



مجلة البحوث التطبيقية في الطفولة المبكرة

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Book Review

The title of the book

**"Developing a Didactic Framework Across and Beyond School Subjects (Cross- and Transcurricular Teaching)"**

**Edited by:** Søren Harnow Klausen & Nina Mård.

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Review by

**Mohamed Metwally Qandil**

Faculty Member in the Department Childhood, Faculty of Education,

Tanta University, Egypt.

Early Childhood Curriculum Specialist



## Introduction

Centered around a contemporary conception of Building, this book effectively demonstrates how the aims of cross- and trans curricular teaching can be reconciled, resulting in a didactic framework for teaching and learning in schools that can be applied internationally.

Chapters present a nuanced and unified approach to fusing theory and practice by of erring accounts of some of the most promising teaching methods from leading scholars in the feld of curriculum research. These methods include dialogic teaching or movement integration, transversal competences like digital or entrepreneurial thinking, and topics that call for cross curricular approaches, like sustainability or citizenship. Addressing diverse worries and criticisms of cross curricular teaching, the book includes international viewpoints and trends such as sustainability, citizenship, and student motivation to present a comprehensive and systematic scholarly treatment of cross curricular didactics within the classroom. It further addresses important challenges that have been widely ignored, like how to evaluate cross curricular work.

Ultimately, this volume makes a highly novel contribution to the feld of cross curricular didactics, and will be of interest to researchers, scholars, and academics in the felds of secondary education teaching and learning, educational science, and curriculum design. Those interested more broadly in the theory of education will also find the volume of use.



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**Søren Harnow Klausen** is Professor of Philosophy, Department of Media, Design, Education and Cognition, University of Southern Denmark, and Guest Professor in Cross curricular Education, Abo Akademi University, Finland.

**Nina Mård** is Lecturer of Education, Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Abo Akademi University, Finland.

**The book includes three parts:**

**PART I:** deals with general theory, contains chapter 2,3,4,5

**2: Speaking and thinking about cross curricular teaching: Terms, concepts, and conceptions**

Nina Mard and Soren Harnow Klausen

**3 Rationale and aims of cross curricular teaching and learning: For life, knowledge, and work**

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**4 Cross curricular work and Bildung: Empowering the students**

Peter Hobel

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Nina Mard And Charlotta Hilli

**PART II:** deals with Cross curricular teaching, thinking, and competences contains chapter 6:12

**6 Dialogic teaching**

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**Conclusion:**



The preceding chapters have made a case for cross- and transcurricular teaching and contributed to developing a didactic framework for it. In conclusion, we would like to stress the following key points and lessons that have emerged:

1. The ideas, cases, and findings presented in the chapters almost invariably support the notion that Bildung can serve as a foundation for such a framework and help to unify different approaches, as we argued in

Chapter 3 This shows both the relevance and strength of a Bildung-oriented approach and the need for subject teaching educators and subject didactics researchers to further familiarize themselves with, and apply, this approach. Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how Bildung already functions as a guideline or model for cross curricular didactics and (in Chapter 4) how cross curricular teaching can support Bildung-oriented goals by being non-affirmative, problem-based, and empowering, and integrate an emphasis on innovation with a concern for ethics. Chapter 6 describes how attempts to promote a truly dialogic classroom and teaching style

can foster personal qualities central to Bildung, like personal engagement, reflection, and self-expression. It also illustrates how a concern for transcurricular learning goals like these is compatible with teaching subject-specific content. Further in line with the inclusive Bildung approach laid out in Chapter 3, Schaffalitzky points out in Chapter 6 that dialogic teaching can support both instrumental and noninstrumental goals.

2. We made clear from the outset that the framework outlined in the book should not be seen as fixed, but as subject to further development. Several



chapters argue for a need to either emphasize certain elements of Bildung more strongly or expand or revise the very notion of Bildung. Chapters 7 and 8 attempt to correct the widespread notion that Bildung and cross curricular teaching are mainly about “bookish” learning, arguing that physical activity and fostering student wellbeing are central to Bildung, which is concerned with the whole person and all human powers. In Chapter 7, Kuokkanen, Gutierrez, Enkvist Snellman, and Romar also show how physical movement can be integrated in teaching in gradually more comprehensive and sophisticated ways, thus demonstrating that cross curricular teaching must not be very demanding or revolutionary. A more gradual, steadily expanding and merely complementary approach is also possible (compare the notion of a “double focus” on subject teaching and more general Bildung aims introduced in Chapter 3). The potential of physical activity is further highlighted in Chapters 11 and 12, on drawing and craft. Both chapters demonstrate how movement and sensory experience is integral to personal development and aesthetic expression, again confirming ideas that are central to the classic notion of Bildung.

a. Several authors attempt to correct typical narrow understandings of cross curricular teaching and Bildung as intellectualist or “bookish” by calling for a heightened awareness of non-human nature and materiality.

This is very pronounced in Chapters 13 and 14 on sustainability and climate change; in Chapter 13, Laugesen and Elf contend that the Bildung-oriented didactics of Klafki and others have suffered from an anthropocentric bias that



must now be overcome in light of the climate crisis. The significance of supporting students' experience of materiality is also highlighted in Chapter 12 on craft. The plea for embracing unpredictability made by Höglund and Jusslin in Chapter 10 on arts integrated poetry teaching can likewise be seen as an attempt to understand Bildung as a more open, experimental, and deliberately risk-taking process than it is usually taken to be. Although it can be argued that both the concern for non-human nature and an acknowledgment of the unpredictability of learning processes were already central to the classic notion of Bildung, such accentuations may be needed to correct recent more one-sided understandings of Bildung, which have tended to overemphasize intellectual skills and focused more on culture and society than on nature. It remains an issue for further discussion whether the climate crisis requires a more radical break with the humanistic orientation of the Bildung approach.

It seems likely, however, that teaching must maintain a particular focus on human beings, particularly students, in their capacity as learners and potential agents of climate change.

b. The extent to which cross curricular teaching should have a critical orientation is also discussed throughout the book. Hobel's emphasis on the nonaffirmative and deliberative aspects of Bildung in Chapter 4 is a typical attempt to correct what may seem like a more conformist tendency in the classical notion of Bildung, by giving more weight to empowerment and critical attitudes of students. Hobel's proposal remains squarely within the Bildung tradition, however, he makes clear that student empowerment must be fostered through engagement with content





and epochal key problems. His and many other chapters exemplify the need for a permanent search and adjustment process aimed at finding an appropriate balance between freedom and criticism, on the one hand, and socialization, enculturation, and qualification, on the other hand:

a EBSCOhost - Several chapters likewise demonstrate that it can be advantageous or even necessary to broaden the understanding of existing concepts, to support genuinely cross curricular teaching and the aims of Bildung. For example, a relational view of mathematics as socially embedded may be preferable to an instrumental view, as Røj-Lindberg, Braskén, and Berts argue in Chapter 9.

Similarly, Rautiainen, Hiljanen and Tallavaara urge in Chapter 15 that democracy should be understood as a general form of life rather than merely a process of political decision-making. Laugesen and Elf point out in Chapter 13 how sustainability teaching has been dominated by the natural and social sciences. In Chapter 16, Mard and Wägar identify a narrow, commercially oriented, and a broader, life skills-oriented and creativity-oriented views of entrepreneurship education. The latter more naturally supports and can be supported by cross curricular teaching, just as it conforms more closely to the Bildung approach. Similarly, in Chapter 18, Hansen, Hachmann, and Dohn distinguish between an understanding of computational thinking that focuses narrowly on the integration of subject-specific skills and one that addresses wider aspects of learning, including affect and institutional setting. They suggest that computational thinking should be understood as a framework that enables students to develop a both general and detailed understanding of narrative and argumentative structures



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and processes of problem identification and solving, thus highlighting its relationship to both hermeneutics and critical thinking. These examples all show how existing concepts, methods, and courses can be appropriated and modified to facilitate cross curricular teaching.

4. Many argue that Bildung-oriented cross curricular teaching should be driven not only by a concern for the personal development of individual students, but also for the ongoing development of the teachers themselves, of teacher collaboration, the teacher–student relationship, and classroom and whole school culture. Nor is cross curricular teaching mainly about “curriculum integration,” in the narrow sense of combining subjects and contents; it is just as much about shaping collective practices and learning environments. Höglund and Jusslin describe in Chapter 10 how working with arts integration, and the experience of letting students work in unpredictable ways, can bring teachers to reflect on and change their teaching habits and professional self-understanding. In Chapter 5, Mard and Hilli characterize teacher collaboration as a process in which individual freedom is negotiated while developing shared ideas and responsibilities – in other words, as a process that exemplifies key elements of Bildung. Rautiainen, Hiljanen, and Tallavaara likewise argue in Chapter 15 that teaching for democracy entails developing a more democratic school culture, and that this includes challenging established teacher self-understandings and fostering a more collaborative mindset. Hence all these authors illustrate, in various ways, development of teachers and school culture.



a. The collective and mutual nature of the Bildung processes fostered by cross curricular teaching is also highlighted in Chapter 8 on wellbeing, which suggests that the ability to maintain and improve wellbeing should be seen as a collective competence. Teaching for wellbeing involves an concern for the emotional climate in the classroom, class group dynamics, and even parental involvement; and the teacher's own wellbeing also needs tending to.

5. The chapters also show how cross curricular teaching remains challenging and so the need for still further didactic development, in some cases for caution and adjusted ambitions. For example, Forsman, Bendtsen, Björklund, and Pörn point out in Chapter 17 that the theoretically attractive idea of teaching simultaneously for both content and language objectives has proven to be difficult to carry out in practice. They do not argue that it should therefore be abandoned, but that it shows a need for strengthening teachers' competences in this field and for enhanced cooperation between language teachers and non-language subject teachers. They suggest that content teachers offer students the use of second language as a possibility rather than forcing it upon them, giving priority to the use of authentic and functional subject-specific language. This is an instructive example of the realism and concern for balance and the diverse goals and aims of teaching characteristic of the inclusive Bildung approach.

6. Nevertheless, most of the findings reported in the book indicate that



cross curricular teaching does not make it more difficult to attain the subject-specific learning goals or maintain a sufficiently high level of student achievement. Nor must it be particularly demanding or resource-intensive. Most of the recommendations are for ways of modifying existing teaching rather than something that requires additional activities.

What is still missing? We have emphasized repeatedly that the development of a didactics for cross curricular teaching is a permanent task. This book has presented a general framework and some more specific guidelines and points of attention, but further work is needed to complement and expand them, especially regarding the following:

1. Adaptation to specific contexts. Most ideas and suggestions in this book should be applicable to a variety of settings, as they do not require any radical changes in framework conditions. However, local conditions, for example, larger or more limited degrees of teacher autonomy or stricter curriculum guidelines may influence their implementation.

Here, models like that of Mard and Hilli (Chapter 5) or more domain-specific models like those of Kuokkanen, Gutierrez, Enkvist Snellman, and Romar (Chapter 7) or Hartvik and Porko-Hudd (Chapter 12) can assist the planners and teachers in figuring out what can be done under the given circumstances. It must also be noted that while the selection of topics and cases presented in the book supports the overall orientation toward Bildung and cross curricular teaching, it is itself based on particular interests and experiences; the cases should be seen as examples among others that may be just as pertinent, or even more.



2. Application to different types and levels of education. Just as the research literature on interdisciplinarity has focused one-sidedly on higher education (see Chapter 2), most research on cross curricular teaching, including most chapters in this book, have focused mainly on secondary education (but see Dolan, 2021, which complements Chapters 13 and 14). This leaves primary education as an important field for future studies. While many of the findings in this book may also be applicable to primary education, at least with modifications, there will likely be important differences. The lesser degree of specialization and sophistication may make it relatively easy to teach across and beyond the curriculum, whereas students' more limited knowledge and need to acquire basic skills may make it more difficult in other respects. Similarly, progression is an issue only marginally dealt with in the book: How can it be avoided that cross curricular teaching revolves around the same recurring topics, and how can it support increasingly demanding curricular goals, while retaining its inclusive character?

3. Evaluation. The attempt to teach across and beyond the curriculum and foster Bildung can make evaluation particularly difficult. It ought to target the educational aims that call for cross curricular teaching in the first place, like transversal competences and personal development. Yet in the absence of specific tools and criteria, it is likely to rather target subject-specific skills, perhaps merely aggregating the results of evaluations done by teachers with different subjects. While evaluation challenges are pointed out at several places in the book, only Chapter 6 on dialogic teaching considers it in depth. Schafalitzky warns against creating high-stake situations, since these can hamper students' willingness to



engage in an authentic dialogue, but suggests that the teacher can gauge the success and progress in dialogic activities based on a number of observational criteria. She also suggests that dialogue can itself be used as an evaluation tool, as it, for example, enables a more reliable assessment of students' linguistic competence than formal tests.

4. Taking up new and unpredictable themes. Though the importance of an open, experimental, and risk-taking approach has been emphasized throughout the book, many of the topics and cases discussed may seem familiar and predictable. For cross curricular teaching to remain relevant, it must remain sensitive to new possibilities and take up new themes. Sjöblom, Wolf, and Sundman address this challenge in Chapter 14 by pointing out that teacher education must be further developed to enable teachers to cope with extremely complex or "wicked" problems that they will increasingly have to deal with in the future. Further research is needed to determine which skills and competences are needed for this, and how teachers can be prepared to adjust their teaching to new historical situations and surprising events, or finding new, particularly relevant and motivating aspects of more permanent issues. Much cross curricular teaching during the last decade has been related to new trends and events, for example, the Arab spring, the election of Donald Trump as US president, the Brexit referendum and populism, have spurred an interest in teaching democracy. But there may also be a tendency to treat events merely as further examples of more or less perennial themes. This again illustrates not only the need for



teachers to engage in a Bildung process themselves, but also for further research and teacher education development.

5. Creating and disseminating a common language for talking about cross curricular teaching. The chapters show that a fairly simple and uniform terminology, tailored specifically to the field of school teaching (see Chapter 2), can be used to describe most of the central findings and concerns. They also show, however, that different fields and topics are still discussed in different academic languages and with reference to sometimes widely different theoretical frameworks. Substantially similar ideas and observations are conceptualized and expressed in ways that are often not far apart but may still make mutual understanding and adoption of the approaches to other subjects difficult. This is unsurprising, and a certain degree of terminological variety is probably inevitable. The use of different theoretical frameworks to conceptualize teaching of different subjects and topics is as such positive, as it ensures new and diverse inputs to the ongoing development of cross curricular didactics. But there is a need for further tools for communicating and coordinating across school subjects – a language that can establish what Galison (1997) has termed “trading zones” between different disciplines. The terminological recommendations and translation for concepts (Chapter 2) and the generic Building framework and taxonomy of basic goals and competences (Chapter 3) developed in this book should help meet this need. However, more work has to be done in subject didactics in order to integrate this approach and find ways to express specific ideas and observations that make them more immediately useful for colleagues working with other



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subjects. A general lesson that has emerged from the discussion in the book is that cross curricular teaching should not be approached one-sidedly from the perspective of the different subjects involved. A common, more general perspective is always needed – hence the need for a general framework and ongoing mutual discussions

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