Exploring children’s agency in a designed atelier: A socio-material perspective

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This paper aimed to explore the interplay between the socio-material configuration of a designed atelier and children’s agency. Ateliers were designed for and utilized by children aged 8–11 years. The material properties of the atelier and the expressions of agency are analyzed as interdependent rather than dualistic elements. In this study, agency was distributed and emerged in relation to the socio-material environment. The paper concluded with reflections about pedagogical and research implications to adopt a socio-material approach.

Key words: socio-material perspective, children agency, designed atelier

Highlights:

• Active explorations of materials were embedded in the socio-material configurations.
• It was necessary to take the whole dialogical relationship into account.
• Learning was closely interdependent to the socio-material network.

In recent years, a number of educational researchers have engaged with socio-material approaches. Socio-material approaches “interrupt understandings of knowledge, learning and education as solely social or personal processes and insist upon attending to the material that is enmeshed with the social, technical and human” (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011, p. 3).

In educational research, Sørensen (2009) has argued that there is a “blindness toward the question of how educational practice is affected by materials” (p. 2). Research in work-related learning and children’s education draws upon cultural-historical activity theory “to understand the dynamics of

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activity and mediation in educational process and the effects of socio-material connection and misconnections” (Fenwick et al., 2011, p. 93). In this sense, the actor-network theory shows how entities that we commonly work with are in fact assemblages of a myriad of things in connection with other human and non-human things (Latour, 1994, 2005). Barad and colleagues (Barad, 2003, 2007; Barad & Nelson, 1996) have shown how these entities become linked through what they call “intra-actions”. “Matters comes to matter through the iterative intra activity of the world in its becoming” (Barad, 2003, p. 823). Lawn and Grosvenor (2005) highlighted the relevance of the material cultures of schooling in order to unpack “the ways in which class and school routines bound together objects and actions” (p. 13).

More recently, Kontopodis and Perret-Clermont (2016) have shown how “teaching, learning, and development take place on various levels and across a wide range of interrelated socio-material orderings” (p. 9). They implied the notion of socio-material orderings, which refers to semiotic and to material relations, and to the interrelations between materiality and sociality (Kontopodis, 2007; Latour, 2005; Law & Mol, 1995).

Based on the assumption that “it is through the being-together of things that actions including those identified as learning become possible” (Fenwick et al., 2011, p. 6). In this paper, I explore the socio-material configuration of a designed atelier, and the emerged expressions of agency, not as dualistic elements but by taking in account their interplay. The theoretical grounding of the key concepts adopted in the study is introduced before presenting my research design.

**Affordance properties of a child’s environment**

Hellpach’s essay *Psychologie der Umwelt* (1924) is considered the starting point for the concept of environmental psychology. In his studies, the environment, according to the influence it has on people, can be classified into: a natural environment, a social environment, and a historical-cultural environment (Hellpach, 1911, 1924). In the same period, another German scholar, Martha Muchow was a pioneer in analyzing environments through the eyes of children. She and her brother (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015) extensively explored the notion of life space (Lewin, 1936) by studying the personal life space of children growing up in Hamburg in the period between the two World Wars. Muchow introduced three perspectives by combining various empirical methods (Muchow & Muchow, 1935/2015): a) *The space in which the urban child lives*. Children were provided with ordinary maps of Hamburg, and were invited to mark with different colors the places where they usually live; b) *The space that the child experiences*. Children were questioned in detail about what, when and where they usually played, and what these places meant to them; c) *The space that the child lives*. This was the central part of her research. The analysis was based
on three kinds of observation methods. The main aim was “to infer from the behavior of the children and from their manner of interacting with circumstances of the urban world how they transform urban space by living it” (Muchow & Muchow, 1935/2015, p. 65).

As the Gibsons highlighted later (1986, 1992), to perceive an affordance is to detect an environmental property that provides possibilities for action. Gibson points out that: “the reciprocity of organism and environment and the reciprocity of perception and action are both reflected in the concept of affordance” (Gibson, 2000, p. 295). So exploratory activity facilities and constraints perpetual learning (Adolph & Kretch, 2015).

Based on these assumptions, Heft (1988) applied an affordance perspective to a pre-existing detailed record of a day in the life of a nine-year-old boy. “The total list of supportive environmental features was then categorized according to common actions. In other words, the environmental features were clustered as to their affordance properties” (Heft, 2010, p. 20).

Kyttä enlarged Heft’s taxonomy with affordances for sociality (Kyttä, 2002, 2006). She first conducted empirical studies about the children’s outdoor environments in communities with several levels of urbanization: a rural village in Belarus and an urban environment in Helsinki (Kyttä, 2002). In the second instance, she proposed a child-friendly environment known as a “Bullerby model” (whose name is taken from the Noisy Village books by Astrid Lindgren), in which “according to the ideal circumstances children enjoy sufficient possibilities to move around independently in the environment and to perceive the environment as a rich source of affordances” (Kyttä, 2006, p. 141).

Based on their research of an adolescent’s environmental space in the south of England, Clark and Uzzell (2002, 2006) conceptualized environment in terms of mutual physical and social affordances by incorporating social context and social behavior in their taxonomy. “The physical aspects of the environment are the ‘building blocks’ of the functional affordances of people’s settings such as the surfaces, greenery, and terrain. Likewise, the presence of other people can also be thought of in terms of ‘building blocks’ – social knowledge, observed behavior, expressed attitudes, and indigenous culture. All provide affordances, out of which people understand, make sense of and then act in and upon their world” (Clark & Uzzell, 2006, p. 179). In this sense, Linell (2009) highlights that “environments are both (more and less) material, and they are inscribed with meaning affordances that have been socially constructed over time” (p. 60). According to dialogism, we are necessarily confronted with a social practice wherein actors interact and communicate, and in which the individual contributions cannot be understood in isolation from each other (Rainio, 2008, p. 209).

In the educational field, Bruner (2003) described an appropriate environment for young children as: “a place where the young discover the uses of mind, imagination, materials, and learn the power of doing things together” (p. 137). In his work, Martin (2006) pointed out that “the physical
environment arranged by the teacher provides a learning setting and at the same time acts as participant in teaching and learning” (p. 92–93). In breaking away from traditional pedagogical practices, Montessori developed teaching tools in her Children’s House (*Casa dei bambini*) that encouraged learners to explore their environments through self-directed and co-operative learning activities (Montessori, 1965). The Reggio Emilia approach conceived the environment as being an integral part of the creation process (Edwards, 2003; Malaguzzi, 1998). In this sense, the founder Malaguzzi introduced the atelier in pre-schools of Reggio as “a place for manipulating or experimenting with separate or combined visual languages, either in isolation or in combination with the verbal one” (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 64). The ateliers were conceived as spaces rich in materials, with tools present in and out the classroom.

Based on this, I designed five Reggio-inspired ateliers. The main aim was to explore the interaction between socio-material configuration and expressions of children’s agency.

**Agency: a socio-cultural definition**

In socio-cultural terms, agency cannot just be defined as a primary characteristic of an individual, but it should be considered in relation to the socio-cultural contexts in which it is enacted (Rajala, Martin, & Kumpulainen, 2016). In this paper, I consider agency as a dynamic process that is constructed relationally (Edwards, 2009; Edwards & D’arcy, 2004; Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Hilppö, & Mikkola, 2014; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011) and mediated by discourse and practical tools (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993). Agency is so conceived, as Ahearn (2001) stated, as: “a socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (p. 112). Moreover, Esser, Baader, Betz, and Hungerland (2016) highlighted that: “agency is produced in conjunction with a whole network of different human and non-human actors and is distributed among these” (p. 9).

In this regard, it is not context-free (Kontopodis, 2012) but “learning and meaning-making are embedded in social and material practices” (Nordtømme, 2012, p. 320). Based on these views, I define agency as the dynamic capacity of people to act in relation to the heterogeneity of the actors. This definition is closely connected with Fenwick and colleagues’ (2011) studies, according to whom, “agency is not an essential property of one actor but emerges through micro-negotiations at the various nodes connecting entities” (p. 112). It is also linked to the notion of relational agency (Edwards & D’Arcy, 2004; Edwards & Kinti, 2010; Edwards & Mackenzie, 2005), which is defined as “an ability to seek out and use the support of others as resources for action and equally to be able to respond to the need for support from others” (Edwards & D’Arcy, 2004, p. 150). The definition also has some resonance with Billet’s (2006) theory of relational interdependency, in which he examines the interactions between individuals’ intentional action and workplace practices.
Method

Atelier sites

Data were collected from 2014 to 2015. During this period, I designed and utilized five ateliers for children aged 8–11 years. Each atelier was organized with different partners (see Table 1) and included groups of 8–13 children. One atelier was set up in a primary school class in collaboration with parents and a teacher. 7 Three ateliers were organized in a class of our department, and one atelier involved the room of a summer camp in Neuchâtel. The ateliers were organized outside of the traditional school setting in order to observe whether the provision of dedicated spaces for the exploration of materials created a fresh learning zone “where there was more freedom of movements of learners and teachers and new pathways of participation available” (Edwards & D’Arcy, 2004, p. 153).

Table 1
Summary of the atelier collaborators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atelier</th>
<th>Collaborators</th>
<th>Times and site</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atelier 1 (2014)</td>
<td>Primary School in Neuchâtel (Switzerland), the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and the Department of Family and Community Service of the Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland)</td>
<td>2 half days In a primary school class, outside of school time</td>
<td>13 Parents’s classmates teacher, 2 researchers 13 classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atelier 2 (2014)</td>
<td>Career Service at the University of Neuchâtel</td>
<td>1 half day In a specially designed classroom in our department</td>
<td>Researchers 10 children (not knowing each other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atelier 3 (2014)</td>
<td>Summer camp at Neuchâtel</td>
<td>2 half days In a specially designed classroom at the camp</td>
<td>Researchers 8 children (not knowing each other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atelier 4 (2015)</td>
<td>Career Service at the University of Neuchâtel</td>
<td>1 half day In a specially designed classroom in our department</td>
<td>Researchers 10 children (not knowing each other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atelier 5 (2015)</td>
<td>An association, which promotes activities aimed at raising children’s consciousness regarding environmental issues</td>
<td>1 half day In a specially designed classroom in our department</td>
<td>Researchers 10 children (not knowing each other)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atelier setup

The atelier settings were designed to facilitate the movement and exchange of children. As underlined by Lewin (1936), of particular importance are: “the nature and the extent of what is allowed to him and what his own abilities permit him to do” (p. 44). In line with this, Valsiner (1987) stated that “settings as structured social situations with elaborate scripts for action are socially constructed cultural means for people to lead their lives, rather than rules given to them by some external agent” (p. 185). Correspondingly, Martin’s (2006) research focused on the

7 Elsewhere I used this case study to analyze family and school inter-contextual relationships in terms of dynamic systems of interaction (Cattaruzza, Iannaccone, & Arcidiacono, in press).
impact of the classroom environment on performance by examining the relationship between the physical setting and the behavior of teacher and students (see also Hathaway, 1995).

Baucal (2012) highlighted the difference between a fixed and flexible classroom design. In a fixed arrangement, “we can expect that the dominant activity for teachers is giving lectures, and the dominant activity of students is listening” (p. 76). On the contrary, in a flexible arrangement where several kinds of learning activities can be easily performed, “it might be assumed that students and teachers develop different kinds of identities, competences, attitudes” (Baucal, 2012, p. 76). Based on this, I adopted a flexible arrangement when designing the ateliers, in which the presence of adjustable tables and materials, with a circle arrangement and detached objects, urged dyad or triad work groups to move and recreate the space for free movement according to their preferences.

“What is important is that children can freely handle and benefit from collections and contribute to them. They can touch them, arrange them in various ways and play with them” (DiBello & Ashelman, 2010, p. 43). Recyclable materials were also employed. Several areas were set up for different activities: a table placed in the center of the atelier was filled with a variety of natural and recyclable materials (see Figure 1 and Table 2). At the beginning of each atelier session, we asked participants to create different kinds of transportation using the materials (ex: wood, plastic, paper) found on the tables. Materials varied in color, texture, and piece size. The classrooms chosen for the five ateliers had two luminous windows and a big transparent door to capture both natural and artificial light. The colored recyclable materials, of various sizes, were put in the center of the room in order to benefit from the best light. The children did not receive any further details or constraints: they were free to choose their materials, adopt their own working technique, and manage their time as they wished. The children worked simultaneously in four self-selected dyad or triad groups in the same room.

The room was designed and equipped by the researchers, taking in account the Reggio-inspired design principles.8

Figure 1. Examples of natural /or recyclable materials used in the five ateliers.

8 Apps and MacDonald (2012, p. 50) summarized these principles as follows: 1) To create a community focus, in order to foster relationships, communication, and curriculum development; 2) To use transparency in the environment through indirect and natural lighting, and transparent materials; 3) To include natural and authentic materials; 4) To bring the outside into the classroom in order to create areas of natural beauty; 5) To provide dedicated spaces, in order to minimize transitions and allow children’s building and exploration to continue over a sustained period; 6) To complete pedagogical documentation in order to capture children’s messages about their classroom environment, and understand their learning experiences and theories.
Table 2
*List of materials used in the five ateliers (adapted from Ferrari & Giacopini, 2005)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural materials</th>
<th>Small tree branches, sea shells</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Office packs, colored gift packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordage</td>
<td>Colored strings, laces, fishing lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic</td>
<td>Tubes, boxes, lids, glass, milk bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polystyrene</td>
<td>Food packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food containers</td>
<td>Egg containers, paper takeout containers, takeaway boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly materials</td>
<td>Modeling materials, glue, adhesives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data collection**

During the activities, as a researcher, I could actively observe the children’s attitudes, join groups of children when they called me, have short spontaneous conversations with them, or just stay nearby.

Data collection for this study primarily consisted of: 1) Observations and field notes; 2) Videotapes of five ateliers (around 15 hours of footage). For each atelier, fixed cameras on tripods were installed in each corner of the room. Each camera was directed on a small group; 3) Photographs of the drawing, artwork, or other creations produced during the atelier session.

**Data analysis**

As stated by Clark and Uzzell (2006), “individuals perceive the environment holistically and do not perceive or utilize social and physical aspects of the environment separately and in isolation from each other” (p. 179). In line with this idea, I analyzed the physical affordances and the expression of agency not as dualistic elements of the atelier, but as interdependent factors. This analysis involved four steps: 1) First, a global viewing of video data recordings was conducted; 2) Second, I identified all the episodes in which participants interacted with others, materials, and environments. As my focus was on the interactions between the socio-material environment and the participants, I excluded the data in which participants were passive. Nevertheless, as Rainio (2008) said, “being passive and responsive can produce some agency for the participant in the context of their being students at school” (p. 124); 3) Third, I employed, as units of analysis, verbal and non-verbal sequences for key episodes in which expressions of agency emerged in relation to material properties; 4) Fourth, I analyzed these key episodes, not as separate elements, but as embedded within the socio-material configuration.

**Results and discussion**

As Eckhoff and Spearman (2009) stated, “through active exploration with objects, children construct knowledge about their environment and the objects within that environment” (p. 12). According to that, video analysis showed that the children’s expressions of agency emerged in relation to two interlinked aspects: a) active exploration of the materials (colored materials of various sizes and transparency) and b) the socio-material configuration of
the atelier (transparency, circle seating arrangement, adjustable tables, and materials etc.). I selected 12 demonstrative excerpts of interactions (Table 3). Conversations were transcribed and translated from French into English. In most cases, the following five combinations of expressions of agency emerged: a) Criticizing the current way of working, allowing the participants to identify the problem. This expression of agency emerges by observing and manipulating materials (excerpt 1); b) Supporting and encouraging each other. This support manifests in different ways, by: minimizing the problem (excerpts 2 and 3), asking for an explanation of the current way of working (excerpt 4), and physically changing their position. For example, in this latter case, Albert turned his chair in order to observe Luc’s work, and when he realized that Luc was having difficulty pasting a piece of plastic, he moved his chair in order to be closer to him and suggested a solution (excerpt 12); c) Explicating. Two temporal dimensions emerged: past and present. In the first case, Hugo evoked his past experience in order to explain his point of view concerning the number of turbines to add to their plane (excerpt 5). In the second case, the property of the piece of wood (excerpt 6) and a piece of plastic (excerpt 7) currently used supported the participants’ suggestions; d) Envisioning is the capacity to envisage ideas and make subsequent suggestions in order to resolve a problem (excerpts 8 and 9) or to imagine a creative solution (e.g., the eggs box mask became a rabbit face; excerpt 10); e) Resisting involves imposing a personal view on the current activity. We can see, for example, how Luc presented the solution to Gaston by altering the spatial arrangement and manipulating the materials (excerpt 11). Luc was inspired by another group situated in front of him and suggested adopting the same solution (excerpt 11). Gaston, in one instance, moves to the other table to verify if the information was accurate; in another instance, he simply turned his chair to observe another way of working (excerpt 11).

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9 These expressions resonate with Engeström’s (2011) accounts of participants’ emerging transformative agency (see also Haapasaari, Engeström, & Kerosuo, 2016). However, in their study, the development of participant’s transformative agency was analyzed in the form of a Change Laboratory (CL) regularly conducted in the workplace. In this context, participants together with a researcher analyze work practices and seek possibilities for collective action in order to accomplish systematic change (Engeström & Sannino, 2010).
Table 3  
*Expressions of agency that emerged*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical aspects of the atelier</th>
<th>Affordances</th>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Analytical Description</th>
<th>Demonstrative excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Colored materials of various sizes and transparency | Manipulating | Criticizing | Identifying the problem with the current way of working | Manipulating a piece of paper | 1. Élodie and Katie, atelier 3:  
Élodie: “The problem is that it comes off easily” (indicating and manipulating a piece of paper that she used to build a wheel)  
Katie: “Actually, we don’t know how to make a wheel...” |
| | | Supporting | Minimizing problems | Asking for explanation | Materials’ properties | 2. Maggie and Katie, atelier 5:  
Maggie: “It (the paper wheel) doesn’t turn anyway!”  
Katie: “Actually we don’t care..., it does not stand upright anyway”@ |
| | | | | | 3. Odel and Élodie, atelier 3:  
Odel: “Oh no, I’m wrong...” (after breaking the piece of plastic used to build a window)  
Élodie: “Don’t worry, there’s another window” (indicating another piece of plastic) |
| | | | | | 4. Élodie and Odel, atelier 3:  
Élodie: “Why are you using a rubber band?”  
Odel: “Why not?”  
Élodie: “Mhm” |
| | | Explicating | Evoking past experience | Explicating their point of view | Manipulating a piece of wood or sponge | 5. Élodie, Hugo and Odel, atelier 3:  
Élodie: “On the airplane, there’s just one (turbine)” (she indicates the piece of plastic)  
Hugo: “No, I took the airplane, I saw many...”  
Odel: “Yes, there are many (turbines) but not on the same side” (he takes the piece of plastic to put it on the other side) |
| | | | | | 6. Luc and Jean, atelier 4:  
Luc: “It’s soft (a piece of wood), you can cut with your hands! It’s easier”  
Jean: “Ah. (…) I try” (he touches the wood piece) |
| | | | | | 7. Nicolas and Étienne, atelier 2:  
Nicolas: “We can take this piece of plastic, it could be better than a piece of sponge”  
Étienne: “But the piece of plastic is more solid”  
Nicolas: “Yes, but also the sponge piece is solid. Touch it” (he gives him the piece)  
Étienne: (he touches it) “Ok, pick (it) over there! (he points to a big piece of sponge on the other table)” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordances</th>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Analytical Description</th>
<th>Demonstrative excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colored materials of various sizes and transparency</td>
<td>Pointing</td>
<td><strong>Envisioning</strong></td>
<td>Oriented suggestions</td>
<td>Resolving problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle arrangements</td>
<td>Moving</td>
<td><strong>Resisting</strong></td>
<td>Imposing personal view</td>
<td>Observing other group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustable table and chairs</td>
<td>Detachable materials</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

8. **Maggie and Katie, atelier 4:**
Maggie: “It doesn’t move!”
Katie: “Then, we can put two things here (indicating a point in the middle of the bottle) and we can make a hole with this (indicating a piece of paper). What do you think?”

9. **Odel and Hugo, atelier 3:**
Odel: “And then, what can we do with this (the airplane)?”
Hugo: “We can throw it from the window”@@

10. **Maggie and Katie, atelier 5:**
Maggie: “Look through it (a transparent box of eggs)”
Katie: (Katie put the box of eggs on her face)
Maggie: “Oh! You are a rabbit!”

11. **Luc and Gaston, atelier 4:**
Luc: (While he is observing the group in front of him) “I had another idea Gaston! We can do more”
Gaston: “More?”
Luc: “Yes, higher!”
Gaston: “Are you joking?”
Luc: “Why?”
Gaston: “It’s too big!”
Luc: “But ... let’s see them! (He points to the other group) We can do it!”
Gaston: (He turns his chair to better observe the other group)
Luc: “Let’s do!” (He moves to them)

12. **Albert and Luc, atelier 4:**
(Albert has some difficulty in pasting a piece of plastic. At the same time, Albert, a participant of another group, moves his chair to observe Luc’s work)
Albert: “What are you trying to do? This one?” (He points to the drawing on the table)
Luc: “Yes (…)”
Albert: “You can use an elastic band (…). It could be easier(…)” (He moves the chair in order to show how)
Luc: “Mhmm (…”)

The excerpts presented are taken from recorded audiotapes and transcribed discussions between children, which took place in the work groups. Pseudonyms are used for children to maintain their anonymity. @ = indicates laughter; (text) = author’s comments; (...) = pause.
Further research and conclusion

The data analysis shows that five expressions of agency emerged in the children during the atelier, and these are embedded in the socio-material configurations. In this sense, it was necessary to take the whole dialogical relationship into account. I had to consider not only how the socio-material configuration of the environment shaped the children’s agency, but also how the children influenced the socio-material configuration in bilateral exchanges in what Siry, Wilmes, and Haus (2016) called “the dance of agency and structure” (p. 16).

The results are in line with Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, and Paloniemi (2013), who showed that the relationship between the social environment and the individual can be understood as exclusively or inclusively distinct. If the individual and socio-material environment are understood as being exclusively distinct, this implies that socio-material environments can be reduced to variables that impact on individual action. If the socio-material environment and individual agency are seen as joined, this implies they can be investigated as closely interdependent. I suggest to approach agency not as an abstract phenomenon, but interrelated to heterogeneous network. In this sense, taken as a whole, the agencies that emerge during the atelier are located in space and time and in relation to specific materials and arrangement (Fenwick et al., 2011; Kontopodis, 2012). Work by Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) suggests that agency can be studied by focusing on distributed action among the participants and, importantly, their socio-material environment.

We can summarize three pedagogical and research implications that emerge from this interplay between individuals and their socio-material environment. First, the creation of an open-ended design involves changes in the positions of children considered as accountable actors (Greeno, 2006; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). The work of Muchow highlighted that “all stories we tell about children are stories told by adults researchers” (Mey, 2015, p. 246). In order to further elucidate the relationship within the socio-material environment, access to the participants’ experience of the activity would be an important resource for future learning research (Iannaccone & Cattaruzza, 2015; Mouchet & Cattaruzza, 2015). In line with recent studies on children’s perspectives from a socio-cultural approach (Hilppö, Lipponen, Kumpulainen, & Virlander, 2016), further research could also set out to examine how we gain access to the children’s and teacher’s experiences.

Second, as Mason (2002) underlined in his research, noticing events is a fundamental element of expertise for teacher education. In line with that, Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) analyzed how the identification of an interaction episode in which agency emerges has pedagogical potential for teacher education and teacher professional development. I argue that there is an urgent need to encourage professional competence in this area in future, new teachers; on the assumption that as Edwards and d’Arcy (2004) stressed, teaching practice is more than an ability to represent a curriculum.
Third, as we have seen, agency is not individualistic, but emerges in relation to the socio-material network. In this sense, “teaching and learning cannot be identified separately from the network through which they are themselves enacted” (Fenwick et al., 2011, p. 6). Hence, teacher practices and children’s engagement need to be studied not as isolated entities but by taking into account the network of connections in which they are embedded. While the atelier was fruitful for a first exploration of the dynamic networks and elucidated the potential of the socio-material enactments, we acknowledge a need for future studies in and out school settings, to elaborate further the socio-material perspectives in the educational researches.

References


EXPLORING CHILDREN’S AGENCY IN A DESIGNED ATELIER:
A SOCIO-MATERIAL PERSPECTIVE

Cilj ovog rada je da se ispita međusobni odnos između socio-materijalne konfiguracije namenski osmišljenog prostora i dečije delatnosti (agentnosti). Prostori su bili namenski osmišljeni i koristila su ih deci od 8–11 godina starosti. Materijalna svojstva prostora i manifestacije delatnosti (agentnosti) su analizirane kao međuzavisni, a ne kao dualni elementi. U ovom istraživanju, delatnost (agentnost) je bila podeljena i javljala se u odnosu na socio-materijalnu okolinu. Rad se završava razmišljanjima o pedagoškim i istraživačkim implikacijama koje se odnose na usvajanje socio-materijalnog pristupa.

**Ključne reči:** socio-materijalna perspektiva, dečija delatnost (agentnost), namenski osmišljen prostor

**Istraživanje dečije delatnosti (agentnosti) u namenski osmišljenom prostoru: socio-materijalna perspektiva**

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