Materializing media literacy in playful ways: Children’s play with digital media in pre-primary class

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During a fieldwork conducted in Danish pre-primary classes in 2014/15, interviews were carried out, and questions were meant to inform the different dimensions of media literacy. One addressed the creating/expressing dimension of media literacy: "What if you were supposed to invent a ‘game’?". The question was not answered by telling about it, but by materializing ‘the game’ (Pahl, 2014). What was at hand in the room came in use to set up the scene for a ‘restaurant-monster-game’. Another addressed the understanding dimension while talking of 'reality' online and offline, materialized as playing the game Fifa and playing soccer in a football club. Danish schools are obliged to work ‘in playful ways’ with digital media per the demands in the description of the curricula for pre-primary education. The paper addresses ‘the playful ways’ from a child perspective, and the two above mentioned examples will be analyzed comparatively with in-school practices with digital media to investigate: what can be gained by materializing media literacy in ‘playful ways’? The key concepts are play and media literacy. The paper’s take on play is inspired by the paradigmatic change towards a participatory and child oriented scientific position (Burn & Richards, 2014), where play depends on participation, skills, and performance. The divergent "what-if’ question ignites imagination and creativity without any other purpose but play (Skovbjerg, 2017; Sutton-Smith, 1997). The understanding of media literacy is rooted in a socio-cultural participation-position, and adapted to methodological use by the trichotomy that implies having access to media, understanding media, and creating/expressing oneself using media. The results suggest the importance of creating spaces/spielraum for play using digital media in pre-primary education (Ackerberg, 2013).


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