Designs for Learning: Focus on Special Needs

# Details

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* Learning
* Literacy and skills
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities

## Sample

1 lower primary school in 1 city in central Sweden: 10 teachers and educators + 1 class.

## Implications For Educators About

* Digital citizenship
* Professional development
* Other

# Abstract

The aim of this article is to contribute knowledge about challenges to literacy development in a digitalised learning environment, with focus on pupils in need of special support. The paper is based on a section of my doctoral thesis (Forsling, 2017), centring on how digital learning environments and situations were designed and orchestrated in a Swedish lower primary school with the aim to provide all pupils, including children in need of special support, with optimal opportunities for literacy development.

The theoretical and methodological framework is grounded in design-oriented theories, with emphasis on how design and orchestration make affordances for learning and meaning-making. The ethnographically inspired study is based on observations and interviews at one school in Sweden. Six teachers, one special needs teacher and one literacy-developer participated in the study.

The results show that the teachers’ intentions with their designs for learning focused on children in need of special support. From a special education perspective, this is a relational and democratic approach – an intention to close gaps. Nevertheless, the results manifest a parallelism where two special education perspectives appeared side by side. On one hand, the teachers’ relational perspective, and on the other hand, the special need teachers’ compensatory perspective.

Another result indicates that the unequal allocation of digital tools displayed the school’s inadequate fulfilment of its mandate to provide equal education: there were differences between the preschool-class and the lower primary classes, and differences between pupils’ home circumstances and the preschool-class.

# Outcome

"[T]eachers’ designs and orchestration stimulated and motivated pupils and provided them with structure and empowerment for development. Teachers’ intentions with their design and orchestration of literacy learning situations using digital tools may be classified into four different categories: intentions regarding participation, motivation, learning and meaning-making. The dominant factor was intentions regarding participation, giving all pupils the opportunity to literacy development in classroom and encompassing different types of equal opportunities.... The challenges for learning were related to both teachers’ and pupils’ circumstances and to organisation. Four kinds of challenges related to design and settings occurred: the unequal allocation of digital tools, the digital challenges, education for pupils in need of special support and policy challenges." (Author, 111-112)