



## Brief

# Focusing Values. On the Didactic Question “What” in Pragmatically Informed Teaching in Preschool

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In 2018 *teaching* was enhanced in the Swedish revised curriculum (Lpfö 18). Both in the pre-school practice and in teacher preparation, teachers seem to struggle with the concept (Vallberg Roth, 2020). In a knowledge overview (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018), Sheridan and Williams emphasize teachers' subject and didactic knowledge as pre-requisites for realizing the intentions of the national preschool curriculum. In the same overview, Eidevald et al. (2018) discuss how caring and playful teaching and education might be delivered in preschool. They argue that goal-oriented teaching practices is a challenge for preschool teachers.

When the Swedish Education Act of 2011 entered into force, the work of preschools with norms and values was also accorded a stronger position that legitimates the preschool to influence children's attitudes. Policy documents applicable to preschools emphasize certain specific values to which individual children and childhood more generally should be related. However, in preschool practice, interpretations of which values are especially important to address vary from one practice to the next and is highly dependent upon normative ideas of the needs of children.

In light of the above, it becomes interesting to study both of these strengthened mandates – teaching and values. Drawing upon experiences from a didactic and pragmatically informed teaching approach with focus on values, the aim of this article is to understand preschool teachers' interpretations of the didactic *what* question.

The material underlying the teaching approach consists of a total of 364 documents, including 64 video recordings. This was carried out in about 120 preschools and/or preschool

departments in ten Swedish municipalities. The analysis takes a didactic approach and can be methodologically described as abductive analysis. The results indicate that pragmatically informed teaching of values revolves around social values, such as democracy and (children's) participation; in the preschool practice, the teaching is organized as opportunities for reflection and "multiparticipation." As the participants conducted the pragmatic and didactic teaching approach, they were confronted with their own and each other's opinions, values and ways of teaching. Additional traces of multivocality emerged from integrative knowledge content moving within and between various value levels. Thus, the didactic and pragmatically informed teaching approach opened for possibilities for participants to gain distance towards their personal definitions of "goods" and "rights".

**Keywords:** *Didactics; didactic and pragmatically informed approach; values; preschool teaching*