

The Faculty of Education and Society, Malmö University, Malmö

Exploring ways of empowering pupils in physical education through circus

An action research project

Matilda Lindberg



Academic thesis

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Abstract <p>The empowerment of children is emphasized in a variety of contexts. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates opportunities for children to be heard and to express their opinions, and the Swedish compulsory school curriculum advocates democratic teaching methods. Despite this, research shows that children's influence in school remains limited and that democratic ways of working are particularly lacking in physical education. Therefore, this study proposes changes to physical education. The aim of this action research project was to explore ways of empowering pupils in physical education. The study involves ten-year-old children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, their physical education teacher, and a teacher-researcher. The study is at the intersection of three different fields in relation to physical education: influence, language, and creativity. Exploratory circus activities are used as a means to empower pupils and challenge the conventional structure of the subject.</p> <p>The study offers multiple contributions, such as practical suggestions for empowering pupils in physical education and the complex interplay between theory and practice. The findings show that physical education can serve as a platform for children to be creative, express themselves in a variety of ways, and exert influence. However, the findings reveal that empowering pupils can be a challenging process for a teacher because of prevailing norms in school, ingrained teaching habits, and both the teacher's and pupils' previous experiences and preconceptions of what education, and physical education in particular, entails. Finding ways to empower pupils means finding ways for teachers to share power equitably with pupils. Teaching and learning circus in physical education contributes significantly to critical thinking and acting upon how education is constructed and conducted.</p>		
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