

TEACHING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE EARLY CHILDHOOD  
CENTRES IN NORWAY

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**Abstract**

*This article discusses teaching cultural heritage in culturally diverse Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) in Norway. What type of cultural heritage should be conveyed in an ECC with cultural diversity, and in what ways can this happen? Based on interviews with directors and pedagogical leaders in selected ECCs, staff members' understanding of the concept of cultural heritage and their teaching of heritage in practice is analysed. The findings are analysed within a theoretical framework of cultural heritage, diversity and children's 'formation' (Bildung). The study reveals a lack of consciousness of cultural heritage on behalf of the ECC staff, as well as an absence of criteria for the selection of teaching content. Despite this, the centres have developed a variety of methods and tools in their work with culture and traditions. A critical approach to cultural heritage together with development of competence in the staff is needed. A stronger emphasis on teaching content and on common elements shared by several cultures would strengthen the ECCs' work in this area.*

**Keywords**

Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Early Childhood Centres – 1-5 year olds, Early Childhood Education and Care, Ethnocentricity, Cultural heritage, Heritage, Heritage Education, Norway, Qualitative research, Teaching Cultural heritage,

**Introduction**

For a long time, Norway has been a relatively homogenous nation from an ethnic standpoint. However, during the last decades, it has gradually become a country with a higher degree of cultural diversity. Encounters between people with different cultural traditions take place in many areas and arenas, and Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) are one of these places. Because most Norwegian children attend ECCs from 1-2 years of age and remain there until the age of 5, the ECC becomes an important cultural meeting place. The early years are fundamental for how the children develop later in life, and what they experience in ECCs is therefore particularly important. The Norwegian Framework Plan for ECCs, which has a status as National curriculum, requires that ECCs convey Norwegian cultural heritage, as well as develop knowledge, understanding and tolerance of other cultures and traditions.

When children encounter different cultures and traditions, the foundation is created for respectful interaction between different ethnic groups. Consciousness about their own heritage and participation in other cultures will help the children to understand other people's way of life (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012, p. 36).

This requirement has consequences for the work with cultural heritage in the ECCs. On the one hand, working with history and traditions can develop the ability to understand and appraise diversity and variety. On the other hand, it can also be used to emphasize common references and create community across cultural borders. A pamphlet on linguistic and cultural diversity related to the Framework Plan expresses clearly how to expect ECCs to approach this work:

When working in a multicultural centre, one has to use all possibilities to expand the content from the traditional Norwegian towards more diversity. That does not mean you have to stop conveying Norwegian traditions, but that you could add something more to it (Gjervan, 2006, p. 21).

As early childhood teacher educators, we have experienced that this strategy is not always chosen in ECCs. We may find many examples where 'adding something more' has turned into 'taking something away'. This means that traditions and cultural expressions are often muted or hidden to avoid the possibility of offending (Gjervan, 2006). We have observed that early childhood teachers experience this as a difficult and increasingly relevant problem, as many ECCs have a larger number of children from different cultures. What type of cultural traditions should be conveyed in an ECC with cultural diversity, and in what ways can this happen? Some teachers also believe that multicultural development can lead to alienation and pose a threat to the teaching of local culture and heritage, and they thereby express a problem-oriented approach to the subject (Lauritsen, 2011).

Little research has been conducted in this area. More research-based knowledge about how the ECCs can meet the Framework Plan goals is required to enable the ECCs to convey cultural heritage in a culturally diverse community in a positive and inclusive way. The ECCs' task is to convey traditional Norwegian heritage and at the same time make sure the children gain knowledge, understanding and tolerance of other cultures and traditions.

With this background, this article will discuss the following research question: How do ECC teachers understand the concept of cultural heritage and how do they teach cultural heritage?

### **Earlier research**

Even though there are some research studies about culturally diverse ECCs and the history and traditions in ECCs, the topic of cultural heritage in culturally diverse ECCs seems to be little examined in general as well as in a specific Norwegian context. In a review of various studies, Ramsey (2006) showed that even young children are aware of ethnicity, culture, social class, abilities and disabilities. However, children may express views that reflect bad attitudes that many adults would like to deny. Instead of denying these, one should, according to Ramsey, help children to explore their assumptions and curiosities about the multiple aspects of the world (Ramsey, 2006). This requires, among other things, that the adults in ECCs allow cultural differences to become a topic of conversation. An extensive research on culturally diverse ECCs in rural municipalities (< 40,000 inhabitants) in Norway shows that most centres prioritised Norwegian culture and to a small degree, included content from other cultures (Andersen, 2011).

Heritage is closely connected to history and traditions. Some research has been conducted on history and traditions in ECCs and on practical experiences in the field. (Cooper, 2002, 2007). Moen and Buaas (2012) found that Norwegian teachers in ECCs to some extent agreed that history and tradition were a priority. They made less use of tangible than of intangible resources in their work, and they had little collaboration with external actors. In another study, the teachers justified teaching history and traditions by the importance of these for the development of children's identity and introspection (Skjæveland, Moen, & Buaas, 2013). According to Lusted (2012), children's (pupil's) beliefs and sense of identity are well formed by the age of five, and learning about culture, history and diversity in the early years is therefore crucial for 'the long-term development of a plural democracy that recognizes diversity and toleration' (Lusted, 2012).

### **Diversity and Heritage – Problem or Resource?**

Although there are some differences among ethnic Norwegian families in regard to values, norms and daily behaviour, most ethnic Norwegian children and their families still have much in common through shared language and other cultural and historical references. Thus, it has been possible to teach a cultural heritage that most people have felt connected to across other cultural differences. However, during the last decades, many Norwegian ECCs have received more children from other parts of the world, with little knowledge and ties to what ethnic Norwegians have perceived as Norwegian heritage. The ECCs have become culturally diverse in other ways than before, and this makes the work with heritage in ECCs far more challenging.

The concept of heritage is difficult to define and is not without controversy (Harrison, 2012), but most people would probably agree that it is about preserving something of the past. This article will focus on how teaching heritage can be continued by including both knowledge and experiences related to 'old days' and heritage from the perspective of today's society; the article will also focus on how the multicultural society has both new limits and opportunities for this teaching.

A distinction is often made between tangible and intangible heritage (Moen & Buaas, 2012). Intangible cultural heritage is defined as 'oral traditions, performing arts, and rituals'. Tangible cultural heritage is physical remains such as monuments, archaeological sites, and sculptures (UNESCO, 2003). Tangible and intangible heritage must be considered from the perspective of constant changes in culture and in ways of living. In an era of the resolution of traditions and cultural dissolution, it is natural to seek for a source of new roots, identity and life orientation. Diversity in culture and values requires an open and dynamic view of culture and heritage, where heritage is shaped and constructed in a dialogue between the present and the past. Heritage is thus not something given and unchangeable, but rather, it should be viewed as cultural experience in use. (Stugu, 2008, p. 138).

The past can be explored by exploring cultural expressions or tracks from the near and distant past. This may be in the shape of clothing, cuisine, art and architecture, toys, buildings or representations and practices such as language, songs, music and stories. Traditions are related to patterns and repetitions that are assigned value. They might also be perceived negatively when they contribute to exclusion or do not give space for innovation. Thus, in a culturally diverse ECC, the staff's awareness of values and their choice of content are very important.

ECCs might use various strategies to handle cultural diversity. A problem-oriented focus primarily involves concentrating on the problems and difficulties that a multicultural community might cause. In contrast, a resource focus strategy involves viewing diversity as a resource and as a source of knowledge, experiences and further development without neglecting the challenges of multiculturalism (Lauritsen, 2011, pp. 59-60). This might also be a useful perspective when studying the work with heritage in ECCs. In addition to analysing the ECCs' practice and understanding of heritage from such a perspective, it might serve as a starting point for discussions about how ECCs might teach heritage that is inclusive and focuses on community and diversity rather than emphasizing culture and traditions as distinctions among groups of people.

### **Heritage as Part of the Formation Process**

The term 'formation' (from the German 'Bildung') is one of four key concepts in the Norwegian Framework Plan together with care, play and learning. Hence, one cannot discuss learning cultural heritage in the ECCs without addressing it in the context of formation. The Framework Plan pinpoints that through a good formation process, children will be able to handle life, develop their ability to be experimental and curious in the outside world and see themselves as a members of a broader democratic community. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012, p. 15). According to Klafki formation is about learning content and about the development of critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation, moral judgements and one's ability to learn or obtain information (Klafki, 1963; Klafki, Ritzki, & Stübzig, 2013). Formation depends on having learned about something, having learnt from or through something and having gained new ways of thinking as well as new manners.

Løvlie (2003) proposed what he defined as an 'extended concept of formation', adapted to a society characterized by modern technology and cultural diversity. In this concept, he draws a direct link between formation and heritage, and this is also linked to the cultural diversity of society. According to him, formation has three aspects; 'the traditional introduction to heritage, the critical processing or reception of this heritage, and the ability to cope with diversity or difference emotionally and intellectually' (Løvlie, 2003). Together with an understanding of learning heritage, a critical approach to the concept of heritage, might, as a part of the formation process, yield concepts that can serve as analytical tools to analyse the empirical material of this study.

Formation is not only about qualifying the child to be a member of the existing society but also about making the child capable of participation in a renewal of society. This means that formation has to be an active process in which the person not only receives the culture that is being passed on but also acts as a critical and constructive contributor (Broström, Hansen, Gundem, Ulshagen, & Sunde, 2004). The Norwegian Framework Plan states that children have the right to express themselves and influence all aspects of life in the ECC, according to the UN Children's Convention. Formation and participation can be regarded as reciprocal processes in which the children develop a positive relationship with themselves and their own learning. Formation and participation can thus help children to develop respect and understanding for what is different. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012).

For children ages 0-6 years, formation processes are often part of play, care and learning situations in the home, the ECC or the community. They take place through direct and corporal encounters with the outside world, in which the children explore and marvel, express themselves, make friends, and participate. Children also develop their identity through play (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012). Learning about cultural heritage can also be seen as a search for identity (Harrison, 2012); thus, one can consider the formation process, development of identity and learning about cultural heritage to be interconnected.

Children, parents and teachers, all with different cultural backgrounds, meet in the ECCs. There, they learn to respect each other's traditions, 'yours' and 'mine'. However, they also create something that is 'ours'. Thus, during the multifaceted formation processes that take place in the ECCs and between the ECCs and society, new communities, roots and identities are created.

## **Methodology**

This research has a qualitative design based on interviews with 10 pedagogical leaders and directors of ECCs. They work in five public ECCs in two urban Norwegian municipalities. Nine of them are Norwegian, and one is from another Nordic country. The sample was strategically selected to include centres that have at least some children with non-Western backgrounds. The directors were included in the research because they are the senior pedagogical leaders of the centres and thus might have an overall perspective on teaching heritage in the centres. The concept of a 'pedagogical leader' is the Norwegian term for teachers of a group of children in the centre. The pedagogical leaders also lead the assistants' work with this group of children.

Semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide with open questions, were conducted in 2013. The participants were asked particularly about how they understand the concept of cultural heritage, how they teach cultural heritage, the teaching methods and tools and what type of principles and criteria this work is based on. The interviews, which lasted for 1-1.5 hours, were recorded using a digital recorder with a subsequent transcription. This resulted in approximately 280 pages of text. The text was categorized according to what the participants highlighted as particularly important, and an emphasis was placed on things that at least two of the participants highlighted.

There will always be possible sources of error and methodological challenges related to collecting data with interviews (Kvale, 2007; Patton, 2002). For example, the participants will be affected by the interview situation and can give answers that they think are expected of them. Parts of the research are based on adults' impressions and interpretations of children's responses and on how staff perceives the different ways in which children might express their understanding. Staff might interpret the children's response based on what they themselves want to hear as feedback. It is also possible to misunderstand or misinterpret the children. The staff might read more into children's expressions than there is reason for, but they might also underestimate children and their ability to understand. There are also great differences in how children respond to experiences and how they communicate this to adults. Children who are active, talkative and have a trusting relationship with the adults will increasingly be noticed, and there is a risk that staff will gain less insight into the understanding of children who are more quiet and cautious. Because of this, it is particularly important to consider the material critically, especially when statements about children's outcomes and understanding are considered.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Teachers' understanding of cultural heritage**

The ECC is supposed to teach children about cultural heritage. Hence, a natural starting point for our study was to examine the teachers' views on the concept of cultural heritage. A main finding is that the majority of the respondents did not present a strict definition or a clear perception of the concept. With one exception, the director of a Sami ECC, they seemed to lack a firm understanding of the concept of cultural heritage.

The teachers had scarcely any common understanding of the concept of heritage. There were several diverging beliefs, but most of the respondents presented private definitions of the concept, and tied heritage to personal experiences. It was given vague and general or rather obscure definitions; some expressed that heritage is 'the values we have with us from childhood'. They talked about private experiences and their own childhood memories when they tried to elaborate on the content of cultural heritage. They emphasized what they

personally appreciated and not what they experienced to have in common with others. This can be interpreted as lacking a reflective and critical attitude towards cultural heritage. It is an understanding of cultural heritage that is emotionally based and privatized, and there was no common understanding of heritage in the centres. Some of the respondents linked heritage to the *Norwegian* national cultural heritage, but in general, heritage was not seen as an expression of a national culture or as part of a common, shared culture. It was connected to private experiences and memories.

In general, the respondents had a vague concept of heritage. However, there were some respondents who presented a very specific or restricted definition of heritage by trying to connect heritage to concrete cultural elements. They mentioned specific artists, authors or books that they had a personal relationship with in their childhood. However, these were not necessarily Norwegian books or authors; for example, some of the teachers included Swedish children's books written by Astrid Lindgren in their concept of cultural heritage. However, even if they managed to concretise the content in this way, it was not a comprehensive or thoughtful definition; rather, it seemed to be random and personal. Thus, it underlines the main finding, which is a lack of consciousness concerning cultural heritage.

To the extent that concrete elements of heritage were specified, the collection of concrete elements consisted mainly of what can be seen as intangible heritage (UNESCO 2003); these elements were connected to music and literature. This corresponds with earlier research (Moen & Buaas, 2012) indicating that ECC staff express a stronger confidence in working with intangible heritage. However, as will be discussed later, this partly contradicts their practice in the ECCs, which also includes tangible heritage. Overall, the elements of heritage seem to have been chosen uncritically and there were no clear criteria for selection of content.

### **Methods and tools in teaching cultural heritage**

Even though the teachers did not express a clear perception of cultural heritage, this did not mean that the ECCs did not teach heritage. They had developed a variety of methods and tools to teach culture and traditions. Several teachers emphasized that pedagogical activities related to diversity were not limited to shorter projects but were a permanent part of the ECC's activity. However, activities that included learning about heritage and traditions took many forms. Some could be conducted as a project for a few hours, a day or a longer period.

One of the motivations for conducting this study was the assumption that teaching history in culturally diverse ECCs could be problematic. However, the teachers indicated that they had experienced relatively few problems related to the subject, and they expressed a resource-orientated attitude towards multiculturalism (Lauritsen, 2011). They seemed to have little problem with national or religious holidays or feasts. Neither religion nor gender was a topic that challenged the teachers or seemed to cause problems. In connection with St. Lucia celebration and Christmas, several ECCs sent groups of children to the local church, without experiencing any negative reactions from parents. Most centres celebrated both Norwegian National Day, 17 May, and United Nations Day, 24 October.

In the daily pedagogical work with heritage, all of the ECCs to a large degree used resources from the local community. This was dependent on the types of resources that existed in the community, but the ECCs were generally very good at adopting local resources. Examples of these were buildings, public institutions or historical persons with ties to the community. One of the ECCs in this study was located close to the Munch Museum in Oslo, so they felt it was convenient to have a close connection to the museum and to include Edvard Munch and his art into the didactic work in the ECC.

But of course – Munch – is the one topic that is quite like that ... close – the Munch Museum is right over here. We even got a picture – it hangs there – when we opened the ECC (...). But it is easy to use when it is in the neighbourhood. We can walk there; we can go and visit the place where Munch lived once upon a time.

In the local community, the ECC could find culture to which all children had a connection, regardless of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, the culture of the local community constitutes a 'common culture'. It can connect history and the present, both traditional Norwegian culture and other cultural expressions. Here, the children can become acquainted with both tangible and intangible culture by encountering persons, capitals, buildings, music, literature, theatre and museums. Instead of emphasizing cultural distinctions, through an emphasis on the local community and the shared culture, the ECC is able to teach heritage based on cohesion, diversity and common elements shared by all cultures (Rüsen, 2007). In this way, ECCs can also develop a common identity connected to their common affiliation with the local community. The ECCs did use resources in the local environment, although in many cases, this was done for practical reasons and not as a result of thoughtful planning.

As Moen & Buaas (2012) found, intangible heritage – song, music, dance and stories – are what ECC staff felt most competent working with. These were the most common methods and means of conveying heritage in the ECCs in this study. For the most part, they sang Norwegian songs, a finding that corresponds with another recent study (Andersen, 2011). However, several of the teachers stated that they also sang songs from the home countries of immigrant children, but this was conducted in a rather arbitrary way. Music is a very convenient way for the staff to convey heritage, but it is also an activity that the children can easily participate in. However, according to the Framework Plan's meaning of this concept, music can only be described as 'children's participation' to a certain degree. Participation in this respect does not only mean children taking part, it also means that children and their families should contribute with their own cultural expressions and take part in the selection of content (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012, p. 15).

Several teachers expressed a desire to become better acquainted with the children and their families and wanted parents' opinions on what was being implemented in the ECCs. It was common for the ECCs to invite parents and families into the centre at various occasions. One of the centres had experienced that focus on food had proven to be a good way to gather children and parents. The centre asked parents to present their own country and culture at gatherings called 'parents' coffee' and to bring food from their home countries. The food project made it easy for them to participate and to present their backgrounds.

But some cultures keep very much on to their culture (...) they stick together, so to speak, and that is positive. (...) But we highlight the different nationalities where the kids come from, to have some arrangement around it. Come and talk with parents – how is it – what music do you like? What food are you making? What clothes, everything like that – So we make that kind of gathering.

As mentioned earlier, 'formation' is a central concept in the Framework Plan. However, neither the cultural content of formation nor the requirements in regard to pedagogical work with culture and cultural heritage is very clearly expressed in the plan. In one of the ECCs, there was an example of pedagogical work that could illustrate Løvlie's (2003) concept of 'extended formation' and could support both formation and teaching of heritage and give it a concrete context in a culturally diverse environment.

The centre conducted a project about 'Primstaven', which is an ancient Norwegian calendar stick. These wooden sticks have been used for several hundred years and were engraved with images that depicted the different religious holidays or feasts. The children made sticks, and in addition to the traditional holidays, they also engraved days that meant something special to them. They also included days or feasts that they celebrated from other countries or talked about in the centre, e.g., Chinese New Year. They also made marks for things they had experienced in the ECC, e.g., trips they had been on. The centre took an old Norwegian tradition as the starting point but connected the past and the present, connecting Norwegian traditions with traditions from other countries; they made it something common that all the children could share whether or not they had a Norwegian background.

... we created an annual program that was based on the calendar stick, which is somehow the Norwegian or Norse culture. Then, we could tie both Norse mythology, we can tie into religions and stuff like that. But the idea was not, was not the Norse and stuff, that was one approach, but it was highlighting anniversaries. And instead of taking a calendar stick that is produced ready for use, we would create our own; and so we created feasts and anniversaries, this could be Chinese New Year or Id, or it could be a birthday.

The Calendar stick was developed in dialogue with the children. They created one very long calendar stick where the children marked each anniversary on the stick. In addition, each child also made his/her own smaller personal edition of the stick. The centre tied the calendar stick to the ECC's annual plan, and it was used actively throughout the year.

The example of the calendar stick is exemplary in many ways. This is a way of conveying national cultural heritage to children in a very concrete way. At the same time, it is relevant to the present. The children participated in an active manner, worked with a physical object from Norwegian heritage and made the tradition their own. The children created something new together. It was also made international and connected to the multicultural environment of the ECC. This example thus fulfils all three of Løvlie's (2003) criteria, 'extended concept of formation', as it implies a traditional introduction to heritage, a critical and innovative processing of this heritage, and its actualization for the culturally diverse community.

### **Cultural diversity as problem or resource**

Only to a small degree did the interviewees reflect on the cultural differences between children in the centres. Essentially, they did not consider teaching heritage in ECCs with cultural diversity to be a major problem. They thought it was rewarding to be in an environment with children from different countries. This means they expressed what (Lauritsen, 2011, pp. 59-60) is characterized as a resource-oriented approach that entails diversity as a source of knowledge, experiences and development. The biggest challenge in the staff's opinion was related to language, not as a clash between cultures, but as a practical problem.

The ECCs experiences with cultural diversity varied. Cultural diversity is not a new phenomenon in either of the two municipalities; both have had a diversity of nationalities in the ECCs for some years. Hence, several ECCs have experience with this. It was more challenging in earlier years, when multiculturalism was new. Difficulties and uncertainty related to this have decreased as the ECCs have gained more experience and it has become routine to handle a diverse group of children, as this experienced pedagogical leader expressed:

We do not teach less (Norwegian traditions), but maybe we have other ways of teaching than what we had before. (...) Earlier, we had more of the pure Norwegian stuff because

we had not that many from other countries. (...) So personally, I do not think it has been somewhat difficult to convey Norwegian culture. (...) Now we have become more familiar with the different cultures. In general, society has indeed become more open about it, and there has been more of it, too. (...) And we also have more knowledge about things in a way – it is not so foreign anymore.

Even though the ECCs do not experience this as a problem, the work on cultural heritage lacks a firm basis in specified criteria and principles. In summary, the findings on how the teachers understand and teach cultural heritage is based on three main principles:

1. *An emotional and personal approach to heritage.* Understanding heritage is based on personal experiences, what the teachers remember from their own childhood and what arouses emotions in them.
2. *A situational and arbitrary selection of content.* The content of teaching is not based on firm criteria or on thorough assessments but on what happens to exist in or nearby the centre, such as a museum, a local author, or differences that exists in the ECC.
3. *Concrete activities are the starting point.* The teachers emphasize and prefer concrete activities that are enjoyable and can activate the children. They tend to choose these activities because they are possible or practical to conduct. The content is decided by the method.

The staff has a personal commitment; they take advantage of the centres' available resources and use amusing concrete methods. However, one can say that based on these principles, both content and methods are arbitrary. They lack criteria for selection of content and there is no overall plan or objective of the work. These principles, or one might rather say lack of principles, illustrate a lack of competence in the field. This is supported by studies by Moen and Buaas (2012) and Andersen (2011). The ECC's task is to continue conveying traditional Norwegian heritage while at the same time ensuring that the children gain knowledge, understanding and tolerance of other cultures and traditions. However, the Framework Plan specifies nothing about the content of this learning; this is up to the staff to determine.

One way to overcome this challenge can be through emphasis on Løvlie's (2003) extended concept of formation, which emphasizes traditions, critical assessment and the ability to understand and appreciate diversity. Formation is, as noted earlier, a central concept in the Framework Plan. In Løvlie's concept of formation, cultural heritage cannot be something static; it is dynamic and evolving. This does not mean that the cultural heritage is dissolving. Traditions should be kept alive, but one should also have the courage to discard parts of heritage and renew it.

When selecting heritage content that is being passed on to the next generation, three simultaneous and interconnected processes are involved: repeat, reject and renew. To convey heritage is not just to repeat the old substance but also to reflect upon it and to renew it. This involves knowledge of tradition and at the same a critical transcendence of it. It can also include an emphasis on both the traditional Norwegian cultural heritage and cultures from minority groups. In the ECC, one can give children knowledge and experience during encounters with different cultures. They can gain knowledge in their own traditions and in other cultures as well as an understanding of the similarities and of what is common across cultural borders. This corresponds with Løvlie's (2003) concept of formation. This means taking care of cultural heritage at the same time as one is critical to this heritage and is willing to participate in a meeting between traditions. Lusted points out that 'Education can be a good way of avoiding

the pitfalls of stereotyping.’(Lusted, 2012, p. 151). Attitudes are formed very early in life. It is therefore important to developed understanding and respect for cultural diversity in early childhood.

### **Implications for practice**

This study shows that there is a need for increased competence and theoretical knowledge among the ECC staff. To improve the teaching of heritage, it is important that the teachers’ emotional and private experiences become subject to critical reflections. Løvlie’s (2003) concept of formation, emphasizing a critical attitude, could be a helpful tool to gain a more comprehensive and fruitful concept of cultural heritage. In this way of approaching formation and heritage, it would be possible to develop a critical attitude towards the selection of content that deals with diversity intellectually and not only emotionally.

Teaching heritage in multicultural ECCs will thus include preserving and maintaining the best traditional teaching of heritage, while the pedagogical work also must be renewed, developed and adapted to more culturally heterogeneous groups of children. The same applies to the content of cultural heritage, which is about placing a value on that which is worth preserving, rejecting or neglecting what has less value, and adding new items.

Children’s participation is necessary to accomplish the goals of ‘consciousness about their own heritage and participation in other cultures’ and ‘respectful interaction between different ethnic groups’ (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012, p. 36). Participation from both children and their parents is needed to gain insight into their own considerations of culture and traditions. Those in the minority have to contribute. It would also be constraining if each EEC community were divided into specific cultural groups and made artificial borders, borders that are not necessarily visible or natural to the children. Rüsen (2007) suggests a theory of culture that avoids the constraints of ethnocentrism. ‘Ethnocentrism is theoretically dissolved if the specifics of a culture are understood as a combination of elements that are shared by all cultures.’ (Rüsen, 2007, p. 30). This idea of considering common elements will also be an important basis for the ECCs’ work with cultural heritage.

### **Conclusion**

This article discussed teaching cultural heritage in some culturally diverse ECCs in Norway. There is clearly a lack of conscious teaching of cultural content, and the teaching is not based on specific criteria or clear principles. The centres have developed a variety of methods and tools to teach culture and traditions, but the content and methods were chosen rather arbitrarily. Developing competence is necessary, both among teachers in the field and in early childhood teacher education. Although there is a long way to go to obtain a balanced and varied teaching of cultural heritage, this work provides a clear understanding of what is already being done in the ECCs today. As Gjervan (2006) notes, it is not about stopping what is already going on but about adding something more to what is already there.

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