

Teaching in School-Age Educare Centres – Human Rights Through Direct, Embedded and Approach-Based Teaching

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Abstract: This article examines how teaching is enacted in extended education settings, using Swedish school-age educare (SAEC) centres and human rights as examples. It analyses SAEC teachers' discussions about content and methods in this practice area. The article is based on interview data from 19 SAEC teachers in Sweden. The data were analysed through content analysis, theoretically framed within an action-theoretical approach and employing three theoretical teaching types: direct teaching, embedded teaching, and approach-based teaching. The findings demonstrate how each teaching type addresses different content with distinct methods, as: a) direct teaching prioritises knowledge development through a variety of methods, b) embedded teaching prioritises conduct development through conversations, and c) approach-based teaching prioritises acquiring rights experiences through teachers' different ways of managing situations. Therefore, the findings suggest that SAEC teachers need opportunities for and competence in all three teaching types to cover a broad range of educational topics and to fully utilise the potential of extended education contexts for teaching and learning.

Keywords: Extended education, school-age educare, SAEC, teaching, human rights, children's rights.

Introduction

Extended education across different national contexts provides a significant space for diverse teaching and learning methods. While compulsory schooling often adheres to traditional teaching approaches, extended educational settings tend to be more flexible and adaptable to various situations (Boström, Elvstrand & Orwehag, 2022). As a result, these environments could be valuable for teaching a wide range of topics. In Sweden, school-age educare (SAEC) centres are the most prominent extended education setting; although not compulsory, they still enrol over 80% of children aged 6–9 years. Therefore, this educational environment could provide a variety of learning opportunities for most children. Even if research on teaching in SAEC has increased in recent years, empirical knowledge about teaching and learning in SAEC centres remains limited (Ackesjö & Haglund, 2021; Boström, Elvstrand, & Orwehag, 2022). Previous research on teaching in extended education settings, especially in SAEC, has emphasised the need to establish a strong foundation for teaching in such environments that reflects their unique characteristics, to avoid the risk of reverting to traditional school teaching.

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Any country that has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) is obliged to address human rights within their educational settings. This obligation includes respecting rights in educational environments, teaching children about their human rights, and promoting human rights values and behaviour (UN, 1998, articles 28 and 29). While compulsory schooling often concentrates on learning *about* human rights, extended education contexts have a unique capacity to teach values and behaviours aligned with human rights alongside knowledge about them. Nonetheless, the teaching and learning of human rights within extended education have not been prioritised in previous research. When human rights have been discussed in SAEC research, for example, in a recent issue of this journal, it has mostly been related to social learning, participation, and children's perspectives (e.g., Elvstrand & Boström, 2025; Gravesen & Aagaard Christensen, 2025; Näpfli & Chiapparini, 2025). Likewise, Wade (2015) shows how after-school programmes can support children's social-emotional functioning. Furthermore, Horgan et al. (2018) state that children's voices need to be considered in the development of school-age care in Irish policy. However, knowledge about the teaching and learning of human rights per se remains largely invisible. Additionally, when educational human rights research has addressed this topic, it has primarily been within school and pre-school contexts (Quennerstedt & Moody, 2020).

Teaching can be defined as activities led by teachers with the intention of developing students' learning around specific content through different methods (SFS, 2010). However, the methods and forms of teaching depend on the pedagogical context (Ackesjö & Haglund, 2021). Knowledge of the enactment of teaching human rights in different contexts can be beneficial for other educational settings on how to approach this matter. The aim of this study is to contribute to the expansion of pedagogical knowledge on the enactment of teaching in SAEC centres, with a particular focus on teaching human rights by answering the specific research question: *Which methods and content do SAEC teachers describe that they include in their practice when teaching human rights?* Human rights and democracy form the value base for the Swedish school system (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). In Sweden, SAEC centres have long been part of the school system and, since 2011, have been governed by the Curriculum for Compulsory School, Preschool Class and School-age Educare (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Therefore, Swedish SAEC centres present an interesting case for studying the teaching of human rights, offering valuable insights for a range of educational contexts.

Teaching in School-Age Educare Centres

School-age educare centres are an indisputable part of the Swedish school system. They provide care for children in primary school (6–12 years) before and after school and during school holidays. About a third of the staff working in SAEC have a university degree in education, and almost 57% have some kind of pedagogical education. Even though it is not compulsory, 82.9% of children aged 6 to 9 and 19.8% of children aged 10 to 12 attend (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2023). Consequently, teaching practice in SAEC centres has the potential to reach a large number of young children.