

International Perspectives on  
Early Childhood Education and Development 23

Eva Johansson · Anette Emilson  
Anna-Maija Puroila *Editors*

# Values Education in Early Childhood Settings

Concepts, Approaches and Practices

 Springer

# **International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development**

Volume 23

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Anna-Maija Puroila  
Editors

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# Foreword

This book is about values education in early years' settings. Communication of values in a broad and diverse sense is central in any pedagogy, especially for the youngest children in the educational system. Still, values education has been neglected as a research field, in education in general and particularly in the early years. Values education has been taken for granted, often regarded as difficult to understand and address, because of its embedded, embodied, and tacit character. Even so, values need to be identified, conceptualized, and prioritized in early childhood education and care (ECEC) practice and research. This is because education is a moral enterprise. Values can never be avoided even if they can easily be neglected.

The authors of this book address this lack of knowledge by scrutinizing various questions about values education in ECEC settings. This book aims to challenge professionals and researchers to reflect on and recognize values and value conflicts. The chapters offer researchers and educators new theoretical and methodological knowledge, including the challenges and difficulties one may encounter when studying and approaching this field. Many questions are posed in this book reflecting theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues. The studies presented are built on close collaboration between educators and researchers as they have approached various methodologies for research and educational practice in different ECEC settings. This means both identifying and discussing the plurality of values in education and educational research.

This book involves many participants, including children, educators, and researchers, who have their roots in diverse contexts. They hold a variety of research and educational positions and their experiences differ, but they are all passionate about exploring conditions for values and values education in the early years. The researchers, educators, and children reside in different parts of the world, including Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. The many experiences presented are ingrained in their sociopolitical context, yet their bearing for theory, research, and practice at an international level is considerable. We have strived to carefully consider the contextualized character of the cases, and to avoid being imperative, yet we argue that the questions, theories, and methodologies emphasized in this book do inform the international debate in manifold ways. Values

are part of everyday life across the globe even though they are differently conceptualized, interpreted, and lived out.

There are many contributors to this book. Without the children and educators in the many participating ECEC settings, there would have been no research and, consequently, no book. Thank you all for generously letting us be part of your everyday practice, allowing us to explore, challenge, and discuss values with one another. The researchers and authors of this book have been part of a collaborative journey, supporting and challenging each other as critical friends, and sharing and developing knowledge on values education together. Thank you for your collective efforts in making this project a success. Additionally, we are grateful for the support from NordForsk, which has made this large research project possible. We also wish to express our sincere thanks to our respective universities for encouraging and supporting this project.

August 2017

Eva Johansson  
Anette Emilson  
Anna-Maija Puroila

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# Chapter 1

## Values in Nordic Preschools: Setting the Scene



Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila

### 1.1 Introduction

This book addresses the field of values education in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. In a globalizing world, and especially in an age of pluralism, the acknowledgment of values has become increasingly important. A genuine pluralistic community requires institutions and open spaces for a multiplicity of values to be pronounced and communicated. The communication of values, in a broad and diverse sense, is central in any pedagogy and in all ECEC settings throughout the world.

The research project – Values Education in Nordic Preschools. Basics of Education for Tomorrow (ValuEd<sup>1</sup>) – underlying this book explored values education in five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden (Johansson, Puroila, & Emilson, 2016). Nordic societies are acknowledged as the most equal in the world, both from economic and gender perspectives (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). However, we know very little about how these values are articulated in ECEC educational policies or how values

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education is achieved in encounters between young children and practitioners in Nordic preschools. In this book, preschool refers to day-care centers offering full-day pedagogical programs to all children between 1 and 6 years old. Preschool is part of the formal educational system of Nordic societies and is available for all children. Governments in the respective Nordic countries have an accredited curriculum for early childhood education and care, which all preschool activities are to follow. The programs differ slightly between the different countries and have some significant commonalities: a child-centered pedagogy; play forms the basis for learning; and outdoor life is important (Ringsmose & Kragh Müller, 2017).

Moreover, characteristic of the Nordic curricula is also that values for democracy, equality, and care are central (Ringsmose & Kragh Müller, 2017). Values are the core of education, even for the youngest children in the educational system. As children and educators represent diverse cultural and social backgrounds and value preferences, a variety of values are communicated in educational practices on a daily basis. Educators, however, often describe values education as an abstract and difficult area. Values are often taken for granted and regarded as difficult to conceptualize because of their embedded, embodied, and tacit character (Emilson & Johansson, 2009; Puroila et al., 2016; Thornberg, 2009). There is a need for educators and researchers in ECEC to reflect on and recognize values and value conflicts. Building on the ValuEd project, this book illuminates recent and novel participatory research on values education in Nordic ECEC contexts as well as new research methodologies in this field. In addition, there are two chapters that contribute to the volume by broadening the discussion beyond the Nordic countries. The chapters from Australia and Slovenia both address the importance of exploring values and values education in early childhood settings and provide significant theoretical perspectives that complement the chapters that are based on the Nordic project on values education.

## 1.2 The ValuEd Project

The overarching purpose of the ValuEd project was to explore the fostering of values in Nordic preschools (Johansson et al., 2016). The aim of this participatory action research project was to respond to the dearth of knowledge on values in the early years (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). We wanted to explore the fostering of values at different levels ranging from the Nordic level to national levels in policy documentation, preschool communities, and individual practitioners. At the level of preschool communities, the aim was also to support and challenge educators' work with values in practice.

In sum, the objectives were to (a) deepen theoretical understanding of values and values education by further developing Habermas' ideas about lifeworld, system, and communicative action (Habermas, 1987), (b) develop innovative research methodologies in which a participative action research method is linked to a cross-cultural

orientation, and (c) advance empirical knowledge of values and values education in Nordic preschools. The research questions were as follows:

- How do national educational policies frame values education in preschools?
- What is values education like in preschools? What kinds of values are communicated? What kinds of gender patterns emerge in values education?
- What are the commonalities and variations in values and values education among Nordic countries?

Based on the participatory action research approach (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), the researchers and educators worked together on the project for a period between 2013 and 2016. The educators working in Nordic preschools have different educational backgrounds. A few educators lack adequate education, while others possess postsecondary education (childminders), higher vocational education, and preschool teacher education at the university level (bachelor's degree). In this book, we use the words educators or practitioners to refer to adults working in preschool contexts. This is because the aim is to use an inclusive term to describe the staff rather than highlighting different kinds of educational backgrounds.

Over the duration of the project, 24 Nordic preschools, approximately 491 educators, and 1940 children were involved at different levels. In total, 25 Nordic researchers shared and developed knowledge in close collaboration with educators in the field. Research material was gathered through various methods: policy documents, individual interviews, group interviews, (video) observations, narratives, and written diaries from the participants and researchers. Artistic methods such as poems, drawings, narratives, and drama as well as video recordings were employed as methods for reflection on values. A variety of qualitative analysis methods were developed to explore values education at various levels. In this book, the central findings from the Nordic project and the sub-studies are presented and discussed from the Nordic, national, and international levels of research.

### **1.3 The Chapters: Values Education from Theoretical, Methodological, and Empirical Standpoints**

This book proposes a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in the early years. We regard values as socially constructed and embedded and contextualized in everyday life, which speaks to the complexity of their character. Still, values need to be identified, conceptualized, and prioritized in early childhood education and research because education is a moral enterprise, and values are always communicated in human interaction in one way or another (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). The book consists of 18 chapters, each employing various questions and perspectives of values and values education in ECEC settings. While the Nordic experiences portrayed herein are situated in their social and political contexts, the questions are relevant for the theoretical, methodological, and educational practice

dimensions at the international level. Two chapters are invited to provide a picture of values education in other contexts, i.e., Australia and Slovenia. The book is divided into three sections: “Part 1: Theory and Concepts,” “Part 2: Methodological Perspectives,” and “Part 3: Empirical Perspectives.” The chapters are introduced below.

*Chapter 1, Values in Nordic Preschools – Setting the Scene* authored by Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila introduces the book, the ValuEd project, and the various chapters, presenting readers with a background of the subsequent chapters and the book as a totality.

### **1.3.1 Part 1: Theory and Concepts**

This part of the book addresses theoretical issues and questions related to values education. The authors review the research field on values education, illuminate some patterns based on the findings of the ValuEd project, discuss the theory behind the project, and elaborate the importance of reflexivity and the meta-analyses of contemporary research on values in ECEC. Five chapters are presented.

*Chapter 2, Mapping the Field: What Are Values and Values Education About*, is authored by Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila. This chapter presents the research field on values education to provide a background for the studies presented in this volume. Values education emerges as a multifaceted concept with different understandings. Moreover, the authors use the Nordic project to illuminate some of the core elements of importance for values and values education in the early years as “something in between.” The chapter also suggests a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in ECEC.

In *Chapter 3, The Heart of Values Education in Early Childhood – Key Issues and Patterns*, Eva Johansson analyzes key findings in values education in ECEC settings, which draw on results from the Nordic ValuEd project. A variety of value fields representing clusters of values are identified and discussed. Ethics and democracy appears to be the most prominent value fields in the practices of Nordic early childhood settings, although variations in occurrence are recognized. Moreover, the value fields of efficiency and discipline appear to be influential as they present dilemmas for educators. Interestingly, individuality appears as a core value in the Nordic project as it influences the value fields in various ways.

*Chapter 4, A Dual Perspective and a Communicative Approach to Values Education in Early Childhood Education*, by Anette Emilson, scrutinizes the use of Jürgen Habermas’ theory in a research project on values education in ECEC settings. While highlighting the opportunities and limitations of using Habermas’ theory and concepts, the chapter assists readers in their own research considerations regarding conducting research on values education in early childhood settings. In addition, Emilson illuminates the utility of the theory for understanding pedagogical practice and the benefit of empirical analyses for developing the theory.

*Chapter 5, Epistemic Climates for Active Citizenship: Dialogically Organized Classrooms and Children's Internal Dialogue*, is authored by Jo Lunn, Sue Walker, Eva Johansson, Laura Scholes, and Mary Ryan. This chapter examines values education in the context of Australia. The authors underscore the role of reflexivity and the creation of a culture of dialogic persuasion and justification in relation to the promotion of active citizenship and inclusionary practices in the early years. A focus on children's epistemic beliefs regarding moral values is, argue the authors, best addressed in dialogically organized early years' classrooms in order to support children's reflexivity.

In *Chapter 6, Values Education in Early Childhood Settings: Challenges for the Future*, Robi Kroflič and Nada Turnšek present a meta-analysis of contemporary reflections on fundamental values and research findings on value development in early childhood. First, according to Malaguzzi, the child is a rich person from the very beginning, who uses several communication tools and searches for the meaning of life. Second, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is, from the beginning, a person with human rights, including "special" rights to ensure his or her protection *and* rights to provision and participation. Since these ideas have been widely accepted, values education has become a sensible activity even in very early childhood.

### ***1.3.2 Part 2: Methodological Perspectives***

This part of the book examines various methodological challenges as well as the potential of values research. The chapters address action research methodology, researcher ethics, encounters between researcher and educator, and horizons and narratives as supportive methods for practice and research on values. Four chapters are presented.

In *Chapter 7, Challenges and Advantages of Collaborative Action Research in Preschools*, Johanna Einarsdóttir and Ingibjorg Sigurdadóttir discuss the advantages and challenges they faced during their collaborative action research on values education in one Icelandic preschool. The action research model provided advantages for professional development, improvement of practice, and children's learning and well-being. However, there were challenges in terms of how to find time for conducting action research, uncertainty regarding action research and values education, and how to influence the whole preschool. The authors conclude that collaboration with the external researcher and colleagues was crucial to ensuring the success of the project.

*Chapter 8, "Sharing horizons," Methodological and Ethical Reflections on Video Observations* is authored by Hrönn Pálmadóttir, Jaana Juutinen, and Elina Viljamaa, who scrutinize the methodological and ethical challenges confronting researchers conducting video observations to explore lived values in ECEC settings in Finland and Iceland. During the research process, the researchers faced several methodological and ethical challenges in relation to values. These challenges

involved the researchers' influence on life in preschools and how to interpret videos in which one researcher was involved. Consequently, the confidence between the researcher and the participants in the study was crucial in observing the lived values of education.

In *Chapter 9, Sharing, Re-telling, and Performing Narratives: Challenging and Supporting Educators' Work with Values in Nordic Preschools*, Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson explore the manner in which narratives assist researchers and educators in generating knowledge about values. The analyses draw on Norwegian and Finnish studies on values education in preschools. The authors conclude that narratives involve the potential to promote educators' participation in the action research process by providing a meeting space for educators and researchers to collaboratively explore pedagogical situations. In addition, narratives offer fruitful ground for educators and researchers to reflect on how values are integrated into the complexities of educational practices.

*Chapter 10, Towards the Fusion of Different Horizons: Methodological Potentials and Challenges When Exploring Values Education in Nordic Preschools* is authored by Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson. The aim was to explore methodological potentials and challenges in cross-cultural research in three sub-studies within the Nordic project. The authors argue that collaboration between educators and researchers and between researchers from different countries constitutes the potential for encounters of different horizons. Encountering a different horizon may broaden the fore-understandings of the interlocutors, thus deepening their understanding. The study also draws attention to the challenges of understanding, such as the lack of a common language, and limitations when using translated texts.

### **1.3.3 Part 3: Empirical Perspectives**

This part of the book presents empirical studies on values education in the preschools within the ValuEd project. The chapters explore various value fields such as democracy, ethics, discipline, and efficiency. They raise questions on values in relation to the reciprocity of care, ethnic diversity among children, tensions imbued in the communication of values for belonging, and how values are communicated with subtle gestures like pointing. Eight chapters are presented.

*Chapter 11, Reciprocal Caring Values in ECEC Settings*, by Kristin Fugelsnes, investigates the caring that is communicated and received in educator-child interactions in ECEC settings. The research material is based on video observations of interactions between educators and children, which was drawn from the Norwegian part of the study. The analyses rely on Noddings' and Løgstrup's perspectives on caring as a reciprocal relation. This theoretical framework enables a consideration of caring from the "one-caring" and "cared-for" perspectives. The findings illuminate how educators communicate caring through words, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, and physical closeness and that children's response to the caring communicated is mainly instantiated through their body language, gestures, and gaze.

*Chapter 12, Educare: Care and Education in Planned Pedagogical Activities*, by Anders Skriver Jensen, is based on an investigation of Danish preschool practitioners' views on care, upbringing, and teaching. The findings reveal how the educators related care to supporting children and to concern for each other involving both physical and verbal dimensions. Upbringing was connected to the pedagogical work regarding children's acquisition of values and norms. Teaching was closely related to upbringing, but it seemed to have a closer connection to cognitive processes such as knowledge, skills, and competences. Care, upbringing, and teaching are, conclude the author, difficult to separate in the practitioners' reflections and can therefore be viewed together as holistic and fundamental dimensions of a practice described as *educare*.

In *Chapter 13, Democracy and Care – Values Education in Nordic Preschools*, Ole Henrik Hansen, Anders Skriver Jensen, and Stig Broström explore caring and democratic values in interactions between practitioners and children (1–5 years) in Nordic preschool settings. Care is referred to as a specific emotional mode in encountering the child's needs and in striving to understand the child's perspective. Caring values are analyzed with reference to Tomasello in the sense that the educator creates zones of joint attention. Democratic values are analyzed on the basis of Biesta's concepts of normal and sporadic democracy. The analysis illuminates a concurrent prevalence of caring, disciplinary, and democratic values in the interactions and that while such values often overlap, they are expressed simultaneously.

In *Chapter 14, Recognizing Children's Diverse Backgrounds. Democracy and Equality in Preschool*, Berit Zachrisen explores how educators approach ethnic diversity among children in pedagogical practice in preschool. The analyses draw on observations of encounters between educators and children (3–6 years) in two Norwegian preschools. The theoretical framework is inspired by Bourdieu's theory. Two main approaches to pedagogical work were identified as emerging in various combinations: a unilateral approach and a multilateral approach. The study highlights the importance of educators' self-reflection on their own beliefs, values, and interpretations of diversity and equality and how these attitudes and values affect educators' didactic choices in preschool.

*Chapter 15, "There is no Room for You!" The Politics of Belonging in Children's Play Situations*, by Jaana Juutinen, Anna-Maija Puroila, and Eva Johansson, aims to deepen understanding of how the politics of belonging emerges in children's play situations in Finnish preschools. The politics of belonging refers to processes by which belonging and exclusion are constructed in children's daily lives in preschools. The research material consists of video recordings and observations from four preschools. The findings provide insights into the politics of belonging as constant movements between children being positioned as insiders and outsiders. Processes of belonging generate various tensions: between stability and variability, inclusion and exclusion, and individuality and collectivity.

*Chapter 16, Tacit Discipline in Early Childhood Education*, by Anette Emilson, analyzes tacit discipline in early childhood education and is based on findings from the ValuEd project. Two issues concerning discipline are outlined, the first of which refers to the finding that discipline is viewed negatively and is thus neglected in

educators' talk about values education. Emilson discusses what this might mean for the communication of discipline in educational practice. The second issue relates to the finding that the communication of discipline is often of a friendly and implicit character, whereby children are treated as rational subjects. This raises questions about the relationship between discipline and democracy, which is discussed from the perspective of Habermas' theory of communicative action.

In *Chapter 17, The Valuable Index Finger*, Berit Tofteland explores children's pointing as an instance in the communication of values. The empirical material consists of video observations from mealtime in Norwegian preschools. The study is framed within theories of democracy, values, and pointing as communication. The findings reveal how children who are less than 3 years old communicate values associated with collectivity, such as trust, discipline, unfairness, solidarity, care, and responsibility for others and values associated with individuality, such as their own enjoyment, satisfaction, and passion. The author concludes that it is important for educators to recognize young children's small utterances as communication and everyday situations, such as mealtimes, as important for practicing and promoting democracy.

*Chapter 18, Values of Efficiency in Educators' Talk about Dilemmas and Priorities in the Daily Pedagogical Work*, is authored by Anita Berge, Eva Johansson, Lise-Lotte Bjervås, Ingibjorg Sigurdadottir, and Anna-Maija Puroila. The aim of this Nordic study was to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators' conversations about everyday practices with children in the cloakroom. The findings highlight a network of various values in the educators' talk. This represented different discourses in the struggle to occupy a hegemonic position in the educators' utterances. According to the authors, this indicates an ongoing process of restructuring in the social relations in preschool and in the identities of preschool educators.

In sum, this book represents a holistic contribution to international knowledge formation on values education in the early years. With this book, we hope to provoke new ways of thinking and to add new knowledge – theoretically, methodologically, and empirically – on values education in the field of early childhood. Values education emerges as a multilevel phenomenon connected with individuals, the communication and relationships between the individual, institutional, and cultural contexts, and the practices of preschools. Founded in a participatory research design, the research presented in this book is akin to the values and value conflicts embedded in educators' everyday practice.

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**Part I**  
**Theory and Concepts**

# Chapter 2

## Mapping the Field: What Are Values and Values Education About?



Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila

### 2.1 Values and Values Education: A Neglected Area in Early Childhood Education and Care

All curricula for early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the Nordic countries maintain values as an important foundation for educational practices, and the educators' responsibility for addressing values in their preschool practice is evident. This assignment for values education in ECEC is demanding and requires professionalism, knowledge, and sensitivity. However, curricula, like other political documents, can be changed. Irrespective of any curriculum changes, values are continuously communicated and negotiated in preschool and are often imbued in a hidden agenda but also in more explicit pedagogical processes.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual approaches to values education in ECEC settings. The analysis is based on previous international research and a Nordic research project called ValuEd. The concepts of values and values education are problematized, defined, and presented in accordance with how they have been used in the ValuEd project and, more broadly, in the literature. Additionally, we extract from ValuEd as a whole and its sub-studies some core elements of

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importance for values and values education in early childhood education. Finally, we suggest a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in ECEC.

## 2.2 Values: Definitions and Different Traditions

The term “values” originates from the Latin *valere*, which means to be strong, be well, be of value, or be worth (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016; see also Sutrop, 2015). As Schwartz (2012) states, “When we think of our values, we think of what is important in our lives” (p. 3). Thus, a cursory glance suggests that the meaning of this term is straightforward. However, a deeper probe into the literature reveals that there is no coherent understanding of the concept of values. Even though researchers in diverse disciplines, such as philosophy, theology, human sciences, social sciences, economics, and education, have long been interested in values, this concept remains vague and undifferentiated (Halstead, 1996; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000; Sutrop, 2015). There are various approaches within which the concept of values has different emphases and definitions. Sutrop (2015) addresses the variation in definitions as follows:

Values are described as desirable objects or conditions, ideas about worth, emotional commitments, things which promote human well-being, virtues worth having, or principles, i.e. fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior. (p. 194)

It is most striking that values appear to be an all-embracing element of human life; that is, values are connected both to the human mind and action, and they emerge at the levels of individuals, cultural groups, and societies. In the literature, the conceptualizations of values vary depending on whether the emphasis is on the human mind or action, individuals or cultural groups, or the situation-specific nature or universality of values.

A large body of research connects values with the *human mind*. From this perspective, values are approached as cognitive representations or mental structures and as concepts, beliefs, schemes, or principles that guide the selection of modes, means, and ends of human actions (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Schwartz, 2012). Halstead and Taylor (2000) define values as “principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable” (p. 169). Yet there are scholars who resist extreme cognitivism and highlight that values are more closely connected to affect than cognition (see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Schwartz, 2012). It is also worth noting that approaching values in terms of the human mind does not necessarily mean considering values as being consciously held by individuals; values may be both *explicit* and *implicit*. Schwartz (2012), among others, notes that the impact of values on an individual’s everyday actions is rarely conscious, and individuals became aware of values especially when those values are opposed or threatened.

Especially in psychological research, values are often treated as static mental structures, and thus there is less emphasis on their significance to *action*. There is

criticism that this leads to viewing values as ideal ends and isolating them from the active process of valuing (see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). For instance, Rohan (2000) argues that theorizing and empirical research on the valuing process are lacking. Further, noting that the word “value” is both a noun and a verb (see also Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; see also Chap. 9 in this book by Puroila & Johansson), she states, “Used as a verb, value refers to the process of ascertaining the merit of an entity with reference to an abstract value system structure. Used as a noun, value refers to the result of this process” (Rohan, 2000, p. 258).

Despite the acknowledgment that values are connected both to the human mind and action, many crucial theoretical questions remain unanswered. For example, what is the relationship between the human mind and action when considering values? Williams and Gantt (2012) address the ontological gaps between thinking, feeling, and action in theorizing human conduct. They point out that human beings do not always act consistently with their values; thus, there is no direct, causal relationship whereby moral principles reliably lead to moral action. Thus, they propose moving away from regarding thinking, feeling, and acting as distinct and separable activities and toward a holistic conception of human action. Applying a holistic view when exploring values in education means, for instance, looking at how values, and which ones, are realized and communicated between human beings in educational settings.

The various theoretical approaches to values have been described as a continuum between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives on values (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012; see also Sutrop, 2015). In the *objectivist* view, values are regarded as absolute and valid at all times, regardless of context. From this perspective, values are conceptualized as abstract principles (e.g., Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 2012) or principled dispositions or virtues (Carr, 2011) that transcend specific actions and situations. Schwartz’s (2012) theory of basic values provides an example of an objectivist view that is cited often in the literature. He argues that people in all cultures recognize ten basic values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. He also argues, however, that individuals differ in how they rank the importance of these basic values.

According to the *subjectivist* extreme of the continuum, values vary from one individual to the next and from one situation to the next (Pantić & Wubbels, 2012; Sutrop, 2015). Hence, according to subjectivist conceptualizations, values are little more than expressions of personal opinions, preferences, tastes, or criteria for making judgments (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). The subjectivist view of values is linked to value relativism, according to which “no set of values can be shown to be better than other” (Halstead, 1996, p. 6).

The *pluralistic* view of values lies between the two aforementioned extremes (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). Within this view, values are recognized as socially constructed and as having the potential to vary over time and across different groups and societies (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). Unlike in the case of value relativism, the pluralistic approach to values is arguably objective in nature, despite the recognition that values may be addressed differently in different

contexts. The pluralistic perspective was promoted in ValuEd because this vantage point allows for regarding values as agreements situated in time and space, yet not as totally relativistic.

### 2.3 Values Education: Definitions and Paradigms

Three main paradigms for values education can be identified in the literature: traditional, progressive or constructivist, and critical (Lunn-Brownlee, Johansson, Walker, & Scholes, 2017; Thornberg, 2014, 2016). The *traditional* paradigm of values education rests on a teaching model emphasizing the transmission of values (Thornberg, 2014). In this paradigm, values are regarded as absolute and true and as constituting the glue that binds people and culture. Accordingly, the mission of preschool is to communicate certain values to children and thereby refine the character of each child using rewards and condemnation (Arthur & Carr, 2013; Johansson & Thornberg, 2014; Solomon, Watson, & Battistich, 2001). The teaching methods in preschool encourage children to exhibit what is regarded as good behavior and thereby develop good habits. There is no room for interpretation, since the meanings of values are already established. This places the educator's knowledge and values in the foreground, while the children's perspectives, values, and understandings remain in the background, invalid. This tradition is described as conservative in ideology (Thornberg, 2014).

The *progressive* or *constructivist* paradigm of values education is built on a dialectic model promoting the collective creation of meaning between educators and children (Thornberg, 2014). In this paradigm, interaction and understandings are at the forefront, and we can recognize the traditions of Dewey (1997) and child-centered pedagogy (DeVries, Hildebrandt, & Zahn, 2000). According to Dewey, education must involve children taking part in democratic discussions and decision-making processes. Constructivist theories of children's development of, and thinking about, morality developed by psychologists like Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1976) also belong to this tradition. In this paradigm, cognition is regarded as a cornerstone of the development of values, and the educators' role is to challenge and support children's understanding of values. The basic idea is that children actively construct their own understanding of values and that they become personally involved in justice and care while interacting and participating in moral discourses. Therefore, it is crucial to involve children in joint discussions on issues relating to values and moral conflicts as well as in decision-making regarding norms for the community of the preschool. This theory resonated in ValuEd.

The *critical* paradigm is built on the idea that the dominating morality of society marginalizes and oppresses certain groups (Tappan & Brown, 1996; Winton, 2013). Therefore, values education is influenced largely by the hidden curriculum as an implicit and ideological protector with the function of reproducing dominance and