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Digital tools in primary school art - what difference does it make?

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The aim of this presentation is to discuss the conditions for using digital tools in Visual Art Education in Swedish primary school. The syllabus for Visual Art Education from 2011 specifies that pupils in grades 4-6, in addition to creating art with traditional materials, should photograph and edit digital pictures and movies. These formulations can be seen as a way of shaping a subject that is more relevant and up-to-date than traditional art education. However, in the latest national subject evaluation of Art education, which was carried out in 2013, 80 percent of the pupils said that they rarely or never get to photograph or edit digital pictures. Their teachers to the same extent also experience a need for further education within this area. This presentation draws on interviews and observations from a small scale ethnographic study of Visual Art Education in grades 5 and 6 at three primary schools. Results show that there are as well internal as external frame factors that prevent teachers from providing the pupils with possibilities to learn digital techniques in Visual Art. Two of the participating teachers lack digital equipment as well as competence to use it, and are never offered any further education concerning pedagogical content knowledge in Visual Art. They also say that they have neither time nor inclination to improve their own skills in digital techniques, especially as they lack the necessary equipment to put any new skills within this area to use in their own teaching practice.