## Codesign for pedagogical play practices in schools

**Research topic/aim**

According to the U.N. Child Convention all children have the right to play. In the context of an increased focus on children’s learnings skills in Nordic schools, there is a risk, however, that play in schools will be reduced to either tools for learning or to a concept of ‘free play’ related to adult-free activities. Yet, at the same time there seems to be an increased number of children that do not thrive in schools. This study explore how pedagogues and researcher by codesigning for play with children in schools can promote play, fun and hope. In addition, there is a special focus on children who needs pedagogical support in order to find unique ways of joining play. The study drags on design research and Nordic pedagogical research, aiming to develop pedagogical practices that can promote play as something that professional pedagogues can act on in order to enhance play participation for all children.

**Theoretical framework**

The theoretical grounding is a mood-perspective theory on play and a concept of play as a specific social order: the order of play (1). Within the order of play, practises and meanings are established in ways where things, identities, words, relations and surroundings are ‘in play’, tested, repeated and changed according to the actions of the participants. The study also includes theories of child perspectives and of pedagogical practices as based on recognition of pedagogical situations (2).

**Methodology**

The study merges a phenomenological codesign-approach with methods and methodologies from Research through Design and Design-based-Research (3). Pivot of the research process are different kinds of experiments: play experiments and play reflection experiments.

**Findings**

The concept of free play seems to inhibit pedagogues in framing for and participating in children’s play. As such some children are excluded from the play community as they need pedagogical support. However, it seems that when pedagogues and children engage themselves in play experiments other understandings of and actions for play emerges. The study thus points at different ways for pedagogues to act in relation to enhance children’s play participation.

**Relevance to Nordic educational research**

In a Nordic pedagogical context play has always been a value. Something to inspire in international research areas on play and education. However, it seems that in order to keep the pedagogical focus on play in frames of education, pedagogues must change their practices. Instead of regarding play as just a value, something that belong to children, it must – also - become the aim of pedagogical actions.

1. Jørgensen & Skovbjerg. (2020). <https://tidsskrift.dk/FPPU/article/view/122507>
2. Van Manen (2012) <https://doi.org/10.29173/pandpr19859>
3. Jørgensen, Skovbjerg & Eriksen (In progress). NORDES conference 2021