Didactics and didactisizing

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In this article I will show how Danes normally understand the term ‘didactics’; and discuss how this term can involve research in didactical phenomena; and how it is possible to come to a new understanding of the term which not only includes the teacher’s didactics, but also views the student as a creator of didactics. The reason for letting the term ‘didactics’ include the student, from the point of view of the research, is to illuminate the connection which is often made between the teacher’s didactics and the student’s learning. The student’s own perception of the discipline ‘didactics’ cannot be ignored in the student’s perception of the teacher’s didactics and his or her learning and thinking. In this discussion of the term ‘didactics’, different derivations of the term will be used to separate the different meanings that the term can cover. These derivations are: didactics, metadidactics, didactology, and didactisizing; didactology and didactisizing can include the student’s didactics.

In the following, I will briefly explain the different meanings that the term ‘didactics’ covers in its original use. Then I will focus on some of the early theories of didactics which still define current positions and tensions within the field of didactics. These are the foundations for some of the best known models of didactics that I will introduce. I will give a few examples of the didactics they touch upon; how particular questions have become the core questions in the German tradition of didactics which influence the didactical tradition in the 20th century in Denmark. This leads to the present discussion about didactics in Denmark; more specifically the discussion whether didactics should be seen as a general concept which embraces all disciplines or should be seen as closely connected to individual disciplines, and therefore be called discipline or subject specific didactics. This discussion shows how didactics is turned into a metadiscipline. One approach of which is how to research in the area of didactics, i.e. didactology. I will present my definition of the terms didactics and didactisizing, and I will present my didactological position which views the student as a creator of didactics, and show how this position is connected with the present discussion in Denmark.

The term ‘didactics’
The term ‘didactics’ originates from the Greek *Didaskein*, which means to teach, to educate. But the term can also mean: having the ability to teach, the people who have the ability to teach, the content taught, teaching aids, including methods and media, the school and the classroom where learning takes place, and learning as the main activity of pupils!

The area that the term has been connected with in its origin is very broad. Over time the meaning of the term has changed, and today the meaning of the term falls into two main categories. Bo Steffensen from the Danish University of Education in Copenhagen has researched into the use and understanding of the term amongst teacher students who are training to become teachers at elementary and middle school in the last decade of the 20th century, and the term is primarily understood as the method of teaching. On the other hand, there exists an opinion amongst many didactical theoreticians that didactics is not a question of method. Instead the term is considered to cover questions to the discipline about what to teach and why to teach it. This group is further divided into a group which views these questions as common for all subjects/disciplines, and a group which views the questions to be closely related to the nature of the content. A lot of the discussions about didactics in the 20th century and the 21st century deal with defining which kind of questions could be called didactical.

**An early sketch of the main tensions in didactics**

The history of didactics is very long, and I have chosen some of the early theories of didactics to represent the main tensions in didactics. This introduction is inspired by Stefan Hopmann’s book about the tradition of didactics and the curriculum. There are many other early didactical theories, but I am only drawing some very broad lines with the purpose of explaining some of the models of didactics. Afterwards I will use the models for the discussion of didactics and didactisizing.

In Antiquity, about 500 B.C., when the term and concept had its origin, it was closely related to the view of human nature. The Greeks believed that Man had choices in his life, and therefore it was of great importance that a free Man in Greek society learnt to make choices and behave in society. In the Greek urban societies,

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3. At this moment the book is still a manuscript, which is not published yet, and it is in Danish. But Hopmann has worked a lot with the tradition of didactics compared with the tradition of curriculum, and has published articles in English and edited books on this subject, e.g. Hopmann, (1998) and (2000). The following analysis of the history of didactics and the tensions in the didactical triangle is strongly inspired by Hopmann’s analysis.
according to the demands of society, the art of speech – rhetoric – was instrumental to
this aim. To learn to speak properly and to create speeches were related to power, and
people became very interested in learning these skills. Therefore the excellent teacher
came into focus. For the first time it was possible to make a living by teaching, and the
professional teacher was born.

This sounds quite simple, but is not enough to provide a serious definition
of didactics. What happened was, however, that the great teachers of the time, the
philosophers, started writing about how to teach. A double point of view is emerging,
which can be seen in Plato’s (427-347) dialogue “Meno”. The dialogue does not only show
what should be learned, but also elaborates on how to teach as a theme and shows, in
its interaction with the reader, a method of teaching. This method is centred on the great
teacher; and the learning will be a result of the Socratic dialogue. This is called the birth
certificate of didactics. Teaching is, at this point, perceived as something that could be
observed, planned, done, and evaluated. If this happened in a certain place, this was
called didaskaleion, which means school.

Stressing the method is only one of the didactical positions, other positions
discuss what to learn. Is the student supposed to learn skills and methods of the
intellect or a certain attitude or a certain amount of content? The discussion of the
choices of content of teaching comes into focus as a part of didactics. Aristotle (385 –322)
takes part in this discussion and questions the absence of general guidelines for what is
to be learned. But guidelines evolve around 100 B.C. as a result of reflections upon what
‘the good human being’ is and reflections upon how to support the formation of the ‘good
human being’. The results focus on the content, which could be seen as a kind of
curriculum - the Seven Liberal Arts. This curriculum was used until the Middle Ages,
and in some places until the 17th century.

The last of the very old roots for didactics that I will mention is the Christian
tradition in its early form. It struggles from the very beginning with establishing the
content according to the different interpretations and the choice of core texts, the
curriculum. A very important point, due to the nature of religion, is, however, how to
convince people about ‘the truth’ of the content. The focus is on the method of teaching,
and rhetoric is again in focus as a method. The listeners or the ‘learners’, however, are
not such a homogeneous group as before, and it is not only a certain content that the
student should be able to recall as a part of being educated, or a method that the

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Sevent Liberal Arts are: Trivium: grammar, dialectics and rhetoric, Quadrivium: music, arithmetics,
geometry and astronomy.
student necessarily has to learn, but the learner should be convinced and feel attached to the content. Now the focus is on the student and the way the student relates to the content. According to Augustine, the teacher might start from the questions already burning in the student’s mind.

Each of the positions mentioned has later turned into something which could be seen as the opposite of my description here. The sophists for example were not concerned with content. The Seven Liberal Arts were taught regardless of whether they were the necessary curriculum, or later, teaching in the Church Schools,⁵ which were precursors to secondary school in Denmark today, used methods which were not concerned in any way with the student, and Christianity was not always interested in burning questions. But in the ways of expressing didactics at that time, most of the problems and tensions in the discussion about didactics in the more traditional way are represented.

**The didactical triangle**

These problems, tensions and questions can be illustrated with two traditional models of didactics. One is a triangle, and the other one is a set of questions, which are directed at two different positions in the triangle.

The didactical triangle (fig. 1) is a very simple model which shows three components in didactical thinking: the content, the teacher, and the student; and three relations between the teacher, the student, and the content. In the different periods mentioned above, different relations or positions have been stressed.

**Fig. 1**

![Diagram of the didactical triangle]

In the first Socratic understanding, the relation between teacher and student is stressed as in Plato’s Socratic dialogue. The view on the human being and on knowledge is that the content is already in the student; it is just sleeping and needs to be called upon. It is

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⁵ grammar schools where part of the education for becoming a priest or a civil servant took place
the method of the great teacher which will reveal this content in the student. But the teacher is therefore also the one who leads the student to the content – and then chooses the content that should be called upon. It is a very teacher centred kind of didactics. The teacher’s argumentation for the chosen content may be related to society’s claim and philosophies about the learner, but the kind of content is still the teacher’s decision.

For the curriculum or content oriented didactics based on Aristotle’s view, the great teachers seem not to have the same importance as before. The content exists, and the content is the most important foundation stone in the shaping of civilized man. The teacher is the organizer of the content for the student. The right organization will help the student to learn in the most efficient way.

In Augustine’s theories, the method is again in focus, but now in the relation between the student and the teacher. The teacher needs to uncover the burning questions in the student’s mind, and by answering them unveil and explain the content. The starting point for the teaching is the student.

In this description, though, there are already possibilities for tensions and problems in didactics. When the goal of learning is not connected to a specific goal in society, as it was in Plato’s case, but instead is shaped by a more common curriculum used in special institutions as schools - as for Aristotle – there is a basis for tensions between society and the school. The content of the school is derived from the philosophy of the good/educated human, not directly from society. What could be called the frame of school has arisen. With this formalisation of the content as a special sort of content taught in schools, the system of school becomes visible and the society around it becomes visible. This can be illustrated by a circle which surrounds the didactical triangle (fig. 2). This is society, with knowledge and demands that are not structured in a scholastic way. In the didactical triangle the extracted knowledge is put into a situation different from everyday life – and enacted between a teacher and a student.

Fig. 2
A consequence of this separation is that there will be two systems. In some didactical theories that are foreshadowed in the didactics of Augustine, the tension has caused the system of school to try to reform itself by calling upon the student's 'real' nature, the student's real questions, not those made up by the teacher or expected by the teacher.

What emerges can best be described as another triangle outside the didactic triangle (fig. 3), which has the teacher as a person (the adult), the student as a person (the child), and the content as a 'natural' content, taken from the 'real' world and not systematized and cut into pieces according to a didactical theory. The relation between the child (not in the role of the student) and the adult (not in the role of the teacher) should mirror the natural relation between an adult and a child, and in the same way the relation to the content for the child and the adult should be understood as a natural relation. However, the relations and the components in the teaching and learning situations are still the same; they form a new triangle. In different didactics or pedagogical reform movements different positions and relations in the 'natural' triangle have been underlined.

Fig. 3

What happens, though, when what is natural becomes the school? If the concept of what is natural changes, what is natural will become school, and a new, more natural triangle would appear within years. What is natural turns out to be culture as well and defined by the changes of culture and society.
In the German tradition, which has influenced the entire 20th century way of thinking, the relation or tension between what is natural and society also becomes complicated in as far as what is natural is no longer considered desirable by society. The demands of nature and the demands of society are different and sometimes in opposition to each other. There is now opposition between the individual, or the psychology of the individual and the culture of society and the rules of community. The balance of what is natural and what is cultural is the aim of the school, so mastering the tension between these two kinds of demands is the goal of the school (fig. 4). This is part of the core in the theories that inspired didactics in the 20th century, and a factor in answering current didactical questions.

**Fig. 4**

In the German 'Geisteswissenschaftliche' tradition, the natural framework also becomes a measure for didactics itself! This establishes another tension in didactics. Is didactics purely theoretical or is didactics also practical? In the few early traditions I mentioned above, didactics develops formalized theories about teaching. But did the teacher teach without any assumptions about his or her own teaching? As part of the definition of didactics in Antiquity and in the rest of the history of didactics, didactics depends on the values and on choices in the view of the human being and of knowledge. From these choices evolves the theory of didactics. The criticism which can easily be raised against these ideas, is that the theory is far away from the everyday reality of the classroom. There is a schism between theory and practice. The theory must be changed and must

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6 In Denmark the tradition of didactics has been strongly inspired by German didactics and especially Wolfgang Klaflki's studies of didactics. The didactical tradition he builds on and elaborates on has its roots in the concept of 'Bildung' in the period of the late Enlightenment and Classicism in the period from 1770-1830. Klaflki explains the tradition in "förste studie" (first study) in Klaflki (1988/2001) p. 27-56. I will briefly return to Klaflki later.
evolve from the real classroom. With reference to the hermeneutical tradition as Wolfgang Klaški sees it, though, another interpretation could be that there is not necessarily an opposition between theory and practice. In the practical situation, theoretical assumptions are embedded like an assumption that can be made into more formal theory, that in turn can revise the existing theory. Both interpretations are shown in fig. 5.

**Fig. 5**

This discussion also shows that didactics has become reflective. Didactics is not only concerned with describing theories about teaching. Didactics is concerned with the validity of didactics itself. It has turned into metatheory. The discussion in didactics about descriptive and normative didactics arises from this tension. I will return to this discussion after an introduction to two sets of didactical questions.

**Two sets of didactical questions**

The two sets of didactical questions are connected with the didactical triangle. From the teacher’s perspective in the triangle two different sets of main questions arise. They emerge from the other two components in the triangle. For the teacher who stresses the content, as e.g. Aristotle stressed the curriculum, the questions will be concentrated on what content should be taught, why to teach it and how to teach it (fig. 6). The questions will primarily start from the 'what question'. The 'how question' will be interpreted in close relation to the nature of the content, to special demands according to special kinds of content that have been systematized in different ways. This is what later will be described as subject specific didactics. This is closely linked to the idea of the content as educating and forming the student.

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The other set of questions will start from the student. ‘Who’ will be taught, ‘how’ are they going to be taught, and ‘what’ are they supposed to learn? This set of questions is closer to the position of Augustine. The ‘what’ will depend on the ‘who’ and the ‘how’; and the ‘how’ is related to the nature of the student, not the nature of the content. This is what later will be called general didactics, which is closely connected to pedagogy and child psychology.\textsuperscript{8}

In the didactics of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the two sets of didactical questions are both in focus. The discussion starts with the first set of questions, but develops into different attempts to relate or discuss the two sets of questions and to establish metadidactics and didactology as terms for research in the field of didactics. In the development of the didactical movement as such, with different themes being stressed, there is also a discussion about the nature of didactics. You could call this a parallel metadidactical discussion.

In the three main movements in didactics in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century inspired by the German didactics of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ come to be stressed differently.\textsuperscript{9} The first is centred on an individual’s formation, ‘Bildung’. It has its roots in the late German Enlightenment and classicism from 1770-1830. It refers to the ideal of the individual, who is faced with the conflict and tension between his/her own desires and the demands of the outside world as described above. In the early movement of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the task of didactics is to find the formative elements in the content of the disciplines. This movement stresses the ‘what’. The ‘what’ question is regarded as the true didactic question, while the ‘how’ is neglected. Subject specific didactics can be seen

\textsuperscript{8} The clarification of the different sets of questions is inspired by Bo Steffensen’s discussion of these two different traditions. Steffensen (2003).

\textsuperscript{9} Gundem (1998) p. 29-34.
as a part of this upgrading of the content. The new Scandinavian interest in subject
specific didactics dates from the last 20 years.10

The understanding of the subject specific movement is subjected to criticism
by behavioral science, which states that didactics takes place in the act of teaching.
Behavioural science finds its arguments in the theories of learning and teaching – and
the concept of formation, ‘Bildung’, changes. Formation is now due to progress equally
obtainable for all through state schools. Formation is to be expressed by behaviour, and
school is only one part of a lifelong learning process. In this process though, progress
must be measurable. This is called the realistic turn, where the ‘how question’ is
stressed. This can be seen in the common pedagogical movement which rejects the
discipline as an artificial and unnatural context for the learner, which again refers to a
certain way of stressing the components in the didactical triangle. From the ‘how’
position an alternative set of questions arise, which are concerned with who should be
taught. This is the first question the teacher is supposed ask.

But ‘how’ do you teach without being critical about ‘why’ to teach ‘what’? The
critical theories of society evolve from the Frankfurt School, which stresses autonomy,
emancipation and self-reflection. The tools are ideology critique and knowledge critique
to escape false consciousness. It stresses the historical and social aspects of knowledge.
The goal is a better society.

Wolfgang Klafki tries to synthesize these different positions in his critical-
constructive theory of didactics. Didactics stands by definition in a constructive and
critical relation to society. It develops and changes dynamically when new knowledge is
developed, but is also concerned with suggestions for education in the future. But Klafki
has his roots in the ‘allgemeine Bildung’ (general formation) and this is why he gives the
three main focuses in education as abilities of self-determination, participation in
decision making and solidarity.11 These characteristics are to be learned when students
are working with key problems which are not isolated to the questions of only one
discipline. The teaching should be directed by the particular student’s needs, the
teaching should be differentiated according to the student. Klafki’s synthesis tends to
turn into the second set of questions in its synthesis of the first set of questions! The
subject matters and disciplines do not, according to Klafki, contain a strong enough
concept of ‘Bildung’ on which to build a system of education. If the reasoning in didactics

10 The discussion about a subject specific didactics in Denmark started in the late sixties, though. Lorentzen
(1998)
11 Klafki (1985/2001), p. 68. The new concept of ‘allgemeine Bildung’ is described in his “Anden studie”
(second study) p. 59-98.
turns to the disciplines, there will not be one concentrated focus in education, or much worse, non-reflective foci could be ruling invisibly. The line between the general and the subject specific discipline is drawn.

**The metadidactical discussion - a general didactics or a subject specific didactics?**

When I use the term metadidactics I refer to a shift in focus on didactics. As mentioned above didactics is concerned with choices which will refer to different values – also when the framework is the ‘real’ classroom. Metadidactics has didactics as its focus. To engage in metadidactics is also what I have been trying to do by using different models for describing the patterns in the different movements of didactics. My goal was to let these patterns emerge from the different theories. Engaging in metadidactics could also include an attempt not to be normative,¹² not to have a certain agenda which didactics should stick to. To research in didactics in theory or in practice could also be called didactology.

I will now present some Scandinavian researchers who have been working with metadidactics and didactological research. Through these researchers’ results and discussions I will try to explain my didactological point of view which considers practice not only as the teacher’s practice of didactics, but also views the student as producing didactical questions. This might sound unusual to someone who will define didactics as what the teacher is doing - especially planning. However, from a didactological point of view this heretical idea makes good sense.

The meta discussion has been concerned with analysing patterns and structures in the different kinds of didactics, and has been concerned with the right definition of the term didactics – what does the term didactics cover and what is the difference between didactics and metadidactics. The inspiration from the German tradition – and from the Anglo-Saxon tradition of curriculum research in the 20th century – is seen in the metadidactics discussion of how to do research in the practice of teaching.

The Danish researcher Frede V. Nielsen (2001) has in his metadidactical analyses of the curriculum, didactics and research in didactics tried to establish the

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¹² Metadidactics, though, can also be normative. The metadidactics of Wolfgang Klafki mentioned above is highly normative.
term didactology. Didactics has a normative purpose. It is the nature of didactics to make choices which are pictured in the didactical questions. It is concerned with planning and making decisions; its foundation is values, it creates values and builds on fundamental pedagogical views instead of scientific views, and the success of a certain kind of didactics will be measured by the student's learning.

Didactology is concerned with the analysis of different theories of didactics. It is descriptive instead of prescriptive; and it is analytical and not normative. The latter should not be misunderstood as if to say that didactology is neutral: it will always be under the influence of values, but it is not under the pressure of having to bring about changes in practice. This is not a distinction between theory and practice. Didactics will still be concerned with theories. The teacher has assumptions about how to teach from his or her own studies and from his or her experiences; and these are parts of the teacher's didactical reasoning. On the other hand didactology depends on a certain didactical point of view, which will influence the choice of method in research. The difference lies in the agenda. Of course didactological research can result in didactics, as when certain results in research become the basis of a development of didactics. But the results will be used with a normative purpose. I find the term didactology useful in order to distinguish between the overall agenda of teaching and the agenda of researching. If you are not aware of the distinction, agendas might be ignored. I will use the distinction because it becomes a point of reference for the different didactical theories.

Nielsen's own concept of didactology, however, does not include the 'how' question. Return to the discussion above of the different didactical questions, he only considers the 'what' and the 'why' questions, in the first set of questions, to be a part of didactics. Nielsen's didactics does not leave room for considerations about the teaching method.

In his book *Det fagdidaktiske project* (2003) another Danish researcher, Bo Steffensen, sets out to clarify the concepts of didactics and establish a metadidactical point of view. He makes an outline of how these different didactics are related, and how these two different models of didactical questions complement each other, which marks

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13 It is possible to find a similar article on the internet by Nielsen in English: Nielsen, Frede V. “Didactology as a Field of Theory and Research in Music Education”, Philosophy of Music Education Review - Volume 13, Number 1, Spring 2005, pp. 5-19 [Indiana University Press](https://www.indiana.edu/~pmer/)

14 This distinction should not be misunderstood as if Frede V. Nielsen is regarding research as being without values, and action research will be concerned with both agendas at the same time.
the line between the two main traditions in didactics. His purpose is to do metadidactics, but subject specific metadidactics. He wants to clarify and focus on the different tensions you should be aware of in an analysis of subject specific didactics. His conclusion is that general didactics and subject specific didactics are two sides of the same coin, but they cannot be used for asking and researching the same set of questions. Nevertheless, the questions cannot be ignored, they complete each other.

The model below is adapted from Steffesen’s original model in the Det fagdidaktiske project (the project of subject specific didactics) (2003, p. 317). I have changed the order in the model of the question from ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘who’ and ‘how’ to ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘who’ to make the circle visible.

![Fig. 8](image)

There are four questions in both traditions, but some of the questions mean different things in the two traditions, so all in all there are six questions. In general didactics you will start from the right, and in the subject specific tradition you will start from the left. The general tradition will start with the how, or with the student, while subject specific didactics will start with the content or the why. The model is circular, and the way in which you will understand the other questions in didactics is defined by your approach, but none of the questions can be ignored.

Steffensen’s conclusion is that a teacher cannot plan, or should not plan without being aware of all the questions - and that is Steffensen’s didactical project. I do

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15 I agree that this may be the conditions for the teacher, but not for the researcher. See the revised model below.
not think, though, that he takes the full consequences of his own reflections. The normative purpose for his metadidactics is to strengthen subject specific didactics and to focus on analyses of differences in points of view on discipline, didactics, and politics of disciplines. He wants to sharpen the teacher's and the teacher students' awareness of whether the reasoning and the answers to the questions are political or based on professional reflection.

Steffensen's attempt to build a dialogue is based on a combination of different approaches, but he stresses the subject specific, didactics approach and still clings to the idea that the questions 'how' and 'who' of general didactics do not belong to subject didactics. If these questions are perceived as subject specific, didactical questions, then the subject specific questions have been transformed into general didactics. I will return to this discussion later because I think it is possible to find another basis. I will also question Steffensen's Model. From the subject specific didactics point of view the 'why question' is missing in the general didactics. Can any didactics exist without the why question? Wolfgang Klaaki, a representative of the general didactics mentioned above, is certainly concerned with the why question. The why question is the basis for shaping the difference between knowledge of life/society and school. It is the question which establishes the frame of school. Why does Steffensen stay with a model which he read from the point of view of the subject specific didactics?

I would establish another relation between the two traditions inspired by Steffensen and Nielsen. They are both related by the why question, but the answer to this question determines the answers to the other questions in the model. From a didactological point of view, these two didactical approaches are to be viewed in the same perspective.

Fig. 9

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\(^{16}\) Steffensen has just revised his own model so the 'why question' in the general didactics is mentioned again. Still, he, still does not connect the two sides of the coin, though. Steffensen, (2005).
From a didactological point of view both sets of questions could be asked and the teaching could be viewed as the result of these considerations. The three questions are interrelated and define each other, whether the teacher is aware of this or not. The questions could be coloured to a certain degree by the relations to the other questions, and none of the relations can be ignored from a didactological point of view of the researcher. Each question could be split up into different interpretations according to its relation to the other questions. The ‘how’ question could then be oriented toward e.g. the ‘who’ or the ‘how’, so neither the subject specific didactics ‘how’, as in Steffensen’s model, nor general didactics ‘how’ could be ignored, no matter what the answer to the ‘why’ question is. The difference between the didactical understanding of the model (fig. 9) and the didactological is in the agenda.

The didactical approach: The teacher is asking the question with the teaching as a goal in theory and practice. The didactological approach: The researcher is investigating the connections between the questions whether they are fully articulated or not. Before I explain my assumptions of how these two traditions meet in the didactological approach and open the perspective of the student, I will return to the discussion about the ‘how’ and the ‘who’ from the general didactic’s point of view.

A model for general didactics and pedagogy - the student as disciplinary participant

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17 The student as a professional or student professionalism is the term that Hetmar (1996) uses when she translates the Danish concept: “eleverfaglighed.” It is a difficult term to translate, and maybe disciplinary
The difference between subject specific didactics and general didactics is the perspective. This perspective is centred in the perception of the content, the subject/the discipline. In subject specific didactics the teacher chooses the subject to be taught, or the content has been chosen for him or her already. The content will control the other questions. In general didactics the subject/discipline does not control anything. Disciplines are artificial. Instead the focus will be on competence and skills to use in every kind of discipline.

The subject didactics movement has often criticized that: The students do not learn the discipline or the subjects; the general didactics approach is not ‘professional’ enough. To this criticism Vibeke Hetmar (1996) has given an answer with inspiration from the reader response theories, where she has turned the discussion upside down. The student is a disciplinary participant; but the teacher is just not aware of this. She completely dissociates her work from didactics and refers instead to the tradition of pedagogy. The tradition of didactics is too burdened with the teacher’s perspective.

In her dissertation: *Litteraturpædagogik og elevfaglighed. Litteraturundervisning og elevernes litterære beredskab set fra en almenpædagogisk position.* (1996) (Literature Teaching and Pupils’ Response) Hetmar establishes a new term, student ‘professionalism’ (I will refer to the term as the student as a disciplinary participant) and takes the point of view – in a very didactical way – that the subject specific, didactical teacher will never hear the student’s voice and discover the student as a disciplinary participant, because he or she will be looking for the picture of the discipline that he or she has shaped him- or herself. Hetmar’s project is to make the student, the ‘who’, visible in the teaching and by this didactical approach make the ‘who’s how’ visible in order to show the student as a disciplinary participant, the student’s ‘what’ on the student’s own conditions. The picture of the student is moving toward the triangle of what is natural, the ‘real’ child.

The teacher’s perception of the discipline is not to be turned over to the students; the students’ perception of the discipline should be accepted and worked with. If the teacher does not work from this perspective, the teacher and the student will never meet in the content as in figure 10a. Instead the conversation will be as in figure 10b. Hetmar’s didactics aims at meeting the student at his or her own level, and the teacher will discover that these positions have a disciplinary content.

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participant is a better translation. Anyhow, it presupposes that the discipline is defined by the students, and not by the teacher.
Hetmar’s dissertation from 1996 is also an answer to a discussion in Denmark about students’ problems with reading and understanding fiction.\textsuperscript{18} She undermines the pessimism with her research results within the framework of the student as a disciplinary participant by showing how much the students have to say about the discipline, when they are given the possibility of raising their own voices.

This has been a real turning point in the understanding of the classroom and the teaching of disciplines in Denmark. Hetmar’s position is criticized as not being serious by subject didactical ‘hard liners’, but her concept of the student as a disciplinary participant is now widely used in Denmark. In a later article from 2004 Hetmar takes a step toward didactics when she describes what is happening in the classroom as a process of culturization, making culture. It is not a question of rigid limits between disciplines, but children being part of the culture of the school and learning the skills of the culture.

She steps into general didactics with the culturization- the ‘what’ - as an answer to why and how. But from this point of view it is possible to find a shared basis for general and subject specific didactics. I will use her theories for understanding the student not only as a disciplinary participant, but also as producing didactical questions, as a result of being a disciplinary participant.

**What is the discipline? - The culturization (sic!) and the discipline**

The didactical model with the two triangles could describe Hetmar’s position, like most general didactics, in the S position. She wants to distance herself from didactics, because it is teacher centred, and it is acting in a way as if the teacher has the knowledge, and student has not, but should be given the knowledge.

\textsuperscript{18} In his book *Når born læser fiktion*, 1993, p. 153, Bo Steffensen claims that only one quarter of the students at the age of 15 are able to understand fictionality. Hetmar criticizes his understanding of - and way to measure - fictionality.
This is considered a very old-fashioned ‘container model’ of what knowledge is, and Hetmar stresses theories that do not accept this understanding of knowledge. She also stresses that the student has knowledge about the discipline. It is just a different kind of knowledge. I regard her idea about cultivation as a useful bridge between general and subject specific didactics. To illustrate this I will raise some questions.

Where is the discipline? And what is the discipline? Descriptions of the discipline exist in documents of curriculum and in what we would call curriculum, but these document are not the discipline. The literary work of art is not the discipline. A lot of research has been done in theory of literature, but this is not the discipline. They are parts of the discussion in which our picture of the discipline emerges. The research is part of the discussion within the discipline with the tradition, not unlike my discussion with some imaginary voices, when I write and tell about the research in didactics in Denmark.

So the discipline is not the research, but is present within it in some way – as it is in the classroom. Where is the discipline represented in the classroom? It is not fixed, it is within the discussion in the classroom, in the teacher’s utterances, in the student’s utterances, in the materials for teaching, the books, the selection of the literature in the books, in the tools for analysis.

The discipline is part of a context; it is established in communication.\textsuperscript{19} To write an article and to teach are different ways in which to work with the discipline, but the discipline is a part of both kinds of communication. The genre of the communication cannot be separated from the content, and that is why the ‘how’ question cannot be separated from the discipline or the subject specific didactics. The genre forms different pictures of the discipline, but none of these contains “the real discipline”. The genre in the classroom establishes some pictures of the discipline, but these are not static.

Taking Hetmær’s theories one step further would be to say that the discipline is the cultivation (sic!).\textsuperscript{20} Depending on the answer to the why question (fig. 9), different didactics can be in opposition to each other, but from a didactological point of view, all the didactics will show the discipline in different ways. The discipline, the content, is a construction and can change over time. The discipline is dynamic, and the discipline only exists in a process of cultivation. This may be apparent when you read and interpret historical interpretations and opinions about the discipline, but it can also be

\textsuperscript{19} The notion of the discipline is inspired by Ongstad (2003)

\textsuperscript{20} The term cultivation is an attempt to translate Hetmar’s Danish term “kulturation”. It pictures the process of being engaged in making culture.
observed in the classroom every day. In the culturization there is a negotiation about the discipline, and the students have a part in this negotiation, which is visible in all their utterances.

This raises a question about the relation between the inner and the outer triangles above. As I have pointed out in my description of my understanding of the relationship between the two triangles, what is natural is not ‘natural’ but culture interpreted as nature. If the framework for school and the framework for didactics change to a so-called pedagogical focus on the student’s voice and knowledge, then the metathinking (the didactical thinking) about the discipline just turns into the discipline itself. It has become the basis for the evaluation of the student: the raising of the student’s voice in writing and speaking in which the student’s thinking can be seen.

This may be a very relativistic interpretation of how Hetmar’s own pedagogy becomes didactics - and turns into discipline. At this point didactics shines through with its normativity, and this is what makes Hetmar’s project a didactical project. We choose ourselves, if we reflect, what values in society the school is to represent e.g. the values of democracy for instance. Didactics and discipline cannot be separated, and they are both shaped and pictured in the communication.

Instead of taking the subject specific didactical question away and only use general didactics or the pedagogical tradition, I would suggest that the triangle should produce some more questions, or rather the student should be seen as producing the questions. Just like the researcher in his or her research talks about the discipline, the teacher also talks about the discipline in his or her teaching, directly observable from the practical answer to the ‘how’ question. The ‘who’ question cannot be overlooked, but the student also talks about his or her perception of the discipline in every utterance.

The two sets of didactical questions have been related to the two different perspectives in the triangle, as when Hetmar chooses a non-didactical position, and Bo Steffensen tries to relate the questions from a metadidactical subject specific position. I will reject this and instead I will view the two sets of didactical questions as asked from the teacher’s point of view in the triangle. If we go back to my attempt to relate the two different traditions in the ‘why’ question as establishing the frame of school as different from society, we still miss one half of the communication and the negotiation on the discipline from a didactological point of view, when we take a look at the classroom dialogue.

**Fig. 11**
Instead I would like to ask, from a didactological point of view, inspired by Hetmar’s didactical thinking: What are the student’s questions? The teacher’s questions are answered in practice. But what if we assume that what students do and think in the classroom is an answer to similar questions from the students’ own point of view, maybe directed by the frame of school, the overall why? It is not my agenda to change the teaching, to make the perception of the student as a disciplinary participant visible, but, as a researcher, to understand every participant in a communication as directed by the intention of understanding\(^{21}\) – whether in order to give the right answers to the teacher or to ask and answer authentic questions. As the teacher’s two sets of questions are directed at the two other angles in the triangle, the student’s utterances in the classroom could for instance be seen as parts of a dialogue within the student where questions are (not necessarily consciously) directed at the two other angles.

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\(^{21}\) Why am I teaching/ why am I being taught in the discipline Danish?
- Who is the teacher, do I have an opinion of the teacher as a person or as a representative of the discipline which influences my discourse (who am I talking to). How to answer the teacher/student, what to answer, and why participate?

Or:

- What is the content? Do I understand this text, does it mean something to me? Why is it chosen, and how do I work with it?

These are simply suggestions for the questions from a didactological point of view; they could be different. There are more didactical points of view in the classroom than the one represented by the teacher. The so-called questions are only visible in the student’s envisionment building\textsuperscript{22} and have to be extracted from a didactological point of view. The type of envisionment building will therefore be related to the construction of the student’s didactical questions. In his dissertation Sigmund Ongstad (1997) starts from a communicative and semiotic point of view on didactics and establishes a double triadic model which explains the relation between the utterance, which is viewed as triadic, the lived experience and the genre. The utterance in the upper layer of the model will only be ‘alive’ in the interaction with the lower level of the model, the speaker’s or the listener’s experience of the ‘lived world’. This dynamic relation is seen in the envisionment building. The utterances in the classroom are made in the context of the school as a part of the culturization, which consciously or not, makes the utterances a part of the didactical genre by the ‘why’–question. The questions can be articulated\textsuperscript{23} by the researcher as in figure 12.

\textbf{Fig. 12}

\textsuperscript{22} The basis for working with the students didactical questions is to understand and research the student’s envisionment building. Envisionsments are text worlds in the mind, they are functions of personal and cultural experiences. They are dynamic, and during reading and working with the text in the classroom it is possible to see how these envisionments of the teacher and the student are developing and changing. The theory of envisionment building is developed by Judith Langer (e.g.1998).

\textsuperscript{23} Articulated or (re)constructed while they are not necessarily conscious and stable.
From this point of view the classroom dialogue is then a negotiation not only about the perception of the 'content of a certain text' but also about the perception of the discipline. Didactics is then embedded in practice, didactics is not only the teacher's planning of the lesson, but from a didactological point of view also a (maybe) unconscious and implicit part of the student's communication: in the lesson, in the homework, in his or her utterances about the discipline. Didactics is dynamic, didactics is what students and teachers are doing in the communication about the discipline. What is happening in the teacher's planning and acting in the classroom and in the student's planning and acting in the classroom is didactizing.

Subject specific didactics and general didactics are from this point of view not very far from each other; they can be put together on the same basis, but as a set of incomplete questions to the lesson viewed by the researcher. The questions of the student are not a part of a didactical movement; they are only a completion of the picture of the didactics and the discipline in action in the classroom from a didactological point of view. Where Hetmar is concerned about the content in the student's communication, and wants to respect the student's special kind of discipline knowledge, my concern is how this content answers the student's didactical questions.

Didactics is then as fluent as the subject or discipline itself. Certain pictures will arise in the negotiation on the discipline, and this negotiation will show some pictures of the didactics in process, the didactisizing. My use of the term is strongly inspired by the work of a Danish researcher, Ellen Krogh,\textsuperscript{24} and a Norwegian researcher, Sigmund Ongstad\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{24}Her dissertation, \textit{Et fag i moderniteten. Dansk fagets didaktiske diskurser}, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, 2003, has an English summary at page 325-332, and it is possible to download the dissertation at the following link: \url{http://www.humaniora.sdu.dk/phd/dokumenter/filer/-0.pdf}

\textsuperscript{25}Ongstad (1997). It is also possible to read and download the following TINE publication: TINEE Publications, Volume 2, Nr 1, \textit{Didaktik/Fachdidaktik as Science(s) of the Teaching Profession?}, where it is
Ellen Krogh has used it in a discourse inspired analysis of the student’s production of knowledge in the teaching of the discipline Danish language and art.

Sigmund Ongstad has used it to describe how a meta-awareness of the discipline, as a result of the content not being seen as natural anymore, is turning into a part of the discipline. The discipline will become didactizised! In many ways this has been the inspiration for my use of the term. But Ongstad only talks about didactisizing when this is a conscious choice. I have added to the term and included the unconscious didactical questions as described above in order to make the students visible in the didactical process – the didactisizing.

**Summary and conclusion**

Didactics covered originally a broad area of meanings. In the course of history, didactics has been formalized, and in the twentieth century there has been a discussion about the nature of didactics: should didactics be general or subject specific? This has developed into metadidactics in which the nature of the didactical research has been discussed.

In different movements of didactics the student’s position has been changing, either being the starting point or being a part that largely was ignored. However, didactics has always been viewed as produced by the teacher – or the theoreticians. If didactics is instead understood as having its own agenda, which is different from research in didactics, there is a possibility, on the basis of a communicative point of view on the discipline and the teaching, to ask if the student is producing didactics as well. There is not necessarily always a causal connection from the teacher’s didactics to the student’s learning. The conversation in the classroom also contains other traces of didactics, e.g. hidden or obvious models for literary analysis. The student’s answer may be an answer to his or her own didactical questions, or his or her way of perceiving the teacher’s didactical questions through the conversation.

To try to uncover the student’s didactical questions in the classroom dialogue, and to be aware of these, may help explain and describe what happens in the classroom, and could be a helpful tool in the reflective teacher’s evaluation of the student’s work.

**Literature**

possible to read an English text about his concept of didactizising (didactization) – and the European concept of didactics in general at the following link: [http://tinyee.umu.se/publications/publication2_1.html](http://tinyee.umu.se/publications/publication2_1.html)
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