

Student teachers' views on digitalisation in preschool

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Abstract

Research aim

In 2017, a Swedish national strategy for the digitalisation of the pre/school system was launched. The concept *adequate digital competence* from the strategy indicates changes over time, meaning a detailed description will not be applicable even in a close future. The revised preschool curriculum (2019) encourages the use of digital tools in children's learning processes, stressing the development of children's digital competence as embedded in the preschool mission. For preschool teachers, this means knowing when - or when not, how and why to use digital tools. Preschool teachers' use of digital tools with the children has a short history, and teachers are found to continuously develop their thoughts about the learning processes digital tools provide in preschool activities (Enochsson & Ribaeus, 2020).

During 2017 to 2021, we followed a group of 15 students during their education from beginners to preschool teachers, where digitalisation was a current topic. The aim with this study is to deepen the understanding of students' developing views of digitalisation in preschool.

Theoretical framework

The study uses curriculum theory, following Linde's (2012) discussion on three arenas in his theoretical framework. The *formulation arena* is about how and by whom steering documents are formulated. On the *transformation arena*, the teachers interpret the curriculum, and the *realisation arena* is about how teachers enact the curriculum. For student teachers and in this study, the transformation arena is the most relevant framework. It has a complement in Enochsson and Ribaeus' (2020) three views on digitalisation in preschool: the use of digital tools in preschool should be very limited; digital tools should be used in the 'right' and organised way, and digital tools can be ubiquitous and used for many things.

Methodology/research design

In the project, we met with the students in about 70 seminars, which were all recorded and transcribed. In this analysis, we chose seminars discussing digitalisation, which means data consists of transcripts from 17 1-hour seminars. The analysis focused on the students' expressed views on digitalisation, from a perspective of the transformation arena in curriculum theory.

Findings

In the beginning of their education several students expressed a negative view on letting children use digital tools, and even talked in terms of addiction. In their last term, the views were much more nuanced, and all of them expressed both benefits and drawbacks of using digital tools in. In all discussions, students only discussed digital tools in general, and not for what purpose they could be used with the children. In terms of the curriculum, the students did not really enter the transformation arena.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

Preschools in the Nordic countries have a somewhat similar situation both regarding how preschools are organised, and also the attitudes and access to digital tools.

References:

- Enochsson, A.-B. & Ribaeus, K. (2020). "Everybody has to get a chance to learn": Democratic aspects of digitalisation in preschool. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01117-6>.
- Linde, G (2012). *Det här ska ni veta! En introduktion till läroplansteori*. Studentlitteratur.