JYX JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Szabó, Tamás Péter

Title: Learning environments : Finnish approaches and practices

Year: 2019

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2019 University of Jyväskylä, “Everyday Creativity” Consortium

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en

Please cite the original version:

Szabó, T. P. (2019). Learning environments : Finnish approaches and practices. In T. P. Szabó, K. Fenyvesi, G. Soundararaj, & T. Kangasvieri (Eds.), Everyday Creativity : Boosting creative resources with Finnish models of Education. Teachers' Handbook. Jyväskylän yliopisto. https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/66599

6. Learning environments: Finnish approaches and practices

Postdoctoral Researcher and Adjunct Professor
Tamás Péter Szabó (Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä)

Goal

The goal of this workshop was to help teachers think about the impact of physical environments on learning and to further build their identity as designers. The workshop also shared some principles and practices of Finnish education with regards to learning environments.

Background

Experiences with different learning environments are crucial in human learning. When exploring new sites, using tools or doing whatever activity, people interact with their material environment and other people in various ways. In such interactions, people learn about the surrounding world and themselves at the same time, and

> "the knowledge, skill and confidence to use the environment to carry out one's own goals and to enrich one's experience"

University of Jyväskylä Teacher Training School

build a so-called environmental competence which means "the knowledge, skill and confidence to use the environment to carry out one's own goals and to enrich one's experience" (Hart 1979: 344).

According to the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (FNCC 2016: Chapter 3.4), "learning environments must offer possibilities for creative solutions and the exploration of phenomenon from different perspectives". Further, the core curriculum emphasizes that students should take part in developing their learning environments, and their individual needs should be taken into account in the design process (FNCC 2016: Chapter 3.4). In accordance with these principles, it is now common in Finland to organize workshops with the participation of students, parents, teachers, architects and interior designers when a new kindergarten or school is being planned, or when a substantial re-design process is launched. For example, the Teacher Training School of the University of Jyväskylä recently organized a multidisciplinary project involving interaction, ICT, arts, culture, literacy and work life skills to renew the Science classroom and the nearby corridor. The students prepared plans and voted for their preferred versions. The most popular plans were finalized by professionals, and a company re-furnished the classroom and the corridor (Mäkelä 2018).

organize workshops with the participation of students, parents, teachers, architects and interior designers when a new kindergarten or school is being planned

Learning environments can be found and created everywhere. School buildings and classrooms, museums and libraries are custom-designed learning environments (Szabó 2015), but any environment can offer learning opportunities; for example, one can learn languages on the street, reading signs (Sayer 2009), or students can solve various tasks while they move in natural and built environments and use various digital tools (Zheng et al. 2018).

any environment can offer learning opportunities

Activities

Learning environments are also places of emotions, identity and belonging. Interaction taking place in various environments influence how we think about them and how we relate to them. The next activity helps you think about your own relationship to school environments.

Viitaniemi School

MY NOTES

1.

Imagine you are again a primary school pupil in the school of your childhood. Close your eyes and recall your memories.

- How do you feel?
- Where are you? What do you see around you?
- What can you hear?
- Are there any particular scents that you can smell?
- What do you do? What do others do?
- Are there particularly important objects, signs, learning materials, etc. that you see and/or use?

Share your time travelling experience with somebody (a colleague, a friend, a family member, etc.).

2.

Now come back to the present: to your school and classroom(s) in which you teach.

- What feels/looks similar to what you have just recalled?
- What feels/looks different? What is the difference?
- What has been your role in making that difference?
- Is there anything that would need to be changed?

To develop your thoughts further, the freely available *Design Thinking for Educators* toolkit (https://designthinkingforeducators.com/) as well as

the tasks and teachers' stories in Module 4 help you plan and implement change in learning environments in which / with which you work.

References

FNCC = Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014. Helsinki: Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016.

Hart, R. (1979). *Children's experience of place.* New York: Irvington Publishers.

Mäkelä, T. (2018). *A design framework and principles for co-designing learning environments fostering learning and wellbeing.* PhD dissertation, University of Jyväskylä.

Sayer, P. (2009). Using the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource. *ELT Journal* 64(2), 143–154.

Szabó, T. P. (2015). The management of diversity in schoolscapes: an analysis of Hungarian practices. *Apples: Journal of Applied Language Studies,* 9(1), 23–51.

Zheng, D., Yang, L., Lambert, A., Aitao, L., Jared, T. & Holden, D. (2018) An ecological community becoming: Language learning as first-order experiencing with place and mobile technologies. *Linguistics and Education,* (44), 45–57.