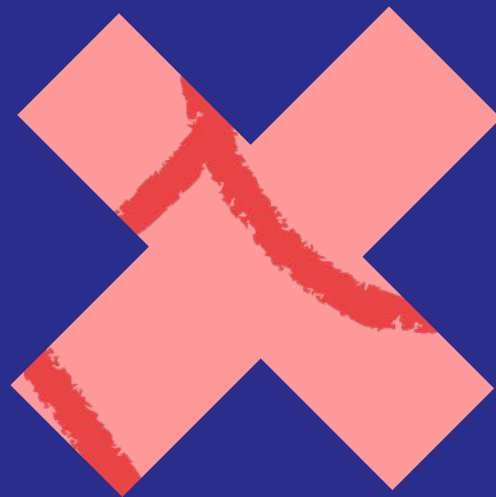
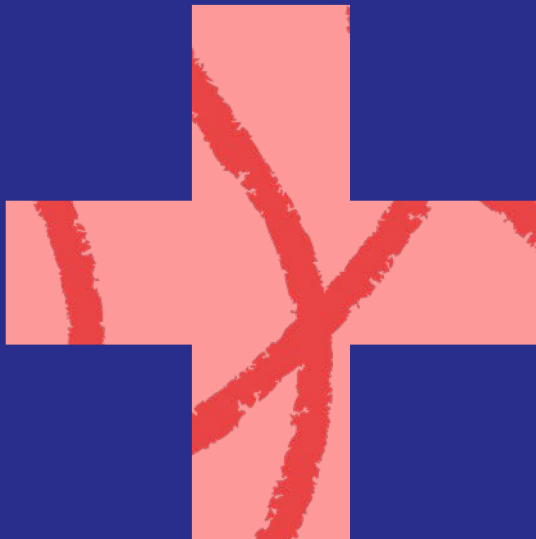
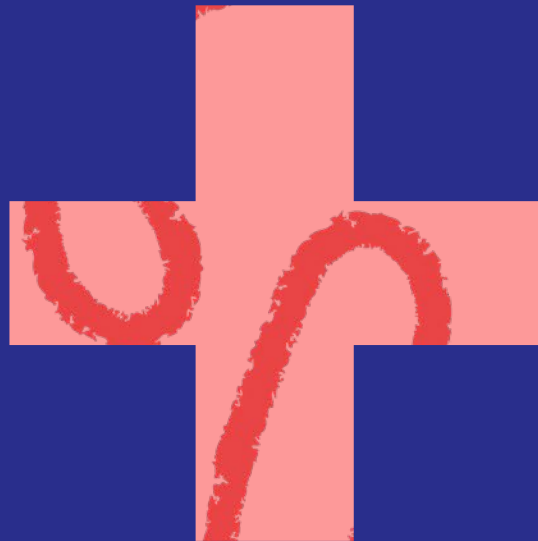


PlayBook 3



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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	2
<i>Laust Joen Jakobsen, Head of Programme</i>	
<i>Welcome to PlayBook 3</i>	4
<i>Mette Lyager and Tobias Heiberg, Programme Directors</i>	
<i>Exploratory educational development</i>	6
<i>Mette Lyager and Tobias Heiberg, Programme Directors</i>	
<i>A didactic basis for playful approaches to learning</i>	12
<i>Mette Lyager and Tobias Heiberg, Programme Directors</i>	
<i>Examples of playful teaching</i>	20
<i>Playful aspects of didactic designs: A play quality analysis</i>	26
<i>Helle Marie Skovbjerg, Head of Research, and Helle Hovgaard Jørgensen, Senior Researcher</i>	
<i>Playful approaches increase engagement, but has the teaching actually become more playful?</i>	34
<i>Lasse Lykke Rørbæk, ph.d. and Project Manager, Rambøll Management Consulting</i>	
<i>Focus on student voices</i>	38
<i>See you in 2023</i>	40
<i>Mette Lyager og Tobias Heiberg, Programme Directors</i>	



Preface

There has long been necessary increased focus on the serious challenges faced by our welfare society, not least in relation to the continuous decline in applications for admission to the largest professional bachelor programmes in social education, teacher education and nursing. The framework conditions for the professions (such as the effect of staffing levels and pay and working conditions on quality) have been and remain a central point of focus. Another important item on the agenda is structural changes, with a debate on the need for increased self-determination in the primary and lower secondary school system. Other key issues are the ongoing discussions of a new teacher education programme with focus on increased practice orientation as well as a revised social education programme.

The development becomes particularly alarming when studies show an increase in the number of children and adolescents who are not thriving. This calls for joint and cohesive initiatives from the Danish Parliament, municipalities and regions, higher educational establishments, schools and daycare centres, in the treatment system and in the homes.

Playful Learning is based on an ambition to use the qualities of play in pedagogical and didactic practices

in daycare centres and schools. The first phase has been aimed at the social education and teacher education programmes as the most natural starting point for establishing an exploratorium, where diverse proposals for playful approaches to development and learning have been studied and developed.

This has not created a magic formula or a concept, but a serious professional response to the great challenges we are facing. It is a qualified proposal for rethinking our approach to practice with the focus being on strengthening well-being and a desire for learning, which will now be tested in daycare centres and schools in the coming phase.

Playful Learning is thus anchored in everyday practice among children, pupils, students, pedagogical staff, teachers, lecturers and managers.

I hope that you enjoy reading it!
Laust Joen Jakobsen

*Laust Joen
Jakobsen,
Head of Programme*







Welcome to PlayBook 3

With the Danish educational tradition as a solid foundation, the Playful Learning project has had a vision since its launch in 2018 to strengthen children's creative, experimental and playful approach to the world and their lifelong desire to learn.



*Mette Lyager and
Tobias Heiberg,
Programme
Directors*

Over the years, we have become much wiser about how we support this vision through playful teaching in the social education and teacher education programmes as well as in continuing and further education.

In PlayBook 3, we want to share some of our insights and experiences with university college lecturers and managers who have either been part of the journey themselves or are just curious about what playful approaches to learning can contribute to the teaching of future and current social educators and teachers. We also hope that graduate social educators and teachers will want to read along, as we have embarked on the practice-oriented phase and are establishing new collaborations with daycare centres and schools.

In this PlayBook, you can read about principles for management of exploratory educational development in the article 'Exploratory educational development', where programme managers Tobias Heiberg and Mette Lyager review the experiences gained from heading a development project which allows the participants to gain experience during the process and where the management continuously uses this learning as a basis for new decisions.

You can also read about the didactic basis for playful approaches to learning, developed by the lecturers involved in the project through countless tests in teaching, didactic reflections among colleagues and analyses of patterns across Denmark. In the article 'A didactic basis for playful approaches to learning', programme managers Tobias Heiberg and Mette Lyager present this joint basis and review important didactic points of the last four years of development work in the social education and teacher education programmes as well as the related continuing and further education programmes in Denmark.

In their article 'Playful aspects of didactic designs: A play quality analysis', Head of Research Helle Marie Skovbjerg and Senior Researcher Helle Hovgaard Jørgensen analyse 36 didactic designs created by lecturers in the social education and teacher education programmes. They also identify and examine the play qualities that emerge in the lecturers' description of their teaching.

In his article 'Playful approaches increase engagement, but has the teaching actually become more playful?', Lasse Lykke Rørbæk, PhD and Project Manager at Rambøll Management Consulting, has asked students and lecturers what they think about the results of the mid-term evaluation and requested them to reflect on why a playful approach increases engagement and why the students do not necessarily experience that the teaching has become more playful.

You will also get a small peek into the practice that unfolds in the teaching and an opportunity to hear the students' perspective in two podcasts.

We thus hope to give a diverse presentation of playful teaching from the perspectives of lecturers, management, researchers and students.

Finally, we give you a small preview of the direction that the project will take in 2023.

Have a good read!
Mette Lyager og Tobias Heiberg



Exploratory educational development

Teaching is something that lecturers and educational managers are highly focused on, but that they often talk much too little about. This is a problem because there is a need to find new ways of teaching in an educational sector where goal management, performance focus and dissatisfaction challenge curiosity, creativity and the desire to learn.



Mette Lyager and
Tobias Heiberg,
Programme
Directors



This article is about the management of educational development. Or, rather, it is about how a playful approach can challenge our ingrained ways of thinking about management of educational development. In fact, a playful approach to learning can make the development of teaching a joint exploratory matter.

Based on four years of management of the Playful Learning project, we have formulated three fundamental principles for exploratory educational management. We like working with principles because they provide guidelines, but no absolute answers. There is room for interpretation and situated adaptation. Our principles for exploratory leadership can be incorporated in different management contexts and applied with different objectives.

An exploratory leadership approach

Teaching must be regarded as a hyper-complex activity, with correlations between effects that are not obvious and outcomes that are rarely predictable. Therefore, the development of teaching practices calls for an exploratory leadership approach that is flexible and adaptive and that can handle unpredictable and changeable contexts with many unknown variables

An exploratory leadership approach makes it possible to gain experiences during the process and continuously use this learning as a basis for new decisions. Exploratory leadership involves the relevant parties from the outset, as lecturers and students together try out new solutions and reflect on their experiences based on the vision that sets a joint direction. Therefore, exploratory leadership requires that the lecturers can see that it makes sense to participate.

The approach takes into account that it is difficult or impossible to predict a development process and that it is not simple to delimit or obtain an overview of problems, which may result in incorrect assumptions and hypotheses regarding the teaching situation, the student and the possible solution. An exploratory leadership approach presupposes that if we are to explore new pedagogical landscapes together, we must recognise that we do not know all the answers in advance. The joint exploration thus becomes a path towards achieving results that no one had seen coming.

Exploratory educational leadership can be handled by designated project managers or experienced pedagogical coordinators, but it cannot succeed without a formal mandate to set the vision, a recognised authority in relation to charting the landscape and in-depth knowledge of the organisation in which the teaching is to function. Therefore, the formal educational leadership is key to the exploratory development of teaching.

For the vast majority, an exploratory leadership approach is a more demanding and unfamiliar leadership discipline than simply following action plans and ticking off milestones, because the managers must be able to handle uncertainty and loss of control. The process may be experienced as chaotic and difficult to navigate and requires a leadership that has the courage to stand in the open and conduct a continuous dialogue with the participants about learning and adjustments in the process.

Therefore, it may be helpful to bear three leadership principles in mind.



Principle 1: Creating a joint exploratory space

The first principle is about creating a joint exploratory space and inviting the lecturers to share this space. This exploratory space must first and foremost be justified by a necessity and a joint vision that set a direction for the exploration. If the big WHY is not answered, there is an imminent risk that the exploration will become diffuse and without impact.



The exploratory space must be filled together, as the force of development is significantly enhanced by reflexive dialogues, mutual inspiration and joint exploration among colleagues. Courage must be built up, errors must be handled, inspiration must be passed on and experiences shared. This is a joint matter for lecturers and managers.

Finally, the exploratory space must be authentic, i.e. driven by sincere openness and deep trust in the lecturers being those best qualified to drive the development forward. The open and exploratory development approach matches many knowledge workers' motivational profile. The experience of being offered a development space in which the lecturers have the autonomy to make their own decisions and experiment with possible solutions within the framework of a joint ambition strengthens the intrinsic motivation of most professionals. They rarely need instructions or concepts telling them what to do. Instead, they would like to be trusted actors in exploring and changing the teaching culture of which they themselves form part.

Here, the leadership task is to keep the exploratory space open, tolerate uncertainty and show confidence and sincere interest in the answers that emerge. The managers must orient themselves towards creating an adaptive framework in which there is continuous balance between: setting, exploring and crossing boundaries, in order to create a secure basis for a genuine exploration of the opportunities that the teaching space provides.

Therefore, there is an important management task in making the paths and detours of the exploration valid, and thus strengthening the lecturers' courage to make mistakes. It is a joint premise that we test, venture, fail and become wiser along the way. A joint exploratory space can be created through framed freedom, where a clear purpose and an established framework go hand in hand with courage, openness and trust. When we succeed in this, we can create interesting and potent exploratory spaces in mutual interactions between unpredictability and clarity.

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Principle 2: Drawing patterns from what arises

The second principle of an exploratory leadership approach is about being responsive to the answers and opportunities that arise in the process. To capture trends, address shared challenges and identify thought and action patterns across the group of lecturers as well as to articulate joint conclusions.

Pattern formation is about being loyal to what is happening, i.e. not letting your own ambitions, professional standpoints or theoretical models become the guiding principles. The lecturers' experiences and actions are what creates patterns of good approaches.

Inviting lecturers into an exploratory development space does not entail an exclusion of the management position. It changes. Empathy, responsiveness, conversations and increased attention to what emerges are in the foreground, and control and instruction recede to the background. The managerial focus is on having a great impact in retaining and framing the process and through the analysis and identification of the patterns that are formed.

Drawing patterns is not just about seeing what stands out. It is also about having the courage to deselect and to simplify complexity. The pattern formation are about highlighting, marking and clarifying the particularly good answers or actions produced by the joint exploration.

The managerial pattern formation should act as a developer for the lecturers' images of what they are exploring together. If the manager does not assume the position of the person who loyally dares to form the patterns, the development process risks seeming unclear and meaningless to the participants.

Given actions, words, concepts, methods and approaches appear with particular frequency or significance when we explore pedagogy and didactics together. These are precisely the actions, words, concepts, methods and approaches that the manager must seek to accentuate and magnify.

Pattern formations are never fixed or finished motifs. The basic philosophy is that exploration never ceases, but is rather a basic attitude in playful approaches to pedagogy and didactics. Therefore, the formed patterns always form part of continuous and responsive dialogues with the exploring community. At best, the manager draws preliminary conclusions, which provide clarity and increased abilities for seeking new answers. If we form the patterns too rigidly and ruthlessly, we appear as dominant and insensitive. If we form the patterns too unclearly and based on too many considerations, the lecturers are exhausted by the lack of clarity and useful answers in relation to the progression of the work.

Successful forms of patterns by the management can, over time, become significant and co-created pedagogical or didactic approaches with a high degree of participant ownership and attachment. In other words, this means that when we create patterns together, we create pedagogy and didactics together. If we are good at first drawing contours and subsequently forming clear patterns, we may succeed in being precise and distinctive in our joint pedagogical identity or signature – without being unnecessarily dogmatic or normative

Principle 3:

Connecting with what already exists

This principle concerns that development initiatives must be linked to the reality in which they are to function. This means that didactic development has teaching as a context and that teaching is embedded in a local cultural, organisational and strategic context, which it is wise to incorporate and make connections to in the development process.

It may be convenient to allow the development of new didactic approaches to take place at a distance from everyday teaching practices. This distance may ensure undisturbed room for immersion in theory acquisition, analysis and reflection, but it may result in disconnected recognitions and insights that do not leave many traces in the difficult and wondrous everyday life of education.

The management of educational development is about embedding the development of teaching in the way you think about the handling of teaching in practice. Many lecturers do this every single day – probably the vast majority. But management is responsible for making it a mission shared by everyone by creating joint exploratory spaces and undertaking to form patterns. The development of teaching must be the point of focus – between colleagues and between managers and employees.

Pedagogical development only really emerges in practice when it is woven into everyday actions. If pedagogy is to manifest itself as anything other than written and conceived ideals, it must be intertwined with practical teaching expertise – right at the point where lecturers and students meet.

Therefore, the manager needs to create an exploratory space that builds on the lecturers' existing expertise, while also daring to strive to challenge and renew the very same expertise in recurring exchanges between pedagogical ideals and practical testing. When the individual lecturer is to use the ideals of pedagogy as a reflexive accelerator for shifts in didactic actions, the lecturer's expertise becomes both starting point and goal. The manager must therefore seek to create a space that builds on the lecturers' existing expertise profiles and concurrently insists on refining and qualifying the very same teaching expertise in the collegial community.

The Playful Learning project is a welcome opportunity

to focus fully on teaching in the teacher education and social education programmes. But the development of teaching practices cannot become dependent on external funding and does not require large, fancy development initiatives. In basic practical terms, we are talking about showing genuine management interest in and attention to what is going on in the classroom and creating opportunities for conversations about what is already taking place and what could also happen.

The development of teaching always takes place in a cultural and organisational context that sets the framework, opportunities and barriers for what can happen. It is possible to push and cross cultural and organisational boundaries, but it is not possible to ignore them. They 'make noise' when you encounter them. It is therefore wise to consider the cultural and organisational context for the development of teaching. What are the organisation's cultural codes, structural conditions and strategic agendas? A development of teaching that relates to the organisational context has a greater probability of succeeding.

This does not mean that educational development should blindly reinforce the organisational culture and structure, but it means that both manager and employees must be aware that this culture and structure are part of the reality in which the teaching is to be able to function. When the organisational reality is taken into account, it becomes possible to utilise existing organisational forums, make connections with related strategic ventures or challenge existing norms and habits.

When the development of teaching is based on teaching situations and incorporates the cultural and organisational context in which the teaching is conducted, it becomes possible to reinforce and anchor the ascertained patterns in the organisation's everyday life. Development of the teaching takes place, so to speak, on the back of what already inhibits or develops teaching and has a greater chance of making itself felt in the everyday life of the degree programmes.

For the lecturers, this may mean that they can see themselves as acting subjects who actually have an opportunity not only to develop their own teaching, but also to contribute to developing the teaching approach of the overall degree programme and making a mark on the organisational context.



Rounding off

The three management principles are related to the playful principles of the didactic basis (See the article: A didactic basis for playful approaches to learning). This was not intended, but the contours of a pattern that emerged during the process. The principles of the didactic basis describe benchmarks for how we make teaching more playful and the principles of management describe benchmarks for how we make this happen. We are curious to hear what patterns you see in the tension field between exploratory teaching development and exploratory leadership.

Creating joint exploratory spaces

—> **Imagining together**

Daring the unpredictable

—> **Forming patterns in what is happening**

Insisting on meaningfulness

—> **connecting with what already exists**

Playful teaching presupposes playful management. For us, playful management is not about management engaged in play. It is about management that draws inspiration and challenges from the special features of play which create gripping and creative communities. Inviting to participate in joint exploration, trying out various things and ensuring that everyone helps set the direction provide an excellent starting point for creating a playful community. And playful communities have the potential to create really good teaching.





A didactic basis for playful approaches to learning

In this article, we will introduce the didactic basis for playful approaches to learning which is the result of four years of development work in the social education and teacher education programmes and the related continuing and further education programmes in Denmark.

The objective of the didactic basis is to provide a joint language and a joint framework of understanding which make it possible to discuss teaching practices together. Hopefully, this will spark even more conversations about the amazing teaching that is already being conducted in the classrooms and provide inspiration for more playful teaching.

The didactic basis has been developed by the lecturers who have formed part of the six ambassador corps under the Playful Learning project. There have been several editions during the process, and there will probably be new versions in the future. We see this as a sign that we become wiser during the process. This edition has been developed on the basis of interviews and input from the lecturers involved. We have asked them what they do when they use playful

*Mette Lyager and
Tobias Heiberg,
Programme
Directors*





teaching, how they conduct it and why. We have subsequently analysed the large volume of data and found clear patterns across the six university colleges. The didactic basis thus does not embrace ALL actions and good reasons for choosing playful approaches, but it expresses the joint experience that has been a general element at all the university colleges.

The didactic basis for playful approaches to learning consists of answering the three fundamental questions of didactics: WHAT, HOW and WHY. The didactic basis thus builds on the general didactic considerations that a professional lecturer will always make. Its intention is to nuance these reflections and actions in a playful direction through a description of the playful actions that unfold in the teaching, the playful principles that guide the lecturer and the

playful intentions that motivate playful approaches to teaching.

The playful actions describe WHAT happens when playful approaches to learning unfold in the teaching. The description of the particular actions that take place in the teaching space provides an outline of what playful teaching looks like and what lecturers and students choose to do in the teaching space. It thus gives you a picture of what we are talking about when we talk about playful teaching, and you can test your own teaching in relation to this.

The playful principles are about HOW you can work with playful approaches to your teaching. In our view, teaching practices cannot be developed through a roll-out of concepts. Instead, we have formulated

playful principles that guide the lecturer towards a more playful approach and behaviour. The playful principles consequently do not give you specific instructions for actions, but gently push you to venture into trying something new by highlighting the special characteristics of play that are relevant in a teaching context.

The playful intentions put into words WHY lecturers choose a playful approach to learning as a teaching strategy. It is not the goal that all teaching should be playful, but we know from evaluations of the project that playful teaching is engaging and motivating and that there are good reasons why playful teaching should take up much more space in the degree programmes. As a lecturer, you can mirror your own motivation for developing more playful teaching in our intentions with these approaches.

Playful actions, principles and intentions form a holistic entity, because the WHY, HOW and WHAT of didactics cannot work separately. The three questions must be answered in close connection with each other and strengthen each other if playful teaching is to be meaningful and engaging to participate in. There must consequently be close links between the reasons for why, the reflections on how and what actually takes place in the teaching space.

We hope that the didactic basis can provide inspiration for a more playful practice in the degree programmes and create opportunities for discussing and reflecting on the playful teaching that is already being conducted.

Playful actions

In this section, we provide a description of the actions that occur in playful teaching according to the lecturers in the Playful Learning project. In fact, playful teaching unfolds in a very special way. We have divided the special actions that manifest themselves in playful teaching into three categories: involving the students as whole persons, acquiring knowledge by acting together, being humbly and insistently present.

Involving the students as whole persons

Playful teaching involves much bodily movement. The students "position themselves in the space, move around, walk away, gather, enter and step up". It also involves a lot of sound. There is "laughing, singing, cheering, clapping, talking and shouting" and occasionally the sound level is turned down to a simmering buzz. The sound of the teaching moves in different keys, because it involves a wide range of emotions. In fact, the students are "surprised, discouraged, excited, reserved and fascinated" in the process.


"Hating it and opting out" can also be mental and quite physical actions in playful teaching that need to be handled, but the enthusiasm and desire to become part of the learning community are the completely predominant element.

Playful teaching is aimed at the whole person and involves the student's body and intellect, feelings and reflection. The students are thus intensely and actively present, which opens up for the students not only putting the academic content in relation to learning outcomes, but also in relation to themselves as future professionals with body and mind, sense and sensibility.

Acquiring knowledge by acting together

When the students move around in the teaching space, they are focused on special actions. They are engaged in "fiddling, testing, constructing, dramatising, caricaturing, producing as well as arranging and dismantling". The students thus interact with materials of very different nature and are actively involved with each other and in the learning process.

Playful teaching may appear random, chaotic, noisy and sometimes silly, but teaching that uses play qualities is always driven by a very strong interest in getting close to the academic material. The physical actions, the high noise level and the interaction with materials and fellow students are, in fact, closely linked to reflexive actions and academic immersion. The students "seize opportunities, immerse themselves, push boundaries, become involved, gain experience, ask questions and activate their professional and academic competences". The students are quite simply more present.



Playful teaching creates academic preludes and opportunities for participant-driven, social, action-oriented learning processes, thus making playful teaching something that lecturers and students do together.

Being humbly and insistently present

The lecturer is not the first person you notice in playful teaching. The lecturer may “lead, step up, put himself/herself on display” or otherwise be exemplary, but the lecturer’s general role is far more withdrawn and “observing, discretely animating or provoking, politely servicing and inviting”.

The lecturer has set up the space in advance and has “unpacked, set out, moved around, rigged” and created an eye-catching or completely discreet scenography that calls for the students to occupy the space. The lecturer has thus created the physical conditions for meaningful actions to unfold.

The lecturer has also focused on creating a mental space that invites the students to participate and be present as whole persons. The lecturer does this by “receiving, welcoming, taking care of, asking, making eye contact and being attentive”. The intention is to create good relationships and an atmosphere of security and trust in which the students feel valued and welcome.

In playful teaching, the lecturer is not concerned with managing the teaching, but expresses his or her didactic intention through a clear didacticization of the context of the teaching. The lecturer’s actions are oriented towards setting the space for learning through scenography, materials and atmosphere. The lecturer shifts his/her attention away from himself/herself and into the space, thus making room to invite the students to participate in a joint exploration of the academic material.

In the teaching, the lecturer’s task is more focused on creating input and opportunities for academic exploration and immersion than in presentation of subjects under the curriculum. The lecturer “erects scaffolding, adjusts, reinforces, opens up, nudges, follows the energy and asks questions and makes

himself/herself available”. The lecturer has an academic objective with the students and gives them the opportunity to reach out for it themselves through the provision of an open learning space as the framework.

The actions that unfold in playful teaching significantly expand the repertoire of actions that more conventional teaching uses. In playful teaching, you can thus observe students who are physically and bodily in motion in the scenography provided by the lecturer. You will hear students who are emotionally and professionally engaged, spurred on by the atmosphere that the lecturer has set. And it will be possible to feel the intense professional immersion that is prompted by the academic preludes and opportunities.

The actions that are present in playful teaching bear a great resemblance to the actions that are present in play. Conversely, it cannot be concluded that the teaching is playful simply because these actions unfold in the space. But the playful actions are a significant sign that there is something playful going on here.

Playful principles

In this section, we introduce three playful principles: imagining together, daring the unpredictable and insisting on meaningfulness. The three principles are about how we work with playful teaching and embrace characteristics of play that we would particularly like to introduce in the teaching space. The playful principles are guiding principles for strengthening the playful elements in teaching, but they can also be experienced as obstacles in relation to the common understandings of how to conduct teaching, and this is how they are intended to work. In fact, playful teaching means that you have to do something different from what you usually do.



Imagining together

Playful teaching allows you to activate the students' imagination. Through a playful approach, you get access to fictitious universes and future scenarios. In role play, you can quite legitimately adopt a schoolchild's perspective and, in the construction game, it makes sense to build the institution of the future. The fiction space of play thus becomes an alibi for testing new perspectives or living out pedagogical approaches through the 'what if' situations to which play gives access.

The playful approach thus offers an opportunity to involve relevant challenges and scenarios from the teaching profession in the teaching and thus place professional and academic standards in a relevant context. The students can experiment with future roles and pedagogical dilemmas in a secure framework, with academic reflection as a companion and thus strengthen their professional judgment and their own perception of themselves as a future social educator or teacher.

At the same time, the fiction space puts reality on hold and provides a ticket of admission to explore new professional and educational perspectives or test unfamiliar arguments. In a playful universe, there is freedom to imagine together, thus allowing the collective imagination and inventiveness free reins.

Daring the unpredictable

No one knows in advance where play will end up. This is part of the fascination of play. A playful approach to teaching also unfolds through open and unpredictable processes, where it is not possible or desirable to control the new opportunities and surprising insights which arise along the way. The playful approach thus represents a break with the illusion that learning processes can be predicted and teaching controlled in detail.

This means that the planning of teaching is not about the lecturer memorising his or her presentations, but that the lecturer didacticizes the context so that it invites the student to academic immersion. When the student thus becomes an agent in the teaching space, the session becomes unpredictable, and the lecturer's task in conducting the teaching is to a greater extent about being present and following the students' energy and their professional and academic immersion.

One way to create unpredictable and open processes is to involve materials in the teaching. Texts, screens and PowerPoints are still the most widely used materials that the students encounter in the course of their studies. Playful teaching also involves straws, strings, cardboard and sticks as well as all sorts of other materials, which thus become things we can use to think with. Both symbolic and tangible materials are carriers of open meanings that the students can grab and make their own. Photos, figures, chalk and metaphors function more as opportunities and preludes for the students' academic reflections than as channels for the lecturer's academic knowledge. When the students form academic concepts in clay or practice inclusion mechanisms using strings, they themselves actively contribute to creating the academic content and their own academic understanding. This requires that both the lecturer and the students are willing to let go of their control and dare the unpredictable.



Insisting on meaningfulness

The experience of meaningfulness is an essential premise in play, but it may be a challenge in teaching. If the playing does not make sense, you will opt out and find something better on which to spend their time. If the teaching does not make sense, you may fade out or reduce the teaching to exam preparation, and this is exactly the situation we want to get away from.

Playful teaching can only take place if it is meaningful for the students to join in. It is not possible to create meaning for the student. The meaningfulness of the teaching may arise through the student's opportunity for involvement and active participation in creating it. The playful lecturer is therefore concerned with creating a wide repertoire of participation opportunities for the students.

Playful teaching opens up precisely the possibility of taking up different positions and recognising and contributing different types of knowledge. Some students are best at concepts, others read moods and dynamics, some are bodily courageous and others convert ideas into actions or physical constructions. Future professionals need the whole palette.

Playful learning is thus about recognising different forms of knowledge and being and giving everyone the opportunity to participate in equal learning communities

The playful principles especially embrace imagination, unpredictability and meaningfulness, which are qualities of play that we believe to be of importance in a teaching context. Our imagination helps us bring the whole person and the profession into the teaching, unpredictability creates an openness that makes room for the students' own work with the academic material and meaningfulness insists on all students having the

opportunity for a place in the learning community.

The playful principles do not eliminate the in-depth professional and academic competences and solid knowledge base, but they insist on a playful approach to and use of knowledge, because it creates the basis for more curious and creative professionals who dare make mistakes.

The principles leave room for interpretation and presuppose that the lecturer decides how the intention behind a principle can be lived out in the teaching. We are not concerned with telling you how to conduct your teaching, but with developing your pedagogical professionalism so that you continuously reflect on and develop your teaching.

Playful intentions

Playful teaching can be a risky affair. It can break with the students' expectation of how teaching is conducted, create uncertainty about whether the learning outcomes will be met or raise eyebrows among colleagues or managers. Nevertheless, many lecturers choose to explore and unfold new and familiar ways of involving playful elements in their teaching. The playful intentions describe why the lecturers in the Playful Learning project choose a playful approach to their teaching. We have gathered the playful intentions in three categories: *challenging own professionalism, strengthening the students' learning processes and developing playful professional competence.*

Challenging own professionalism

The lecturers make it clear that they are also doing it for their own sake. It is simply more fun and more motivating to be a lecturer with a playful approach to your own teaching, because it energises the teaching space, strengthens the relationship with the students and produces good feedback.

The lecturers get closer to the students and their learning process because a playful approach creates a joint academic space for exploration.

For many, it is also a way to maintain the desire to teach and challenge their own didactic habits. Lecturers who choose playful approaches to learning as part of their action repertoire thrive best on continuously developing and experimenting with their teaching practices. These are lecturers who "become burnt out academically and didactically" and "get

bored by their own PowerPoints".

A playful approach to teaching thus becomes an opportunity to push your own and others' boundaries or to let personal inclinations towards playfulness unfold freely. The intention of playful teaching is to create meaning and joy in working life.

Strengthening the students' learning processes

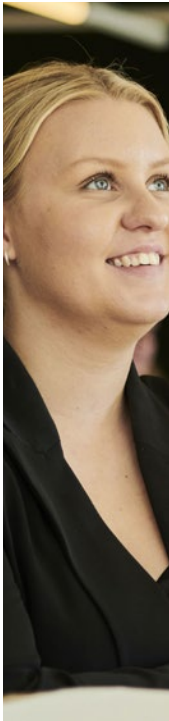
It is well documented that a playful approach also promotes the students' engagement in classes, and it is well known that engagement provides a sound basis for learning. The lecturers in the Playful Learning project choose a playful approach to teaching precisely because they want to strengthen the students' learning processes.

Having the opportunity to become involved in academic problems using thought, body and feelings and being active co-creators of the academic recognitions in the teaching improve the students' understanding and ownership of the academic content. The lecturers' experience is that playful learning provides an opportunity for making the recognition processes more nuanced and holistic and for insights to be embedded as bodily experiences, because the students use themselves on all parameters

The intention behind playful learning is that the teaching becomes academically liberating and innovative. A playful approach to learning must enhance the students' learning processes by disrupting academic preconceptions and encouraging a greater degree of curiosity in relation to exploring new perspectives and understandings.

Developing playful professional competence

A playful approach to teaching is not only about the didactics that the students encounter in their degree programme. It is just as much about the development of the students' playful professional competences, i.e. their competences to develop, initiate, enter into and





reflect critically on playful learning and development activities in their future professional practice in daycare centres and schools.

There are plenty of well-documented learning arguments for why playful activities are important in daycare centres and schools, and they are similar to those we have already outlined: Playful teaching and other educational activities make the children's lives in school and daycare centres more fun, activating and engaging.

However, the intention of educating students with playful professional competences goes beyond that: Children need social educators and teachers with playful professional competences, because the playful approach aims to strengthen the children's well-being and democratic formation.

A playful approach can strengthen children's open approach to the world in which they are not afraid to make mistakes. This is not about knowing the quick and familiar answers, but about finding possible joint paths to take. Perfection and performance are momentarily replaced by joint exploration.

This exploration of the world presupposes that the children can securely participate in communities in which everyone is invited to contribute actively and where plurality is valued.

The intentions of introducing a playful approach in a learning context range from a desire to keep yourself alive as a lecturer, over a deep interest in how the students best develop their playful professional competences to a conviction that playful teaching has something absolutely essential to contribute in relation to the children in daycare centres and schools whom it is all about.

The didactic basis has the social education and teacher education programmes as well as the related continuing and further education programmes as its primary context and reference. However, there is much to indicate that the approach to teaching expressed by this didactic basis is also valid in other pedagogical contexts where there is a wish to strengthen a playful approach to teaching and development. The didactic basis is, in fact, to be further developed by those who work with it. This entails future adaptation and development opportunities in line with new projects being added to the Playful Learning programme. We hope you that you will join us in exploring this.



Examples of playful teaching

In the following, you can find 13 examples of didactic designs developed by the Playful Learning lecturers. The purpose of the didactic designs is to promote playful approaches to teaching in the social education and teacher education programmes. Some of the didactic designs have been developed in collaboration with the Playful Learning lecturers' colleagues. They all have in common that they are the results of a series of trial actions. Therefore, they are both well-tested and well-founded proposals for how the qualities of play can unfold in teaching.

The 13 didactic designs will be dealt with in the section "Playful aspects of didactic designs: A play quality analysis".



Ball tracks

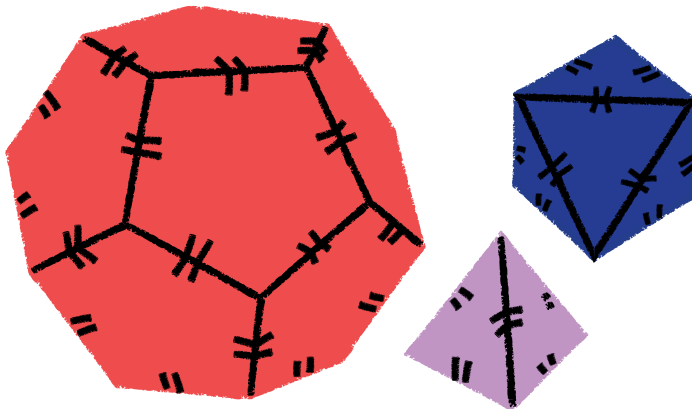
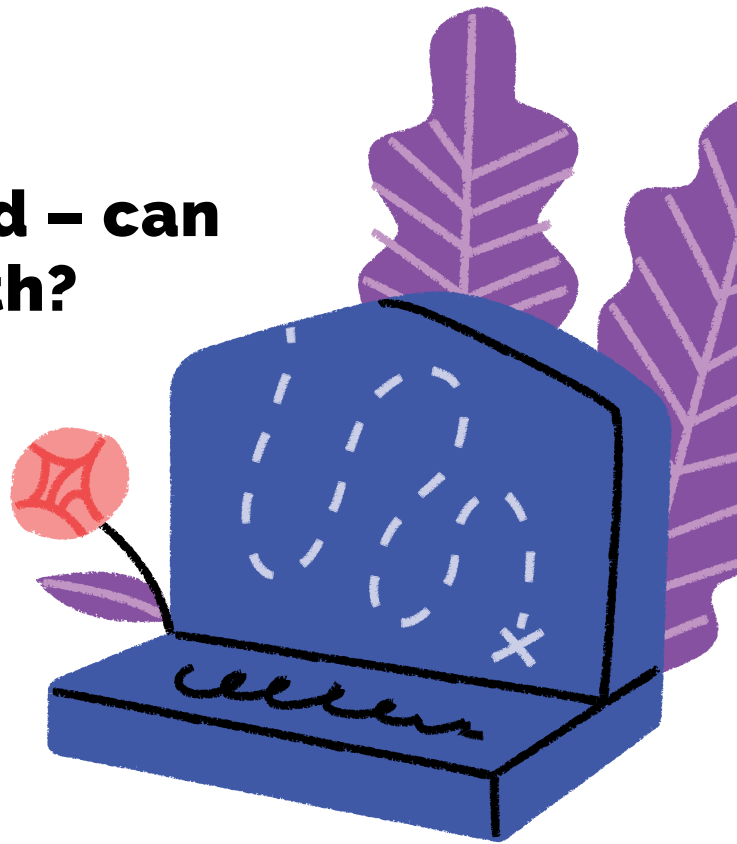
*By Linda Ahrenkiel,
UCL University College*

Linda divides her students into groups that are to construct ball tracks with different play media. The purpose is for the students to reflect on the play practices, play qualities and play atmospheres that arise during the construction work.

Bang, you are dead – can you play with death?

By Britta Kornholt, University College Copenhagen (KP)

Britta invites her students on a fantasy journey into the unknown when they work with the religion subject area Death and notions of death. During the fantasy journey, the students must construct a fictional character, whom they follow through different stages of life until this character's last breath. After the journey, the students will reflect on the afterlife based on their own perceptions and jointly read texts, and they will design a burial place for the character.



Spatial figures

By Ulla Christina Mortensen, University College of Northern Denmark (UCN)

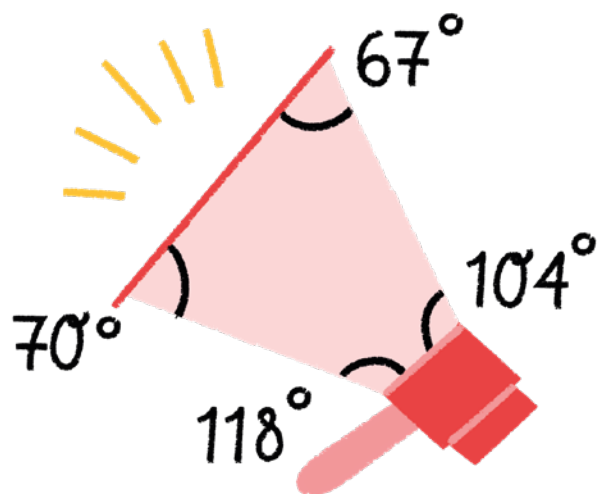
Ulla Christina uses a playful approach in her mathematics teaching when the students are to rediscover Euler's theorem on polyhedrons. The students are to construct spatial figures with polyhedrons and reflect on what the playful and exploratory approach means for their understanding of the mathematical theorem.

The Play School

By Rikke Brandt Bundsgaard, UCL University College

The students are to use their imagination when Rikke invites them into a scenario-linked didactic course where they will act as newly hired teachers at the Play School. The school's values are based on playful principles, and the students must therefore incorporate play into the various assignments that are to be performed along the way.





Communication in the mathematics classroom

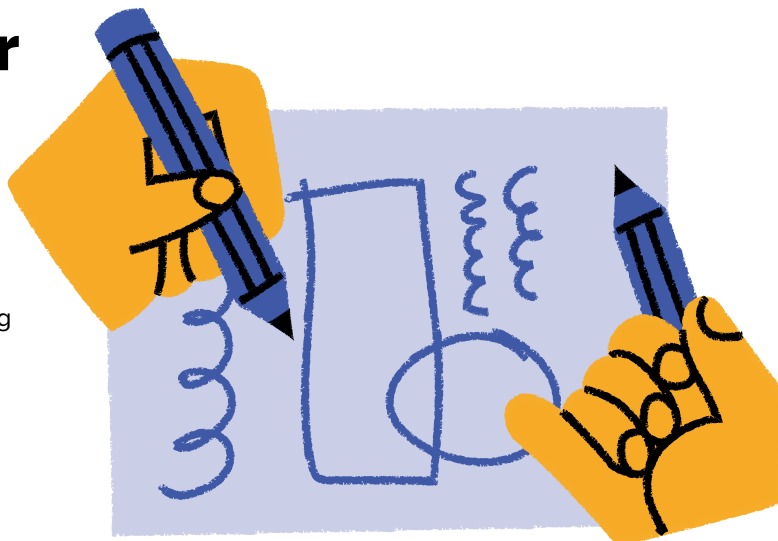
By Per Nygaard Thomsen, VIA University College

Per puts the students' bodies, imagination and imaginative abilities into play when they experience situations from mathematics classes with both open and closed communication in a role play. They must subsequently reflect on what communication means to pupils' learning, self-image and relationships in the classroom.

The concept poster

By Frederik Zeuthen, University College Absalon

In a two-week course, Frederik's students work with pedagogical core concepts. During the course, the students must prepare a visual summary of their learning outcomes after each teaching session. At the end of the course, the students must prepare a poster with a self-chosen concept – but Frederik has come up with obstacles that challenge their creativity and aesthetic competence.



Museum visit with playful approaches

By Knud Erik Christensen, UCL University College

Knud Erik takes his students on a museum visit, where they will learn how a museum visit can be planned based on a playful, sensuous and bodily approach. The museum's settings and the works are didactic fellow players who open up for the students' wondrous ideas and paths to reflection and learning.

A stylized illustration of a snake formed by eight people holding hands in a circular pattern. The people are depicted in a simplified, flat style with blue bodies and yellow faces. The snake's head is at the top left, and its tail is at the top right. The body of the snake is a large, dark blue shape that curves around the central text. The background is a solid blue color.

The inclusion snake

*By Karen Stine Egelund,
University College Absalon*

Karen invites her students to participate in the role play 'The inclusion snake'. The students draw a role card with and without special needs, and must arm-in-arm collaborate on getting through a course each with their own different prerequisites. The students must subsequently use their bodily experiences with the inclusion concept in an interaction with their knowledge when they are to re-design games from their childhood in groups.



Perform and play

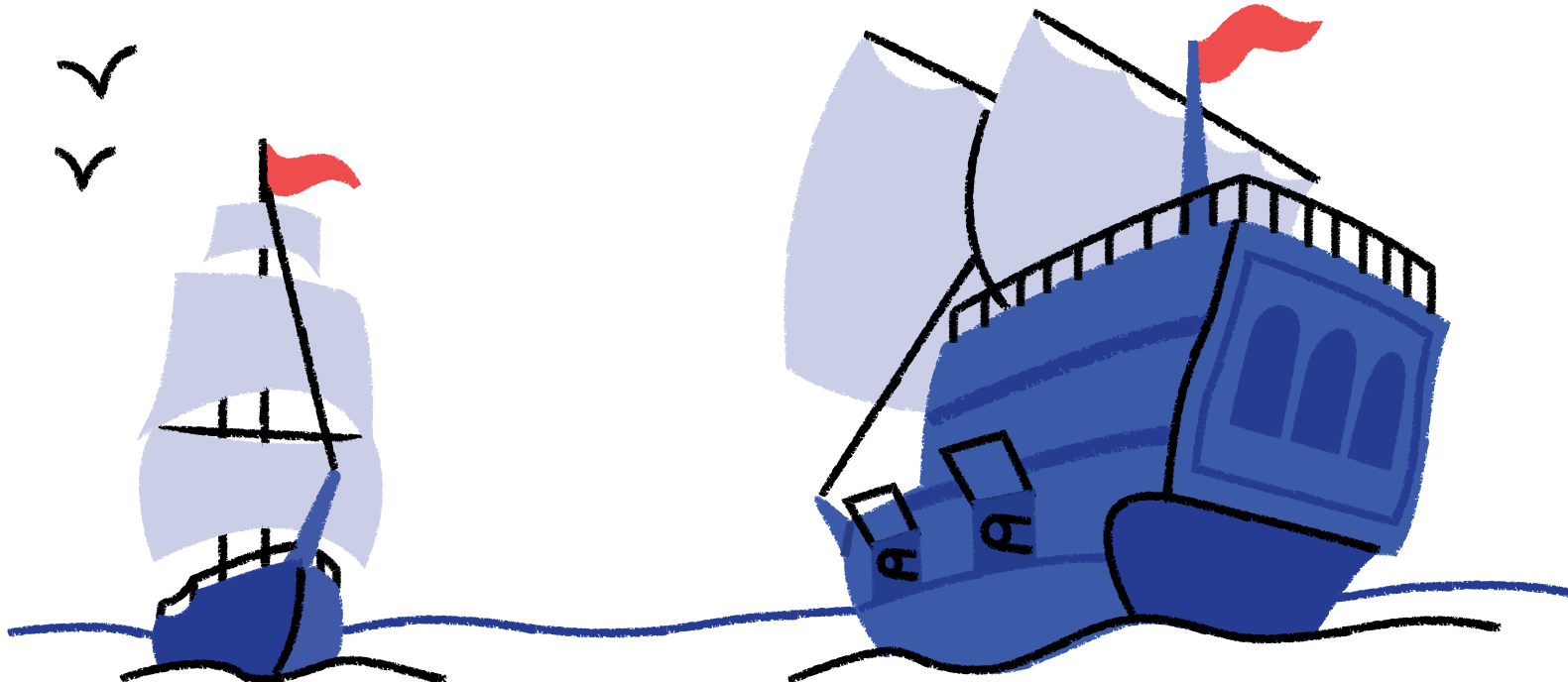
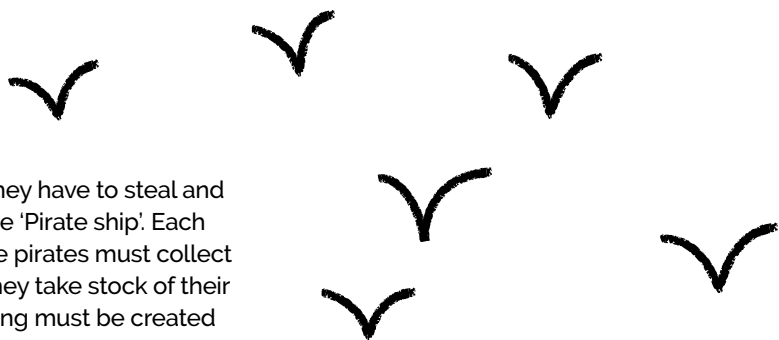
*By Mathilde Knage,
University College Absalon*

Mathilde is inspired by drama and forum theatre when the students have to engage themselves in a case about class 2.A and act out different situations for each other. Along the way, the audience has the opportunity to intervene – and, for example, demand that roles be switched. The purpose is to thematise inter-professional practices among social educators and teachers in the school area. Humour, silliness and fun help open up for play moods that can redeem, create new insights, provide courage and give rise to in-depth reflections.

Pirate ship

By Heidi Stensman Pugh

Heidi sends her students on a pirate expedition where they have to steal and plunder academic concepts from each other in the game 'Pirate ship'. Each ship has its own academic theme and, in each round, the pirates must collect or hand over concepts to and from each other. Finally, they take stock of their academic treasure chests, and a battle cry or a pirate song must be created based on the contents of the chests.



Film Festival: Purpose of the School System

By Birte Debel Hansen

Birte's students are to produce films about the historically changing purpose of the school system. The films are showcased at a film festival with red carpet and giant screen in PlayLab. Based on different categories, the students rate the films and cast their votes. Once the votes have been counted, the prizes will be awarded and the prepared acceptance speeches will be given.



The time capsule

By Birgitte Lund Jensen

Birgitte makes a time capsule with her students at the beginning of the course. The students are given a piece of paper where they have to write down all their knowledge and uncertainties about the topic, how they learn best and a good message for themselves. The papers are placed in a box and a place for burying the time capsule is chosen. At the end of the course, they dig up the capsule and repeat the exercise. The time capsule gives the students the opportunity to reflect on their own learning process by comparing their thoughts before and after the course.

Creativity enhancing obstacles

By Bettina Brandt


In Bettina's teaching, creative obstacles are didactic devices used to challenge the students' work procedures and presentation of projects. By formulating and testing obstacles themselves, the students have the opportunity to reflect on what it means to their learning process and how it can be used in the specific teaching in the primary and lower secondary school system.



Playful aspects of didactic designs: A play quality analysis

When we develop playful approaches to teaching and learning, the playful elements will often play tricks on us, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, because the concept of playfulness is not easy to put into words (Sutton-Smith, 2021). It seems as if when we are theoretically just beginning to grasp what playfulness is, it slips out of our hands, out of our language, and we have to try again. Practically, because we often use the part of playfulness that we like ourselves. In other words, we design playfulness in the way that suits our own taste (Skovbjerg et al. 2021). Overall, this creates both theoretical and practical challenges, and, most of all, it makes it difficult to create knowledge in relation to playful approaches to teaching and learning that we can share with each other.





Helle Marie Skovbjerg, Head of Research and Helle Hovgaard Jørgensen, Senior Researcher

In the research project entitled Playful Learning Research Extension, we have therefore worked to develop a concept of play qualities (Skovbjerg, 2020; Skovbjerg & Jørgensen, 2021) aimed at helping with the theoretical framing of what playfulness may entail. We know that these play qualities will put us on the trail of playfulness, and we are therefore thematising precisely these specific qualities. In addition, the intention with the use of precisely these play qualities and the development of the concept has been that it is to help us reflect on what we actually design for and with. It is also to help with the reflections on the opportunities for us to create diversity in precisely the play qualities we design with and for when we create didactic designs with play qualities in the teacher education and social education programmes. We see diversity in play qualities as one of the goals for creating meaningful teaching, as diversity will invite more people in and thus create an opportunity for teaching to be made relevant to more people. In other words, diversity in play qualities will create participation opportunities for more people (Skovbjerg et al. 2022).

Based on 36 didactic designs, this article will therefore identify and examine the play qualities described in the didactic designs.

The 36 didactic designs are a result of the work of the lecturers in the Playful Learning project. The lecturers' didactic experiments and trial actions with playful approaches have been conducted in the social education and teacher education programmes. A didactic design is thus the tangible and shareable proposal for how play qualities can be played out in a given teaching and learning context. We have developed a method for examining play qualities (see Skovbjerg et al. 2022; Skovbjerg, Jørgensen & Ahrenkiel, 2022), but, in this article, we will first and foremost analyse the didactic designs with the conceptual apparatus at the forefront and as pivot. The aim of our analysis is to find out what kind of play qualities emerge when skilled and experienced

lecturers experiment with playful approaches to their teaching. In addition, the analysis must also focus on the further development of the concept of play quality to establish whether there are play qualities that need to be included in the further concept development. In other words, are there play qualities that we have overlooked? Are there play qualities that can be said to be unique to the social education and teacher education programmes as empirical context?

Play qualities in play moods as theoretical framework

We have used the concept of play quality as a lens in our analysis. We define play qualities as the nature of the game, i.e. the characteristics that the particular game has. For example, a play type like construction games has characteristics such as building, creating something, whereas a play type like role plays has other characteristics. Here it is important to mention that these characteristics cannot be understood as something that can be completely defined in advance, but rather as something that may occur in a given play situation. Therefore, play qualities can only be identified in specific situations where something happens. And when the play qualities occur, they always occur for someone. This means that the bodily and sensuous elements will tell us something about the characteristics and thus the play qualities in a given situation. This means that if we are to identify play qualities in a given teaching context, we must look at the actions initiated in this context, and we must be interested in how these actions enable the characteristics to occur for the specific participants who are involved in what is happening (Skovbjerg & Jørgensen, 2021).

The concept of play quality is theoretically rooted in the mood perspective on play (Skovbjerg, 2021). The basic principle of the mood perspective is that you engage in play practices and that this leads to an experience of play mood. If you imagine playing on a trampoline, you jump, you laugh together with others and you move your body faster and faster – these play practices mean that you experience a play mood understood as the special feeling that this



activity is playful (Sutton-Smith, 2001). This means that the activity in the given context and situation says something about play quality.

Through the mood perspective, we can pinpoint four practices that lead to four basic moods, and, through these four moods, we can identify a total of 16 archetypal actions that say something about play quality in very specific situations and contexts.

The first group of actions are attached to SLIDING play practice and devotion mood. These actions are characterised by having a soft and continuous rhythm, it is about getting into the flow and the hand is often at the centre of the games, the body is calm and still. The participants build, fiddle, assemble and balance. Many games start with a practice and mood of these types, and here we find out what it is all about.

The next group of actions are linked to SHIFTING play practice and intensity mood. They are characterised by the whole body being in motion, it shifts in speed, direction and height, and precisely involves the shifts between one speed and to something wilder and faster. The participants run, swing, dance and jump. The experience is linked to butterflies in the stomach or the rush of being in motion with others.

The actions connected with the next group are characterised by games that put the performative, the dramatic and role playing at the centre. The DISPLAYING play practice creates the tension mood. Here, the audience is important, and the play practice involves both watching and being watched. The participants perform, imitate, spectate and pretend. The dynamic between performer and audience, between the displayer and the displayed creates the tension mood.

The euphoria mood is created through the EXCEEDING play practice, and here the participants are involved in smashing, teasing, destroying and shouting. These actions are not attached to the characteristics of specific games, but may occur in all games, and are often seen when the game is coming to a standstill, is becoming sluggish and needs new energy in order to continue.

The four groups thus contain different play qualities and play characteristics. Also in playful approaches to teaching and learning, we will see that characteristics from several different groups are used and performed. This will become clearer in the following.

Analysis of 36 didactic designs

In the following, we will analyse the 36 didactic designs through the play quality concept. This means that we are focusing on the 16 actions and their contexts. We are also interested in identifying actions that say something about play quality, but that are not already included in our theoretical framework. Our analysis strategy is inspired by situational analysis (Clarke, 2011), which means, in specific terms, that we have coded and mapped our data material, which consists of 36 descriptions of didactic designs. Initially, we have coded the 36 designs line by line and found action verbs. We have then focused our coding and categorised them in four 'houses' that reflect the 16 play qualities.

The devotion play qualities

Building and constructing are still qualities used in the design intentions in the 36 didactic designs. This means that the lecturers plan that the students are to build and construct something, and it is often relatively predefined what is to be built or constructed. The materials with which the students are to build and construct are highly scripted in advance, but open materials are also used extensively in the building and construction activities. There are examples of how the use of the open and closed materials becomes a way to experiment with the possibilities of greater or lesser diversity of play qualities. This applies, for example, to the didactic design Ball tracks, where prefabricated tracks are tested against self-constructed tracks.

Fiddling is mentioned as a play quality in the didactic designs that the lecturers want to design for, but it is not clarified in further detail how, or whether it actually took place in the realisation of the game. But there are action verbs that point towards the fiddling quality, understood as a creative pursuit. These are actions such as drawing, painting, cutting, colouring, shaping. In the design Bang, you are dead – can you play with death? A fantasy journey into the unknown, the students are asked to "paint and draw where the emotions are located in the body" in a process in which they are to imagine a fictional character's life



Play practice/ Play mood	Play actions			
SLIDING/ Devotion	Building	Fiddling	Assembling	Balancing
SHIFTING/ Intensity	Jumping	Dancing	Swinging	Running
DISPLAYING/ Tension	Performing	Spectating	Pretending	Imitating
EXCEEDING/ Euphoria	Smashing	Yelling	Teasing	Destroying

Figure 1: Overview of play practice, play mood and the 16 archetypal play actions

story until death. In another design, The time capsule, envelopes are decorated and paper patterns are cut. Several designs mention that the goal of the didactic designs is flow, which means that there is a desire that the devotion mood is to be a general measure of the outcome of the students' experiences.

The intensity play qualities

In the didactic designs, several of the lecturers find that it is an important play quality to bring the body into play in their designs. It is about a "hands-on approach to mathematics" in the Spatial figures design, and when the fantasy journey begins in the Play School design, this takes place on a yoga mat, with the participants lying on their backs with their eyes closed.

The question is which part of the body is regarded as dominant when it comes to play qualities? First and foremost, it seems that the hand is privileged, not surprisingly, over other parts of the body. For example, there are no designs that consciously work with the legs.

Furthermore, it is a common feature of the didactic designs that they are primarily designed for a calm and quiet body, a body that moves continuously with the same steady movement, while abrupt shifts in speed, direction, or height for that matter, are completely absent. We find that there is a potential in considering how a moving and fast-paced body can be brought into the teaching space in a meaningful way that could further expand the diversity of play qualities. It should be mentioned that there are no designs among the 36 didactic designs that come from teaching practices in physical and movement education. Here, it must be assumed that precisely play characteristics of this type are brought into play.

It is interesting that in a design like Communication in the mathematics classroom, where role play is used, importance is attached to "the body being brought into play in a dignified and proportionate way for adult student teachers", because the focus is on the

displaying practice. It takes courage to try out roles, and the consideration for the students thus entails an argument that the body should be more or less at rest.

The tension play qualities

In the didactic designs, the play qualities of the displaying practice and the tension mood dominate when the lecturers are to make designs for playful approaches to learning. It is about showing to others what you have done and about others showing you what they have done. Not only to put yourself on display, but also to display it to others. Here, several of the lecturers emphasised the importance of an audience, and also the audience's verdict on what has been produced, often constructive, as, for example, in the design The concept poster, where you could give a like, a wish, a puzzlement or an idea back to those who were presenting. There are a few designs that end with a competition involving the audience's verdict, but the majority of the didactic designs leave out competition elements.

Not only did the lecturers design for these play qualities, they were also used when the students were to connect three works in a museum through a new experience in the design Museum visit with playful approaches. They dramatised the works and they presented a poem about the works.

In the didactic design The inclusion snake, the students must draw a 'role card' where they "can put on ear protectors or scarves if this supports their role". It is about playing roles, dressing up and using props. The design Perform and play – interprofessional practice and collaboration with parents also uses the play qualities and characteristics that give the participants an "experience of really putting themselves in someone else's place".





The euphoria play qualities

The play qualities associated with exceeding practice and the euphoria mood are used in several ways in the didactic designs:

1) The qualities are used directly in the design:

In Pirate ship, the design is based on play qualities where the participants steal concepts from each other and all "sneaky tricks are allowed". This means that the lecturer directly uses exceeding practices in the design. The same applies to the design Creativity-enhancing obstacles, where the students are tripped up by obstacles in their presentations.

2) The flexibility of the design can make the play qualities possible, and the lecturer also hopes that this will happen, without directly planning it:

There are designs which draw on displaying practice and the tension mood, but which are also designed in a flexible and open manner that makes it possible to draw on play qualities from here. This applies, for example, to the design Talking posters, where the lecturer encourages that, in their presentation of their posters to the other students, the students can shout, imitate, whisper and chat. The lecturer thus encourages the students to draw on both crazy and silly elements.

3) The play qualities emerge from the design without the lecturer having imagined it or expected it:

In the design Film Festival: Purpose of the School System, where the students were to make films, the students used play qualities from the euphoria mood. This was reflected in the film productions shown at the concluding film festival, where the students showed film clips where they made mistakes that ended in a laughing fit, and also in the "acceptance speech with acknowledgement of the handbook in pedagogy", where the students used humour and exaggeration

This group of play qualities has previously proven to be the hardest for the lecturers to use for design purposes and in relation to the social education and teacher education programmes. One lecturer does, in fact, mention that the euphoria mood in connection with his design "turned out to be underweight", even though he had designed for it to be possible. In relation to the specific design, the students were those who held back and were aware of the limits for too much and too little. This suggests that it does not only concern difficulties in actually designing for this group of play qualities, but also whether the students join in, or whether they stay within the limits of what they usually do, the permissible and the orderly.

But when designing for the exceeding practice, it is typically with the play quality of 'the teaser who teases'. This is reflected in, for example, the design Creativity-enhancing obstacles, where the following is stated: "if obstacles form the framework for the presentation and if the students have been very creative, play qualities may here be crazy, silly and surprising", and the lecturer describes the mood as 'euphoric'.

Summary

We have analysed the 36 didactic designs created in connection with the Playful Learning project. The analysis shows that the lecturers prepare didactic designs using a wide range of play qualities, and that several designs deliberately design and explore the framework for what is possible in education, with play qualities from exceeding practices and the euphoria mood. The analysis also suggests that the lecturers primarily prepare designs within a group of play qualities, and thus do not consciously use mood shifts in their designs. The analysis also shows that the calm and quiet body remains a goal for the teaching and that the striving for a flow among the students is a goal for several designs. There is consequently a potential in a future exploration of how it is possible also to include play qualities from SHIFTING practice and the intensity mood, and this will mean that we create participation opportunities that suit more students' tastes and preferences.



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Playful approaches increase student engagement, but has the teaching actually become more playful?

The mid-term evaluation of the Playful Learning project shows that playful approaches to learning increase the students' engagement and make them feel better prepared to engage in teaching practices. Unlike their lecturers, however, the students do not find that there has been a significant change in practice at the university colleges since 2019. In this article, two students, a lecturer and two Playful Learning ambassadors reflect on the evaluation results – and also provide their recommendations on how best to share considerations about didactic choices with the students.

Kamilla Benedikte Bendiksen and Sarah Elisa Novak Sabat conclude their second year of the social education programme in summer 2022. They can both recognise that teaching characterised by playful approaches to learning increases engagement. "Playfulness captures me more than just sitting still and reading a book or looking at PowerPoint slides," says Kamilla, and Sarah adds:

"Many of us think visually, so when what we learn is connected to a product we've created or a play we've produced, we remember it better."

Sanne Stensgaard Fusager, who is an Associate Professor and pedagogy lecturer, is also not surprised by the evaluation result – or that playful approaches increase engagement or preparedness for practice. "That's also the view expressed by my students. The playful approaches develop competences that are transferable and that they can take with them and use in their further work. They are happier and feel more ready to work as a teacher or social educator after graduating," she explains and elaborates: "It's about having more responsibility and being able to seize what's happening in the moment. These are important competences to have as a graduate".

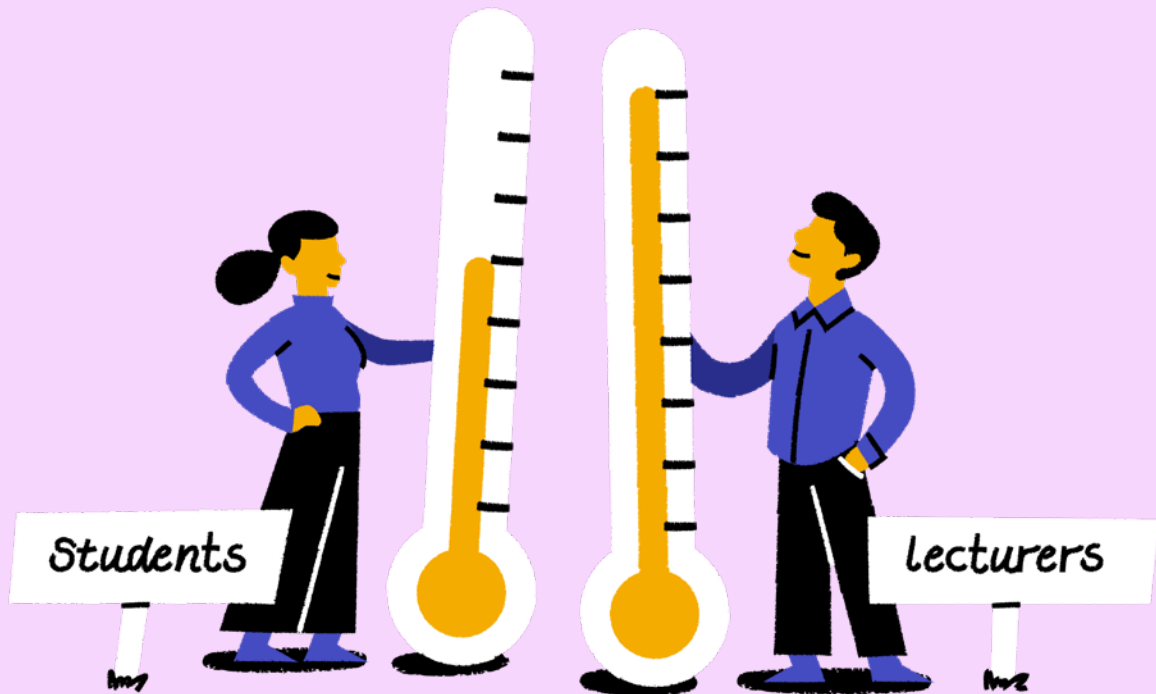
Also in the teacher education programmes, the experience is that playful approaches increase engagement. According to Birte Debel Hansen, who teaches didactics and is a Playful Learning ambassador, the encounter with playful approaches is a positive experience for the vast majority of student teachers, and many demand more teaching activities based on playful approaches. Regarding the students' preparedness for practice, she adds: "Playful approaches to teaching help the students engage in more meaningful teaching themselves, and makes a difference to the pupils in the school. It simply makes them better teachers."

The students do not experience the same development as the lecturers

Conversely, Kamilla and Sarah are surprised that students across the teacher education and social education programmes do not experience that the teaching incorporates more playful learning in 2021 than in 2019. In fact, they have themselves experienced it as a bit of a culture shock – especially in their daycare specialisation – how playful the teaching actually is. "The general impression in our class has been 'wow, we really do a lot of playing!'", as Sarah puts it.

However, they remember their first year on their degree programme as significantly less playful. They

Playful approaches



also both experience that the extent and quality of the playful elements in the teaching are highly dependent on the individual lecturer: "For some lecturers, group work with assignments is a way to make the teaching playful. But you don't really experience this as a student if the assignment is still set within a fixed framework," explains Kamilla.

Sanne Stensgaard Fusager also finds that both her own and her colleagues' teaching has become more playful in recent years. But she also sees several possible explanations for why the changed teaching practice is not experienced as clearly among the students: "We want to let go and seize the moment, but we're still guided by content, framework and goals. So we can't do it as much as we would like. It requires a cultural change that is difficult to achieve when we're tied to such a tight and outcome-driven ministerial order".

In the teacher education programme, Birte Debel Hansen particularly notes that the scepticism expressed by some lecturers when the Playful Learning project was launched has been silenced: "Some were worried about professional and academic standards. Others probably saw it as a threat to the way they had been teaching for many years. But the guards have dropped because we've been able to show what playfulness can do and that it does not mean having to compromise on professional and academic standards".

The students are unconsciously affected by changed teaching practice

Even though the students generally do not experience that the teaching has become more playful, several results from the mid-term evaluation indicate that they are nevertheless unconsciously affected by a change in teaching practice. For example, the word 'play' is used more in the students' internship and exam papers in 2021 than in 2019, and 'children's play and the professional's role in it' has become a central topic in the students' papers.

Lene Bech Dalsgaard is a Playful Learning ambassador in the social education programme and is first and foremost very pleased to see that play takes up more space in the students' practice. However, she is aware that this development cannot necessarily be attributed solely to the Playful Learning project. The project is part of a more general trend in Danish pedagogy, which is expressed in a number of ways, including by the strengthened pedagogical curriculum from 2018, in which play is a key element. "I think that the Playful Learning project has landed at a good time. Where previously, the view would have been that 'this is silly', we're now in the process of figuring out what the role of play is in a learning universe. In the past, you would have kept play and learning separate from each other," she says.

The article is based on interviews with Associate Professor in the teacher education programme at VIA University College and Playful Learning ambassador Birte Debel Hansen, Associate Professor in the social education programme at UCL University College and Playful Learning ambassador Lene Bech Dalsgaard, students in the social education programme at UCL University College Kamilla Benedikte Bendiksen and Sarah Elisa Novak Sabat, Associate Professor in the teacher education programme at UCL University College Sanne Stensgaard Fusager.



However, the ambassador regrets that the students are not conscious about the development. It may of course be that they already regard playful approaches as a natural part of the teaching, but it may also be because the lecturers do not sufficiently articulate why precisely these approaches are included in the teaching.

Important to reflect on didactic choices together with the students

For Kamilla and Sarah, meaningful teaching is about understanding why you are being taught the way you are and that you have a say in the planning and organisation of the teaching.

Lene Bech Dalsgaard completely agrees that the lecturers should reflect on didactic choices together with the students: "It's about how the student is equipped as a future didactician and is able to expose others to playful learning. We need to do the things in our teaching that we want students to go out and do in practice. They must both have done them and then reflected on them," she explains.

The evaluation of the Playful Learning project also suggests that a lack of understanding of the purpose results in less support when it comes to experimenting with new practices among the students. As Sarah puts it:

"If we don't see the point of the game, many of us will be left with the feeling, 'Shit man, what am I going to bring to the exam table? I've done nothing but play!'"

According to Birte Debel Hansen, for many of her students, the internship is an eye-opener in relation to what playful approaches can do: "This really dawns on my students when they get feedback from the pupils in the schools. The pupils give feedback such as, 'it's great that we're doing something together in class', 'I understand the subject much better when we work this way' or 'this has been the greatest day'".

How are didactic choices articulated in the teaching?

Lene Bech Dalsgaard advocates maximum openness

when it comes to sharing her didactic considerations with the students: "I know that some of my colleagues prefer the element of surprise, but I want to be as open as possible about my agenda. For example, I can start by mentioning criteria that the students are to deal with, and I will then return to the criteria afterwards to hear their reflections."

As a tangible method for involving the students in the didactic considerations, Lene Bech Dalsgaard practices what she calls *licence to hack*.

"The students are allowed to hack my teaching at any time if it doesn't make sense to them. But it must be a qualified hack"

It must be because they think that they will benefit more academically and professionally from doing it differently. And it's that co-determination that makes them think, 'I can go out and do this in practice', she explains.

As a lecturer, Sanne Stensgaard Fusager has also tried different methods, and has recently changed approach: "Previously, I attached a lot of importance to introducing and explaining before the students were to start. I now take the opposite approach and say: 'do something'. And when they've then done something, we can reflect on it together."

As an example, she mentions a class in which the students had to engage in role playing based on ethical dilemmas that they had experienced during their internships. "The dilemmas worked really well, but the students were not all that ready for role playing. We discussed this afterwards, where they had to admit that the role play had actually meant that they had got the dilemmas under their skin to a greater extent," says Sanne Stensgaard Fusager. "It's important to talk about different approaches to learning. Which approach makes sense depends on what we want the students to learn," she concludes.





Focus on student voices

In Playful Learning Podcast, we examine the relationship between play and learning and how we create a more playful educational culture. Find all episodes on our SoundCloud channel or on your favourite podcast app.

During the summer, the Playful Learning Podcast focused on how the students from the social education and teacher education programmes have experienced playful teaching. This has produced two episodes, which you can read more about below.



The students' perspective on playful teaching

In this episode, you will meet Sandra Andersen from the social education programme at University College Copenhagen and Rikke Christiansen from the teacher education programme at University College Absalon. We examine what playful teaching means to the students' learning processes, what works well and less well in playful teaching and what they take with them from playful teaching in their internship and future practice as social educator and teacher.



Playful teacher competences

Natasja Bech graduated as a teacher from University College South Denmark (UC SYD). In this episode, we take a close look at Natasja's playful teacher competences. We have asked her how the playful approaches she has encountered in her degree programme influence her working life at the school Johannesskolen on Frederiksberg. And we then sit in on her biology class with 8. F, where we ask the pupils about how they have experienced the playful teaching.



See you in 2023

In 2023, we will begin a new phase in the Playful Learning project, where we will build on the capacity and the development communities with practices established in the previous phases.

In the coming phase, there will be full focus on putting the built-up capacity into play with the challenges and development opportunities that social educators and teachers and children in daycare centres and schools know from their everyday life and where a playful approach to learning can be part of the solution.

In this phase, the project moves out into practice with a solid baggage of high professionalism and the competence to act in relation to playful approaches to learning, and, in future, the project will therefore be called Playful Learning Praxis.

We are thus in the full process of strengthening children's creative, experimental and playful approach to the world and their lifelong desire to learn.

Follow our work

www.playful-learning.dk

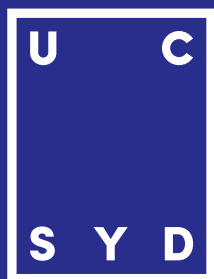
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