

Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande

Musical play
Children interacting with and around
music technology

av

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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Abstract

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This thesis explores young children and music learning in the ecology of music technologies. The research is a part of an EU project called MIROR (Musical Interaction Relying on Reflection) that had the intention to develop software for music learning designed to promote specific cognitive abilities in the field of music improvisation. The overarching aim of this thesis is to explore activities where children (and adults) interact with and around the music technology MIROR Impro, and what this participation allows and supports children to learn, including musical learning. The research focuses on the participants' interaction with each other and in relation to the instrument connected to the software. Participants in the empirical studies are 4-8-year-old (with an emphasis on 6-year-old) children in a Swedish preschool and in an afterschool centre.

The theoretical framework is a sociocultural perspective. A point of departure is the understanding of learning as an act of participation in communities of practice rather than as an individual, cognitive process of internalizing knowledge. According to this perspective, learning is situated in a context and mediated by cultural tools (physical such as musical instruments as well as discursive ones) which are included in the unit of analysis.

The results are presented in four empirical studies. Together, these studies show that despite the technology being launched as self-instructive and work as an 'advanced cognitive tutor', in situations where a more experienced participant is engaged and interact with the children, their opportunities to learn in and about music is enhanced. In these contexts, the teacher is vital to help the children to conceptualize and identify musical possibilities. The make-believe play communicatively frames the activity in a way that creates meaningfulness and helps children make sense. By interacting verbally with the children as a co-creator, the teacher goes into dialogue with them about a musical content and thus provides opportunities for emerging music learning.