

# Chapter 1

## Developing Play-responsive *Didaktik* – Mission Impossible?



“Do not disturb, the child is playing!”

Play lies at the heart of preschool pedagogy. It has been so since the advent of this institution, built on the ideas of scholars such as Friedrich Fröbel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey. The history of play in preschool, in the twenty-first century, could be described in terms of shifting perspectives (Cutter-Mackenzie, Edwards, Moore, & Boyd, 2014). These are interesting to consider as they create the backcloth for the aim of the research project reported in the present book.

At the time when the first preschools were established, the value of play in childhood was ideologically stated as something essential. Rousseau launched the image of the innocent, naturally evolving child needing protection from adults to be able to play, interact with nature and in this way, be in the process of ‘natural learning’ (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2014; see also Loizou, 2017). This image has paved the way for the child-centeredness that still is a hallmark of preschool practice. Subsequently, Piaget, the preeminent and for a long time dominating developmental psychologist, further strengthened the view of children discovering the world through unassisted exploration and play. Developmental psychology became the “research evidence base for protecting children’s opportunity to learn and develop through the provision of traditionally valued play-based experience” (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2014, p. 16). However, eventually critical voices started to problematize the ‘what’ of learning; children might learn through play, but *what* do they learn? In line with such discussions, adults’ role in children’s play has come to the fore as a debated issue, including whether the ‘intervention’ of adults in children’s play are necessary to support ‘appropriate learning’ (and what is considered ‘appropriate’ and according to whom or what criteria), or whether such ‘intervention’ damage children’s sense and development of agency.

Today, Cutter-Mackenzie and colleagues (ibid.) argue, what dominates discussions about early childhood education is what they refer to as the post-developmental perspectives. These are characterised by an emphasis on social and cultural aspects on learning and human cognition, and also on the sociology of childhood. The interest in how and why play is used in preschool has increased, and, for example, how peer cultures take form among children (e.g., Corsaro, 2011). The work of the

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky is, according to Cutter-Mackenzie and colleagues, the most influential contributor to the development of preschool practice in what they call the post-developmental era. With this development, the role of teachers has been increasingly emphasised, particularly as dialogical partners to children. With reference to Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2008), Cutter-Mackenzie and colleagues argue that

[I]f play is to be considered educative in basis it would have to teach children ‘something’. This representation of the ‘something’ sums up the tensions associated with contemporary perspectives on pedagogical play in early childhood education and illustrates the need for principles on play-based learning to inform early childhood [...] education. (p. 19)

This quote in part captures where the present study is positioned in the field of what is today often discussed in terms of play-based learning (e.g., Pyle & Danniels, 2017; Walsh, McGuinness, & Sproule, 2017). What has driven us in the research project that we will here report is an interest in how teachers can contribute to children’s learning of ‘something’, while respecting the valued practice of child-centeredness and the importance of children’s right to play. The three perspectives on play that have been developed through the history of preschool, as here presented through Cutter-Mackenzie et al.’s (2014) review, have all in different ways contributed to enrich the understanding of pedagogical play.

The representatives of what is called developmental pedagogy, Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2008), were part of the phenomenographic (Marton & Booth, 1997; Pramling, 1988) research group in Gothenburg in the 1980s at the time when *didaktik*<sup>1</sup> was founded as a research discipline in Sweden (Englund, 2007). The fundamental interest within this research tradition is the *content* of learning – that is, the ‘something’ of learning. Two main approaches have developed since then in this tradition: the learning of subject matter research, which springs from the phenomenographic tradition, and curriculum studies. The early research in what (later) developed into phenomenography, had a focus on the learner’s perspective on ‘something’ covered in teaching or studying (e.g., Marton & Säljö, 1976; Pramling, 1983). In studies in subject matter learning, a sociocultural perspective has become central, while politically informed theories have dominated curriculum studies. Englund (2007) points out an important feature of the development of *didaktikal* research in Sweden, which he calls ‘the communicative turn’. This turn implies that the traditional metaphors of teaching and learning, as transmission and reception of knowledge, respectively, are abandoned in favour of an emphasis on dialogue and communication between teachers and students. Englund argues that ‘communicative didactics’ presupposes a critical analysis of the choice of content and forms of teaching. This typical Nordic way of understand didactics is related to the German concept of *Bildung*. According to Broström (2012), “a Bildung based approach listens to the children’s perspectives and gives them the opportunity to influence their daily lives” (p. 70). This kind of approach, if

---

<sup>1</sup>The reason for us using the original spelling of *didaktik* rather than the English ‘didactics’ will be clarified later in this chapter.

applied in preschool practice, requires that children and teachers become engaged in a shared content where the child is both listened to and supported in reflecting, in order to expand his or her understanding. Broström voices a risk of curriculum-based modern preschool: that educational practice may be reduced to adjustment to and training for formal schooling. However, he also suggests that preschool teachers themselves have the possibility to independently reflect on and choose educational content “appropriate for their specific children” (p. 72).

As already mentioned, the aim of the present project is to develop, that is, conceptualize and theorize, what we will refer to as *play-responsive teaching and didaktik*. This means that we take on the challenge to empirically study and theorize the intersection of two traditions to see if, and if so how, conditions for children’s learning and development can be supported through play. Play, as we have already briefly mentioned, have in the history of preschool often been associated – and still so today – with ‘no interference’ by adults and no such things as intentionally introduced content (direction of learning). In contrast, *didaktik* revolves around an interest in the teaching of something (content). However, what we perceive as a contemporary trend in both traditions (i.e., play-based pedagogy and didactics) is an increasing emphasis on dialogue and problematizing of content.

One of our basic premises is that the commonly heard comments such as the one quoted in the first line of this chapter, that adults should not disturb children’s ‘free’ play, are counter to both the institutional conditions of preschool and what we know about learning and development (and, in fact, also about what we know about play). But how, and on what conditions, can teachers and children engage in mutual developmental play activities that facilitate not only social and academic skills but also children’s fantasy (imagination)?

The research group conducting the present study has a long tradition of doing research in close collaboration with teachers. However, in the project laying the ground for this book, we have taken collaboration one step further. The teachers are now in charge of the data production. To enable closeness to everyday practice in preschool, beyond particular recurring activities such as circle-time or activities provided in order to produce research data, we have handed over the cameras to the teachers. This is also in line with the general development in preschool where digital technology is a common tool for documentation. The teachers’ participation in the empirical work has proved to both open up for new insights and to introduce new challenges. These matters will be discussed in detail in Chap. 4 of this volume.

In this chapter, we will expand on the themes of the book, which we have briefly introduced. More specifically we will be focusing:

- Teaching and learning in early childhood education and care (ECEC)
- Play-based pedagogy
- The continental/German tradition of *didaktik* as distinct from the Anglo-American tradition of *didactics*

We end this chapter with guidance for readers, clarifying the structure and rationale of the book.

## Teaching and Learning in ECEC

In Sweden, most children aged from 1 to 5 years old participate in preschool and there has been a long tradition that the state shares the parents' responsibilities for children. Today, a national curriculum for preschool (*Lpfö 18*) governs preschool, stating the teachers' role to support children's well-being, enjoyment and learning (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018).

Around the last millennium shift, a new movement in ECE research emerged, where children and childhood are seen not in terms of their biological conditions, but as constructed by those who have historically interpretative precedence. In this childhood sociology (Corsaro, 2011; James & Prout, 1997), attempts are made to consider children as individuals rather than only as family members. This ambition can be understood as a response to the fact that previously more homogenous social structures are increasingly multicultural and that conditions for children's socialization and development differ depending on, amongst other, gender, class and ethnicity. Another reason to question previously established views on children and childhood is the UN Convention of the Right of the Child, which highlights the importance of all children's equal value, rights and participation. Accordingly, issues such as influence and democracy are also related to children. Today, children's participation is promoted as an important feature of preschool activities. According to normative documents, such as the Swedish national curriculum, preschool activities should express a child-centred humanistic perspective where children have equal right to be listened to and to participate in democratic processes (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018).

Children are increasingly regarded as competent actors on their own terms (i.e., as having agency) and childhoods (in the plural) are seen as social, cultural and historical phenomena. Today, children and adults are considered, at the same time, as *beings* (as agents in the present) and *becomings* (in development) (e.g., James & Prout, 1997; Trondman, 2011; Uprichard, 2008.). A strong change in contemporary childhood requires a preschool in both social and substantive transformation and potentially a partial change in teachers' knowledge and profession. Today, greater expectations are voiced about what preschools can make possible for children to learn and develop knowledge about, which becomes apparent, for example, in some of the objectives of the Swedish national curriculum for preschool (*Lpfö 18*) having recently been clarified: activities in preschool shall involve children with the intent to raise their awareness about and developing skills and knowledge in different domains of knowing (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). Content issues are therefore essential to the task of contemporary Swedish preschool. Hence, children are expected to be able to participate in activities where they are supported in developing emergent skills in specific areas, such as mathematics, literacy, science, technology and the arts.

According to regulations and guidelines, Swedish preschool does not have the goal of children reaching a particular level of achievement, since the directions in the national curriculum are *goals to strive for* (not goals to achieve). Furthermore,

children are meant to be supported in making sense of different content areas, not as traditional school subjects but as dealt with in a holistic, thematic way. Play and care have always been central parts in Swedish preschool tradition (sometimes the notion of ‘educare’ is used) and with an increased emphasis on learning, there may appear to be contradictory discourses highlighting play and teaching, and social pedagogy and readiness-for-school, respectively (see Pramling, Doverborg, & Pramling Samuelsson, 2017, for a discussion). While education always has been an important part of the task of preschool, in parallel with care for the children’s well-being, there are particular challenges in the work of contemporary preschool. These become visible in the emergence (in Swedish preschool) of the notion of teaching now being integrated in the national curriculum.

## Different Voices, Arguments and Standpoints

As we have already touched upon, there are fundamental disagreements among researchers about how to define children’s play, why children engage in play and what its role for learning and development in preschool is (e.g., Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2014; Pyle & Danniels, 2017; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2012). These are worth expanding on a bit more by reviewing some of the empirical studies made on play and education. The importance of children’s play has rarely been questioned, since it long has been recognized to be an important mediator of emergent competences in early childhood (Bergen, 2002; Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2011; Vygotsky, 1930/2004, 1933/1966), but whether, and if so in what ways, adults should interact with playing children, are more contested. Discussing these matters, Hakkarainen, Brèdikytè, Jakkula, and Munter (2013) identify a Scandinavian model that supports children’s ‘free play’ with a minimum of adults’ interventions, while, for instance, in the former Soviet Union, teachers used ‘didactic play’ to instruct preschool children how to play. An example is presented by Bodrova (2008) who describes a play intervention based on Vygotsky’s and Elkonin’s theorizing of make-believe play. The teachers were instructed to scaffold children’s play by

using toys and props in a symbolic way; developing consistent and extended play scenarios; being able to take on and to stay in a pretend role for an extended play episode or a series of play episodes; and being able to consistently follow the rules determining what each pretend character can or cannot do. (p. 366)

These strategies are said to both promote make-believe play and at the same time scaffold the development of early academic skills.

How to participate in children’s play is, as we have already mentioned, one of the debated issues. Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2011), for example, reports researchers’ concern about direct adult involvement in children’s play, as they tend to take over and correct children’s play in ways that might be inconsistent with the children’s interests, needs and cultural traditions. In addition, Sutton-Smith (1990) argues that well-intentioned adult play interventions too often lapses into “didactic

play bumbblings” (p. 5), ending in over-directions of children’s play. Consequently, there are views that adult taking part in play can hinder play engagement.

In her discussion of early childhood, Stephen (2010) identifies two enduring ‘big ideas’ or discourses among early childhood practitioners in the UK: one about the child in center, that allows children to freely choose how to spend their time in the playroom, and one that emphasizes “play as the medium through which children learn” (p. 18). Stephen (2010) refers to a study of pedagogical effectiveness in the UK (Moyles, Adams, & Musgrove, 2002) based on conversations with ECE-practitioners. The practitioners tended to refer their work to pioneering pedagogical approaches, such as Reggio Emilia or Montessori, rather than to educational theorists even if an examination of the playroom pedagogical practices provided evidences of the legacy of Piaget, in that they for example grouped the children by age and had a focus on the individual child’s active exploration. The practitioners placed emphasis on providing resource-rich environments and the roles they saw for themselves were providers and observers of freely experimenting children. Intersecting these issues, in a discussion of play pedagogy and playworlds (Lindqvist, 1995; see Chap. 3 of the present volume), Baumer (2013) argues that

At the end of the 20th century, in many Western societies, young children’s life and play became “segregated” into specifically designated areas of nursery rooms, playgrounds, and theme-parks. At the time, many educators and parents believed that children’s play needed to be spontaneous and free from adults’ guidance and influence. They recognized the developmental significance of play and assumed that play- and child-dedicated spaces would ensure that children’s play was nurtured and protected and that their development was optimized. However, in the absence of parents and educators, children’s play spaces became depleted of cultural resources. Commercial toys and other objects of material culture that replace adults’ presence are increasingly seen as detrimental for children’s creativity and imagination. In contrast to this trend, play pedagogy advocates adult and child joint play, in which adults provide a variety of social, emotional, cognitive and communicative resources to enrich and support children’s play. (Baumer, 2013, pp. 1f.)

This historical reasoning, thus, proves an important argument that, despite the best intentions to care for children’s play though allotting play spaces, this may have worked contrary, in that the associated distance to adults (and per implication, cultural practices) has actually de-created the developmental value of play. What is emphasized in playworlds approaches (see also, Ferholt, 2010; Marjanovic-Shane, Connery, & John-Steiner, 2010) – as well as with the perspective we develop in this volume – in this regard is that critical is personnel and children *engaging in mutual imaginary activities*.

Returning to Stephen’s (2010) discussion, she argues for a need for caution in these respects (i.e., personnel as observers and organizers of the environment rather than participants) when it comes to the understanding of children’s learning:

There is also a need to guard against practices designed to allow children space to explore tipping over into a laissez-faire approach that removes adults from the learning processes once the environment has been prepared and which can be seen as placing responsibility for progress and change on the young learner. (p. 20)

The idea that adults might ‘interfere’ in children’s play is hence common both among researchers, theorists and practitioners. According to one line of reasoning, once the environment is set up, children are expected to learn by themselves while playing, which, according to another line of reasoning, is to neglect the responsibility of teaching by the adults.

At the same time, many researchers challenge common concern with child-centered, freely explored practices. For example, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) have demonstrated that settings where there are a balance between child-initiated and practitioner-initiated learning activities provide the most favorable conditions in terms of children’s cognitive, social and dispositional outcomes. This is in line with Pramling et al.’s (2017) reasoning that outlining ECEC in terms of *either* play-free-from-adults *or* instruction-of-subjects, is unproductive as a basis for outlining developmental support for children. There is a pressing need for developing – that is, theorizing on empirical basis – approaches to the development of children’s play and understanding beyond such dichotomous reasoning. In the present study, this is the challenge that we take on.

## Early Childhood Education *Didaktik*

While *didaktik* in Sweden emerged in educational discussions in the 1980s (Englund, 2007), the notion of ‘didactics’ has long been used in the field of education internationally (Hopmann, 2007; Hudson & Meyer, 2011; Nordkvelle, 2003). However, it is important to realize that, particularly in Anglo-American countries, the word often has negative connotations, as denoting a traditional lesson approach with an instructing teacher and passive children (Hamilton, 1999). However, there is a different didactics tradition in the Continental European countries. The Czech scholar Johan Amos Comenius is generally referred to as the founder of general didactics in Europe. Already in 1657, he published the book *Didacta Magna* that still is seen as an inspiration and guideline for didactical thinking (Meyer, 2012). In the 1960s to the 1990s, the so-called “*Bildungstheoretische Didaktik*” was dominant in Western Germany with Wolfgang Klafki (born 1927) as the most prominent representative. This is a reason to often spell ‘didactics’ with a ‘k’ to emphasize that it is on the basis of the continental European use of the concept ‘didactics’ that is intended. ‘*Didaktik*’ is here related to its original ancient Greek meaning of “showing” (from “*deiknumi*”) with the intention of making others see or realize something new.

The common core of *didaktik* is characterized as ‘restrained teaching’, based on (i) a commitment to *Bildung*, (ii) the educative difference of matter and meaning where learning experiences emerges within the learning process itself, based on the meeting of a unique individual with the matter at hand, and (iii) the autonomy of teaching and learning, since an emerging experience always is situated in unique moments and interactions, there is no way to fix the outcome in advance (Hopmann, 2007). Hudson and Meyer (2011) argue that it is not only didactics that does not exist in Anglo-American (tertiary) education, but also one of the basic concepts of

continental didactics, '*Bildung*' finds no equivalent. To conceive teaching and learning from such a *Bildung* perspective means to understand the activities as complex nexuses of interaction, educational experience, social learning, moral development and content-related 'acquisition' of knowledge and abilities. Hence, how teachers create conditions and how children face them are a matter of interaction or dialogue. A prerequisite is that the teacher contributes to focusing on content that is meaningful and interesting to the children. Scandinavian didacticians often tend to refer to the Anglo-American work on "reflective practice" (e.g., Donald A. Schön) and the German model of *Bildungstheoretische Didaktik* (Wolfgang Klafki). Hopmann (2007) claims that some Americans, for example Dewey, were well aware of and to a large amount inspired by the continental and northern European tradition of general and subject matter *didaktik*, "but it never made its way into the mainstream of American teacher education" (p. 109). *Didaktik* was replaced by concepts such as 'curriculum' in America, which is arguably a fundamentally different concept.

A notion of didactics relevant to early childhood education has been developed on the basis of empirical research and theoretical accounts by Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson (2011). What they refer to as an 'early childhood didactics', and what this book intends to further develop, reconnects to the etymology of the word and its subsequent development, 'didactics' as 'pointing out and linguistically informing experience'. In brief, this take on early childhood didactics revolves around some key concepts. A point of departure is that an education is at heart a communicative endeavor in the original sense of the word, that is, to 'make common' (Barnhart, 2004). Hence, communication is not seen as one person sending information to another who receives it, but as a collaborative sense-making activity (on different models of communication, see Reddy, 1993). This activity therefore presumes that language is used as a cultural tool in directing someone else's (and one's own) attention (Tomasello, 1999; Vygotsky, 1997, 1998). However, simply sharing attention while being a necessary condition is not a sufficient one for a didactic encounter to take place, in the more delineated sense here referred to. The two (or more) participants also need to coordinate their perspectives on what they attend to, that is, establish intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1974, 1992). Often people communicate through pointing – with fingers and gaze as well as through speech (using words such as 'there', 'that', 'this') – what is referred to as deictic references (Ivarsson, 2003). However, while participants may share attention on 'that thing there', they may perceive 'that thing' in very different terms. Where one sees, for example, the geometrical shape of a triangle, the other may see the figure as the roof of a house (cf. Luria, 1976). The two participants may appear to have achieved intersubjectivity. However, as further probing would prove, this is in fact what Ivarsson (2003) has referred to as 'illusory intersubjectivity'. What the two participants (e.g., a teacher and a child) attend to are on a *terminological level* ('that thing there') the same but on a *conceptual level* (what they see – or in, for example music, hear – 'that thing there' *as*) they are uncoordinated and thus focus on different things. For this reason, communicating and also meta-communicating (i.e., communicating about one's communication) are vital to a 'didactic encounter' in the sense here outlined. Consequently, this perspective ascribes the teacher (or



another more experienced participant) great importance to the child's development in educational settings and activities.

## Theoretical and Empirical Continuity and Discontinuity

In relation to some of the work produced by the members of the research group who has authored the present volume, it can be illuminative to somewhat explicate the continuities and discontinuities between the work we (some of us) have previously done, both in theoretical terms and in terms of empirical interests. Some previous work of this group has been in the tradition of phenomenography. What is referred to as phenomenography is the tradition emerging in Gothenburg, Sweden, in the 1970s to study the experience and approaches of learners (for a historical elaboration on the emergence of the interest and approach of what later came to be known as phenomenography, see Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson, & Säljö, 1977/1999). Conceptualized as phenomenography (Marton, 1981), for example, qualitatively different ways learners understand what it means to read a text and, consequently, how they read texts were analyzed. The point of departure is an interest in how learners understand a content of learning, or a phenomenon, such as electricity (Kärrqvist, 1985), gravity (Lybeck, 1981), or learning as such (Pramling, 1983) (see also, Pramling Samuelsson & Pramling, 2016, for a more general discussion). Research within this tradition has been much informative about what is today generally referred to as the child's or the learner's perspective (see Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2010, for a meta-discussion). However, this research differs from our present concerns.

Critically, phenomenography takes its point of departure in a *phenomenon* and investigates how it is experienced in qualitatively different ways by learners, while in the present project we are interested in *activities*. Hence, rather than, for example, asking how children experience numbers, in the present project we are interested in what contents are constituted in mutual play activities and how the learning of these contents are supported in such activities. Hence, in phenomenography there is an interest in a particular phenomenon (or content of learning), while in the present study what contents are constituted remains unknown until analyzing the empirical data (the point of departure instead being taken in particular kinds of activities).

On the basis of the approach of phenomenography, variation theory later emerged (Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Tsui, 2004). Critical to this theory is the premise that meaning springs from differences, not similarities. With an interest in how powerful learning can be facilitated, that is, how teachers can provide support necessary for making possible for learners to discern phenomena, the 'object of learning' is highlighted. This 'object of learning' is differentiated into 'the intended', 'the enacted' and 'the lived object of learning', referring to what teachers plan for, provide the means for discerning, and how it is experienced by learners, respectively. The conceptual framework of variation theory and its tripartite object of learning are highly functional for investigating what opportunities learners are offered to develop

conceptual insight in formal education. It may also be used in other milieus, but has been done less so. In contrast to the interest of most studies building on variation theory, in the present study we do not take our point of departure in a particular object of learning. The activities we analyze may or may not be initiated by teachers in order to provide developmental support for children to develop new insight into particular domains of knowing, but many activities will be initiated by children without such aims. Still, in the nature of evolving mutual activity there will be contents constituted; what these contents are and how they come to play a part in continuing activity are something we are interested in analyzing. Hence, sharing the point generally made in the tradition of phenomenography and variation theory, respectively, that there can be no learning without someone learning *something*, what this something is will emerge in activity. Our interest in the participants' perspectives is also continuous with research from the perspectives of phenomenography and variation theory, even if we differ from these perspectives in analyzing participants' perspectives as they responsively come into play in communicative practices.

Like variation theory (Marton, 2015), developmental pedagogy (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2007, 2008) developed from phenomenography. What is here referred to as developmental pedagogy emerged through theorizing the findings of numerous empirical studies conducted in preschool (e.g., Pramling, 1983, 1994; see also Pramling Samuelsson & Pramling, 2016). Meta-reviewing this tradition of research, Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2007, 2008) highlight (a) the following important principles, that they suggest are shared by playing and learning: “children’s experience as a point of departure”, “discernment, simultaneity and variation as key-factors”, and “meta-cognition, meta-communicative dialogues and meta-communication as crucial issues” (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2008, p. 631), and (b) that play and more aesthetical contents had not been much studied from this perspective. In response to this realization, subsequent research focused on aesthetics/the arts (particularly music, dance and poetry; for some examples, see Pramling & Asplund Carlsson, 2008; Pramling & Pramling Samuelsson, 2013; Pramling & Wallerstedt, 2011). Regarding the absence of studies of play from the perspective of developmental pedagogy, focusing on children’s learning in different domains of knowing appear to have resulted in, to some extent, taking play for granted; for example, reasoning about play as the way children make known to preschool teachers that the topics they have worked with have made a difference to the children, that is, engaged them. The identified lack of studies on play in the tradition of developmental pedagogy was one of the starting points in initiating the project reported in the present study. However, and critically, the present project also builds on empirical research and theorizing from other traditions and disciplines (e.g., developmental psychology, sociocultural/cultural-historical theory, zoology and philosophy, see Chaps. 3 and 4 for an elaboration).

## Guidance for Readers

In this chapter, we have introduced the topic of our investigation – theorizing how to understand how early childhood education support children’s learning and development in a way that is responsive to, rather than counter, play. We have briefly discussed that our line of reasoning reconnects to the continental tradition of *didaktik* (as fundamentally different from the concept of didactics, as traditionally understood in the English-speaking world). In subsequent chapters and finally, as an outcome of our investigation, we will further develop a *didaktik* for ECEC.

The volume is structured in the following way. In the next chapter (Chap. 2), we present our perspective on teaching, learning and *didaktik*. What we refer to as *didaktik* highlights issues concerning content and context, and we therefore discuss these notions more closely. In Chap. 3, we more extensively review empirical research on play and learning in ECEC, highlighting some studies that are of more general interest to our present study (other important studies are introduced in empirical chapters reconnecting to more specific issues raised in these). We review work on conceptualizing and valuing play. We position the present study in relation to some particularly important previous studies. Thereafter (Chap. 4), we present our combined research and development project and we introduce concepts central to our investigation. These have reflexively been developed in close coordination with empirical data. Then follows the empirical chapters (Chaps. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). These chapters are divided into two parts. In the first part, we present analyses of activities highlighting what we refer to as *teachers’ playing skills*. In these Chaps. (5, 6, 7, and 8), we can see how teachers attempt to enter into, and how they participate in, children’s play, how stories are used to communicatively frame activities and mutual projects, and how contents are constituted in such activities. In the second part (Chaps. 9, 10, and 11), we present analyses of longer (entire) play episodes to clarify empirically *playing and teaching as integrated activities*. The book is concluded (Chap. 12) with a summary of the most important findings and theoretical elaboration. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 all build on original data from ECEC settings. These empirical chapters are organized on different basis; some follow a prolonged activity from initiation to conclusion while others build on data from different activities and settings. The book is concluded by a chapter where we discuss the most important findings and how these relate to the research field, and we outline the critical features of the developed approach to supporting children’s learning and development that constitutes the key outcome of our investigation.

## References

- Barnhart, R. K. (Ed.). (2004). *Chambers dictionary of etymology*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Chambers.
- Baumer, S. (2013). Play pedagogy and playworlds. *Encyclopedia of early childhood development*. <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/BaumerANGxp1.pdf>

- Bergen, D. (2002). The role of pretend play in children's cognitive development. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 4(1), 1–12.
- Bodrova, E. (2008). Make-believe play versus academic skills: A Vygotskian approach to today's dilemma of early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(3), 357–369.
- Broström, (2012). Curriculum in preschool: Adjustment or a possible liberation? *Nordic Early Childhood Education Research*, 5(11), 1–14.
- Corsaro, W. A. (2011). *The sociology of childhood* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Cutter-Mackenzie, A., Edwards, S., Moore, D., & Boyd, W. (2014). *Young children's play and environmental education in early childhood education*. Springer Briefs in Education. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0_2).
- Englund, T. (2007). Om relevansen av begreppet didaktik [On the relevance of the concept of didaktik]. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 1(1), 2–10.
- Ferholt, B. (2010). A synthetic-analytic method for the study of perezhivanie: Vygotsky's literary analysis applied to playworlds. In M. C. Connery, V. P. John-Steiner, & A. Marjanovic-Shane (Eds.), *Vygotsky and creativity: A cultural-historical approach to play, meaning making, and the arts* (pp. 163–179). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Hakkarainen, P., Brëdikytë, M., Jakkula, K., & Munter, H. (2013). Adult play guidance and children's play development in a narrative play-world. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(2), 213–225.
- Hamilton, D. (1999). The pedagogic paradox (or why no didactics in England?). *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 7(1), 135–152.
- Hopmann, S. (2007). Restrained teaching: The common core of didaktik. *European Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 109–124.
- Hudson, B., & Meyer, M. A. (Eds.). (2011). *Beyond fragmentation: Didactics, learning and teaching in Europe*. Opladen, Germany: Barbara Budrich.
- Ivarsson, J. (2003). Kids in Zen: Computer-supported learning environments and illusory intersubjectivity. *Education, Communication & Information*, 3(3), 383–402.
- James, A., & Prout, A. (Eds.). (1997). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London, UK: Falmer.
- Kärrqvist, C. (1985). *Kunskapsutveckling genom experimenterande dialoger i ellära* [Knowledge development through experimental dialogues in electricity] (Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, 52). Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Lindqvist, G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools* (Uppsala Studies in Education, 62). Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Loizou, E. (2017). Towards play pedagogy: Supporting teacher play practices with a teacher guide about socio-dramatic and imaginative play. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25, 784–795. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2017.1356574>.
- Luria, A. R. (1976). *Cognitive development: Its cultural and social foundations* (M. Lopez-Morillas & L. Solotaroff, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lybeck, L. (1981). *Arkimedes i klassen: En ämnespedagogisk berättelse* [Archimedes in the classroom: A subject-matter story] (Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, 37). Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Marjanovic-Shane, A., Connery, M. C., & John-Steiner, V. (2010). A cultural-historical approach to creative education. In M. C. Connery, V. P. John-Steiner, & A. Marjanovic-Shane (Eds.), *Vygotsky and creativity: A cultural-historical approach to play, meaning making, and the arts* (pp. 215–232). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography – Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10, 177–200.
- Marton, F. (2015). *Necessary conditions of learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Marton, F., Dahlgren, L. O., Svensson, L., & Säljö, R. (1999). *Inläring och omvärldsuppfattning* [Learning and experiencing the world]. Stockholm, Sweden: Prisma. (Original work published 1977).
- Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I—outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46(1), 4–11.
- Marton, F., & Tsui, A. B. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Classroom discourse and the space of learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Meyer, M. A. (2012). Keyword: Didactics in Europe. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 15(3), 449–482.
- Moyles, J., Adams, S., & Musgrove, A. (2002). *SPEEL: Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness* (Research Report 363). London, UK: Department for Education and Skills.
- Nordkvelle, Y. T. (2003). Didactics: From classical rhetoric to kitchen-Latin. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 11(3), 315–330.
- Pramling, I. (1983). *The child's conception of learning* (Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, 46). Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Pramling, I. (1988). *Att lära barn lära* [Teaching children to learn] (Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, 70). Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Pramling, I. (1994). *Kunnandets grunder. Prövning av en fenomenografisk ansats till att utveckla barns sätt att uppfatta sin omvärld* [The foundations of knowing: Trying a phenomenographic approach to developing children's ways of experiencing their surrounding world] (Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, 94). Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Pramling, N., & Asplund Carlsson, M. (2008). Rhyme and reason: Developing children's understanding of rhyme. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 9(1), 14–26.
- Pramling, N., Doverborg, E., & Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2017). Re-metaphorizing teaching and learning in early childhood education beyond the instruction – Social fostering divide. In C. Ringsmose & G. Kragh-Müller (Eds.), *Nordic social pedagogical approach to early years* (pp. 205–218). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Pramling, N., & Pramling Samuelsson, I. (Eds.). (2011). *Educational encounters: Nordic studies in early childhood didactics*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Pramling, N., & Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2013). Language play: The development of linguistic consciousness and creative speech in early childhood education. In D. A. Winther-Lindqvist & I. Schousboe (Eds.), *Play and playfulness – Cultural historical perspectives* (pp. 127–139). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Pramling, N., & Wallerstedt, C. (2011). Mind your step: Representation and the trajectory of a circle-dance project with 6-8-year-old children. In N. Pramling & I. Pramling Samuelsson (Eds.), *Educational encounters: Nordic studies in early childhood didactics* (pp. 191–221). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., & Asplund Carlsson, M. (2007). *Spielend lernen: Stärkung lernmethodischer kompetenzen*. Troisdorf, Germany: Bildungsverlag Eins.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., & Asplund Carlsson, M. (2008). The playing learning child: Towards a pedagogy of early childhood. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(6), 623–641.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., & Pramling, N. (2016). Variation theory of learning and developmental pedagogy: Two context-related models of learning grounded in phenomenography. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 60(3), 286–295.
- Pyle, A., & Danniels, E. (2017). A continuum of play-based learning: The role of the teacher in play-based pedagogy and the fear of hijacking play. *Journal of Early Education and Development*, 28(3), 274–289.
- Reddy, M. J. (1993). The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed., pp. 164–201). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Rommetveit, R. (1974). *On message structure: A framework for the study of language and communication*. London, UK: Wiley.

- Rommetveit, R. (1992). Outlines of a dialogically based social-cognitive approach to human cognition and communication. In A. Wold (Ed.), *The dialogical alternative: Towards a theory of language and mind* (pp. 19–45). Oslo, Norway: Scandinavian Press.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Sylva, K. (2004). Researching pedagogy in English pre-schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(5), 713–730.
- Sommer, D., Pramling Samuelsson, I., & Hundeide, K. (2010). *Child perspectives and children's perspectives in theory and practice*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Stephen, C. (2010). Pedagogy: The silent partner in early years learning. *Early Years*, 30(1), 15–28.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1990). Dilemmas in adult play with children. In K. McDonald (Ed.), *Parent-child play* (pp. 15–42). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2018). *Läroplan för förskolan, Lpfö 18* [Curriculum for preschool, Lpfö 18]. Stockholm, Sweden: National Agency for Education.
- Tomasello, M. (1999). *The cultural origins of human cognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Trawick-Smith, J., & Dziurgot, T. (2011). Good-fit' teacher-child play interactions and the subsequent autonomous play of preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(1), 110–123.
- Trondman, M. (2011). To locate in the tenor of their setting the sources of their spell: Clifford Geertz and the 'strong' program in cultural sociology. In J. C. Alexander, P. Smith, & M. Norton (Eds.), *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural investigation in the social sciences* (pp. 145–166). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Uprichard, E. (2008). Children as being and becomings: Children, childhood and temporality. *Children and Society*, 22(4), 303–313.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1966). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Voprosy psikhologii*, 12(6), 62–76. (Original work published 1933).
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky, Volume 4: The history of the development of higher mental functions* (R. W. Rieber, Ed. & M. J. Hall, Trans.). New York: Plenum Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky, Volume 5: Child psychology* (R. W. Rieber, Ed. & M. J. Hall, Trans.). New York: Plenum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 42(1), 7–97. (Original work published 1930).
- Wallerstedt, C., & Pramling, N. (2012). Learning to play in a goal-directed practice. *Early Years*, 32(1), 5–15.
- Walsh, G., McGuinness, C., & Sproule, L. (2017). 'It's teaching... but not as we know it': Using participatory learning theories to resolve the dilemma of teaching in playbased practice. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1–12.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

