

Abstract

Title: Children learn from each other – in preschool and school.

Language: Swedish, with a summary in English

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The aim of the thesis is to study different situations and contexts where children learn from each other and to describe children's verbal expressions about teaching and learning from a peer. Four empirical studies illustrate the aim from different perspectives, by describing children's processes of participation and verbal expressions in interaction and communication with each other.

The theoretical framework rests on the assumption that teaching others and being taught is not merely a matter of younger children being taught by older ones. The decisive factor in the kind of knowledge children acquire or create together is not just a matter of one person being more competent than another, but rather that children have different experiences and ways of dealing with the world around them. In a wider perspective children's experiences, and the varying levels of competence they possess, become knowledge. Communication and a multitude of perspectives are fundamental to teaching and learning.

In three of the studies (I, III & IV) the data consisted of observations based on video recordings and in one study through interviews. The empirical studies are inspired by a sociocultural perspective on learning and development, where learning is an integral part of social practice, and participation in social practices is the primary phenomenon in learning. The studies are also related to the phenomenographic perspective and aim to assess the differences in children's evaluations of what they do when they teach a peer something, and to find qualitatively different states of awareness of what constitutes teaching.

The results show that interactive situations constantly arise between children. The primary goal for the children is to acquire specific knowledge and skills, which lead to knowledge of how to be a participant in the existing peer culture. When children are together they create learning situations by imitating, listening to and observing a peer in group situations. Children are eager to learn from each other in pre-school and school, through play and in recurrent everyday activities. In the thesis the presence of the adult is emphasized as well as his or her awareness of the importance of communication and interaction as prerequisites for solving problems in a group of children. Children shift between different roles and formations when they collaborate and seek answers to something that is unknown to all of them. The children are conscious of the fact that they can learn from their peers as well as teach them different things. Children view each other as sources of knowledge.