Digital Practices in the Kindergarten

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As the newly published report from The Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education on toddlers’ digital universe shows (Guðmundsdóttir and Hardersen 2012), there is a great variety of access and use of digital devices among young children, and many parents are eager to provide the newest tools for their children. Newspaper articles and research papers display the educational potential of the newest technology, as well as its impact on the children’s social skills, play skills, language skills, its role in negotiation and cooperation and of course, the development of digital competence. With this positive scenario in mind, we turn our attention to a few aspects of digital practices in the kindergarten: implementation, the role of tablet computers for literacy and language learning, the building of digital practices amongst early years practitioners, and the practice of using children and parents as co-researchers to document children’s everyday practices.

However, the implementation of digital technologies in the kindergarten is not in proportion to the interest and open-mindedness parents and enthusiasts in the field are exponents for. In the present volume, the premier and longtime exponent of ICT in the kindergarten, Nina Bølgan, shares her insight into the slow process of implementing digital tools in the kindergarten, and providing pre-school teachers with competences and insight into how new technologies impact pedagogical processes.

In the first of three peer-reviewed articles, Sandvik, Smordal and Østerud explore the role of a tablet computer (the Apple iPad) and a shared display as extensions of a practitioner’s repertoire for literacy practices and language learning in a multicultural kindergarten. By focusing on the conversations around the tablet computers and the use of two selected apps, the types of talk are seen in relation to the level of structure in the apps.

In the next article, Lafton questions how early years practitioners build, shape and maintain their digital practices through talk and action. She assumes that the participants construct and develop knowledge together, and promotes the idea that analysts have to look beyond the social situated idea of knowledge building, and include multiple elements in analyses of the field digital practice in kindergarten, with an emphasis on discourse and materiality as important elements in constructing a dynamic context model as a representation of the field digital practice.

In the last of the peer reviewed articles, Aarsand, based on data from two studies, addresses the practice of using participants – here children and parents – as co-researchers to document children’s
everyday practices. As knowledge producers the analysts need to be able to show what, how and why data and knowledge are produced, and thereby the role of the context must be considered when recordings are done by children and parents with an absent researcher.

The research presented in this special issue of the Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy is framed by an interest in the ways in which the future kindergarten classroom can utilize new technology, and how practitioners can best provide opportunities for children to engage in useful and purposeful language and literacy interactions. Further research is needed, and as the editor of this volume of the NDJL, I will argue for a focus on how technology for emergent literacy, both in the children’s first and second languages, can be designed.

References