

Preface

Early childhood education (ECE), or preschool as it is called in Sweden, for children 1–5 years of age, is becoming more common all over the world, and ever-growing numbers of children are being enrolled. It is also becoming more regulated in many countries since curricula, frameworks, standards or plans of various kinds have been developed to guide practice.

In Sweden we are at the moment of writing, in the process of launching a new school law, and this includes preschool. This law states that “practice with children should be based on experience and research” (prop. 2009/2010, p. 165). Attention is drawn to research and what research tells us about important aspects of work with children in early years.

In this book we will give some examples of research of relevance to professional work with children. The specific areas covered are: arts (drawings, dance and music), ethics, nature-knowing/science, literacy, mathematics, democracy, gender and narrative. These studies share certain features: (1) They focus on problems of relevance to children’s learning and development in the context of preschool, (2) the studies have been carried out in everyday practice with children and (3) there is a genuine effort to improve practice based on the results.

This kind of qualitative research is more common and developed in the Nordic countries, perhaps due to the large number of preschool teachers who have pursued doctoral studies in education. This group has also contributed to the development of the academic field of ECE. In this book we want to share this kind of research with other professionals. Preschool teachers have participated in many of the studies presented and have supplied invaluable feedback, which encourages us to believe that this book could be very useful to professionals working in ECE as well as to researchers and those pursuing university studies.

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