic-alexander-stubb-on-1-march-2024/>

**SKAPA SMIL (Nina Dahl-Tallgren, Åbo Akademi) explores how performing arts can be integrated into primary school curricula and basic arts education, with a focus on enhancing student engagement and creative expression.**

Nina Dahl-Tallgren

The University of the Arts of Helsinki, Theatre Academy & Åbo Akademi University, Finland

SMIL is a development and research project during the years 2023-2026, aiming at exploring how the performing arts could be integrated as part of the learning environments of comprehensive schools and pre-primary education. The project is funded by the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland and is located at the University of the Arts in Helsinki. The focus of the project is to strengthen cooperation between pedagogues, artists, researchers and educational institutions. SMIL is a follow-up project to the development and research project "TIE at Wasa Theatre". The outcome of the TIE project is Nina Dahl-Tallgren's doctoral thesis (2024) towards a performative pedagogy. In the SMIL project, the performative pedagogy is put to work and further explored as performative learning processes. The SMIL project is conducted as educational design research (Bakker 2018; McKenney and Reeves, 2019) and explores how performing art is put to work as an art subject and in the educational setting. Performing arts in this project consists of exploring the art forms of theatre, drama, dance, circus and literary art. The research aims to explore what is made possible when performing arts are implemented as an art subject and integrated into the curricula of education in Finland. Integrating performing arts in education focuses on strengthening the relationship between performing arts and learning, the development of teaching through performing arts and research to develop the design of performative pedagogy in education. The project investigates how to design and implement performing arts as an art subject and as performative pedagogy in the education context, guided by the overall research questions: *How do educational designs where the performing arts are included as part of the curricula develop the relationship between arts and learning?* and *What do students and teachers learn through the performing arts, and how do they experience the learning processes?* The project will contribute theoretical and practical knowledge for developing a model demonstrating how the performing arts can be integrated into the learning environments of schools.

Reference:

Bakker, A. (2018). *Design research in education. A practical guide for early career researchers*. Routledge.

McKenney, S. & Reeves, T. C. (2019). *Conducting educational design research. Second Edition*. Routledge.

Dahl-Tallgren, N. (2024). Towards a Performative Pedagogy: An educational design study of three Theatre-In-Education programmes. Åbo Akademi. <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/189966?locale=lsv>

SMIL project: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/scenkonst-med-i-larande-smil/>

## SKAPA Ordkonst: Creating Pathways to Equal and High-Quality Education in Literary Arts

Sofie Lundell, Ria Heilä-Ylikallio, Mia Österlund

Åbo Akademi University, Finland

This presentation describes an ongoing project aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of literary arts (in Finnish Sanataide and in Swedish Ordkonst) as an art form in a Swedish-speaking context, where teacher education, comparative literature studies, and educational research collaborate (see Åbo Akademi). The starting point for this presentation is art-specific, focusing on the art form referred to as literary arts (Litterärt skapande) in our university context. Our understanding of literary arts encompasses both receptive and productive functions of literature. Literature didactics and creative writing constitute related frameworks of understanding. Literature education in a Nordic perspective has been investigated by Gourvennec et al. (2020).

To develop structures for improving quality and accessibility of literary arts, this project operates on multiple levels and with various methodological approaches. In the project's first, exploratory phase (year 2023), existing and potential new actors within the field of literary arts were contacted, visited, and interviewed. Based on the data, a need for educated literary arts teachers was identified. This need is confirmed in reports written by Martens-Seppelin (2022) and Vähämaa (2022). Additionally, policy documents, reports, and previous research, have been analyzed to clarify concepts used about literary arts in education (Heilä-Ylikallio, 2024). In the project's second phase (years 2024-2025), educational possibilities in literary arts are being developed both within pre-service and in-service education for teachers, primarily through open university studies. Concurrently, further research is being conducted on what literary arts is and could be (Jusslin et al., n.d., Lundell & Rättä, n.d.; Åbo Akademi, n.d.).

The overarching research question is: How can education of teachers in literary arts be developed both for basic education, so that teachers in mother tongue and literature gain increased competence in literary arts (and creative writing processes), and for basic art education, so that teachers receive both arts education and general pedagogical qualifications?

Preliminary results related to this will be discussed in the presentation.

### References:

Gourvennec, A., Höglund, H., Johansson, M., Kabel, K. & Sønneland, M. (2020). Literature education in Nordic L1s: Cultural models of national lower-secondary curricula in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. *L1-Education Studies in Language and Literature*, 20(20), s. 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL2020.20.01.07>

Heilä-Ylikallio, R. (2024). Utveckling av pedagogisk kvalitet inom konstformen ordkonst via forskning och lärarutbildning. AD-symposium, Ämnesdidaktiskt symposium vid Helsingfors universitet 8–9.2.2024.

Jusslin, S., Höglund, H., Heilä-Ylikallio, R. & Österlund, M., Lyberg-Åhlander, V. (u.a.). Vetenskaplig antologi om ordkonst som konstform och pedagogik på svenska i Finland.

Lundell, S. & Rättä, K. (u.a.). Den brokiga ordkonsten [Unpublished manuscript].

Martens-Seppelin, M. (2022). Ordkonst: Framtidens utbildningsvägar och arbetsfält. Svenska kulturfonden.

Vähämaa, V. (2022). Sanataideopettaja – Tulevaisuuden toiveammatti: Selvitys sanataideopetuksen tilasta 2020-luvulla [Ordkonstläraren – framtidens drömyrke: Utredning av ordkonstens tillstånd på 2020-talet]. Suomen sanataideopetuksen seura.



Åbo Akademi. (u.å.). Litterärt skapande. Hämtat 30 oktober 2024 från <https://www.abo.fi/om-abo-akademi/fakulteterna/fakulteten-for-pedagogik-och-valfardsstudier/litterart-skapande/>

## **Two SKAPA music projects: SKAPA Musik i klasslärarutbildningen and SKAPA Behörighetsgivande utbildning i musik**

Aleksi Ojala<sup>1</sup>, Mikael Pennanen-Dahlbäck<sup>2</sup>, Minna Muukkonen<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland. <sup>2</sup>Åbo Akademi, Finland. <sup>3</sup>University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland

Many Finnish classroom teachers find teaching music in grades 1-6 challenging (Hallam et al., 2009; Suomi, 2019; Tereska, 2003). Some classroom teachers even refuse to teach music (Anttila, 2008; Juvonen, 2008).

Music education in Finnish Swedish-speaking schools is currently not provided on an equal footing in grades 1-6 (Brörk et al., 2019). This is attributable to the disparate levels of competence among those teaching music in primary education in these schools. Another underlying cause can be traced to the systematic reductions in resources allocated to music courses at Finnish teacher training programs. Moreover, there are no straightforward pathways for Swedish-speaking teacher candidates to pursue further studies in music education that would lead to subject teacher qualification.

The symposium presents the results of two studies related to SKAPA music projects and an outline of the development work. Both projects aim to improve the quality of music education in Swedish-speaking basic education.

The first project aims to improve the possibilities for Swedish-speaking teacher students to integrate music education studies into their degree programmes. The development work will be carried out in cooperation with the three participating universities, taking into account the corresponding studies at the Sibelius Academy. The project aims to establish a natural study pathway that provides Swedish-speaking classroom teachers with the opportunity to complete the subject studies.

Prior to the commencement of the development work, two studies of a limited scope are organized. The first study examines the optional courses in music education available at various universities and the pathways to pursue further studies in music education. The data is gathered from university course guides and questionnaires. Interviews are also conducted with lecturers responsible for elective studies in music education. The second study investigates the interest of Swedish-speaking students in engaging in elective music studies, using surveys as data sources.

The second project aims to strengthen music teaching in schools and, more broadly, Swedish-speaking music culture. A training program is implemented in cooperation with music education networks that promote the music pedagogy community in Swedish-speaking areas in Finland. The program consists of a 60-credit point study unit following the curriculum of the music education program at the Sibelius Academy.

## **References**

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Björk, C., Juntunen, M.-L., Knigge, J., Pape, B., & Malmberg, L.-E. (2019). Musikundervisning förverkligas på ojämlika villkor i årskurserna 1-6 i Finlands svenskspråkiga skolor. Finnish journal of music education, 22(1-2), 30-58.

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Suomi, H. (2019). Pätevä musiikin opettamiseen? Luokanopettajaksi valmistuvan musiikillinen kompetenssi perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteiden toteuttamisen näkökulmasta. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä].

Tereska, T. (2003). Peruskoulun luokanopettajiksi opiskelevien musiikillinen minäkäsitys ja siihen yhteydessä olevia tekijöitä. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Helsinki].

## Roundtable discussion: Mapping Art Education Programs in Nordic and Baltic Countries

Chair: Juuso Tervo, Aalto University, Finland

Discussants: Anette Göthlund Konstfack, Sweden, Editla Musneckiene Vilnius University Siauliai Academy, Lithuania & Frida Marklund Umeå University, Sweden

This roundtable presents key issues and insights from an ongoing Nordplus Higher Education funded development project “Internationalizing Nordic and Baltic Teacher Training in Visual Arts and Craft Education” organized under EDDA Norden network (<http://eddanorden.com>). The goal of this development project is to establish a sustainable model for Nordic and Baltic collaboration that allows visual art and craft teacher training programs to integrate international collaboration into the yearly cycle of their study programs and share knowledge, practices, and resources when working on topical issues such as sustainability, diversity, and AI. This, in turn, supports these programs in strengthening their national and international role in educational development. The project partners are Aalto University (project coordinator); University of Agder; HDK-Valand Academy of Art and Design at University of Gothenburg; Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design; Umeå University; University College Copenhagen; Vilnius University Siauliai Academy; and Iceland University of the Arts.

The project was launched in June 2024, and currently focuses on mapping the present status of visual art and craft teacher training programs in the participating institutions. This current phase is driven by two interrelated areas of inquiry: 1) Pedagogy: what kind of courses, contents, ways of working, etc. do our curricula consist of? What kind of policies and perspectives inform and direct our teaching? 2) Research: what kind of research do we do in our programs, how, why, and how does research inform our curriculum (and vice versa).

This roundtable serves as a forum to deliver, discuss, and evaluate the project outcomes thus far. The papers presented in the roundtable offer a historical and institutional contextualization of the development project and discuss its present aims and practices. Rather than merely reporting on the project, the speakers engage the audience in a conversation about the means and aims of such development work. What has worked, and what has not? How to establish and ensure long-term effects of such a project? How does the theme of the NERA Conference – A Pedagogy of Hope: Gratitude, Diversity and Sustainability in Education – resonate with the project?

### **Historicizing the Project: Some Background for Internationalization in Visual Art Education**

Juuso Tervo

Aalto University, Finland

This abstract is submitted for Mapping Art Education Programs in Nordic and Baltic Countries roundtable.

Since teacher training programs are closely tied to national policies, international collaboration between Nordic and Baltic visual art and craft education students and teaching faculty is often tied to short-term projects and ad

hoc partnerships. While such projects and partnerships are valuable, they rarely offer possibilities for a more longitudinal development work and collaboration between art and craft teacher training programs.

This presentation contextualizes the current development project within a lineage of collaborations and projects between Nordic and Baltic visual art education programs within the past few decades (Forsman, 1987; Göthlund, Illeris & Thrane, 2015; Lindström, 2009). Considering that international collaboration has been an integral part of educational development throughout the history of the profession (c.f., Törnudd, 1907), it is important to ask, what is at stake with the internationalization of visual art and craft education today, whether in terms of teaching or research? Why, indeed, strengthen a longitudinal international collaboration between these programs in the 21st century? What do we wish to accomplish and why?

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#### **Internationalization in Visual Art Education: The benefits of leaving home**

Anette Göthlund

Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden

This conference encourages us to ask what the perspective of hope requires from education. My first answer is: more perspectives. One of the biggest threats to society, democracy, ecology is single-mindedness or a one-eyed perspective on our world and the species who inhabit it. There is a need for *polyvision*, not least in relation to education. How can we invite polyvision and polyphony to our pedagogical endeavours? One suggestion is to leave home: go to other places, learn from others, seek different view-points to create different perspectives.

In this presentation I want to argue for the benefits from internationalization and building long term, more or less distant relationships using experiences from two different projects: a NordForsk project called CAVIC (Contemporary art and visual culture in education, see Göthlund, Illeris & Thrane, 2015) and NoVA (Nordic Visual Studies and Art Education). CAVIC (2009-2011) was a Nordic/Baltic collaboration where researchers, artists, teachers and doctoral students together explored new and uncertain paths for collaborating and working together. NoVA (2013-ongoing) is a collaborative international mastersprogramme where the initial setting was four universities from Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden that created a programme with a Nordic profile, where international students added a variety of perspectives to our teaching and learning.

#### References:

- Göthlund, A., Illeris, H., Thrane, K. W. (Eds.) (2015). *Edge: 20 essays on contemporary art education*. Multivers.

## **Diversity in collaboration**

Frida Marklund, Mikael Heinonen, Stina Wikberg

Umeå university, Sweden

This abstract is submitted for "Mapping Art Education Programs in Nordic and Baltic Countries roundtable".

Previous studies (Lindström, 2009) have mapped research in the field of visual arts education in the Nordic countries and found that the countries differ somewhat in terms of focus and areas of interest. One of the aims of the development project is to similarly map both educational programmes and research at the participating higher education institutions in order to gain a picture of the current situation and to find possible entry points for increased collaboration. For example, the type of theories and methods used and the concepts emphasised in education and research. However, participating institutions come into the project from different angles and with different interests and needs. A potential challenge for the project is therefore to balance two objectives that may clash. How do we identify common denominators that can enable exchanges of various kinds in both research and education, while at the same time allowing for the differences that exist between the countries and educational programmes? Diversity, we think, needs to be embraced as it offers different perspectives that can enrich our respective practices. But how can we, as a large and heterogeneous group, reach consensus on certain issues and what we want to achieve? Do we need to think and act alike? In order to collaborate we also need to adjust to formal educational requirements. A possible risk of collaboration is that programmes become more standardised to enable exchanges. Is there a risk that something will be lost? How can we recognise our differences in a way that offers us the opportunity to test and rethink our practices. In this presentation we share some reflections based on ongoing analysis of our research and study programmes at Umea university, as well as discussions from the project start-up meeting in Helsinki in August 2024.

Reference:

Lindström, L. (Ed.) (2009). Nordic visual art education in transition. A research review. Swedish Research Council.

## **Nordic and Baltic Collaboration in Art Education Studies: Mapping Themes**

Edita Musneckiene

Vilnius University Siauliai Academy, Lithuania

In this project we prioritize art education within the overall educational frameworks of Baltic and Nordic countries, including curriculum standards, teacher training, and assessment practices, focusing on the interplay between national education policies and art education programs. We seek to contribute to ongoing discussions about the future of art education and the importance of cross-cultural exchange in promoting creativity, sustainability, diversity and innovation.

Key areas of exploration include:

- Comparative analysis of national education policies in the field of art education and HE studies;
- Analysis of common themes and practices in art education, which are relevant to national culture and global understanding;
- an overview of art education research topics and priorities that outline new directions in the development of art education;

-International collaboration initiatives, investigating existing partnerships between universities, art schools and cultural institutions, including student exchange programs, joint research projects, and faculty collaborations.

The main topic of this discussion is about possible common points in art education within Nordic/Baltic network, research themes that can be the basis of cooperation, and what future visions are foreseen in art education in the era of digital technology and AI.

By examining case studies in Baltic/Nordic network, we raise multiple questions – what art education studies is for and why? How can art education reflect the diversity of cultures and experiences of the world? How can art education be integrated into sustainability initiatives, inspire creative solutions, and how can art foster a deeper understanding of environmental issues and for sustainable living? How can art education assist well-being and stimulate a sense of belonging and community among diverse populations? Or what other important areas and new forms of artistic expression we will develop in the field.

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

## Workshop: Co-creation in storytelling processes across cultures

Chairs: Jon Sverre Thorstensen, Østfold University College, Norway

Ragnhild Louise Næsje, Østfold University College, Norway

Gunhild Brænne Bjørnstad, Østfold University College, Norway

Discussant: Gunhild Brænne Bjørnstad, Østfold University College, Norway

In this workshop we will introduce the participants to different didactic uses of storytelling in teacher education and/or classroom settings. Our point of departure is the multicultural classroom and how we can work on inter-literacy as a skill to include all participants. As our societies become increasingly diverse, our student teachers also have different experiences with stories and do not necessarily share common understandings of values or world views. When we work with storytelling in multicultural classrooms it requires us to activate our inter-literary competencies not only in texts, but also through sensory and aesthetic dimensions. We therefore need to use our knowledges on materiality, dramaturgy and musicality to trigger understandings across cultures.

In this workshop we will provide an example of an A/R/Tographic (Artist/Researcher/Teacher) approach to storytelling through our own adapted performance of *The Snowqueen* by Hans Christian Andersen. We will use this as an artistic entry into a discussion about how aesthetic learning processes may be fruitful for gaining insights into one's own and other's literary cultures in a multicultural classroom.

As the presenters come from different academic fields (Norwegian language studies, drama and music) but collaborate to create a joint expression and mutual benefits from the project, we will also discuss how we can use co-creation across disciplines to invent new stories.

Through a visual, didactic methodology, we thereafter invite the participants to be active in categorising, linking, sharing ideas and exploring/inventing stories with the use of storycards. The methodologies we present have been tested in several courses in teacher education and we share our experiences and reflections related to the classroom setting.

This presentation will provide insights into the matrix formed by our own artistic process of exploration, the researchers' view on how resonance becomes significant in our performance, and our didactic ideas that emerge from this aesthetic experience.

### **Increasing critical global citizenship through storytelling**

Ragnhild Louise Næsje, Gunhild Brænne Bjørnstad

Østfold University College, Norway

Storytelling is a vivid part of any culture, and the stories we tell reflect our values and implicit world views. As implied readers of a story, we are, according to Gayatri Spivak, familiar with the culture where the story is situated, and can easily access unspoken understandings communicated through the story. In multicultural classrooms

however, there will probably be students not recognising themselves in the culture of the story or being implied readers. So, when working across cultures, teachers need to be aware of tacit understandings in the stories in use and activate their inter-literary competencies. We need to develop didactic methodologies that transcend culture to enhance our critical global citizenship skills (Andreotti), by connecting to other cultures and stories.

This paper is based on an empirical study in the collaborative NoZa-Intercultural Mobility Project between State University of Zanzibar and Østfold University College in Norway. Through a workshop in teacher education aiming to enhance critical global citizenship and encourage future teachers to approach unknown stories and cultures with curiosity, we ask *how student teachers from different cultural backgrounds use their insights into their own culture and storytelling tradition to convey stories to non-implied readers, and how these insights can be used to improve critical global citizenship?*

In the workshop, the student teachers created their own story-boxes and filmed their oral presentations of selected stories. These films are analysed with regards to inter-literacy and discussed as examples of methodologies that enhance critical global citizenship skills.

Preliminary findings suggest that the student teachers activate their experiences of being unfamiliar with a context, to better understand which parts of their own story are necessary to explain or emphasize. Furthermore, they use a number of visual, auditive and material effects to deepen the understandings of the readers who are non-implied, and thereby adding new layers to the storytelling. Lastly, we discover that the stories emerging from this workshop make creative use of traditional storytelling techniques and topics to provide insights not only into the story itself, but the cultural and traditional values of the society.

By addressing a didactic perspective on methodologies suited for multicultural classrooms, we argue that this research has strong relevance to Nordic Educational research, as our societies and classrooms become increasingly diverse.



## Symposium: Language developing methods in preschool – preliminary results from a big-scale R&D-program in Sweden

Chair: Anette Olin Almqvist, Mälardalen University, Sweden

Discussant: Jonas Almqvist, Uppsala University, Sweden

In a multicultural society as Sweden, language skills become increasingly important among all citizens as a democratic resource. How well preschool teachers succeed in supporting all children in developing their language is therefore a research area of great interest. A research and development program: *Language developing methods in preschool*, involving preschool teachers (N=350) and leaders (N=100) from 11 municipalities in Sweden, emanates from this interest that has already rendered several research projects before. Still, the teachers seem unsure about how to make use of the knowledge that has been built up and the preschool leaders worry about the lack of equality among children that this leads to.

The research and development program is set up based on language socialization theory, early language support theories, socio-cultural perspective on learning and communication, translanguaging, didactical theories on language teaching, and action research. The aim is to gain deeper knowledge about 1) how pre-school educators develop their reflection and competences in relation to (trans)linguaging with the help of action research, 2) potential (multi)linguistic development among children and different ways to evaluate the development of children's languaging and language development, and 3) in what ways leadership and collegial collaboration nurture and constrain the on-going development work. Methodologically, action research contributes to collaborative ways of gathering data, where all participants in the program are studying their own practices; preschool teachers study their work with the children and preschool leaders their leading practices. When meeting in dialogue seminars, these studies form the base for dialogues that are documented and sent to the researchers for research studies on an aggregated level. Additionally, the five researchers make field visits to a working team in one preschool in each municipality once every semester to deepen their understanding of the preschool educators' on-going development work in different local contexts.

In this symposium we intend to present research studies that are formed in relation to the three research questions mentioned above, and their preliminary results. Our hope is that this large-scale research and development program will lead to noticed transformation of the ways didactical work in relation to children's language development in preschools gets enacted in the future. In this way education may better support every child's growth to be able to take part as active members of communities, which in the long run will lead to sustaining a democratic society according to a Nordic tradition. However, we realize that this is an ambitious goal which we also wish to discuss at the symposium.

### **Educational change in the practice of preschool – a language development approach**

Polly Björk-Willén

Department of education communication, and learning, Gothenburg University, Sweden

This presentation emanates from an ongoing larger study on *language developing working methods in preschool*, where preschools from 11 municipalities in Sweden participate. Methodologically, action research contributes to collaborative ways of gathering data. The participants use video recordings as a tool to grasp and

develop various *linguaging* events with the children. During a period of two years the researchers have visited the participating preschools once per semester to meet, listen and talk to the preschool teachers about their language development work among the children. The talk has been recorded and transcribed. The overall aim with the present study is to highlight some preschool teachers' process of change and professional learning when it comes to improving their language teaching ability. This study derives from two of the target preschools. The theoretical framework for the study is language socialization and sociocultural theory, viewing learning as situated and constituted through social interaction and talk (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2013; Lave and Wenger 1991; Macbeth 2000; Mehan 1979). Viewing learning as *changing participation* (Lave, 1993) also gives the analyst the possibility to make the learning process visible by empirically demonstrating how talk and action may change over time. The result so far shows how the participants' talk initially was about organization devices and change of the physical environment. The participants also had a strong focus on the recordings of their own acting. The second visit recordings show a *turning point*. As a part of the program the preschool teachers had made transcriptions from their recordings of their "actions". Their talk about their language education was more reflexive and had a greater focus on the children's language and linguaging. On the third visit the researcher did a group interview containing questions about the participants' views of language education theory and their action research. The preschool teachers' joint talk and reflections further deepened the conversation both in terms of the content and the way they verbally expressed themselves. Finally, the study so far points out that the participants use a higher degree of professional language and that their talk about their language practice has undergone a clear change.

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## Tools used to follow children's language development in Swedish preschools

Ann Nordberg

Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

There are different ways to follow children's language development at preschools in Sweden (Vallberg Roth, 2012; Nordberg & Jacobsson, 2019). One approach is to observe the children's language in daily activities and document them. Other ways are using schedules designed with predefined categories or using detailed language tests (Gjems, 2010; Kalliala & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014). This current study is aimed to investigate what kind of tools teachers in preschools in Sweden use when they follow children's language development. The study is part of the Research and Development program "*Language developing working methods in pre-school*" including preschools from 11 municipalities in Sweden.

This study focuses on which tools the teachers in the present program use and what aspects of the children's language the tools they use include. Another focus of this study is to gain more knowledge about on what basis the educators choose the tools they use. The data collection in this study is ongoing and will be carried out by asking

the preschool teachers, included in the program, to provide the researchers with the tools they usually use, or they have started to use during their action research in the program. The answers from the teachers are presented as descriptive data. From this qualitative data, a content analysis will be conducted and a thematization will be performed for a reduction of the data material.

The present study is focused on a research area that has not been closely explored before in a Swedish preschool context (Norling, 2015). The use of educational follow-up tools for children's language development and to follow children's language development in an educational context is a complex task. It requires a repertoire of work methods and reliable and valid information about children's language and how to choose useable tools for this purpose. This study will provide useful knowledge about how teachers perform an important part of their work. To deal with follow-ups of children's language development on a regular basis in preschool makes it possible to gain more knowledge about how each individual child's language develops.

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## Transformed views on leading - principals' reflections as they participate in a research and development program

Annika Åkerblom

IPKL Gothenburg University, Sweden

This presentation emanates from an ongoing larger study on language development support in preschool, where preschools from 11 municipalities in Sweden participate. Methodologically, action research contributes to collaborative ways of gathering data. The presentation focuses on leaders and leadership actions as support for the preschool educators (Riddersporre & Erlandsson, 2019; Tallberg Broman, 2016) and is linked to one of the overall research questions of the program *What opportunities and difficulties for the (multi)lingual development work are identified that can be related to leadership and collegial collaboration?* Throughout the program the leaders followed and supported educators action research work related to developing their (multi)lingual practices. Eventually, also the leaders started doing their own action research on their leading practices. Written reflections from this collaborative work were collected at four seminars where preschool principals and leaders (N=100) participated and discussed their roles and leadership actions. In the study, discourse, actions and relations in connection to leadership were analysed with the framework of practice architectures (Kemmis et al, 2014). The

analysis shows that changes occurred in all the dimensions throughout the program. So far, some preliminary themes have emerged around the principal's role and actions to support the educators. The themes emanated from what came into focus and how this was handled by principals in the program. Preliminary result show that themes identified so far are: 1) the leader as a creator of opportunities (time, space and organisation), 2) the leader as a support for security and container for frustration, and 3) leaders as role models as learners themselves. Additionally, an interesting dimension was connected to power relations between leaders and educators.

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## Symposium: The whole world in our preschools – teaching in multicultural contexts

Chairs: Siobhan Hannan & Mary-Rose McLaren, Victoria University, Australia

Discussants: Siobhan Hannan, Katharine Gronow-Rajek, Mary-Rose McLaren & Nathalie Nehma, Victoria University, Australia

Global population movements bring cultural and linguistic change to communities, contributing to the complexity of our work with young children and their families. This symposium will share insights from the Australian experience, presented by a team of academics from the ethnically diverse and constantly changing western suburbs of Melbourne.

Australia is a highly multicultural and multilingual society. There are some 300 languages spoken. About a quarter of the population speak a language other than English at home. The public sector routinely translates into 63 languages, and also interprets into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and Auslan.

Early childhood education therefore takes place in a context of diversity and rapid change in the ethnic make-up of the educators and the communities they serve. This creates both challenges and opportunities.

This symposium will present aspects of how the multicultural and multilingual contexts of preschool education in Australia affect the work of early childhood teachers and preservice teacher education. Our challenge is to work responsively and respectfully in ever-changing multicultural communities. We bring the lens of multiculturalism to some big themes of early childhood – identity, community, language, innocence, inclusion, trauma. Our stories and insights are both local and universal.

In keeping with our pedagogical approach to child and adult learning, our symposium will be interactive, allowing for embodied learning through games and activities that provide pathways into thinking about how to embrace diversity respectfully in multicultural settings.

The four presentations in this symposium will be:

How many Countries is Australia? – The place of Indigenous cultures in preschool pedagogy

Second language teaching in a multilingual country with a monolingual mindset – the case of Auslan

What do we celebrate? – how can we choose whose culture gets recognised

The impact of war - considering the experience of people who were children in Lebanon in the 1980s

### **How many Countries is Australia? – The place of Indigenous cultures in preschool pedagogy**

Siobhan Hannan

Victoria University, Australia

Australia is now a single state, occupying an entire continent. But the underlying history is of many Aboriginal communities with their own languages and cultures. The survival of Aboriginal languages and the current connection of people to their territory depends on the local history of colonisation.

Big social debates find their way into early childhood education. A current case is the so called 'history wars' – a term that characterises the tension between different versions of the colonisation of Australia. A decolonising approach has been posed as an alternative, challenging the truth of what is often taught or believed by mainstream Australia. Two key ideas are the concepts of Truth Telling, and putting First Nations voices first.

These questions are some of the big issues of current Australian politics and society - the 2023 Voice Referendum, the Apology to the Stolen Generations, Treaty processes.

The Australian early childhood framework obliges programs to embed Indigenous Perspectives in preschool curriculum and to create 'culturally safe' spaces for children and families. There is no established way to do this - teachers and services are tasked with working out how to meet these obligations. The space is both innovative and contested.

Telling the truth challenges us to acknowledge dark and uncomfortable parts of our history, such as the forced removal of children from their families for racist reasons. How can we talk to young children about these uncomfortable truths? Whose perspective is privileged? Whose voices are heard? How many Countries are there in Australia and who do they belong to?

One of our challenges as a university program is to prepare our adult students for this aspect of the role of the teacher. This presentation will report on our current decolonisation project, where we aim to increase the proportion of content that addresses First Nations perspectives, and find ways to put First Nations voices first.

*This presentation will include activities that explore First Nations perspectives.*

## **Second language teaching in a multilingual country with a monolingual mindset – the case of Auslan**

Katharine Gronow-Rajek, Matthea Rudolph

Victoria University, Australia

Australia is highly multilingual. It was multilingual before colonisation – it is estimated that there were more than 250 Aboriginal languages. Modern Australia has added many new languages, with the diversity continuing to grow.

Australia is also an English-speaking country, colonised by Great Britain and part of the history of the growth of English and hostility to other languages. It has been described as having a 'monolingual mindset'.

Auslan is the signed language of the Deaf community in Australia. It used as a first language or primary language by many Deaf people and their families. There is also a growing enthusiasm for teaching Auslan in the education system. There have been Auslan programs in schools for many years, where Auslan is taught as a subject equivalent to languages such as Italian, French, Japanese.

Beginning in 2019, a new program has offered the opportunity to include a second language into early childhood curriculum. Communities were offered the opportunity to choose any language, so Karen and Punjabi are taught as well as Japanese and Spanish. Auslan was a popular choice.

However, the implementation of programs in Auslan has turned out to be more complex than services realised. There are issues around finding appropriate teachers, and developing a curriculum for this new context. A key issue is the need for other staff in services to understand that Auslan is its own language, and not a way to sign English, and that they must also learn about Deaf culture.

*This presentation will be partly presented in Auslan and will be interactive.*

## **What do we celebrate? – how can we choose whose culture gets recognised**

Mary-Rose McLaren

Victoria University, Australia

The Australian national curriculum framework – the EYLF – embraces a multicultural view of society, expecting educators to be ‘culturally responsive’. It specifies that ‘Being culturally responsive also includes respecting and working collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.’ Educators are expected to develop their own ‘cultural knowledge’, and to see culture as being ‘central to children’s sense of being and belonging’.

The concept of responsiveness is presented in the EYLF as established and understood – this is an assumption that in itself deserves to be interrogated. What do educators actually understand this to mean? Explorations from research into how this concept is interpreted will form part of this presentation.

Frequently, the first step into an effort to embrace cultural diversity is an effort to observe important religious/cultural festivals as part of the program. This presents an inherent difficulty of choice from among the myriad options. Whose celebrations get onto the calendar? It also brings a danger of superficial or tokenistic concepts of culture.

Often forgotten in this is the educator’s own cultural identity. Educators are often expected to present an English-only persona to the workplace, and to participate in a range of activities and celebrations that have been deemed relevant to the children but do not recognise the educators themselves as having cultural identity. And yet our workforce is highly diverse, and becoming more so. Here we will explore some of the different ways of being Chinese that are part of the personal experience of our own diverse academic team, highlighting aspects of how that plays out for their teaching of adults and children.

*This presentation will be interactive, promoting embodied learning through games and activities that provide pathways into understanding ways to embrace cultural diversity respectfully in multicultural settings.*

## **The impact of war - considering the experience of people who were children in Lebanon in the 1980s**

Nathalie Nehma

Victoria University, Australia

One of the many components of the ethnic diversity of Australia is the Lebanese community. Some families have been in Australia for multiple generations – for example former Premier Steve Bracks. But there was an expansion during the 1980s, when people came in large numbers from Lebanon and established themselves as a significant presence in some areas. The Lebanese community is itself highly diverse - the confessional system of government in Lebanon recognises 18 faith communities.

A key driver of global population movements is war. Australia’s diversity can easily be read as a product of conflicts in other places. People come to Australia looking for peace. But the impact of the conflicts that drove them here is masked rather than gone.

Early childhood services continue to find themselves adapting to a new influx of people from yet another country, with its own languages and identity, and its own complexities of culture and conflict. The impact does not end with the immediate experience of war or escape. A person whose childhood was framed by an experience of war carries that formation throughout life.

In this presentation, Dr Nathalie Nehma draws on her PhD research which traced the impact in later life of war experience in childhood, based on a narrative inquiry with participants who were children during the Lebanese civil war.

This scenario of refugee settlement has been repeated many times throughout Australia's history, and continues to occur for us, as it does in other countries. Our early childhood educators often need to be aware of historical conflicts and lingering trauma as they seek to be sensitive to the cultural identities of the families they work with.



## Roundtable discussion: Children's right to public spaces and public spheres through early childhood education and care

Chair: Danielle Ekman Ladru Stockholm university, Sweden

Discussants: Christine Eriksson, Stockholm university, Sweden

Teresa Elkin Postila, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Tarna Kannisto, University of Helsinki, Finland

Terhi Ek, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Annika Manni, Umeå University, Sweden

Jessica Samsioe, Stockholm university, Sweden

There is a growing interest on issues of preschool and public space among Nordic researchers, who have started to explore the multitude of relations between early childhood education and care institutions and public spaces. A shared starting point are ideas on young children's right to use, play and learn in public space and the public sphere, as well as thinking of children's societal agency of constructing their own sense of the world. The growing interest for these type of explorations springs from concerns about a decrease in spaces for children in contemporary cities, as well as an increased focus on formal learning in early childhood education settings. The aim of the round table is therefore to discuss how Nordic early childhood education institutions participate in public spaces/the public sphere, and in what ways. Participants are invited to think about questions concerning the role of early childhood education and care in relation to urban/rural sustainability, children's urban/rural citizenship and inclusion as well as spatial justice. The following questions/topics will be discussed:

Young children's agency and participation in various public spaces and spheres

Preschool children's encounters, interactions and affordances of various public spaces and spheres

How can preschool promote and enable children's participation in public spaces/spheres?

The researchers will present experiences and reflections from different research projects that will situate the above raised questions and guide the round table discussions. The round table will also be the starting point of the Research network on Preschool and Public Space.

Contributors: Danielle Ekman Ladru, Christine Eriksson and Jessica Samsioe (Stockholm university), Teresa Elkin Postila (Mid Sweden university), Katarina Gustafson (Uppsala university), Natalie Davet (Gothenburg university), Annika Manni (Umeå university), Tarna Kannisto (University of Helsinki)

## Preschool and Public space – the large cloakroom

Jessica Samsioe

Child and Youth studies, Sweden

With a growing interest in preschool and public space, this paper will discuss children's agencies and their timespatial activities in two large preschool cloakrooms. When building new preschools, larger buildings are often built, and that also means that the cloakrooms are fewer, holding space for more children's outerwear than what previous research has highlighted. Research regarding larger buildings shows that transitions from space to space takes up a lot of pedagogical time (Brandi-Hansen, 2015). Research in smaller buildings highlights the cloakroom as a space where the public and private meet and intersect (Markström, 2005, 2007; Rutanen et. al., 2019; Røthle & Fugelsnes, 2018). This paper draws on empirical material from 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. What do children do and do not do while getting undressed or dressed in the cloakroom? 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. The results show how children engage in timespatial activities that both enhances their undressing practices as well as enhances what seem to be their own worldview of what can or cannot be done in the cloakroom during dressing practices. Children roll around on roller pallets and they hang around the boot jacks. The children help each other to dress or undress and they cheer each other on, when their peers are struggling with undressing. The large cloakroom enables more children to meet and help each other, as well as it sometimes disables the possibility to dress and undress quietly and without distractions, as smaller cloakrooms might do. Overall, the result show that the large cloakroom is full of public space for children's agential timespatial activities, which is of relevance to the nordic discussion on educational research as the large space of the cloakroom highlights how diversity and hope is challenged in (un)expected ways.

## Curating a context for the child as connoisseur in ecologies of practices and through public place as medium

Christine Eriksson<sup>1</sup>, Teresa Elkin Postila<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. <sup>2</sup>Department of Education, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Research topic/aim

Children's opinions about what concerns them must, by law, be listen to, and children's concerns must be offered exchange with other citizens to have a real effect on society (Lundy, 2007; Wall & Robinson, 2022) through any medium of their choice (SFS 2018:1197, article 13). Building on our experiences from our two doctoral thesis we open for discussions on how preschool can promote and enable children's participation in public conversations through methods of *curating context* in specific public places through thinking about *place as a medium* for meeting exchange (Eriksson, 2020), and on how young preschool aged children can participate in research and in society, through the concept *connoisseur* which offers dimensions of a child who partake with their local situated knowledge of place, questions and methods. Furthermore, the concept *ecologies of practices* offers a possible and potential methodological approach to listen to children's concerns since it potentially offers opportunities for exchange with other citizens (Elkin Postila, 2021).

## Theoretical framework

Our thinking is based on site-specific artistic reasonings of *Place as medium* that conditions and activate various direct public conversations through heterogenous interests (Gabrielson, 2006). Inspiration is also taken from Stengers' (2010; 2018) thinking on the connoisseur as a partner with knowledge situated in local practices. This opens up for other approaches on how research and society together in an ecology of practices make themselves intelligible to each other as well as expose the value of difference of methods and knowledge.

## Methodological design

Early Childhood Educational Research can take inspiration from site specific artistic walking methods to *curate a context* in public spaces where preschool children's concerns and conversations can take place in concrete societal situations. Curating context thus means establishing meetings between different practices in which children's concerns and interest can take place. Furthermore, these ecology of practices in which the child is connoisseur could inspire to start in children's here-and-now inquiries, engagements and matters of concern in public conversations about social, ecological and economic matters.

## Expected results

Preschool children are our youngest citizens with the same rights to public spaces and public conversations as adults. By curating a preschool context in public spaces Early Childhood Education can enable children to mediate their usage, concerns and interests in these public spaces. Thus, children's rights to partake in public conversations can take place in direct and situated democratic meetings in public spaces. The above methodological approach also has implications on how research with young children is conducted, how preschool practices can be more inclusive and how preschool aged children can be participants in societal and democratic matters.

## Relevance to Nordic educational research

The expected relevance for the Nordic educational research is to further elaborate on the methodological approach to curate a context for the child as a situated connoisseur in ecologies of practices through thinking of place as medium in different societal levels – in research, in education and society at large.

## **Tiny rights? The opportunities and challenges of toddler's encounters with preschool outdoor spaces**

Annika Manni<sup>1</sup>, Johanna Annerbäck<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Umeå University, Sweden. <sup>2</sup>Linköping University, Sweden

For this symposium, we will draw on the results from a comprehensive research project on children's outdoor encounters in Swedish preschools to zoom in on and discuss toddler's and what we call "tiny rights" in relation to public space. Referring to the Convention of the rights of the child, "tiny rights" points to the marginalized inclusion of the very youngest children in public and scholarly debates on children's right to public spaces. Our previous studies show how toddler's engagements with preschool outdoor spaces unfold along with the design, and the material and physical characteristics of places, as well as in relation to teachers approaches, ideas and ideals about outdoor stay (Manni et al 2024a). While toddler's, when allowed, often engage with preschool outdoor environments in unexpected, creative ways, their engagements are also surrounded by implicit rules and hinders restricting their encounters with the world (Annerbäck et al 2024). This is even more evident when outdoor spaces are affected by weather changes and are covered with, for example, ice and snow (Manni et al 2024b). The challenges of the outdoor environments of preschools primarily affect the toddler's, who also rarely get an opportunity to leave their preschool yards as fieldtrips are more often conducted with older children (Manni 2022). The results, indicating the marginalized position of the toddlers' in preschool outdoor spaces, together raise

some important, and critical questions to discuss at the symposium. Why are the rights of toddler's so silent in public debates regarding space and early childhood? How can "tiny rights", as a concept, be developed and used to address the invisibility of toddlers' in these debates, in future policies concerning outdoor time in preschool settings and, more broadly, children's right to public spaces?

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## Roundtable discussion: Designing studies to research diversity and sustainability in education

Chair: Per-Åke Rosvall, Umeå University, Sweden

Discussant: Mattias Nylund, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

To the round table PhD students are invited to discuss the development of ongoing or planned research in terms of design in relation to the conference theme diversity and sustainability in education. The PhD students are either researching or planning to research justice through education in different ways. That is for example, how to address equality and diversity in career learning and transitions, how schools interpret and implements the national guidance documents in areas with students who have challenges entering the labour market or subject specific content and concepts in visual arts in order to comprehend and advance in the educational system.

The questions raised during the round table session will emerge from the PhD students' interest and mirror the stage in their PhD studies. However, questions of common ground when researching diversity will dominate the discussions, such as:

Categorisation when researching diversity? When researching diversity, it is a dilemma in how to categorise since categories might make some groups visible while on the other hand hide individual diversity within the category. While using categories in research the researcher also runs the risk to contribute to overemphasise diversity between categories. Thus, during the round table it will be discussed how categorisation is addressed in selection and during production of empirical material in relation to the described matters.

Implications for sustainability? In research on diversity the standpoint is that the world is not just and thus research is needed to understand driving forces for diversity and injustice. In light of this background it is relevant to discuss how research on diversity can contribute to a more sustainable and just society. During the round table it will be discussed how the research design can contribute to address issues of implications for (social) sustainability in education?

The questions of categorisation and implications for sustainability is intertwined and related to other themes (Cohen et al., 2018) such as, research ethics (Rosvall, 2015), whose voice to be heard (Elgenius et al., 2023), data triangulation (for ex. Wolff et al. 2021) et cetera. Thus, the ambition of the round table is to engage in vibrating discussions on research dilemmas where the PhD students can raise questions related to their PhD studies and their design. In order to achieve this researchers from associated Nordic networks such as NoRNet and Critpen will be invited.

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## Bildspråk – Creating space for inclusion with and in Art Education

Lovisa Parkman

Umea University, Sweden

Practical-aesthetical subjects has been a common place for including newly arrived students in school. However, arts subject relies on the continuity of all previous stages of compulsory school. Of the newly arrived students, some has short or no former experience of education or the Swedish educational system (Nilsson Folke 2017).

My research project is about arts education in the last years of compulsory school (grade 7-9). My interests concern the crossings between arts education, school culture and inclusion as well as second language development from the perspective of newly arrived students. In addition, it's about every school subject needs and claims for a specific language and vocabulary, in this case with extra focus on the learning environment of tactic and practical knowledge. The aim with this study is to make newly arrived students learning processes visible within the context of arts education, and the arts education visible within the context of language development. An overall interest is to discuss notions of knowledge and learning processes in aesthetical subjects. My research questions concern challenges in the arts subject according to L2-perspective, how newly arrived students' experiences are used, how teachers introduce the subject and how aesthetical learning processes can contribute to language development.

With this quantitative study, based on semi-structured interviews (teachers) and a collection of artworks (students), I hope to represent a wide perspective of this specific education context. With the latter method I mean to connect to the aesthetical field of knowledge.

To ease the inclusion and give possibility to equal participation in education, the experience and knowledge about art, language and communication need be collected and formulated in the specific context of arts education. My expected result is that aesthetical methods would be favorable for language development and inclusion.

Ethical challenges with participants with short or no former education is to reach understanding of the notion consent in research context (Ljung Egeland et. al. 2023). Another ethical dilemma is the categorizing of minority or vulnerable groups, in this context *newly arrived*. The category hides the heterogeneity of the group - ex. migration reason and educational background but may on the other hand be useful because of common denominators (Nilsson Folke 2017). Although inclusive aims, categorization may have a contra productive effect through distinguishing from the norm group (Wiltgren 2022).

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## Looking at early childhood education through the lens of career guidance - *An ethnographic study regarding career-related learning in preschool*

Maria Lindblom Jonsson

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Why should preschool education be concerned with career? An answer would be that it's not expected from preschool children to be committing to which jobs they see themselves applying for at this stage, but it can be helpful to address these questions in relation to the word *career*. In this context, it becomes important to realize the breadth and depth of what career consists of. Career is about life, learning, *and* work. Therefore, career concerns everyone, is for everyone, and encompasses the learning we undertake from birth throughout life (Godden et al., 2024, p. 11).

Since 1998, the preschool is part of the educational system in Sweden. There is nothing explicit written about *career guidance* in the curriculum for the preschool (2019). There are however parts in the curriculum and career-related learning contributions being made by preschool-educators that can be directly linked to the subject and intentions of career guidance in Sweden

The purpose of the study is to develop knowledge about how career-related learning is expressed in preschools located in different localities and social contexts. Focus lies on the preschool's compensatory mission, norm criticism and how preschool education can initiate the foundation of decision-making competence. The study is based on seeing career guidance as "the whole school's responsibility".

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that career decisions are shaped through the interplay between the individual and the fields they inhabit, drawing their theory on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. This perspective is particularly relevant within the policy discourse of career planning, when assumed that individuals make career decisions as "free agents". However, decisions are invariably influenced by one's *habitus*. Gottfredson (1981) suggests that the "cognitive maps" guiding career decisions are formed during early childhood. Therefore, it is crucial to address career-related questions early on to prevent children from limiting their "horizons for action" based on social, geographical and gender related factors, which later influence educational and occupational choices (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). Furthermore, making informed and sustainable choices regarding education and occupation has significant implications for both individual and societal economic and social costs (SOU, 2019)

The anticipated results will identify different career-related learning contributions and establish the "red thread" in relation to seeing career guidance as "the whole school's responsibility".

The preschool practice will be studied using ethnographic methods, primary through participant observations and interviews. Diversity regarding the selection of preschools in different social contexts concerning ethnicity and socioeconomic circumstances becomes relevant.

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

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### 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.

### RQ's:

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.

### **Who is responsible for ensuring that students receive the study and career counselling? – A study on teachers' and career counsellors' perceptions**

Elisabeth Berg

Department of Education and Special Education, Gothenburg University, Sweden

**Research topic/aim** In school, there are various roles that work with preparing students for future choices of study and profession. In the curriculum for the compulsory school (Skolverket 2024), it is stated that everyone who works in the school must contribute to ensuring that the student's study and career choices are not limited, and everyone must work to develop contacts outside the school. But it's not from the curriculum clear who that is responsible for that work being done, which makes it an interesting empirical question to explore.

Thus, the aim of the study is to investigate teachers' and career counsellors', understandings of the purpose and responsibility of career guidance with a specific focus on the importance of the socio-economic context.

**Methodology/research design** The data analysed consist of interviews with six teachers and career counsellors from six different compulsory schools in Sweden. The schools differ in terms of catchment area linked to socio-economic factors such as education level, the local labor market and the merit value of grades.

**Theoretical framework** The analysis is based on a two-step process. (1) A thematic approach (Braun & Clark 2006) of transcripts from semi-structured interviews. (2) The concepts classification and framing (Bernstein 1990) was then used to study how boundaries and arrangements of control (e.g. between roles within the school) affect the view of the purpose and responsibility of career guidance.

Three research questions guide the study:

- How do the teachers and career counsellors understand the core purpose and responsibility of career counselling, and how is the responsibility visible in the work?
- What are the similarities and differences between teachers' and career counsellors' perceptions of the purpose and responsibility?
- What importance has the socio-economic context for the results on the two questions above?

**Expected results/findings** Preliminary results indicate that the understanding of teachers and career counsellors about the purpose and responsibility for career guidance do not differ much. However, there is a bigger difference in how the responsibility manifests itself in the work with study and career guidance.

Both teachers and career counsellors believe that the two single strongest socioeconomic argument for working with career guidance is to increase students' study motivation and to ensure that parents do not influence their child's future choices.

**Relevance to Nordic educational research** The results will be of interest to other Nordic countries as the questions and phenomena explored are not tied to a specific Swedish context, but have a more general relevance, in a Nordic welfare context (Blossing m.fl., 2014).

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Network: 4. Justice through Education

## Workshop: Networking to support critical thinking and research

Chair: Elina Lahelma, University of Helsinki, Finland

Discussants: Anna-Maija Niemi, University of Turku, Finland

Gun-Britt Wärvik, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Lisbeth Lundahl, Elisabet Öhrn, Elina Lahelma & Anne-Lise Arnesen: Networking to support critical thinking and research

### Background

The workshop departs from previous research on networking and our own experiences in several Nordic research networks, with a focus on NordCrit - Critical Nordic Research Network on Education, Welfare, Children and Young People (2007-2014).

Research has identified interpersonal trust as a key driver of sustainable networks aiming at knowledge transfer and exchange. Other enabling factors are strategic orientation, good leadership, co-creation of and identification to values, and size of the network (Ferrer-Serrano 2022). However, work and networking take place in and are marked by the ever-stronger performativity and competition culture – not only in STEM sciences but also in humanities and social science. Researchers are thus increasingly forced to collaborate for successful competition over grants, competence and prestige. Consequently, research networks are often analyzed as assets or capital for research careers. Such capital is unevenly distributed regarding gender, ethnic background, and academic seniority. In addition, the sustainability of the strategically motivated, contract-based collaboration has been questioned (Kosmützky & Krücken 2023).

NordCrit worked across countries and across theoretical and thematical borders, but with a shared aim of doing critical research from an equality and social justice perspective. It organized annual NordCrit conferences, doctoral courses and symposia at Nordic and European conferences. Publications included books and special issues (e.g. Arnesen & al. 2010, 2014; Lappalainen & al. 2013), and younger researchers published jointly across countries. The network was created with an explicit intention to work against the dominance of managerialism and performativity in contemporary academia by resting on feminist leadership, solidaric collaboration for critical thinking and research and a striving to work horizontally, without the common vertical hierarchy.

### Aim

This workshop aims at furthering network building on critical research. We invite colleagues to discuss if non-hierarchical network collaboration to support critical thinking and research across borders is still possible.

### Audience involvement

We hope for a mix of senior and junior researchers and PhD students to participate and share their views. After a brief presentation from the organizers and prepared comments from two discussants, the workshop moves on to an open discussion and hopefully, some tentative suggestions for the future.

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## Workshop: EQUITÉ. Investigating equal access to knowledge in technology rich education.

Chair: Marie Nilsberth, Karlstad University, Sweden

Discussant: Roland Hachmann, University College Syd, Denmark

In the exploratory workshop EQUITÉ, researchers from three Nordic countries together discuss the role of digital technology in relation to student diversity and development of subject knowledge. The purpose is to discuss and develop ideas about how digitalisation in education can be investigated and understood from an equity perspective, in terms of students' different social background, ethnicity, special education needs and gender. Investments in one-to-one technologies, learning platforms and digital learning materials have significantly changed a wide range of classroom activities, but does not automatically lead to more participatory teaching practices (Blikstad-Balas & Klette, 2020). However, a recent research review (Blomberg Kjellström et al.) about how teachers' use of digital tools connected to texts impact the potential for inclusive teaching, indicates that it is possible to increase pedagogical inclusion through variation and student engagement but that this requires specific teacher competencies. The EQUITÉ workshop builds on a previous Nordic research collaboration in the Connected Classroom Nordic project (CCN). In the CCN-project, we have studied the role of digital technologies for teaching quality, using innovative video methods in close collaboration with teachers and students. The findings of this project highlights that students' participation in classroom practices tend to get more and more personalized (Slot et al., 2023). However, previous ethnographic studies have encountered methodological challenges when it comes to representation of student diversity among participants (Sahlström et al., 2024). We often find a preponderance of relatively study-motivated students among the participants, whereas students who experience educational challenges seldom volunteer to participate in research. This kind of biased representation in school ethnographic research makes it difficult to further investigate and interpret equality aspects of our findings. This roundtable discussion is an invitation to an open-ended conversation about methodological challenges and possibilities related to student diversity and subject knowledge. We present some preliminary findings from ongoing research projects in three Nordic countries as a point of departure for continued exploration of how relations between digital technologies, student diversity and equity could be investigated and understood. The workshop thus addresses contemporary challenges related to knowledge and inclusion in a digital society at risk of widening differences, with a specific focus on the role of education.

Blikstad-Balas M, Klette K. 2020. Still a long way to go. Narrow and transmissive use of technology in the classroom. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 55–68.

Blomberg Kjellström, K., Magnusson, P. & Östlund, D. (unpublished manuscript). Teachers' use of digital tools connected to texts in inclusive classrooms: A qualitative systematic review.

Sahlström, F., Nilsberth, M., Laihoine, P., Hansen, J., Lysberg, J. Rusk, F., Öhman, A. Inclusive ethnography with 8-9 grade pupils about hybrid sociality. Gains and challenges from scientific and participatory perspectives. Paper presentation at EARLI SIG 10-21-25 conference, 11-13 september 2024, Bari, Italy

Slot, M. F., Jensen, M. P., & Høegh, T. (2023). Bidrag til digital didaktik set fra et posthumant elevperspektiv. *Tidsskriftet Læring Og Medier (LOM)*, 16(27).

## **Equity in literacy practices? Terms for participation in technology-rich learning environments when literacy is challenged.**

Marie Nilsberth

Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper presents an ongoing pilot study that focuses on terms for literacy and participation in technology-rich learning environments for students in need of support related to reading and writing. Previous research on digitalisation and literacy challenges has mainly focused on use of assistive technology or specific training programs to compensate for reading- and writing difficulties (se t.ex. Fäldt et al, 2021; Nordström et al., 2019), whereas few have been directed to the technology-rich classroom as a learning environment in relation to literacy challenges. The general picture is that digital resources might be beneficial as assistive technology in the right circumstances, but also that there are challenges for many students to navigate among the increasing amount of screen-mediated texts as well as to develop critical thinking in literacy practices (Serafini, 2012). More knowledge is needed from the perspective of these students, but based on previous studies we also see that it might be ethically demanding to ask them to participate in classroom studies. Therefore, this pilot study is based on collaboration with special education teachers that already work close to the students. Methodologically we use an action research approach (Kemmis et al., 2014), where 4-6 lower secondary special education teachers and 2 researchers meet regularly in five focus group discussions. Together the group discusses relevant research literature and plan different field-work activities that can inform the discussions. These activities are conducted by the teachers between each focus group session, such as classroom observations, discussions and interviews with students, photos or screen-recordings of screen-mediated literacy practices. Hence, also students will be involved as voluntary research participants but instead of working with researchers they will work with their teachers. Data for analysis will consist of both the material from the teachers fieldwork activities, and video recordings of the focus group discussions between teachers and researchers. In this presentation, I will mainly contribute with a methodological discussion about gains and constraints with this kind of research design in relation to investigating equity in technology-rich education together with some preliminary insights from study.

Fälth, L., Brkovic, I., Kerestes, G., Svensson, I., Hjelmquist, E. et al. (2023) The Effects of a Multimodal Intervention on the Reading Skills of Struggling Students: An Exploration Across Countries *Reading Psychology*, 44(3): 225-241 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2022.2141399>

Nordström, T.; Nilsson, S, Gustafsson, S. & Svensson, I. (2019). Assistive technology applications for students with reading difficulties: special education teachers' experiences and perceptions. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 14 (8), 798-808. Doi: 10.1080/17483107.2018.1499142

Serafini, F. (2012): Expanding the four resources model: reading visual and multi-modal texts, *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 7:2, 150-164

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner. Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer.

## **Tracing children's political online activities**

Pia Mikander, Kirsi Wallinheimo, Anna Slotte, Carolina Björkas

University of Helsinki, Finland

Originating from the research project Mångsam, this presentation concerns research interventions between schools and teacher education at the Swedish-speaking division of the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the

University of Helsinki. The goal of the work package was to pay attention to young students (9-12 years) as socially and linguistically knowledgeable actors, based on their engagement in digital games and on social media. The idea was to locate new methods in teaching languages and active citizenship, where students can recognize their competencies and opportunities as language users and active citizens through their digital engagement. In this presentation, the active citizenship part is in focus (see Wallinheimo et al, forthcoming, for a focus on the language part).

The researchers collaborated closely with class teachers in schools in the metropolitan area, planning and discussing the content for the seven lessons that the research assistant conducted. The result was an intervention with elements of action research (Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). The idea was that through the intervention, new solutions and strategies could be identified to serve as a basis for further development of teaching. The first three weeks mainly concerned language learning. Lessons four to six were connected to social science. The activities included discussions about liking, commenting and sharing online videos, emotions connected to online content and hate speech, and the role of influencers and belonging. One aim was for the students to become aware of themselves as socially conscious and linguistically knowledgeable actors when they engage digitally, for example, when they "like" or share a video with a specific message or communicate in online games. Another aim was for the students to learn to express what they do in terms of social and linguistic competence. Further, the idea was also to find a way to provide space in social studies education to discuss topics that the students encounter during their digital leisure time, such as questions regarding climate, war, and inequality.

Our preliminary findings include the point that the students were enthusiastic about the project. Many felt uneasy about speaking about their digital leisure time in a school setting. Particularly in one class, the gender gap between different online leisure time environments was wide. We also found that students, including the youngest ones, have experienced hate speech online and many regularly show solidarity to their peers online. In the discussion, we connect these preliminary results to issues of equality – how can social science education recognize students' leisure time digital active citizenship from a perspective of equality and different backgrounds?

Nolen, A. & Vander Putten, J. (2007) Action research in education: Gaps in ethical principles and practices. *Educational Researcher*, 36, 401-407. doi:10.3102/0013189X07309629

Wallinheimo, K., Mikander, P. & Gullstrand, A.(forthcoming) Flerspråkigt lärande och språkanvändning i digitala miljöer: En fallstudie om elevers diskussioner om digitala miljöer i svenskspråkiga skolor

## **EQUITÉ. Investigating equal access to knowledge in technology rich - Equality and “badges of membership” in technology rich classroom cultures**

Marie Slot, Lars Bo Andersen

University College Copenhagen, Denmark

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss how we can operationalize the concept of "equality" in our discussions in the EQUITÉ project. Based on previous research projects and results on digital and computational text work in subjects among students and teacher students, we focus in this presentation on students' digital expressions and *how equality or inequality is concretized in different strategies for students access towards digital technologies* (Slot 2020, Møller, 2023). Students in digital rich environments have enormous opportunities for expression in a hybrid classroom culture, we often talk about this in broad terms such as “strategies” and “accessibility” (Selwin, 2017).

In the hybrid classroom, students have a repertoire of technologies and tools, many of which are not designed to support student work. It provides a lot of difference (and often inequality) in relation to digital text work and computer-based text work. Based on diSessa's theoretical work on computational literacy, we propose the concept

of "badges of membership" as a lens for observing how equality is constructed and negotiated between students and teachers (diSessa, 2001). We focus on technologies that provide students with identity and social belonging, and frame technology as symbols of engagement: "marked by affects such as pride and sometimes (for beginners) embarrassment." (diSessa, 2001, p. 39, Hachmann, 2024).

Methodologically, the examples will be based on post-analyses of video material from CCN with a focus on students' everyday life in technology-rich classrooms. Observations from teaching and learning processes will be re-coded and reanalyzed to find out whether students giving and taking "membership badges" is a barrier or a gain to equality in a tool-rich classroom. Our findings will contribute to in-depth empirical elements that contribute to digital didactics and to teachers' understanding of how "badges of membership" construct equality or the opposite and therefore can be renegotiated to achieve more equality in shared hybrid classroom culture.

Currently, hybrid or technology rich classroom culture is under massive criticism. Developing in-depth elements that focus on equality by not just turning off the computer is relevant to Nordic educational research and research into digital technologies and identity formation (Holm Sørensen, 2019, Selwyn, 2016, Andersen, 2018).

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## Workshop: How may we oppose neoliberal educational reforms' impact on formal education and social life?

Chair: Charlotta Rönn, Independent researcher, Sweden

In formal Educational contexts, Neoliberal reforms have had a far-reaching impact and has fundamentally altered how educational settings define their commission, comprising the emphasis on measurable outputs, effectiveness, the commodification of knowledge, as well as creating entrepreneurial and competitive citizens who take individual initiatives. In, for example, higher education quality assessment and performativity have replaced both debates and intellectual inquiries. (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Neoliberal educational “solutions” has been regarded as inescapable without focusing on harmful long-term consequences, and a main solution to educational issues has often been the implementation of more neoliberal reforms such as for example the teachers’ reforms at Swedish upper secondary schools – which turned out to reduce the teachers’ teaching in favour for improving results (Erlandson, et al. 2023). However, the authors argue that in local practices the implementation of the reforms may result in micro-political actions.

Some lower secondary school pupils in a Swedish municipally school acted on, and resisted, the emphasised focus on measurable results and performativity by outsourcing their schoolwork to classmates without the teachers’ awareness; e.g. some pupils logged into peers’ Goggle classroom accounts and wrote original texts for others. This resulted in that some obtained elevated grades with little (or no) efforts (Rönn, 2023).

Researchers should not merely describe and analyze burdening conditions. They should actively contribute to changes. Beach and Vigo-Arrazola (2021) have explored and identified cases where researchers have participated in activism and have described empirical examples where efforts have led to successful transformation.

The purpose of this Workshop is to share the participants’ insights from various Nordic educational contexts and to try to promote ideas of how neoliberal reforms could be disarmed and/or resisted at a local level.

The Workshop will be designed as following:

Brief introduction by the chair. Presentation of neoliberal educational reforms and their impact in different educational contexts (higher education, upper secondary school, and compulsory school).

Discussions in groups (according to the participants’ experience and interest). Which are some of the major (negative) effects of New Public Management and Neoliberal educational reforms? Short debriefing to everyone from all groups.

New discussions (same groups): How could these effects be addressed and/or resisted? In collaboration with whom might these effects be resisted? What wiggle room is there for teachers and researchers? Short debriefing.

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Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

## **Roundtable discussion: Nordic research on educational governance, crisis management, and leadership in schools: Extensive demands, support and control**

Chair: Ann Elisabeth Gunnulfsen, University of Oslo, Norway

Discussants: Gudrun Ragnarsdottir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Helene Ärlestig, University of Umeå, Sweden

Alex Mäkiharju, University of Åbo Akademi, Finland

Ann-Sofie Smeds-Nylund, University of Åbo Akademi, Finland

Ulf Leo, University of Umeå, Sweden

The international body of research on crisis and school leadership is expanding, yet studies focusing on this theme within the Nordic context remain limited, predominantly addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The roundtable aims to examine contemporary research on crisis management in Nordic education to elucidate the governance, support, and control mechanisms employed during unexpected events, and to inform future research directions. The roundtable is based on an up-coming article drawing on neo-institutional theories and a contextualist approach that traces the phenomenon of interest across Nordic education systems and governance contexts. This study is based on a systematic literature search and applies thematic content analysis. Through the elaboration of six themes, the demands and expectations for school leaders and the tensions they encounter were revealed. The findings suggest that crises often precipitate centralized, top-down governance that challenges the traditional values and decentralized governance in Nordic education systems. In these changed governance relations, school leaders continuously adjust to ever-changing policies through sense-making and re-organizing the routines and pedagogical approaches of the school. Additionally, the study explores the consequences of crisis management, revealing ethical and social responsibilities and challenges to the well-being of school leaders. Lastly, showing various forms of support and control applied both vertically and horizontally. The study contributes to the field by offering a comprehensive understanding of crisis management in Nordic school leadership and guiding future research to enhance the resilience and stability of educational institutions.

The purpose of the roundtable is to further investigate how to build knowledge on supporting school leaders in managing crisis-related dilemmas, work-related stress, rapid knowledge development, and emotional support. The purpose is also to discuss how future research should focus on crises at an aggregated level to increase knowledge about individual reactions and how organizations quickly could establish cooperative relationships using their joint competence and resources.

The participants will be asked to present the latest research in the Nordic countries concerning crisis-leadership. They will be engaged in discussions about how future Nordic research in crisis leadership and management should be conducted. Depending on the number of participants different methods can be applied; an OPERA-session or brainstorming using digital platforms i.e. Padlet

## **Crisis Management and Leadership in Finnish Schools: Insights from the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Ann-Sofie Smeds-Nylund, Alex Mäkiharju

Åbo Akademi, Finland

While the Nordic countries have generally been safe over the past few decades, smaller and larger crises occur in schools daily. Finland's history and geopolitical location have fostered a continuous awareness of the need for crisis preparedness. Despite school shootings in Jokela in 2007 and Kauhajoki in 2008, research on schools, leadership, and crisis management has been limited until the recent focus brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following COVID-19, we identified five articles that specifically examine aspects of educational leadership. During the COVID-19 crisis in the Spring of 2020, Finnish primary school teachers and principals effectively coordinated virtual collaboration among staff, pupils, and parents (Korhonen et al., 2021). Upadaya et al. (2021) found that 535 school principals experienced high stress due to increased workload and COVID-19 concerns, with social support and work engagement reducing stress levels. Elomaa et al. (2023) highlighted that elementary school principals faced stress from workload, conflicts, and limited resources, using various coping strategies and needing more problem-focused support. Lavonen et al. (2022) noted that well-digitalised schools facilitated distance learning, but decreased engagement and increased stress were prevalent among students and staff. Ahtiainen et al. (2024) reported that Finnish school leaders emphasised clear pedagogical vision, emotional support, and managing rapidly changing instructions during school closures, focusing on providing stability and support to their communities.

Across these studies, some key themes emerged. The well-being of principals was significantly affected, with many experiencing high levels of stress due to increased workload and the challenges of remote learning. Leaders also needed to provide clear guidance and maintain a pedagogical vision to navigate the transition to distance education, while implementing new technologies and ensuring purposeful communication. Emotional support for teachers became a central part of leadership. Additionally, the crisis revealed inequalities in access to technology and resources, affecting both student engagement and learning outcomes.

The governance of the COVID-19 period in Finland can be divided in three phases. The Finnish political system is decentralised, with local decision-making processes and strong municipalities and regions. In mid-March 2020, the Finnish government and the president declared a state of emergency due to the pandemic, an unprecedented move since World War II. During the initial phase, schools were closed for two months, and principals had to adapt to directives from central authorities, significantly reducing their usual autonomy. When schools re-opened in May 2020, principals were tasked with implementing safe operational procedures. In the subsequent hybrid phases, regional authorities determined school operations based on infection rates, leading to frequent changes in distance education protocols as the pandemic evolved.

### **How school leaders manage crises**

Helene Ärlestig

Umeå University, Sweden

The interest in how school leaders manage crises increased during the pandemic Covid 19. Despite of that we have only found 7 Swedish articles between 2019 and 2024 that study schools and crisis management.

Even if the workload of principals already is heavy a crisis contributes with new and complex tasks (Ahlström et al 2020; Norberg & Gross, 2019). This reveals both what occur and are needed in the local school and on other

governance levels. Coping and the need for an adaptive leadership in crises urge principals to develop distributed leadership (Ekman Rising, Packendorff, Svensson, 2021), ability to handle stress and professionalism in decision-making. Adaptive leadership also call for new thinking to find creative solutions in a crisis (Sahlin et al 2023). There is often a trust in crisis plan (Danielsson, & Sjöstedt-Landén, 2020) still 6 out of 10 schools do not have an updated plan related to serious threats and violence (Rantala, Johansson & Leffler, 2024).

Despite what sort of crises that hits a local school, school actors are generally seen as a profession that needs external help when a crisis occur (Persson, Alvinus & Lindhagen, 2022). As the school actors need to act pro-active, re-active, immediately and on a long-term basis there are several aspects that need to be considered simultaneously.

Most of the research is focusing on the immediate situation, and its prerequisites and short time effects. There is a need for further research on how different actors, including principals, in different context and phases of the crises act and react to cover both short time and longtime consequences.

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## Mapping Contemporary Studies on Crisis Management and School Leadership in Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education in Iceland

Guðrún Ragnarsdóttir

University of Iceland, Iceland

The international research body on crisis and school leadership is expanding (Gunnulfsen et al., 2023; Harris & Jones, 2020; Huber, 2021; Ragnarsdóttir & Storgaard, 2023), providing valuable insights into how educational systems worldwide respond to unexpected challenges. This roundtable discussion examines contemporary research on crisis management and school leadership within Icelandic compulsory and upper secondary education, with a particular focus on governance, support, and control mechanisms. The study is grounded in a literature review of ten academic papers, four written in Icelandic and six in English. Of these, nine papers address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and eight focus on upper secondary education. The expanding body of research

on crisis management and school leadership in Iceland elucidates several key aspects. During the pandemic, school leaders encountered heightened responsibilities, managing new demands such as remote teaching and ensuring the well-being of students and staff. Their roles transitioned from being primarily organizational to more pedagogical, necessitating a balance between external demands and the professional autonomy of teachers. The increased workload, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, led to social and professional isolation, prompting the development of new support networks and strategies to manage stress and workload. Furthermore, school leaders had to swiftly adapt to evolving governance structures and modify educational policies in real-time. They were also responsible for ongoing professional development and support for teachers. Enhanced communication and collaboration within the school community and with external stakeholders emerged as critical components for effective crisis management during this period, leading to a division of labor. The shift to online teaching underscored the importance of technological preparedness, highlighting the need for robust digital infrastructure and training for educators to manage future crises effectively. Effective crisis management relies on robust support systems, including clear communication channels within the school community and between schools and external bodies. Supportive governance structures that allow flexibility and responsiveness are crucial. These findings are essential for preparing schools within the Nordic countries to navigate future crises, ensuring educational continuity, and supporting the well-being of all stakeholders.

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#### **Educational leadership and crisis - studies from Norway**

Ann Elisabeth Gunnulfsen, Hedvig Abrahamsen

University of Oslo, Norway

Despite that there have been an increase in severe natural crisis events in Norway the last twenty years, such as land slides and flooding, there has not been conducted research on how these events have impact on schooling, the core purpose of schooling, teachers practices and school leadership. This paper aims to contribute knowledge on contemporary knowledge about crisis management and school leadership in Norway and what the Norwegian studies suggest about the governance, controlling forces and school leaders' roles during challenging times. The review from the Norwegian education context consist of six selected peer reviewed research articles. One of the six selected articles is a quantitative study which directs attention to policy makers', school leaders' and teachers' preparedness during the Covid-19 crisis. Four of the selected six studies are qualitative interview studies, including one mixed-methods study, focus on school leadership experiences, practices and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic. One last selected article of the total of six put attention to the designing of a national strategy on classroom communication concerning the 22 July terror attack in Norway, where a terrorist killed 77 people by

bombing government buildings in the center of Oslo, followed by attacking a summer camp organized by the youth wing of the Labor Party (Norwegian Labor Youth). This paper was selected because of the ways in which the teachers and consequently the school leaders can help pupils to deal with such events. The Norwegian studies have indirect suggestions to the governance level, controlling forces and school leaders' role when addressing school purposes and educational leadership during challenging times.

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## **Symposium: Youth work in schools and the school coach's work and role to promote pupil and student well-being, as well as young people's own experiences of social media use related to loneliness and mental health in an age of uncertainty**

Chair: Jessica Hemberg, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Discussants: Sofia Gylfe, Yulia Korzhina, Emelie Käcko, Kia Ikonen, Pia Nyman-Kurkiala & Erika Jakobsson, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

As mental health problems and school absenteeism among young people increase in Finland and most other countries, this symposium aims to explore youth work in schools as well as the school coach's occupational work and role and how this can support pupil and student well-being. Further, it explores their experiences of social media use and mental health in an age of uncertainty. Interviews with school coaches, teachers and young people are conducted. Youth work can be a health promoting measure for supporting pupil and student well-being. The school coach's work is seen as valuable and important for enabling security and well-being for pupils and students. Young peoples' social media use can have an impact on loneliness and mental health.

### **School coaches' perceptions of their professional role: A qualitative study.**

Erika Jakobsson, Sofia Gylfe, Emelie Käcko, Yulia Korzhina, Amanda Sundqvist, Kia Ikonen, Pia Nyman-Kurkiala, Jessica Hemberg

Åbo Akademi University, Finland

#### **Research topic/aim**

As a result of the declining well-being of the population, action is taken at several levels; public, private and third sector. Professions, collaborations and new approaches to promote well-being are being explored and developed. The school coach is a new profession that has emerged in schools and educational institutions in recent years with the aim of promoting student well-being. Albeit still a difficult profession to define, the school coach has a varying job description and working conditions depending on workplace and stage of education. Broadly speaking, however, a school coach is a neutral additional resource in schools, whose purpose is to promote student well-being. As a new profession, school coaches need a clearer framework for their work and a more elaborate job description to facilitate the multi-professional cooperation that the profession entails. Because only scant research has been carried out on school coaches' perceptions of their professional role, their health-promoting work and working methods, as well as their multi-professional cooperation, this study aimed to explore these issues.

#### **Theoretical framework**

Vygotsky's theory on learning and development through social interaction and cultural transmission of experiences was used.



## Methodology/research design

A qualitative exploratory design was used with ten participants; school coaches in Finland were interviewed face-to-face using a semi-structured interview guide. Qualitative content analysis was chosen to analyze the interview data.

## Expected results/findings

Ten main categories were found: (1) The school coach is a neutral and safe adult for pupils and students, (2) The school coach provides personal, genuine contact and is easily accessible and open to spontaneous dialogues or conversations through inclusive communication, (3) The school coach is visible and present both in the physical school environment and digitally on social media, (4) The school coach provides support in pupils' everyday challenges and personal development, (5) School coaches adapt their work flexibly according to the needs and dynamics of the school, (6) The school coach has extensive collaboration with actors inside and outside the school environment who can support students, (7) The school coach transfers some cases to relevant professionals who can provide important support to students, (8) School coaches' way of working is influenced by their educational background, (9) Variations in school coaches' work contracts create ambiguity in terms of responsibilities and work image, (10) Communication challenges in the multi-professional collaboration create a risk of overlapping and duplication of work.

## Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study is important because it can provide a picture of school coaches' perception of their professional role and their efforts for health promotion as well as their role in multi-professional collaboration in school, which may be of importance for Nordic educational research.

## **The school coach's work in school: An interview study**

Sofia Rönblad, Alexandra Rehnfeldt, [Pia Nyman-Kurkiala](#), Jessica Hemberg

Åbo Akademi University, Finland

## Research topic/aim

The purpose of the study was to discover school coaches' perceptive job image and promotion of student health in grades 7–9 in schools in Swedish-speaking Finland. The study has two research questions: 1. What does the school coach's job image look like?, 2. How can a school coach promote student health?

## Theoretical framework

Antonovsky's theory of sense of coherence (KASAM) was used as a theoretical framework.

## Methodology/research design

The study had a qualitative exploratory design. The study material was collected through qualitative, semi-structured individual interviews with school coaches. Five informants participated in the study. Inclusion criteria were active school coaches in grades 7-9 in a Swedish-speaking school in Finland. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to the principles of qualitative content analysis.

## Expected results/findings

Six main categories emerged as follows: (1) tasks, (2) plan for tasks, (3) plan for evaluation, (4) collaboration, (5) perceptions of work image, (6) relationship with students and (6) promoting student health. The results show that

school coaches' tasks are diverse and varied. School coaches do not have a clear, detailed plan for tasks and evaluation. They need support and a clearer picture of their work in order to do a good job. Policy makers need to recognize the importance of school coaches' role in schools and make decisions that develop this role. School coaches are part of multi-professional cooperation in schools and cooperation with the other professionals in school needs to work well for school coaches to be able to carry out their work to the full. The work of a school coach can be perceived as stressful and there is a clear need for more school coaches in schools. School coaches should be given an official position in the school and a work contract specific to the position. The results also show that there is a low threshold for students to contact the school coach. As school coaches do not have an evaluative responsibility, pupils may find it easier to contact a school coach than the other adults in the school. Conversations with school coaches are characterized by trust and voluntariness. School coaches are able to give pupils the time that other adults in the school cannot give them. The school coach increases security and school well-being and helps pupils to find their own strengths and solutions to problems. School coaches can offer pupils knowledge and skills that help them in their personal development. The presence of adults is needed to promote student health in school.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study can provide an understanding for the school coaches' work and their perceptions about their role in school in Swedish-speaking Finland when it comes to promoting pupil health.

### **Youth work in schools: Teachers' and school coaches' experiences**

Catharina Höglund, Yulia Korzhina, Amanda Sundqvist, Emelie Käcko, Kia Ikonen, Sofia Gylfe, Pia Nyman-Kurkiala, Jessica Hemberg

Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Research topic/aim:

The aim of the study was to investigate the role of school youth work in the school environment and to explore how teachers and school coaches perceive school youth work in basic education.

Methodology/research design:

A qualitative exploratory design was used. Four people participated in the interviews (two teachers and two school coaches) working in secondary schools in a municipality in Swedish Finland. Qualitative content analysis was chosen to analyze the interview data.

Expected results/findings:

The results show that youth work in schools can take different forms. The working days of school coaches vary from day to day depending on needs. Teachers collaborate with school coaches and have them in class every week to some extent. The school coach has the task of supporting the pupils and teachers in different ways, for instance with the order in the classroom or making sure that the pupils go to their classes. The school coach can also, for example, provide support teaching for exams. The school coach is an extra adult in school who moves among the pupils during breaks, can listen and be there for their well-being, sees how they are doing, and is thus able to reach them in a way that subject teachers cannot. The school coach can, for example, organize regular boys' groups, where they can discuss their feelings and problems. The school coach sees things that teachers do not get to see and hence gains more knowledge about various events. For instance, the school coach can bring up issues of bullying and discuss them with the pupils through educational discussions. Both teacher and school coach informants believe that the school coach's work in the school provides a sense of security for the students that can

strengthen their well-being. The school coaches feel that some teachers do not yet know their tasks or understand why they are there, but that they are mostly treated positively by the teachers.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study is important because it shows how the new professional category of school coaches works and their professional role in schools, which can be important knowledge for the development of the school coach's work and role in the other Nordic countries as well.

### **Social media use in a changing world and its impact on the well-being of adolescents and young people**

Jessica Hemberg, Emelie Käcko, Yulia Korzhina, Amand Sundqvist, Kia Ikonen, Pia Nyman-Kurkiala

Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Research topic/aim

Scarce research has been carried out on adolescents and young people's social media use and its relation to/impact on their well-being. The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of adolescents and young people's use of social media and its relation to/impact on their well-being in daily life.

Methodology/research design

A qualitative exploratory design was used with 16 participants 16-26 (2 males and 14 females) who took part in individual interviews.

Expected results/findings

Five main categories were found: (1) Social media as a means of connecting and experiencing community, (2) Social media as a channel for information, general education and entertainment, (3) Social media as a positive source of well-being, (4) Social media as a negative source of mental ill-being, (5) Social media as a negative source of physical health barriers.

The results show that social media has both positive and negative effects on young people. On the positive side, young people keep in touch with each other and are, for example, up to date on politics. In terms of work, it is also an important tool and something that is constantly present in everyday life. Social media can also counteract loneliness and increase the spread of positive messages and information about mental health. The negative sides become apparent when it starts to affect mental health negatively. It can then be easy for the young person to end up in a negative spiral with, among other things, cyberbullying, which in the long run can lead to self-harm and suicidal behaviours. The majority of young people believe that their use of digital media has a negative impact on sleep, schoolwork and exercise. At the same time, digital platforms are here to stay and it is necessary to have a good balance in life. One way in which this can be accomplished is to help parents and young people create good habits at an early age. Duration of using social media, degree of activity, and whether it created an addiction all correlated in one way or another with depression, anxiety, and mental illness. Negative experiences can impair well-being. According to previous research, excessive use of social media can lead to physical, mental, and social difficulties in young people, such as anxiety, headaches, eating disorders and depression. On social media, bullying, vulnerability, skewed norms and body shaming can also occur. Further research could focus on the possibility of using social media to promote mental health and well-being.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study is important because it can provide a picture of how social media is experienced by young people and its possible impact on well-being and health, which may be of importance for Nordic educational research.

## Symposium: Intercultural education: On its construction, limitations and hopeful trajectories.

Chair: Merete Saus, UiT The arctic university of Norway, Norway

Discussant: Paul Adams, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

This symposium considers intercultural education to understand how the term has been constructed, the hopeful claims made by its advocates, and some of its associated limitations and challenges. This responds to the conference call because intercultural education is often championed as a key component of pedagogies of hope; we suggest that critical consideration of the term is necessary for it to make a meaningful, and indeed hopeful, contribution to educational research.

Since the widespread adoption of the term intercultural education in 1983 – when European ministers of education met to discuss the schooling of migrant children – the term has generally been accepted as a leitmotif of education policy and practice, with a much-expanded horizon to its initial use. Its advocates (see e.g., Council of Europe, 2022) proclaim that intercultural education is essential to democracy, it promotes language awareness and sensitivity, encourages critical reflection, helps foster critical digital literacy, encourages learner autonomy and supports the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised students. However, if one considers the construction of the term, limitations and possible challenges become apparent. For example, within any nation or other boundary of cultural identity, are not cultures fundamentally interwoven so that defining oneself as belonging exclusively to a single cultural identity becomes problematic? What if one then considers the dynamic nature of culture itself, continually shifting and reforming as diverse peoples intermingle and become entangled in new constellations: does it then make sense to talk about the interplay between two distinct, fixed cultures as such? And importantly, how can indigenous narratives such as Sámi knowledge systems be included in a way that does not simply incorporate them under Western frameworks but indigenises our way of thinking and conducting research.

The papers presented are all from members of the ICRED research group based at UiT The Arctic University of Norway and Jönköping University. Contributions each offer a unique but complementary perspective - theoretical considerations, indigenous narratives, participatory research and policy analysis - all ultimately convening around the symposium theme of intercultural education to offer a rich account and initiate lively discussion. Different national perspectives are included, including Norway, Sweden, England and Scotland. The symposium is relevant to Nordic educational research because of its recognition of Sámi perspectives, methodological insights in a Nordic context and policy analysis conducted within the Nordic region.

### **What makes intercultural relations educational?**

Louis Waterman-Evans

UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway. Karlsruhe University of Education, Germany

With *intercultural education* as a leitmotif of education policy and practice, and indeed also a central concept of the ICRED research group presenting in this symposium, there is a clear need for conceptual clarity. In addition, there is a gap in research offering a distinct educational perspective when discussing educational concepts and lack of “educational questions about education”. The reason why a specific educational lens is needed is to resist competing agendas that threaten the integrity of education studies, and instead pose questions – and offer solutions – following the logic of education.

The presentation proposes a construction of intercultural education, beginning with an understanding of intercultural relations and then identifying conditions needed to consider these relations educational. The structure is as follows: 1) I outline an understanding of intercultural relations, challenging the idea of static, unified, and distinct 'cultures', but nevertheless using the term heuristically to advance the argument. 2) I present a framework of education to interpret intercultural relations as educational, emphasising the relational structure of education and questions of method, purpose, and justification. 3) I connect intercultural relations to this educational framework, with a focus on justification and the concept of *bildung*. In its classical form, *bildung* involves self-alienation into the world, followed by a return to oneself, enriched and transformed. Intercultural education is constructed through this lens, with the potential for self-alienation and *bildung*, if one also returns to oneself from alienation to complete the transformative journey. 4) I explore challenges to this construction from an educationalist perspective, focusing on sustainability discourses. For example, how can intercultural education respond to critiques that *bildung* overly emphasises human progress to the detriment of nature? How can justification through *bildung* be concurrent with the necessity of achieving sustainability?

This presentation is relevant for Nordic educational research because of the prominence of *intercultural education* – and its refashioning as *intercultural competence* – in Nordic educational discourses and curricula, therefore calling for conceptual clarity. It addresses the conference theme of *A Pedagogy of Hope* because it offers a hopeful construction of intercultural education, and it catalyses discussion about tensions to this construction such as concerning sustainability. These tensions, I will argue, are best addressed from an educationalist perspective that resists the myriad other agendas that so often dominate educational discourse.

Key words: intercultural education, intercultural relations, education, bildung, sustainability

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#### **Cultivating Resilience, Social Sustainability, and Social Justice: Empowering Child and Youth-Led Futures Through Education.**

Ole Henrik Hansen

Jonkoping University, Sweden. UiT Arctic University of Norway, ICRED, Norway

##### **1. Research Topic/Aim:**

This presentation investigates how education can cultivate resilience, social sustainability, and social justice to empower children and youth for a hopeful future. It emphasizes the importance of early childhood education and family empowerment in fostering holistic child development and explores how participatory research can engage youth in addressing social and environmental challenges.

## 2. Theoretical Framework:

The presentation is grounded in sociocultural learning theory, recognizing learning as a social process embedded in cultural contexts. It advocates for child and youth-centered approaches where they are active participants in shaping their educational experiences.

## 3. Methodology/Research Design:

The presentation utilizes participatory research methodologies, collaborating with young people as co-researchers to ensure their voices and perspectives are valued in the pursuit of social justice and sustainability.

## 4. Expected Results/Findings:

This research aims to demonstrate how participatory research and sociocultural learning principles can inform pedagogical practices that promote inclusivity, cultural responsiveness, and collaborative learning. It is expected that these approaches will foster resilience, a sense of belonging among diverse learners, and contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable future led by empowered and engaged children and youth.

## 5. Relevance to Nordic Educational Research:

This research aligns with Nordic educational values emphasizing democratic participation, equity, and social justice. By highlighting the importance of early childhood education, family empowerment, and youth-led participatory research, it contributes to hopeful trajectories in intercultural education within the Nordic context, fostering inclusive learning environments and empowering children and youth from diverse backgrounds to become active and engaged citizens.

### **Exploring Hopeful Trajectories: Integrating Aesthetic Teaching Methods with Diversity and Inclusion in Norway's LK20 Curriculum**

Susanne Sakariassen

UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

This ongoing research project critically examines how the new Norwegian national curriculum (LK20) integrates aesthetic teaching methods with themes of diversity and inclusion. The research question is as follows: *How does the LK20 curriculum integrate aesthetic teaching methods with its diversity and inclusion objectives?* This inquiry is prompted by critiques that Norwegian education has become overly theoretical, prioritizing core subjects like reading, mathematics, and science at the expense of broader educational goals such as teacher autonomy in addressing diversity through the arts. While some researchers and policymakers advocate for the educational benefits of aesthetic teaching methods in fostering inclusion and recognizing diversity in primary education (By et al., 2020; Karlsen & Bjørnstad, 2019; Kristoffersen, 2020), this study seeks to evaluate these claims through a document analysis of the LK20 policy texts (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017; Morgan, 2022). The analysis employs a framework derived from existing literature on diversity, inclusion and aesthetic learning theory (Emmoth, 2024; Graham, 2023; Sæverot et al., 2024). Preliminary findings suggest that while the curriculum explicitly connects aesthetic approaches with aspects of diversity, such as Sámi culture and the interdisciplinary theme of *democracy and citizenship*, there is a notable separation between how aesthetics and broader diversity issues are addressed. This study aims to explore these findings further, assessing the implications for educational practice and policy. Additionally, it seeks to illuminate the potential of the LK20 curriculum to foster hopeful trajectories for intercultural education, with more inclusive and culturally responsive educational environments through the integration of aesthetic teaching methods. The study is in the form of a policy analysis conducted within the Nordic

region and is also relevant to Nordic educational research because it includes exploration of Sámi perspectives in the Norwegian curriculum.

Key words: Aesthetic Teaching Methods, Diversity, Inclusion, Norwegian Curriculum (LK20), Educational Policy Analysis, Intercultural Education

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## **Making spaces for Sámi knowledge in education landscapes**

Anne Myrstad, Carola Kleemann

UiT – the Arctic University of Norway, Norway

In the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Norway (2023), the visibility of languages and culture, as well as those of other national minorities, is emphasized as central to the process of reconciliation, so that minority languages and cultures can be preserved and further developed. In recent decades, the visibility of Sámi language and culture has been strengthened and clarified in Norway's educational framework, from preschool and school to college and university levels. However, a universal tendency in the implementation of Indigenous topics in curricula shows that Indigenous narratives are often interpreted through Western frameworks, which limits and simplifies Indigenous representation. To reverse this trend this requires indigenization, where knowledge is rooted in Sámi perspectives. In such a context, the concept of intercultural education has limitations unless the concept is expanded to include relationships with place, landscape and nature.

Sámi culture and identity have traditionally been associated with lifestyles in rural areas. Various skills, attitudes, and values have emerged through the long-term use of different local landscapes, *meachit*, and local resources. Despite urbanization/migration, the connection to nature and landscape remains a cornerstone of Sámi culture (Valkonen & Valkonen, 2014). Nature and landscape form relational bonds between past and present; between people and experiences from previous generations; and between people and animals (Finbog, 2023; Kuokkonen, 2006). In a Sámi knowledge system, everything is interrelated (Porsanger, 2012), which is also reflected in

*àrbedeihtu*, - translated as traditional knowledge or the skill/ability to perform inherited knowledge. We aim to explore how inherited Sámi knowledge understandings, knowledge, and values, developed in relation to an urban place, can be maintained in the educational system.

In this presentation, we will shed light on how to create space for Sámi knowledge and values in the outdoor environment of preschools. Here, creating space has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers concretely to the design and layout of an outdoor area in a preschool, in an urban setting. In the collaborative project Nordlige hager ("Northern Gardens"), an outdoor environment has been designed with play equipment that clearly references Sami coastal culture and reflects the local cultural and natural landscape in Tromsø. Through a participatory research design, we followed the construction process together with children and staff in the preschool, and with the artist/architect and boat builder who created the play equipment. The children have been able to observe and document through drawings and by using GoPro cameras. On the other hand, it is about creating space for Sami knowledge systems and values within an educational system based on Western science. To weave these elements together, we will think with a braiding- and weaving metaphor, rooted in Indigenous epistemology (Atalay, 2020) We will argue, that the metaphor can provides room for diverse perspectives, cultural preservation, and cultural innovation simultaneously.



## Symposium: Creating hope across educational spaces – the power of practices of recognition in interpersonal relationships between pupils and teachers in Norway

Chair: Hilde Thyness, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Discussant: Osa Lundberg, Malmö University, Sweden

In an increasingly diverse and troubled world, making social inclusion and cohesion more fragile (UNESCO 2020), teachers in the Nordic countries have a unique opportunity to create hope in children and youth through fostering equitable quality education (UN 2015). To reach the ambitious goals embedded in the SDG 4, it is paramount that preschools and schools capitalize on the pupils' diverse backgrounds and modes of expression through practices of recognition. Research has shown, however, that there are gaps between educational policies at the macro level and practices at the local levels (e.g. Biesta 2015).

According to Honneth's (1995) three-stage approach to recognition, the individual's sense of belonging, welfare and opportunities for reaching their full potential require recognition at the interpersonal level, at the legal level and at the level of social esteem (Felder 2018). In this symposium, we zoom in on practices of recognition understood as social esteem at the interpersonal level between educators and pupils. By showcasing four very different contexts in Norway, we aim to illuminate how these practices can contribute bridging the gap between policies and practices. The overarching research question of the symposium is: *How can practices of recognition in interpersonal pupil-teacher relationships contribute to a pedagogy of hope?*

Through qualitative research designs applying diverse and innovative methods, the four symposium papers explore practices of recognition in interpersonal pupil-teacher relationships through different theoretical lenses: 1) Taking into account children's particular needs for various forms of expression in the transition from kindergarten to school, we will show how teachers provide space for children's inherent resources, analyzing observation and interview data; 2) In a reception class context, a framework for participation is used to operationalize the notion of recognition. Using student-centred methods, a resource-oriented pedagogy is identified; 3) We then present counter-narratives to the image of Islam as a threat to Norwegian values based on qualitative interviews with mosque pupils. The pupils' perspectives are analyzed through the concepts of safe space and communities of disagreement 4) Adopting the vantage point of English teachers in lower secondary school, we showcase inclusive assessment practices as a way to scaffold individual learning. Focus-group interviews and video observations of dialogic assessment conversations are analyzed through the lenses of sociocultural theories.

As this symposium assumes that practices of recognition are key for the development of inclusive, democratic and socially just societies, the findings will contribute to the Nordic pool of knowledge of what the perspective of hope requires from education.

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### **"Teachers made me more ... maybe like sure in myself": Newly arrived students' experiences of practices of recognition for participation and agency**

Kjersti Ree Skrefsrud

The University of Inland Norway, Norway

This paper explores how newly arrived migrant students experience the opportunities for participation in their first year as newcomers in reception classes in Norway. The aim of the paper is to examine, from an emic point of view, how resource-oriented teaching and practices of recognition in these learning spaces can potentially enhance the positioning for participation and agency for newly arrived students.

Methodologically, the paper builds on a qualitative year-long classroom study utilizing student-centered methods like drawing maps, student-led walks and interviews to examine the students' perspectives of their participation in different learning spaces. The students' views are also illustrated by field notes from observations. The sample consists of seven students in the age of ten to twelve, who are attending two reception classes in a primary school in a highly diverse urban context in Norway. Theoretically, the study draws on Lundy's perspective on children's participation (Lundy, 2007) and the concepts of empowerment (Cummins, 2001) and agency (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

The findings indicate that a resource-oriented pedagogy, when implemented in a safe learning environment where newly arrived students' competence and experiences are valued, can foster meaningful participation and agency in language learning for the students. Consequently, the experiences of agency in the reception classes may contribute to the students becoming active participants also in new and future learning spaces, such as the mainstream classroom. On this background, the paper argues that separating newly arrived students into reception classes does not necessarily lead to exclusion. Rather, providing a safe learning space where students experience agency and participation seems to strengthen their resilience, supporting their academic aspirations and creating hope for the future.

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### **Recognition and critical thinking within mosque education**

Anne Grethe Kjelling

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"But for me personally, I think it's quite fun to debate the things we disagree on" (Maryam, 14, about her mosque teacher)

In what ways can Muslim pupils participating in mosque education express themselves within this educational setting? Is it even compatible with secular, Norwegian values to participate in mosque education? In the public discourse in Norway, many would agree in questioning this, exemplified most lately by the Norwegian Pakistani politician Abid Raja, who recently published a book where he states that the rise of Islam is “threatening western values” (Raja, 2024). While previous research on mosque education describes the mosque as a safe space for developing a firm religious identity, there are a few traces of critical thinking within the mosques (Jacobsen 2011). In this paper I explore counter-narratives to this perspective, and to Raja’s statement, by investigating how young Muslim pupils participating in this educational setting experience the way in which they can express themselves.

The material applied in this paper consists of field notes from three different mosques in rural and urban cities of Norway, interviews with 14 young Muslims aged 13-24 participating in educational settings within these mosques, and four interviews with young Muslims recruited outside of the mosques, talking about their experiences in retrospect. Theoretically, I draw on the concepts of safe space (Jackson 2014) and communities of disagreement (Iversen 2019) when I investigate the experiences of the young Muslims.

My findings suggest that, even though some of pupils talked about mosques with little or no room for expressing themselves, most of my informants experienced that the mosques provided them with a safe space. Many of them emphasized the relationship to the mosque teacher, and a few of them also elaborated on how they could challenge the teacher and discuss controversial issues. These experiences illustrate that the ideal of critical thinking is present within mosques in Norway and is as such a counter-narrative to the image of Islam as a threat to Norwegian values. They also illuminate how the mosques are influenced by society at large, but also, and even more, by the individual pupils who bring their knowledge, ideals and practices from the public school to the mosque. A condition for this to happen is that the mosque teachers recognize and support the pupil’s resources.

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### **Creating Inclusive Assessment Practices: Recognizing students’ strengths and skills and creating opportunities for student participation in a diverse classroom**

Elin Løvnæseth Hauer

University of Inland, Norway

«All types of assessment should give the students some form of feeling of mastery. We should constantly try to look for what the students can do and should start there to be able to give the students some form of mastery» (English teacher grade 10).

The working title of this project is “Inclusive Assessment – Dialogic Assessment Conversations in the Subject English in Lower Secondary Schools”. Based on the sociocultural theories of learning this project examines how dialogic assessment is used in an interactive situation by English teachers in 5 different lower secondary schools in Norway. Furthermore, it is a study of how dialogic assessment is used as an assessment method in the mapping of the students’ current level of competence and skills; when used in teacher-student interactions where the

students are seen as active participants. This thinking builds on and extends Vygotsky's original arguments that dialogic practice has a central role in students' conceptual development (Egan, 2009).

The dialogic assessment conversations referred to in this project are the conversations where students and teachers engage in sustained shared thinking where all students are given the opportunity for development, mastery, learning, and well-being based on their circumstances. Using dynamic assessment practices and adjusting instructions based on student needs gives the teachers possibilities to promote individual learning and help students to reach their full potential with the help of mediators (Gibbons, 2002).

This is a qualitative study based on teacher focus-group interviews; video observations of dialogic assessment conversations followed by video-stimulated recall interviews with the participating teachers.

The findings discussed are; active student participation, empowerment through dialogic assessment conversations, challenges in implementation and "teaching to the test".

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#### **"You can't really expect them to be completely quiet": From kindergarten to classroom: Recognizing children's diverse expressions and musical ways of being in school's structured environment.**

Liv Anne Danbolt

INN University, Norway

This paper investigates how children from kindergarten adapt to and navigate the early experiences of transitioning into the school environment. The transition from kindergarten to school is a significant and transformative phase, considered the most challenging transition a child faces in their educational journey (Broström, 2009). The study explores how their existing social skills, routines, and learning strategies evolve as they face new expectations and adapt to a more structured, formal educational setting. Children's spontaneous expressions, including their innate musicality (Bjørkvold, 2005; Campbell, 2010), and their musical ways of being –

capturing music as an inherent part of how they express themselves and engage with their environment – are valuable assets that support children's need for movement and expression as they adapt to the classroom setting.

Methodologically, the study is based on observations conducted in both kindergarten and classroom settings, as well as interviews with ECEC teachers, primary school teachers, and the children themselves. The observations highlight how children respond to the changing expectations in everyday school life, while the interviews shed light on the teacher's and children's own perspectives on the transition. The study draws on theoretical perspectives on social scripts, focusing on how children adapt to and negotiate the expectations and roles presented to them as they transition from kindergarten to school.

The findings indicate that the school day introduces a more structured environment than kindergarten, often leaving little room for children's spontaneous, musical expressions such as vocalizations and physical movement. While these musical ways of being can seem disruptive in the structured classroom setting, the teachers expressed an understanding of children's need to move and to make sounds, acknowledging that complete stillness may not be realistic or supportive. At the same time, however, they emphasized the importance of these expressions occurring within certain boundaries, where they could maintain a sense of control over the classroom and the group dynamics. By providing space for these spontaneous expressions within the structured school environment, teachers support children in carrying forward the rich, expressive resources they bring from kindergarten. This approach can strengthen children's sense of identity affirmation and agency, integrating their inherent resources into the learning environment and fostering hope for the future.

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## Roundtable discussion: Empathy in the Age of AI: Rethinking Emotional Development in Education

Chair: Sergio Alexander, Texas Christian University, USA

This roundtable discussion will explore how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the way empathy and emotional development are fostered in educational environments. Traditionally, empathy has been learned and developed through human interaction, forming the foundation of emotional intelligence, social bonds, and ethical behavior. However, with AI becoming increasingly integrated into education—whether as virtual tutors, classroom assistants, or social media algorithms—students are encountering new dynamics in how they relate emotionally, not only to each other but to machines as well. This shift raises important questions about the future of emotional learning in education and the ethical role AI should play.

The central focus of this roundtable is to examine whether empathy can be effectively taught or experienced through human-AI interaction, and if so, how this may change the emotional landscape of education. Participants will explore how students' relationships with AI might either enhance or diminish their empathy toward peers and how educators can balance the benefits of AI with the need to nurture genuine human connections. The discussion will also address how gratitude and ethical responsibility toward AI can be cultivated in students, fostering a critical understanding of AI's role in their academic and social lives.

Key questions that will drive the discussion include:

- 1- Can human-AI interactions foster empathy, and if so, what are the ethical implications for education?
- 2- How might empathy toward AI influence students' ability to emotionally connect with one another?
- 3- What role does gratitude play in shaping responsible relationships with AI, and how can educators encourage critical reflection on AI's capabilities and limitations?

Participants will be engaged in a collaborative and interactive discussion, drawing on diverse perspectives from educators, researchers, and practitioners. The session will begin with a brief introduction to the core ideas surrounding AI and empathy in education, followed by ethical case studies and guided questions that encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences with technology in educational settings. By sharing insights, participants will consider how empathy-focused AI education can be thoughtfully integrated into curricula to promote emotional intelligence and social responsibility, while maintaining a balance between technological benefits and human-centered learning.

The roundtable will conclude with practical takeaways, offering educators strategies for navigating the complex relationship between AI and emotional development in the classroom. This discussion aligns with the broader goals of inclusivity, social justice, and sustainability in education, central to the conference theme of fostering hope and ethical responsibility in a technology-driven world.

## Roundtable discussion: Exploring Nordic approaches to AI in education

Chair: Linda Mannila, University of Helsinki, Finland

This roundtable discussion is organised by NordicEdAI, an interdisciplinary network exploring how artificial intelligence (AI) affects education in the Nordic countries. Due to AI's fast development and potential implications for education, there is a need for collaboration, dialogue, and the exchange of experiences to build deeper understanding, contribute to current knowledge and facilitate sound decision-making.

AI development is a global phenomenon, and many systems are being developed by international tech companies. However, policies, culture and values are essential in determining how and when solutions can and should be implemented. Therefore, the discussion on AI in education must be situated in local contexts that respect the Nordic culture and values. The Nordic countries share many similarities and values required for the responsible and ethical use and development of data and AI (Seehus, 2022), and a joint discussion on how to approach AI in education makes it possible to share experiences and ideas. It has the potential to guide both practice and policy-making across the borders.

The roundtable discussion will explore the Nordic approach to AI in education, covering two main perspectives: AI competencies (learning about AI) and applications of AI in teaching and learning (learning with AI). The conversation will span several educational levels, from K-12 through higher education, aiming to uncover potential best practices, opportunities, and challenges.

The session will begin with an introduction (5 minutes), followed by a series of lightning talks, each presenting a unique perspective on AI in education (20 minutes in total). The goal is to address key themes and questions related to Nordic educational traditions, cultures, and values.

Participants will then break into smaller groups for cross-country discussions (20 minutes) organised by educational level (primary, secondary, and higher education). These conversations will allow attendees to share insights, challenges, and approaches from their contexts, focusing on how to address AI in education at their respective levels.

The roundtable will conclude with a joint discussion (15 minutes), synthesising insights from each group to highlight common goals, distinctive approaches, and strengths and weaknesses within the Nordic region.

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## Symposium: A Part and Apart? Education and social inclusion of refugee children and youth in Iceland (ESRCI)

Chair: Susan Rafik Hama & Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Dicussant: Gry Paulgaard, The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

The research project, *A Part and Apart? Education and social inclusion of refugee children and youth in Iceland (ESRCI)* aims to critically explore the education and social inclusion of Syrian and Iraqi refugee children and youth at pre-, compulsory and upper secondary levels and the structures created for their learning and wellbeing in their social and educational settings. While there has been some research with refugee groups in Iceland, ESRCI is the first extensive research with these refugee groups.

The ESRCI research group includes eleven researchers with various backgrounds who bring diverse experiences to the project, including their own understanding of migration.

The project is directed by the overarching research question:

How do the education system and socio-cultural environments in Iceland contribute to the education and social inclusion of refugee children and youth?

The ESRCI project is comprised of the following four main pillars which cover the main areas of research and related research questions:

**PILLAR 1:** Education and inclusion of refugee children and youth. The aim of this pillar is to explore the opportunities and challenges that refugee children and youth and their teachers and principals experience in schools at different levels (pre-, compulsory and upper secondary).

**PILLAR 2:** Language learning and multilingualism at home and at school. The aim of pillar 2 is to explore the refugee children's and youth's language use, language learning and multilingualism.

**PILLAR 3:** Social relationships, identities and wellbeing. The aim of pillar 3 is to explore the wellbeing, social relationships and positions of refugee children and youth, identity processes and intersections.

**PILLAR 4:** Cultural and historical backgrounds of Syrian and Iraqi refugee children and youth. The aim of pillar 4 is to understand how the refugee children's and youth's cultural and historical backgrounds affect their experiences of education and society in Iceland.

In this symposium, four papers based on data from the ESRCI project will be presented, one from each pillar.

The ESRCI project involves Syrian and Iraqi refugee children and youth of different genders and their parents who have diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, altogether 30 families in eleven municipalities in Iceland where they were invited to settle when they arrived in Iceland. Furthermore, the ESRCI project involves the children's teachers, principals and, where relevant, school counsellors in schools at pre-, compulsory, and upper secondary levels, municipality persons, social services and NGOs in their communities. The municipalities are located in all areas of Iceland. They vary in size and consist of urban, farming and fishing communities.

Multiple case studies were conducted with quota refugee children and youth as well as their parents, teachers, principals and municipality persons, social services and NGOs. Semi-structured in-depth and focus group interviews



were used for data collection. Furthermore, child friendly, emancipatory approaches were used for data collection, including language portraits and value cards.

## **Syrian and Iraqi Children and Youth Language Use, Language Learning and Multilingualism in Icelandic Social and Educational Settings**

Zulaia Johnston da Cruz, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir

University of Iceland, Iceland

**Purpose:** The research aims to examine the language use, learning, and multilingualism of Syrian and Iraqi youth in Iceland from their perspectives. The focus will be on their use and learning of Icelandic and heritage language/s within educational settings, their daily lives, and at home. Additionally, the research aims to explore how schools use their linguistic resources and support their linguistic needs.

**Framework:** This study is guided by a theoretical framework focused on critical multilingual awareness, multilingual practices, and heritage language learning. Scholars such as Burns (2008) and Cummins (2004) emphasize that language proficiency can be a critical marker for inclusion, particularly in schools where awareness and acknowledgment of language diversity play a crucial role. Expanding this notion, Banks (2009), and Prasad and Lory (2020) argue for the necessity of moving beyond monolingual pedagogies to promote language and cultural diversity and equity in schools. They advocate for creating of collaborative environments where students can utilize their heritage language alongside the majority language, where family and community engagement are welcome to provide systematic support for language learning and identity development through meaningful home and school collaboration.

**Methodology:** This is a qualitative research study designed to understand the participants' perspectives, employing a multiple case study method, to demonstrate consistent patterns identified across cases (Stake, 2005). The research utilizes semi-structured interviews and language portraits, to explore participants' personal lived experiences. The participants are twenty children and youth ages 12 to 24 of different genders from Syria and Iraq who resettled in Iceland with their families in 2015-2019. These participants reside in eleven different municipalities across Iceland. The study also involves five teachers who taught or are currently instructing these students in regions, as well as eleven parents of these youths.

The expected results of the research are to reveal the complexities of Icelandic language learning, heritage language maintenance, and social and academic inclusion among youth with refugee backgrounds in Iceland. So far, preliminary findings suggest that education, such as inclusion, peer interactions, and teaching practices, significantly influence these children's well-being and motivation to learn. Despite encountering language learning challenges when learning Icelandic these youth show remarkable progress and active social engagement in school settings. This study contributes to Nordic educational research by emphasizing the critical need for inclusive and equitable practices that uphold the values of diversity, sustainability, and social justice.

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### **In between wor(l)ds – Educational aspirations and experiences of refugee children and youth in Iceland's education system and socio-cultural environment.**

Hrafnhildur Kvaran<sup>1</sup>, Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Iceland, Iceland. <sup>2</sup>University of Akureyri, Iceland

Refugee children and youth represent a particularly vulnerable group within host country education systems, necessitating specialized approaches to meet their unique needs effectively. Despite principles of equal access to education and individualized learning for all, students from migrant, minority or non-dominant language backgrounds often experience marginalization, devaluation and being positioned within a deficit framework with their strengths and abilities overlooked (Block et al., 2014; May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Recent research in Iceland has shown that schools frequently lack resources to address the diverse challenges refugee students face, and educators often feel ill-equipped to support this group (Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014; Gunnþórsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2020; Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2023).

This research, conducted under Pillar 1 of the ESRCI project: *Education and inclusion of refugee children and youth*, seeks to critically analyse the educational experiences, aspirations, and support systems for refugee children and youth in Iceland. This part of the research focuses on analysing interviews with refugee youth, aged 13 and older, who are currently enrolled in compulsory and upper secondary schools or have past experience of attending these schools. The data analysis process is ongoing. Using thematic analysis, we examine how these students' educational goals, as perceived by themselves, are supported in their social and educational environments. Findings are interpreted and discussed drawing on social justice theories and critical multiculturalism frameworks.

Preliminary findings indicate that, beyond the more general challenges of resettlement, participants experience conflicting expectations, from family and social and educational environments. They are expected by their family to perform well academically and integrate into mainstream culture while also preserving their cultural heritage, language and traditions. Concurrently, they face societal pressure to adapt to their new socio-cultural and educational environments while being continually reminded of their different background, often requiring them to take on roles as cultural informants. Initial analysis also suggests that teacher support and expectations may play a significant role in shaping refugee students' academic success and adaptation.

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## **Institutional Trust and Resettled Refugees from Syria and Iraq in Iceland: A Cross-Cultural Perspective Between Higher and Lower Trust Societies**

Lara Hoffmann<sup>1</sup>, Magnús T. Bernhardsson<sup>2,1</sup>

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Scholars have long been interested in people's trust in educational, political, and social institutions and its consequences for social cohesion (Putnam, 2000). Trust as a concept is so integral to the Nordic region that it has been called the "Nordic Gold" (Andreasson, 2017). Through increasing migration to the Nordic countries, institutions, among them educational institutions, are faced with the task of identifying ways to bridge newcomers and local communities, processes inevitably involving trust-building. Prior studies on resettled refugees, the focus of this presentation, identify as a key theme the need to rebuild lost trust (Essex et al., 2021). We contribute to the literature on institutional trust among resettled refugees with a study on educational institutions and Syrian and Iraqi families in a high trust society, applying a context-dependent perspective by highlighting varied cultural backgrounds and their implications for trust. We address the research questions: How does trust (macro and micro) manifest itself in relationships and encounters of resettled refugees from Syria and Iraq in Icelandic society? How can educational institutions improve their communication and work practices to foster and develop trust?

We draw on interviews-data collected among refugee families (N=50) and school staff (N=30) in 2023 and 2024. We shed light on the experiences and trust of resettled refugees from Syria and Iraq, considering their cultural backgrounds. Drawing on studies on trust in the Nordic Countries (Andreasson, 2017) and trust in the Middle East (Spierings, 2019) provides valuable background information because refugees in the Middle East generally express lower levels of trust than inhabitants in the Nordic countries as some people fleeing war and climate disaster have lost trust and faith in their society's future (Essex et al., 2021). We differentiate between varied forms of trust, as studies suggest that applying commonly used concepts of trust might not be sufficient for understanding the Middle Eastern context (Spierings, 2019).

While trust levels are overall high, they vary between Icelanders and refugees, with the latter experiencing mistrust toward authorities, enhanced by fear and insufficient communication. Cultural mediators, community members or interpreters, play a crucial role. Professionalization and availability are inconsistent, particularly in small or rural communities where professional-community relationships are more personal. The knowledge of staff members, also recognizing newcomers' knowledge and experiences, might help build trust.

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## **Transcultural Journeys: Unveiling Hybrid Identities and Superdiversity Among Young Quota Refugees in Iceland**

Muhammed Emin Kizilkaya, Guðbjörg Ottósdóttir, Eyrún María Rúnarsdóttir

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The purpose of this PhD study, part of the ESRCI project, is to examine how Syrian and Iraqi refugee children, resettled in Iceland between 2015 and 2019, navigate multiple and evolving identities as they build relationships and develop a sense of belonging in a new environment. Refugee youth face distinct challenges, and effective school systems play a critical role in their integration. Although Icelandic research highlights the importance of inclusive frameworks, there is a gap in studies examining the educational and socialization experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Educational approaches must address both the strengths and challenges in children's lives—such as family, school, peers, and community—in order to support their success. The concept of well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, is integral to this process (Ungar, 2021; Roffey, 2019).

This study examines identity formation, social relationships, and transcultural experiences among refugee youth using a qualitative mixed-methods approach, engaging 20 youth participants of mixed genders, 11 parents, and 5 teachers. Data collection involves interviews, walk-and-talk sessions, and language portraiting, exploring language use, cultural practices, and integration experiences. The study draws on theories of hybrid identity (Welsch, 1999), transculturality, and superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007), and integrates Icelandic research on the role of socialization in identity formation (Rúnarsdóttir, 2024). Through these theoretical lenses, the study investigates how refugee youth construct and negotiate their identities within a superdiverse and multidimensional Icelandic society. The concept of multidimensional belonging (Johansen & Puroila, 2021) further aids in understanding how refugee youth navigate complex social, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to form their sense of identity and community. Additionally, the mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2016) and research on the superdiverse social media (Veronis et al., 2018) provide insights into how digital platforms shape hybrid identities and facilitate transcultural exchanges.

Preliminary findings suggest that the identities of Iraqi and Syrian youth in Iceland are shaped by their linguistic and cultural backgrounds as they adapt to Icelandic society. This adaptation leads to a complex process of hybrid identity formation, blending cultural influences from their home countries with Icelandic norms. These identities shift across transcultural and superdiverse spheres, encompassing interactions within home, school, broader society, and online spaces. Social media plays a pivotal role in maintaining cultural ties and fostering transcultural interactions, enabling these youth to adopt multiple, flexible identities in different settings. Their sense of belonging and identity is reinforced through cultural practices and peer interactions, both in-person and online. These findings emphasize the importance of longitudinal studies and educational frameworks to support refugee integration and address diverse student needs.

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by emphasizing the importance of inclusive, culturally responsive frameworks that address refugee youth needs. It highlights how these frameworks can foster inclusivity and well-being, supporting long-term success in a superdiverse society. It also calls for longitudinal studies to track changes in youth identities over time and inform policies for effective refugee integration.

## **Symposium: Nordic languages as second languages: Rethinking policy and practice in the education of multilingual students in the Nordic countries - PART 1**

Chairs: Line Møller Daugaard, VIA University College, Denmark & Finn Aarsæther, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Discussants: Angela De Britos & Clare Mouat, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

In recent years, the Nordic countries have received large numbers of migrants as a result of forced and voluntary migration, leading to a great diversity of engagement with Nordic languages as second languages. Statistics reveal that education for migrant learners remains complex, both within and beyond the Nordic countries. More attention, exploration, and potentially a new vision of policy and practice are urgently needed to meet the needs of multilingual students, including newly arrived migrants, in the Nordic countries.

These concerns have been the impetus for the establishment of the NORDPLUS network Nordic Languages as Second Languages, from which this symposium springs. In this symposium, we present reflections and findings from ongoing work with the aim of also reaching out to a broader Nordic research audience in order to strengthen dialogue, reflection, and mutual learning as part of the development of our broader research.

The symposium brings together perspectives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, but also Scotland through the voices of the discussants. The symposium's paper presentations foreground cases from the different countries, highlighting the dilemmas and potentials of education of multilingual students in the Nordic countries. The overall research relates primarily to multilingualism and second language teaching-learning, but important topics around student well-being, multicultural education, and social justice are also included.

In the presentations, we explore formal educational settings from primary schooling to adult education and teacher education, in addition to non-mainstream learning spaces such as language centers and family settings. The symposium includes the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, and analyses of curricula. Together, the presentations invite investigations into differences and similarities through a cross-Nordic lens. A central aim is to produce new research-based knowledge to improve quality in the education of multilingual learners.

The symposium is organized in two segments. Part 1 contains a brief introduction by the organizers, and five individual paper presentations. Part 2 contains three paper presentations, a reflective presentation by the discussants, and ample time for the audience to engage in dialogue. As a whole, the symposium strives to establish a productive space for rethinking policy and practice in the education of multilingual students across the Nordic countries.

### **Children's views on their multilingualism and linguistic identities through language portraits**

Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, Renata Emilsson Peskova, Kriselle Suson

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With a small total population of less than 400,000, changing demographics as a result of migration have had an impact on Icelandic society as well as the education system.

Nearly 30% of pupils in compulsory schools have a foreign background [or have other heritage languages] in 2023 (Statistics Iceland, 2024).

This paper draws on data from the qualitative research project, *Language policies and practices of diverse immigrant families in Icelandic and their implications for education* (LPP) which aimed to critically explore the family language policies of 16 different immigrant families with diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds living in four different municipalities.

The aim of the paper is to explore the views of 10 children in these families on their bi- or multilingualism and their linguistic identities through the lens of language portraits (Dressler, 2014).

The theoretical framework includes language agency of children and their multilingual development (Said & Hua, 2017). According to Lanza (2007), children should be viewed as active social agents who contribute to adult society, while at the same time producing their own culture. Research has shown that children are active participants in creating their own knowledge – and have the ability to express themselves about their views on language learning and language policy (Palviainen & Curdt-Christiansen, 2022).

Data was collected in 2022 and 2023 in semi-structured interviews with altogether 10 children (age 13-16) about their multilingualism and linguistic repertoire, in addition to a dialogue with them about their language portraits where they expressed their views on their languages and language preferences. Language portraits and interviews were searched for markers/children's views and expressions of the categories of competence, affiliation, and inheritance (Dressler, 2014), as well as their perceived use of the languages in the future (Emilsson-Peskova, 2023).

The findings indicate that the children have clear ideas about their languages and have preferences regarding each of these. They make decisions about what languages they use and in what contexts, to the degree that circumstances and their competence in the languages allow.

The main value of the paper is providing insight into children's agency in utilizing their multilingualism and negotiating their linguistic identities in different settings and their agency in developing family language policies. Examples of these multilingual children's language use and preferences can lead to rethinking the support that the maintenance of children's active bi- and multilingualism requires and will provide important information for in schools in Iceland as well as in other Nordic countries on how to support children's active bi- and multilingualism.

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## Danish as a Second Language in the Primary and Lower Secondary School in Denmark – a subject or not?

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Drawing on an ongoing PhD project, this presentation unfolds as a discussion of Danish as a second language (DSA) in the Danish primary and lower secondary school in a subject didactic perspective. Is DSA a subject, a so-called 'special subject area' or something third?

In Danish school legislation, it is stated that 'To the extent necessary, teaching in Danish as a second language is given to bilingual children in primary school' (LBK nr 989 af 27/08/2024, §5 subsection 6, my translation). Here DSA

is referred to as 'teaching'. In the official curriculum, Common Objectives [Fælles Mål], it is characterized as a 'subject' offered to bilingual children who have a need for linguistic support in Danish (BEK nr 699 af 07/06/2023, my translation). On [www.emu.dk](http://www.emu.dk) – a ministry-run platform targeted towards professionals and school managers – DSA is instead characterized as a 'special subject area' [et særligt fagområde] having two sets of Common Objectives (DSA basic and DSA supplementary).

The different terms employed in official policy documents illustrate some of the complexity concerning DSA in the Danish primary and lower secondary school. Drawing on subject didactic theory (Gundem 1997; Nielsen 2007; Krogh & Nielsen 2011), I will in the presentation discuss how – if at all – DSA theoretically can be understood as a subject. The main method used is document analysis (Mik-Meyer 2005). As a part of the document analysis, I will also draw on some supplementary empirical material from interviews with school administrators, managers and teachers, all working with DSA.

In relation to the symposium, this presentation will discuss the results in a post-migrant perspective (Foroutan 2019; Schramm et al. 2019) as a possible way to rethink policy and practice of second language instruction in primary and lower secondary schools in a Nordic perspective.

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#### Looking for multilingual pedagogies

Helene Fulland, Finn Aarsæther

OsloMet, Norway

This paper is based on data from a study investigating education of newly arrived migrant students in a separate class, at a lower secondary school in Norway during the school year 2022/23. One of the dimensions analyzed is the school's and teachers' approach to the use of the students' different first languages, at the attitudinal level as well as at the pedagogical level.

A prominent finding is that while teachers and management express positive attitudes towards multilingual practices, and even encourage them, the strategy behind the use of multilingual pedagogies appears vague, and even hard to discover in our data. When analyzed according to the holistic model for multilingualism in education carved out by Duarte and Günther-van der Meij (2018), the school mainly positions itself at the symbolic level,

where recognition and valorization of the students' first languages are described as the main functions. The more committing levels in this model, the scaffolding function and the epistemological function, do not appear systematic and planned in our context.

This has generated the following questions: what characterizes teachers' attempts to facilitate multilingual learning activities, and what would have enhanced teachers' agency to enact multilingual pedagogies more systematically?

Empirically, we shed light on these questions by analyzing notes from classroom observations in selected sessions, combined with data from interviews with the teachers who led the teaching activities. Theoretically, we relate to current directions and discussions within the translanguaging framework (Cummins, 2021; 2014; MacSwan, 2017). We put specific emphasize on pedagogical translanguaging (e.g. Duarte and Günther-van der Meij, 2018; 2020; Fang, Zhang and Sah, 2022), including the claimed lack of exploration of the pedagogical potential of translanguaging practices (Conteh, 2018) and teachers' claims that the goal of translanguaging is too philosophical and lacks a clear definition in terms of pedagogical tools (Ticheloven et al. 2019).

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### **Ukrainian students' affordances for participation viewed through the eyes of their teachers and other school professionals – a perspective of the project Ukrainian Children in Danish Schools.**

Line Krogager Andersen<sup>1</sup>, Rikke Brown<sup>2</sup>, Søren Sindberg Jensen<sup>3</sup>, Karoline Lund Nielsen<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UCL Professionshøjskole, Denmark. <sup>2</sup>Professionshøjskolen Absalon, Denmark. <sup>3</sup>University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

This paper examines how teachers, language assistants and other professionals involved in the reception of Ukrainian students in Danish schools experienced the students' affordances for participation in school practices. Teachers' and other school professionals' perception of the students and their personal, academic, linguistic and cultural resources have a strong impact on the affordances for participation offered to them, which is why we consider this topic worthy of inquiry.



In our study, we draw on prior research on linguistic identity (Norton Peirce, 1995) and multilingualism underscoring the importance of acknowledging students' full linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2012) for their linguistic wellbeing and the importance of investment for second language learning (Ushioda, 2009). Furthermore, we are interested in how the school professionals perceive the transnational (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) positionality (Anthias 2002) of the Ukrainian children

The study draws on the *Ukrainian Children in Danish Schools* data set which includes 11 interviews with representatives from municipalities and school management, teachers and other school professions and students, field notes from classroom observation and art-based research activities in 3 classrooms over a period of 10 months. We zoom in specifically on data extracts where teachers and other school professionals express their views on the students' resources and compare these to our observations of the affordances for participation offered to these students in the classroom and other school settings, combining thematic content analysis and positioning analysis.

The arrival of the Ukrainian immigrants in 2022 was a shock to many Nordic countries, but also brought about some changes of the approach to immigrant reception, requiring Danish municipalities and school professionals to rethink their approach. This extraordinary context is a rich point for examining the reception practices of Nordic schools, casting a light on the broader societal dynamics surrounding immigration policies and how transnational students are affected by this.

Based on our preliminary analyses, we expect to see some correlations between perceptions of students' resources and the affordances offered to them in classrooms and hope to offer some perspectives on how a resource-oriented approach to students with transnational backgrounds might enhance the affordances for participation offered to them.

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### **Ukrainian youth building sustainable futures on flee**

Minna Suni, Sanna Mustonen

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

The war launched by Russia in Ukraine in 2022 brought many Ukrainian pupils and students to Finland at various levels of education. The time of uncertainty has raised questions regarding social and cultural sustainability: How to strengthen students' hope for the future? How to support their language learning, engagement and belonging while many of them also wish to return home? In this presentation we will focus on the 16+ aged Ukrainian students who are studying in a transitional phase between comprehensive school and secondary education.

The ethnographic data to be focused on has been collected in two educational institutions, and it includes observation fieldnotes from Finnish as a second language lessons and narrative interviews with the students and their teachers. A nexus analytical approach (Scollon & Scollon 2003) will be applied to bring together the personal life histories, situated discourses and interaction patterns and practices present in the settings where students and teachers touch upon the questions of belonging, learning, inclusion or exclusion, for example. The data comes from the ongoing project Language, engagement and belonging: Ukrainians accessing and transforming rural school and work communities (2023-2027).

Based on our analysis, teachers are reflecting on how to genuinely value their students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and how to encounter and support those who have arrived from the conflict area and are in a need of strong socio-emotional support while also facing a very different kind of learning culture in Finland. They also need to consider how to promote social networking and engagement into the local communities. Furthermore, in line with the curricula, studies in Finnish language should also strengthen the transversal competencies such as multiliteracies, learning to learn, critical thinking, participation, active citizenship, building sustainable future, and cultural collaboration. These are the skills that every student will need regardless of whether they leave or stay. These competences will also promote the rebuilding of the Ukrainian school; such aspects of learning have only recently been introduced in the school reform and official policies of the Ukrainian educational system.

Our study illustrates how teachers support students' transversal competencies and actively promote engagement in learning by bringing complex, timely themes into the classroom already at the early stages of second language development. This presupposes conscious investment in creating safe learning environments, and readiness to set high expectations for all. However, rather than offering ready-made answers, we aim to recognize and introduce some relevant dimensions of social and cultural sustainability to be taken into account in language pedagogy in the era of increasing uncertainty.

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## **Symposium: Nordic languages as second languages: Rethinking policy and practice in the education of multilingual students in the Nordic countries - PART 2**

Chairs: Line Møller Daugaard, VIA University College, Denmark & Finn Aarsæther, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Discussants: Angela De Britos & Clare Mouat, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

In recent years, the Nordic countries have received large numbers of migrants as a result of forced and voluntary migration, leading to a great diversity of engagement with Nordic languages as second languages. Statistics reveal that education for migrant learners remains complex, both within and beyond the Nordic countries. More attention, exploration, and potentially a new vision of policy and practice are urgently needed to meet the needs of multilingual students, including newly arrived migrants, in the Nordic countries.

These concerns have been the impetus for the establishment of the NORDPLUS network Nordic Languages as Second Languages, from which this symposium springs. In this symposium, we present reflections and findings from ongoing work with the aim of also reaching out to a broader Nordic research audience in order to strengthen dialogue, reflection, and mutual learning as part of the development of our broader research.

The symposium brings together perspectives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, but also Scotland through the voices of the discussants. The symposium's paper presentations foreground cases from the different countries, highlighting the dilemmas and potentials of education of multilingual students in the Nordic countries. The overall research relates primarily to multilingualism and second language teaching-learning, but important topics around student well-being, multicultural education, and social justice are also included.

In the presentations, we explore formal educational settings from primary schooling to adult education and teacher education, in addition to non-mainstream learning spaces such as language centers and family settings. The symposium includes the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, and analyses of curricula. Together, the presentations invite investigations into differences and similarities through a cross-Nordic lens. A central aim is to produce new research-based knowledge to improve quality in the education of multilingual learners.

The symposium is organized in two segments. Part 1 contains a brief introduction by the organizers, and five individual paper presentations. Part 2 contains three paper presentations, a reflective presentation by the discussants, and ample time for the audience to engage in dialogue. As a whole, the symposium strives to establish a productive space for rethinking policy and practice in the education of multilingual students across the Nordic countries.

## Using music as a tool for learning Swedish as a second language. Experiences of teachers in adult language education

Ulrika Jepson Wigg, Anna Ehrlin

Mälardalen University, Sweden

### 1. Research topic/aim

This presentation aims to contribute knowledge about teachers' experiences of using music activities in supporting second language development among adult students. In Sweden, adult migrants are offered education in *Swedish as second language education for migrant adults* (SFI). Research has shown that music activities are useful tools in teaching second language learners and increases students' well-being (Valtersson, 2019; Crawford, 2020; Lehtinen-Schnabel, 2023). Experiences of music have also been shown to create community and belonging (Gabrielsson, 2011) and by using music as a tool in teaching, opportunities for intercultural meetings can be created between people (Crooke., et.al. 2024).

### 2. Theoretical framework

Small's (1998) concept of "musicking" forms the basis of the presentation, and points to the active nature of musical engagement and shifts the focus from music as a product to music as a process. Small argues that "musicking" is a more inclusive term that encompasses a wide range of activities related to music. This perspective allows for the recognition that everyone, regardless of their level of musical training can be involved in "musicking" in their own way. It acknowledges that music is a part of everyday life for people across various cultures and backgrounds. "Musicking" also promotes the idea of inclusivity and diversity in music.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The empirical material is based on observations of training sessions and development group discussions. A group of seven teachers took part in a professional development endeavour in which they worked with expanding their use of music in teaching Swedish as a second language to adult students. The school where the teachers work had some music material aimed especially at adults that they used, but the teachers wanted to develop their methods and become more comfortable in using music in their teaching. A music pedagogue was contracted for the training. There were four sessions with the music pedagogue and in addition three sessions where the teachers reflected together.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The tentative results from the study show that although the teachers had a positive outlook on using music as teaching methods, using these methods isn't uncomplicated. The obstacles the teachers experienced were, for example, feeling uncertain of their own abilities to use different music activities in teaching and handling potential resistance from the students. Regardless of the level of previous schooling, students sometimes feel infantilized by singing and doing rhymes. The benefits were among other things that the students became more confident in speaking Swedish, and that it made the teaching setting more relaxed.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Music has been found to be a pathway to inclusion, and a useful tool for language learning when teaching younger students and in informal settings. We maintain that rethinking the role of music in teaching Nordic languages as second languages for adults is vital and the results are of relevance to Nordic educational research on language development and inclusion.

## Social participation and competence in Icelandic among students in Icelandic language centers in Reykjavík

Renata Emilsson Pesková<sup>1</sup>, Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir<sup>2</sup>, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir<sup>1</sup>, Susan Rafik Hama<sup>1</sup>

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The reception of newly arrived students is a recognized challenge in the Nordic countries (Helakorpi et al., 2023). This research explores the response of the municipality of Reykjavík to the growing need to attend to the vulnerable group of newly-arrived students. The aim of the presented research project is to investigate how four Icelandic language centers (ILC), established recently by the City of Reykjavík, prepare students for learning in compulsory schools, and whether the work of these programs contributes to students' inclusion, learning and participation in school communities and leisure activities. The ICLs are situated in four compulsory schools in Reykjavík, and they are intended for newly-arrived students in 5th-10th grades from all neighborhood schools. Students stay for 3-9 months until they reach competence level 1 in Icelandic as a second language (Ministry of Education and Children, 2024). The project is based on theories of social justice and inclusion (Larsen et al., 2019) and grounded in children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, n.d.).

Methodology is qualitative and builds on visits to schools and on semi-structured interviews taken in autumn 2024 with teachers in the ILCs, project managers, school principals in schools that house ILCs, as well as teachers and school principals in students' home schools where the students are registered and attend classes in the afternoons. The data analysis is ongoing, but the results will be discussed with respect to 1) stakeholders' management of the ILCs, 2) students' achievement of competencies in the Icelandic language and 3) how the ILCs affect students' social connections and participation. ILCs seem to provide the necessary space to bring students to the first competence level in Icelandic (Ministry of Education and Children, 2024) yet students' inclusion in their home schools while they study in ILCs, and their continuous development and support in Icelandic learning after they graduate from ILCs seem to need a more systematic approach.

The implementation of Icelandic language teaching and support for this student group varies across municipalities and schools, making it important to research which solutions yield the best results so that the students have equitable opportunities in a democratic society. As an example of a developing good practice, ILCs that adequately combine language, study, and social goals for newly-arrived students, reflect the values of social justice anchored in policies of the Nordic countries. Consequently, this research has implications for policy makers on municipality and national level also beyond Iceland.

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## **The subject Danish as a second language in teacher education: Decolonising multilingualism by bringing Southern epistemologies to Nordic classrooms**

Line Møller Daugaard

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Danish as a second language occupies an unstable position in Danish teacher education. This is reflected in a highly turbulent history in the teacher education curriculum: Introduced as elective subject on a trial basis in 2001, made permanent in 2007 (36 ECTS), abolished as elective subject and replaced by a strongly diminished obligatory short course (10 ECTS) in 2013, and reintroduced as both elective subject (35 ECTS) and a further diminished obligatory short course (5 ECTS) in 2023. The ever-changing development in curricular form has been accompanied by constant negotiation of what counts as appropriate content within the field of Danish as a second language in teacher education (cf. Jagenreuter, 2022; Benediktsson, 2024).

The empirical point of departure for this paper presentation is Danish as a second language as a curricular configuration at a particular time and space; namely the obligatory short course entitled Teaching multilingual students (10 ECTS, 2013 reform). The presentation reports on a small-scale teaching experiment conducted in a specific class of student teachers in a Danish teacher education institution. The teaching experiment is part of a larger research collaboration on multilingual learning materials across the global South and North, and in the teaching experiment, Danish student teachers are introduced to the innovative South African learning material iSayensi Yethu, featuring hybrid combinations of English and IsiXhosa and originally developed for use in science teaching in Grade 4 in primary schools in Cape Town (Guzula & Tyler, forthcoming). The empirical material from the teaching experiment in Danish teacher education involves multimodal and multilingual digital student texts and audio-recordings of classroom conversation.

The presentation is anchored in a critical sociolinguistic approach to multilingualism (Blommaert, 2010), and the analysis of the empirical material from the small-scale teaching experiment is inspired by theories of the decoloniality of language (ibid.). Preliminary analysis shows that knowledge about multilingualism produced in the global South can be positioned as authoritative in a Nordic teacher education context. The presentation thus aims to contribute to the rethinking of Nordic languages as second languages by exploring potentials for decolonising multilingualism by bringing Southern epistemologies to Nordic classrooms within the context of teacher education.

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## Symposium: RECLAIMING THE PUBLICNESS OF EDUCATION

Chairs: Carl Anders Säfström, Department of Education/CPEP, Ireland & Elisabet Langmann, Department of Education, Södertörn University, Sweden

Chairs: Birgit Schaffar-Kronqvist, Department of Education, Finland & Dion Russelbaek-Hansen, Department of Design, Media and Educational Science, Denmark

This symposium will discuss education's individualisation, privatisation, and capitalisation over the last decades, which has removed it from its defining characteristics and turned it into a significant force of authoritarian capitalism.

The discussion mainly concerns public education; we will discuss what is public *in* education rather than what is public *about* education. The symposium will take its starting point with a standard definition of public education: that it is publicly financed, democratically controlled and for everyone. However, as we will develop in four different papers, such a definition can be understood as being about *external* expectations on education rather than saying something fundamental about what education *is* or what 'public' means within the tradition of educational thought. Instead, the symposium will develop different aspects of what will be called 'the publicness of education' and, as such, move beyond traditional definitions of public education.

The symposium will take issue with late technological developments in education since they all tend to either empty education of any content, focusing on process and magnifying it to cover all of its reaches, or tend only to concern external expectations, often understood in terms of outcomes and profit. Against such a power grab, this symposium will seek to reclaim the publicness of education and, in doing so, will seek to reclaim education itself. The papers represent what traditionally are considered different subdisciplines within educational thought. Acknowledging the importance of framing educational issues in multiple ways, the symposium will show how they all are rooted in the tradition of educational thought rather than being objects for those subdisciplines' desires. We have invited two scholars to respond, representing different research fields. With the discussion, we hope to tap into the conversation on the publicness of education in the Nordic countries and elsewhere, mainly since those nations once were proud examples of public education.

### THE PUBLICNESS OF EDUCATION: TO STAY IN THE WORLD WITH OTHERS

Carl Anders Säfström

Department of Education\_CPEP, Maynooth University, Ireland

The idea that education is meant to fulfil goals outside itself motivates education as a significant force for all with ambitions to change society in its image. The neoliberal wave that has washed over us simply moved this ambition from a 'public' sphere into a 'private' sphere, accentuating individualisation, competition and profit for education owners and customers while sharing this fundamental idea: Education is to create a future which is not here, and that future is defined by the powers directing education from the 'outside', either 'the market', and/or 'the state'. Therefore, such an idea also empties education of its force from within, or, as Masschelein and Simons (2013) say, 'taming' education. However, as will be argued in this paper, the shift from 'public' to 'private' tends to be more of

a change in degree than a fundamentally different understanding of what education *is*. Rather than starting with the Platonian idea that education is to perfect the state or the market by perfecting the individual, this contribution will, as did the Sophists, begin in the everydayness of our shared lives, involving people, animals, plants, clouds, and mountains, engaged in the mixture of a world. With homage to John Dewey, this paper will ask us to ‘stop, look and listen’ to pay full attention to the present moment we share with others in this world at precisely this moment and to argue that the publicness of education emanates from this moment. The paper will show that there is nothing outside, beyond, above or against the moment of education. It is *autotelic*. Instead, the practice of teaching within the moment of education, the paper will conclude, is not to guide towards a goal outside education, defined as such from powers directing education, but guides the unfolding of the present and, therefore, connects people, animals, plants mountains and clouds across difference.

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## Commodification of public education for the global market: Finnish International Schools

Maija Salokangas, Nika Maglaperidze

Maynooth University, Ireland

This paper draws on an empirical project focussing on the growth of Finnish international schools around the world, a phenomenon that can be understood within the broader context of global neo-colonialism, where educational models flow from the West to "the Rest" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). These predominantly privately run schools have entered into various agreements with private and semi-private Finnish entities (Seppänen et al. 2020), which serve to commodify the internationally acclaimed Finnish public education including its: curriculum, teaching staff, teaching materials, and arguably pedagogical approaches and export them to these diverse political cultural and social contexts (Seppänen et al. 2023).

Through case studies of two schools—one in South Asia and the other in Eastern Europe—this paper seeks to understand how Finnish public education is commodified in these export efforts. Drawing on ethnographic and interview data, the paper explores stakeholder perceptions of how Finnish public education travels to different national, cultural, social, and political contexts. Our analysis is guided by postcolonial and curriculum theories, helping to cast light on whose knowledge is prioritised in curriculum-making and whose is marginalised or silenced, raising questions about whether these export efforts constitute a form of educational imperialism. Bernstein’s (2004) concepts of classification and framing provide a lens to understand the tensions between imported Finnish curricula and local adaptations, particularly in relation to the paradox where values like publicness and equity are marketed as aspirational, yet the commodification of the curriculum simultaneously foregrounds exclusivity.

Our findings so far indicate that what is deemed Finnish, and how these arguably Finnish approaches travel to these varied contexts differs from school to school. Our participants also report of considerable tensions in most aspects of the day-to-day school life. These observations underscore the need to better understand the international school sector’s role in the erosion of the publicness of education, as the commodification of Finnish education is increasingly tied to private agreements that often serve the interests of edubusinesses and other commercial entities.

We recognise that these findings prompt further critical engagement with Finland's complex colonial legacies, especially given the prevailing national narrative of the colonised. Rather than merely echoing familiar critiques of



global educational practices, our analysis highlights the suppression of diverse forms of knowledge in favour of a dominant, often Western, epistemology (Paraskeva, 2015). Through this lens, the study reframes discussions about whose knowledge is valued, and what is at stake in the commodification of public education.

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#### THE PLURAL SELF AS PUBLIC SELF IN EDUCATION

Joe Oyler

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The 'self', whether in the guise of the child or the adult, remains an important concern for education and schooling. Depending on the tradition or orientation, the self is a thing to be shaped, tamed, awakened, called forth, skilled up, or reflected on. As it relates to considerations of the publicness of education, relational aspects of selfhood have been thoughtfully explored, including by members of the current panel. In my presentation, I want to suggest that although 'relationally situated' conceptions of the self rightly reflect our socially and materially embedded nature as subjects, they continue to reinforce a conception of the self that runs contrary to these insights. I will further claim that this is in part because we are still struggling to distance ourselves from a conception introduced and reinforced to the majority of the world through colonial influences. Central to these conceptions of the self is an understanding of it as a singular, transcendental subject. In place of this view of the self, I want to explore a plural and relationally constituted conception and trace some of its implications for our thinking about 'publicness' in education. I will draw from feminist thought and Social Psychology to articulate a view that sees the self as a network of 'I' perspectives - each with the capacity to function as a self-referential subject. Educationally, adopting such a conception of the self means that stepping forth into the world as a self, can be (or must be) supported through forms of 'self-making' (Valsiner & Cabell 2011) and/or 'relational autonomy' (Mackenzie & Stoljar 2000) both of which involve a kind of dialogue among these perspectives. Connecting these dialogic forms to Biesta's concept of publicness as 'a place where freedom can appear' (2012, p .693), I will close by outlining some educational practices that might help cultivate a quality of publicness, both within the self and among other selves.

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## EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD: WHY EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE NOT ENOUGH

Gert Biesta

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Nowadays the case for education as a public good is often made in terms of equal opportunities. Rather than relying on the aristocratic argument that education is only there for those who are deserving of it, the democratic case for public education highlights education as a universal right. (On the distinction between the aristocratic and the democratic argument see Säfström 2021.) This therefore comes with the demand to provide good education for everyone or, in the more technical language of equal opportunities: the right for everyone to have an equal opportunity at achieving educational ‘success.’ In my presentation I will raise a number of critical questions about the discourse of equal opportunities in order to argue that the case for equal opportunities in education is more aristocratic – and thus less democratic – than is often assumed, and therefore insufficient as an avenue towards any attempt at reclaiming a meaningful account of the publicness of education. One aristocratic ‘rest’ in the case for equal opportunities is the argument that children with the same potential should have the opportunity to achieve the same outcomes, thus suggesting that the inequality of potential is not just assumed but actually accepted. This also raises the question how the apparent potential of a student can be ‘discovered’ before education takes place. Here I will argue that the only way to find out whether one has the potential for something is actually through education. The case for equal opportunities actually seems to deny the power of education, including its equalising power. Finally, it is remarkable that equal opportunities are nowadays mainly understood in terms of equal performance on pre-specified educational ‘tasks.’ In doing so, the equality that is promised is an equality of performance on standards set by others. In opposition to this view, I will explore the democratic case for what I will refer to as the equality of existence, that is, the fact that each human being is equally called to its own existence which, by necessity, is a public existence. Here, as I will suggest, rather different tasks for education and its democratic publicness begin to come into view.

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## Symposium: Academic writing and philosophy of education: Experiences and reflections after one year of academic publishing with SPEKI. Nordic Philosophy and Education Review

Chair: Claudia Schumann, Södertörn University, Sweden

Discussant: Henrik Vase Frandsen, Aarhus University, Denmark

To write philosophically is not just another academic exercise of composing an excellent research paper. It is also about adopting a style and mode of writing that opens for deep engagements with essential questions by the means of putting philosophy into action, to explore actively, pushing boundaries of thought, and refining understanding. In short, to write philosophically is to philosophize (Lang 1983, Risser 2019, Schusterman 2022).

Despite the fact that philosophical writing is a well-recognized subdivision of academic writing, philosophers of education seem to be reluctant to write papers that do not adhere to the IMRaD format. This hesitance may be due, first, to the fact that philosophy of education is a discipline caught in between the educational sciences and philosophy (Strand, 2012). Secondly, the fact that philosophy of education intersects with academic capitalism (Munch, 2020). Philosophers of education may thus be caught in a dilemma between curiosity-driven and policy-driven research, between academic autonomy and heteronomy, between an inclination to philosophize versus to assert the continuing relevance of their discipline through broader engagement (Peters et al 2022). Third, a substantial dilemma is related to peer review, which is both mandatory and important in upholding the integrity, quality, and advancement of philosophy of education as an academic discipline. However, the reviewers do not necessarily relate to the standards for philosophical studies (Lang 1983, AERA 2009), but rely on assessment criteria that apply to other types of educational research). So, how to cope with these dilemmas?

In this symposium, members of the editorial board of a newly (re-)launched Nordic journal in philosophy of education discuss their experiences and views on the role of journals in providing publication platforms for philosophical papers within education. We explore different forms of hesitance to publish philosophical papers, the challenges we find regarding articles intended as parts of PhD theses, as well as the necessity of establishing legitimizing publication platforms. We also address questions regarding the role smaller, human-run journals can have in a future potentially dominated by large-scale AI-driven publication forms. We also critically examine the division between philosophically oriented and empirical journals as regards our own positioning between philosophy, theory and the empirical in philosophy of education.

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## **Academic stiles and literary writing in philosophy of education**

Marie Hållander

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The paper presentation “Academic stiles and literary writing in philosophy of education” develops issues regarding philosophical writing in philosophy of education, its method and form. Drawing on my own experience of writing essays (both for audio and for reading), poetic and literary work, and articles within the field of philosophy of education, the presentation at the symposium will discuss academic stiles and literary writing in philosophy of education, and by that give an answer to the question: what does it mean to write educational philosophy? The paper has a specific focus on philosophy of education in terms of method and form, and will use examples from the research project The Children of Textiles, as well as the article “A Playful Time: Working Class Children’s Stories in the History of Textile Industry” (forthcoming), where literary writing and art-based research becomes a way to fill out the gaps in an untold history. Art-based research implies that the researcher is involved in some form of direct artistic creation, in my case literary writing, as the primary approach to the systematic survey (McNiff, 2011). In this article, the historian Hartman’s work *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments* (2019) is a role model regarding the expressive literary form as a possible method for conducting historical research as a way to fill out the gaps and make historical voices come into a new light. Another works that will be discussed is philosopher Jonna Bornemark’s *Jag är himmel och hav* (2022), in which she combines philosophical and poetic work on pregnancy, life, and the limits of the self. Drawing on these works, the paper explores what writing in philosophy of education can be and include, as well as not include; its limitations and possibilities, also given the format and system of peer review and publication standards (for example the IMRaD format) within journals of philosophy of education.

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## **Philosophical writing between being and event**

Torill Strand

Oslo University, Norway

The idea of philosophical writing as a way of putting philosophy into action, or to "philosophize," emphasizes the dynamic aspects of philosophy. This perspective acknowledges that philosophical writing is not just another academic exercise of composing an excellent research paper. It is also about adopting a style and mode of writing that opens for deep engagements with essential questions by the means of putting philosophy into action, to explore actively, pushing boundaries of thought, and refine understanding.

My aim with this paper is to explain and discuss the art of writing philosophically. I open the paper by briefly explaining the ways in which philosophical writing as an active process of philosophizing, as well as the frameworks and methods for doing so, are based on widely accepted principles and practices in the field of philosophy (AERA 2009, Aristotle 1979, Badiou 2001, Lewis 2008, Plato 1991, Vaughn 2006). Next, I discuss these principles in terms of a Badiouan concept of what it means to philosophize (Badiou 2001; 2009; 2012; 2022). In a Badiouan perspective, the philosopher commits themselves to the incommensurable relation between the rules of philosophy and the ordinary rules of life. The purpose of philosophical writing is not to develop a credo. Philosophy cannot and will not tell what particular position to take in politics or science. Truths are produced and continue to emerge in other, non-philosophical spheres of life: such as love, art, politics or science. However, philosophy – and philosophy alone – contains the resources to reveal and preserve the appearance and immanence of truths. In this way, philosophy deals with truths as creation. So, philosophy is neither the interpreter nor mediator of truths. The task of philosophy is rather to “examine the constitution, in singular worlds, of the appearing of truths, and therefore on what grounds (sic) the evidence of their existence” (Badiou 2009, p. 9). In summing up, I hope to invite an engaged discussion about the potential powers of the art of writing philosophical papers.

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## Symposium: Teacher without borders: Recruiting and retaining teachers and teacher students – an interregional project in The Nordic Green Belt (NGB).

Chair: Nina Kjeøy, Nord University, Norway

Discussant: Pär Olausson, Faculty of Humanities, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Both Jämtland (Sweden) and Trøndelag (Norway) face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. Both regions grapple with a declining student base for teacher training, including recruitment for South Sami teacher training. In addition, the recruitment base is narrow because few men and people with a minority background apply to pre-school teacher and teacher training courses. There is currently no structured cooperation between the various teacher training courses and between border municipalities within the education sector in NGB (Boström et al., 2024). In the project, funded by Interreg Sweden-Norway, we want to tackle these challenges by working across NGB from different aspects of cooperation. Nord University, Queen Maud University College (DMMH), and Mid Sweden University are central actors in NGB when it comes to preschool teachers/teacher training for Norwegian, Swedish, and Southern Sami students. The primary goal of the project is to foster cross-border cooperation in the border region between municipalities, teachers, universities, and students.

The aim is to reverse the trend related to these challenges. We will collect data (including policy and statistics) within NGB regarding teacher shortages both current and projected, establish various networks within NGB, and finally provide recommendations to municipalities and higher education institutions in NGB.

As this is an interregional project, different theoretical frameworks will be used in different studies, such as policy analysis, media analysis, governance models, comparative educational theory, regional development theory, and "wicked problem"-theory. The same applies to methodology/research design for different sub-studies.

The expected result is to generate knowledge about the needs of teachers/student teachers to be able to stay in the region so equal conditions are created for the citizens who exist at the local/regional level in terms of access to good education with competent teachers. This presupposes that the municipalities can create the conditions for recruiting and retaining competent teachers and that the teacher training programs in the region can recruit students who, after completing their studies, can be attracted to remain in the region. An attractive and strong border region can contribute to developing and maintaining a good range of public services for those who live and live here, where preschools, school-age-educare centers, and schools are crucial for both social and interregional sustainability.

The relevance for the entire Nordic region is obvious. Our countries have sparsely populated areas, and in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, there is the Sami area. In the Nordic countries (except Finland), teacher shortage is more or less visible, especially in certain subjects such as mathematics and science, and finally, teacher training programs have fewer student applicants than before (except Finland) (NLS, 2023). In other words, a powerful force is needed in different ways within the Nordic region to recruit and retain both teachers and student teachers.

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## Common Paths: Improved Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in NGB

Lena Ivarsson

Mid Sweden university, Sweden

The purpose of this research and development project is to create the conditions for collaboration between the three universities Mittuniversitet in Sweden, Norduniversitet, and Dronning Mauds Minnes Høgskola in Norway, all in the Nordic Green Belt (NGB). The project then aims to work together to identify different ways to attract student teachers, retain teachers, and thereby develop cities, communities, and villages in the Nordic green belt ((Boström et al., 2024).

As a starting point, an interview study will be conducted with Swedish and Norwegian people who, during the school years 2012-2015, underwent a joint Swedish-Norwegian preschool teacher training with a focus on cultural heritage and cultural heritage pedagogy and which was given in collaboration between Mittuniversitetet and Dronning Mauds Minnes Høgskola.

The theoretical framework consists of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It enables interpretations of the empirical material based on the five systems: the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and crono system, which can contribute to explaining, highlighting, and analyzing the prerequisites and challenges for cooperation within, for example, the teacher training programs at the three universities, but also the opportunities for collaboration for students, teachers, higher education institutions, teacher training programs and municipalities in NGB.

The methods that will be used are semi-structured interviews. The empirical material will be analyzed through content analysis.

The study is expected to contribute with knowledge about whether cooperation between the higher education institutions, primarily within teacher education, can contribute to the development in NGB regarding the access to student teachers, who, after completing their studies, remain in the region and thus contribute to the schools in the region maintaining good quality with trained teachers. The previous students' experiences of studying in a Swedish-Norwegian education will also be used, analyzed, and reported to contribute relevant knowledge about the conditions and challenges of joint teacher education.

The difficulty of recruiting students to the teacher training programs has increased in recent years. More student teachers start their studies but do not complete them. At the same time, many trained teachers leave the teaching profession to work in other fields. Through this study, the intention is to contribute relevant research that can help strengthen NGB regarding access to students and qualified teachers. The problem of teacher shortages and low application pressure for teacher training courses is widespread in several Nordic countries.

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## **Representations of School and the Teaching Profession in Newspapers - A Narrative Text Analysis**

Ole Petter Vestheim

Nord University, Norway

Research topic/aim: Through media, the public gains insight and knowledge about society. Since the media can only offer a selective and edited snapshot of issues, journalism represents a social construction of reality. Media coverage simultaneously reflects and influences public opinion and political sentiment. Media can serve as a corrective to politicians and bureaucracy, but it can also be used as a tool by these entities in the shaping of policy. At the same time, media coverage of an issue will inevitably affect the public's perceptions and opinions about it. This study examines how schools and the teaching profession are portrayed and discussed in local and regional newspapers within the "Nordic Green Belt" region. It also explores how these portrayals may impact the status and attractiveness of teacher education and the profession itself, which could, in turn, influence individuals' interest in becoming teachers or not.

Theoretical framework: This study utilizes narrative analysis as both the theoretical framework and the analytical method. Narrative analysis is well-suited to exploring how stories and narratives are constructed in texts to convey meaning. Newspaper articles often create narratives that highlight specific values and perspectives, and narrative analysis provides tools to uncover underlying stories. The analysis investigates which stories dominate representations of schools and the teaching profession in regional newspapers, identifies the "heroes" and "villains" presented, and examines which narratives are most prominent. This approach provides insights into the cultural values and attitudes that shape these portrayals. The theoretical framework is inspired by Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics.

Method: To examine media representations of schools and the teaching profession, the dataset has, for practical reasons, been limited to regional print newspaper. Such newspapers reach both urban and rural areas, thus influencing the opinions of a broad readership, which may, in turn, affect interest in pursuing a teaching career. Additionally, written texts provide a more analytically manageable dataset than broadcast materials. The empirical material was collected using the search function in Retriever's media archive, Atekst. By carefully reading the texts, the analysis seeks to uncover what is implied but need not be stated explicitly to be understood.

Preliminary results: Preliminary analyses show that the narratives presented in the media are diverse, with various perspectives and focuses. Newspapers, often inclined towards sensationalism, may, for example, depict schools and the teaching profession through categories associated with crisis and challenges, political debates, changes and reforms, the popularity and quality of teacher education, or in less sensational terms with a positive focus on the teaching profession. These portrayals likely shape the public's perception of schools and teachers and, in turn, influence recruitment, status, and teachers' self-perception and professional identity.

Relevance to Nordic Educational Research: Recruiting and retaining teachers is a common challenge across the Nordic countries. This study can help highlight issues related to teacher shortages and underlying contributing factors.



## **The Teacher Shortage in a Regional Perspective – Historical Development and Current Situation, Challenges, and Possible Solutions**

Glenn Svedin

Mid Sweden University, Sweden

This contribution discusses how the teacher shortage has developed both in Sweden as a whole and, more specifically, in the region of Jämtland-Härjedalen during the 2000s, as well as how it is expected to evolve in the future. Furthermore, the significance of regional teacher education, to ensure the personnel supply for schools in rural areas, are discussed. Public statistics and various policy documents (strategy documents, competency supply plans, investigations, etc.) will serve as the primary sources for the study. Additionally, various attempts that have been (or are being) made with decentralized education programs, to secure staffing in the public sector in rural regions, are also discussed.

This includes a discussion of the consequences of the governments regional and education policies for the availability of teachers in (northern) rural areas: While the teacher shortage has indeed been acknowledged by the authorities, their measures can sometimes be seen as ambiguous. There has been considerable emphasis on the need of both regional development and competency and personnel supply, but at the same time, some political proposals in Sweden have suggested centralizing teacher education programs to fewer universities, which could severely diminish the availability of trained teachers in certain regions. Various policy documents from the national level will be used as source material. Furthermore, the potential relationship between various educational reforms and the development of the teacher shortage over time will also be discussed.

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## **Exploring strategies to attain and recruit to the preschool teacher profession**

Marit Holm Hopperstad, Kari Emilsen, Maria Selmer-Olsen

Dronning Mauds Minne Høgskole for Barneagelærerutdanning, Norway

### **Research topic/aim**

In this paper we draw attention to the situation for the preschool teacher profession in Trøndelag and Jämtland/Härjedalen. More specifically, we present ongoing research that aim to develop and explore strategies that can contribute to a stronger professional environment in the field of practice and strengthen the interest for staying in the preschool teacher profession and widen the recruitment basis for the preschool teacher education in various social groups. To illustrate the proportion of male preschool teachers in Norway is 10%, in Sweden 3%. The central strategy and pivot point in the research is to bring central actors and stakeholders together to develop and explore borderless networks and measures.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study is theoretically framed within the context of the ECEC teaching profession and recruitment perspectives. Theories about strategic management (Bolman & Deal, 2024; Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2010) and network governance are used for analysis and discussion (Olausson & Nyhlén, 2017).

#### Methodology/research design

The research has an overall qualitative design. We build on empirical data from interviews with practitioners, students, administrators and stakeholders at the municipal level that become involved in the processes of developing cross-border networks. Statistical data and analysis of policy documents will be conducted to map out background variables.

#### Expected results/findings

We expect the following results:

Permanent and self-governing networks across the border that will enrich and strengthen the professional environment and positively affect the recruitment and attainment to the preschool teacher profession in the area.

Innovative solutions for a wider recruitment to the preschool teacher education and profession in the area

New collaborative relationships across the borders, opportunities to learn from each other, be inspired and benefit from each other's skills and resources.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Recruiting and retaining preschool teachers is a challenge common for all the Nordic countries. The insights, experiences and results can be used as a basis for further research on teacher shortage and for central stakeholders to counter the challenges.

## Symposium: Theory of Practice Architectures as a Framework for Understanding and Transforming Teacher Education in light of a Pedagogy of Hope

Chair: Ola Buan Øien, Nord University, Norway

Discussant: Lill Langelotz, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

The theme of the 2025 NERA conference, *Pedagogy of Hope*, invites us to explore *Gratitude, Diversity, and Sustainability in Education*. This symposium contributes to the discussion by examining the theory of practice architectures (TPA) as a valuable framework for empirical research. Developed by Kemmis et al. (2014), TPA investigates how practices are shaped by participants' actions and pre-existing cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements.

This symposium focuses explicitly on teacher education, examining how student teachers are supported or constrained by conditions across three dimensions—sayings, doings, and relatings—revealing how practices are cultivated, maintained, or challenged in different contexts (Kemmis et al., 2014, pp. 31–33).

The symposium features three presentations that apply TPA from different perspectives. The first paper explores systematic and pedagogical observation (peer learning) of student teachers during their practicum in driving teacher education. The second examines their conceptions of success in the profession, while the final shifts focus, using autoethnography to investigate the challenges of applying TPA in empirical research and addressing calls for a more critical evaluation of the framework. Empirical data consist of observations, interviews, and empathy-based stories, analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) in combination with TPA.

All papers represent the Norwegian branch of the international research network *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis (PEP)*. However, one paper takes a comparative perspective, drawing on cases from Finland, Sweden, and Norway. The joint discussion will be introduced by Lill Langelotz, a Swedish researcher from Gothenburg University with extensive experience in TPA. Together, we will explore how gratitude, diversity, and sustainability shape a pedagogy of hope—one that fosters not only academic success but also the development of compassionate, empowered individuals who can "*live well in a world worth living in for all*" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 25).

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### **Pedagogical observation (peer learning) as a learning activity in driving teacher education in Norway**

Hilde Kjelsrud

Nord University, Norway

The purpose of this article-based thesis was to explore the learning activity of pedagogical observation (peer learning) in driving teacher education and to further develop and clarify the theoretical and practical foundation

for pedagogical observation as a learning activity (Kjelsrud, 2023). The thesis consists of a comprehensive summary (kappa) and three associated scientific articles and focuses on the driving teacher students' collaboration on driving lessons in the field of practice (Kjelsrud 2023).

Based on these questions, pedagogical observation is discussed in the light of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017). The dissertation relies on a sociocultural view of learning (Säljö & Moen, 2001) and uses previous research in nearby fields, as well as theories and concepts especially within the educational field, to answer the main question of the thesis.

Data has been collected in the form of 10 individual interviews, 9 field observations, and 2 focus group interviews. The transcribed data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The thesis shows that pedagogical observation as a learning activity is perceived as useful and with a good learning outcome. The driving teacher students learn to cooperate with others, and they become reflective and critical regarding the execution of driving lessons. They learn to convey and articulate knowledge and skills, and at the same time manage their own learning by carrying out assessments of themselves and others. If successfully organized and implemented, the learning activity can result in these five shared learning outcomes: (1) collaboration with others; (2) engage in critical inquiry and reflection; (3) convey and articulate knowledge, understanding, and skills; (4) manage learning and how to learn; and (5) conduct self and peer assessments, consistent with peer learning (Boud et al., 2013).

Findings also show other more specific characteristics of importance; there must be a plan for the driving lesson and a working agreement, the students must be engaged, and the feedback must be constructive with subject knowledge. Finally, good cooperation and guidance skills are required.

Gratitude plays a role as students appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other and from their experiences, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. Diversity is crucial, as it brings a range of perspectives and approaches to learning activities, enriching the educational experience and leading to more innovative and effective teaching methods. Finally, sustainability and hope are reflected in the long-term benefits of pedagogical observation, as it equips future driving teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to educate new drivers responsibly and effectively, ensuring safer roads and communities connected to the vision zero. Vision zero represents a commitment to creating a safer and more sustainable transportation system for everyone (Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2013).

### **Student teachers' conceptions of success in their future profession - cases from Finland, Norway and Sweden**

Ingrid Elden<sup>1</sup>, Ola Buan Øien<sup>1</sup>, Anna Katharina Jacobsson<sup>1</sup>, Petri Salo<sup>2</sup>, Jessica Aspfors<sup>2</sup>, Ola Henricsson<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nord University, Norway. <sup>2</sup>Åbo Akademi, Finland. <sup>3</sup>University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Both Norway and Sweden face difficulties to recruit and retain students for teacher education (Boström et al, 2024). Despite reports on increased workload and decreased job-satisfaction among Finnish teachers (Taajamo & Puhakka, 2018) teacher education seem to have maintained its attractiveness (Heikkinen et al 2020). This study is part of a cross-national research project focusing on student teachers' orientation regarding and conceptualizations of success and failures in their future teaching profession. This study focuses on student teachers' conceptions of professional practices contributing to a sense of success in their future work as teachers. The method for gathering data is empathy-based stories, a narrative method in which the student teachers use their experience and understanding of teachers work to respond to a fictive future scenario (Wallin et al., 2019). The data consists of stories written by 158 student teachers in their final stage of studies in three primary school teacher education departments in Finland, Norway and Sweden in 2023-24. In the frame story they were to

respond to a fictive future situation in which they worked as full-time teachers and felt confident in their work and successful in their teaching.

The data-analysis was done in two complementary steps. Firstly, the complexity of the stories was reduced by a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and secondly the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) was used to analyze and describe the professional practices identified in the student teachers' stories of success in teachers work.

The thematic analysis resulted in identification of three prominent themes across the three countries: (a) involvement in a professional community with collegial support; (b) didactical competence including relationship building with pupils and classroom management; (c) reflection on the professional self, combined with professional development. These three themes were aligned in with two subthemes: (d) relationship-building and relations to parents and (e) competences and resources acquired during teacher education.

The analysis of the stories with the theory of practices architectures, with focus on sayings, doings and relatings and different arrangements enabling, and constraining practices result in identification of two interconnected practices: a teaching practice (with focus on didactical doings and recognitive relatings to students) and a practice of collegial support and collaboration. Consequently, social-political arrangements substantiate both practices, expressed by sayings such as *planning, structuring, adapting, including and engaging* as well as *getting in touch with, creating good relations, asking and receiving help, support and advice*.

The results relate quite strongly to the relational aspects of teachers work, both within and outside the classroom, to be paid attention to both in teacher education and when creating favorable working conditions for newly qualified teachers. The study suggests that emphasizing stories of success rather than failures may improve the attractiveness and reputation of the teaching profession and ultimately a pedagogy of hope. The paper clarifies what the students look forward to with confidence—and contributes hope for the teaching profession.

### **Perceived challenges related to use of TPA in empirical research**

Eli Lejonberg<sup>1</sup>, Hilde Marie Madsø Jacobsen<sup>1</sup>, Tove Seiness Hunskaar<sup>1</sup>, Ingrid Elna Elden<sup>2</sup>, Beverley Goldshaft<sup>3</sup>, Ela Sjølie<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Oslo, Norway. <sup>2</sup>Nord Univeristy, Norway. <sup>3</sup>Oslo Met, Norway. <sup>4</sup>NTNU, Norway

#### **1. Framing**

The current contribution is investigating TPA as a relevant framework for empirical research. TPA has been claimed to have potential to contribute to actors "living well in a world worth living in for all" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 25). The framework is described underlining the potential to provide lenses that help us see social formations as "made by people, and thus open to be remade by people (kemmis et al 2014; 17). However, recently challenges related to TPA has been more elaborated on (Variyan & Edwards-Groves, 2024). In this contribution, we explore challenges regarding the use of TPA in research in empirical research, as they are perceived among researchers with experience of using TPA in empirical research.

#### **2. Theoretical framework:**

The work of Kemmis et al. (2014) is chosen as this is much cited, and acknowledged as "the earliest publication that shows how TPA can be put to work analytically and empirically" (Variyan & Edwards-Groves, 2024: 3). Variyan and Edwards-Groves (2024) build on Foucault to challenge the use of TPA as a thinking tool, arguing that it over time

has developed quite rigid understandings of use. In the current contribution we build on critique of TPA, as presented by Variyan and Edwards-Groves (2024).

### 3. Methodology/research design:

In this contribution, we are inspired by self-study (LaBoskey, 2004) and autoethnography (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022), to investigate challenges researchers can experience when using TPA to understand practice. Driven by the interest of understanding and using TPA, and Inspired by autoethnography and self-study approach, we gathered six researchers (of whom several are included as co-authors on this text) with experience of using TPA in empirical research to a conference symposium held in February 2024. The intention of the symposium was to address opportunities and challenges linked to the use of TPA in their research. Transcript were made object to a thematic analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke (2022), and elaborated on in accordance with principles for autoethnographical approach (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

### 4. Expected results/findings:

In this contribution, we elaborate on experienced challenges related to use of TPA. Several challenges related to use of TPA in empirical research was highlighted, such as understanding of the analytical concepts of TPA, relations between analytical concepts, the normative grounding and change intentions, as well as implications for methods for data gathering/relations between TPA and empirical data. The autoethnographical approach encouraged us to also elaborate on affective aspects related to our experiences of using the TPA framework (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Affective aspects such as fear of misinterpretation of concepts, and uncertainties related to status of methodological approaches, the normative grounding and complexity of the framework, is elaborated on.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research:

TPA has gained increased attention in Nordic educational research the last years. However, critical perspectives has not received much attention (Variyan & Edwards-Groves, 2024). The contribution can be seen as an answer to a call for more critical perspectives related to the TPA framework.

## Symposium: Theoretical, empirical and methodological considerations on expertise development and teacher Education

Chair: Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann, University of Turku, Finland

Discussant: Auli Toom, University of Helsinki, Finland

This international symposium integrates three presentations that explore different facets of teacher expertise development. It begins with theoretical reflections on paradigms in teacher research, followed by a presentation of a theoretical model contributing to our understanding of beginning teachers' cognition during classroom management. Then, a study using eye tracking and interview method is presented. The symposium brings together and problematizes our paradigms and ways of understanding and measuring desirable academic and non-academic characteristics in the teaching expertise. Pedagogical implications and the relevance of current theoretical and empirical research to develop the Nordic, research-based teacher education is discussed.

1. Hans Gruber, Gabriele Kaiser, Stefan Krauss & Georg Hans Neuweg: Incitations for teacher competence research from the perspective of expertise research

This contribution examines in-how-far competence research and expertise research are complementary or antithetical. Based on a literature review, it is tried to identify "invisible" paradigmatic characteristics of both lines of research. It is shown that a focus on dispositions of teachers leads to different conclusions than a focus on performance of teachers. Incitations for teacher competence research are provided from the perspective of expertise research. It is argued that the investigation of action competence, which is an important part of expertise research, may suitably complement the investigation of reasoning competence.

2. H. P. A. Boshuizen, C. E. Wolff, & D. Duchatelet: On teachers managing multiple, simultaneous events in the classroom: The EVENTS model of teachers' classroom cognition

Beginning teachers may feel quite confident about the content they teach, but often feel far less certain about their ability to manage their classrooms and achieve intended learning goals with their students. This presentation introduces the theoretical EVENTS model (Events, Vision, Expertise, kNowledge & Teaching skills), which captures the complex cognitive demands of teaching in authentic classroom contexts. Pedagogical implications concerning future teacher education and research possibilities are also discussed.

3. Henna Vilppu & M. Mikkilä-Erdmann: Pre-service teachers' mental classroom representations - a case study combining eye tracking and interview method

Classroom management is one of teachers' core skills yet also a critical challenge, especially for beginning teachers. While previous studies on teacher perception and interpretation of classroom situations have focused on differences between novice and expert teachers, especially among subject teachers, this study sheds light on preservice classroom teachers specializing in primary education, a group that has not been widely studied. Using their eye movements as a reflection aiding stimuli, the study examines what kind of mental representations do preservice classroom construct of a classroom situation and whether there can be found qualitative differences between them.

## **Incitations for teacher competence research from the perspective of expertise research**

Hans Gruber<sup>1</sup>, Gabriele Kaiser<sup>2,3</sup>, Stefan Krauss<sup>1</sup>, Georg Hans Neuweg<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Regensburg, Germany. <sup>2</sup>University of Hamburg, Germany. <sup>3</sup>Nord University Bodo, Norway. <sup>4</sup>Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria

This contribution examines in-how-far competence research and expertise research are complementary or antithetical. The presentation thus investigates the issue of teachers' professional development and students' learning from an innovative perspective. We aim to integrate those two research perspectives, which so far have been addressing professional development and learning from different starting points: research on dispositions of teachers (competence research) and research on performance of teachers (expertise research).

In a review study, the most important references from both areas were collected and systematically compared. While competence research predominantly focusses on the impact of teacher competencies via instructional quality onto student outcomes, expertise research mainly focusses on the reverse direction by reconstructing pathways towards teacher expertise. Our review shows that it is necessary to mutually address inadequacies and restrictions of both approaches, such as assumptions of stable dispositions and neglect of intraindividual development processes in competence research as well as the limitation of the focus on well-structured domains and, thus, on a gap in the definition of expertise in teaching in expertise research.

It is aimed to critically question the implicit assumptions in the underlying conceptualisations of both approaches in order to discover avenues to link them. It is tried to identify "invisible" paradigmatic characteristics of both lines of research. A focus on dispositions of teachers leads to different conclusions than a focus on performance of teachers. In comprehensive recent conceptualisations, Blömeke et al. (2015) describe competence as a continuum embracing performance, whereas Krauss et al. (2020) in their cascade model distinguish different components of competence. It is shown that even in these approaches, which had their origins in the teacher competence paradigm, the teacher expertise paradigm has not yet been appropriately considered despite close relations that repeatedly have been part of the discourse.

Thus, incitations for teacher competence research are provided from the perspective of expertise research. It is argued that the investigation of action competence, which is an important part of expertise research, may suitably complement the investigation of reasoning competence. This is based on Berliner's (2004) distinction of "good" and "successful" teachers, and on Boshuizen et al.'s (2020) proposal of the model of "knowledge restructuring through case processing" and helps to extend the current understanding of interindividual differences that predict teaching quality by an elaborate understanding of intraindividual development towards high quality and instructional means so support this development. Based on the expertise paradigm, practical implications for teacher professional development are put forward focussing on intraindividual learning processes and individualised support.

## **On teachers managing multiple, simultaneous events in the classroom; The EVENTS model of teachers' classroom cognition**

Henny P. A. Boshuizen<sup>1</sup>, Charlotte E. Wolff<sup>2</sup>, Dorothy Duchatelet<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Open Universiteit, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Netherlands. <sup>2</sup>University of Iceland, School of Education, Iceland. <sup>3</sup>Open Universiteit, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Netherlands

Beginning teachers may feel quite confident about the content they teach, but often feel far less certain about their ability to manage their classrooms and achieve intended learning goals with their students. Classrooms are 'multidimensional' contexts, punctuated by a stream of simultaneous events, some of which demand immediate



response and some of which are unpredictable. Responses to this continuous stream of events are partly emergent and partly planned. These events also occur simultaneously with the typical tasks teachers carry out, such as:

- Performing cycles of formulating learning goals, selecting and implementing instructional strategies, creating learning opportunities, and assessing student progress;
- Establishing and maintaining rules for recurring activities comprising the instructional process
- Dealing with various ongoing interactions, interruptions, and off-task behaviours.

Only when these tasks can be carried out in a coordinated way and potential interference with the learning flow can be anticipated, are teachers able to skillfully balance these complex, continuous, and simultaneous demands.

Classroom events vary in their duration, expectedness, and potential impact on learning goals and outcomes. Eraut (1994) pointed out that responding to these variations in the work environment demands different modes of cognition, and thus different forms of professional preparedness. Very fast events require nearly instantaneous/reflexive action that is either physiologically programmed or very well-trained. Events that develop rapidly also require quick decision-making and action, but may also allow for teachers to think-on-the-go and modify their actions to arrive at the appropriate action that achieves the intended results. Deliberative thinking is not possible with this speed of event processing. Yet there are also events which develop more slowly, allowing time for analytical reflection and deliberative decision making to interpret or re-interpret their meaning.

Current models of classroom cognition generally focus on singular aspects of teachers' event attention, while the proposed EVENTS (Events, Vision, Expertise, kNowledge & Teaching skills) model for teachers' classroom cognition takes the multiplicity of concerns described above into account. The key to mastering this continuous combination, coordination, prioritisation and adaptation of goals and outcomes is a knowledge-base that is structured in a way that allows for easy and fast activation so that interpretation of situations leads to appropriate responses and actions to support student learning.

The EVENT model has implications for teacher education, particularly when it comes to preparing beginning teachers for the complex cognitive demands of the classroom. Possible implications for training include scaffolding situational awareness to improve reaction time and decision-making through immersive VR simulations, bug-in-ear technology for coaching in real-time, or mobile eye-tracking for capturing "fast" decisions/actions in the performance of teaching. Since most research to date has focused on the slower, reflective processes and single-event processing, empirical evidence must be collected about the fast, reflexive processes as well as the integration and balancing of Eraut's three modes of cognition. This calls for intentional emphasis on events and processing modes alongside new research questions, methods, and designs, which will be discussed in light of the proposed EVENT model.

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### **Preservice teachers' mental classroom representations – a case study combining eye tracking and interview method**

Henna Vilppu, Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann

University of Turku, Finland

Due to its centrality to student learning, classroom management can be considered one of teachers' core skills. Visual attention plays a crucial role in classroom management, requiring teachers to first notice relevant events and then interpret them appropriately (Jarodzka et al., 2021). This situation-specific skill is referred to as professional vision (Sherin, 2001). While previous studies on teachers' professional vision have largely focused on

differences between novice and expert subject teachers, this study sheds light on Finnish preservice classroom teachers specializing in primary education, a group that has not been widely studied.

This case study aimed to answer following research questions:

What kind of mental representations do preservice teachers construct concerning the classroom situation (i.e., what do they perceive, where do they direct their focus and on what temporal level do they operate in their descriptions)?

What kind of qualitative differences can be identified in preservice teachers' cognitive processing of classroom situations?

Twelve preservice classroom teachers from different study years participated to the study. Eye tracking and stimulated recall interviews (SRI) on a classroom video were utilized to answer the research questions. Each annotated episode in the SRI was coded for perception, focus and temporality. Additionally, these codes were used for giving each participant scores to describe their cognitive processing in terms of perspective (single vs. multiple) and continuity (references to past and future events). Finally, participants were divided in four groups based on their scores on the above-mentioned dimensions, highlighting qualitative differences in their processing of the classroom situation.

The same stimulus brought about different perceptions, thematic foci and interpretations, as well as time scale among the participants, also highlighting the different levels of complexity in the cognitive processing of the classroom situation. The weakest group, *isolated and discontinuous* preservice teachers mentioned fewer themes in their episodes and rarely, if at all, deviated from the contemporaneous time scale. The strongest group, *integrated and continuous* preservice teachers, included multiple viewpoints and the most references to past or future events in their descriptions, showing that they perceived the classroom events as a progressing series of occurrences (Wolff et al., 2017). Other groups are described in the presentation. Interestingly, preservice teachers from different phases of the programme were almost equally scattered over the four groups. This tentative finding suggests that the combined scores of perspective and continuity are not necessarily related to experience; rather, the quality of cognitive processing develops at an individual pace. Pedagogical implications for the Nordic teacher education will be discussed.

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## Symposium: High Hopes with Thousand Students: the Blended Learning Model in Finnish ECE Teacher Education

Chair: Outi Ylitapio-Mäntylä, University of Oulu, Finland

Päivi Pihlaja, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Sara Sintonen, University of Turku, Finland

Jonna Kangas, University of Helsinki, Finland

Discussant: Mary-Rose McLaren, Victoria University, Australia

This symposium focuses on ECE teacher education in Finland from perspectives of a blended learning (BL) model “the 1000+ project”. The project has been targeted to students who have already worked in early childhood education, have basic studies in educational sciences (25 ect), and also have earlier degree such as practical nurse.

In this symposium the presentations will concentrate on the blended teacher education BL model. The symposium consists of students’ perceptions, pedagogical leadership and teachership more generally in BL model. The national BL model has been created together with seven Finnish universities.

The growing demand for qualified early childhood education (ECE) teachers in Finland has led to novel solutions in teacher education. The Ministry of Education and Culture launched the 1000+ project aimed at expanding ECE teacher education particularly at adult learners already working in ECE centers without formal teacher qualifications. With funding allocated from 2018 to 2021, the initiative created approximately 1,000 new student places (MinEdu, 2017). As mentioned above, the project 1000+ utilizes a blended learning (BL) model, enabling students to continue their professional development through studying combining online learning with face-to-face instruction in a flexible format (Maunula et al., 2023).

Finnish research-based teacher education approach encourages teacher autonomy and innovation (Husu & Toom, 2016), which are also the aims of the project. As a research oriented education, seven Finnish universities’ jointly-developed project, the blended learning model not only fulfills the shortage of qualified ECE teachers but also fosters the development of ECE teacher education through close collaboration between universities and municipalities. The BL model provides a flexible pathway that accommodates adult learners. It offers a rigorous yet adaptable model for training ECE teachers, balancing the demands of work and study, and shaping the future of teacher education in the country (Maunula et al., 2023).

This symposium offers various viewpoints on the blended learning for ECTE. The first part is focused on students’ experiences of blended learning as a working, adult student. The second part is focused on describing students’ perceptions of pedagogical leadership related to their own competencies, and the third topic is related to the professionalism of ECE teachers.

## **ECE teacher graduates' perceptions of pedagogical leadership and related competences**

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### **1. Research topic/aim**

The aim of this study is to find out how students who have completed a multimodal teacher education programme in early childhood education (ECE) perceive their own competence in relation to pedagogical leadership and how pedagogical leadership is reflected in their responses to their teaching. The study is part of a wider collaborative project between seven universities to train in-working childcare nurses as ECE teachers.

Over the last decade, in Finland, there has been a strong focus on ECE as well as on improving its quality. In 2016 the Finnish National Agency for Education published the first National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. It emphasise the importance of pedagogy and the pedagogical responsibility of ECE teachers for the goal-orientation, planning, assessment and development of activities (EDUFI, 2022, 20). ECE teachers are required to be able to lead their team's pedagogy and professional learning (Heikka et al., 2022a; Heikka et al. 2022b).

### **2. Theoretical framework**

In the study, pedagogical leadership is defined as a relational, shared and evolving process, to which ECE teacher's perception and competence of leadership has a central influence (Mäntyjärvi & Parrila, 2021). Successful pedagogical leadership is based on the whole team's collaboration for interact, learn and develop pedagogy according to the local curriculum and children's needs (Mäntyjärvi & Parrila, 2021). However, according to studies ECE teachers do not always have sufficient competence or training to act as pedagogical leaders of their teams (Halttunen et al., 2019).

### **3. Methodology/research design**

The data was collected with Webropol survey in spring 2024, with responses from 78 teachers. The data includes open and closed questions on pedagogical leadership and teaching. Analysis combines both deductive and inductive content analysis (Elo ym., 2022; Kyngäs, 2020).

### **4. Expected results/findings**

Preliminary results indicate that the participants rated their own pedagogical leadership competence as good, but the concept of pedagogical leadership was not used much in the open responses. This may indicate that ECE teachers still feel unsure using the concept of leadership when defining their own teaching.

### **5. Relevance to Nordic educational research**

The study provides relevant information for the development of teacher education in ECE and the pedagogical leadership of the ECE teacher. The subject is topical internationally and in the Nordic countries.

## **High hopes meet future challenges - Newly qualified ECE teachers reflections on their professional self and the prospects of the field**

Katri Hansell<sup>1</sup>, Jonna Kangas<sup>2</sup>, Päivi Pihlaja<sup>3</sup>, Suvi Puolakka<sup>4</sup>, Laura Rantavuori<sup>5</sup>, Sara Sintonen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Åbo Akademi University, Finland. <sup>2</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland. <sup>3</sup>University of Eastern Finland, Finland.

<sup>4</sup>University of Turku, Finland. <sup>5</sup>University of Jyväskylä, Finland

### *1. Research topic/aim*

This presentation aims to describe how newly qualified early childhood education (ECE) teachers from blended learning (BL) early childhood teacher education (ECTE) programmes reflect on 1) what kind of ECE teacher they aspire to be, and 2) how they expect the ECE teaching profession to be in ten years. The analysis contrasts the characteristics that the respondents view as core of their professional self with the ECE field's predicted future. The BL model for ECTE is an interesting context for this study, as many students have extensive professional experience in ECE but are new to their roles as ECE teachers.

### *2. Theoretical framework*

In Finland's decentralised educational system, ECE teachers are expected to be active agents in their professional development and learning and are given considerable autonomy in their professional practice and development (Kangas & Harju-Luukkainen, 2021; Moate et al., 2021). This autonomy means that teachers' views on their professionalism directly influence their practices and everyday work. We view professional development as a continuous learning process occurring in ECTE and throughout their professional careers (e.g., Lazzari, 2012; Moate et al., 2021).

### *3. Methodology/research design*

The analysis is based on survey data conducted within a BL ECTE network (1000+). The data was collected in 2024 with a questionnaire sent to newly qualified teachers from BL programmes for ECTE. The questionnaire included 23 questions, with responses from 78 respondents. In this study, we analyse answers to two open-ended questions: *What kind of ECE teacher do I want to be?* (N=70) and *How do I see teachership in ECEC in 2034?* (N=63).

### *4. Expected results/findings*

Respondents envision themselves as professional, playful, and present in their interactions and contacts with the children, and emphasize collaboration with colleagues, the working team, and guardians. These aspects align with core elements of the so-called Nordic model for ECE (e.g., Thingstrup et al., 2023). Thus, respondents focus on quality aspects and positive views on the profession, conveying hope. However, their prospects on ECE and teachership, also include concerns about increased administrative burden and social challenges, emphasizing the need for socially sustainable working life.

### *5. Relevance to Nordic educational research*

Different models for ECTE for individuals already working in ECE are developed in several Nordic countries, often entailing BL and/or workplace-based learning. However, research on these models remains limited. Systematic follow-up on the development of professional skills and identity are of importance for the research-based ECTE programmes within the Nordic ECE, as well as for the teaching profession in everyday ECE practices.

## **Developing and diversifying 1000+ education**

Minna Maunula<sup>1</sup>, Outi Ylitapio-Mäntylä<sup>2</sup>, Katja Suhonen<sup>3</sup>, Niina Riihivuori<sup>4</sup>, Suvi Puolakka<sup>5</sup>, Mikaela Svanbäck-Laaksonen<sup>6</sup>, Heidi Harju-Luukkainen<sup>1</sup>

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### *1. Research topic/aim*

The 1000+ project aims to address the acute shortage of teachers in the field of early childhood education (ECE), while at the same time strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care. At the same time, the new form of education will help to develop teacher education in Finland. Blended learning in early childhood education has been developed nationally in close cooperation with seven Finnish universities throughout the project period and beyond. Joint planning, sharing and developing the best training solutions for adults has been an intensive process. It is essential to take into account the perspectives and development ideas of the participants in the training, which contributes to promoting equal education for adults.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Based on a Finnish research-based approach, which emphasizes the importance of teacher autonomy and innovation (Kangas et al., 2024; Husu & Toom, 2016), the 1000+ project offers adult learners a flexible educational pathway. The project has developed a new education model at the national level, offering a rigorous but adaptable model. This enables early childhood teachers to train and balance work, study and other demands of adult life. It also contributes to shaping the future of Finnish teacher education (Harju-Luukkainen, 2023; Maunula et al., 2023).

## 3. Methodology/research design

This presentation examines the experiences of qualified early childhood education teachers, graduates of the 1000+ project, who have a Bachelor's degree in education and training and who have been qualified in this field. The data covers all the training courses of the 1000+ project. N=78 early childhood education teacher graduates responded to the survey.

## 4. Expected results/findings

According to the preliminary results, three dimensions emerged from the responses: the dimension of training and personal time management, the dimension of taking into account individual starting points and needs in training practices, and the dimension of multi-modal training as a unique opportunity. According to those who had participated in blended learning, the arrangements were good and considered the needs of working adults. Nevertheless, time management and anticipation challenges were encountered in everyday life. They felt that the training had made use of the skills of those with practical work experience, but some felt that this was insufficient. However, the overall satisfaction with the career progression and skills enhancement provided by the multimodal training was seen as an excellent and unique opportunity, which meant that the occasional challenges in training practices were accepted.

## 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

In Finland, the 1000+ project has driven major reforms in teacher education, improving both practical training and attitudes toward blended learning and new educational innovations. Ongoing development should be grounded in research and consider diverse perspectives. This comprehensive national survey has provided an in-depth look at the current state and improvement areas in early childhood teacher education. From a Nordic perspective, it supports structured comparisons of national education systems and highlights the importance of sharing research-based educational innovations across Nordic countries.

## Roundtable discussion: Nature and Adventure in Primary Education: Co-Designing Programs for Physical and Mental Well-Being

Chair: Ellen Rohaan, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands

In response to societal challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need to bring children outdoors and encourage adventurous play. Research shows that children today spend significantly less time outside, with increasing numbers never engaging in outdoor play (Lucassen et al., 2020). This is troubling given the clear benefits of adventurous, outdoor activities, which positively impact children's motor skills, self-confidence, resilience, and mental well-being (Mann et al., 2021; Sando, Kleppe & Sandseter, 2021; Roberts et al, 2020). Research also emphasizes the importance of education for sustainability, where learning is connected to real-world issues, fostering critical thinking and eco-literacy (Wals, 2015). Outdoor adventure education aligns with this, offering children experiential learning opportunities that not only benefit their physical and mental health but also cultivate a deeper connection to the environment and a sense of responsibility for its care.

The question then arises: How can we design effective outdoor adventure programs in primary education that support both physical and mental health in children and their eco-literacy?

This roundtable discussion will center on the design and implementation of outdoor adventure programs in primary schools, using ongoing work at country estate 'Sparrenhof' as a central case study. Sparrenhof, located on the edge of Tilburg in the Netherlands, is a pedagogical free space that aims to create an inclusive environment for children to explore, play, and engage in meaningful experiences. The mission of Sparrenhof is to offer space for children's dreams and talents, free from the pressures of competition and rigid curricula. This makes it an ideal site for developing programs that foster both physical and mental health through nature-based adventures.

Participants will be actively engaged in exploring three guiding questions:

What practical and theoretical insights inform the design of outdoor adventure programs?

What knowledge and skills are critical to successfully implement these programs?

What is the measurable impact of outdoor adventure on children's development?

The roundtable session will include a group discussion, sharing best practices, identifying challenges, and generating actionable strategies for introducing more nature and adventure into schools and teacher education.

Besides, I'd like to explore opportunities for collaboration and funding.

## Roundtable discussion: Comparative Research on Initial Teacher Education in the Nordic Countries

Chairs: Sanna Forsström, Knowledge Centre for Education, University of Stavanger, Norway

Elaine Munthe, Knowledge Centre for Education, University of Stavanger, Norway

Discussant: Elsebeth Jensen, VIA University College, Denmark

Comparative research on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in the Nordic countries is critical both to address shared challenges and unique national strategies in preparing teachers to meet national and global societal demands. This roundtable is based on an earlier scoping review of Nordic research on Initial Teacher Education (ITE), which included an evidence gap map (Forsström & Munthe, 2023) highlighting several areas for further investigation: e.g. systematic comparisons between the Nordic countries, pre-service teachers' development of professional identity, teacher educators, the role of assessment practices in initial teacher education.

The aim of this roundtable is to discuss future research needs in initial teacher education research in the Nordic countries. The discussions will inform the development of a proposal for a special issue in a Nordic educational journal. The focus is on comparative research on initial teacher education (ITE) in the Nordic countries.

Presenters represent four of the Nordic countries and their papers are all related to central topics identified in the scoping review.

Norway: Results from a scoping review of research on ITE in the Nordic countries

Sweden: Nets and nodes in teacher education research in the Nordic countries

Norway: Assessing prospective teachers in teacher education: A systematic scoping review

Denmark and Norway: Knowledge integration in teacher education through the use of simulation

Finland: Conceptions of success and failure – Finnish pre-service teachers' stories of their future work

Following the presentations our goal is to engage the participants in a discussion about future needs for comparative studies on initial teacher education in the Nordic countries. We will invite participants to discuss:

Based on the papers presented here and the scoping review, how can we conceptualize research on teacher education in the Nordic countries?

What do you see as the most interesting topics to compare – and why? Where do you think there will be interesting differences? Similarities?

Forsström, S., & Munthe, E. (2023). What characterizes Nordic research on initial teacher education: A systematic scoping review. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 43(3), 241-259. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v43.5588>

### **Assessing prospective teachers in teacher education: A systematic scoping review**

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Assessment is a value-laden, high-stakes issue in education, which impacts significantly how we teach and learn. In teacher education, it is also a complex issue involving assessment of students' ability to integrate epistemologically diverse disciplines as well as practical and theoretical knowledge (Hermansen & Mausethagen, 2023; Muller, 2009; Shulman, 1987). However, systematic empirical knowledge on assessment practices in teacher education to date is surprisingly scarce (Forsström & Munthe, 2023; Matsumoto-Royo & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021; Smith, 2016). Our



scoping review synthesizes empirical literature on assessment of prospective teachers in initial teacher education. The main research question is: *What characterizes empirical research on assessment in initial teacher education?* More specifically, we examine: 1) what characterizes research design and methods used in empirical studies on assessment in teacher education; 2) what characterizes aims and focus of empirical studies on assessment in teacher education, including what aspects of professional knowledge are assessed; and 3) what forms, tools, and contexts of assessment are examined in empirical studies? In other words, we map both methodological and substantial characteristics of empirical research, focusing on the patterns and variations in aims and focus of research, study design, as well as forms, tools and contexts of assessment under investigation.

We provide an overview of peer-reviewed, primary empirical research published between 2014 and 2024. The review contains 99 articles, which were identified through systematic searches in several databases with a supplementary hand search. The analysis surfaces several interrelated patterns. First, it points to a large share of intervention-based studies conducted by teacher educators and focused primarily on presenting the design of an innovative assessment practice or exploring how the involved actors perceive it. At the same time, only few studies take a more detached perspective and focus on examining how assessment practices unfold in real-life settings. Furthermore, the analysis indicates a lack of studies explicitly addressing how assessment practices capture and assess integration of professional knowledge, rather than taking such integration for granted. Finally, the analysis indicates a need for a more critical examination of the entanglement of summative and formative assessment in ITE, which in the reviewed studies is generally assumed as unproblematic.

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## **Nets and nodes in teacher education research in the Nordic countries**

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### **1. Research topic**

In focus of this paper is the publication landscape of teacher education research as presented in the search engine Web of Science (WoS), a search platform with detailed information about research publications – including more than a quarter of a million records with education as a topic

The purpose of this paper is to analyse research affiliated to the Nordic countries in WoS in order to answer the following questions:

How has the publication landscape of teacher education research developed over time in the Nordic countries?

How is this landscape organising itself in research fronts and intellectual traditions?

What differences are possible to identify between the Nordic countries and in relation to the international landscape of teacher education research?

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

The study is based on previous studies on teacher education research in Sweden (Lindblad, Samuelsson & Nelhans, 2024 and is a compliment to a previous Nordic study (Forsström & Munthe, 2023).

The research approach is a combination of bibliometric analysis and network analysis, Research fronts are identified by bibliographic couplings between publications and intellectual tradition by means of co-citation of references (Garfield, 1979), which are further explored by means of clustering links between publications (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The outcomes are then analysed as organising the research field in nets and nodes in the publication landscape (Czarniawska, 2022).

### **3. Research design**

Search in Web of Science resulted in 1482 publications with authors affiliated to the Nordic countries (N = Denmark 55, Finland 515, Iceland 19, Norway 572, Sweden 401) out of a total of 28 886 items. This research field has expanded dramatically in WoS the last decades.

### **4. Preliminary results**

A set of eight research fronts was identified by means of bibliographic coupling which is presented in a two-dimensional map with networks on (dimension 1) teacher identity on one side most distant from pedagogical content knowledge on the other side, and (dimension 2) digital education in one direction and physical education in the other direction. Considering intellectual traditions five different networks was identified with (in dimension 1) nodes such as power and cultural reproduction on one side and with activity theory on the other side, and (in dimension 2) from matters of teacher student experiences to matters of teacher education reforming. These nodes and nets are further analysed.

### **5. Relevance**

Comparing different landscapes of Nordic teacher education research, we identified a strong American influence considering intellectual traditions. A set of more detailed comparisons of teacher education research in Nordic is presented in the final section where matters of Nordic and international research cooperation are discussed. The pros and cons of the research approach and data are considered in relation to the field of study.

## Conceptions of success and failure – Finnish pre-service teachers' stories of their future work

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This study focuses on professional identity as it is one of the research areas standing out as requiring future research needs in initial teacher education research in the Nordic countries. It is evident from the scoping review and evidence gap map that professional identity has been a key research focus in Finland (Aspfors & Eklund, 2017; Stenberg & Maaranen, 2020). Despite this, further research is needed to get a more nuanced picture of how professionals have been studied across different Nordic countries.

The Finnish context is the point of departure of this study, although the study responds to the call for more comparative research by being a part of a larger comparative project with participants from Finland, Norway and Sweden. The overall aim is to explore pre-service teachers' conceptions of success and failure in their future work as teachers. This study aims to deepen the understanding of pre-service teachers' professional identity development. The method for gathering data is empathy-based stories (Wallin et al., 2019) with two frame stories; one with a scenario of future success, and the other one with scenario of failure in the teaching work. In this study, the aim is more specifically to investigate Finnish pre-service teachers' stories of their future teaching work. This study consists of two data sets. The first data set was collected in December 2023, with 60 stories (32 with a positive and 28 with a negative future scenario) at one teacher education department. The second data set will be collected in January 2025 from another teacher education department. Altogether 100 pre-service teachers will be asked to write the stories of their future work as part of a course assignment.

In line with the preliminary analysis from the first department, pre-service teachers focus on similar aspects of teachers' work when it comes to conceptions of both success and failure in their future work. Relations with colleagues are one of the most important factors for success and pre-service teachers emphasize good cooperation and support. Furthermore, classroom management and relations with the pupils are seen as crucial for success, as well as self-awareness and wellbeing in the profession. In reverse, workload and ill-being are aspects related to failure in the profession, followed by poor relations with colleagues, pupils, and parents. The findings of this study will increase the understanding of pre-service teachers' professional identity in a wider Nordic perspective. Thus, pre-service teachers' conceptions of their future work are relevant knowledge for both the development of teacher education and teachers' professional development.

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## Knowledge integration in teacher education through the use of simulation: Cases from Denmark and Norway

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<sup>1</sup>Østfold University College, Norway. <sup>2</sup>VIA University College, Denmark

A persistent challenge in teacher education (TE) is bridging the theory-practice gap. This gap, often encountered by student and novice teachers, stems from the abstract nature of their preparatory education compared to the situated nature of in-service experiences (Canrinus et al., 2017). Effective teaching requires integrating diverse knowledge resources, from educational theories and research to subject-specific knowledge, didactics, practical skills, and an understanding of school contexts. Teachers must assess how to mobilize and integrate these resources for tasks such as planning, lecturing, or facilitating discussions. Addressing this discrepancy can begin during school placements, but there is a call for more innovative approaches, like simulations, in Nordic TE (Forsström & Munthe, 2023). The discussion in the roundtable will include perspectives on student teachers' outcomes from a roleplay of a parent-teacher meeting (Denmark) and digital simulations (Norway).

The framework of practice-based TE (e.g. Grossman & Fraefel, 2024) emphasizes that simulations can allow student teachers to practice elements with high support and reduced complexity. According to Hermansen and Mausestaden (2023), designing for knowledge use and collaborative integration in simulations requires: (1) *Knowledge Resource Pool*: Providing comprehensive conceptual and material resources (e.g., books, research articles, digital devices) for students to activate in familiar activities. (2) *Scenario Integration*: Creating scenarios to integrate various knowledge production modes in technology-enhanced, scenario-based simulations. (3) *Resource Analysis*: Supporting student teachers in analyzing the affordances and constraints of specific knowledge resources, aiding them in assessing potential. (4) *Creative Connection*: Recognizing that linking knowledge resources and processes is a creative, analytical task evolving through practice.

In both cases a design-based research approach is used. The Danish case examines a simulation in the format of a parent-teacher meeting roleplay in campus teaching. The Norwegian case aims to develop iteratively refined learning activities and resources to advance learning theories and practices. Collaborating with teacher educators, student teachers, and teachers, the study identifies challenges in knowledge integration and develops scenarios integrated into technology-enhanced simulations. These scenarios employ various forms such as desktop VR using 360 cameras (CAVA360VR) and modified AI chatbots, enabling teachers to pause, reflect, and discuss knowledge resource integration.

Student teachers' outcomes are analyzed through observations and a qualitative survey with open reflections (Braun et al., 2021).

The findings from the two cases will be presented under the following themes: (1) *Renewing Teaching Approaches*: Addressing the need for updated teaching and learning approaches in TE. (2) *Innovative Simulations*: Developing innovative, scenario-based simulations using the latest technology. (3) *Teacher Leadership*: Educating prospective teachers to take on leadership roles. (4) *Communication and Concepts*: The importance of effective communication and conceptual choices. (5) *Theoretical Motivation*: Increasing motivation for further theoretical studies. (6) *Embodied Learning*: Understanding the role of embodied learning. (7) *Collaborative Learning*: Highlighting collaborative learning through discussions and feedback.

Based on these two cases and the evidence gap map (Forsström & Munthe, 2023), the roundtable will discuss the need for comparative Nordic research to further explore simulations as an innovative approach in TE.

## Roundtable discussion: 'So, what's the difference?': collaborating for pedagogy across the North and Arctic

Chair: Paul Adams, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

Discussants: Flavia Devonas Hoffman, College of Social Education, Greenland

Pigga Keskitalo, University of Lapland, Finland

Kalpana Vijayavarathan, University of the Faroe Islands, Faroe Islands

Maria Brännvall, University of Agder, Norway

This roundtable brings together researchers engaged in a two-year Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) funded collaborative project 'New Northern Pedagogies: exploring Arctic Pedagogy for ITE', (2023 to 2025). This follows a small-scale Scottish Government funded project in the academic year 2022 to 2023 which aimed to consider the place for Arctic Pedagogy for Scottish Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Originating in dis-satisfaction with the Anglo-phonc position that pedagogy is merely 'the methods and practices of teaching', the project seeks to bring together a range of interested parties to identify and exemplify more expansive and/or relational interpretations. Specifically, the project values 'Arctic Pedagogy' not as a prescriptive model, but as a metaphor that honours diverse pedagogic worldviews through which we seek to foster inclusive, and transformative forms, such as those implicit in Indigenous knowledge systems. We endeavour to understand the intimacy of people, place, and time, that are so often overlooked or labelled through the D/discourse of 'absence,' (re)framing them instead as foundational 'presences'.

The group's approach diverges from traditional research methods focused on immediate findings or outcomes, seeking, instead, to weave a 'community of praxis' through the creation of an inclusive 'third space, transforming hitherto colonial mindsets by engagement with voices such as those that are Indigenous. Here we seek to generate '...Gutiérrezian third-space theory [which] challenges dominant D/discourses though its invocation of a space for improvised, dialogical exchange' (Adams, 2023: 156) where individuals might find resonance and empowerment in their work. This 'pedagogic tapestry' recognizes the value of multiple voices, inviting participants to share in the transformative process of inclusive-engagement, grounded in both Indigenous perspectives and Arctic frameworks.

Through this roundtable, members of the RSE project will share insights into how Indigenous and Arctic paradigms have influenced their thinking, extending invitations for others to join the conversation as new projects are planned or developed.

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## **Arctic Pedagogy in Higher Education in Greenland**

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A key concern of Arctic Pedagogy is to anchor education in the local arctic context, which can include indigenous worldviews and traditional ways of living, nature and geographical conditions, as well as communities and elders (UArctic, 2017; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2019). At the College for Social Education in Greenland, a working group was established to examine how Arctic Pedagogy can be used in the design, implementation and content of education in social pedagogy (which includes early childhood education and social work). This group arises from the need of rethinking social pedagogy education in Greenland: How do we implement Greenlandic values into higher education without reinforcing a dualism between Greenlandic and Western ideologies? We use participatory action research to reach a joint understanding of what Arctic Pedagogy means for us and to understand how we can design learning environments through place-, community-, and culture-responsive practice. The research project involves students, educators in social pedagogy, early childhood educators, social workers, and local knowledge bearers such as elders. The aim is to increase quality and relevance of social pedagogy education through culturally appropriate education, and thereby contribute to a sense of belonging and a sustainable and resilient society in Greenland. At the round table, I will share insights about the process and outcomes of our work.

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## **The presense of place. A phenomenological interview study in a school in a sparsely populated area in northern Sweden.**

Maria Brännvall

University of Agder, Norway

The research project aimed to contribute with a deepened understanding and knowledge of the teaching profession's opportunities to stand as a guarantor of the welfare state. This is done by reflecting teachers' thoughts and experiences in relation to the surrounding place and finding out what opportunities and limitations the place provides for the creation of an equal education.

According to lifeworld theory, understanding our connection to the environment or the space around us is not a one-way relationship, but rather a dual. The theory posits that by understanding the idea of space, we can understand what the 'lifeworld' is and how this 'world' works. Lifeworld thus denotes the ontological, epistemological and methodological space that is created in and by people's relationship with what we call our world." (Bredmar & Dahlberg, 2019)

Since it is the teachers' experiences of their life world that are examined in this study, it is with a qualitative research approach that I collect empirical data. It is about the meeting between the place where the school is and where the teachers carry out their work, together with the conditions that surround the place. It is fundamental in phenomenology that there is a mutual relationship between people and phenomena, and by studying teachers' lived experiences I create an image of the phenomenon and the characteristics it has.

The place in this study is a place marked by the consequences of urbanization, which contribute to and create a field of tension in the teacher's pedagogical work in the school. The meaning I assign to the concept of equity for this study means that in the field of tension, challenges are revealed for the teaching profession's opportunities to stand as a guarantor of the welfare state when a perceived urban norm drives depopulation from places where knowledge grows. Even the fact that the *bildung* debate has been replaced by a discussion about measurable results (Lundgren, 2017b) contributes to these challenges.

In this study, I have shown that through a phenomenological perspective, it is possible to open up a discussion about the concept of knowledge, and through that, develop the School Act's basic goal of equal education throughout the country and thereby nuance the purpose of education in the school system in Sweden. In other words, I have created an opportunity to make use of the diversity of knowledge that different places provide us with by opening up to a different way of thinking regarding the education assignment in the Swedish school system.

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## Roundtable discussion: Leading by example as teachers and university teachers and researchers.

Chair: Isabelle Letellier, Stockholm University, Sweden

Discussant: Anne-Kathrin Peters, KTH, Sweden

Education for sustainability has this specificity that it doesn't only aim at communicating a knowledge but that it also aims at transforming both our students and at a larger scale society. The goal of transformation requires that the education focuses on framing new internalized behaviors and requires therefore a reflection on these internalization processes, as well as what they imply for our teaching. From a psychological development perspective, we know that children first internalize what is right or wrong based on what they perceive the adults they trust do and later even based on what their friends do. From the perspective of internalization processes modelling learning can therefore play a major role. And it is all the more important that society doesn't necessarily mirror the sustainable behaviors that are being learned. From a climate psychology perspective the concept of cognitive dissonance is pointed out as what often explains how people "think right" but "do wrong". For instance if I think hypermobility is unsustainable but book a trip to New Zealand, this means that I acted in a cognitive dissonant way. Cognitive dissonance is in short: knowledge without action. Based on model learning process there is a risk that receiving education for sustainability from actors who exhibit unsustainable practices are in fact taught to act in the same cognitive dissonant way than their own teachers - rather than taught environmental consciousness.

It is therefore essential to frame our students environmental consciousness so that they can frame children's environmental consciousness. How can we insure not just that we teach knowledge about sustainability but also that we transform them into environmentally conscious individuals and citizens? How can students be supported to make their own ecological transition as individuals and citizens so that they can support children to become ecologically conscious individuals and citizens? What does transforming our students require in terms of time frame and pedagogic strategies?

But we can resonate one step further: if model learning is essential in framing environmental consciousness of our students shouldn't we even look back at ourselves who teach the future teachers? How do we model learn environmental consciousness to our own students? Are the individual and collective practices we communicate framing individual and collective environmental consciousness? What is our ecological responsibility as university teachers in education programs? Can we transform ourselves and our institutions? How? This calls for a transformation of our own individual and collective practices as university teachers: How can we frame the ecological transition in our universities?

The roundtable invites to a collective reflection about the conditions for transformative pedagogies that frame environmental consciousness and give hope in change: how we can frame our students' environmental consciousness, how we can become ourselves environmentally conscious as university teachers and researchers in our individual and collective practices.



## Workshop: From a dystopian present towards a hopeful future: Re-vitalising dialogue around teacher education through the arts

Chair: Josephine Moate, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Discussant: Eva Vass, Western Sydney University, Australia

The turbulence of current times has increased the urgency with which we must revisit fundamental questions in education. In our era permeated by positivist framings devaluing emotions, separating mind from body and prioritising abstract rationality, the arts remain the core mode of embodied perception and expression. Embodied experiences and lived encounters can catalyse personal, pedagogic and scholarly discernment and metamorphosis. The arts also enable a reopening to others, nurturing a community of confluence into being.

This workshop uses E.M. Forster's (1909) short story *The Machine Stops* as a provocation for revisiting habits and habitats that inform teacher education, and the landscapes we curate as teacher educators. Whilst Forster's depiction of a dystopian future resonates with life today, his desolate ending has not happened yet. As humans we can still make better choices, as educators we can work towards a better world. Building on the core themes in his short story, we aim to dialogue with our audience to imagine and formulate an alternate ending – one which offers hope. Our aim is to invite participants into scholarly dialogue extending beyond the intellect, bringing participants' embodied and felt experiences to the centre. Collectively, we will be exploring and opening to the possible.

We draw on Bakhtinian dialogism and Natural Inclusionality (Rayner, 2011) as complementary philosophies for revisiting the situatedness of teacher education, theorisations of education and reciprocity as the heart of educational relationships. This philosophical fusion invites dialogue beyond conventional academic modalities creating space for a pedagogy of hope (Hodgson, et al. 2018) and aligns with a shift to eco-centred notions of education (Biesta, 2022) and valuing the arts in Nordic educational research (Biesta, Skregelid, & Bøe, 2024).

This workshop has four interconnected parts: an aesthetic retelling of Forster's dystopian short story, a curated dialogue between the workshop leaders and participants on vulnerability and vitality in teacher education, a short presentation of how this story offers a prompt to pursue gratitude, diversity and sustainability within teacher education and a reflection with workshop participants on arts-based scholarship as an opportunity to re-vitalise, rather than instrumentalise, teacher education. This workshop encourages an aesthetic educational encounter to revisit the habitat and habits of teacher education. Through activities and provocations, participants will have the opportunity to encounter, engage with and to express the often taken-for-granted in terms of educational relationships and environments. Technology and visual arts will facilitate sharing and documenting different perspectives laying the foundation for further scholarly dialogue and arts-based approaches in teacher education research and practice.

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## Symposium: Nordic Teacher Induction: Promoting Professional Development for Newly Qualified Teachers through Nordic and Baltic Collaboration

Chair: Tonje H. Brokke, University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

Discussant: Gert Biesta, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

This symposium introduces the results of the collaborative research in the Nordic countries on mentoring and induction that has focused on pathways for professional development.

The **first** presentation of this symposium introduces the network Nordic Teacher Induction (NTI), a cross-sectorial collaboration network on induction and mentoring newly qualified teachers in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The historical account starts from early 2000's and move to today, towards the current project "Promoting Professional Development" (NTI-PPD) and the new project under application: "Flourishing and Becoming (NTI-FAB).

The **second** presentation "Empowering Mentor Teachers through a Pedagogy of Hope" focuses on programs of Mentoring Education. This paper looks at the kind of quality provided in mentor education across the Nordics and Estonia. It looks at how mentor education is linked to initial teacher education and how it is linked to professional development cycles for mentors, mentees and for learning communities in schools.

The **third** presentation "Defining Mentoring in Nordic and Estonian Education Policy" explores how mentoring is defined - what it is and what it could be - in current education policy across the region. Collaborative efforts between teachers' trade unions, teacher educators and researchers play a pivotal role in shaping policy changes and garnering political attention on mentoring in the educational landscape.

The **fourth** presentation "What is the point of mentoring (in the Nordics): Some theoretical openings to see mentoring in a new light" zooms out to ask "what is the point of mentoring?: What (good) mentoring is, and what it could be?" Drawing on balancing Biesta's three dimensions of good education (qualification, socialization and subjectification), this presentation moves the focus to the challenges and opportunities for future Nordic cooperation. This will provide a platform for a new NTI project based on the domains of purpose of education.

### **Nordic Teacher Induction (NTI): A cross-sectorial network collaboration**

Tonje Harbek Brokke<sup>1</sup>, Åse Bonde<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway. <sup>2</sup>Danish Union of Teachers, Denmark

This symposium outlines a unique cross-sectoral cooperation to develop mentoring in the Nordic countries. The network started as a joint project between universities and teacher educators but was expanded to include teacher unions. The network brings together researchers, teacher educators and teacher union representatives from the Nordics (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden).

The network roots back to 2004 when the Newly Qualified Teachers in Northern Europe network was established, consisting of researchers of mentoring from all these countries. In 2017, the network was joined by teacher union

representatives from the aforementioned countries, thus becoming more cross-sectoral and deliberately taking a more visible role in policy making in terms of teachers' professional development.

The present collaborative project NTI-PPD (financed through Nordplus Horizontal) aims at investigating how the practices of teacher induction and mentoring of new teachers are prefigured (enabled/constrained) in the Nordic countries and Estonia as part of continuous professional development. Through our collaboration, we have contributed to developing practices of mentoring and induction through analyses of existing practices and research-based knowledge. The collaboration between different partners in the wider education community has created a deeper understanding and contributed to a greater diversity.

Another aim has been to strengthen the Nordic and Baltic voice in international policymaking and public discourse related to induction and mentoring, and this collaboration between researchers and teacher unions has enabled discussions that focus on research as well as experience-based knowledge on how to establish sustainable systems, highlighting diversity and tensions in our different practices and experiences. The network has also taken an active role in developing a European dimension of mentoring and induction research.

This year's NTI-symposium will present findings from the NTI-PPD project 2023 – 2025. In addition to this brief presentation paper, the symposium consists of 3 other papers where the two first papers present findings from the current project. The third paper points to the new NTI project: Flourishing and Becoming (under application), where the aim is to give a voice to the newly qualified teachers themselves.

**Paper 2:** Empowering Mentor Teachers through a Pedagogy of Hope. Presenters: Sally Windsor et.al

**Paper 3:** Defining Mentoring in Nordic and Estonian Education Policy. Presenters: Elisabeth Halse et.al

**Paper 4:** What is the point of mentoring (in the Nordics): Domains of purpose and future potentials. Presenters: Hannu L.T. Heikkinen et.al

### **Empowering Mentor Teachers: Mentoring Education in the North**

Sally Windsor<sup>1</sup>, Mattias Börjesson<sup>1</sup>, Birna Svanbjörnsdóttir<sup>2</sup>, Katrin Poom-Valickis<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gothenburg University, Sweden. <sup>2</sup>University of Akureyri, Iceland. <sup>3</sup>Tallin University, Estonia

In the context of ever-evolving educational landscapes, mentor teachers hold a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining the next generation of educators. How, then, are mentor teachers educated to take on this important role? This part of the symposium explores how mentor teachers can be empowered with a pedagogy of hope (through mentor education) which will create sustainable pathways for teaching and learning. We build on work that the Nordic Teacher Induction (NTI) network has done gathering accounts of mentoring education, and look at what research is being done on mentoring education and how mentoring education professionally develops mentors and, in turn, how mentoring education can contribute to schools.

We seek answers to the following questions: What kind of quality is provided in mentor education, and is it fit for purpose? How does mentor education 'speak to' initial teacher education, and can the two foster a stronger (re)connection between schools and universities? Is mentoring intricately linked to professional development cycles (for both mentors and mentees), and is it important in contexts with issues recruiting and retaining teachers, as we suspect? How is mentoring, or should it be, integrated into the whole school development process?

We understand that high quality mentor education can ensure that mentorship not only addresses immediate needs but also contributes to the holistic development of schools and the educational community. There has been a trend in recent years where there is a growing disconnection between teacher education programs and schools, yet we understand that mentors seek further connection/collaboration with teacher education (Yildirim et al, under review). Mentor education can help re-establish this connection and contribute to the building of professional learning communities or communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in schools.

The sustainability, diversity and critical importance of mentor education (Ulvik & Sunde, 2013) is discussed in this presentation, with an emphasis on how mentoring education can address issues of teacher retention and well-being (Ellis et al., 2020). In a time of ongoing ecological and societal crises, environmental destruction and the degeneration of democratic norms, the question of how mentor education can contribute to a more sustainable world in which teachers and students develop the capacities to counteract these trends. Sustainable mentor education that prioritizes the mental, emotional, and professional health of all teachers, including mentor teachers and student teachers is crucial for the teaching profession (Rinne et al. 2022). As is mentoring education that includes strategies for mentor teachers to develop culturally relevant curricula, enhance equity in classrooms, and support mentees from underrepresented groups.

### **Defining Mentoring in Nordic and Estonian Education Policy**

Elisabeth Halse<sup>1</sup>, Päivi Lyhykainen<sup>2</sup>, Jonina Hauksdottir<sup>3</sup>, Reemo Voltri<sup>4</sup>, Åse Bonde<sup>5</sup>, Per Båvner<sup>6</sup>, Sally Windsor<sup>7</sup>, Sissel Havre<sup>8</sup>, Mattias Börjesson<sup>7</sup>

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This paper outlines collaborative work done between teacher unions and teacher education academics in the NTI-network to create a deeper understanding of how mentoring for newly qualified teachers (NQT) is defined or understood in policy documents, and in turn provide new knowledge and approaches to inform policy in regard to sustainable systems of mentoring and induction.

From earlier work in the NTI-network, we have found that in the Nordic countries and Estonia mentoring practices for NQTs are considered important but are enabled or constrained through national policy in very different ways, fx. regarding funding, national/local systems for mentoring, collective agreements with teacher unions and the systematic evaluation (Windsor et al, under review).

As the term “mentoring” has an unclear definition and is used in research, policy and day-to-day settings with different and vague meanings (Olsen et al. 2020), when discussing the term within the NTI-network, we have agreed on our own definition of sustainable mentoring. We suggest that a mentor, regardless of context, research or policy is an experienced teacher, who engages in processes (i.e mentoring) that facilitate and enable an inexperienced teacher's continued professional development and well-being, not by being more knowledgeable but by mutually reflecting on teaching and teaching-related tasks in order to support and develop future practice (NTI, 2024). This working definition outlines a sustainable cycle of learning and development for new teachers and experienced teachers alike.

We ask the following questions:

How, if at all, is mentoring for newly qualified teachers defined in policy in the Nordic countries and Estonia?

As the teacher unions influence policy on mentoring for NQTs, how, if at all, do they define mentoring?

How do the definitions, or understandings, connect to a sustainable and professional development for the NQT?

Two theoretical perspectives underpin this work. The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al. 2014) offers a theoretical lens to identify conditions of possibility in educational settings and this study uncovers the enabling and constraining factors that shape mentoring practices for NQTs, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play. Secondly, Biesta's conception of 'Good education' (2015) is reconceptualised in terms of 'good mentoring'. We posit that good mentoring consists of three interconnected purposes: qualification; socialisation; and subjectification.

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## **WHAT IS THE POINT OF TEACHER INDUCTION (IN THE NORDICS): SOME THEORETICAL OPENINGS TO SEE MENTORING IN A NEW LIGHT**

Hannu L.T. Heikinen<sup>1</sup>, Per Båvner<sup>2</sup>, Eva Bjerkholt<sup>3</sup>, Sissel Havre<sup>4</sup>, Tonje Harbek Brokke<sup>3</sup>, Sally Windsor<sup>5</sup>, Birna María S. Svanbjörnsdóttir<sup>6</sup>

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This presentation asks what (good) mentoring is, and what it could be (in the Nordics). Based on this paper, we outline the challenges and opportunities for a future project of the Nordic Teacher Induction (NTI) – network. The project aims to reframe the induction of new teachers around the principle of human flourishing. This approach, based on the Ancient Greece idea of "eudaimonia", often translated as "good life" or "flourishing", and recently supported by bodies like UNESCO and the OECD, emphasizes that a central aim of education is to be able to live well in a world worth living in (Kemmis et al. 2024). This extends the aims of education beyond traditional aims of qualification, advocated especially by the human capital theory. Inspired by a growing international movement (e.g. Curren et al., 2024; de Ruyter et al., 2022; Kristjansson 2020), this project embraces the idea that education should emphasize the immediate and long-term well-being and interconnectivity of individuals with their communities and the world.

To ground this approach, the project draws on Gert Biesta's (2021) three domains of education—qualification, socialization, and subjectification—and particularly highlights the often-overlooked area of subjectification. Traditionally, mentoring places particular emphasis on qualification (knowledge, skills and competences), reflected

in the common term newly *qualified* teacher, where the term qualification is literally in the middle of the concept. Becoming a teacher is also largely acknowledged as a process of socialisation, where new members adopt the culture, routines, practices, values and norms of the community. However, socialisation is not just a one-way street: newcomers also have the opportunity to critically examine the values, habits and practices. Traditionally in mentoring, socialisation has been understood rather one-way; its history is full of paternalistic examples: new teachers are positioned as objects of support or tacit knowledge transfer. They are often seen missing something essential. This approach has been called a deficit perspective on mentoring (Kelchtermans et al. 2019; Skytterstad et al. 2025). Instead, new teachers can be seen from a non-deficit perspective as agents of social transformation.

While focusing on qualification and socialisation, the subjectification dimension has been largely overshadowed in mentoring. Together with (new) teachers, we must ask some of the most fundamental questions of life, such as how I want to exist in this world and flourish as a unique human being. We also argue that the Nordic "bildning" tradition opens up interesting views on a subjectification perspective. In "bildning", education is about cultivating one's humanity in a way that fosters self-understanding, empathy, and a deeper connection to the world. Individuals are seen as striving toward an ideal image of what it means to be human, representing the highest potential of human existence, encompassing moral integrity and wisdom. Understood in this way, mentoring can be a transformative process of subjectification through which teachers approach this ideal and commit themselves to lifelong growth and self-discovery, understanding themselves and their fellow human beings as part of nature, thus opening perspectives for transcending anthropocentrism.

## Symposium: Professional Mentoring for Individual and Collective Competence Development – Local Mentoring Programs for Newly Qualified Teachers in Norway

Chair: Gerd Sylvi Steinnes, Volda University College, Norway

Discussant: Birna Svanbjornsdottir, University of Akureyri, Iceland

Mentoring for newly qualified teachers in kindergartens, primary schools, and upper secondary education has been a political priority in Norway since 2004. Over these years, the national network for mentoring of newly qualified teachers within Norwegian teacher education programs has collaborated with kindergarten and school owners on the development of local high-quality mentoring programs.

Local mentoring programs aim to prevent dropout from the teaching profession and help create strong connections between the qualifications gained in teacher education and further professional development in the field. These programs are also intended to recognize and highlight the competence of newly qualified teachers within the professional community. Qualified mentors, collective processes, collaboration with teacher education programs, and mentoring programs anchored within the organization can provide learning and development for all stakeholders.

Systematic professional mentoring is based on research- and experience-based knowledge, and the national network for mentoring of newly qualified teachers has taken responsibility for contributing to research in the field. Examples of such research are presented in the anthology that forms the basis for this symposium. In spring 2025, the network will celebrate its 20th anniversary with the publication of the anthology *"Mentoring for Individual and Collective Professional Development."* The symposium's introduction will elaborate on the main themes of the anthology and the network's thoughts on an anthology that reflects diversity and development over the past twenty years.

The symposium will present articles from three of the main areas of the anthology. From the area "Foundational Thinking in Mentoring," the article *"Practical Vocational Theory: A Fetish in Mentoring?"* by Kari Søndenå and Eva Bjerkholt will be presented. The article discusses a conception of mentoring developed by Handal and Lauvås, which has had a strong influence on the field of mentoring. The authors problematize how a one-sided, individual, and personal orientation has been insufficient for professional development and has reduced the mentor's mandate.

From the area "Mentor Education," the article *"Education for Professional Mentoring – Mentor Students' Perspectives on the Significance of Their Education"* by Inger Merethe Hansen et al. will be presented. This article explores the importance of mentor education for the development of professional mentors. The authors examine what students in mentor education programs report as significant content for their development as professional mentors.

From the area "Sustainable Mentoring Programs," the article *"Local Mentoring Programs: Superficial Plans and Systems or Sustainable Programs for a Good Professional Start?"* by Nina Aa. Vasseljen and Anne Kristin Dahl will be presented. The article emphasizes quality and sustainability developed through processes of shared understanding of goals, co-created knowledge, and development. It proposes ideas for the further development of

the national framework and calls for an elaboration of formulations such as "planned and sustainable system" and "...clearly anchored and with close contact between actors and levels."

The presentations will be followed by a commentary from Birna Svanbjörnsdóttir, Associate Professor, University of Akureyri, Iceland.

### **The concept "Praktisk yrkesteori" (Theory of practice) – is this concept a "fetish" in mentoring?**

Kari Søndena<sup>1</sup>, Eva Bjerkholt<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Stavanger, Norway. <sup>2</sup>University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

The intention of this article is to shed a critical light on mentoring in higher education. The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotop is introduced as an idea that enables human action in mentor context, including culture and tradition and personal experience and as an alternative to or in addition to theory of practice. We are interested in the two concepts, theory of practice and chronotop as generators of basic ideas in mentor's work. A tradition developed by Handal and Lauvås has dominated the knowledge base of mentoring in the Nordics for several decades. Theory of practice is one of the main concepts, representing an individual perspective with focus on personal thoughts and actions. We ask what we do if the theory of practice is sealed as a main entrance in mentoring. We assert that theory of practice with individual and personal orientation is not sufficient in mentoring, and that the mandate of the mentor is reduced. Will the content of mentoring be disconnected from the community mandate and the collective base of knowledge in professional work? We discuss a dialogic paradigm, with emphasis on culture and tradition and on collective as well as individual values, as a counterforce to the concept of theory of practice. This discussion about ontological and epistemological perspectives in mentoring is important for influencing on the development of the theoretical knowledgebase of mentoring in the Nordic countries.

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## Development as professional mentors - students' perspectives on mentor education in Norway.

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### Research topic/aim

The aim of this study is to shed light on the contribution of mentor education to the development of professional mentors. We examine four mentor education programs at master's level from three higher education institutions in Norway. The research project follows the first two cohorts after the introduction of the national framework for mentoring newly qualified teachers in kindergartens and schools. We ask: *What do the students present as significant in their mentor education for their development as professional mentors?*

### Methodology/research design

The data consists of student texts. The article is based on a comparative study combined with contextual analyses with the four entries (Kazamias, 2009; Kindeberg, 2011; Røise, 2022; Svensson & Dumas, 2013).

### Theoretical framework

The discussion interprets and describes the significance of our findings considering previous research, views of professional learning and mentoring (Bjerkholt, 2017; Dysthe et al., 2020; Skagen, 2021; Svare, 2006; Søndena, 2004, 2009; Worum, 2014) and professional ethics (Levinas, 1993; Løgstrup, 1991).

### Results/findings

The students' preconceptions were mainly mentoring as a practical-methodological approach emphasizing individual development. This notion evolved into an understanding of mentoring as a complex ethical and dialogical activity viewing mentoring as collective learning processes founded on the knowledge base of the teaching professions. The students describe how varied work methods that link theory and practice contribute to becoming more confident and aware of critical perspectives. Gradually they use different strategies and approaches, as well as broadens the view of learning as a mentor.-

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Higher education institutions offering mentor education are recommended to facilitate learning activities characterized by differences and multivoicedness that challenge dominant individual-oriented mentoring traditions.

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**LOCAL MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS: SUPERFICIAL PLANS AND SYSTEMS OR SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS FOR A GOOD START AS TEACHERS? Experiences from co-creating a knowledge base for local mentoring programs.**

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In Norway, all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) should be offered professional mentoring at the start of their career. Local mentoring programs for NQTs are described by Norwegian school authorities as “Planned and sustainable systems rooted locally at owner and school/unit level...” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018). A national evaluation in 2021 identified three success criteria for local mentoring programs: “Qualified mentors, clear anchoring and close contact between actors and the organizational levels, and mentoring programs that are flexible and adapted to local conditions” (Rambøll, 2021). The article is based on a R&D project in three regions in Trøndelag 2021-2022 where school owners, school leaders, mentors, NQTs and teacher educators developed co-created knowledge for the career start of NQTs and local mentoring programs.

Cultural historical activity theory (Leont’ev 1978, 1981; Mietinnen, 2009) provides the study’s theoretical foundation. The method of the study is action research (Elliot, 1991; Hiim, 2016) and data are collected through focus group interviews, surveys among school owners, school leaders, mentors and NQTs, and document analysis. The data has been analyzed using the constant comparative analysis method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The article emphasizes the importance of local ownership and shared responsibility with interacting plans and actions. It also draws attention to quality and sustainability developed through processes for shared understanding of purpose and goals, co-created knowledge and development. It proposes ideas for further development of the national framework and requests an elaboration of formulations such as “planned and sustainable system” and “...clearly anchored and with close contact between actors and levels...”

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## Symposium: Teacher Shortage: Hope for the New Generation of Newly Qualified Teachers' Flourishing in Schools

Chair: Eva Bjerkholt, University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

Discussant: Auli Toom, University of Helsinki, Finland

The research project STEP: Partnership for Sustainable Transition from Teacher Education to Profession is a project built on hope for collaboration between stakeholders in the aim of retaining Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in school. It follows the first generation of students with a five-year master's education for primary school teachers in Norway during the last year of study and the first two years as teachers.

The primary objective is to develop research- and experience-based knowledge on transition from Teacher Education into the profession.

Secondary objective: Identify student teachers' expectations to the profession and school actors' expectations to NQTs' competence.

Secondary objective: Identify experiences of tension and recognition of these NQTs with a master-degree (master thesis) and deeper subject knowledge in some subjects than earlier generations.

We investigate collaboration between research and policymaking and discuss how this collaboration regarding teacher shortage may give hope for the new generation teachers. We interview the different actors in schools: Employers, head teachers, newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching, their mentors and colleagues. We ask how NQTs' competence is valued in schools by mentors, colleagues and employers and how NQTs experience and feel included in the professional communities in schools. We discuss how our reliance on crisis metaphors oversimplifies the complexities of new teacher induction and create solutions that may obscure the real issues. We then look at how to sustain a long career in teaching through an intergenerational conversation around reflections and insights around teaching itself. Finally, we will highlight dilemmas and tensions around partnership, research and policymaking and hope for the future.

The symposium consists of four papers:

Newly Qualified Teachers – hope for the future or is teaching still an occupation that “cannibalizes its young?”

Presenters: Janne Madsen, Marit Ulvik, Eva Bjerkholt

Crisis Metaphors in New Teacher Induction: Constructing Problems and their Prefigured Solutions. Presenter: Remi Skytterstad

After the first STEP: How to sustain a career in teaching? Presenter: Gert Biesta

Tensions in partner collaboration for developing research and policy about teacher induction in Norway.

Presenters: Gunn Gallavara, Jorun Sandsmark

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### **Newly qualified teachers – hope for the future or is teaching still an occupation that “cannibalizes its young”?**

Marit Ulvik<sup>1</sup>, Janne Madsen<sup>2</sup>, Eva Bjerkholt<sup>2</sup>

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Twenty years ago, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) described teaching as an occupation that “cannibalizes its young” (p. 682) highlighting high levels of attrition particularly among newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

There is still a substantial number of teachers who leave the profession during their first years in practice (Thomas et al., 2019), and teacher shortages have become a global problem (UNESCO, 2023). The demanding nature of the workload, linked to performativity and accountability pressure, is mentioned as a key reason for leaving (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). What seems to enhance motivation to continue teaching is high-quality collegial support and a sense of being part of the team (Thomas et al., 2019).

Research indicates that NQTs possess professional knowledge that can benefit their colleagues (Fleming, 2014; März & Kelchtermans, 2020). A recent Norwegian study involving school leaders, mentors, and NQTs found that NQTs contribute high levels of commitment, flexibility, fresh perspectives, and new knowledge. However, their contributions are not always recognised or valued (Kvam et al., 2024). As a result, NQTs may feel only partially acknowledged as members of the team.

Several studies have advocated for moving beyond a deficit-based perspective regarding NQTs' work and recognizing them as valuable resources (Kelchtermans, 2019; Kvam et al., 2024; Sullivan et al., 2019). Focusing on helping can be counterproductive by emphasising the shortcomings of new teachers. (Correa et al., 2015; Kelchtermans, 2019).

Why attention is often placed on NQTs' perceived deficiencies, can among others be explained by school micropolitics. Schools are characterised by certain traditions and habits (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). This might lead NQTs to seek conformity within the organization (Lindqvist et al., 2020) rather than leveraging what they bring to the teaching profession.

The *Partnership for Sustainable Transition from Teacher Education to Profession (STEP)* project examines the transition from teacher education to school for Norwegian NQTs with master's degree. The five-year master's degree-based teacher education provides NQTs with enhanced academic and research competencies compared to previous teacher education. The Norwegian arrangement for NQTs aims to provide necessary support while

building on the competencies NQTs bring from their education, facilitating their professional growth and recognition as contributors within the teaching community (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

Despite skills gained through the five-year master's degree program, NQTs are often given challenging roles for which they feel underprepared. The study shows that the potential of their master's-level competencies is not always fully utilized. Their increased academic knowledge is often overshadowed by focus on lack of experience and ability to manage daily challenges. NQTs receive support, but this support often emphasizes what they lack rather than what they bring into schools.

When teacher education does not align with the practical challenges of schools and workplaces fail to appreciate the competencies new teachers bring, there is a risk that these teachers may not remain in the profession.

NB: References in the introduction to this symposium.

### **Crisis Metaphors in New Teacher Induction: Constructing Problems and their Prefigured Solutions**

Remi Skytterstad

UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

#### **Research Topic**

The use of “crisis” metaphors like “reality shock” and “keep your head above water” in the discourse surrounding new teacher induction is pervasive. Despite progress in our understanding of the challenges faced by new teachers, the metaphors we employ—and consequently the problems it constructs—lag behind. These metaphors, entrenched in policy, research, and public narratives, position new teachers as needing to be rescued—a status they either succumb to or resist. This framing, implicitly state they are the problem, not the solution (Mockler, 2019). This paper argues that, similar to the persistent use of temporal and epochal metaphors (Papastephanou, 2024), our reliance on crisis metaphors oversimplifies the complexities of new teacher induction, shaping superficial, individualized, and potentially counterproductive solutions while obscuring structural issues. The discourse on teacher attrition often centers around the idea of retention—keeping teachers within the profession. This framing is limited. Rather, we should consider shifting our framing from one of retention to sustainment. Sustaining teachers means more than just keeping them in the job; it means applying, supporting, and developing their continuous professional learning; valuing the competencies they bring; and integrating those competencies into the practices of the schools, effectively positioning new teachers as producers of practice, not only products of it.

If our solutions in research, policy, or practice are framed by the simplified desire of just keeping new teachers working in schools by “rescuing” them, we risk constructing the problem in a way that only allows for solutions that do exactly that and little more.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Inspired by Bacchi's (2016) What's the Problem Represented to be? approach, this paper unpacks how these metaphors construct new teachers as unprepared or in constant need of intervention, limiting the solutions we are able to consider to short-term fixes, like supervision, quality control, and so on. I draw from existing critique of “epochal metaphors” to argue that viewing induction as a string of individualized challenges obscures the interconnected systemic causes of teacher attrition.

#### **Research Design**

Applying Bacchi's WPR approach, the analysis seeks to uncover the underlying assumptions and implied solutions that shape policies, practices, and perceptions surrounding new teacher induction.

## Expected Results

The research is expected to demonstrate how “crisis” metaphors might construct problems that primarily prefigure solutions that fail to address the root causes of the challenges faced by new teachers.

## Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

By integrating the ‘Pedagogy of Hope’ theme, this paper argues for a shift in the way new teacher induction is metaphorized and discussed in Nordic educational research.

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## AFTER THE FIRST STEP: HOW TO SUSTAIN A CAREER IN TEACHING

### Gert Biesta

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

The first step into teaching is without doubt an important moment in the career of a teacher, and the STEP project has developed important insights into the dynamics and complexities of the transition from teacher education into the profession. But the first step is only the first step of what could become a whole life in teaching and perhaps even a whole life devoted to teaching. In addition to the question of how to take the first step and support new teachers in taking this step, there is therefore also another question that needs attention: how to sustain one’s career in teaching once one is ‘there.’ In this contribution I offer some insights from my own teaching career which, to my surprise, has been going on for more than four decades already. How have I managed to stay ‘in’ teaching? Was this a matter of managing? How much effort did it take? What kind of effort did it take? Where did I encounter difficulties? And what nourished me and kept me going? I will argue that it is important to ask these questions and share the insights from those who have been ‘around’ for quite some time with the new generation of teachers. Such an intergenerational conversation, which could perhaps take the form of writing letters in the way in which Philippe Meirieu has written his letter to young teachers (Meirieu 2005), can itself make a significant contribution to the sustainability of a teaching career. In my presentation I will also look back at my first step which, remarkably perhaps, was not a step based upon subject- knowledge – I had little or no knowledge of the subject I was going to teach – but a step into teaching itself. Perhaps that is part of what has sustained me over the decades. It definitely raises some interesting questions about the current obsession with the idea that teachers should first and foremost have strong subject-knowledge.

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## Tensions in partner collaboration for developing research and policy about teacher induction in Norway.

Gunn Gallavara<sup>1</sup>, Jorun Sandsmark<sup>2</sup>, Yngve Antonsen<sup>3</sup>

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Keywords: Mentoring, Collaboration, Induction, Policy, Norway, self-study.

#### Research topic/aim

We investigate the tensions we as partners experienced internally in a collaborative external financed project about improving the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Norway through research and policy. The tensions can be vehicles of change, but they can also significantly challenge the developments, and thus, investigating them allows to identify the key issues in the collaborative development. The equal partners in STEP are University of South-Eastern-Norway, UiT-The Arctic University of Norway, Union of Education Norway (teachers and leaders in kindergarten and schools), Norwegian Teacher Student Union and KS -The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (municipalities). STEP is as such a collaborative project where partners with different perspectives, expertise and experiences on equal level meet each other in a shared field.

Our theoretical framework consists of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström et al., 1999). CHAT is developed for analyzing and stimulating conceptual growth within and across the boundaries of activity systems, including different participants (Engeström, 2007). In addition, it emphasizes the importance of the social dimension concerning how individuals relate to the world, the activities of which they become a part and how historical continuity, and social contexts are important.

Our research question is: What tensions experienced the partners in the collaboration of the project?

#### Methodology/research design

We use a critical self-study approach to investigate our practice in the STEP-project with the intention to learn from it (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). The project included a variety of activities that included seminars, meetings, popular science articles, conference contributions. We have analysed written material from these meetings, in addition to self-reflective notes from the authors. In the project and in writing the article we have used international experts as reflective friends in line with descriptions of self-study.

#### Expected results/findings

The partners have different legitimate interests in the society, and this creates tensions in the project that had to be dealt with continually. Especially as the participants lack knowledge about the different interests the partners have in the project. We found tension in regard of developing fast policy and slow research and in the use of experience-based or research-based knowledge for improving the induction system.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Investigating how different partners could collaborate is essential for developing *Gratitude, Diversity, and Sustainability in Education*.

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## Roundtable discussion: Strengthening Supervisory Alliances through a Supervision Toolbox: Insights from Guidance Counselling Programmes in Turkey and Ireland

Chair: Ece Gokmenoglu, Maynooth University, Ireland

This roundtable discussion session introduces a supervision toolbox designed for use in group supervision sessions within a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Guidance Counselling programme in Ireland. The primary goal is to enhance the supervisory alliance in counselling supervision for postgraduate students conducting personal counselling with adolescents during their school placements.

Drawing on her doctoral dissertation in Counselling Supervision, the facilitator will present tools initially adapted for final-year undergraduate Guidance Counselling students in Turkey and have since been adapted to meet the needs of Irish postgraduate students, with a focus on strengthening the supervisory working alliance. The process of adapting these tools to align with different cultural and educational contexts will be discussed, highlighting how these tools support various phases of the supervisory relationship.

Key components of the toolbox include an adaptable “Supervision Contract” to clarify roles, a “Letter to the Supervisor” activity that allows supervisees to express their learning styles and interpersonal dynamics, and the “Professional Life Bridge” activity for goal-setting and reflection. Additional tools, such as the “Case Conceptualization Puzzle” for structured case analysis, a “Supervision Learning Objectives” checklist, and “Feed-forward Worksheets” to improve feedback within the supervision group, will also be introduced. Participants will engage with these tools through an interactive format involving group discussions and reflective exercises to explore each tool’s practical application.

This session underscores the value of an adaptable Supervision Toolbox that not only strengthens the supervisory alliance but also equips supervisors with innovative strategies to support supervisees’ personal and professional growth in a culturally sensitive manner. By the end of the session, participants will have reflected on ways to integrate these tools into their practice and foster a supportive, culturally responsive supervisory relationship tailored to their professional settings.

An effective supervision process is fundamental to successful counselling practice, supporting both professional competence and identity development in supervisees (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995; Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Beyond professional growth, a well-structured supervision process contributes to client mental health and, by extension, community well-being.

Central to supervision is the supervisory relationship (Holloway, 1995), also known as the “working alliance” (Bordin, 1983). A positive, collaborative relationship based on trust, understanding, and respect enhances the supervision experience (Fleming & Benedek, 1966; Campbell, 2000). Research suggests that fostering an open environment for difficult conversations (Knox et al., 2021), utilizing a “here-and-now” relational approach (Barron, Dayton & Goletz, 2022), and promoting cultural sensitivity (Kemer et al., 2021) are all key to strengthening this alliance. A strong supervisory relationship has been shown to increase supervisees’ motivation to learn while reducing anxiety around assessment, thus supporting their personal and professional development (Gokmenoglu, 2022).

## Symposium: Tensions in postqualitative research

Chairs: Charlotta Hilli, Åbo Akademi, Finland & Mark Hardman, University College London, United Kingdom

Discussant: Teresa Elkin Postila, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

The symposium presents inquiries into methodological tensions in postqualitative research. Postqualitative research invites humans, matter and nonhumans into the scientific processes, pointing to non-linear and dynamic events shaping the study. Doing research from such positions of speculative middles suggests thinking and doing research differently, from inside events, never as objective outsiders, sometimes inventing new methods or reimagining traditional ones (Springgay & Truman, 2018). However, nurturing (in) tensions or frictions when doing research differently becomes important to envision new futures. Thus, the symposium opens up tensions or frictions as spaces of unlearning/reimagining in four studies involving humans and matter through engaging with diverse movements of research praxes, crafting powerful artifacts and attuning to the mundane of matter in postqualitative research.

The symposium responds to current questions about the potentials and challenges of post-qualitative inquiry as openings towards immersive and embodied research practices to explore more-than-human and material agencies and dynamics. The methodological approaches discussed critically consider various concepts, ideas and practices of postqualitative research that offer inspiring, risky and uncomfortable encounters with human and more-than-human research members. Hilli and colleagues plug into literature's thing-power in teacher student's learning diaries through a practice of painting with movement and consider how such an approach created further movements in the researchers' collective thinking and moving with each other, learning diaries, theories and images. Jones and colleagues resist the notion of consensus when doing qualitative research together, and explore how a decolonial research praxis of walking-with can cultivate humility, vulnerability and unlearning in higher education. Clucas elaborates on crafting powerful artifacts in mutuality for participating humans and non-humans in STEAM learning spaces as possibilities to shift to relational ontological positions. Mehto focuses on tensions when attuning to agentic materiality and the mundane of materiality in students' learning-by-making projects to draw attention to how nonlinear interactions with materials provide the potential to foster learning with the world.

By turning the focus towards research practices and themselves as researchers, the presenters of this symposium consider practical consequences in teacher education and for re-imagining/developing pedagogical practices. The four studies grapple with various discordances, clashes, and unpredictabilities of post-qualitative research as challenging and enriching possibilities to create knowledge beyond human-centred perspectives. Each presentation is 15 minutes long, followed by a 10-minute discussion by the discussant. The symposium ends with a joint discussion with questions from the audience.

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## Literature's thing-power in teacher education - Thinking and painting with movement

Charlotta Hilli<sup>1</sup>, Jenny Renlund<sup>2</sup>, Jenny Byman<sup>2</sup>, Alexandra Nordström<sup>2</sup>, Heidi Höglund<sup>1</sup>, Katrina Åkerholm<sup>1</sup>, Sofia Jusslin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Åbo Akademi University, Finland. <sup>2</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland

### Research topic

This collaborative research involved seven educational researchers from Finland with different research interests and backgrounds, all connected to teacher education and postqualitative approaches. During the symposium, the presenters will discuss tensions and potentials of an analytic process of scribbling, writing and painting with movements when thinking with nine learning diaries by Finnish early childhood education student teachers.

### Theory and research design

The learning diaries inspired us to delve into literature's thing-power (Bennett, 2010) and trace the movements set in motion by literature in early childhood teacher education. During our explorations with movement, we scribbled visual expressions of movement on post-it notes while thinking with the excerpts. These scribbles were then translated into a visual vocabulary of movement by Renlund in Photoshop. We used visual vocabulary to paint experimentative and enlivened collages in Canva, which worked as visual expressions and provocations for our ongoing thinking and moving with the students' texts. In this way, we moved with the rhythms, flows, directions, crossings and speeds that we could sense in the way the course literature had put something in motion in the students' learning diaries.

### Implications and relevance

Following Jackson and Mazzei (2023, p. 2), "In writing, in plugging in, we enact something that is a constant, continuous doing. It is attuning to how lines respond to each other, how they fit together [...]". In this presentation, we want to approach the entangled collaboration where we began the analytical process of thinking-with each other, learning diaries, theories and images. Each author came to the study with their perspectives, backgrounds and movements, which unfolded into embodied acts of experiencing-with data (Vagg, 2022) and performed further movement. Our collective endeavour touched upon "the quivering unease of doing research differently" but simultaneously together (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p 204). This methodological endeavour involved productive tensions between the movements of materialising text and images, which we sensed and interpreted in unique and collective ways, performing additions, juxtapositions and lively collages. Often, the emerging and continuously changing collages would elicit provoking and engaging discussions about our ontological and theoretical focus, pushing us to ask questions about where the movements in the student's texts and our scribbling, writing, painting and collaging were taking us, what these movements were expressing about the affective force of literature in education, and what they could teach us about our relations to literature as educators and researchers in a Nordic context.

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## **Walking and Talking Decolonisation - Resisting Consensus in Collective Research**

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This presentation troubles the assumed consensus that is often implied in the reporting of qualitative research conducted by research teams. By drawing on Haraway's idea of situated knowledges (1988) we explore the ways in which each member of a research team makes sense of data, through their own situated sense-making practices. In turn, these practices are shaped by social identities, histories, and relationships to the research topic and participants, as well as to other members of the team. The presentation seeks to reveal the tensions, power relations, messiness (and impossibilities) of reaching consensus in the context of doing qualitative research. In so doing it maps lines of flights towards different ways of framing the complexities of collective analysis, whilst resisting simple narratives which seek to collapse this complexity.

The presentation draws on a project that involved walking interviews with six student teachers at a university in London, and sought to understand how the material-discursive spaces of the university shaped their experiences of racialisation. We took Springgay and Truman's (2019) notion of 'walking -with' as a guide to conducting the walking interviews. A broader intention of the project was to engage with decolonial research praxis; interrogating the power relations, norms and representations which are reproduced within empirical research methodology. For our research team, engaging with a decolonial research praxis has meant cultivating humility and vulnerability and engaging in 'unlearning' (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). The challenge of being vulnerable together has promoted a willingness to interrupt our taken-for-granted approaches to doing (reflexive) thematic research, and acknowledge the colonial workings of power that are inescapably part of researching racialisation at a university in London. By exploring and presenting the difficulties and tensions involved in turning the lens back on ourselves as researchers, we hope to speak to the vital contemporary importance of unsettling colonial assumptions and practices within research.

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## **Crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality —A tool for thinking with when approaching tensions in post-qualitative inquiry?**

Paul Clucas

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In our field, which is science and technology education, post-qualitative inquiry (PQI) is an uncommon but growing choice of methodology. Because science and technology intrinsically concerns the non-human, PQI seems well-placed in a field that is fundamentally concerned with 'knowledgeing' in the more-than-human assemblages that are science and technology learning spaces. Recently Aagaard (2022) has critiqued PQI, pointing to tensions that risk limiting the potential of PQI as a pathway to opening to different ways of knowing in non-quantitative research. Two tensions or risks described by Aagaard touch fundamentally on the degree of researcher visibility in

their research: PQI is seen at one extreme as potentially opening to researcher deletion. At the other extreme, PQI is seen as potentially opening to the deletion of everything but the researcher. Recently we have presented a human-decentered reconfiguration of the northern European educational construct *Bildung*. Although developed with a view to providing researchers and educators tools to think with in their shaping of science and technology teaching spaces, the conceptualisations the model generates may be valuable when navigating tensions connected to PQI. In this symposium we will focus on one of these conceptualisations, that of *crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality*. Fundamentally, the possibility of crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality is opened when humans are opened to an embodied awareness of being entangled as a part of more-than-human assemblages. Crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality points thus to material and discursive events that embody the possibility of shifting participating humans to a relational ontological position. We believe that a fundamental concern of PQI —through its enactment— is opening to such a possibility. Crucially, this possibility is not seen as ending in research settings, but as persisting in the material and discursive events of research dissemination. *Crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality* becomes a useful tool thus to think with when shaping fieldwork, academic papers, posters, and oral presentations. Building upon recent fieldwork in a Swedish afterschool setting, we aim in this symposium to open to the possibility of crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality for participants at the symposium. According to Aagaard (2022), methodological approaches are needed that can enable an exploration of more-than-human encounters. PQI ought —we think— open to theory/data/papers/posters/oral presentations that, although embodying the researcher, reveal humans as a part only of more-than-human assemblages. By opening to the possibility of crafting powerful artefacts in mutuality, we will seek thus to open to an embodiment of it as a tool for thinking with in realising such ends. Hence our goal in this symposium is to highlight an avenue for potentially resolving tensions related to the degree of researcher visibility in PQI.

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#### **Balancing Acts in Attuning to Active Materiality in Learning-by-Making**

Varpu Mehto

University of Helsinki, Finland

This presentation focuses on my struggles in moving beyond anthropocentric and individualistic notions of learning, knowledge, and agency when attuning to agentic materiality in learning-by-making projects.

The empirical context is situated in invention pedagogy, which engages students in the nonlinear process of ideating, designing, and constructing their inventions into tangible artifacts. The data was produced through research-practice partnerships, ethnographic participation, and video recordings. During four consecutive studies that focused on different projects, I encountered three key methodological and onto-epistemological balancing acts. My approach gradually shifted from a structured analysis to a more open-ended exploration.

Firstly, I learned to acknowledge the materiality of the research process itself and paid attention on my embeddedness within the material and affective flows of the active data (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018). The research-practice partnership allowed me to experience how available resources, local practices, and educational policies are assembled in and by the mundane details of the classroom. Ethnographic participation invited me to immerse in the classroom, sensing atmospheres, emotions, and sensations. At a later stage, videos required a different focus. Slow, manual engagement with video helped me to notice the importance of mundane materiality.

Secondly, I had to reconsider my presumptions of what is relevant or irrelevant in learning. Focusing on mundane and seemingly insignificant aspects of classroom activities revealed how materiality shapes learning beyond preplanned practices. Embracing the messy and illogical realities of the classroom acknowledged the contradictory roles of materiality that are not tied to pedagogical intentions. Questions arose, such as who or what participates in processes of learning-by-making, what counts as being knowledgeable, and what values and ethical responsibilities underlie materialities.

Thirdly, acknowledging the role of materiality as ever-changing and situated required reconsidering the research's aims, shifting from explaining to imagining learning-by-making differently. Asking what the study does highlights the researcher's positionality and responsibility. Zooming into the mundane invited me to consider what is worthy of academic inquiry, aligning with Haraway's (2016) argument that the stories we tell shape the worlds we create. In educational research, the details we focus on shape our understanding of learning. This understanding has practical consequences in teacher education and pedagogy development.

In this study, material engagements appeared as significant in themselves, not merely as a means to learn a subject matter. Open-ended and nonlinear interactions with materials provided the potential to foster learning with the world rather than merely *about* it.

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## Symposium: Finding meaning in the hopeless: Reflecting on the potential of a pedagogy of hopelessness

Chairs: Emma Heikkilä, University of Helsinki, Finland

Juliane Höhle, University of Ghent, Belgium

Discussant: Joel Hietanen, University of Helsinki, Finland

Whilst living amid crises, death, and injustices, education has been appointed across times a role of bringing hope. However, it remains often ambiguous what 'hope' means and why it is crucial in education. Webb (2013) has pointed out that hope is defined in many, sometimes contradictory ways and there are developments towards a more critical (Ojala, 2012) and anti-colonial hope (Zembylas, 2022). We view hope as affective regarding future and transformation.

While hope might be the only thing left in struggle and mourning, many experience hopelessness and continue the work. Hope might also be used to direct students' feelings to relate in the "right way" to the climate crisis, that is, in an action-competent and positive way. Children who do not feel the same way might be excluded based on their lack of the "right" feelings (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015). Thus, there is a trend of engaging with hope normatively as something to be desired or aimed at in education (and political life, see Ahmed, 2010) while more negatively perceived emotions are excluded.

Building on this more troubling view of hope in education and pedagogy, we pose the following research questions:

Why is hope seen as an ontological need in education and pedagogy and what is its perceived purpose?

What is the potential of engaging with hopelessness or other perceived negative emotions in educational contexts (within the climate and other crises)?

What are potential dangers of only addressing hope and not hopelessness in education and pedagogy?

Teachers and educators often find themselves facing hopelessness when encountering complex wicked problems they address with students. But hopelessness might not always deter people from acting; it may be beneficial. It helps students to understand painful feelings as a justified response to environmental injustices. Vulnerability that comes with embracing hopelessness in a classroom is a joint challenge and experience, and it is crucial to live with in times of darkness (Verlie, 2021). In this symposium we do not aim for hopelessness but want to discuss hopelessness and education and allow for other emotions than hope or other positively perceived emotions to become valued in the classroom (Ahmed, 2010).

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## Attending to feelings of loss: The educative potential of sacrificing attachments in sustainability transitions

Juliane Höhle

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In service of sustainability transitions (STs), people are already facing sacrifices, e.g. in areas where minerals for renewable energy technologies are mined<sup>1</sup> and people are giving up habits and learn new ones toward more sustainably<sup>2</sup>. These losses and sacrifices can be highly affective, as Bogner et al.<sup>3</sup> highlight with their work on "transition pain" around anticipated or experienced losses because of STs. We explore how these sacrifices can be educative in enabling reflection and action upon what might be lost. We present two studies, one on potential learning outcomes linked to sacrifice and one on people's affect around sacrifice and facilitators attend to it.

We build on transactional didactic theory<sup>4</sup> inspired by the work of Dewey for conceptualising and investigating the educative potential of sacrifice and on the work of Shilling and Mellor<sup>5</sup> and Marres<sup>6</sup> to address the affective quality of sacrifice by paying attention to the often irreconcilable attachments at stake.

We focus on informal learning and observe people in sustainability-related initiatives such as public consultations and activist camps. We analyse their discussions with facilitators in which they talk about (future) losses and track their affect. We use Practical Epistemology Analysis<sup>7</sup> for understanding how sacrifices and affect surrounding it are privileged or dismissed. We use the teacher move analysis<sup>8</sup> to understand how facilitators steer the privileging and which weight they give affect in them and with which outcome.

We provide a typology of how facilitators react to sacrifices of people facing STs (e.g. ignoring, acknowledging, taking action) and describe how their reactions to affect around sacrifice contribute to learning processes. We study how negatively perceived affect such as sadness and exasperation can be educative and how facilitators can realise this educative potential.

Sacrifices for sustainability are relevant in the context of local developments in the North where the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples stand against mining operations which are described as enabling more global sustainability. We further work within the research tradition of *Didaktik* prevalent in the Nordic countries, which focuses on the relationship between teacher (facilitator), student (participant) and content (the sustainability issues and the sacrifices of attachments these involve).

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## Hope as Bad Practice in Environmental and Sustainability Education

Jonas Lysgaard

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The days of using education to sell the illusions of modernist welfare states as saviors of individuals, societies and environments are long gone (Carlsson & Lysgaard, 2024; Jónsson et al., 2020). Scandinavian societies are between a rock and a hard place: Global economic competition threatening our economies and job market, cultural diversification and political radicalization uprooting vague notions of homogeneity and global warming rapidly changing our habitats (Baron, Heidenreich, & Kokorsch, 2024; Koivunen, Ojala, & Holmén, 2021). Hoping for a better future and pushing towards it though e.g. education has been a main narrative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it seems more nuanced and critical perspectives are needed (Lysgaard & Jørgensen, 2020). Based on a lacanian inspired notion of Bad practice (Lysgaard, 2018) and new materialist conceptualizations of Dark Pedagogy (Lysgaard, Bengtsson, & Laugesen, 2019; Saari & Mullen, 2020) this presentations argues for a radical engagement with all our failures, in order to develop a critical, political and educational understanding of hope that sees the possibilities and openings in the challenges of our time (Bengtsson & Lysgaard, 2023).

By drawing on lacanian notions of *denial* and *disavowal* it is argued that the ideals (such as sustainability, hope and enlightenment) that saturate our everyday lives as citizens, teachers and researchers carries the risk of only seeing failure, where we could see efforts to navigate great challenges under impossible conditions (Lysgaard, 2018). Linking this to Harman' objected oriented ontology (Harman, 2011; Levi Bryant, 2011) frames the always inherent potential for engaging with a world that is greater than ourselves and might not evolve in the way we used to hope, but still open vistas for understanding and navigating it as educationalist.

## Technology, affect, and agency: Embracing the ambiguity of (post)digital education

Jenny Högström

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Digital technology has generally been framed to cultivate an ethical remaking of education, attributed hopes and expectations to contributing to a brighter and socially more just future (Grimaldi & Ball, 2021). By now, this 'remaking' is nonetheless recognised to be enacted through emergent political and techno-capitalist forces, which further raise critical questions about how and under which conditions educational technology (EdTech) is implemented and managed at schools today (Selwyn, 2022).

In this presentation, I think with scholars emphasising the ambiguity of modern technologies (Knox, 2019; Paasonen, 2021). I will discuss some of the findings from my ongoing PhD research that takes an affective perspective on digital technology and learner agency in Nordic lower secondary classrooms. The research aims to explore what affective capacities are carried forward in human-technology entanglements, implying that technology can produce affects that are anticipated and translated for specific purposes, or affects that are unexpected and beyond human intention, skills, or desire (Ash, 2015). The question of what digital technologies then 'do' in educational contexts is topical – bringing the interests and intentions of different actors at stake. It is not only a matter of students and teachers getting access to digital technology, but also about technology providers gaining access to the human users and the consequences thereof.

An increased access to devices, software, and platforms engages teachers and students in forms of affective labour within the attention economy of the (Ed)Tech industry. Technology and digital data evoke various sensations and emotions (Paasonen, 2021), fostering (human) responsibility for the individual self, which can further generate a sense of despair and hopelessness (Paakkari, 2024). Moreover, continuous (one-to-one) access in classrooms raise

serious questions about ecological and social sustainability (Selwyn, 2021, 2022). Hence, embracing ambiguity is a call for engaging with the multiple facets of the hope(lessness) that technology is made to carry forward, and invites to rethink the possible futures of EdTech. This opens for discussion about how the highly individualising technologies could be broken down into something collective and shared, to explore new sustainable ways of being.

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## Symposium: Creating (h)openings: in relation-with more-than-human forces in early childhood professionalism

Chairs: Camilla Eline Andersen, University of Inland Norway, Norway

Jayne Osgood, Middlesex University/University of Inland Norway, United Kingdom

Discussant: Dorte Staunæs, Aarhus University, Denmark

This symposium addresses an on-going concern that has long occupied educational researchers - that is - 'professionalism' in Early Childhood Education. And further, teacher education as part of that concern. The sector has been subject to ongoing regulation, standardisation, requirements for predefined educational programmes, and increased credentialization in the name of improving professionalism. Meanwhile, such developments have been accompanied by an intense commercialization of early childhood pedagogy, alongside international trends for evidence-based research which narrowly shapes professionalism through universal and standardised criteria. Research has drawn attention to how neoliberal technologies have forced striated working conditions. Furthermore, the normative criteria that is used to implement and measure professionalism regardless of local geopolitical contexts has been the subject of ongoing critique. Despite this longstanding commitment to deconstruct what professionalism is, what it means, and the implications of regulation and standardization, very little has changed. A highly gendered and marginalized workforce remains the focus of policy reform and heavy surveillance. In this symposium, we wonder might there be more hopeful approaches to be taken in ECE that move beyond critique alone? Within this symposium presenters offer creative explorations and experimentations with teacher education pedagogy and professionalisms-to-come.

If, as Latour (2004) argued, 'critique has run out of steam' different modes of enquiry are needed that ask different questions. Perhaps now is the moment to consider what decades of critique have laid the foundations for. Moreover, if the age of hope as critique is at an end, in order to avoid the trap of clinging to hope (Chandler, 2019, s. 702), we wonder where we can turn to in search of (h)openings and how other ways 'to be' might be created to teach and research (differently) in the field of early childhood education.

In pursuit of (h)openings - that are generative of ways to reimagine professionalism in early childhood education this panel collectively addresses the conference theme by considering hope from more-than-human perspectives. Each of the three papers in this symposium mobilizes the concept of (h)openings - as dynamic hopeful openings - that allow us to sit with the discomfort that surfaces when seeking to pursue professionalism-otherwise in our teaching and research practices. Reworking 'hope' from a posthumanist orientation decouples it from humanist concerns with desire, intentionality and expectation. Rather, by attuning to the feltness of other-than possibilities (Manning, 2024) as they emerge through our everyday encounters in early childhood contexts we gesture towards hope as a creative and speculative practice. In turn, the papers make space for professionalism to be encountered as stuttering, faltering processes of discomfort and tension. Critical posthumanist approaches that are presented throughout this symposium are encounters with pressing matters of concern that intersect with professionalism to-come. The papers address how difficult pedagogies are felt and the (h)openings that surface in pursuit of justice in teacher education and research encounters.

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## **What does virus-ing-with make possible in early childhood? Refusing narratives of learning loss and heightened anxieties from within and beyond the pandemic portal**

Camilla Eline Andersen<sup>1</sup>, Jayne Osgood<sup>2,1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Inland Norway, Norway. <sup>2</sup>Middlesex University, United Kingdom

In this paper we explore (h)openings that are generated from the forces of a pandemic that invited us to wrestle with what 'virus-ing-with' might potentiate as a mode of educational research-creation (Manning, 2016) and what it might mean for teachers working with the 'Covid generation' - and hence, how it might contribute to unlikely reformulations of professionalism. Our paper brings together ruptures and residues from research undertaken at the height of Covid 19 and again, four years later with a cohort of children born during the pandemic and in their first year of formal schooling. For these children participation in formal early childhood education was never an option and as a consequence they are deemed woefully not 'school-ready' with some not yet fully toilet trained, and many struggling to cope with the demands made for their young squiggly body-minds to be regulated - they have been labelled 'vectors' and 'victims'.

In this paper we dwell amongst the affective residues that circulated and resurfaced from this extraordinary moment in time- with its capacities to draw into sharp focus the precarities of living, teaching, learning amongst the ravages of the Anthropocene. In the spirit of the theme of this conference though, we also attend to the generative, hopeful affordances that virus-ing-with as a praxis potentiates. Through a series of interwoven encounters we celebrate ways in which virus-ing-with makes attuning differently to the world possible. Taking virus-time as some form of portal (Roy, 2020) offered a hopeful stutter to more-of-the-same or a 'return to normal'. We contemplate how virus-ing-with as concept and method holds the potential to disrupt and reformulate ways to undertake research, ways to conceptualise the child, and crucially the opportunities it presents to consider professionalism to-come in the classroom. We explore how our research-creation projects shifted dominant narratives that underpin and shape the 'Covid generation' from fragility and deficit to hopeful renewal. For example, sharing film clips that depict viruses moving around and through the human body; contemplating the vivid array of colours and patterns that microbes are formed of, to the ways in which they glide, bounce and cling, agitated children to generate wild, fantastical tales of the vitality of microbial life for earthly survival. Their inquisitiveness and playful inquiry through arts-based activities shifted the discourse in more generative directions. Child curiosity and willingness to encounter 'virus' on its own terms provided teachers with inspiration and permission to allow virus-ing-with to shape their professional practice in hopeful directions. This paper contends that it is possible for ECE professionals to refuse dominant narratives and policy imperatives in favour of attuning to the significance of the more/other-than human in children's lives. Virus-ing-with is a hopeful praxis that holds the potential to radically shift the grounds upon which ideas about teacher professionalism are formed.

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## Towards Ethical Practices in Mentoring of ECE Teachers

Anna Rigmor Moxnes

USN, Norway

Drawing on feminist new materialist theories, this paper explores what was produced and thought in a creative workshop with educated mentors where the aim was to take seriously materiality, bodies and affects when working with ethical challenges in mentoring practices. Ethical challenges are here related to professionalism, and questions involving young children, parents or colleagues in Norwegian kindergarten organisations, for children from 1 to 6 years. In the workshops, we explored mentoring in less familiar ways, through adding different kindergarten related materiality, as e.g. children's toy, furniture, teachers' equipment they make use of in their practice as notepads, mobile phones etc. The participants were all educated ECE-teachers and all had studied mentoring and qualified to become mentors for student-teachers, induction of teachers, and for applying mentoring to development-project in their professional practices. But, neither of them had experience with thinking with materiality, bodies or affects in mentoring in advance.

Applying post-perspectives into mentoring is a move towards a shift of ontological and epistemological questions, for new conceptualizations. In this article, I work to explore what happens when posthuman inspired philosophies is employed onto a socio-constructivist and socio-cultural field of research? What does such crossover in thinking bring about? These issues will be dwelled with in the article to try to bring new and more creative insight into ideas of development of professionalism.

Ethical issues and dilemmas (e.g.: Botnen Eide et al., 2009) concerning professionalism are already central topics in mentoring related knowledge. However, applying posthuman perspectives opens for possibilities to challenge traditional ideas of the ethical in mentoring practices. In some cases the mentor might seem to pay more attention to pleasing the mentees feelings, than to challenge the mentee to more critical and ethical thinking (Moxnes et al., Forthcoming). Through the workshop, this assumption is what we pay further attention to through actively exploring materiality, the body and affects. And way: to try to go beyond critic and towards creativity to re-think kindergarten practices and professionalism in ECE.

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## **Moodwork as (h)openings towards different teaching for racial justice**

Agnes Westgaard Bjelkerud, Camilla Eline Andersen

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This emerging project evolves from embodied stutterings experienced by us as white teacher-educators, and through an interest in pursuing racially just pedagogies. The stuttering relates to what sometimes becomes difficult pedagogies when issues of race and racialization are taught in diverse classrooms. And also to race-events emerging in university spaces (classrooms, corridors, toilets etc) that ‘fold comfortably around’ Norwegian whiteness (Hvenegård-Lassen & Staunæs, 2021). Further, to stories of failure or discomfort, but also of hope and creativity, from exploring ways to work pedagogically with race and racialization in teacher education.

To move beyond being conscious of how we as white teachers take part in “race relations”, in this presentation we explore what might emerge when turning to ‘mood work’; to ‘feelings that are not our own’ (Ahmed, 2014, p, 15) as a mode of professionalism to-come. We are particularly interested in how racialized moods sensed by us as educators are formed, in the classroom and in teaching, connecting moods to “more worldly orientations that directed towards specific objects and situations [...] establish the condition for our encounters with the world” (Zembylas, 2021, p. 346). With these orientations we experiment with ‘mood work’ to carefully and cautiously work to transform our pedagogy to create (h)openings towards more racially just educational spaces.

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## **Symposium: Hopeful renewals for 'environmental sustainability' in early childhood contexts: the promise of multispecies ecologies for a dying planet**

Chairs: Jayne Osgood, Middlesex University/University of Inland Norway, United Kingdom

Camilla Eline, University of Inland Norway, Norway

Discussant: Hanna Sjögren, Malmö University, Sweden

This symposium celebrates and critiques early childhood as it is produced within the geo-political epoch that we have come to recognise as the Anthropocene. The papers collectively address an urgent need to stress the importance of relational practices that seek to expose and grapple with the destructive and irreversible processes of planetary crisis in which early childhood plays out. Each paper, from distinct orientations, offers provocations to contemplate how it might be possible to find ways - with children - to refuse human exceptionalism and developmentalist logic.

This symposium stresses an imperative for relational practices over the moralising agendas that have come to dominate approaches to 'environmental sustainability' in early childhood education contexts. Thinking-with and through multispecies, more/other-than human relationalities holds the promise of detaching childhood from its anthropocenic footing, shifting thought about childhood from humanist developmental roots into deep relations with worlding conditions that actively challenge the Anthropocene's 'huMan' planet (Wynter, 2003). This has never been more urgent. The Anthropocene's toxic entanglement of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy is hopefully called to account through the research and pedagogical examples shared across this symposium.

Each paper is committed to (re-)situating Anthropocene childhood/s as endlessly relational by giving serious consideration to irreducible associations/assemblages of human, thing, weather, soil, microorganism, critters, politics, pollution...that are woven through each other and work to shift the conceptual and practical grounds on which contemporary childhoods come to matter.

Drawing upon current research projects and pedagogical initiatives this symposium explores what outdoor play, slow pedagogies and in-the-moment practices hold the potential to agitate when contemporary childhoods are so heavily regulated and contained by concerns for progress, safety, knowability, achievement and ultimately commoditised by Anthropocenic desire. The papers in this symposium trouble what is meant by 'hope', 'knowledge' 'early childhood', 'environment' and 'education' through innovative, novel and creative contributions that hold the potential to further extend understandings of Anthropocene childhoods through the pursuit of critical inquiries and alternative approaches.

### **Indigenous knowledge in environmental education: knowing through art and South Sámi storytelling**

Trine Kampmann-Jensen, Linn-Terese Bern, Camilla Eline Andersen

University of Inland Norway, Norway

In this paper we share our ongoing modest thinking and doing with Sámi systems of knowledge in an early childhood teacher education course focusing on sustainable early childhood education practices. We are three non-Sámi teacher educators in the subjects of pedagogy, art and craft, and drama. For three years we have worked

across disciplines with preservice early childhood teachers to learn and unlearn together how to practice environmental education from multiple perspectives with young children. The idea of working with indigenous knowledge in this course on sustainability came from our interest in postdevelopmental thinking in education such as decolonial- and indigenous perspectives (Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020; Huuki & Kyrölä, 2022; Kuokkanen, 2005). As well as various calls for education to be reconfigured so that we can imagine alternative ways to live with land and Earth (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020; Rooney & Blaise, 2023; Taylor, 2017). From this we wanted to explore how Sámi systems of knowledge could be included in the course as ways of knowing that could contribute to imagining other relationships with the world than we and most of the pre-service teachers had learned through schooling.

In the planning of our in-class teaching we stumbled over the film *Historjá – Stygn för Sápmi* (2022) [Historjá - Embroidery for Sápmi], a documentary about the Sámi artist Britta Markatt-Labba who for decades has engaged in environmental struggle and climate issues from an Indigenous perspective. We decided to use the film as part of our teaching along with a text on Sámi systems of knowledge (Finbog, n.d.), South Sámi stories and storytelling, and art. In the presentation we share our ongoing thinking on how to include indigenous knowledge in environmental education. Some of the questions that guide us are: How can environmental education be thought differently when engaging with Sámi knowledge systems? What ethical considerations might be important when non-Sámi teacher educators teach about and with indigenous knowledge? How can engaging with indigenous knowledge, art and Sámi storytelling nurture alternative relationships with the world? What alternative environmental education practices with young children can be thought when engaging with Sámi systems of knowledge?

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## Education inside out: Doing “the arts of attentiveness” in educational multispecies cultures

Riikka Hohti<sup>1</sup>, Jan Varpanen<sup>2</sup>

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Key thinkers in the field of educational theory rely on various forms of an inside/outside distinction in making sense of education (e.g., Biesta, 2021; Masschelein & Simons, 2013). Educational practices are shaped by an outside/inside binary that actualizes in controversial ways. For example, in Finnish early education contexts, outside activity is traditionally valued as a space of free play, healthy development and learning. However, what takes place outdoors mostly becomes pedagogical only after it has been brought inside and re-valued later in the classroom. Inside/outside division also relates to how children are still commonly positioned in society, in the ‘waiting room’, outside the complexities of the world.

Our presentation complicates these boundaries. Drawing on the methodology of multispecies inquiry that seeks to understand the world as emergent through the contingent

relations of multiple beings, and the concept of multispecies childhoods (Hohti & Tammi, 2019), we put to work the “arts of attentiveness” (van Dooren et al., 2016) towards the ways in which educational contexts are part of a multispecies world. Our purpose is to become attentive to how children’s lives are situated in multispecies ecologies and constituted by multispecies relations both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

In the presentation, we will discuss selected experiences from our empirical work done in the Nordic context. We will bring multispecies childhoods and education in connection with recent developments in host microbiome research and its implications for childhood studies (e.g. Millei et al., forthcoming). Emerging understandings of microbial life in and around us highlight how bodies extend to environments and are environments themselves - we are ‘lively vessels’ (Fishel, 2017) inhabited by microbiota that outnumber human cells multiple times. We will also highlight methodological complexities that relate to examining the multispecies and microbial world beyond human exceptionalism, direct visibility, and the human-centric, verbal interaction cultures of both educational practices and research. Grasping child bodies and educational contexts as nested ecologies forces a reconsideration of the very idea of environment in environmental early childhood education - it is this shift that we wish to trace.

Keywords: microbial childhood, multispecies ethnography, daycare, microbial event, inside/outside binary

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## Reimagining Early Childhood Environmental Education through Arts-based Research: Playing in the Undercommons

Jayne Osgood

Middlesex University, United Kingdom. Inland University of Norway, Norway

This paper proposes artful/playful approaches to childhood research concerned with environmental sustainability as subversive acts of refusal. Insights from a current research project are presented within the broader context of contemporary schooling which is shaped by intensified regulation of young child body-minds in the name of developmental progress. Bringing playful interventions into the classrooms of four-year-olds, to explore multispecies interdependencies and relationalities in an arts-based 'Environmental Early Childhood Education' project, caused all manner of trouble. The ultimate aim was to playfully pursue less anthropocentric narratives concerning ways to live together on a dying planet. Haraway's practice of 'serious play' provided a mode of getting caught up in the knots and tangles of life in the Anthropocene without clear direction, prescribed outcomes or a firm agenda. Yet the chaotic wildness that ensued generated acute discomfort for adults caught up in this praxis. We argue that reconfiguring play - as serious, nonsensical and not the exclusive preserve of children - relies upon a close attunement to what else play can potentiate when it is (permitted to be) emergent and unbounded. Harney & Moten's (2013) invitation to join 'the undercommons' is taken up by illustrating how open-ended, exploratory, playful encounters have capacities to simultaneously turn attention to the mechanisms of control that regulate and govern body-minds, and highlight the activist potential for play to reach alternative ways of being, seeing and relating.

Keywords: play, postdevelopmentalism, arts-based research

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## Roundtable discussion: Social Pedagogy for the Future

Chair: Elina Nivala, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Discussants: Hanne Meyer-Johansen, Københavns Professionshøjskole, Denmark

Amela Pacuka, OsloMet, Norway

Elina Nivala, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

In a world where hope seems to be replaced by hatred and openness is being locked behind the bars of prejudice, the social pedagogues need to take a critical look into themselves and their field: Are we doing what we should be doing? Are we building a better world as the legacy of the trailblazers of social pedagogy would guide us to do? What are the values guiding our work? Are our practices in line with the values that guide our thinking? What is the future for us and social pedagogy? And what kind of social pedagogy do we want to uphold and create for the future? What kind of social pedagogy do we need in order to build a better future for us and the coming generations?

This roundtable discussion takes up these questions and looks critically both into the world around us and the research and practice fields of social pedagogy. With three presentations from three Nordic countries, we bring to the fore some critical issues and blind spots of social pedagogy. We believe that a self-critical look is inevitable to create awareness and bring about change. We also believe in the power of dialogue in both understanding the realities around us and creating new insights into what we can and should do. Thus, a dialogue is also the basis for recreating hope and finding paths forward.

The three presentations are based on different theoretical perspectives and research settings, and they bring to discussion different aspects of social pedagogy and social pedagogical work. Hanne Meyer-Johansen from Denmark calls for a more socially transformative and non-individual-oriented approach to social pedagogy. Amela Pacuka from Norway highlights the importance of decolonial understanding and discussion in the field, and Elina Nivala from Finland argues for the urgency of an eco-social perspective in both theory, research, and practice. Together, these presentations call everybody to join the discussion about the future of social pedagogy and the social pedagogy for the future.

This roundtable offers researchers, practitioners, and teachers of social pedagogy and related fields in the Nordic Countries an arena for coming together and reflecting on the pressing issues of today and tomorrow in a world that is on fire, both figuratively and literally. It has a huge potential importance for the Nordic discussion in the field.

### **Social pedagogy and its empowering potentials to people in excluded positions**

Hanne Meyer-Johansen

University College Copenhagen, Denmark

Background of research topic/aim

Based on two different projects about social pedagogical professionalism, this presentation advocates for a more socially transformative and non-individual-oriented approach to social pedagogy, emphasizing the potential of the

empowerment concept in efforts to contribute to individuals' emancipation and the transformation of their life conditions (Askheim 2021,2, Askheim & Andersen 2023).

#### Theoretical framework

This pedagogical aim is examined based on a historical perspective of social pedagogy as a normative and political grounded idea, inspired by two central pedagogical and learning theorists: Paulo Freire and Oskar Negt . Furthermore the critical social theories of Hartmut Rosa and Andreas Reckwitz (Rosa 2022, 2019, 2014, Reckwitz 2019). Drawing on these critical social analyses and transformative possibilities, illustrative examples from two previous studies of social pedagogical practice will be presented to uncover both the presence or absence of educators' reflections on critical social and transformative perspectives and transgressive orientations.

#### Methodology/research design

The two projects were undertaken through a combination of ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative interviews, and critical-utopian action research facilitated by dialogue workshops. The common feature of both projects was to grasp and come closer to identify the specific characteristics of socialpedagogical professionalism in the context of different target groups.

#### Results/findings

The prevailing societal tendency towards an individualized and organizationally internal perspective seems to dominate with the consequences that the emphasis on social pedagogical potentials is displaced by a focus on an individualistic and compensatory approach of citizens. However, another study indicates that the need for pedagogical encounters across the organizational frameworks of the workplace can highlight the importance of a broader societal perspective, with solidaristic identification and a focus on the empowerment of the citizens involved. This might be a useful way to contribute to a renewed generation of meaning and a transformative dimension of social pedagogical work, as well as its practitioners in this field.

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## Eco-social orientation in Social Pedagogy

Elina Nivala

University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Social pedagogy has traditionally been defined as a field that is interested in the relationships between individuals, their communities, and society. It has been about supporting the socialization process to help individuals integrate into society and about working with people who are at risk of being socially excluded from normalized forms of human coexistence. In today's world, working within the social realm between people is no longer enough. Humans are destroying their living conditions and those of other species. Climate change, the extinction crisis, and other pressing ecological questions need to be addressed in social pedagogy as in other social and educational sciences. We need to look beyond human interaction and social issues and pay attention to the ecological issues and the interconnectedness of human beings, other animals, and the whole planet. Social pedagogues need to understand the eco-social aspects of well-being and growth. It is not just relationships between people but also relationships between human beings and other species that need to be nurtured. We have to start seeing ourselves as belonging to a more-than-human world.

In this presentation, I describe an increase in the discussions on ecological and eco-social questions in social pedagogy and suggest that these discussions can be considered as a new eco-social orientation of the field. This new orientation is present in concepts like social pedagogy of sustainability (Böhnisch, 2020), social pedagogical environmental education (e.g., Caride & Meira, 2020), and planetary social pedagogy (Salonen et al., 2022). The eco-social orientation poses a challenge to the whole field, questioning the human-centeredness of its worldviews and calling for a more holistic image of a human being, including not just the head, heart, and hands but the whole body as a source of knowledge and as a means to create a stronger connection with the more-than-human world.

This presentation is based on a theoretical article (Nivala and Ryyänen, forthcoming), which, for its part, builds on the arguments presented in a Finnish social pedagogy textbook (Nivala & Ryyänen, 2024).

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## Unpacking Professional Colonialism and Imperialism

Amela Pacuka

Institute for social work/OsloMet, Norway

Decolonization of social pedagogy involves challenging and transforming the traditional Eurocentric frameworks that have long dominated the field. Social pedagogy, often rooted in Western philosophies, has historically positioned Western norms as universal standards, inadvertently marginalizing non-Western practices and knowledge systems. Decolonizing social pedagogy requires acknowledging and valuing diverse cultural perspectives, embracing non-dominant narratives, and recognizing the ways colonial legacies persist in educational and social work practices.

In the context of a roundtable discussion, exploring the concepts of *professional colonialism* and *professional imperialism* through the lens of systems theory can offer valuable insights into how certain professional practices and theories become dominant at the expense of others. Beyond the transfer of professional knowledge or perspectives, also entails the imposition of the professional's own underlying norms and values, shaped by their upbringing or professional experiences. This dimension of professional colonialism highlights how individuals bring their internalized beliefs, cultural standards, and normative assumptions into their practice, often unconsciously. When professionals operate within diverse cultural contexts, these ingrained norms can shape their interactions, decisions, and approaches in ways that reinforce a dominant cultural paradigm.

A key aspect of this process is shifting from a model that views assimilation as the goal to one that fosters genuine inclusivity. This means co-creating social pedagogical approaches with communities rather than imposing predefined standards. Decolonization emphasizes reciprocal learning, where social pedagogues engage as facilitators who respect the lived experiences and cultural insights of the people they work with.

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## Symposium: Whose voice is being heard in school development – and do we need to care?

Chairs: Jaana Nehez, Halmstad University, Sweden

Veronica Sülau, Frida Utbildning, Sweden

Discussant: Anette Olin Almqvist, Mälardalen University, Sweden

In the previous NERA conference in 2024, the School Development Network organized a Round Table session focusing on sustainable school development. Some of the issues raised were what sustainable school development is and how it can be enacted. The dialogue in the round table culminated in further questions about whose voices get to be heard in school development and if and why different voices matter?

Sustainable school development requires participation by all those working in schools – students, teachers and principals. However, school development research shows that teachers and students are rarely involved in such work (Johannesson, 2024; Nehez et al., 2022). They tend to be passive targets of school development rather than active change agents themselves. Therefore, there is a need to understand and make visible both how researchers work together with participants from schools in their joint strive for school development, and how researchers think about different voices and their need (or not?) to be heard. *Whose voices are being raised in research and what are the consequences of these voices being heard? What does it mean for us as researchers? What can we learn and what do we need to think about when conducting research together with practitioners in schools?*

In this Symposium, we wish to provide space for a dialogue about different voices in school development. We want to highlight different voices both to increase our joint understanding about this issue, but also to problematize the presence and absence of different voices.

The aim of the dialogue is to deepen the understanding of sustainable school development by listening to different perspectives, challenging each other's thinking, and learning more about participation in school development.

Participants who contribute with an abstract are asked to read the other participants' contributions in advance and make notes of points to discuss during the Symposium. During the session, space will be provided for raising these questions or comments in a dialogue. The dialogue will be led by a moderator who takes responsibility for creating a democratic space where everyone's voice is included. A discussant will be invited to promote a meta-perspective on the different contributions and on the dialogue itself.

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## The voices of the third space

Ulrika Bergmark<sup>1,2</sup>, Helena Sagar<sup>3</sup>, Sara Viklund<sup>2,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. <sup>2</sup>Piteå Municipality, Sweden. <sup>3</sup>Kungsbacka Municipality, Sweden. <sup>4</sup>Umeå University, Sweden

### *Research topic/aim*

One way to achieve practice-based research contributing to school development could be the establishment of sustainable research environments shared by stakeholders and higher education institutions – a *third space*. In 2023, a Swedish national network of scientific leaders in school settings was established. The purpose of the network is to gather national expertise on collaboration regarding research and development within and between educational institutions and higher education institutions. Within the network, different stakeholders and higher education institutions are represented. In the network, we have carried out a study with the aim to explore challenges and opportunities when working in the third space.

### *Theoretical framework*

In the third space knowledge and discourses from universities and school practice meet and converge and can be seen as a metaphor for bridge-building between the fields. It offers a way to negotiate collaboration, serving as an environment where different ideas and notions about research and school development come together. Stakeholders' role in creating a third space is particularly emphasised, where dual competencies and accordingly dual professional roles, appear to be a key to success.

### *Methodology/research design*

The data consists of written reflections by members of the network. The study focused on portraying the experiences of operating in the third space.

### *Expected results/findings*

Preliminary findings highlight the complexity of professionals functioning as a “boundary crosser” or “bridge builder” in the third space. Holding dual professional roles poses challenges relating to using different “language”, unclear mandates, insufficient legitimacy, and limited access to publishing and research networks. However, proximity to both school practice and higher education enhances understanding of the two contexts, fosters collaboration, and facilitate knowledge exchange. Incorporating the voices of “boundary crossers” or “bridge builders” in educational research is essential, as their dual perspective can make research more relevant and applicable, addressing real-world issues in education while fostering innovative solutions enhancing development in both research and practice.

### *Relevance to Nordic educational research*

In the Nordic countries, there is an increasing interest for practice-based research in schools. Therefore, our study presents challenges and opportunities of working in the third space that can inform research in Nordic countries and internationally.

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## **Student participation in school improvement – collective habits and student experiences**

Erik Andersson, Lill Langelotz, Stina Jerdborg

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

In the Nordic tradition of education, democratic participation is imperative. A way of living democracy in school and at the same time improve it, is to let students participate. Previous research shows how principals and teachers face challenges in organising and institutionalising student participation in school improvement enactment.

The *aim* of the study is to gain knowledge of student participation in school improvement in primary, secondary and adult education in Sweden:

What experiences do students in different parts of the education system have of participating in school improvement?

Which productive and hindering collective habits can be identified when trying to realize student participation in school improvement?

What is the democratic characteristic of student participation in school improvement?

### *Theoretical framework*

The understanding of democracy is based on the works of Dewey, in which *democracy* is viewed as collective decision-making, formation, conservation, and transformation of life in association with others. Within this definition we use the concepts of *thin* and *thick* democracy (Young, 2000) and the theory of *the democratic process* (Dahl, 2007) to understand the democratic characteristic of student participation. We use the concept of *collective habits* (Dewey, 1922/1988; Andersson, 2024) and *educative* and *mis-educative experience* (Dewey 1938/1997) to identify and discuss what hinders and support student participation.

### *Research design*

We use a mixed qualitative design. The research involves school leaders at the municipal level, local school principals, middle leaders, teachers and students. It takes place within ongoing school improvement initiatives in two municipalities in Sweden including the entire education system from preschool to adult education. We use data from interviews and field notes from researchers and participants in the improvement work.

### *Expected results*

Students are mainly positioned as informants and experience exclusion from influencing the quality of teaching and learning, e.g. from decision-making in creating and testing solutions. Thin democracy dominates in which students make their voices heard but are not listened to. The students find it hard to grasp the idea of their

importance in school improvement. Especially, in upper secondary and adult education there is a sense of ‘what’s in it for me? (I need to improve my grades and I don’t have time to engage in such stuff)’.

#### *Relevance to Nordic educational research*

The paper contributes a democratic perspective on school improvement as a way of enabling and experiencing democracy in education. It brings novel knowledge to understand the importance of school improvement as an inclusive and collective endeavor by focusing on student participation.

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#### **Reflective practice research in schools – teachers voices**

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This is a storytelling about how teachers voices can be strengths In School development. I work together with ten Elementary- and Middle Schools, teachers, and School Leaders. Each Schools have a lot of figures and surveys as an expression about quality. But people need language to make sense to the numbers. So, to reflect on teaching quality, teachers use qualitative methods to research in own lessons and use the data in own professional learning communities. This methods and use of data, support their reflection on practice and the core curriculum. The research question is *How do teachers use observation with logs in professional learning communities and in School Development?*

Professional reflection about practice differs from everyday reflection when it comes to self-formation (Storen & Lie, 2023). While most of us reflect upon our actions as a part of our navigation in and around everyday life, reflection about practice and reflective practice have a stronger connection to theory, a more defined structure, and a more deliberate purpose. Reflective practice research is about recognizing, describing, and communicating one’s actions to be able to learn in a continuous way. Åsvoll (2012) compares reflection as a cognitive constructive process (ea. Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978) and reflection as an intuitive and social process (cf. Dreyfus et al., 1986). The self-forming process (paideia) can lead to practical wisdom (fronesis) (Weiss, 2021). Reflective practice, as a tool to improve practice, is linked to the thoughts of John Dewey (1916) and further developed by Donald Schön (1987). Kolb (1984), influences by Dewey, developed a four-stage model for reflective practice.

This is a presenting and discussing about strengthen teachers voices in School Development. I will present from a project with fifteen Elementary- and Middle schools of *how teachers use observation with log in professional learning communities*. I will introduce the experience from use of observation as a tool for teachers, school leaders and researcher from the local university to frame and systemize the reflecting process for school development. The Core curriculum and the professional language about didactical teaching is the center for collective reflection.

The collecting data will when support professional learning communities to reflect on practice, judge the quality and be able to find key development areas.

By bringing together teachers and leaders in research groups where they reflect on practice, based on data from observation and logs, get teachers a stronger professional voice. Rich data support the analytic learning on Teachings Skills relations to students' learning and well-being, with the core curriculum I the Centre.

Reflection, as a thinking-tool, are strongly linked the Nordic dimension of education, social welfare, equality among genders and social equity. It has to be an incorporated part of education in the next year's meeting with KI.

Keyword: School Development, reflection on practice, observation with log, professional learning

### **Towards sustainable school development. Capturing the presence of student voice.**

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The aim of this paper is to explore and analyse the presence of student voice in sustainable school development. According to the Swedish Education Act, student voice is an important aspect in school development and improvement. However, there are challenges in engaging students as active agents in school development (cf Rönnsström & Blossing, 2024). In this scoping review, literature on student voice in sustainable school development will be explored, thus providing a picture of student voice and students as active agents and participants. This study will apply Lindensjö and Lundgren's (2018) theoretical framework on governance of reforms and the concepts of transformation, mediation and realisation arenas to describe where and how the interpretations of student voice can take place. The formulation arena is characterized by the actual design of, for example, goals, plans and content through selection processes. The realization arena is characterized by the process whereby are realised in practice. Between these two arenas lies the mediation arena, where a gap can be said to occur. Expected findings are studies in the literature which deepen the insights of how student voice in sustainable school development is manifested in the literature, including possibilities, challenges and examples in practice. The findings of this study are of interest and relevance for Nordic education research, as well as international education research, as the results will provide a research contribution regarding how student voice in sustainable school development is captured, i. e. manifested in theory and applied in practice. The results will most likely show a lack in student voice and therefore, the need to support and advance student voice and students as active agents in sustainable school development.

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## Workshop: Increasing wellbeing in students

Chair: Åse Fagerlund, Department of Education, University of Helsinki, Finland

### Purpose and rationale

The ability to acquire new information and learn is inevitably closely intertwined with the wellbeing of the student (Carr et al., 2021). Today, many students suffer from stress, worry and depression making their learning capabilities far from optimal. Student struggle may or may not be linked to the learning environment at school per se, such as involving a troublesome home environment, bullying on social media or stress associated with study load.

Extensive research has shown that a positive mood is associated with the broadening of attention such as a wider working memory capacity, more eye movement indicative of students taking in more information as well as capacity for enhanced problem solving and new learning (Garland et al., 2010). Socially and psychologically a positive mood builds student trust towards other students in class and make it easier to trust new students at school. Over time, this broadened attention capacity builds resources for the student (Fredrickson, 2013). Student wellbeing may thus have a deep impact on learning. Suffering students easily fall into a negative spiral of illbeing and compromised learning whereas other students may follow an upward positive spiral of wellbeing associated with better learning capacity. It becomes a question of student equality to focus both on wellbeing as well as learning in our schools.

Our research group has developed and tested methods to enhance wellbeing in students, staff and parents since 2015 (Fält-Weckman et al., 2024; Jakobsson et al., 2023; Laakso et al., 2022; Laakso et al., 2021; Laakso et al., 2023). In our studies, we have followed rigorous research protocols using randomized control trials as well as qualitative data gathering targeting primary school and upper secondary school. Content is based on validated methods from positive psychology, social emotional learning, psychotherapy (CBT) and neuroscience.

### Description of the presentation and audience involvement

In this workshop we will share some of the practical exercises that we have developed and tested regarding practical wellbeing interventions in class with students of different ages. As educator, you will have the opportunity to try hands-on tools and methods for use with your students. During the workshop we will focus on building positive mood, wellbeing and compassion in students through practical exercises, especially using character strengths and enhancing a more dynamic mindset.

## **Workshop: Moral stress as a matter of school organising and leadership – calling colleagues to discuss insights, experiences and paths for future research**

Chairs: Sarah Davy, University College Copenhagen, Denmark  
Nana Vaaben, University College Copenhagen, Denmark

### **Background:**

Our research of the past decade has taught us a lot about strain and wellbeing in schools. We can see that many teachers leave their profession and a main reason is moral stress: The perception of knowing the right way to act professionally - but feeling unable (due to time, support, financial resources or other) to act accordingly.

In our research on Danish public schools, we address the complexity of challenged teachers and school pedagogues from different perspectives. We look both upwards into the political system, we look into employee motivation and individual differences in stress/well-being perception and we look into teachers' work life conditions: school leadership and organisation. We can see that some schools are better than others at buffering the effect of limited resources and other system challenges, resulting in a more sustainable psychosocial work environment for their staff. We are curious to explore the latter perspective further, together with Nordic and international colleagues in this workshop.

### **Workshop focus:**

The aim of this workshop is to share knowledge across countries and research institutions on the following two levels:

1. What do we know about leadership and organisation as factors that affect and/or buffer strain and moral stress in schools? Which factors are at play? Which studies have we carried out/do we know of? What do we not know (enough) about?
2. How can we go about increasing knowledge in this area? Which research designs and approaches do we expect to be meaningful and feasible? And: Do we want to network and link up to work collaboratively and/or comparatively in the Nordic countries?

### **Process and audience involvement:**

Presentation of research behind our question and intro to workshop process. After a short presentation (max. 10 mins), participants at this workshop are invited and expected to share their thoughts and knowledge on the topic. We will work inspired by the method "world café", in three rounds á 10 mins, following the abovementioned two levels.

The number of café tables/work stations will be adapted to the number of participants, aiming for max 5 people per station.

In the first two rounds, everybody collects knowledge, ideas and questions aiming at the first abovementioned level ("leadership/organizing factors in schools that affect/buffer moral stress" – what we know/don't know)

In the third round, participants on all stations will relate the content of what was discussed and written on their table sheets, to the abovementioned level 2 ("How can we go about increasing knowledge in this area?")

In the remaining time of our workshop, each group/table host will share their findings and we will share contact details to open up for future research collaboration.

