



# Teachers Matter – But How?

An international research conference on *Didaktik*, pedagogy, and classroom research • Linnæus University, Sweden, October 13–15, 2021

The theme of this research conference is new ways of exploring teaching and learning activities in diverse forms of teaching groups. The key interest is how to gain new knowledge about the teaching conditions in preschool, school, and university, promoting quality in the teaching process: With what fundamental concepts and from what perspectives can we increase our knowledge? The overriding theme is how we can understand the core questions of pedagogy and *Didaktik* today. What are the prospects of going beyond the gap between the German-language concept of ‘*Didaktik*’ and the English-language term ‘pedagogy’ or the divergence between curriculum and pedagogy? What do pedagogy and *Didaktik* have to offer in relation to teaching understood as moral sensibility – in accordance with a philosophical suggestion of the meaning of teaching? And where is the research front in classroom research today?

The specific approach of this international research conference is to critically examine conditions for teaching and dimensions of teaching emphasized in the current policy and curriculum discourse from philosophical, sociological, and moral perspectives by focusing on theoretical concepts in terms of *Didaktik*, pedagogy, democracy, and equity. We welcome researchers to address topics within the framework of the conference theme in parallel paper presentations.

**We are primarily planning for an onsite conference - with the opportunity to participate online for those who do not have the opportunity to travel (a hybrid conference). The prerequisite is that society has opened up by then and that we can meet without risk for infection. However, if the onsite option proves to be impossible by September, the format of the conference will change from onsite to online conference only. Thus, we plan for a hybrid conference from the start to be able to follow the course of events through the following next months.**

## Important dates:

- Abstract submission: **March 15 – May 15, 2021**
- Notice of acceptance of abstracts will be given latest **June 1, 2021**
- Registration: **August 1 – September 15, 2021**  
(when register, you decide if you would like to participate on site or online)

The conference is being organised by the research group Studies in Curriculum, Teaching and Evaluation (SITE) together with the knowledge environment Educational Change, at the Linnæus University, Sweden.

**Organization committee:** Ulrika Bossér, Bettina Vogt, Ninni Wahlström

**Reference group:** The research group The Elusive Gap (classroom research)

# Keynote speakers

**Professor Barbara Comber, University of South Australia:**  
**Classroom participation – Teachers’ work as listeners**

One of the hardest aspects of teachers’ work, and perhaps one of the most under-rated is listening, really listening. This presentation will examine teachers’ work as part of the everyday life of classrooms, schools and communities, as curriculum design and lastly as an oeuvre which is assembled over time. In particular, I highlight the contributions of teacher researchers who take students and their worlds seriously and help them assemble repertoires of complex communication practices for representation, participation and taking action. Listening to students and their wider communities underpins their critical engagement and creative curriculum designs. I illustrate both the potential of this intense listening and also what can go wrong for students in its absence.

**Professor Anna Sfard, University of Haifa:**  
**The devil in details – Teaching as managing inter-discursive gaps**

Once teaching-learning events are conceptualized as inter-discursive encounters, it becomes clear that classroom talk is rife with invisible pitfalls. There are many types of unacknowledged discursive gaps, some of them necessary for learning, and some potentially harmful. Such gaps may exist also between the teacher’s intentions and her own habitual moves, most of which are too brief and automatic to be controlled. Unknown to the teacher, her basic communicational routines may constitute invisible crevices through which the prejudice enters the conversation. In this talk, it will be argued that if devil is in the finest detail of classroom communication, it is the detail that must be considered in the attempts to exorcise the devil. The talk will begin with illustrations of these claims and will conclude with a reflection on how teachers may sensitize themselves to discursive pitfalls, how they and their students can benefit from those communicational gaps that are likely to generate learning, and how they can cope with those divides that hinder the process or infect it with unwanted messages.

**Professor Kirsti Klette, Oslo University:**  
**Teaching Matters – towards a common language for teaching? How research on curriculum and instruction contribute to a shared vision of teaching and possible improvement of schooling**

More than forty years ago, Dan Lortie famously lamented the lack of a common language with which to describe teaching. In this talk, Dr. Klette will explore the use of video classroom research and observation protocols as a tool to develop common language and professional vision around teaching and to improve instruction.

**Professor Katherine Schultz, University of Colorado Boulder:**  
**The role of listening and silence in classroom participation**

This talk will address the ways that teachers can use listening and silence to shift understandings of classroom participation. To build a pedagogy that is respectful and engages students in learning, I suggest that teachers listen deeply to students, locating the knowledge they gain about the students at the center of teaching. Listening to silence in classrooms involves listening to what is said between and beyond words through a stance of questioning and not knowing. Listening for, inquiring into, and honoring silence might lead to louder, more dynamic and engaged classrooms that have moments of stillness when students pause for reflection. Most important, inquiry into classroom silence and participation might lead to classrooms where equitable participation is defined as broadly as possible.

**Professor Stefan Hopmann, Vienna University:**  
**Didaktik and Democracy**

It is one of the most commonly held beliefs among educators that what teachers teach shapes society. Yet, how does this happen, to what degree and in which areas? If you believe what most of the currently available empirical research tells you, then this is about the contribution of teaching to academic achievement, i.e. the social distribution of school knowledge and/or the competencies which are said to be connected to this. Based on more than thirty years of historical and comparative research, I would like to argue that this is a complete and utter misunderstanding of what teaching in schools should be about and what it is able to do. For me, this is more than an academic question of which theories we prefer or which data we believe in. This is a fundamental matter of if and how democracy can have a future in our societies.