Arts education and beyond

From recent studies of the impact of arts education it is possible to conclude, that competent teachers in an art form have a positive impact on children’s learning in art as well as in other subjects. In this anthology the process of learning is studied informed by the notion of transformation and transformative aesthetics. The transformations taking place in aesthetic approaches to learning can be characterized as character-forming journeys.

When children and young persons are involved in creative activities like producing a film built upon an idea from a computer game, creating a visual symbol, producing a performance connected to the theme bridges, or producing a textile work which promotes the well being of some group in the society – they are all contributing to the culture in the community they are part of.

The authors suggest that a better understanding of the values embedded in arts education is needed. Some of the questions elaborated in the studies presented in the anthology Arts Education and Beyond are the following: What kind of thinking underpins arts education? What does it mean for the learner to make active aesthetic responses, or to transform ideas into artistic expression? What is the importance of the transformations in productive artistic work? What are the key features of the (inter) cultural competence asked for in educational strategy documents? How is eco-philosophical thinking linked to philosophical aesthetics?

The basis for a dialogue is the pre-understanding that art plays an important, but not yet fully known, role in children’s lives and in their learning. To articulate the value basis underpinning arts education, as well as the learning paths in aesthetic and artistic processes is a challenge the article writers in this scientific anthology respond to. The researchers are deeply involved in arts educational thinking and are actively contributing to the ongoing debate about how to develop education with as well a solid knowledge base as skills to reflect upon educational values in a meaningful way.

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Arts education and beyond

Anna - Lena Østern & Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik (Eds.)

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Abstract

The purpose of this anthology is twofold. The authors want to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding arts education through reports from practice-based research in natural settings. Based on their findings the authors take part in a discussion concerning the importance of arts in children’s and young people’s lives. This discussion is brought into the overall context of education and aesthetic approaches to learning in general are tried out. We suggest that a better understanding of the values embedded in arts education is needed. What kind of thinking underpins arts education? What does it mean for the learner to make active aesthetic responses, or to transform ideas into artistic expression? What is the importance of the transformations in productive artistic work? What are the key features of the (inter) cultural competence asked for in educational strategy documents? How is eco-philosophical thinking linked to philosophical aesthetics?

The high standard of teacher education in Finland represents a challenge for the teacher educators, and the need for more research based knowledge about what’s going on in arts educational processes has inspired the article writers in this anthology. We wish to strengthen this dialogue between research in arts education and educational practice. The basis for the dialogue is the pre-understanding that art plays an important, but not yet fully known, role in children’s lives and in their learning. To articulate the value basis underpinning arts education, as well as the learning paths in aesthetic and artistic processes is a challenge the article writers in this scientific anthology respond to. The researchers are deeply involved in arts educational thinking and are actively contributing to the ongoing debate about how to develop education with as well a solid knowledge base as skills to reflect upon educational values in a meaningful way.

This report is not primarily a critique of existing arts educational practices, but it is in dialogue with them. More competence in an art form changes the person’s reflective thinking about quality in art. It is different from the thinking of a person, not so competent. From recent studies (Bamford, 2006) of the impact of arts education it is possible to conclude, that competent teachers in an art form have a positive impact on children’s learning in art as well as in other subjects. In this anthology
the process of learning is studied informed by the notion of transformation and transformative aesthetics. The transformations taking place can be characterised as character-forming journeys.

Summing up the linking threads between the articles, from the perspective of what’s beyond arts education, the ethos of dialogue, relation, collaboration and community is formulated as basis for arts education. The intertwining of cognitive and affective dimensions promotes emerging meaning through production of arts expression. The main characteristics of art informed learning processes are the transformations, which lead to insight in the human condition. Ethical-aesthetical reflection as a competence can be promoted in arts education. A common characteristic of the analyses is the focus on the not yet known, the recognition of the learning situation as an event, and the cyclical layer upon layer process. To become more competent in an art form implies elaborating elements in more and more complex ways.

The writers of this book have taken on the challenge to tell the story of their research. They have made the effort to transform mimesis one to mimesis two. Now the challenge for the reader is to perform mimesis three and to interpret and be in dialogue with the texts about what lies beyond arts education.
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Introduction
What is the difference that makes a difference in arts education?

Anna-Lena Østern & Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik

The purpose of this book is twofold. The authors want to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding arts education through reports from praxis-based research in natural settings. Based on their findings the authors take part in a discussion concerning the importance of arts in children’s and young people’s lives. This discussion is brought into the overall context of education and aesthetic approaches to learning in general are tried out. We suggest that a better understanding of the values embedded in arts education is needed. What kind of thinking underpins arts education? What does it mean for the learner to make active aesthetic responses, or to transform ideas into artistic expression? What is the importance of the transformations in productive artistic work? What are the key features of the (inter) cultural competence asked for in educational strategy documents? How is eco-philosophical thinking linked to philosophical aesthetics?

A weak connection between educational research and practice has a long history in many countries (Bresler 2001). Finland is in this respect an exception, due to progressive teacher education reform some 30 years ago. Teacher education was transferred to universities at this time and since then every teacher in primary and secondary education has been obliged to take a Master’s degree. Student teachers are trained to carry out small-scale research projects in educational settings, and to reflect upon the findings. So for a teacher in Finland it is common to take the perspective of a researcher as well as that of a practitioner. The high level of teacher education represents a challenge for the teacher educators, and the need for more research-based knowledge about what is going on in arts educational processes has inspired the article writers in this anthology. We wish to strengthen this dialogue between research in arts education and educational practice. The basis for this dialogue is the pre-
understanding that art plays an important, but not yet fully known, role in children’s lives and in their learning. To articulate the value basis underpinning arts education, as well as the learning paths in aesthetic and artistic processes is a challenge the article writers in this scientific anthology respond to. The researchers are deeply involved in arts educational thinking and are actively contributing to the ongoing debate about how to develop education with a solid knowledge base as well as skills to reflect upon educational values in a meaningful way.

The key challenges for education and society are considered to be connected to sustainable development socially, culturally and economically. With these challenges as guiding perspectives, the knowledge basis for education must be developed regarding the concept of knowing, the concept of learning and the concept of empathy as well as, intercultural knowledge, in order to form an eco pedagogical thinking. Kari Uusikylä, a professor of education and researcher of creativity in Finland, has for decades reminded policy makers of the basic values for education. According to Uusikylä (2003), the main challenge for education is to support the wish to learn and the creative mind in the young learner. As a consequence, effectiveness and - the most important aspect for a researcher – creativity may flourish. In international research reports the importance of arts in education as a value in itself and as a support for other learning processes is underlined by, for instance, Anne Bamford (2006), Liora Bresler (2001) and Staffan Selander (2009).

A research group connected to the Faculty of Education at Åbo Akademi University, has explored the theme Arts Education and Learning through research and development for most of the past decade. Professor Anna-Lena Østern has initiated this research group as a researcher workshop forum where senior researchers and doctoral students have been in dialogue about arts education research. The research group has organised several research seminars and research symposia elaborating themes connected to arts education. The Nordic network Arts, Culture, and Education\(^1\) has been the scene of some of this ongoing dialogue about what lies beyond arts education. The articles in Arts Education and Beyond highlight some of the activity in the research group and in the Nordic NERA network.\(^2\) A research symposium at the NERA conference

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1 A research network connected to NERA, Nordic Educational Research Association.

2 Four of the article writers have served or serve as convenors of the NERA network.
in Trondheim in March 2009 Arts Education and Beyond was elaborated. Finally the research symposium Arts Rich Education connected to the sixth Nordic drama boreale network conference in August 2009 in Vaasa brought the research group into a dissemination of the results of the ongoing research dialogue, which are published in this report.

The threefold mimesis as character-forming journey
An aesthetic approach to learning can be connected to beauty as a philosophical concept: as a work done to form a beautiful creation. In the educational context the philosophical concept “beauty” is not used. Instead, the challenges to education can be formulated as a question about how an individual’s experiences can be acknowledged and transformed in a meeting with new knowledge, in a meaning-making process. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1984) in Time and Narrative writes about a threefold mimesis: our lives are lived narratives, not yet told, but they exist in time. This is the first mimesis (prefiguration). The second mimesis (figuration) is the narrative told (or written). The third mimesis (refiguration) is the listener’s reception and interpretation of the story told. The Swedish philosopher Bernt Gustavsson (2007) suggests the character-forming journey as a possible “third way” for education in school. The journey metaphor is described in many tales: the learner leaves from home he undertakes a fascinating, dangerous journey; his encounter with the hitherto unknown, with otherness and the foreign, makes him change; he returns more mature and wiser. The character-forming task in art subjects is education to art, and in all subjects education through art. The character-forming journey might imply a nomadic journey, from which the learner never returns to the starting point.

The aesthetic perspective opens up the dialogue about quality, what qualitatively makes a difference. An aesthetic approach has its focus on meaning-making through work with the relation between form and content. In learning in art the aesthetic approach is a main mode in which to develop knowledge. An aesthetic approach implies that the learner dwells in the art form, uses its symbolic signs and techniques in order to gain insight into and competence in the art form.
In order to become skilled in music the learner plays, composes, listens and analyzes music – supervised by a teacher, in ensemble groups or alone. The aesthetic approach is characterized by challenges for the learner as well as the teacher, both emotionally as well as cognitively in meaning-making processes.

The Danish philosopher Dorthe Jørgensen (2006) characterizes the experience of philosophical aesthetics as a sense of “something more” beyond the expected, a possibility to perceive the world differently and to feel connected to a larger whole. The forms of knowing in aesthetic practices are connected to the idea of being involved in learning processes which demand emotional and cognitive involvement. The idea of connectedness which Jørgensen describes in philosophical aesthetics is well in line with the eco pedagogical principle which is applied in artistic work and in aesthetic approaches to learning. The eco pedagogical principle is applied in holistic learning processes (instead of fragmentary), and towards thematic work where the learner is challenged emotionally as well as cognitively.

As teacher educator and professor of language and literature education at Åbo Akademi University, and as professor of arts education Anna-Lena Østern has inspired a generation of PhD-students to engage themselves in research regarding for instance music education, drama and theatre education, visual art education, literature and language education, because these arts educational fields are considered to be under researched. To explore and articulate the knowledge gained in art educational work has been the purpose of the studies reported in this anthology.

There is a strong linking thread and a dialogue between the articles in this anthology. The linking thread consists of a focus on aesthetic approaches and on aesthetic learning processes. In most of the articles the need for dialogical approaches to aesthetic learning processes is underlined. One common feature is furthermore the analysis of the transformations that are as well means as goals for aesthetic and artistic learning processes. In the studies the forming process is described as a series of transformations from an idea towards more elaborated form, which is an active and engaging learning process. From a critical perspective, one conclusion to draw from the studies reported in the anthology is that, there is a difference that makes a difference regarding the quality of learning about and in art forms: The competence of the teacher is a decisive component. The competence of the guide into the art
form as well regarding design of structures as the subject content, and the communication competence will be challenged in work in art forms and with art forms. The underpinning basic values will inevitably become visible in the ways artistic learning processes are supported and guided.

Hansjörg Hohr writes about the holistic approach to human life in his analysis of John Dewey’s concept of experience. According to Hohr’s analysis Dewey conceives of emotion as an integral and therefore necessary part of experience. As such, emotion plays both a productive role in experience and is the result of it. The latter quality transforms emotion into a historical and cultural category and opens the path to pedagogy of emotion. Hohr is introducing a theme that is elaborated in several of the articles in this volume: the meaning making in producing artistic expressions involves both cognitive and affective aspects. Hohr especially mentions Susanne Langer’s thought, that art not is an expression of a feeling but is its articulation. Dewey’s notion of the connectedness between everyday life and artistic work is further elaborated in the articles by Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik and Johan Vikström, underlining the importance of imagination in aesthetic learning.

Anna-Lena Østern is analysing a deviced performance, where four blind teenaged girls perform. The performance is studied from the perspective of emerging meaning and formation as well as transformation of frames of reference. She describes the possible disorienting dilemmas caused by the unfamiliar aesthetics, and she elaborates the notion of autopoietic feedback loops when the enchantment of the performance might result in a sudden deeper insight into the shared process of being in the world. This shared process gives space to an articulation of young persons’ Utopian hope for a better world to grow up in. This deeper insight is part of a character formation, and one of the core thoughts underpinning arts education philosophy.

Johan Vikström reveals some of the educational potential of the ludic element by discussing how play can be employed in pedagogical practice and how it influences learning in visual arts education. He argues that simulation is a form of pedagogical practice that makes aesthetic learning through play possible, because learning through simulation makes it possible to represent and handle the complex structure and nature of play. He also argues that simulation is a form of investigative play that offers arts educators a method for direct embodied experiential learning
that promotes skills in creative problem-solving and investigative learning. In Vikström’s critical perspective play challenges established learning methods. The invitation to play and imagination is a means of promoting experimenting in order to generate meaning. In Vikström’s as well as in Kaihovirta-Rosvik’s article the collaborative aesthetic process and working mode is considered important in aesthetic approach to education.

Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik describes art education as a dynamic process that generates rhizomatic nodes of connection between people, cultural representations, experiences and imagination. Her article is designed as a composition with ten layers, where she makes a narrative re-creation of co-experienced aesthetic learning moments. Kaihovirta-Rosvik concludes her discussion with suggestions regarding what kind of dialogues should be supported in art education practice. Thus she articulates one central perspective on what is to be found beyond arts education in form of qualities in dialogue. She also mentions that in this dialogue the unexpected changes ways of learning. Kaihovirta-Rosvik’s contribution to the clarification of what’s beyond arts education also comprises the formulation of the transfer of art and aesthetic into pedagogic understanding. Art is understood as learning in qualitative events.

In the article *Intercultural bridges through physical theatre* the reader is invited to undertake a journey together with the researcher Heli Aaltonen to the European Children’s Theatre Encounter *Bridges*. Aaltonen states that during a collaborative devising process young people negotiate and embody theatrical meaning relationally. In the article the focus is on theatrical playing in a multilingual context, where young people produce performances, which express their Utopian hope for a future with ecological balance. This aspect is also elaborated in Østern’s article. Aaltonen, in her analysis, points at two aspects of what might be beyond arts education: the embodiment of (theatrical) meaning relationally. In contemporary time the relational aesthetics is promoted in different arts educational settings. The other aspect highlighted in Aaltonen’s analysis of the importance of intercultural performance work is the articulation of ecological citizenship as a basic value in arts education. Aaltonen’s article is connected to the thinking about the importance of a ludic element presented in Vikström’s article through Aaltonen’s notion of playing mood.

Kristina Skog presents student teachers’ aesthetic learning processes as they occur through learning portfolios in visual art. One case, Anja’s
narrative, is analyzed in depth in the article. Through analysis of the portfolio documentation, especially the diary entries on different topics, Anja’s professional development is characterized by an emerging meta-reflective knowledge, an insight into the importance of parallel learning cycles with socio-cultural learning supported by a group, which functions like a sounding board – combined with an individual elaboration of the semiotic mediation through the transformations of the task in visual arts. The contribution to the elaboration of what’s beyond art education is in Skog’s article articulated as an application of semiotic mediation.

In *A Clown Story - a study of an aesthetic learning process* Birgitta Silfver actually tells how she was enchanted by a clown and by the potential for identity work the art form clowning offered in an educational context. Silfver describes a research project involving teenagers and their meetings with three different clown characters. She wants to add to the developing knowledge of the arts and learning through clowning and presents the characteristics of the educational process in clowning.

Eva Ahlskog-Björkman describes the possibilities of using Creating-with-textiles as an expression of visual communication in a learning context. Significance is placed on the visual communication and interaction explicit in nursing education, which is why the study contributes to the development of knowledge as regards both Creating-with-textiles and ideological care thought. The study rests on the basic premise that, in Creating-with-textiles, aesthetical reflections promote ethical reflection. Ahlskog-Björkman contributes to the articulation of the value foundation of arts education in the formulation of how ethical-aesthetic reflexion is promoted through productive creative work in an art form. Ahlskog-Björkman’s article is in dialogue with Østern’s theme of disorienting dilemmas, caused by an unfamiliar aesthetics in a performance. The disorienting dilemma also promotes an ethical-aesthetical reflexion.

Ellinor Silius-Ahonen explores the meaning of arts education from a meta-theoretical stance. She presents a three-dimensional research model for reading complex texts, characterised by their transformative potential. Meaning making, according to drama, to play, to education as settings of form and content, and to research in humanities, is highlighted through practical examples and their impact on the underlying reasoning. A dialogic relationship between opposite perspectives emerging liminally in a space between has implications on the settings exemplified. Silius-Ahonen, in her model, articulates several
of the themes elaborated in the other articles in the anthology, among others the cyclical nature of learning processes in art forms, and the meaning potential exposed as layers of meaning.

Johanna Ray is addressing the possibly occurrence of strong experience of music (SEM) during music lessons in school and highlighting SEM as a resource for learning will be reported in her article. The overall aim of her study is to deepen the understanding of strong experiences in music (SEM) and to direct attention to the role of school music education in preparing pupils for significant and meaningful experiences like SEM. Her article is in dialogue especially with Hohr’s analysis of the concept emotion in Dewey’s thinking about experience. The critical perspective in Ray’s text connects her article to the criticism articulated in Vikström’s article. She is suggesting a more brave approach to including the possibility of strong musical experiences also in a school context, or opening up the didactical space for these.

John Somers, founder of the research journal RIDE, has contributed to this anthology with a text based on key note given at the symposium Arts Education and Learning at Åbo Akademi University in Vaasa 2006. His lecture about community theatre as communal work was deeply touching and engaging. Community Theatre has different roots and functions related to its cultural, social and political setting and its purpose in those specific environments. In some cases it may be that community rituals and stories, often deeply embedded in cultural traditions, are performed as an integral part of defining and celebrating a community’s cultural and spiritual identity. Some of the latter date back for many centuries but continue to be performed in spite of the fact that the factors dealt with within the drama have become objects of heritage rather than contemporary life. Other forms of community theatre have a political intent: to inform and energise a community in bringing about change or in asserting human rights. Somers’ article sums up the importance of the community perspective in artistic processes, and he clearly points at the political aspect in showing what human rights imply.

The article about community theatre represents a fascinating journey, and is also an example of a threefold mimesis. Somers quotes Etzioni, expressing that “Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and over-lapping communities to which we all belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy and resources to shared projects.”
Summing up the linking threads between the articles, from the perspective of what’s beyond arts education, the ethos of dialogue, relation, collaboration and community is formulated as basis for arts education. The intertwining of cognitive and affective dimensions promotes emerging meaning through production of arts expression. The main characteristics of art informed learning processes are the transformations, which lead to insight in the human condition. Ethical-aesthetical reflection as a competence can be promoted in arts education. A common characteristic of the analyses is the focus on the not yet known, the recognition of the learning situation as an event, and the cyclical layer upon layer process. To become more competent in an art form implies elaborating elements in more and more complex ways.

Anna-Lena Østern has co-ordinated the research group and invited writers to participate in the scientific anthology. She has also been in a response dialogue with the writers. Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik is a visual artist as well as arts educator and researcher. She has designed the cover and also the layout of the book.

The writers of this book have taken on the challenge to tell the story of their research. They have made the effort to transform mimesis one to mimesis two. Now the challenge for the reader is to perform mimesis three and to interpret and be in dialogue with the texts about what lies beyond arts education.
References
2. The role of emotion in experience
– comment on John Dewey’s Art as Experience

Hansjörg Hohr

Abstract
The holistic approach to human life and activity is one of the most meritorious features of the concept of experience by John Dewey. Not unlike the phenomenological approach by Martin Heidegger, the world by Dewey “is had” in a “direct phase of experience” (EN, LW 1, 74\textsuperscript{1}). This means a re-instatement of the productive role of emotion in experience as opposed to the notion that emotion obfuscates and distorts our perceptions and thoughts. I am interested in how Dewey’s understanding may contribute to questions what an emotion is and how the emotion works in experience. The main point is that art creates new outlooks on the world, opens the eyes for what has been hidden by the dross of everyday life experience, renews the understanding; in short, art is a method of discovery and exploration. This is accomplished by abstraction, an abstraction, which, however, is different from the abstraction of science.

\textsuperscript{1} EN= Experience and Nature; AE= Art as Experience; MW= Middle Works; LW= Later Works of Dewey.
Introduction

Whitehouse (1985) makes a survey of the discussion on Dewey’s concept of emotion and argues against those who criticize Dewey’s concept for being inconsistent. He holds that *Art as Experience (AE, LW 10)* does not offer a sufficient definition of the term and that the critics therefore have no sustainable basis for their criticism. Also, it is decisive, whether *AE* is understood as a pragmatist approach to art or as an extension of the concept of experience to the aesthetic realm. In the latter case one can rely on prior definitions of emotion in Dewey’s work. I agree with Whitehouse in that *AE* makes most sense if read as an exploration of the concept of experience with respect to the realm of art rather than a pragmatist art theory, though it may be both and that may be part of the problem. However, I cannot agree with the statement that *AE* does not offer an extensive definition of emotion. On the contrary, nowhere else does Dewey explore the role of emotion as widely and intensely. *AE* may even be considered a key text with respect to the concept of emotion.

Experience is, in Dewey’s view a significant and integral part of human life and fundamental to it. It contains every possible aspect of the unfolding relationship between the human being and its world. Thus, one cannot single out, other than analytically, the various aspects of this relationship:

> It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. The emotional phase binds parts together into a single whole; "intellectual" simply names the fact that the experience has meaning; "practical" indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it (*LW 10*, 61).

There is in other words an organic “unity” to experience. This means that not only is there no contradiction between emotion and cognition, but the one is not to be had without the other and cannot be developed independently. Further, “emotion” and “cognition” do not make sense without the idea of cooperating and of being integrated into action. Dewey makes a plausible cause by pointing out that only by cooperation between action, emotion and cognition the organism can survive in the environment. It remains, however, unclear in which way these aspects interact and contribute to the whole. In the following I explore the role Dewey assigns to emotion in experience mainly on the basis of *Art as Experience*. 
Before that, some further comments on the concept of experience are needed. Besides the “unity” there are a few other central qualifications. One is *transformation*. Not all the living process is experience. The term is reserved to that part where change of attitude of the person towards her world takes place. That change includes, as we have seen, action, cognition and emotion as a unity. Experience is, thus, a property of the unfolding action with corresponding growth of insight and differentiation of emotion. “Transformation” distinguishes experience from another fundamental life process, namely *habit*. In contrast to experience, habit per definition does not consist of any change of attitude. Habits are, though, in Dewey’s view the backbone of the life process. Transformation means change but also continuity. There is a dynamic quality to Dewey’s concept of experience as every experience is based on prior experiences. In habit the prior experience is simply used, in experience it is transformed. Besides *transformation* experience is defined by *expression*, which designates the medium. Unless there are means and media involved in the activity of the organism, there is no experience. Dewey offers an instructive example, which illustrates the transition from mere emotional discharge to experience. First the infant cries simply because it feels uncomfortable. But once the child realizes that its cries bring about a specific change they become expressive and become means and media for a purpose.

The consequences we can draw from this example for the concept of experience and expression are far reaching and involve at least the following moments. The expression is *emotional* as it transforms, shapes and defines the needs of the child; in the interaction between crying child and the reacting world an originally ill defined and vague emotion of discomfort is gradually transformed and differentiated into emotions of specific discomfort and of specific comfort, of being hungry and of getting the breast, of being lonely and being cuddled with, of being wet and getting a shift of diaper etc. Thus, as the interaction unfolds definite needs take form and differentiate and the need structure of the person develops. The expression, the crying is furthermore *cognitive* as there is a growing realization in the child that its utterances are means. The identification of situations of comfort and discomfort implies cognition. The child is, thus, developing discriminations and expectations with regard to the following events and situations and also developing a growing awareness of self as distinct from the situation; expression thus creates the expectation structure or consciousness of the person. Also, the cries start to be increasingly *communicative* as they are not only means,
i.e. instrumental to the wanted change but also media of communication of a purpose and are produced with the purpose of being understood. The child’s initial cry or smile develops into an increasingly complex communication structure. Further, there is an imaginative quality as the child in its crying comes to anticipate a situation which does not yet exist; a moment of fantasy is involved; experience is thus undetermined and indeterminable because its outcome is open and emerges gradually as the experience runs its course. How the cries are met and which situation will prove satisfactory is a matter of continuous negotiation and interpretation of the involved. Last but not least the crying is situational. Subject and object form a unity in experience; and indeed, considering the cries of the child there could hardly be any talk of a subject acting towards an object. Rather the interaction itself is the agency and the subject, and the experience experiences the child and the object.

As a last criterion of experience by Dewey one should mention consummation. An experience is defined by a marked ending where the obstacle is overcome and a new harmonious interaction with the world is established. This could also be called the pleasure aspect of experience, pleasure being at the core of experience. Not usefulness and biological survival but the pursuit of pleasure, drama and excitement are the energies which unfold experience and culture. Some formulations in Experience and Nature (EN, 1925, LW 1) could even suggest that the pleasure aspect of experience coincides with the aesthetic.

To sum up, unity, transformation, media and consummation are the validity criteria of experience by Dewey. There are degrees of these properties in experience. “Aesthetic” in a wider sense is Dewey’s designation of the degree of balance and integration. The more integrated the various aspects and levels of an experience the more aesthetic it is. There is no experience without “aesthetic quality” i.e. without a minimum of differentiation and integration.

As a preliminary conclusion about the role of emotion in experience one can say, that emotion is, in Dewey’s terms, a “phase” amongst others, “phase” being the designation for a cyclic event which together with specific other parts make up the full circle. The term underscores the indispensability of the individual part and thus the indispensability of emotion in experience. It does, however, not easily lend itself to the idea of the dynamics of experience or even the necessarily shifting kinds of co-operation between cognition, emotion and action.
Emotion as historical and cultural category

Experience, so Dewey, starts not only with an impulsion, but as an impulsion. Dewey underscores by that the holistic approach, pointing out that emotion is not an external force which helps the experience on its way, triggering, pushing and pulling it to its conclusion, but is a force within and integrated part of it. Also, the impulsion is not a simple and isolated stimulus to a definite action, say, taking a glass of water and drinking when thirsty, but vital and encompassing the whole being of the person. As such “impulsion” has an emotional, practical and cognitive aspect.

Impulsion alone however is not enough. The smooth interaction between world and person does not allow for an experience, because the impulsion in this case would simply result in an “emotional discharge”. There is no transformation of attitude in that. It is, thus, decisive that the impulsion is faced with an obstacle. Only then arises a situation, which makes the unfolding of an experience possible.

Emotion is the conscious sign of a break, actual or impending. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection. Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony (LW 10, 21).

The claim that activity, emotion, experience depend on an “object” in a literal meaning of the word makes sense on a basic level. There is an initial ill-defined impulse for action, which is not simply and effortlessly spent in routine but needs physical, cognitive and emotional effort in order to be developed and clarified.

The most striking feature on the topic of obstacles seems to be a primary craving for breaks. If one examines various examples of experiences given by Dewey one may note that the impediments necessary for experience are not primarily imposed by the physical world but are created by the individual. The Deweyan person is looking for all sorts of trouble, challenges and problems, and if they are not present, they are invented. This is due to the fact that experience is about “direct enjoyment: feasting and festivities, ornamentation, dance, song, dramatic pantomime, telling yarns and enacting stories” (LW 1, 69). There remains the valuable notion that emotion evolves as the organism is striving to overcome the impediments, grappling with its “object”.
The transformation or, better, the evolvement of “mere emotion” to “interest” is what one could call a process of progressive definition. Thus, emotion does not only change and is different at different stages of interaction and experience, but it gains ever more definition and clarity as experience runs its course. Therefore emotion is not a biological category but a cultural one. Emotion is not destiny but unfolding in accordance with the differentiating interaction. “Mere” or “raw” emotion becomes ever more sophisticated “interest”. One must also keep in mind that “interest” for Dewey is related to praxis as it represents a sophisticated form of “purpose” (MW 5, Ethics). The origin of interest may be the impulsion and raw emotion, but it comprises moral consideration as well. It means an interest in life and the world as whole, not partial wishes for individual gain. Thus the interaction creates a structure of “interests” which comprises a structure of expectations and a structure of needs and drives.

**Emotion, Sense and Immediacy**

The qualification of emotion as a “conscious sign” suggests that there is some sort of cognition involved in the emergence of emotion. The individual must register the break and, as a consequence, direct an action in order to mend it. Therefore it is consistent when Dewey claims that „emotion is a mode of sense“ (LW 10, 38). Sensation of the world cannot be cognition in isolation. That would be biologically meaningless since it is the duty of sensation to sustain life. Thus, sensation discriminates between the useful and the harmful and makes the organism approach the former and avert the latter.

The dictionary will inform any one who consults it that the early use of words like sweet and bitter was not to denote qualities of sense as such but to discriminate things as favourable and hostile. How could it be otherwise? Direct experience comes from nature and man interacting with each other. In this interaction, human energy gathers, is released, dammed up, frustrated and victorious. There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfilment, pulses of doing and being withheld from doing (LW 10, 22).

In the paragraph above Dewey provides a genetic argument. Sensation as a primordial form of experience must indeed combine motive power with cognitive guidance. However, the argument that links the integration of emotion and cognition to a primordial form of experience cannot make this quality plausible as exemplary for human experience. One may easily entertain the notion of unity in an incipient form of experience, but, as far as humans are concerned, there is a varying degree
of dissociation between the practical, the intellectual and the emotional. The emphasis on unity makes for a regressive trait in the concept by Dewey as it tends to propose an archaic form of experience as ideal, while the various differentiations as for instance a predominantly emotional or predominantly theoretical experience in some way seem incomplete or wanting.

Unless one is prepared to denounce the differentiation as a sign of aberration and corruption, there is a need for a differentiated concept of experience that can account for the numerous variations in which the practical, intellectual and emotional come together and interact in human experience.

There is another problem too, in that the concept seems to vacillate between an organic and a mechanic understanding. For a moment the paragraph above suggests an idea of emotion as a rather neutral and impersonal life energy which “gathers, is released, dammed up”. The same could be said of the steam in the steam engine or the water in a reservoir feeding a hydroelectric power plant. But this mechanic notion is immediately discarded when in the next moment an entirely different kind of energy is at issue, an energy which can be “frustrated” or “victorious”, which is endowed with “want” and the ability of “doing”. These two perspectives seem to coexist even though the mechanic is not as prominent as the organic. Repeatedly Dewey underlines that experience is immediate, sensuous and emotional or the activity is no experience. Experience is lived and not only something thought of. It would for instance not constitute an experience to sit down, think through a past event and then draw new conclusions. Even though experience is a “reconstructive doing” (LW 10, 59) i.e. transforming past experience, it is a life process going on here and now. This property makes experience to a mediated immediacy. In Dewey’s view the qualification of experience as immediate does not exclude mediation, but on the contrary sees it as necessary. One could also put it that way: every experience is dependent on pre-experience otherwise the flux of sensation would remain meaningless. This pre-experience is certainly no impediment for having a new experience but a necessary precondition. Experience is not only about something, but it is something.

The emphasis on immediacy is as problematic as is the emphasis on unity. In fact they cover pretty much the same ground. “Immediacy”, too, begs the question of differentiation of the concept of experience. This becomes clear when one asks whether reading a novel could constitute
an experience. Dewey’s answer would be: yes, it can as far there is sensuousness and immediacy. But this answer is not convincing. Surely there is a difference between reading the novel and the real life experience with regard to the sensuousness and immediacy. Is it not the strength of the novel to remove the reader from action in order to give her the opportunity to contemplate or even reflect upon action? Even though there hopefully is a vivid presence of the emotions involved in the reading, they clearly are not felt in the same way as they would be in immediate action. But it is precisely the distance, which makes the emotional development, the clarification of emotion in art possible.

**Emotion as the subject of experience**

In the following section I concentrate on Dewey’s organic understanding of emotion. There, emotion appears as agency. Emotion is not just a sign of a break in the relationship between person and world but main actor in the development. At first emotion is cast as a prospector:

> Any predominant mood automatically excludes all that is uncongenial with it. An emotion is more effective than any deliberate challenging sentinel could be. It reaches out tentacles for that which is cognate, for things which feed it and carry it to completion \((LW\ 10, 73)\).

One may note that “mood” and “emotion” are used as synonyms. As experience is made of material mostly taken form the “mind” i.e. from the “deposit of meanings” \((LW\ 10, 269)\), emotion initiates a search for materials or meanings which seem relevant to an ever more clearly defined purpose. In the paragraph above the “tentacles” of emotion are seen in opposition to the deliberation of a sentinel. Whatever the search and retrieval mechanism, it is not deliberation. Also, as emotion “reaches out” for usable material, “sentinel” projects a too passive role. The tentacle metaphor, on the other hand, evokes ideas of a vegetative kind of registration or of a primitive animal cognition. These ideas are not easily reconciled with the notion of an agency able to sort out the “uncongenial” and to appreciate the “cognate”. While the “cognate” suggests a common origin, “uncongenial” refers to a shared meaning or lack of it. The mixed or even inconsistent metaphor indicates a vast space of possible kinds of cognition in emotion reaching form the deliberation of a sentinel to the sifting of water by tentacles of a mollusc.
How difficult it is to describe the operation of emotion in experience becomes even more apparent when Dewey leaves the metaphor of tentacles and moves into the realm of the non-organic:

In the development of an expressive act, the emotion operates like a magnet drawing to itself appropriate material: appropriate because it has an experienced emotional affinity for the state of mind already moving. Selection and organization of material are at once a function and a test of the quality of the emotion experienced (LW 10, 75).

Here, the mechanism of identification and retrieval of relevant material is stripped of any cognitive connotation and is compared to the action of a magnet. The “congenial” and “cognate” are now substituted by “emotional affinity”. Again, also this is an uneasy companionship as emotional attraction clearly is of a different order than the magnetic attraction. Nonetheless the term “emotional affinity” may give the most transparent idea of how the emotion operates: it is searching and collecting materials which have a similar “feel”. In any case, what the magnet metaphor is supposed to do is to underscore that emotion not only has a searching, sorting and collecting function but even an organizing one. This is the more significant as even the intellectually most demanding experience is seen as structured and organized by emotion.

The mixed metaphor, the rhetorical glide between different frames of reference, the alternation between the physical, the biological, and the cognitive, are to a certain degree programmatic. Dewey wants to substantiate the continuity between the an-organic and organic world, between animal and human life and between everyday life experience and art. Here just another instance of this movement:

The selective operation of materials so powerfully exercised by a developing emotion in a series of continued acts extracts matter from a multitude of objects, numerically and spatially separated, and condenses what is abstracted in an object that is an epitome of the values belonging to them all (LW 10, 73).

The play of mixed metaphors, thus, continues as the action of emotion at first is compared to the “extraction” of matter which, conjuring up a mining or refinery operation, immediately afterwards is declared an “abstraction”, connoting a cognitive operation, before gliding back into the world of physics as abstractions are “condensed” into an object which would serve as an “epitome of values”. Whether it is possible to
condense abstractions or whether abstractions could be taken for condensations, either way the ever extending modus operandi of emotion seems now increased by abstraction and condensation of values.

From whatever perspective one looks upon the method and procedure of emotion it becomes quite clear that its duties are fearsome. Emotion seems to be responsible for the entire experience, from its inception as impulsion throughout to its completion, and every duty is loaded on its shoulders. This may be more than they are able to bear. There looms the obvious danger of hypo-stasis as the emotion seems to be endowed with the abilities of a person. Also, there looms, paradoxically, the opposite danger, namely that experience is reduced to an impersonal physical event. Qualifications like “tentacles”, “magnet” and “extraction of matter” and “condensation” point in that direction.

**Emotion as the result of experience**

The predominant epistemology of emotion conceives of emotions as more or less definite and stable mental objects like love, hate etc. which then are applied or attached to the objects of the world. There is, say, love, which then is directed toward certain persons. Dewey denounces this notion as linguistic reification.

We are given to thinking of emotions as things as simple and compact as are the words by which we name them. Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity, are treated as if each in itself were a sort of entity that enters full-made upon the scene, an entity that may last a long time or a short time, but whose duration, whose growth and career, is irrelevant to its nature. In fact emotions are qualities, when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes. I say, when they are significant, for otherwise they are but the outbreaks and eruptions of a disturbed infant (LW 10, 48).

The significance of an emotion is defined by the degree of complexity of the corresponding experience and a matter of “duration”, of “growth” and “career”. Whenever an impulsion is not simply discharged but initiates an experience the corresponding emotion becomes “significant”. The complexity, though, is relative and contrasted with emotional “outbreaks” and “eruptions”. The term “significant” is thus marking an emotional development in contrast to the emotional outbreak that leaves the emotion untouched and unchanged. Since emotions are qualities of concrete actions and interactions, they are relational:
Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it. By the same token, emotions are attached to events and objects in their movement. They are not, save in pathological instances, private. And even an "objectless" emotion demands something beyond itself to which to attach itself, and thus it soon generates a delusion in lack of something real. Emotion belongs of a certainty to the self. But it belongs to the self that is concerned in the movement of events toward an issue that is desired or disliked (*LW* 10, 48 f).

Emotion belongs to the "self". But "self" is defined by the interactions it is involved with. Thus, emotion originates, moves, and unfolds as the person deals with the world, in interaction with it. One may note that "interaction" becomes a central term in Dewey’s theory of experience. Although it is analytically possible to distinguish between subject and object, they are rather “phases” in the interaction as the notion of the unity of experience suggests. In this sense it is experience that creates the self. Then it may not just be a linguistic coincidence that Dewey is speaking about “having an experience” and not about “making an experience”. Still, the formulation “Emotion belongs of a certainty to the self” indicates that Dewey is not prepared to surrender the notion of an individual subject. Most important, emotions are qualities of actions. Nouns like “love” and “hate” are just language based constructions and qualify specific actions and corresponding purposes.

In the paragraph above there are at least three important implications. First, emotion is directed towards objects. An emotion is always “towards” or “about” an object and thus tied to concrete actions. Second, emotion is public or cultural. Emotions are shared since they belong to the world of actions and not primarily to the world of private mental processes. Third, emotion is dynamic. Also in this sense, there are no objects like love or hate. Emotions move in accordance with the interaction, they come into being, change, and unfold as the interaction unfolds. In short: „An emotion is implicated in a situation, the issue of which is in suspense and in which the self that is moved in the emotion is vitally concerned“ (*LW* 10, 72). Repeatedly Dewey returns to the issue of emotion being the quality of a complex experience. Neither is emotion a static entity, nor is it matter of instants coming in flashes of temper. It is unfolding, differentiating, growing in depth and in width. It has temporal and spatial structure since it develops alongside the interaction.
Aesthetic emotion in practical work

While the term “significant” is used as designation for the distinctive property of emotion as opposed to the outbreak and discharge of “raw” emotion, the term “aesthetic” is used in order to set experience apart from routine. The term “aesthetic experience” appears first by Clive Bell (1914) designating an emotion distinctly removed from everyday life experience and exclusively evoked by fine art. The emotion verges on ecstasy and on religious feelings of belonging and of being part of and dependent from a bigger entity. By Dewey, in contrast, “aesthetic emotion” refers to an emotion belonging to experience us such and is defined by the degree of integration.

The first example of an aesthetic emotion Dewey offers is characteristically taken from everyday life or, more precisely, from a practical task. It is about an irritated man who instead of taking out his frustration on his house mates decides to put his aggressive energy to tidy up his room, straightening pictures, sorting papers, clearing out drawers and the like.

If the person in question puts his room to rights as a matter of routine he is anesthetic. But if his original emotion of impatient irritation has been ordered and tranquillized by what he has done, the orderly room reflects back to him the change that has taken place in himself. He feels not that he has accomplished a needed chore but has done something emotionally fulfilling. His emotion as thus “objectified” is esthetic (LW 10, 84).

One may note, that the putting to rights of the room is not organically tied to the original irritation in the sense that the person is irritated by the disorder and acting upon it. Thus, the activity is a distraction and a device for calming an affect. Dewey thinks here of the irritation as a neutral power that must be disposed of since the man “cannot suppress it any more than he can destroy the action of electricity by a fiat of will” (LW 10, 84). Nonetheless, there are options as “he can harness one or the other to the accomplishment of new ends that will do away with the destructive force of the natural agency” (ibid.).

True enough electrical energy can be used to power the food processor as well as the vacuum cleaner. But does emotion really work in this way? Is the cause of irritation in the example of no interest? The tidying has obviously neither removed nor identified the cause of irritation and, thus, the irritation has not been “ordered”, but has at best simply subsided. Here is no example of a transformation. There appears instead
an understanding that seems to contradict the organic notion of experience and emotion. The argument above could have been taken from a socio-biologist giving advice on instinct technology.

There is another problem as well, as Dewey fails to distinguish affect from emotion. “Emotion” refers to a mental and cultural structure while “affect” relates to performance, i.e. to the activated emotion. The distinction is of the same order as that between competence and performance or the French langue and parole in linguistics. Seen from this perspective the subsiding irritation reflects not an emotional development but a change of affect or mood. There may be a change of mood as the person’s attention is diverted from the source of irritation and directed towards a simple practical task. There may also be a change of mood as the beneficial result of the activity is increasingly anticipated. The least convincing notion is that the tidying up in itself would be emotionally fulfilling, that the activity would be executed for its own sake, would establish a new emotion. What changes are affects as the changing situation evokes emotions, which already exist. An emotional development on the other hand would entail a contemplation of and communication about the irritation. It would mean clearer view of its origin and source, a better appreciation of its circumstances and relevant perspectives and a better understanding of possible courses of action. That would mean a “clarification” to use a Deweyan term, i.e. the conversion of “mere” emotion into “interest”.

Aesthetic emotion in the work of art

While the concept of the unity of experience is threatened by the notion of a neutral emotional energy that can be “harnessed” to arbitrary ends, the problem seems almost reversed when Dewey explains “aesthetic emotion” by an example of art experience:

The primitive and raw material of experience needs to be reworked in order to secure artistic expression. Oftentimes, this need is greater in cases of "inspiration" than in other cases. In this process the emotion called out by the original material is modified as it comes to be attached to the new material. This fact gives us the clue to the nature of esthetic emotion (LW 10, S. 81).

The work of art is based on “primitive and raw material”, “reworked”. Since emotions are organic part of this material they, too, are reworked, and thus, rendered aesthetic. The wording in the paragraph, however, is worrying. How can this raw material “call out” the emotion when it already contains it? And how could the emotion be “attached” to the new
material when it is integrated to begin with? This wording is more in accordance with the notion of emotion as a relatively neutral energy, which can be extracted and “harnessed” to any aim.

There is another problem as well which has to do with the question of the relationship of everyday life to the artistic work. For Dewey there is not difference in principle between the two, but only a difference in degree of differentiation and integration. Dewey uses Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* as illustration and argument:

The emotion that was finally wrought out by Tennyson in the composition of "In Memoriam" was not identical with the emotion of grief that manifests itself in weeping and a downcast frame: the first is an act of expression, the second of discharge. Yet the continuity of the two emotions, the fact that the esthetic emotion is native emotion transformed through the objective material to which it has committed its development and consummation, is evident (*LW* 10, 84 f).

By writing his poem, so Dewey, the poet is working on a “primitive and raw” grief and transforming it into an “ordered” and “clarified” grief, in short he is writing out an aesthetic emotion.

The notion that “esthetic emotion is native emotion transformed” is, however, a logical short cut. The weeping at the grave of a dear person is no “native emotion”, but part of a – culturally embedded – mourning process. The composition of a poem, on the other hand, is not part of a mourning process and not its fulfilment. The poet does not mourn passionately in the poem and does not develop his passions in the making of the elegy. Nor does he communicate his own emotions so that others may inspect, comment upon or discuss them. The poet is simply not writing about himself. The poem is about a fundamental experience of loss that the poet is exploring and presenting. There certainly is continuity between the emotion of everyday life and the emotion in the poem in the sense that the latter is based on the former, but there is a categorical difference. Mourning means an effort in order to come to terms with a loss, there is an experience of loss and pain and a need of remembrance. The composition of the poem on the other hand is concerned with creating and presenting a form for an emotional experience. Thus, mourning and writing poetry are different in purpose and scope even though they may come together in one person. The poem may help the mourning process along. It may offer the comfort of a shared experience; it may suggest ways of remembrance and of turning the loss into a meaningful event. But mourning remains part of everyday
life and is not transformed or transported into the fictive world of the poem. Also, while the writing in the instance of *In Memoriam* obviously is based on the experience of loss, it is certainly not based on personal experience alone but also on that of others. Compared with the example of tidying up, the example of the poem, too, fails to establish the notion of aesthetic emotion as it discards the difference between having and presenting. Indeed, one must consider the radical possibility, namely that the poem does not express grief at all. The poem is presenting an emotion through its form. Here, I concur with Susanne Langer’s (1942) and Ernst Cassirer’s (1944) criticism of expressive aesthetics.

Applied to the presentation of erotic motives the notion of transformation of a “native emotion” into an “aesthetic” gains even a comical quality:

The nudes of Renoir give delight with no pornographic suggestion. The voluptuous qualities of flesh are retained, even accentuated. But conditions of the physical existence of nude bodies have been abstracted from. Through abstraction and by means of the medium of color, ordinary associations with bare bodies are transferred into a new realm, for these associations are practical stimuli, which disappear in the work of art. The esthetic expels the physical, and the heightening of qualities common to flesh with flowers ejects the erotic. The conception that objects have fixed and unalterable values is precisely the prejudice from which art emancipates us. The intrinsic qualities of things come out with startling vigor and freshness just because conventional associations are removed (*AE* 10, 101).

If one interprets Renoir’s nudes along the lines of Dewey’s interpretation of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* one is confronted with the notion that the nudes turn the sexual excitement and pleasure of everyday life into an “ordered” and “clarified”, an aesthetic emotion in art. Such a notion is not easily entertained, and Dewey, to do him justice, does not propose it either.

The main point in the paragraph above is that art creates new outlooks on the world, opens the eyes for what has been hidden by the dross of everyday life experience, renews the understanding; in short, art is a method of discovery and exploration. This is accomplished by abstraction, an abstraction, which, however, is different from the abstraction of science. Dewey never really explains what this abstraction consists of and how, exactly, it differs from that of science. He obviously thinks of an abstraction of “practical stimuli” in art. But the same is valid for science.
He rightly points out that the art object does not arouse the spectator sexually. Its effect is different from that of the object depicted when confronted with in everyday life. It differs from “ordinary associations with bare bodies”, even though one wonders how ordinary these associations – “flesh with flowers” – are.

Dewey observes that the “practical stimuli ... disappear in the work of art”. Thus the world of art seems to be situated outside of the practical world, the world of actions. Indeed, art creates a “new realm”. However, the idea that the emotions of everyday life are “transferred” seems implausible, for sexuality continues to exist in everyday life while it is inadequate to think of art as a refined sexual practice.

The notion of a “new realm” threatens the concept of experience us such, since it implies the abstraction of the practical. And with that goes one of the cornerstones of the concept and the notion of unity of experience seems abandoned. One wonders, though, whether “new realm” is just a linguistic slip. Dewey does not seem to attribute further importance to it, does not expand on the distinctive features of this realm nor does he return to it in his deliberations. How problematic the notion of transference or transformation of a “native emotion” is becomes rather manifest in the verdict that “the esthetic expels the physical” and “ejects the erotic”. Besides of being at variance with his former tenet this judgement seems to contradict the experience of these works of art. There is eroticism in abundance in Renoir’s nudes even though not in a pornographic manner.

The contradicting interpretations could be reconciled if one accepts that art is not a sophistication of everyday life experience and its fulfilment, but an exploration and representation of it. Perhaps art has little to do with transformation or even differentiation of emotion but much with cognition of emotion. With respect to emotion, the term differentiation seems the most adequate. With the work of art there emerges a new experience of loss and a new erotic feeling, which does not substitute the emotions of everyday life, but comes in addition and as enrichment.

There is one last issue I would like to address with regard to “aesthetic emotion”. Dewey’s reflections seem to imply that the emotion formed in the work of art is identical with the emotion felt in production and reception, in other words that the “aesthetic” emotion coincides with the emotional content of the work of art. This confusion becomes even clearer in the following paragraph:
The passionateness that marks observation goes with the development of the new form – it is the distinctly esthetic emotion that has been spoken of. But it is not independent of some prior emotion that has stirred in the artist’s experience; the latter is renewed and recreated through fusion with an emotion belonging to vision of esthetically qualified material (LW 10, 93).

Dewey remarks on the deep emotions that accompany the production and appreciation of the art object and identifies them with “aesthetic emotion”. Again he points out that these emotions are based on prior experience, which is reconstructed through a fusion with emotions which belong to the production of the art object.

Dewey escapes that he is talking about a different emotion from that addressed in connection with Tennyson and Renoir. The “passionateness” is not transformed “native emotion” but a passion for form and representation, for finding the adequate expression for an experience. This passion is shared by the reader, listener or spectator who may find her own emotion in the expression. The release, the excitement one feels in the work of art stems from the experience that something inchoate and unclear has been delivered in a significant form. This kind of artistic emotion may be felt also in works of art which are very abstract in content like, say, Vasarély’s play with geometrical forms and colours or in works of art which are entirely self-referential like Duchamp’s urinal. The latter art objects do not explore emotions and thus do not transform them while they may offer a clearer and fresher view of the world. In this case, the aesthetic emotion would not consist in a feeling of harmony or of emotional fulfilment, but more specifically consist in the alleviation one feels when something inchoate becomes clear and understood.

One must concede that Dewey is not giving in without a struggle. He seems uncomfortable with the tension between the emotion formed and presented in the work of art and the emotion developing and felt during production and reception.

Just because emotion is essential to that act of expression which produces a work of art, it is easy for inaccurate analysis to misconceive its mode of operation and conclude that the work of art has emotion for its significant content (LW 10, 74).
Dewey, thus realizes, that the emotion evolving during production and reception is not content of the work of art but is due to the making of and perceiving the art object. Indeed, Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* does not make the reader sad and mourn but may offer new perspectives on mourning while Renoir’s nudes do not sexually arouse the spectator, but may make visible qualities easily overlooked in sexual excitement. Susanne Langer rightly points out, that art is not an expression of feeling, but its articulation. This seems also the point in Dewey’s paragraph above. Still, he seems not to realise the difference between the emotion articulated in the work of art and the emotion felt in the artistic experience. Instead he concludes wrongly that art has not emotion for its “significant content”.

This is of course a self-contradiction since his central tenet is that the work of art constitutes and creates a new experience. That must include the emotion, how could it be otherwise? And, indeed, Dewey is consistent enough to be forced to contradict himself:

Expression is the clarification of turbid emotion; our appetites know themselves when they are reflected in the mirror of art, and as they know themselves they are transfigured. Emotion that is distinctively esthetic then occurs. It is not a form of sentiment that exists independently from the outset. It is an emotion induced by material that is expressive, and because it is evoked by and attached to this material it consists of natural emotions that have been transformed (*LW* 10, 83).

We are, thus, back at the beginning. As emotion becomes conscious, it is transformed into what Dewey calls “distinctively” aesthetic. The terms “evoked” and “attached” make the presence of a mechanic concept of emotion felt.

**Intellectual experience as oxymoron**

It is important to Dewey that “aesthetic” should designate the degree of differentiation and integration of experience in general and not only the specific quality of art. Thus, the tidying of a room could be used as an illustration of the emergence of aesthetic emotion. I have argued that the example is ambiguous. There is certainly no continuity between everyday life and art like that Dewey suggested in his discussion of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* and objected to in his analysis of Renoir’s nudes.

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2 Oxymoron is a contradiction in terms.
A similar problem as to practical activity arises with regard to the role of emotion in intellectual work. Rather, the problem becomes more poignant. Though, in *Experience and Nature* (1925) things seem straightforward. There, Dewey makes the important distinction between primary and secondary experience. While the primary experience is immediate and inexplicably “had”, secondary experience is based on analysis and reflection. Intellectual work understood as secondary experience seems to fit easily into the concept.

In *AE* however, there is no mention of secondary experience. Now Dewey presents the distinction between expression and statement. Expression is as we have seen the medium of experience – mediated immediacy. Intellectual work, on the other hand, operates at the level of statements that consist of “signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own” (*LW 10*, 45). They lack the immediacy required in experience. Actually, they are nothing more than signboards that may direct one towards situations where experiences may be had. The validity criterion of the scientific statement consists, thus, not in whether it can reveal the “inner nature” of things – it cannot – but in its “directive efficacy”. One could say that the statement offers instrumental knowledge. For example may the chemical formula for water offer clues as to how to produce it or as to what use one can put it:

Such, however, is the newness of scientific statement and its present prestige (due ultimately to its directive efficacy) that scientific statement is often thought to possess more than a signboard function and to disclose or be “expressive” of the inner nature of things. If it did, it would come into competition with art, and we should have to take sides and decide which of the two promulgates the more genuine revelation (*LW 10*, 91).

At a first glance it would seem as if Dewey in *AE* implicitly identifies experience with what he previously called primary experience. This impression is however not altogether correct. For once, Dewey thinks highly about the intellectual value in artistic work. He even holds art for intellectually more demanding than scientific work. Also, he argues that there is no conflict between immediacy and mediation in experience and that, on the contrary, mediation is a necessary precondition of (immediate) experience. There is, as Dewey rightly observes, a lot of thinking going on in the work of art i.e. in artistic experience. Whether this makes for an experience that simply can be “had” is however doubtful.
The original appreciation of intellectual work as secondary experience on the other hand seems to be void in AE. Intellectual work is there said to operate by means or by media of statement, which has nothing but a signboard function. Since intellectual work is based on operation with signboards it is difficult to understand how Dewey can hold that even intellectual and scientific work can have an aesthetic quality and must have it if it is to be complete.

Nevertheless, the [intellectual] experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt. In so far, it is esthetic. What is even more important is that not only is this quality a significant motive in undertaking intellectual inquiry and in keeping it honest, but that no intellectual activity is an integral event (is an experience), unless it is rounded out with this quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive (LW 10, 45).

The price of the extension of “aesthetic” to intellectual work is a radical formalization of the term “aesthetic”. Here Dewey is no longer concerned with the content of the intellectual experience as the content clearly lacks any immediacy. Instead the formal features of the experience in intellectual activity are highlighted as “artistic structure” inclusively the elating rewards when the activity is successfully completed. Still, the emotion plays here quite a different role to that in Tennyson’s In Memoriam or Renoir’s nudes. True enough, they are similar with respect to the formal structure. As we work practically, or intellectually or artistically, we experience our work immediately. In this respect the emotions in art, science and practical work are indeed comparable as they are integrated in the work process. There is a wish for logical solution and for conceptualization in intellectual work, and there is a wish for adequate form and for representation in art, there is a wish to make a usable object in practical work. However, the emotion regarding a concept is a different proposition from the emotion of the object the concept is about. In art the emotion associated to the object is reworked. Is this the case also in science and to what extent?

Final remarks
At the end I will try to draw some conclusions as to the role of emotion in experience and as to consequences in education. Dewey has given a theoretical basis for the thought of education of emotion. It consists in the concept of an organic integration of emotion in interaction and in corresponding experience (even though there is a strong interfering
strand of a mechanical concept as well). Clearly, emotions can be taken as causes and reasons for an action. This is the traditional stance in educational psychology, represented by the concept of motivation. But, more important, emotions may also be seen as the results of action. What Dewey has taught us is that emotions are mental (and perhaps cultural) structures, which evolve and unfold in interaction of the individual with the world. Especially important and against Western rationalistic tradition he has shown the indispensability of emotion in theoretical and scientific work.

The concept of unity of experience proves to be a blessing and a drawback. It is a blessing as it opposes the ontological dualism of Western rationalism. It is a drawback as it prevented Dewey from a narrow analysis of the different ways of cooperation between emotion, cognition and action in experience. With respect to art he draws conflicting and wrong conclusions like appreciating the poem (Tennyson) as a sophisticated way of mourning and the picture (Renoir) as expulsion of the erotic. With respect to theoretical work he rightly underlines the necessity of emotional involvement, but fails to show the simultaneous necessity of emotional distance, and the relation between the two demands.
References
3. The transformative power in four blind teenagers’ performance - subjective reframing caused by a disorienting dilemma

Anna-Lena Østern

Abstract
This case study of meaning making in a devised performance builds upon research material from a three year development project in 13 Finland-Swedish schools called “Drama and theatre in identity forming education”. The specific focus of this article is the final performance “The four elements” resulting from an aesthetic approach to education in a school for visually impaired children. The devising process forces the teacher into a disorienting dilemma, which she gradually solves by personal re-framing, building new frames of reference, and applying new habits of mind in a highly transformative process. The disorienting dilemma for the young audience and the young performers might have been more a formative process, being part of an articulation of an equity and diversity perspective regarding what it takes to be part of an artistic production process. The researcher as audience also had a disorienting dilemma to solve regarding the notion of aesthetics in contemporary time. This dilemma was solved by referring to Shklovsky’s notion of ostranenjie (making the familiar unfamiliar) and to the notion of otherness character formation based on cultural literacy as part of new habits of mind.
Introduction

It’s confusing and disturbing to watch the first minutes of the performance: the chaotic bodies, the restricted movements, the staccato tempo, the intervals with seeking, the meta-comments produced by taps with hands, adjusting to the space, the direction confusion, the tendency to fall into introversion, the stepping out of role and laughing with the audience, the happiness and relief, when done. But something is happening with me during the process of watching the performance. [Researcher diary entry 1]

Victor Shklovsky’s notion of *ostraenjie* was demonstrated right before my eyes; that was why my cheeks reddened, and I was thrilled, remembering Shklovsky’s words:

> Art exists that may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar”, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (Shklovsky, 1965, 12)

The purpose of this article is to develop more knowledge about the meaning making in a performance, a devised dance theatre, by four blind teenage girls in the context of a three year long arts education project in Finland, called *Drama and theatre in identity forming education*. I mirror the meaning making against three concepts in Mezirow’s (2000) transformative theory regarding adult learning: disorienting dilemma, personal re-framing and new habits of mind. Informed by the notion of aesthetic approach to education, I suggest an aesthetics revisited. The focus of my interest is the affordances and the cultural literacy identified in the performance “The four elements”.

The pre-understanding for this study is the importance of an aesthetic perspective on learning processes in school and in teacher education. I consider cultural literacy as one important goal for school in late modernity. If aesthetic learning processes can be a dimension within teaching different subjects, a teacher education where the students learn what it takes to teach from an aesthetic level is needed. To teach from an aesthetic level means that the art form the pupils and students are working in gives the group the rules and the frames for the work. Art is connected with skill and one part of the teacher’s possibility to integrate
“art as method” in his or her teaching connected to meaning making learning processes is that he/she is capable of handling the dramaturgy of the classroom and of challenging aesthetic learning processes to take place. An aesthetic or artistic learning process is characterized by learning where the individual’s relationship to something is changed, a new perspective on reality is opened.

Research problem and research questions
My research problem can be posed as a question about what kind of meaning making processes can be identified during this project emanating in the performance. I ask a set of exploratory questions: What kind of aesthetic thinking is informing this project? The ideas of cultural rights and inclusion are quite obvious, but what kind of aesthetic-artistic experience is at stake when describing the participants’ and the teacher’s experience, versus the frame of reference constituted through the performance for a live audience of pre-adolescent sighted children, or for the researcher involved in this research project?

Method and research material
This study is informed by narrative inquiry and reflexive methodology. The main research material is a videotape from the performance at the opening ceremony of the “Theatre party” in Tampere April 2005. I carried out one in-depth interview with the teacher and one with her assistant after the performance in Tampere. The teacher made short interviews with the girls. I received transcripts of these interviews. These were part of the final evaluation of the project. When I started to analyse the videotape, a lot of new questions regarding the process and especially the ownership of the performative expressions arose. Consequently, I asked if I could carry out one more interview with the main teacher, which was done in December 2005. Field notes from the live performance situation is part of the research material. In the research diary there are also comments from the audience after the performance, and notes from dialogues with drama teacher students and researchers connected to watching the video of the performance.
Theoretical framework
My theoretical framework is based on transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000). The notion of aesthetic approach to education is applied (Bresler, 2007). Post-modern thinking about otherness character formation (Drotner, 2004) is central to my observations concerning cultural literacy in an inclusive perspective. Finally I connect the findings to some aspects of performance theory (Bicât & Baldwin, 2008; Carlson, 2008; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Lehmann, 2006; Schechner, 1985) The concepts transformation and auto-poetic feedback loop, from performance theory, are used in order to explain the emerging meaning.

The project “Theatre and drama in identity forming education”
During three consecutive school years (2002-2005) a drama and theatre as arts education project was carried out which included 13 participating schools, located within the Finland-Swedish school system. At the beginning of the project the pupils were about 10-12 years old, which in Finland means grade 4. At the end of the project in April 2005 they were in grade 6 and 12-14 years old. The idea of the project was to support the pupils’ development in arts education, in language arts and performing skills. Every participating group had made an agreement that they would work within this program for at least two hours weekly during the three years. The first year was devoted to storytelling, oral and written. (Weckström, 2004) The second year was focused on physical theatre and mime. (Ström & Burman, 2005) The third year was focused on production: devising and writing a play, rehearsing and performing it.

About 300 of the participating children met at a “Theatre party” (in Swedish ‘Teaterkalaset’, a children’s and youth theatre festival), held in Tampere during one weekend in April 2005. There the groups from different schools performed for each other, participated in drama and theatre workshops, and made some final evaluation tasks regarding the impact of the project from the participants’ point of view (pupils and teachers).

The project was a joint venture with The Swedish polytechnic’s programme for performing arts in Vaasa. The others involved were The Faculty of Education at Åbo Akademi University and The Theatre

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3 Cf. Kaihovirta-Rosvik’s (2009) explanation of the notion in “Images of Imagination. An Aesthetic Approach to Education” and in her article in this anthology.

4 Today NOVIA University for Applied Sciences. The manager of the project was lecturer Birgitta Snickars-von Wright, and coordinator Eva-Helen Ahlberg.
Academy in Helsinki. Every year there were one or two gatherings, 2 day courses, where the teachers involved learnt about the ideas in the project and gained some basic skills in the focused area for the year in question. The teachers kept contact with a co-ordinator of the project, and reported what they had done every year. The students from the performing arts program had some of their practice in the schools participating in the project.

One of the participating schools was a school for visually impaired children. In this article I will focus on the final production of a small group of four girls participating in this project. The girls participated in the project for all of the three school years. Their teacher Lena\(^5\) had a Master’s degree in special education as well as subject studies in drama education and in physical education. She worked extensively with these four girls during the three years. She introduced drama as part of the school curriculum, which was new for this school with blind children as pupils. The second year she worked in collaboration with a teaching assistant, one of the students from the performing arts program at the participating polytechnic. This assistant also participated in the final event. All four girls had been since early childhood. This group was picked out to open the festival with their performance “The four elements”.

**The performance “The four elements”**
The performance “The four elements” definitely makes a familiar event (the devised school performance) strange. I note some basic descriptive features. The group has produced a performance, 15 minutes long, concerning one of the great conflict themes of humanity: man against man, or here nature against nature. The basic structure of the devised performance is:

Scene 1: Introducing the four elements, introducing the conflict: who’s the strongest?
Scene 2: More competition, giving each other good or bad credits for their dance and music.
Scene 3: Escalating conflict, they show how they can destroy each other.
Scene 4: Desires and dreams, what each element wants
Scene 5: Resolution: together can we make this happen. Together we are strong.

\(^5\) Fictive name.
They expose a dramaturgical thinking. They elaborate form clearly: use space in various ways, use-levels, body parts, form lines, connect, exaggerate their “blindisms”.

The project is supposed to be a piece of devised theatre, and there has been a devising process led by the drama teacher, but at this stage I do not know who has done what. I will come back to this later, but now a closer look at the introductory scene.

**Description of the introductory scene:**

In the gymnasium about 300 young persons and their teachers, and some parents, form the audience. In the front there is a traditional raised stage with a curtain. Behind the curtain, which is held closed by somebody, are obviously the players. The teacher Lena is welcoming the audience to the annual meeting of the four elements. She signals that she is the teacher in role. She is dressed formally (but in a feminine way) in a dark costume. Somebody is holding the stage curtain (the teacher assistant, which in the performance is a jukebox robot).

The performer Gunilla is pushed forward from the back curtain. She embodies the element earth. She wears a brown, long gown (like a choir gown), with some bright threads round her wrists. She has long light unruly brown hair. As Gunilla is blind she seems a bit unsure about the direction of the audience. She lies down on her back with knee bent, one hand holding the other leg (which is paralysed). She wears long red leggings. She stretches and bows the one knee in rhythm with a dark soft drum sound coming from the loudspeakers. While she is bending and stretching her right leg her face is turned away from the audience. She sits up in a yoga position and leans her head forward so she touches the floor. When she raises her head she also lifts up her right hand and says in a strong voice: “I am earth, and I am the best.” Gunilla smiles, relieved. She struggles to get up on her feet and moves to the right side of the stage. The audience is absolutely still, but when she utters “I am best” some small gigglings from the audience are heard.

The next performer, Anna, is led to her place by Lena. Lena turns Anna’s face towards the audience and says “Welcome”. “Thank you”, Anna says. She sniffs and lifts up her chin. She is dressed in the same

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6 Fictive name.

7 Fictive names are given to all performers.
type of gown as Gunilla, but her gown is white. She also has a white painted line on her nose. Her light brown hair goes down to her waist. “I am air. I can blow, dance and turn around” Her voice is soft and not dense. Some air is leaking out while she is talking. The music starts, it is a dripping melody played with a discordant metallic sound.. Anna starts her dance. She is turned towards (the voice) of her teacher. She bows forward, but not very deep. She turns around. She repeats this sequence three times. She gets up on her toes and spreads her arms out on both sides, and down again two times. When doing this she says: “I am the air, and I am the best”. A relieved expression is on her face. She is brought to the right side of the stage.

Siri is led in by the teacher as chair of the meeting: “Welcome” says the chair, Lena, and turns Siri’s face towards the audience. Siri says “Thank you” when she is at the spot where she performs her first part. She is smiling all the time. She wears a grey gown (of the same type as the others). Siri has a grey painted stripe on her nose. Her hair is in disorder, dark-red-brown in colour. “I am water. In me you can swim. Sometimes I storm, sometimes I am standing still.” She is still turned with her face towards the audience. For a little while she stands upright and opens and closes her fingers. The music starts. It is a soft beat accompanied with the sound of water. Siri turns around, and bows forward, stretches down her hands to the floor. Gets up again, stretches both arms straight up towards the ceiling. This sequence is repeated four times. While still down, tapping her hands on the floor, she finally says: “I am the best.”

The performer Linda comes in dressed in red, a red stripe on her nose, with long wild hair in a red tone. Very strong energy. “I am fire. I am warm and wild.” While saying the sentence, she kicks out to one side at the time with her fists. The music starts, it is a heavy rock piece with a strong and even beat. She is moving according to the beat. Every moment she is driven a bit closer to her teacher on the left side of the stage. First she pulls out her arms with closed fists as though kick boxing to the side. After that Linda starts kicking with her head in different directions. Linda kicks her upper body forwards and backwards. She is then kicking with one leg at a time: “I am fire. I am best.” Finally, she parts some of her hair which has covered her face. [Researcher’s Field note 1]

Both teacher and assistant have the double function of being co-players and of safeguarding the stage for the group, because there is an edge which it is possible to fall down from (onto the audience sitting on the floor).
In the concluding sequence it becomes obvious that Linda has the leading part, and has most of the sentences uttered. She says: “Oh this is a failure. We can destroy each other”. The audience giggles in an empathetic way, like soft rain falling on the players. “Fire can extinguish air.” Linda embraces Anna, showing how this turns out to be. This little sequence is an intensified moment of presence. Linda continues saying out loud how each element contributes to the survival of all. In this sequence all performers expose typical “blindisms”: shaking their wrists, rucking forwards and backwards, tapping on their bodies, sniffing air. It is like a relief for the performers, as though communicating: “We are done. We made it.” The four players organize themselves in a row holding hands. They are at the right side of the stage. A music like bright dawn coming is played. The applause from the audience is supportive and strong. [Researcher’s Field note 2]

In the next section of this article I will use Mezirow’s (2000) transformative learning theory for adult education as lenses for the interpretation of what the aesthetic approach to education through this specific performance shows in terms of emerging meaning. As part of a transformation of understanding Mezirow describes a starting point in a disorienting dilemma, a crisis when the learner experiences that the frames of reference might be wrong, based on socio-cultural distortions, or there is a piece missing. This might lead to a sudden process, or a slowly evolving process of transformation, where objective or subjective (or both) re-framing of the frame of reference is happening. This process involves critical thinking as well as affective involvement. The transformation leads to actions, changes in focus, and eventually new habits of mind. Mezirow applies the term formative learning regarding children’s acquisition of meaning schemes. The pupils aged 12-14 years, when this performance was devised and performed, might still be in the formative phase regarding meaning making of theatre, but they might have established a set of meaning schemes that will be disturbed by the performance in question. The young persons in the audience all have devised their own plays, which are performed later on during the theatre party. The devising process they have participated in may have formed certain expectations regarding what a performance is like in this context.
Disorienting dilemmas

I am confused and touched by the performance. During the performance “The four elements” I am first very disturbed. Why are these blind teenagers placed on a raised stage – there is obviously a risk of them falling down. Why not in the middle of the floor in the hall? Why do they have this type of choir gown covering their movements? Who has actually devised this performance? The teacher, or the group? Who has been the playwright, and how much collaboration has there been regarding choice of plot, scenography, music and choreography? The lack of control over the space, over the directedness – is this part of an artistic event? What genre is this? I become drawn into the performance, I get hooked. I gradually understand that these girls perform actually far beyond what could be expected from young girls with severe handicaps. To get up on to the tip of the toes, to lift up one foot, to kick with closed fists, to exaggerate reassuring movements known as “blindisms” all this is part of the aesthetic transformations in this performance. The performers flip flop – I think involuntarily – between being in and out of role. The support from the music is important for the choreographed parts. Some performer performs the choreography in a very intellectual way – I think she is repeating the instruction in her head. Some other performer is energetically and devotedly performing the qualities of the element. The timing and the correspondence with a certain beat is not always there. When I take in the audience I can notice a strong concentration, and fascination. It is like common breathing. [Research diary entry 2]

No other performance of the theatre party made such impact on me as this one. The other performances can be divided into three groups, all very familiar to a drama and theatre teacher working with community projects: (a) typical, traditional amateur theatre, giving the flavour of a time passed long ago; (b) new circus type clowning: well drilled; (c) non-fulfilled ideas, or no clear idea of to communicate; impossible to hear what the performers said. The three types are well known within the field of school productions, but “The four elements” is different and provocative. I think that the teacher directing might have tried to make a more traditional play, but I suggest that the circumstances forced her into unknown territory.
The teacher Lena's disorienting dilemma

As mentioned earlier, Mezirow (2000, 22-23) describes, as part of a transformative learning theory for adults, the notion of a disorienting dilemma. A disorienting dilemma is like a crisis, when things that you have taken for granted no longer seem to support your actions and your thinking. Lena describes her disorientation dilemma in the following way:

When I started to teach drama with my whole class consisting of blind pupils, I found out that my drama teacher education had not given me any support for working with pupils who could not see, and had a very scarce body awareness. They simply did not even know the names or places of different body parts. One of the pupils with a weak half (the left) of the body, because of pareses, did not notice that she had this side of her body. I did not have knowledge about how to work with bodies that were chaotic, and voices that did not obey instruction. How could the pupils express themselves with bodies and voices that did not obey them? They did not either use facial expression very much. I had to rethink what I knew about drama and how to build fiction, and combine this knowledge with what I had got from special education and from physical education. I had to build up my teaching design anew and collaborate with the pupils. I was very focused and demanding, because the pupils had hitherto always heard that “You are blind, and that is OK”. I said it is not OK for a girl to do this or that, I made them aware of their “blindisms”, I challenged them to notice who in the group needed help from the others to get up and down on the floor. I used the ‘sound lighthouse’ to teach them to co-operate and be turned towards each other in a circle. I made a rhyme with the main points in the fiction contract. Luckily, I had many lessons with the group during these three years. I got their trust. I developed a functioning teaching concept, using all my skills and knowledge. [Quote from interview with drama teacher Lena]

Lena gradually solved her disorienting dilemma by reframing her assumptions, by an intensive struggle as old perspectives became challenged and transformed. She also made an informed and reflective decision to act on her reflective insight. She made a “leap into the

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8 Subjective reframing, according to Mezirow, involves critical self-reflection of one’s own assumptions. It can be consciousness-raising (conscientization is the concept used by Paolo Freire) in the civil rights movement. It might be about a narrative, applying a reflective insight from someone else’s narrative to one’s own experience. It can also be about the assumptions about the ways one learns. (Cf. Mezirow, 2000, 22-23.)
unknown”⁹, together with her pupils. She not only presented a new perspective for her pupils, but she also lived the new perspective.

_Disorienting dilemmas for Lena’s pupils?
_I had only short evaluation interviews (carried out by the teacher Lena), when the three years of special focus on drama, storytelling and physical theatre were over. From the final result I can see that the pupils are highly involved in their devised performance. In terms of the whole project and their memories of it, I can produce the following narrative. My researcher assumption is that these pupils met a teacher who challenged them to the limits of their abilities, and moved these limits, also making the physical space, narrative space, and aesthetic space become wider.¹⁰ The pupils developed competence and confidence through the focus on corporeality and through the relational aesthetics applied.¹¹ I suggest that they became more embodied minds, at least more aware than before. The three year process opened up new spaces, especially new meaning making possibilities regarding art and communication through artistic signs. They answered like this in the interview made by the teacher Lena:

> What I remember most from the theatre party in Tampere is our play “The four elements”, and when we had the battle about the weather. I liked our play. Especially I liked it when the air danced, and the body was glad; my chaotic hair, the feeling when performing. I enjoyed the feeling of tension before, to be on stage, and the relief and satisfaction afterwards. I especially remember the intense moment when water could extinguish fire. [Quote 1 from the interviews with Gunilla, Anna, Siri and Linda]

The memories are sensuous. The girls talk about bodily sensations. One girl mentions that the body was glad. Another mentions a very intense moment in the performance. To experience the tension, the intensity of performing, and the relief after the performance can be an experience the girl not have had before, and the experience gave her a dimension of a new identity. It was a transforming process in the sense the concept is

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¹⁰ Cf. T. P. Østern (2009) in Meaning making in the Dance Laboratory.

used in performance theory. I will come back to comment the experience of the intense moment in the next paragraph.

What I remember the best from our drama lessons is the importance of the fictive contract, and to obey that. I remember the improvisation, the dancing with different parts of my body, the tales, all the movements and the relaxation, and the massage. And above all the work with our play. [Quote 2 from the interviews with Gunilla, Anna, Siri and Linda]

The longitudinal process of developing drama competence is in Quote 2 connected with corporeality, the body memories of movement, the different body parts, the relaxation and the massage. The fictive contract is mentioned as an important aspect of drama competence: to obey the rules of the art form. The most challenging task, to devise a performance is described with the words “above all our work with the play”. The process has in the mind of the girl been collaborative and she shares the ownership of the product with the other girls.

I have learnt not to bite others, to be kind to others and to listen to them, and not always talk yourself, to use a distinct and strong voice (but not scream), and to say yes. I have improved my knowledge about my body and its parts. I have learnt to dance, to move my arms, and to improvise. [Quote 3 from the interviews with Gunilla, Anna, Siri and Linda]

In quote 3 it is remarkable that the girls describe learning as integrating social rules (not bite, not scream, be kind) and to improve the code competence for socially acceptable behaviour. (to listen, not to talk all the time) Learning connected to the art form is also mentioned (improvisation, dance, say yes), and the importance of bodily sensations, the improvement of bodily awareness seems to be important for the participants.

I would like to continue with all this, much more. I would like to elaborate the plot and the solutions a lot more in devised plays, to produce more performances and be on stage. I would like to move my body and to improvise and play more. [Quote 4 from the interviews with Gunilla, Anna, Siri and Linda]

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The project drama and theatre in identity forming education seems to have contributed to a new orientation for the participating girls. The art educational project has made a difference in their experience of being in the world. Quote 4 validates this conclusion, because they wish to continue with all this, “much more”. Quote 4 introduces a wish to develop more competence in devising and performing. They have the confidence that they can contribute in an artistic setting.

These quotations imply that the pupils have integrated meaning schemes, which include and embrace the aesthetic approach to learning. They express as well as an insight into the art form, and a wish to learn more, and also an insight into the community aspect of collaborative work in an art form. I suggest that the disorienting dilemma for these pupils was regarding the much strong challenge to learn in general compared to what they had experienced before, and to form a new, much more embodied identity through the corporeality of the work carried out, guided by their teacher.

The concept transformation in performance
So far I have connected transformation to Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, but the concept transformation has long been used in performance to articulate the changes, the new identity, that can be the result of a meeting with art, performance. When the teacher Lena had to form a new concept for drama teaching, she moved into unknown terrain. I suggest that her combination of ethical-aesthetical considerations moved her teaching towards an aesthetics of inclusion, humanity and empathy – close to the transformations sought for in postmodern performance.

In an artistic event Fischer-Lichte (2008, 74) identifies a continually operating feedback loop provided in any performance event by the ongoing interactions of performers and audience: “The bodily presence of the actor that affects them and sets the auto-poetic\textsuperscript{13} feedback loop in motion.” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 74)

The performers in “The four elements” presented a Utopian solution to the problems of the world. Dolan writes about Utopian performatives:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{13} The term was first used by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, biologists, who pointed at the self-producing operations of living systems: \textit{...} “auto-poetic systems are simultaneously producers and products, circular systems that survive by self-generation.” (Carlson, 2008, 7)
\end{quote}
“small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking and intersubjectively intense” (Dolan, 2005, 5, quoted in Carlson, 2008, 9).

The concept auto-poetic feedback loop can be applied to what was happening during the performance – between the performers on stage, and between the audience and the performers.

Disorienting dilemmas for the audience and for the researcher
After the theatre party the participating young persons made drawings from a moment which they remembered the best. They also filled out an evaluation sheet with thoughts about what they remembered the most, what they had learnt, and what they would like to do. That material is not part of this study, but it could be a contribution to more thorough knowledge about how the sighted children received the performance “The four elements”. Concerning the possible disorienting dilemma, I would like to borrow the concept formative period (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) in terms of young persons’ (children in a transition period to teens) formation of ideas regarding what the performance is. The highly focused and receptive audience throughout the performance can be one sign of an ongoing disorienting dilemma, as well as of a breakthrough or an acceptance of “new rules” for a good performance in the final phase of the performance: the phase when the challenge not to destroy each other is presented (Water can extinguish fire; Fire can use all the air…), and the Utopian solution of co-existence and interdependence is presented.

From the researcher’s field notes and from a sentence in one interview with the performers (mentioned in a paragraph earlier), I identify that this phase seems to be a especially intense moment, where the audience and the performers experience an auto-poetic feedback loop. Carlson (2008, 9) writes: “These small but profound moments are clearly the moments that Fischer-Lichte would call moments of enchantment, resulting in a sudden deeper insight into the shared process of being in the world.” This deeper insight is part of character formation.

14 For children in the formative process of learning this performance might represent what performance is.
Character formation today includes the notion of otherness. To take in otherness in thoughts, cultures and in oneself has long been part of the changes in perspectives undertaken when building fictional worlds. The audience watching “The four elements” might have met otherness in expression, and otherness in other teenagers at the stage as a sudden insight in the human condition. Drotner (2004, 16-17) writes that drama education has been developed in relation to two discursive fields and educational fields of practice: /…/ “namely the cultural field, where drama belongs, and the pedagogical field, where education belongs”. She suggests a dialogue scenario for drama education in the future. This scenario encompasses both the cultural and the pedagogical dimensions, but it is crucial that drama education builds upon the complexity of the aesthetic processes themselves. Drotner thus suggests that drama can also be an arts subject, a cultural subject, and can support learning processes in other subjects. She links this thought strongly to the notion of otherness character formation, considering the necessity for young people today to take in the perspectives of foreign cultures and people.

Cultural literacy through auto-poetic feedback loops, moments of enchantment and ostranenjie
As researcher I was part of the audience at the theatre party. In the first paragraph of this article I have described my disorienting dilemma regarding what I could think about this performance. I tried to use my analytical tools to define the genre and the aesthetics at play. I gradually became ashamed of my own socio-cultural distortions, and my cheeks were blushing, as I started my own subjective re-framing process. I tried to identify building blocks for the cultural literacy necessary in order to keep up a dialogue about being in the world together with young persons. Revisiting aesthetic thinking and the confusion I experienced, made some new questions move to the foreground of my attention: Who has stated the rules for aesthetics, like being symmetric, rhythmical, fast? How can differently bodied persons get the right to participate equally in the production of culture? Together with the audience of “The four elements” I experienced the auto-poetic feedback loops between the performers present on stage, and the audience, intensifying some profound moments, perhaps resulting in “a sudden deeper insight into the shared process of being in the world”.

In postmodern performance and in radical art you can find this unfamiliar, touching beauty. The performance “The four elements”

15 The concept differently bodied is coined by T.P. Østern (2009).
articulates this unfamiliar, stunning beauty. You can fill out the gaps with your empathy, with your interpretations of the intentions, the moments of fulfilment. The performance “The four elements” is a piece of community based, site-specific communication based on aesthetics suitable for contemporary time.

The simultaneous communication levels of (a) story, and (b) the autobiographic narratives expressed in the body language of the performers produce, as multi-modal discourse\textsuperscript{16}, a cluster of meanings. The cluster of meanings is not just about the aesthetics of otherness, but is the thought-provoking idea of the right to participate on an equal basis – not as blind or seeing, but as young persons with dreams and wishes for the future, which everyone in the audience can embrace. I have been able to identify different disorienting dilemmas, each one of them pointing in the same direction: this performance is the result of a transformative arts education process. It is necessary to abandon the taken for granted notion of aesthetics and art, revisit it, and look at a strange, unfamiliar beauty, which might form new habits of mind for everyone involved.

References


4. Understanding the educational potential of play employed in visual arts education

Johan Vikström

Abstract

The aim of this article is to reveal some of the educational potential of the ludic element by discussing how play can be employed in pedagogic practice and how it influences learning in visual arts education. This article argues that simulation is a form of pedagogic practice that makes aesthetic learning through play possible because learning in the simulational mode makes it possible to represent and handle the complex structure and nature of play. This article presents how simulation can be employed as a method and as a medium for exploring and experiencing learning content. I also argue that simulation is a form of investigative play that offers arts educators a method for direct embodied experiential learning that promotes skills in creative problem-solving and investigative learning.
Exploring life, death, and beyond through art

Two teenage girls are lying in the street, seriously injured, after having had a violent traffic accident on their way to school. Seconds ago they were both riding a lightweight motorcycle at full speed down the street when they collided with an oncoming car. Blood covers the street, pouring out from the inside of the motorcycle helmets that perhaps saved the lives of the two girls when they were swept off the motorcycle and onto the street. Behind the steering wheel in the car sits The Goddess of Fate. Her frightful white face is smiling when she realizes that she has succeeded in catching two more souls which she will bring with her to captivity in the dream world. A group of six teenagers, classmates of the two victims, gather around the two unconscious girls. They are eagerly discussing how to handle the situation while videotaping each other.

“I think they are dead. We’d better call an ambulance”, says a boy, dressed like a medieval monk, standing next to the girls, looking through the camera and trying to arrange a dramatic shot composition when framing the three elements beneath him: two bodies and a motorcycle”.

“They will wake up in the dream world next week. Then all dead people will have to play the game”, whispers The Goddess of Fate before she disappears”.

An experimental study in a school context
The scene presented above is an example of how a group of teenagers use simulation when making a short film entitled “The Play”. This article presents some findings from this experimental study in a school context where play was employed in the learning process of filmmaking. The study was conducted as an interventional study during twelve art lessons with a group of nine 14-15-year-old pupils in a Finnish upper secondary school. Frames of reference for the teaching content and methods in the study take as point of departure the Finnish national curriculum in visual arts, pointing out that learning in the visual arts is process-oriented and emphasizes the development of artistic learning and the understanding of artistic processes (see NCCBE 2004, 234-238). The aim of the study is to examine how play can be employed in an aesthetic learning process in visual arts education, and thereby to examine how play can contribute to aesthetic learning. In this article I discuss the findings from my experimental study, where the teenagers found out that they can employ ludic activities as forms of dramatic
activity when making film. During both lessons the teenagers’ intention
to film and dramatize staged scenes and events transformed into ludic
activities that best can be understood as simulations.

The ludic element – the element of play in aesthetic learning in
arts education
The understanding of the play phenomenon refers to the existence of the
ludic element – the element of play – which is a fundamental element in
human culture, according to Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, in his work
_Homo Ludens_ (orig. from 1938). The term _ludic_ is derived from _ludo_, the
Latin word for “to play”.

In this article a free, voluntary, and non-utilitarian form of play is called a
ludic activity referring to American game theorist Eric Zimmerman
(2004), who divides play phenomena into three general categories: 1)
Game play, or the formal playing of games. 2) Ludic activities, or
informal play. 3) Being playful, or being in a playing state of mind.
According to Zimmerman (ibid), ludic activities, or informal play include
all of the non-game behaviours that we think of as playing: children
chasing each other, two teenagers tossing a frisbee back and forth, a circle
of children playing ring-around-the-roses, etc.

A core argument for employing play in aesthetic learning is that play and
art coexist and that art originates from play. Huizinga (1938) argues that
the ludic element is pervasive and fundamental and that culture is ludic
from the start. There is no single type of activity, called “play”, that
subsequently turns into another, called “culture”. The heart of culture is
essentially constituted by elements of theatricality, exhibitionism,
virtuosity, joyful improvisation, competition and challenge.

Thus, art and aesthetics intrinsically possess ludic qualities. Emphasizing
the ludic element, omnipresent in aesthetic learning, therefore
illuminates the fundamental nature of the art form and the subject being
studied.
Play challenges arts education
However, the main reason why I suggest that play should be employed in aesthetic learning is that play challenges established learning methods. The experimental study proves that aesthetic learning as a form of play rejects learning processes relying on the dominant mimetic forms of representation for understanding and representing reality. The qualities of play cannot be explored, nor can they be sufficiently understood through investigative artistic learning relying on pure observation. The nature and structure of play consists of complex and dynamic processes of non-linear causality, flux and change. The handling of these processes requires a direct form of experiential learning, emphasizing immediate embodied experiences of the subject matter that is to be explored.

The concept of play therefore creates opportunities for innovative forms of pedagogic practice which take into account young people’s informal learning from play, games and interactive media. In this manner play employed in education can contribute to postmodern arts education for the Information Age and beyond.

Exploring life through art and play
In the study, the nine teenagers decided to explore the theme Life and Death by making their film about what possibly happens when you die. The teenagers found out that the prospect of losing one’s life could best be experienced through play instead of through visual narration based on observational methods or on mimetic representation based on narrative. In this manner the teenagers became experientially involved and immersed in the exploration of the issues that were of great importance to them. Play thereby became a medium for exploring the theme Life and Death, as well as a medium for exploring the film-making process.

The most interesting finding from the experimental study is that the intertwined filmmaking-and-playing-process was not based on representation but on an alternative semiotic structure known as simulation. This type of learning practice, where the pupils also actively and consciously experiment with form in order to generate meaning, is therefore understood as a simulation.
Simulation in computer based learning

When searching for a practicable way to employ play in aesthetic learning I first looked at learning in computer generated learning environments and there found a form of learning called simulation. Scientists have traditionally used simulation for explanatory purposes and in particular for predicting the behaviour of complex systems. Therefore the idea of using simulation for educational purposes is far from new and was already extensively explored in science education by constructionism. The idea was developed by Seymour Papert (1985) through mindstorms and logo, and it was continued by such authors as Yasmin Kafai (1995), whose students learned mathematics through videogame design. The main problem, however, is that constructionism is not designed for dealing with social and humanities education and I therefore claim it is not at all suited for arts education which intends to explore, express, and critically discuss human and social matters.

According to the American game researchers and authors, James Paul Gee (2003) and Marc Prensky (2007), simulation has for a long time been one of the leading learning principles in game-based learning, and, according to Uruguayan game researcher Gonzalo Frasca (2004), the all time best-selling video-game *The Sims* (2000) represents a breakthrough in videogame design because it fully opened the Pandora’s Box of simulating human life. Frasca writes that video games like The Sims introduce a different form of representation – simulation – that now makes it possible for players to start modelling complex systems, like life.

However, after doing some research in digital teaching materials I found that most learning games used in education are not simulation games but so-called fact-games filled with educational material (for example, historical facts), which the pupil can explore during the game. These games are remains of the practice of “edutainment” or “education through entertainment”, which represent a very different approach on how to employ the ludic element in learning contexts than is advocated in this article. This viewpoint regards play and games as teaching or training tools, whose main purpose is to make the learning process more enjoyable, appealing or accessible to the pupils. In this case, the teacher wants to achieve a predefined goal, such as the transmission of some piece of knowledge about mathematics, biology or some other serious science. The teacher does not consider this subject matter to be essentially ludic, and so the process of playing has in his view no intrinsic
connection to the core content. Playing is treated solely as a vehicle to maximize the “effectiveness” of teaching.

**Employing the ludic element in aesthetic learning in arts education**

I argue that employing the ludic element in aesthetic learning requires a completely different approach on how to think of play and games in education than in the example presented above. The point is not that arts education would be more “effective and attractive” if methods were more ludic, but rather that arts education in most aspects already is ludic. There is a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, using games as an efficacious instrument to teach art, and, on the other hand, treating art under the aspect of play. The latter approach requires the understanding that the ludic element is pervasive in arts and aesthetics and that an artistic activity in most aspects already is ludic. This understanding implies that an intertwined ludic and artistic activity can be a genuine medium for exploring subject matter and content. In this way the connection between learning and playing is no longer contingent but essential. Therefore, when an art teacher intends to employ play in teaching, the first question should always be: what aspects of the subject matter in question already exhibit ludic features? And how can these aspects be explored and emphasized in the learning process?

Consequently, in the planning of the experimental study I started from the conviction that a film-making process is an aesthetic learning process that intrinsically holds ludic qualities. I considered making drama in film to be an appropriate learning content because the film-making process involves various forms of artistic expressions that have distinct ludic features. The videotaped research material from the experimental study shows that the teenagers developed innovative ways of exploring and expressing learning contents when the learning process was treated under the aspects of play. When playing involved filming, the camcorder became part of the play and the teenagers developed skills in how to use the video camcorder in the simulational mode by combining filming techniques and elements from factual and fictional film-making.

However, I think the most important finding is that playing promoted the evolving of meaning as the teenagers developed a form of investigative play – simulation – that made it possible for them to become experientially immersed and involved in the exploration of the theme Life and Death. This type of simulation that arose in the study
exhibits strong features of improvised drama. Frasca (2003; 2004) defines simulation as the modelling of a dynamic system through another system. He claims that the drama technique The Theatre of the Oppressed of the Brazilian dramatist Augusto Boal (1985) is a good example of simulation because it combines theatre and simulation in order to produce social and political simulations that encourage critical debate over social, political and personal issues. Frasca argues that one of Boal’s (1992) most popular techniques, The Forum Theatre, is closer to games and simulation than to theatre because the audience is encouraged to participate by improvising possible solutions to the problem that is being staged. Frasca claims that Forum Theatre perfectly fits the definition of simulation: it models a system (the oppressive situation) through another system (the play). In the study the teenagers learned from their experiences because the simulation allowed them to enter into, and to explore how they felt about, a situation that really concerned them. By repeating the simulation the teenagers were also allowed to improvise and act out different possible solutions to the staged scenario, and by doing so, learn. I therefore strongly suggest that simulation in aesthetic learning should be realized through physical play that provides embodied experiences and promotes embodied learning. The experimental study proves that simulation can be employed as a form of role play, where learners simulate and explore human relationships, social issues and social reality in performative scenarios. Bodily action is recommended because in aesthetic learning knowledge is generated by processes of intertwined mental and physical work, so that objectives for expression, skills and knowledge are realized simultaneously in artistic activities. Consequently, I claim that an artistic activity has distinct ludic qualities and that, in a simulation, the artistic activity can be transformed to a ludic activity, maintaining its function as a generator of expression, skills and knowledge.

I further suggest that play employed in arts education can best be carried through in group-oriented practices. A simulation requires group work because the ludic element appears uppermost and is effected in interaction between the co-players and opponents. Group work is therefore an operational and a convenient way to evoke and deploy it. Moreover, the study proves that play emphasizes co-operative effort and provides challenges in how to interact and co-operate with others. The nine teenagers worked together as a team through different phases of the making and playing of the simulations; they jointly created the subject matter and background stories, the settings for the simulations, and they also performed the simulations jointly in the group.
A more ludological approach to learning in visual arts education

Ludology is a formal discipline that studies play, games, toys and computer games and a ludological approach in play and games focuses on the understanding of its structure and elements, claiming that games need to be understood in terms of the concept of play. A ludological process is a process realized through play, games or through game play (see Frasca 1999; 2003).

I claim there is strong similarity between learning through simulation and the learning process in visual arts education, and thereby argue that simulation is an interesting form of investigative artistic learning. Simulation has some implications for visual arts education because simulation is dynamic and its essence is change. It thereby forces visual arts education to focus on the creation of the new. The potential of simulation is not as a conveyer of values and should not be employed for stating facts, and for solving problems with predetermined correct solutions. Thus, simulation directs the objectives of problem solving and investigative learning towards creating, exploring and experiencing future possible scenarios. In temporal terms, simulation is not about what happened or is happening, but with what could happen. Because simulation is the form of the future, the impulse toward simulation must always be asking the questions What if…? What would happen if we…? What would it be like to…?

In my opinion these are exactly the questions that should provide the starting points in an assignment in visual arts instruction. For visual arts education this is a refreshing reminder of one of the original and most essential missions of art and arts education in society: to be a forerunner, pointing out possible future scenarios and critically discussing human and social matters through means of art. I think this makes simulation an appropriate method according to the objectives of visual art instruction, which aims to develop the imagination and to promote the pupil’s skills in the creative problem-solving needed in building a sustainable future (NCCBE 2004, 234).

When simulation is employed in arts education, it simply requires a more ludological approach to learning because it focuses on the creation of new meaning and on a non-linear and holistic understanding of the world. A more ludological approach to learning may help us to understand a world that no longer seems susceptible to cause and effect logic, but more and more to non-linear causality, implying the understanding that all events or behaviours may have multiple
determinants and outcomes. This comes quite close to the characteristics of an aesthetic learning process, which, of course, holds strong ludic qualities. In fact, a simulation deploys a learning process very similar to an aesthetic learning process, according to Danish game researcher Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2005), when he points to the factors in games that educators and researchers find interesting for educational use. He writes that the general idea seems to be that games for educational use should be open-ended, creative, process-oriented, dynamic, complex and toy-like. Interestingly, these ludic qualities are easily found in aesthetic learning processes.

The Finnish researcher in arts education, Anna-Lena Østern, writes that aesthetic learning processes are dynamic and that they are in constant motion. They are based on improvisation and are therefore unpredictable; they are complex and have different purposes. Various participants give their different interpretations and tell different stories. The work with art forms requires an open-minded and searching approach. Art welcomes the incomplete and the emerging. There are no predetermined correct solutions, but a continuous dialogue about value and meaning, which inspires pupils to actively engage in valuing and meaning-making of knowledge (Østern 2006a, 25; Østern 2006b, 26).

Moreover, fundamental to learning in visual art and to learning through simulation is the process of creating content and form. They are process-oriented and strive for the creation of new meaning, and learning by doing requires a process over time to develop. A simulation creates a playful social environment in which learners come together to experience and explore learning contents through participation in a shared ludic and artistic activity in which meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than individually. In this way simulation can be understood as process-oriented, participatory and investigative learning. Simulation requires the active participation of learners not just for interpretational matters, but also for accessing its content. The only way for new learners, coming from outside the learning event, to get access to learning contents is to join and actively participate in the ludic activity. It is essential that learners both create and play the ludic-artistic activity. “Creating” in visual arts education implies that learners reuse, remake, and modify their own real-life experiences and experiences from media. Gee (2008) stresses the learning potential achievable when learners simultaneously play and build inside a simulation. He explains that scientists normally stay outside the simulation, observing the behaviour of the simulated model when it is set running, whereas gamers learn
from player experience, from building inside the simulated game world. He claims that playing strategy and simulation games like the multiplayer online games *Civilisation* (2005) and *World of Warcraft* (2008) result in players developing increasing empathy for complex life systems, which also results in the growing consciousness of the players about values and ideologies of life. He claims that these abilities are promoted by “modding” – players modifying and remaking the games themselves. Learners then start asking questions about the game’s ideology: is it okay to let my people starve to death because I put our money into weapons instead of agriculture?

Gee (2008) points out that a learner’s understanding of a complex life world radically increases when he is not only playing the game, but also creating the actual game world. He thereby explains “modding” in gaming as “you make it to play it!” Gee strongly suggests “modding” in group-oriented online communities to be a form of learning that deserves to be transferred to educational practice in a school context.

**Creating simulations**
The idea of placing learners inside a simulation and encouraging them to create a life world where they can explore human relationships and social issues was tested in the experimental study. The nine teenagers gradually found out that they could explore the theme Life and Death through simulation. First, they collectively made up a background story featuring all of them disappearing from their ordinary lives under strange circumstances and transferring to a mysterious world in another dimension. Four of the teenagers also transformed themselves into fictional characters. They designed well-defined and interesting characters and they were very interested to dress up like the characters and to act them out in the simulations. One girl decided to transform herself to a fairy that was a Greenpeace-activist dressed in colourful hippie style from the 1970s. Another girl, inspired by characters from horror movies, wanted to be transformed into an evil puppet that had escaped from puppetry and should appear as a walking zombie in the fantasy world. The group then decided she was The Goddess of Faith, the ruler of the dream world. One boy decided to transform himself into a mysterious medieval Russian monk. He chose to hide his true identity by using a Santa Claus mask. A third girl wore a diving suit and covered her face behind diving goggles while playing. She played the role of a sea world creature which lived on the beach not far from the school building. The remaining five teenagers wanted to be themselves while playing because they felt they were exploring real life issues from their own lives.
Then the teenagers created the setting for the simulation: the time, the location and the circumstances providing the main backdrop from which the simulation could be started. The starting scene for the simulated accident in the street simulated as closely as possible an everyday situation of two girls having an accident. They both ride their lightweight motorbikes to school along the same street where the simulated accident was performed and they often discuss the possibility of having a fatal accident some day. The question asked in their simulation was: What would it be like to have a serious accident on my way to school? The accident-simulation was staged as realistically as possible, with all nine characters involved: The Goddess of Fate sitting in the front seat of a car (the teacher was driving), the two girls riding the motorbike and the other teenagers filming while crossing the street where the two vehicles were to collide.

The teenagers arranged several similar simulations where they explored ways of directing and filming each other and spontaneously acting together. They experimented with filming and acting out improvised scenes of open-ended loose dramatic scenarios. According to the back story The Goddess of Fate was the ruler of the dream world and she decided who would meet their fate and be transferred to the dream world. She was able to move around in the ordinary world, invisible to the eye of the human beings, but she always turned up in front of the eyes of the person she decided to bring to the dream world. The teenagers knew the story only as a set of non-scripted, loose possible dramatic scenarios, which provided them with multiple ways of staging and performing the scenes. In almost every simulation the evil Goddess of Faith somehow succeeded in catching one or two of the teenagers and she then brought their souls to her kingdom in another dimension, which was a twilight zone between life and death. The simulated learning practices provided experiences that could not have been generated in a representational mode; the teenagers had now discovered the fascination of simulation. The possibility to become trapped between life and death fired the imagination of the teenagers and they became very curious and interested in experiencing this fascinating scenario. They decided to explore it by creating and playing a compelling and competitive role-playing simulation. An authentic everyday life site, a park, was chosen to simulate the mysterious dream world. Up to now the simulations had consisted merely of free and spontaneous informal play, but now the teenagers created a game-like simulation with winning and losing conditions. The four teenagers playing the fictional characters (the
goddess, the fairy, the monk and the diver) were now settled guardians of the game world and performed in the roles of game masters, who could manipulate the course of events by commissioning the five players to perform various tasks needed to be fulfilled in order to proceed through the game. Before the role play simulation was set running, the game masters presented the rules of the game to the players. The guardians also decided that the five players should carry small hand-held camcorders and videotape their adventures non-stop during the entire game event. According to the new back story the five players, arriving from the outside real world, were rookies who had to play a risky, rule-based and mobile game, assisted by the sometimes unreliable guardians of the game world. The players expected the role play simulation to be an exciting way of experiencing what it possibly would be like to be transferred to a twilight zone between life and death – a mysterious, playful ludic world – and the question asked towards the simulation was therefore: What would it be like to have to fight for my life together with my friends in a scary mysterious dream world? And how can we escape from captivity in the ludic world and return to life back home in the real world?

The experimental study proves that the group of nine teenagers were able to create immersive and meaningful simulations by remaking and modifying real life experiences and experiences from play, film and literature. They made up interesting background stories, created characters, and used real life settings in order to stage starting scenarios from which the simulations could be set running. But they also understood that a simulation has to be non-scripted and that it is open-ended and produces unpredictable outcomes. The experimental study shows that characters, background story, and a good playing site is not enough to start a simulation. The starting scene from which the simulation can be set running has to contain a conflict or a problem that the players have to solve. In fact, the major driving force behind the making of the simulations was the teenagers’ need for thrilling experiences, which resulted in an active and conscious experiment with form in order to generate meaning.

**Serious playfulness in simulation**

The non-scripted role play simulation in the park proved to be an open-ended improvised form of human simulation, which engaged all the teenagers in its intense run of continuously following unexpectedly occurring situations and events. The role play allowed for a rich and intense interaction between the players, and as it is based on real
interaction, everybody immediately became a participant and thus initiated occurrences when they encountered or casually bumped in to each other. The interaction required improvised role-playing and the teenagers then dared to start using their imaginations and gradually gave themselves over to the ludic process of invention. The action-based role play unfolded for thirty-five minutes within a spatio-temporal frame, the so-called “magic circle”, which isolated the ludic practice from the actual time and place. The competitive role play simulation resulted in upsetting emotional experiences that intensified the teenagers’ intentions to explore the theme Life and Death further.

In the role play simulation the use of fantasy and imagination played a vital role in evoking the ludic element. This type of simulation presupposes that learners collectively and willingly enter into their imagination, become active participants in the activity by driving it forward through interaction and improvisation, and even engage in fictitious and symbolic action. The video footage shows that although the teenagers were playing and enjoying themselves in the role play simulation, there was at the same time a high degree of seriousness involved.

Huizinga (1938) uses the notion serious playfulness when he describes play which is not isolated from the serious. The role-playing of the teenagers was serious playfulness in the way that the active creating of fiction is seen as playing with meaning, but at the same time also playing by the rules. Four of the teenagers dressed up like their fictitious characters (a fairy, a monk, a sea creature, and The Goddess of Faith), and immersed themselves in the fictitious lives of their characters when acting them out. I think the character immersion was made possible because the pupils created and played characters that were genuinely meaningful for them: characters representing dreams and behaviour that the pupils could not realize in their everyday life. The pupils perceived the role-playing game as representing something from their private fantasy world. They embedded personal interests and motives into the role-play, realizing dreams and wants and trying out what it would be like to be transformed into another. For example, the girl who role-played the hippie-fairy-Greenpeace-activist firmly believes in environmental protection and is a convinced fan of the Greenpeace organisation. The role play made it possible for her to act out her dream of becoming a protector of threatened species and environments. The boy who played the medieval Russian monk tried out his fantasies of possessing supernatural power. His character’s characteristics and ability
to perform magic were similar to the ones of the magicians from the film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* movies. According to the pupil, the wise and mysterious monk had been living in the game world for nearly a thousand years and suffered from a personality disorder, which meant he had to be treated with a great deal of respect and caution. Hidden behind the mask with its long white beard and dressed in a long coat, the boy convincingly role-played the monk and expressed himself through speech and actions in a way that he normally does not dare to do in front of other pupils.

Østern (2003, 35) explains that serious playfulness is a necessary prerequisite for aesthetic doubling. Aesthetic doubling means that the participants of the drama process reflect their meanings in the transformational space between the fictive and the real world. The students’ play with roles, story, place and time creates freedom to express more than is possible to express in one-dimensional reality. They devote themselves to the construction of the fiction, they make it conditionally (not for real, “for play” – they bracket the demands for “reality” for a certain amount of time and then they leave it) and they are not obliged to do anything else other than to obey the rules of the play. The learning potential of drama is in the aesthetic doubling of role, place, time – and plot.

Serious playfulness is not present only in make-believe and in imagination. In simulation, serious playfulness is also required in investigative play, which explores real life situations by simulating reality as close as possible. In the accident-simulation, serious playfulness made it possible for the teenagers to realize their serious attempts to explore a perilous traffic accident in malleable forms under relatively safe circumstances. In line with experiential learning, theory simulations make it possible to perform actions in a simulated setting, resembling real actions as closely as possible. The teenagers’ intention was to simulate a collision between the girls riding the motorbike and the car driven by the teacher and the Goddess of Faith. The rest of the teenagers were pedestrians filming and crossing the street where the fatal accident should take place. The simulation was staged so that the persons driving the vehicles involved in the simulation would start on a signal from fixed positions from where they could not see each other. The exact timing of the two vehicles was very difficult, so when one of them was late there was no collision and the drivers and pedestrians improvised other possible scenarios instead. The teenagers found that a simulation provides them with multiple ways of performing possible
scenarios because a simulation is repeatable and produces different outcomes every time. Every time the simulation was set running they then started to improvise new possible solutions to the scenario. Some of the simulations produced the accident hoped for, most other simulations did not, and in one of the repeated simulations one of the pedestrians crossing the street got in front of the car and “got killed”. In this way simulation proved its capability to represent complex processes with multiple agents and causalities at work.

The simulated accident in the street proves that it is in the marginal space between the real and the simulated that the fascination and the learning potential of simulation resides. This simulation generated real-world experiences that had real-world effects – embodied, direct and material, because afterwards the teenagers discussed the death toll on the roads and how to behave in traffic on their way back to school. The important question asked after the simulated was: How should we act in the traffic to avoid accidents like the ones we just experienced? In this way the simulation generated experiences that both modified behaviour and entertained the teenagers. British media researcher John Dovey (2002, 233) states that simulation as material practice deployed in role plays using social actors produces real knowledge about real things in the real world and has real effects upon real lives.

When participating in the simulated accident and in the role play simulation in the park, the teenagers found that through simulation it is possible to experience fascinating simulated situations and scenarios dealing with matters and problems that help them examine their interpretations of the world. Moreover, simulation provided safe ways to experience and gain access to otherwise inaccessible situations, and it allowed the teenagers to take on a different perspective, creating a whole new approach to the situation. British media education researcher David Buckingham (2003, 79-81) writes that simulation is a form of role play: it involves putting students in the position of media producers, albeit in an essentially fictional way, where they are presented with a series of choices to make or problems to solve, and are then encouraged to reflect upon the consequences of their decisions. The obvious advantage of simulations is that they offer a direct, “hands-on” experience of aspects of media that are often difficult to teach about in other ways. A simulation should not be regarded as just a form of play-acting – students need to be presented with problems that are sufficiently challenging, and their choices should genuinely make a difference.
Playing a simulation evolves meaning and modulates experiences

The videotaped research material reveals that the teenagers used simulation because it made it possible for them to experience and process experiences concerning friendship, loneliness, life and death: things that the teenagers felt to be important for themselves and in relation to the world around them. Playing in the experimental study is therefore understood as a collective attempt of the teenagers to examine their interpretations of the world, referring to the philosophical starting point of Johan Huizinga’s study Homo Ludens (1938), which is the observation that, where there is play, there is also “meaning”, and to describe play is to describe its “meaningfulness” for the players. When the teenagers were allowed also to create a simulated world, they built a game world that was meaningful to them, where they could explore issues that concerned them. In this way they created meaning when they created play.

In this way, the learning process was driven by a collective meaning-making process as the teenagers employed simulation as a medium for exploring issues of importance from everyday life and through playing transformed them to new relationships of meaning. The concept transformation in aesthetic learning is, according to Finnish researcher in arts education Inkeri Sava (1994, 37), thought of as a mental process of change within the person concerning interpretation and meaning-making.

The teenagers felt that the playing made sense to them and the learning process was meaningful because it succeeded in challenging an existential dimension in the search for knowledge. Because the role play simulation in this study was part of a cyclic aesthetic learning process, knowledge in this article is understood as the elaboration of meaningful aesthetic experiences. Østern (2004, 84) writes that aesthetic learning processes generate a knowledge which is deeply rooted in the sensuous: a knowledge of the body, where feelings and thinking are integrated in a holistic understanding.

Because the aim of a simulation in aesthetic learning is the modulation of meaningful aesthetic experiences, the function of simulation in pedagogic practice can thereby be understood according to the classic theory on play presented by Huizinga (1938), where he claims that the essential function and the fundamental motive of play is the modulation of experience and that the experience of the player is essential to the very
nature of the play. Huizinga (1938) writes that we do not characteristically play to fulfil a practical task:

We play for the sake of the lived quality that attaches itself to the act of playing. Playing is thus closely akin to aesthetics, in that experience is irreducible: it constitutes an essential aspect of the phenomenon. To speak of experience implies a vocabulary of qualitative description. Words like “tension”, “release”, “challenge”, “effort”, “uncertainty”, “risk”, “balance”, “contrast”, “variation” and “rhythm” typically describe the activity of playing as a temporal modulation of rising, falling and evolving intensities.

The experiences of the pupils were therefore the “primary phenomenon” studied, in the sense that whatever functional benefits concerning learning were derived from play depended on the quality of the experience. When the pupils were deeply engaged in embodied artistic work in the simulations, they experienced aesthetic pleasure. It was because the embodied experiences were engrossing and absorbing that it promoted learning in terms of engaging the pupils in meaning-making and inspired them to explore and develop forms of artistic expressions. It seems that play is, on the whole, psychologically or socially efficacious only to the extent that players derive satisfaction from it.

I argue that there is considerable educational potential in simulation as a generator and transformer of experiences. From the perspective of learning, knowledge produced through simulation is understood as experiences that have been processed and transformed to expanded relationships of meaning. The modulation and the transformation of experience is a fundamental quality both in simulation and in aesthetic learning processes.
Simulation in an aesthetic learning process
Thus, learning in simulation can be understood according to the experiential approach represented by John Dewey and follower Sava. They describe an aesthetic learning process as one where the learning person through a transformative process creates new relationships of meaning. Experience in life can be transformed into an aesthetic experience through poetic elaboration. This poetic elaboration is dialogical and transformative. The learning person forms a new inner reality and obtains a new perspective on reality, himself, other people, and nature, on life in general (Dewey 1980; Sava 1994, 37).

I argue that simulation is a way of employing play in education that fits extremely well into educational practice in visual arts education, especially well into aesthetic learning processes, where the modulation and the transformation of experiences into new relationships of meaning is a fundamental quality. The study proves that the purpose of a simulation in an aesthetic learning process is to generate experiences that provide the necessary embodied experiences and physical sensations (tactile, kinetic, audiovisual and motor skills) for a given situation to be constructed meaningfully by the teenagers. The simulations generated embodied and lived experiences that work excellently as the immediate, lived experiences that are the starting point in a cyclic aesthetic learning process based on experiential learning theory, as explained by Sava (1994, 59) and Østern (2006a, 42). In the study, the lived and perceived experiences generated by the simulation were shared and reflected on, formed into narratives and then transformed to new relationships of meaning through artistic work in the art forms of film and drama in new simulations, providing new experiences. A cyclic motion was thereby implied, since new choices led to new reflections, and so on.

The power and the attraction of the ludic element
In this article I argue that, due to the close relation between arts and play, the ludic element, which has attraction and holding power, can take control over an artistic activity. I thereby also claim that the artistic activity can be transformed into a ludic activity, maintaining its function as a generator of expression, skills and knowledge. The role play simulation is an example of the holding power and impact of the ludic element on educational practice when play is set free. Playing took control over filming because the teenagers found that they can explore content and create meaning if they fully engaged in playing. The filmmaking process first changed into a ludic activity and then completely
transformed into the simulative mode as the teenagers became experientially involved and immersed in the flow of the play.

During the role play simulation the nine teenagers became fascinated and overwhelmed by the possibility to influence and determine the course of events of the non-scripted role play. The group became so deeply engaged in playing that they stayed in the fictive role play world for more than half an hour until the play was completed. Huizinga (1938) explains that the consciousness of play as a separate and self-contained sphere is often reinforced by the pervasive tendency to enclose the players within a spatial-temporal frame, the so-called “magic circle”. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer (1986, 112), the fascination of play lies in the way the structured movement “draws” the players into its arena and “fills” them with spirit. The Norwegian education researcher, Kjetil Steinsholt, explains that when children play they are carried away by the run of the play; they are taken into the clutches of the play, and that they are, in a way, being “played” by the play itself (Steinsholt 2004, 35; 2006, 15).

The Finnish game researcher Laura Ermi (Ermi & al, 2004, 15-17) calls that dimension of game experience where one becomes absorbed with the stories or begins to identify with a game character, mental immersion. This is the area where ludic activities and game play offer the players the means to use their imagination, tell stories, or just enjoy the fantasy of the game. Another form of immersion that is particularly central for ludic activities and game play, since they are fundamentally based on interaction, is action-based immersion. This is the feeling of immersion which is at its most powerful when one is able to achieve the perfect balance of challenge and abilities. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has written about this phenomenon and named it optimal or flow experience. Flow is characterised by a pleasurable, emotional state, where time passes by and the participant experiences a driving feeling of success.
Filming in the simulational mode rejects mimesis

The videotaped research material from the simulations shows that in their film work the teenagers rejected the dominant mimetic forms of representation for understanding and representing reality. In the experimental study, creating a simulation was not an intention, but an unexpected result as the teenagers actively and consciously experimented with content and form while filming in order to generate meaning. The experimental study was originally an attempt to see what happens when ludic activities are employed as a form of dramatic activity in the film-making process.

In visual arts education some media for representing reality and fiction are static. A painting or a sculpture depicts a snapshot of reality frozen in time. In contrast, the film medium is dynamic; it shows change with time. Drama in film-making in visual arts education relies on Aristotelian drama and storytelling and is thereby carried out through the mimetic form of dramatic performance, which relies on narrative as a form of structuring representation. When creating drama through visual narration in school, a story, characters and setting are usually collectively created in a devising process. Scenes and events are then acted out and filmed according to scripts and storyboards (see Lindstrand 2006). In that way the dominant mimetic tradition of dynamic representation has become the form of representation for both understanding and explaining reality when creating drama in the film medium. The storytelling model of film-making has resulted in the idea that drama in film in arts education is based on linear narrative, with a fixed sequence of events presented as an inexorable progression of incidents without much room for alteration.

Consequently, before getting the role play simulation going, the teenagers met with the question of how to represent in the film medium the infinite number of imaginable situations and events that possibly could occur in the open-ended, non-scripted and improvised role play. They found that the mimetic tradition of filming staged events is unable to capture the intensity and the authentic flow of the role play simulation. When they tried to film and play-act according to shooting schedules, the teenagers realized that the ongoing role play was stifled because it had to be interrupted. The study shows that when play is going on, it should not be orchestrated, because it will lose its power. The teenagers then threw away the scripts and storyboard and agreed that filming themes and issues should take place in a playful ludic zone,
where the outcome of events was not fixed in advance. Without knowing it, they then completely entered and accepted the simulation mode.

The role play simulation then became the creative and serious work of exploring ways of creating drama in film treated under the aspects of play. When the teenagers became deeply engaged in the simulation, playing led the filming and the recording camcorders became part of the bodily action in the improvised performances. When body, play and camcorder became naturally interconnected, the teenagers were able to keep on filming while playing, despite the fact that they were carried away by the run of the play. Yet they mostly remembered to frame the upper body of the person they were interacting with. The emphasis with the use of the camcorder was on creating footage with a sense of presence, and not on the composition of the image, or on framing or focusing. Of course, the video footage filmed with shaky hand-held camcorders contained a lot of camera wobble, problems with focus and framing, etc. However, the intended function of the video footage did work: it conveyed dramatic action, from the first person perspective of a player, from incidents occurring during the role play simulation.

Film-making with more or less shaky hand-held camcorders seems to be completely accepted in youth culture, mainly thanks to young people’s experiences from watching reality game shows on television, and thanks to the impact of user produced videos on YouTube. The British media researcher Richard Kilborn (2003, 19) writes that reality shows which provide dramatic eyewitness accounts of police arrests or other incidents derive much of their appeal from giving the viewer the illusion of potential involvement in dangerous or disturbing events. By the same token, the various indications that hand-held recording devices are being used (camera wobble, problems with focus and framing, poor sound, etc.) have acquired a sign-like status, suggesting a form of direct and active involvement in a sequence of unfolding events.

This ludological process of filming intertwined in role-playing resulted in a variety of captivating video footage, showing different plots from the same role play, and conveying dramatic action from the first person perspective of characters: a spectrum of individual experiences that is brought together tells the story of the fictive world, the events, and the characters. The videotaped research material shows that the teenagers not only role-played in order to learn how to express themes and issues in film: also filming, acting and exploring themes and issues were treated under the aspects of play – in the context of a role play. More clearly, in
the simulation mode learners not only use playing in order to learn something, but learning contents are transformed into a form of play. In brief, aesthetic learning in simulational mode is aesthetic learning as a form of play.

**The use of narratives when creating and reflecting on a simulation**

The experimental study proves that play is also a storytelling medium and that meaning-making through storytelling plays a vital role in aesthetic learning through play. However, in the study the forming of narratives only happened before and after the simulations because mimetic representation based on narrative is unable to handle and to represent the structure and the nature of play. The teenagers used narratives and storytelling in the devising processes before they started the simulations, and afterwards when reflecting upon their experiences. American media researcher Henry Jenkins (2003) writes about transmedia storytelling when he describes how content moves between different media in the ecology of storytelling media that include video games, movies, novels and comic books.

In a very flexible way, reminiscent of transmedia storytelling, the teenagers mixed contents from ordinary life experiences with contents from novels and films into new modified ideas that formed the setting and the background story needed to stage a starting scenario for a simulation to be set running. A dominant characteristic of the teenagers’ work with creating the simulations was the use of intertextuality, meaning that their texts were constantly referring to and drawing upon other texts. Although the use of imagination and make-believe played a vital role, the experimental study once again proves that in visual arts education, the use of fantasy and imagination when creating fiction starts from bringing back earlier observations, memories and experiences (see Arnheim 1970, 226-241; Forsman & Piironen 2006, 116).

In the devising process, when the teenagers collectively created the setting for the role play simulation, they discussed and modified concepts familiar to them from classical adventures of literature and film, where children are moved by fate to strange and mysterious worlds, as in the way *The Brothers Lionheart* moved to *Nangijala*, and the way the *Pevensie siblings* moved to the *Kingdom of Narnia*. The teenagers were also inspired by the concept used in the TV series *Lost*, where the background stories of survivors on a mysterious island are presented as flashback
inserts. The teenagers made up their own back stories, explaining that their unwilling transfer to the scary fantasy world was a punishment due to bad acts that they had performed in their ordinary lives.

As soon as the simulation had run its course and the players came out of their roles and out of the simulated world, the narrative desire became evident. The study shows that a simulation is a group oriented ludic activity with strong narrative aspirations, which implies telling stories and creating narrative experience from them. The teenagers’ interpretations and experiences from the simulations were therefore strongly narrative seeking, and this became evident in the way they put the experiences into words after having played them.

The video footage from the simulations was transmitted to computers in the classroom and was watched and reflected on by the teenagers. The pupils engaged enthusiastically in watching the video footage, commenting frequently on the unexpectedly high levels of engagement of the characters on the monitor, and on how they could have improved their playing, their acting, and the improvised dialogue. Watching and listening to themselves role-playing on the monitors reinforced the pupils’ memories and made them recall in more detail and remember emotions and feelings connected to experiences from their actions in the simulation. It was important for them to interpret and discuss the sequences of events as they had experienced them, and to tell about incidents and things that they had considered important in them. To make the events manageable the teenagers narrated them, and put them in perspective. In this way narrative became a way to understand and handle the world by making it meaningful.

When watching the video footage, discussing and reflecting on experiences from the former simulation, a widened attention affected the process itself, since it guided them towards new choices, and the teenagers then started to make up new stories that led to the creation of new simulations. A cyclical motion was thereby implied, since new choices led to new reflections, and so on.

The final film entitled *The Play*, where the various film clips from the different simulations were brought together, edited and narrated, tells of the destiny of a group of teenagers who are dramatically abducted from their ordinary lives and meet in a mysterious game world and try to help each other out. The film turned out to be about the teenagers themselves,
about being young and what it could be like when life suddenly changes into something unfamiliar, into a twilight zone between life and death.

Conclusions
Referring to the findings from my experimental study I argue that play employed in aesthetic learning in visual arts education should be carried through as simulation. The film-making process proves that the nature and the structure of play can not be handled by mimetic forms of representation and that aesthetic learning as a form of play rejects learning processes relying on mimetic forms of representation for understanding and representing reality.

As confirmed by game researcher Frasca (1999), the simulations in the study were not based on representation but on an alternative semiotical structure known as simulation. And as established by Huizinga (1938), Gadamer (1986), Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Steinsholt (2006), the attraction, and the holding power of the ludic element absorbed the teenagers and carried them away in the flow of the play. I argue that when the intention is to employ play in aesthetic learning, this should not be regarded as a problem, but as an advantage, because simulation affirms and benefits from the attraction of the ludic element. The study proves that in the simulation mode learning about film-making has to be treated under the aspects of play, and not the other way around.

Referring to Huizinga (1938), my experimental study confirms that the ludic element is omnipresent in arts and in aesthetics, and that emphasizing the ludic element in the learning process therefore illuminates the fundamental nature of film-making. My study thereby proves that simulation can be a genuine medium for exploring subject matter and content when making drama in film. In this way the connection between learning and playing become essential. Moreover, I argue that in a simulation, the artistic activity of making film can be transformed into a ludic activity, maintaining its function as a generator of expression, skills and knowledge.

In the study, simulation proved to be a form of investigative play and a method for investigative artistic learning that made it possible for the teenagers to become experientially immersed and involved in the exploration of themes and issues that concerned them. In arts education, simulation should therefore preferably be employed for exploring future possible scenarios concerning human and social issues. As pointed out by Gee (2008), the learners’ understanding of a complex life world
radically increases when learners are allowed to create a simulation in order to explore issues that are meaningful to them.

Huizinga’s (1938) statement that “where there is play there is also meaning” supports my argument that the teenagers actively and consciously experimented with form and content in order to create meaning when they played and created simulations. I also refer to Huizinga, when I argue that the function of simulation in aesthetic learning is the modulation of meaningful aesthetic experiences, and that the experience of the player is essential to the very nature of the play.

I argue that there is considerable educational potential in simulation as a generator and transformer of experiences. From this perspective on learning, knowledge produced through simulation must be understood as experiences which have been processed and transformed to expanded relationships of meaning. The modulation and the transformation of experience is a fundamental quality both in simulation and in aesthetic learning processes. I suggest that simulation is a way of employing play in education, which fits extremely well into educational practice in visual arts education, and especially well into aesthetic learning processes, where the modulation and the transformation of experiences into new relationships of meaning is a fundamental quality. In the study, simulation transforms experiences to new relationships of meaning in the same way as in the aesthetic learning process described by Dewey (1980/1934) and Sava (1994). In that way I suggest it is possible to apply the findings from my study to arts education in general.
References


5. The importance of dialogues in arts education

Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik

Abstract
This article takes as its focal point the discussion of an aesthetic approach to learning. In the article arts based learning is considered as a dynamic process that generates nodes of connection between people, cultural representations, experiences and imagination. Based on data in which arts educative acts in school have been transformed to narratives on experiences, the article examines the outcomes from a dialogue between a student and an artist-researcher-teacher as a communicated learning experience. The article is designed as a ten-layered interpretation of theories and auto-ethnographic documentations made in a specific arts based learning practice in elementary school.
Introduction
The basic character of educational intentions is the continuum of educative practices that are formed by the teachers professional, political, social and cultural heritage. The educational intentions and acts are structured by the curriculum, which gives guidelines for designing a professional culture were students learning is made possible and meaningful. In education learning is responded to by various teacher strategies and students’ school experiences are through life transferred into narratives about situated learning moments in school, as well as constructions of the individual learning identity in relation to culture and society.

This article addresses the recognition of that students’ learning experiences to a great extent depend on the educators’ approach to the students, the learning event and the guidelines that the curriculum proposes to be considered in a meaningful learning practice. The article originates from one arts based learning practice that have become a topic of interest for me as an artist participating in education. The article is partly written as a self-reflective response, which comes to view in parts where I use an artist-researcher-teacher self-reflective voice on arts educative practice. The article emphasizes to by an aesthetic approach to research in education formulate the importance of non hierarchical and dialogical response to imagination outcomes in arts education. I address the question if a dialogue on co-experienced arts education formulates the receiving of each other in arts based learning practice in terms of curriculum and a democratic education context.

The context
The Finnish education structure: Finnish National Curriculum for Basic Education (FNCBE 2004) is subject based. In addition to the subject related issues the curriculum reveals cross-curricula themes for guiding thematic, subject integrated and relational learning. The cross-curricula themes are based on strategies developed to enlarge the possibilities for educators to scaffold diverse learning modes responding to global, national, local and individual requirements, and are an attempt to encourage a democratic approach to education. The cross curricula

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1 Democracy is here approached as the conception of creating social and cultural conditions where people involved in the situation, on as equal premises as possible, are offered possibilities to express their requirements and to decide about issues they consider meaningful to elaborate on and to offer participants strategies for questioning the (in this case educational settings that are on hand.
themes are: personal development, cultural interpretation and identity, communication and media knowledge, initiative and activity, sustainable development in the environment/culture and learning new technologies (cf. FNCBE 2004). The themes are defined as aspects responding to the pluralistic society and culture of today and concern universal values that all individuals have experienced. They are described as guidelines for democratic topic themes\(^2\) in that they picture entrances for dialogues on multiple world-views. They suggest dialogical spaces (cf. also Dysthe 1996) to be a part of the educational discourse, wherein individually and culturally connected traditions and visions are central issues to discuss. They also offer a general and objective agenda wherein it is possible to highlight how individuals involved in educational contexts receive each other as subjects. Primarily, the cross-curricula themes are related to socio-cultural and material conditions that education is obliged to address. In addition to social and material conditions I claim that the cross-curricula themes address the possibility to in educative settings make sense of how imagination and learning are connected. By implementing the human ability to imagine in the context of the cross-curricula themes, I by using an interpretation pattern informed by narrative analysis, investigate how an arts based practice in basic education indicates cross-curricula themes as keys for connecting imagination and learning in education. As I pursue a deeper, more critical understanding of arts educative practice, I informed by theories on connections between imagination, learning and narration explore clusters of thought on the relation between dialogues, construction of self and culture in arts based learning. The article also explores the transition from an artistic approach to arts and learning in general to an aesthetic approach to arts based learning practice in education.

**Tuning into an aesthetic writing mode**

Liora Bresler (2006) proposes an aesthetic approach to research in education as a way for reflecting on emphatic outcomes from education. Bresler describes the feeling of empathy as a core of human co-experience that is important to address in qualitative inquiry in education. She describes that the aesthetic approach to research in education adds to the researcher’s observing methods a dimension of being a co-experiencing, reflecting and responding researcher. In the context of an aesthetic approach to research in education this means that

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\(^2\) The subject themes are represented as contents of specific subjects in compulsory education. For example, contents of European Art History in the subject of Visual Art.
emotional and cognitive meanings in the research practice are connected to the research outcomes.

The idea of an aesthetic approach to learning is not new in Finnish research in education. In 1918 Juho Hollo (cf. Hollo 1932) in his dissertation in pedagogy wrote on the relation between imagination and learning. Hollo addresses one chapter in his thesis on the educative understanding of “arts education” as an aesthetic approach to learning. Hollo claims that the principles of cultivating imagination is central in education because imagination is a basic criteria for creating a connection between the teaching and learning act. Hollo makes the connection between teaching and learning by claiming that imagination, in addition to the human capacity to create a connection between the immaterial and material world, also is an ability to sense the meaning of relations. He claims that imagination is not only about *what* we see and do but also *how* we see and create various forms of relations, which is central for how education is formed.

**Tuning into a receiver**

From a contemporary arts educative position I find Hollo’s approach to imagination interesting. His approach differs from a contemporary arts educative perspective, where imagination to a large extent is defined not only in relation to the created and seen, but also in relation to the experienced (cf. Dewey 1980; Vygotsky 1995). In Hollo’s view arts education is about visualizing ideas. Today, arts education focuses on that visual expression in a learning community is a process of learning where imagination is an apparatus that turns experiences into knowing. Arts education is about to generate learning possibilities where knowing becomes material through aesthetic expression. In contemporary arts education conditions I find interest particularly in understanding Hollo’s idea of education in terms of understanding teaching as a way of cultivating imagination.

This article approaches Hollo’s idea from both a particular and general level. By interpretation of two narratives I interpret how imagination functions as a connecting area for a teacher and a learner in a situation where two individuals form themselves and each other through a dialogue. By recalling a situated dialogue where a student-produced image functions as a mediator for a “teaching” artist’s and student’s dialogue on a co-experienced arts educative practice, the article suggests that it is the human ability to receive another person’s self that is central for how imagination affect learning. The receiving of the other self is in
the article recognized by Emmanuel Lévinas (cf. Kemp 1992) notion that an authentic reception of another person’s self always should be understood as an asymmetric and not a symmetric event. This means that a dialogue in arts based learning is not about to explain the otherness of each other but to experience it.

An artist-researcher-teacher approach to arts education
As a participating artist-researcher-teacher in education, I often face the question of how I in practice conceptualize the interaction between several cultural zones in the discourse of education. The interaction is made on an understanding that the school is a context that for all the individuals involved in its practice is an institution with its own cultural structures and codes. A participating artist in school is neither an unfamiliar guest nor a teacher in charge of the everyday school schedule. A participating artist is continuously involved in the school reality and faces arts and teaching practice based on the school codes and together with teachers and students. By scaffolding various arts processes as experiences of learning on an aesthetic level, the participating artist adapts the pedagogical idea of the context. At the same time the artist contributes to the educational situation with knowledge of arts conventions that scaffold learning, which means that the artist attempts to juxtapose arts practice with educational intentions and purposes.

In this article an experienced juxtaposition is carried to a research level by inquiry into narrative meaning in two auto-ethnographic narratives. The transfer of the atmosphere of empathy from the experienced dialogue to the investigation is made by an article design where ten sections function as ten layers of reasoning on issues that generate possible criteria for scaffolding the aesthetic approach to arts based learning practice.
Layer one: approaching imagination in arts based learning practice

In school, children learn through social construction and social transition. In arts education this for example comes to view in learning practices where students are shown adult artists’ artworks and the learning practice is formed as an assignment where students train understanding for ways of seeing the artwork (cf. also Forsman & Piironen 2005; Berger 1991). In this kind of visual arts education the fact that students’ interpretations of arts differ from the artist’s or the educator’s experiences or expectations might not become articulated. Since the ways of seeing in this kind of arts interpretation processes are connected to an aesthetic understanding generated from “adult applications”, one consequence might be that the students’ learning are limited to reproduce a specific way of approaching visual arts. The limitation might result in educational expectations that reduce the educator’s understanding of the students’ aesthetic learning experiences.

For an arts educator who achieves an aesthetic approach to learning; producing arts practice and observing arts and learning results is not enough for understanding arts based learning experiences. In this article I am concerned with responding on two dimensions of how social factors affect the understanding of meaningful arts based learning. The first dimension is a response on how an educator becomes aware of a student position in an arts based learning event situated in class. The second dimension is to generalize the understanding of importance of giving time to students as individuals in a culture where social features much affect the learning experiences. The article articulates an endeavor to by a meta-reflection on imagination as an apparatus that affect learning, artistic expression and social construction in different ways, understand an aesthetic approach to arts education. In my view an art educator who is informed by an aesthetic approach has to actively revitalize the “teacher” experience of something unexpected. The educator has to defamiliarize the norm and well-known and has to imagine the arts based learning experience from the students position. This means that the educator requires empathy (the ability to acknowledge the other). The educator’s empathy is an aesthetic approach, where the educator’s imagination scaffolds the educator to act within a learner response that is more appropriate to the students’ learning experiences than the educator’s expectations.

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3 For instance, a normative relation to the curriculum and the educational objectives.
In order to be able to incorporate empathy and an aesthetic approach to learning, the educator has to be in dialogue with the students on the art based learning experiences created. This is conceptualized in the cross-curricula themes, but how the idea explicitly appears in situated arts based learning practice in school is a question to discuss.

Layer two: an aesthetic approach to arts based learning

According to Inkeri Sava (2003), one central aspect of research in arts education is the transition of arts and aesthetics to the pedagogical understanding of the learner, the learning modes and learning experiences. Sava’s thinking on research in arts education underpins this article. I consider an aesthetic approach to learning as a way of understanding arts as learning in *qualitative events* that are made on an aesthetic level and framed by a union of artist thinking and pedagogical understanding. The qualitative event is here defined as individuals’ willingness to by aid from the imaginative ability cross the boundaries of expectations by steering towards the unexpected in a dialogue on arts based learning experiences (cf. Østern 2001). In order to be able to acknowledge the unexpected outcomes of the dialogue, this article focuses on approaching the dialogue as a process of interaction between self-construction and reception of the other (cf. also Illeris 2005, 2008).

Layer three: getting transparent

Arthur Efland (2002) brings up one theme on interaction between imagination and learning that needs to be noted when discussing the importance of dialogues in arts based learning. He explains imagination as a cognitive act, where individual and original thoughts are formed on existing concepts. Elliot Eisner (2002) claims that these thoughts are *distilled concepts* in a sensory form that people use for representing experiences. Eisner follows Lev S Vygotsky’s (1995) notion of the connection between imagination and reality. Vygotsky points out that the more elements of reality a person experiences, the more meaningful and productive the imagination will be. With this, Vygotsky directs attention to the understanding that the form of the experiences is a key factor for how meaning is elaborated in imaginative processes. Further, the way in which imaginative outcomes are responded to has impact on how people interact on and share their reality and experiences.4

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4 For example, individual imaginative ideas that are not coherent with others’ experiences from a co-experienced situation in life can be responded to as telling an untruth.
In arts education it is valuable to be aware of imagination as a space where it is possible to develop, transform and respond to not only conventional, but also to unconventional lived experiences. If imagination is not understood in relation to various forms of experiences of reality, there can arise a communicative noise in dialogues, where expecting ideas produce filters that weed out imaginative ideas that at first glance do not make sense. It is therefore important to recognize Eisner’s (2002) description of imagination as a safety net that enables people to communicate ideas without the consequences they might encounter if they had to act upon them. According to Vygotsky (1995), imagination is an apparatus that regards concepts and experiences as transparent thinking layers, where even ambiguous concepts and experiences can become valuable and meaningful learning when elaborated in dialogues that are framed by communication that emphasizes to understand the other.

Layer four: tuning from aims to interpretation
Each individual interpretation makes connections with other individuals, objects and phenomena. These connections, whether true or fictitious, are incorporated in everyone’s lives as narratives on experiences. When an experience turns into narratives, the individual’s imagination converts experiences to both material and immaterial concepts. The narrative concepts require a recognizable composition so that others may grasp the essence of them. This composition can be defined as narrative meaning (cf. Johansson 2005). Narrative meaning is not fixed, limited or static. It is a self-motivating process, where individuals use imagination and universal codes: archetypes, metaphors or similar cultural representations, as communicative references (cf. Kristensson-Uggla 1999). These references are connections between cultural representations and experiences, and they are not definite. They function as layers where imagination uses diverse denotations, connotations and associations as tools for play. The play creates a dynamic relationship between past, present and future and provides the narratives with a sense of meaning. The meaning making consists of judgments where the lived experiences may transform into the narrating act itself, which does not reduce the actual experience but transfers new meaning into it. The idea of narrative meaning connects with John Dewey’s (1997) theories on that learning experiences as continuity can be compared with how people create continuity in their lives by creating narrative meaning on their experiences.
Layer five: The shift from narrative contribution to narrative response

Contemporary education is based on a tradition whereby educators preset informative stories as knowledge sources for the students. These stories are about nature, humanity, culture or technical evolution and mainly based on meta-narratives, grand representations characterized by universality and generality. They are large-scale theories of the world and stand for a civilizing panorama to refer to when mediating social or cultural concepts. For the arts education context, it is worth noting Jean-François Lyotard’s observation (1984) that in our age we have ceased to believe that narratives of this kind are the only ones to connect to when searching and making meaning in life. With the transition from modern to postmodern, Lyotard argues that the meta-narratives have lost their power and voice to convince. Postmodern culture has become more aware of the relational dialogues on difference, diversity and multiple concepts. Lyotard’s observation highlights that in addition to the grand, traditional narratives, people communicate meaning with each other with their local narratives. In terms of arts education, I argue that the local narrative that has the greatest impact on learning experiences is the individual narrative. The individual narrative is a concept where imagination plays a central role. Keeping in mind that the connection between experiences and narratives is central when talking about imagination, I claim that in addition to the individual narrative, the narrative that has the most powerful influence on imagination is the subjective narrative (cf. Gadamer 1997; Ricoeur 1990). The recognition of the subjective narrative is important from an arts educational perspective. In terms of individual narratives, the narrative meaning is interpreted as using imagination on experiences already communicated in dialogues. In a context within which subjective narratives generate narrative meaning, the interpretation is based upon oscillating processes of subjective, imaginative and emphatic play on experiences. Depending on what kind of meaning subjective narratives is looking for - or is familiar with - the narrative meaning differs. It can be positive, negative, complex, or basic. Wherever one positions oneself in relation to a subjective narrative (for example, the imagined now, imagined past, or

5 Stories told in the third person.

6 Each individual’s story told by them selves.

7 Note here that Gadamer and Ricoeur follow a late modern discourse, while Lyotard follows a postmodern discourse. This means that Gadamer, Ricoeur and Lyotard approach narratives from slightly different perspectives, hence they all point out theories that scaffold acknowledges how grand and small narratives depend on each other in narrative meaning making.
imagined future), each perspective has an impact on the play, interpretation and personal meaning constructed. Therefore, in educational settings, it is vital to in addition to telling individual narratives also to respond to subjective narratives. By allowing learning experiences to evolve into subjective narratives, arts education avoid misinterpretations and given stories. Instead, arts education creates spaces for relational dialogues and play with the unexpected.

Layer six: getting into narrative meaning

During the school year 2006-2007 I was an artist participating in the visual art lectures of two 5th grade classes in elementary education in Vaasa, Finland. Together with teacher Brita Rantala, I planned the syllabus and conducted the visual art lectures. The content of the lectures was built upon the teacher’s and my experiences and ideas of how we can realize the challenge of our collaboration when combining the curriculum, our personal profession experiences and the students’ experiences of art and learning. The planning was made with the recognition that for developing an aesthetic approach to the learning situations and for creating meaningful art based learning experiences for the students, the teacher and I had to take into consideration four preconditions that contributed to students’ learning: the hook, the experience of otherness, social interaction and meta-reflection (cf. Illeris 2005, 2008).

I shall now respond to two narratives based on a reflective dialogue linked to the learning experiences from the collaborative arts education practice. The dialogue was made as a response to the set visual art lectures, where students from the teacher’s and my semi-fictive introduction to the topic were encouraged to explore the lion as a visual symbol from medieval times. The topic chosen for the particular art lecture was one stop in a fictive journey through art history that was set as the syllabus for the art lectures in this class during the school year 2006-2007. The reflective dialogues were one of a variety of methods used for meta-reflection and response on the art based learning experiences. When planning the lectures, the teacher and I implemented the hook, the experience of otherness, social interaction and meta-reflection in our structure for the upcoming learning practice. In the following narrative on experiences from the actual lecture the four preconditions give implications of being criteria for meaningful arts based learning practice.

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8 The introduction was made as storytelling, partly based on facts and partly on fantasies.
Based on auto ethnographic notes made during the specific dialogue represented in the article, the experiences are here reconstructed as two narrative schemas (A and B).

**Layer seven: the imaginative ability and the narrative meaning**
The first narrative schema is a reconstruction of the student Anna’s dialogical self-response to her experiences during her process when creating her image of a lion. The narrative meaning is here interpreted by the use of cross-curricula themes. The cross-curricula themes are used as a meta-reflective tool for responding to the student’s learning process in the educational context. In the second narrative schema the artist-researcher-teacher’s self-reflection is a key factor for understanding the learning scenario. Both the student and artist shift of approaches moves along a spiral line traced through the conversation represented. The two narratives are linked to each other by recognition of how the relation between grand, individual and subjective narratives generates meaning. The narrative meaning is finally evaluated by the artist-researcher-teacher conclusion of the narrative interpretation process.
Figure 1. Photo documentation of the student’s final image created during the arts based learning practice.
Narrative schema A
The Student and the Aesthetic Learning Experience

The student’s narrative

When I now look at my image I think of it as a piece of art, because it has the feeling of a vivid lion that is about to pounce. My process started with a problem. My first impulse was to make an image of the Finnish lion as a national symbol. I wanted to capture the idea of the Finnish lion, because the discussion we had about it during the lecture had given me new ways of looking at the symbol. I have not consciously thought of the lion as a symbol before; to me the lion had previously just been an animal.

Narrative meaning generated by observation and interpretation.

**Observation:** The student recalls her learning experience and uses her imaginative ability to connect cultural and individual concepts for description of the learning situation.

**Interpretation:** The student is simultaneously aware of her ability to reconstruct her experience in the dialogue and her problem-solving process during the lecture. The way of constructing meaning can be recognized by cross-curricula themes: to develop as a human, reflecting cultural interpretation and describing own identity.
However, while sketching, my first idea did not work out. It seemed simple and difficult all at the same time. I discussed this struggle with a fellow student next to me in the classroom. I wanted to find an interesting visual concept for my image. The girl suggested looking at the boy's jacket in front of me. And there it was, the shape of a lion, although it was a PUMA label. I saw the idea I wanted to find.

**Observation:** The student reflects on topic-related problems. She explains her actions during the art lecture as a strategy of self-activity for solving topic-related problems.

**Interpretation:** In the narrative there is an interaction between learning experiences, communication with others and imaginative ability to distance oneself from a particular learning situation. The student is developing an idea based on the subject and the situation challenges her development as a person. Cultural interpretations and identity, communication with other individuals, media knowledge and acting with initiative are recognized cross-curricula themes in the narrative.
So I used the PUMA label on the back of the boy’s jacket as a base form for my sketch. I copied it, but not just as a copy, I used the shape of the cat-animal in action. The PUMA label as well got a new meaning for me during my work. To draw it accurately, I really looked at it for the first time. After I had sketched my lion, I cut the sketch as a model and drew around it on the backside of my painted paper. At the time I did not think of the fact that the figure became a mirror figure. I realize it now when you ask about it. My idea was not to change the PUMA label; I just used it as inspiration. My strategy was clear. I looked at the lion shape I had made on the painted paper and found figures to cut out as a mosaic. It was pleasing because I had never thought of mosaic in this way. It is fascinating that you look at the mosaic pieces as the lion’s body parts. I did not think of it consciously when I made my image. It was natural to cut them in that way. I wanted to make a unique image. I had some problems with the tail. My first tail started to look like a pipe, so I made several different versions and tried them out before I was satisfied.

Observation: The student recalls the working process in a topic-related description. Her recognition of the PUMA label activates her ability to make conceptual connections and cultural interpretations. Both the reflective dialogue and the former experienced learning situation urge use of the imagination. The student tells her subjective story for me (I wrote notes during the dialogue). The spoken dialogue provides the student with the possibility to mirror her thoughts directly with the participating artist.

Interpretation: The narrative portrait shifts between description and reflection in the student’s communication. In the dialogue the student recalls the learning experience. In addition to this the student and artist respond to one another. The student demonstrates that she is aware of the importance of the dialogue. The narrative meaning can be grasped by cross-curricula themes: personal development, experiencing cultural interpretations and self-identity, communication of thoughts and initiative. The narrative documents the cross-curricula themes that occurred in the learning situation.
I always structure my images. I am a kind of perfectionist. When starting up with the topic I first felt help! this is difficult, but at the same time I like it when there are challenges during the art lectures. The introductions we have for the topics are important for me, because I need to get into the mood of “art lecture” and focus my mind on thinking of art in different ways. The introductions are like stories presenting the topic. They get me feeling relaxed; I forget all the other things that have occupied my mind during the day. I know that I can try to find ways by myself and that if I really get stuck, I can ask for someone else’s opinion.

**Observation:** The student describes herself in the learning (school) context (In the dialogue she uses the word “perfectionist” as a positive description of her school-identity). In the dialogue she distances herself and finds meaning in the learning experience. Furthermore, she comments on the impact that the great narrative legends of art history have on her during the lecture. **Interpretation:** The narrative demonstrates the importance of combining grand, local, individual and subjective narratives in art education. The concepts of cross-curricula themes (personal development, experiencing cultural interpretations and identity) are all parts of the student’s self-assessment.

I am satisfied with my image and I like the train of thought I went through in doing it. I have not created images of lions before. I like to draw horses. I want to do this a lot at home now.

**Observation:** The student explains that she has learned something new. She communicates her satisfaction in the outcome: skills, method and material used. She also communicates satisfaction relating to the thought process and the development of her imagination. **Interpretation:** The student demonstrates self-confidence in the new concepts she has learned. The student’s learning process can be related to the cross-curricula themes: to develop as a human and recognize cultural interpretations and identity.
It was nice to talk about my image and how I made it. I would like to do that more often, because talking about my artwork and learning process allows me to see new things in my images. In school, the art lectures are my favorites, because during them my thoughts can travel here and there. My thoughts pass by and attach themselves somewhere in my mind.

**Observation:** The student appeals to the participating artist to take into consideration the learning methods that are valuable for her.

**Interpretation:** This process is liberating in the way it allows the student to imagine new ways of learning. The narrative meaning is in terms of the cross-curricula themes developing as a human, recognizing cultural interpretation and identity.
Narrative schema B
The Participating Artist and the Aesthetic Learning Experience

The participating artist narrative

**Description** The material for the specific art lecture was planned and realized with the focus on one theme, the lion as a visual symbol. The educational objective for the lecture was to scaffold the students in a learning process from where other branches of learning could grow. The techniques used were planned in advance with the anticipation that the students wanted to explore the various artistic elements inherent within. The technique used was paper collage imitating mosaic.

**Response:** The artist explains the structure of the lecture. She describes the learning situation based on syllabus, topic and cross-curricula theme related objectives. The artist’s focus is on the curriculum objectives.

**Description:** The use of historical legends for getting the students hooked on the subject was based on the notion that history tells us that during medieval times visual symbols were more than concepts of expressing nature or culture in a mimetic or a romantic way. In this period visual symbols were a kind of informative system. The teacher and I underlined this with some images.

**Response:** The artist presents topic-related information. The focus is on interpreting the use of grand narratives related to the topic for the lecture. In addition, the artist describes the educational strategies used for lecture introduction.

**Description:** When looking for which narrative to interpret in this study, Anna’s and my dialogue on her image immediately came into my mind.

**Response:** The artist distances herself from the particular experienced situation by recalling that the narrative is a reconstruction of the particular educational situation.

**Description:** The first impression of Anna’s image was intentional. I felt satisfied. The student had followed the instructions and combined them with her personal ideas.

**Response:** The artist describes satisfaction in terms of educational intentions and expectations.
**Reflection:** Now recognizing one moment during the lecture surprises me. It was the moment where the boys completely took away the focus from me. It was a discussion that started with the images in the introduction. One of the boys made a comment about the lion being a national symbol for Finland. Several boys joined in with this comment and started to discuss it. They announced that the Finnish ice hockey team has the lion as its symbol. The boys were convinced that the lion is a symbol of power, fighting and strength. They urged searching the Internet for an image of the national symbol.

**Response:** The artist reflects on the art lecture and recognizes during the dialogue how she was following a new thread of discussion during the lecture. In addition, the artist explains the cultural concepts that the students came up with and how that fueled the artist’s imagination and acting during the lecture.

**Reflection:** When Anna told about how she started with a problem, I realized that her classmates had given her an impulse to work on. I was astonished when Anna told me about her problem with the Finnish national symbol when starting up. The observation during the dialogue with Anna that she solved the dilemma herself made a turning point in my approach to her learning process. When her first sketch did not work out, she did not ask me for advice, but asked the friend who sat next to her. When Anna told about how she came up with the idea for her lion I initially felt guilty for not recognizing her dilemma, but then I was impressed by her way of solving it.

**Response:** The artist tunes into an aesthetic interpretation of the lecture. The artist reflects on the educational act and the recognition of the learner’s dilemma. The artist demonstrates how individual imagination affected by educational desire forms the pre-understanding of the student’s learning process. The dialogue generates new meaning for the artist. The artist’s imaginative ability is tuned into the experience of the learner’s process. The artist reflects on not being aware of the student’s dilemma during the lecture. The artist transfers from recognizing the student as an individual to recognize her as a subject. The artist also transfers from personal experience into co-experience with the student during the dialogue.
Description: I noticed Anna working in class; she seemed very focused. I did not myself think of the PUMA label when I saw her working with the image. I experienced it together with her during the dialogue.

Reflection: By connecting cultural and individual concepts by imagination, Anna managed through her process with the image. She used the framework given, the visual symbol of the lion, her personal impressions, specific techniques and materials to create her image. In my opinion, although with some struggle, she was able to reflect her art-practice process and was able to reach her own conclusions on her learning experiences.

Layer eight: dialogical meaning-making in arts education

The two narratives generated both expected and unexpected outcomes relating to imagination, teaching and learning experiences. The student and the artist had expectations and past experiences that both differed and related to one another. The dialogue allowed interaction and development of thought, to which the student and the artist in dialogue contributed from their individual approaches to the image and the past art lecture. When the student and the artist discussed their experiences of the art lecture with the image as a mediator, the image neutralized the recognition of misunderstandings and illusions about the experienced learning situation. For example the four preconditions functioned as a great setting, although they did not match “one to one” considering the educators expectations on the situation. The dialogue brought to view that the hook, the experience of otherness, social interaction and meta-reflection look different in a student and an educator (and artist) perspective. Still the dialogue showed that the preconditions were fruitful. In the dialogue the focus was not on correct or incorrect outcomes considering preconditions and actual experiences of the lecture. The focus was on to address possibilities to rethink knowledge assumed as an outcome from the art lecture and to in a dialogue let the student communicate the imaginative and meaning-making patterns she

Response: The artist acknowledges a context-related learning process and recognizes the student’s and the artist’s transformation during the dialogue.

Response: The participating artist turns from a catalyst to a receiver and focuses on the reflection to the student’s learning process.

The curriculum and the topic appear as a scaffolding fond behind the student’s learning experiences.
had followed whilst creating the image. By using the image as a mediator, the student and the artist opened themselves towards each other as individuals and created new meaning on the theme chosen for elaboration during the former experienced art lecture. The narratives articulate that the dialogue both for the student and the artist created a double transformative learning process on the theme chosen: the process of using imagination for creating meaning on the lion as a cultural symbol and the process of observing how imagination colors individual concepts of a co-experienced learning situation. Comparing to Gadamer (1997), the interpretation of narrative meaning illuminates the fact that dialogues in arts education are hermeneutic processes in which the subjects involved expand knowing on several levels when pushed beyond expectations.

**Layer nine: understanding cross-curricula themes as concepts for an aesthetic approach to learning**

Recalling Sava’s notion that one central aspect of research in arts education is the transfer of arts and aesthetics into pedagogical understanding, the transfer of arts needs to be done with focus on the learner. The interpretation of the reconstructed narratives brought into view that imagination create connections between teaching and learning that is recognizable in three overlapping layers:

- The first layer illustrates that imagination connects teaching and learning in arts based learning practice in a way where it is important that individuals involved are given possibilities to have dialogues on co-experiences.
- The second layer shows that arts education has to be a safe space for educators and students for letting themselves to imaginative play expressed in the dialogues.
- The third layer highlights that an aesthetic approach to arts based learning is about to as an educator approach a learning situation as an asymmetric, not a symmetric event.

The use of cross-curricula themes as concepts for the interpretation of meaning in the first narrative made the cross-curricula themes concrete in relation to the arts educational practice. In this view it is possible to base an aesthetic approach to learning in the curriculum structure. This means that the cross-curricula themes are possible to use as guidelines for creating learning conditions for not only production and social interaction but also for highlighting imagination as a cultivating learning process. The interpretation of the narratives generated the notion that
although imagination traditionally appears as an individual affair, imagination in arts education is always a dynamic process of dialogue, response and social construction (cf. Illeris 2006). The interpretation of narrative meaning as well drew attention to the student’s and artist’s need to construct themselves as responsive, experiencing and imagining subjects.

Layer ten: Concluding Comments
The composite of ten sections as layers of meaning became a hermeneutic spiral in which the artist-researcher-teacher response to the student and self-reflections on arts educational practice grew towards expanded knowledge of an aesthetic approach to arts education. By this, one can also state that an artist-researcher-teacher aesthetic approach to research in arts education is to transfer from artist thinking to art educational understanding of the learner, i.e. the learning methods and learning experiences in arts education. Arts education is progress and transformation of an aesthetic approach to learning for all involved.

Learning art in relation to the cross-curricula themes is one aim of arts education in elementary education. In addition, it is the key to acknowledging arts in learning communities as an opportunity to imagine and to push boundaries of pre-understandings beyond the expected. This needs to be articulated in dialogues where conversation is an interactive interpretation of experiences, beliefs and ideas that easily could go unheard in school.

To conclude: re-articulation of dialogues based in arts education reveals that arts education is to let the unexpected change ways of approaching, teaching and learning arts – over and over again.
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6. Intercultural bridges through physical theatre
Heli Aaltonen

Abstract
In this article eight aspects of a creative youth theatre process are discussed. The interpretative interest is to examine what possibilities young people have to act as competent, active, creative agents in a process of physical theatre work. There is always some kind of pre-understanding of the meaning of arts, which has an influence on the actual art educational practice with young people. In Aaltonen’s view, relational aesthetics and playing mood as a way of inter-subjective communication provide concepts for understanding child-centred art educational practice. At the same time, ecosophical logic requires that we see all humans as ontologically interdependent on other forms of life. Humans, with their symbolic cultural expressions, are in webs of living connections instead of being at the centre. The consequence of such ontological change of focus is that art educational practices need to be evaluated regarding how they function according to three ecological registers: the environment, social relations and human subjectivity.
Introduction
When young people create a performance in a collaborative devising process from an idea with their artist-teachers, they construct shared meanings for their experiences. Theatrical meaning-making is relationally negotiated and embodied. This article reports on a research project involving nine intercultural, multilingual theatre workshops of 12 to 15-year old young people. The multidisciplinary research was conducted in the context of the 10th European Children’s Theatre Encounter Bridges which was organised in Estonia, Viljandi, from 8 to 22 July, 2001. The Encounter is regarded as a theatrical event. The analysis of the theatrical event was divided into four segments: Cultural Contexts, Contextual Theatricality, Theatrical Playing and Playing Culture. In this article the analysis concerning the segment Theatrical Playing is discussed. It is a segment where the actual communication between the young people and adult leaders is described. The creative process by means of theatre and the sharing of the performances is in the focus of the Encounters. The research question I intend to elaborate in this article is: What characteristics of a creative process can be identified in the collaborative devising process with theatrical playing?

Playing mood as a characteristic quality of everyday communication
I will open the scene of the Encounter by giving voice to the adult leader, Grace, and young workshop participant, Timo. This video extract was recorded by Timo after a theatre workshop session with Grace.

Grace and Timo, in playing mood
Timo: How are you, Grace?
Grace: Today, I am, I am feeling very sad.
Timo: Why?
Grace: Aaah // well opera // I // ah, I // I don’t know. I wanted chocolate for dinner. There was no chocolate for dinner. I asked for chocolate for dinner. They said no chocolate for dinner and I would like to protest.
Timo: Yes?
Grace: Yes [smiling].

Timo: Where are you going, Grace, now?
Grace: I am going on the journey to find myself. // I am lost somewhere. // I must find my inner soul // and the chocolate [smiling].
Timo: Yes, yes. (Video recording 14.7.01; Aaltonen 2006, 114)
Grace smiles twice during the video recording and signals that nothing she is saying is supposed to be taken seriously. This way of sending meta-communicative signals is full of stimulating paradoxes (Bateson 1978, 157). How am I supposed to understand your message? Do we have the same playing mood?

Playful relations between adults and young people, playing mood, paradoxical play signals and joking describe the most used ways of communication between adults and young people in the 10th European Drama Encounter in Estonia. The artist-teachers encourage young people to engage in playful relations with each other. When young people understand that joking is allowed outside the theatre workshops, the general atmosphere of the Encounter becomes relaxed, trustful and creative. Playing happens in the protected zone. It is a question of real life situations, where the communication is not taking place in a serious way, but in a creative way, in a playful way, which opens up multiple possible interpretations.

Context of the research
At a time when the concepts ‘fun’, ‘free expression’ and ‘personal development’ are not in official use any more, it is worth looking more closely at an activity where these concepts have for a long time been widely in use. It is youth theatre, a public space between home and school. There is a strong belief among people who make theatre with young people that something significant takes place when young people participate in creative processes. It is a secure place to explore matters which are important for young people. It takes place outside formal education and is founded on the voluntary participation of young people. I wanted to understand more about the creative process of youth theatre and find out what young people want to express with their performances.

I conducted a drama educational case study in 2001 (in Viljandi, Estonia) of an arts-rich programme organised by the EDERED-association of EDERED-association has an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) status in the Council of Europe (CoE). From 1982 to

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1 The abbreviation EDERED stands for European Drama Encounters – Rencontres Européennes de Drama. The aim of the association is the promotion of intercultural work through drama and theatre with children and youth in Europe. This is achieved, for example, through “the organization and realization of international Encounters” (Statutes of EDERED, 1998, # 2). The idea of the Encounters grew out of an initiative put forward by the Council of Europe in a seminar hosted by Sweden in Eskilstuna in 1979 under the title Children and Culture in Contemporary Europe. (Hauger, Piers & O‘Dwyer 1999, 1).
2009, members of the EDERED-association have organized thirteen Children’s Encounters and eight Youth Encounters.

Research material was gathered from 212 participants of the Encounter (from 12 to 15-year old children and their leaders, who came from 18 different countries). The field research lasted for the two-week period of the Encounter, namely from the 8th July to 22nd July, 2001. The participants of the two week Encounter event used English as a lingua franca, as well as 17 other languages; therefore the event was a truly multilingual theatrical one. Participants from approximately ten different national groups formed one multilingual group, which had 20 participants and two theatre workshop leaders belonging to different nationalities. The starting point of the creative drama process for all groups was the theme of the Encounter, ‘Bridges’.

I would argue that physical theatre may function as a communicative practice for meaning-making in a multilingual youth encounter context. The result of a physical theatre workshop is an intercultural performance. The creative process by means of theatre and the sharing of performances is the focus of the Encounter events. In this paper I will discuss the following research questions:

- What are some of the characteristics of a creative process?
- What kind of social, political and/or spiritual purposes and themes are emphasized in theatrical products based on the metaphor ‘bridges’?

Interpreting the answers to these questions leads to further questions concerning identity and community (re)construction, such as:

- How are the categories ‘community’ and ‘child’ constructed in an intercultural drama practice and performances?

I start by contextualizing my research with other youth theatre research. Then I present the art educational trends which have influence on the background of a creative process of theatre. I suggest that art educational practice be looked at from a holistic point of view. Further on, I suggest eight characteristics of a creative process of theatre. A critical performance reading of nine intercultural performances reveals that the intercultural performance themes of young people are love, identification with nature and shared interests. This made me look at the human
activity from the ecosophical perspective\textsuperscript{2} and suggest that the creative practice of the EDERED association promotes “ecological citizenship”\textsuperscript{3}. Helen Nicholson conceptualizes the different citizenship themes of applied drama practice with a metaphor of ecological citizenship, which she defines as follows:

Ecological citizenship is a metaphor that suggests the complex, interdependent, interactive and often uneven relationships between local and global interests in the practice of citizenship, and it is also a literal description of an important environmental movement (Nicholson 2005, 33).

At the end of this paper I will draw conclusions and offer some political suggestions concerning youth theatre.

**Research around youth theatre**

The English researchers, Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson (2003, 31), identify four different reasons for being\textsuperscript{4} in youth theatre. The reasons are realised in four different models: 1) theatre/arts, 2) community, 3) youth work, and 4) applied theatre model.

In the case of the EDERED Encounter two models are intertwined together, namely the theatre/arts and community models. The reason for being, in this case, is to offer the possibility to participate in professional quality drama and theatre processes, as well as to reflect and present the concerns of European young people and to promote intercultural understanding and ecological citizenship through theatre activity.

Only a few empirical studies have been identified where the focus is on the theatre/arts model. The concepts ‘growth’ and ‘development’ are the concepts in use, both in Hughes and Wilson’s, as well as in Christina Chaib’s (1996) Swedish research. High quality youth theatre promotes the personal, social and political development of young people. Hughes

\textsuperscript{2} Arne Næss (1989/1976, 38) explains ecosophy as follows: “…a philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere”.

\textsuperscript{3} Helen Nicholson (2005, 19-37) writes about the participatory aspect in applied drama work. She points out the important connection between ecological citizenship and applied drama. She notices that “both drama and citizenship are creative practices, and both are concerned with the values, needs and aspirations of individuals, communities and societies.” (Nicholson 2005, 33)

\textsuperscript{4} “The ’reason for being’ for all youth theaters is to provide access to theatre for young people. When theatre stops being their reason for being, it is less like youth theatre and more like applied theatre or stage school that cannot be defined as youth theatre. For example, projects within the youth service or youth offending service often have a starting objective that is nothing to do with theatre and use theatre because they feel it may be a successful way of delivering those objectives.” (Hughes & Wilson 2003, 31)
and Wilson conclude, in their youth theatre research in England, as follows:

The research findings suggest that attending youth theatre can be an important protective factor for young people experiencing social exclusion/growing up in contexts of high risk. This is an important area for further research. (Hughes & Wilson 2004, 68)

In Finland, Timo Sinivuori (2002) focused on the artistic learning process, amateur actors’ and directors’ learning experiences, and personal motives.

The Norwegian, Cecilie Haagensen (2008), is interested in studying comparatively the artistic processes of young people’s theatrical practice. The focus in her research is a comparative analysis of Norwegian and Australian theatre students’ theatrical practice. She presents the Australian research of Sandra Gattenhof (2004, 2006), who suggests that young people are “drivers of change”, and that their contribution to theatre language is an aesthetic renewal.

The Australian, Julie Dunn (2008, 56), observed that many pre-adolescent girls (11-12 years old) prefer to play dramatic plays with their peers. In her research the focus is “to gain a greater understanding of how cohesion in dramatic play is achieved”. She identifies five key phases in the text creation process. They are “the preparation, enactment, innovation, breakdown and concluding phases” (ibid., 68). The players are used to support the development of the above-mentioned phases with four playwright functions: ‘narrative, intervening, reinforcing and reviewing” (ibid.).

The research work of the American researcher, Stephani Woodson, from Arizona State University, has inspired me to see youth theatre from a political perspective. She works on the spirit of the UN Child Convention and points out the importance of treating young people as active agents of their own childhood. She calls community-based youth theatre “an applied theory of the social construction of childhood and youth identity worked out in cooperation with youth themselves”. Physical theatre workshop provides a relational and playful space for adult leaders and young participants to construct meanings for their unique youth in present time (Woodson 2004, 27).

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5 Haagensen’s Ph.D work in progress has the working title Devising Lived Experience – a study of Norwegian and Australian theatre students’ theatrical practice.

6 Stephani Woodson is an editor of Youth Theatre Journal: The Scholarly Journal of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education.
The American, Milbrey McLaughlin, (2000) illuminates with her research group the reasons why young people want to participate in some community-based organizations which exist for them. The effective youth organizations are “intentional learning environments”. The strengths of the organizations are based on three qualities. They are “youth-centred”, “assessment-centred” and “knowledge-centred” (ibid., 8). In other words, young people want to be seen and heard, they want someone to care about them, and they want to learn something useful. All these qualities were present in the Encounter culture.

**Arts educational trends on the background of the Encounter practice**

The overriding aim of my drama educational case study was to deepen the understanding of meaning-making in a creative intercultural youth theatre process and to examine it in the context of the 10th European Children’s Theatre Encounter, *Bridges*, in 2001. The research task was to give a theoretical description of some key features of a creative drama process as the basis for theory about meaning-making in physical theatre.

Several arts educational trends influence the work of drama/theatre artist-teachers and have an impact on experienced creative drama practice. The Danish scholar Anne Bamford (2006, 31-32) has, in her global research compendium, grouped major trends in arts education as they are experienced around the world. They are: (1) technocratic art, (2) child art, (3) arts as expression, (4) arts as cognition, (5) arts as aesthetic response, (6), arts as symbolic communication, (7) arts as a cultural agent, and (8) postmodernism.

In the context of the EDERED Encounter practice, all the above-mentioned trends are identifiable and allied together.

The technocratic art trend is represented in pure formal learning, for example, in learning the steps of dance choreography. In the national evening the children learnt the different steps of national dances from each other.

The child art trend is in use always when art-making is assumed to develop ‘personality’ in one way or another. This idea is widely in use in

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7 The theoretical and methodological foundation of the study can be found in Aaltonen 2006, 37-84.
the youth theatre context. Youth theatre activity develops personality as well as the social capacity to manage in life.

Many of the accounts of the young people, as well as their leaders, represent the expressive trend. They wanted to point out how the arts provide a means for young people to express their ideas.

The arts as cognition-trend is represented when there is a belief that some form of embodied, aesthetic knowledge forms are created during the art-making process. In theatre work the starting point can be an improvisation, which is developed by working further on the theme. During the process of theatre work more knowledge is created about the theme of improvisation.

One of the goals in the EDERED practice is to emphasize the encounter between artist-teachers and children. It is represented in a trend where arts are seen as an aesthetic response. In this trend the formal language of arts and knowledge of the techniques are seen as the carriers of cultural values.

When the communicative and symbolic aspects of arts are emphasized, it is meant that the sign systems of arts communicate through non-discursive means. These systems may be visual, aural or kinetic, and the message may be in forms other than verbal accounts. Several studies point out that the symbolic creativity of young people, their own cultural-aesthetic forms of expression, and media culture provide young people with the means (body, music and visual culture) to make sense of their experiences and to explore questions around identity and community. In a multilingual context it is important to acknowledge this idea, because physical theatre has many common aspects with young people’s own culture-aesthetic language. The theatre arts may be used as relational, embodied language for inter-subjective communication.

When arts are seen as a cultural agent, the focus has turned from intersubjective interaction between people and their surroundings to active cultural agency. The arts-rich programs of the EDERED are led by adult-artists and made in the spirit of youth and alternative theatre. All of the leaders wanted the view of young people to be represented in their performances. The pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1980) has a strong impact on this trend where the idea of self-expression is expanded with the social intention (ibid.).

The previously mentioned idea of ecological citizenship is an example of how arts may promote cultural agency. One of the EDERED groups worked intuitively with the connection of three ecologies: the
environment, social relations and human subjectivity (Guattari 2000, 28). The performance called *What the crystal ball told us*\(^8\) took up an important question concerning the world’s water resources. The performance group wanted to solve the problem with utopian hope. In the story were presented two social groups in conflict with each other, farmers and gypsies. The farmers owned all the water and did not want to give it to the thirsty gypsies. Only the individual love between the young people coming from each group solved the problem.

Finally, postmodernism is challenging the idea of arts and sees that everyday experiences may have the same qualities as fine arts and popular culture. In the domain of postmodernism there is no one and universal interpretation of the meaning of art work, but many parallel, competing personal narratives. The peaceful existence, side by side, of personal narratives from multiple points of view is accepted.

All the above mentioned arts educational trends seem to offer a partial and atomistic explanation for the art-educational practice in focus. I have analysed the two-week Encounter as an artistic activity, theatrical event. The two-week theatrical event is “an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects”, as Nicolas Bourriaud (2002, 107) suggests in defining art. Pipsa Teerijoki (2003, 146) has a relational point of view of drama educational practice and she names an arena of drama education as “a ruin stage”. On the ruin stage elements of everyday life, dramaturgy and poetics, social presence, creativity, encounters and events interconnect people in the relational process of transformational learning. The intercultural theatre workshops are relational ruin spaces of the Encounter, and in them webs of connections are formed between national and linguistic groups. Two participants from approximately ten different national groups form one intercultural workshop group. In this way, every national group can share and compare the experiences with five workshop groups. The Encounter provides the possibility of creating intercultural knowledge in webs of connections. The young people share their experiences in multiple relational spaces, in national, linguistic and intercultural groups. The intercultural theatre work is reflecting, representing, re-creating and producing inter-human relationships in the Encounter. Everyday life and art are intertwined into each other. The recycling of everyday experience into artistic form and using artistic form in everyday encounter is characteristic of the Encounter culture.

\(^8\) Analysis of the performance text is found in Aaltonen 2006, 209-217.
Bjørn Rasmussen and Rikke Gørgens (2006, 235-244) define applied theatre practices as “part of everyday life” by comparing Dewey’s pragmatism and Gadamerian rational philosophy. According to them aesthetic experience does not significantly differ from everyday experience:

> What we experience and eventually consciously know, in aesthetic and other ways, is always part of a natural problem solving process. Our everyday life contains problem situations that we intentionally solve as experience. We make, and remake, hypotheses about the world through a continuous stream of experiences that are linked to past and future experiences (Rasmussen and Gørgens 2006, 239).

An aesthetic experience is understood in Dewey’s pragmatism as an experience where the aesthetic quality is noticed and appreciated. The goal of the artistic process is to make visible the aesthetic meaning potential of the aesthetic experience (Väkevä 2004, 84.).

Creative theatre work is just a part of the two week aesthetic experience of the young people. They have close contact with the environment which surrounds them. They identify themselves not only with human issues and problems, but also experience exceptionally rough thunderstorms and play them, follow storks hatching their eggs on nests close to their rehearsing place, connect themselves to other forms of life and act mammals and birds in their cultural products.

Youth art festivals, theatre camps and other forms of encounters provide a ‘total’ aesthetic experience. They are webs of connections representing unity and diversity at the same time. In such art-educational examples relational, ecosophic thinking with three ecologies is in the background. Private, social and environmental ecologies are in relational connection with each other. The environment is “talking” in children’s cultural products. David Rothenberg\(^9\) explains what identification with nature may mean:

> This is also an active term: it could be thought of as ‘identiting’. We discover that parts of nature are parts of ourselves. We cannot exist separate from them. If we try, our Self-realising is blocked. Thus we cannot destroy them if we are to exist fully.

In this sense, ecosophical thinking and relations between the three ecologies in art education represent a holistic art educational trend, which I suggest to be the ninth arts educational trend. Sally Gradle (2007, 1501) writes about “spiritual ecology in art education” and concludes her thinking by giving a statement:

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The heart of art education is here in the participatory, visionary focus; honed on the spiritual connectivity of humankind with all of life as the most artful composition of all.

Relational aesthetics with young people
How to lead a creative theatre practice which interests young people and encourages active agency?

Eight inter-related aspects can be distinguished in the intercultural theatre workshop, as shown in Figure 1. They are the following: (1) creative atmosphere: flow energy in presence, (2) cultural production, (3) dialogic and poly-logic relations, (4) paradoxical communication, (5) dramatic meaning-making, (6) well-working exercises: a combination of the physical and the imaginative, (7) dramaturgy, and (8) site-specificity.

Figure 1: The eight inter-related aspects of the creative drama process.
1. Creative atmosphere: flow energy in presence
It is possible to achieve new insights only when the channels of creativity are opened and a creative mode of being is established. The leaders frequently repeated in their accounts the concept ‘energy’. Given the importance of the concept energy it becomes clear that energy means simply a capacity for doing work. An optimal energy level is described by the concept ‘presence’.

According to Mihály Csikszentmihalyi (1998, 110-123), performance of ‘flow’ energy is possible when children’s abilities and challenges to do tasks are kept in balance. If the challenges of the tasks are too overbearing, the performers become worried and nervous. If the abilities of the performers are higher in relation to the tasks, they become uninterested. It is crucial, therefore, that the leaders succeed in establishing a creative atmosphere and get the whole group to the level of flow energy where they encounter each other in presence. Only then may they feel ‘the short magic moments’ of discovery. The performers share the same place in having on-stage relationships. They need to be able to sense each other. Sensitive body awareness\(^{10}\) means that they are able to build bridges to space, to themselves, to each other, and to the audience.

2. Cultural production
The young person can be seen as a competent, creative social agent of his/her youth. This idea leads to the interest in offering a space for young people and democratizing the skills of theatre for their use. Performing arts becomes a medium for young people to communicate their message on stage. The cultural production is made to empower young people and find ways in ‘giving voice and being heard’ (Sinclair 2004). At the same time, young people find it important to make something ‘ready’. The cultural production is an important part of the creative theatre process. It is one form of group-based answer to questions which the artistic process has posed. I wanted to know what the cultural productions of the Encounter told about their identity and community construction. The result of the performance analysis is as follows:

\(^{10}\) Body awareness is called "proprioception" (from the Latin proprius meaning “one’s own” and perception) in movement theory. It “is the sense of the position of the parts of the body, relative to other neighbouring parts of the body”. Retrieved September 14, 2008 from http://www.factbites.com/topics/propiroception
We use many different languages and belong to different nationalities. The nationalities do not connect or divide us. Communities are created with people who make the same things together.

We are all different. Unified communities can be created together with people who share the same interests.

We are born into different communities and share the life style of a community. Individuals can break the bonds of different life styles and communities by loving each other.

Connections can be found between all forms of living creatures. Unified communities are created by connecting different individuals with shared visions together.

A group of people is as strong as the individual links are.

Personal love can bind more strongly than belonging to social classes. There are other, more sensual and embodied ways of being than the western way.

It is possible to create multilingual unified communities by loving each other.

There are differences between people. Only love and caring help us to encounter each other with real understanding.

Love helps different genders to come closer to each other and create a unified community (Aaltonen 2006, 191-192).

Young people expressed in their performances utopian hope to solve environmental, economical or social problems by loving each other or by doing something together. They talk about important questions, but do not see any political solution for those problems. In many performances young people performed other forms of life, birds, mammals and nature elements.

3. Dialogic and polylogic relations
Dialogic relations are emphasized in art educational relationships. Hierarchic or one-dimensional sender-receiver, talker-listener relationships are expanded. Dialogic relations make it possible to encounter otherness and be open to different points of view. Dialogic relations are not the only option in a group-based activity such as drama. Relations may have even more complex forms. They may be polylogic, which means simply that meanings are created in a relational web of connections. Distributing knowledge creation between students and the teacher helps develop increased understanding. It also helps foster critical analysis and gives students the space to develop in ‘a space of possibilities’. Devised theatre work is collaborative and open in its form and at the same time it is also fundamentally relational. This aspect makes it so efficient in building ecological citizenship and connections
between three ecologies. Dave Cormier (2008) suggests the concept *rhizomatic education*: “In the rhizomatic model, knowledge is negotiated, and the learning experience is a social as well as a personal knowledge creation process with mutable goals and constantly negotiated premises.” The rhizomatic model describes well the dialogic and polylogic knowledge construction at the Encounter.

4. Paradoxical communication

Children and young people appreciate a joking atmosphere. Playing as a mode of being is based on paradoxical communication. It means that what we are talking about is actually not what we mean with our talking. Paradoxical communication in interpersonal encounters is widely discussed in Gregory Bateson’s (1978, 39-51) theory of play and fantasy. In play the paradoxical mode of communication is negotiated between players and the messages are not supposed to be taken seriously. The rules of play and a paradoxical frame of communication create freedom for many interpretations in the situation. Because playing is based on paradoxical communication, which is impossible to explain in a logically correct way, it seems to be underestimated in an educational context. However, it seems that children and young people use paradoxical communication a lot in their everyday culture and appreciate joking adults.

5. Dramatic meaning making

Anna-Lena Østern and Hannu Heikkinen (2001, 110-123) suggest that one of the key concepts in drama is *aesthetic doubling*. This means that the participants of the drama process reflect their meanings in the transformational space between the fictive and real world. The play with roles, story, place and time create freedom to express more than it is possible to express in one-dimensional reality. The ideas of young people obtain negotiable and recycled aesthetic forms in a “ruin space” of dramatic meaning-making. Michael Fleming (2003, 98-99) points out that dramatic meaning-making makes it possible “to be emotionally engaged yet distant, to be serious yet free from responsibility, to be a participant as well as observer, to be open to the new while rooted in the familiar and to simplify situations in order to explore their complex depths.”
6. **Well-working exercises: combination of the physical and the imaginative**

In non-verbal, embodied communication the physical and the imaginative are combined.

Non-verbal communication is the central aspect of communication. In the multilingual situation non-verbal communication also works for a concrete aim. The variety of languages at the same time controls the possibility for equal verbal communication as well as increasing the need for and interest in non-verbal communication.

Well-working exercises in the area of non-verbal communication combine the physical and the imaginative. The mental images are represented in body postures and movements. The body is a highly essential area of identity negotiation. There are many restrictions concerning how the body should be and how it should move in different situations. The body is a cultural and political site where genders, ages, attitudes and other differences between cultural groups are represented and negotiated (King 1971, 8). The physical body in space creates mental images for the performers as well as for the spectators.

7. **Dramaturgy**

Dramaturgy is emphasized by many drama practitioners. Different dramaturgical models are connected to diverse epistemological fundamentals (Allern 2003; Gladsø et al. 2005; Østern et al. 2005). For a drama leader it is important to be conscious of how different dramaturgical choices influence the outcome of the creative work. The dramaturgical models may be divided into four basic models, as Janek Szatkowski (Gladsø et al. 2005, 168) suggests. These are the dramatic, epic, simultaneous and meta-fictional models. All these models were in use in the Encounter performances. Different forms of child play or mythical thinking may also offer a model for dramaturgical thinking.

There are, roughly divided, two different dramaturgical approaches represented in the media and theatre. Juha-Pekka Hotinen (2002, 208-227) suggests calling them *old* (traditional, Aristotelian) dramaturgy, and *new* (post-modern performance or montage) dramaturgy. They may also be called, in the terms of Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) as *dramatic* and *post-dramatic* dramaturgy.

Post-dramatic dramaturgy is a typical representation of fragmented post-modern thinking. The identification of solid characters, actions, motives,
interaction and message may be defined as representation of mimetic, old dramaturgy.

Lehmann’s (2006, 86-107) eleven characteristics of post-dramatic dramaturgy are: 1) parataxis/non-hierarchy, 2) simultaneity, 3) play with the density of signs, 4) plethora, 5) musicalization, 6) scenography, visual dramaturgy, 7) warmth and coldness, 8) physicality, 9) “concrete theatre”, 10) irruption of the real, and 11) event/situation.

In six performances out of nine the groups decided to tell a story. They used either dramatic, meta-fictional or epic dramaturgy. The three performances which used simultaneous dramaturgy had also some of the qualities which Lehmann identifies as being typical of post-dramatic theatre.

8. Site-specificity
The environment, rehearsing room and performance space are all important aspects of spatiality. Theatre art is by its nature rooted in spatial elements. It is important to know where the activity will be performed. Performance takes place somewhere and therefore the site that is chosen will characterize the artistic development. The work with theme is closely connected with space and some of the leaders found it difficult to move from an inside rehearsing space to an outdoor scene. It is easy to lose some of the quality when the space of the process and presenting of it are not the same. Because theatre is a spatial art form, it is easy to see that by means of theatre it is natural to work between three ecological registers, as Guattari (2000, 28) suggests, namely between the environment, social relations and human subjectivity.

Conclusions
I have presented in this article eight characteristic aspects of the creative drama process. The civic European association EDERED has produced twenty-one successful and challenging theatrical encounters. The main priority of the organization has not been educational or social, but cultural and artistic. However, by working with arts-rich programs, they have been able to work politically and bring young people to public spaces, to respected theatre scenes, where they have not been seen before. The Encounter has influenced different communities to see young people in a positive way. The young people have been seen and heard. Young people have discovered their own private social constructions and worked out questions around their youth identity in cooperation with artist-teachers and their peers. They have lived three ecologies for a two
week period and with the help of global media culture have succeeded in communicating on an intercultural level. The multilingual, intercultural situations which the organizers of the EDERED have faced are reminiscent of many classroom interactions of any urban European suburb. The difficulties in communication may be lingual, but it may be that there is a language that can be learnt in such a situation. The non-verbal language of physical theatre offers a meaningful language for communication in a multilingual context.

The research around young people’s creative, multilingual theatre process has been carried out in optimal circumstances. The young informants of the research were theatre enthusiasts and they wanted to meet other enthusiasts from different countries. The language of physical theatre was not new for many of the participants. Many of the participating young people had long and wide experience in different forms of theatre-making. However, I think that many of the conclusions made in this chapter could be adapted to other multilingual situations or to situations where intercultural bridges between different youth groups need be built.

1. The symbolic creativity of young people in everyday life is performative. It is expressed through the body and also through music and visual culture. The symbolic expressions of young people carry cultural significance.
2. Dialogic and polylogic relations, aesthetic experiences, embodied presence and a playing mood are essential fundamentals in intersubjective encounters with young people.
3. The language of physical theatre is based on body images, movement and music. Through the embodied language of physical theatre it is possible to express the feelings and experiences of young people, because meaning-making in physical theatre is close to their own everyday symbolic language.
4. In a multilingual context, where the verbal languages are secondary, physical theatre offers an embodied language for communication.
5. It is possible by means of physical theatre to construct symbolic worlds, where questions about intercultural identity and multilingual community are examined and where the provisional answers are constructed in social interaction.
6. Communities create structures of feelings which can be examined in community-based theatre practices as physical theatre practice with young people.
7. The creative practices of the theatre and applied drama promote ecological citizenship.

Political suggestions
I have compared two official political documents of Finnish child culture from 1979 and 2003 (Aaltonen 2007, 5-9). The free space of expression has diminished. In the 2003 document the main task of arts seems to be how to socialize children to Finnish Culture. The writers of the 2003 document are fully aware that children/young people have their own cultural activities and a lot social problems, but the content of the program is not based on the knowledge of the child and youth research. If young people were really and truly appreciated, the poetically correct ways of producing child/youth culture would be studied and carried out in a collaborative process with children. I want to cite Woodson (2004, 27) from the U.S., who suggests “an educational theatre program for the twenty-first century”. According to Woodson such a program needs to be focused on young people’s lived experiences. She summarizes five interrelated characteristics for the program:

1. A program that treats young people as active agents rather than passive observers.
2. A significant program, not afraid to explore big questions, social issues and/or problems.
3. A program that creates advocates for the arts while exploring what it means to be an artist in the 21st century.
4. A program that celebrates and uses popular cultural forms.
5. A program that creates and promotes caring kinship bonds deeply connected into both the school and surrounding communities.

I want to add one characteristic for the program I think is the most fundamental:
A program that creates and promotes loving connections to all other forms of life and which acknowledges that nature has an intrinsic importance for the humanity of man.

Such a program could be based on the ideology of relational aesthetics and ecosophical thinking. Artworks would be judged “on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt” (Bourriaud 2002, 112). If relational aesthetics provided a crucial criterion for children

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11 All young people under 18 years old.
and youth arts, the relational embodied encounters with adults and young people would be as appreciated in the program as they are among children.
References


Abstract
In this article student teachers’ aesthetic learning processes in visual arts are presented as they appear through their portfolios. The intention is to explore and describe what the portfolio conveys about student teachers’ conceptions of their learning. These conceptions are mirrored in the learning aims for pupils in grades 1-9 in the Finnish National Framework Curriculum from 2004 (FNBE, 2004). The focus is on one student’s narrative, from a group of eleven students, during a course (5 ECTS) covering a period of about two months. All eleven students’ portfolios differ from each other in some way and the chosen portfolio (Anja) is looked upon as one case. The analysis of Anja’s narrative shows some distinctive features of an artistic learning process documented in her portfolio, mainly in changes at three different levels in her knowledge and insights: quantitative, qualitative and structural. Through analysis of the portfolio documentation, especially the diary entries on different topics, Anja’s professional development is characterised by an emerging meta-reflective knowledge, an insight into the importance of parallel learning cycles. These parallel learning cycles are socio-cultural learning supported by a group which functions like a sounding board – combined with an individual elaboration of the semiotic mediation through the transformations of the task in visual arts. Another parallel process is the comparison with the future role as a visual arts teacher for pupils, who also can benefit from using the portfolio methodology as a learning tool in visual arts.
Introduction
During lessons in visual arts there is time for discussing images and learning, but is there enough time for discussing with all the students? Many students like to talk about their learning process, but many do not, for different reasons. Is there any possibility for a teacher in visual arts to give the possibility for all students to discuss and reflect? Could the portfolio, as a tool for teaching, give the teacher an opportunity to communicate with all the students and be aware of students’ conceptions about their learning process? My intention in this article is to articulate how a student teacher takes his/her own interests and the curriculum into consideration while planning a project in visual arts and what the student teacher describes and reflects on during the learning process. The student teacher uses the content of the curriculum in visual arts (FNBE, 2004) when coming to an understanding of didactics through his/her own learning process. In this article I will suggest the portfolio as a tool for semiotic mediation both for the teacher as well as for the student teacher. The student teacher articulates his/her learning process and the teacher has a chance to respond to the reflections. This is also a learning process for the teacher in terms of understanding of the student teacher’s process of insights into the didactics of visual arts teaching.

This article is structured like a conversation between the narrative of the student teacher and structural frames and theory about aesthetic learning processes. I initially describe the frames for teacher education set out in the text about visual arts in the Finnish National Framework Curriculum for grades 1-9. Relevant literature and research in the field of visual arts, process portfolio and learning to learn in general are also considered. When given a theoretical and reflective framework for the more analytical part of the article, I introduce a student teacher narrative, which is constructed based on the text in one portfolio. The narrative is interwoven with a dialogue of theory and didactic reflections. The main themes in the student teacher narrative from the perspective of aesthetic learning processes are underlined. The student teacher narrative is one articulation of a learning process. Theoretically loaded concepts are used when making a reading of the narrative. The intention is to make a semiotic mediation of the student teacher’s learning path. I use my knowledge as a researcher in the didactics of visual art in order to articulate and make visible some central aspects of an aesthetic learning process.
The concepts artistic and aesthetic

The term “artistic” refers, according to Dewey (1980/1934), primarily to the act of production, the process of doing and making; “aesthetic” refers to perceiving, appreciating and enjoying. Both terms are needed to explain art: Dewey says it would be unfortunate to try to separate them too much from each other. Aulin-Gråhamn and Thavenius (2003) talk about aesthetic processes when there is a change in thought, imagination or activity during the process where thinking materialises in an expression. In this article the notion aesthetic learning process is used when talking about the course since it includes both the practical part and reflection over time. When working with the process portfolio these parts will be compiled and not separated. When referring to the framework curriculum the notion artistic learning process will be used as it is mentioned in the curriculum.

My previous experience with pupil portfolios in grade five as inspiration

When I was working as a primary school teacher, pupils in grade five documented their artistic learning processes in a portfolio. The portfolio informed about the pupils’ learning and the teachers’ teaching and also in a way helped the pupils individually to be aware of their learning. Use of portfolio as a method also helped the pupils to become aware of their thoughts and progress in interaction with their classmates. This first hand experience has inspired me to introduce the portfolio as a teaching and learning tool. Later on, as a teacher in visual arts for student teachers at Åbo Akademi University in Vaasa, Finland, I used the portfolio teaching tool during a course lasting for seven weeks. The student teachers were in their second year of a five year long Master’s degree program in education (300 ECTS). This course was an optional course (5 ECTS), which means that the student teachers were already familiar with the subject and motivated to study more visual arts. During the course the student teachers reflected on their learning process in a process portfolio. Making a process portfolio was part of the examination in this course. The portfolio contains the student teachers’ reflections about the learning process, their experiences during the course, ideas, photos, pictures, and so on.

The content of the Finnish National Framework Curriculum for visual arts, grade 1-9

An artistic learning process comprises (1) planning, (2) making a sketch, (3) completing the artefact and (4) evaluation (FNBE, 2004). These different stages can also be a part of the portfolio process. The curriculum
also points out the importance of saving the artefacts, which is something you do in portfolio, while you save your artistic works in order to document your process in the portfolio. Since the level and scope of competence these student teachers have to be able to manage is found in the curriculum for compulsory school, it is the curriculum that is in focus during the course in question. The aims of the course are directly modelled on matching the aims of the curriculum. This gives the possibility not only to achieve the aims for the course, but also in a wider perspective the aims for visual arts in the curriculum for compulsory school in Finland. The student teachers have set up aims for their project at the beginning of the course based on the aims of the framework curriculum. Thus, their individual projects have the same limits prescribed by the curriculum.

The curriculum points out that one characteristic for visual arts is its thematic character. This gives the teacher the opportunity to work in a comfortable atmosphere and to sustain the project in order to make it possible to explore the theme more deeply. By following up the process both teacher and pupil can articulate how their knowledge and understanding increases. As a profile for good proficiency at the end of the fourth grade the curriculum states that the pupil should know how to document the work process and be capable of using the document for self-evaluation (FNBE, 2004). The demands of the curriculum make it possible to use the portfolio for documentation of the artistic learning process. Creative problem-solving is also a necessary part of visual expression. The artistic learning process should be emphasised in visual arts education.

The curriculum for the visual arts further points out that the pupils should make and justify aesthetic choices. Justifying and defining the purposes of the artistic works that the pupils are expected to create is also an obvious part of the portfolio process.

Forsman and Piironen (2006) state, in a handbook for visual arts, that working with long-term projects gives the pupils opportunity to work with portfolio and to interact with other pupils. The portfolio works as a good starting point for discussion since the pupils already have reflected on the work before bringing their thoughts into the classroom to the teacher and the other pupils (FNBE, 2004). These discussions are good exercises in learning how to respect different ideas of art and artistic processes. The pupils have concrete scaffolding in learning how to learn critical thinking. Discussing with their classmates makes the pupils
realize the different ways of learning, and at the same time they learn how to reflect about what they have done (Forsman & Piironen, 2006). The questions made by the teacher will often help the pupils in evaluation. The teacher also enhances the pupils’ possibility to describe the individual process and to talk about it. These questions should always start from the pupils’ own intentions and the intended meaning of the artefact and progressively turn into questions regarding thoughtfulness, accuracy and contents as the process continues (FNBE, 2004).

**Process portfolio**
The portfolio as an educational tool has been practised in Finland since the beginning of the 1990’s from kindergarten up to university level. A process portfolio (Niikko, 2000) includes documents and material that are important for the student and shows progress and learning and tells how the work is progressing. The pupils learn about different artistic processes, for example gathering knowledge, seeing different ways of expressing oneself and discussing aesthetic aspects (Forsman & Piironen, 2006). A portfolio includes, for example, a range of work over time selected by the teacher and student, the student’s goal setting, reflection related to selected works and the student’s self-assessment. The portfolio will contain content which makes sense to the student. There are many different ways of making a portfolio. A process portfolio could also be called a pedagogical portfolio. It tells about the whole artistic learning process from the idea to the finished artefact. A diary to support the making of the portfolio can be used (FNBE, 2004). The notion process portfolio will be used in this article since my focus is on the learning process.

Fox (2003) in his paper *Developing a vision for learning in the 21st century* suggests that “teaching students how to learn is now more important than teaching them what to learn”. I interpret his suggestion as a notion that it is important to develop thinking processes for the information age, where a person learns how to access the knowledge required and how to evaluate the veracity of the source and the knowledge itself. Fox is the principal at Buckland’s Beach Intermediate School in Auckland, New Zealand. He has developed a model, “Learning to Learn”, through portfolio pedagogy that teachers around the world use (Egidius, 1999). This model deals with the way pupils formulate goals for their schoolwork by themselves. With the starting point in the criteria they have made, the pupils think of how well they have done and
assess themselves and their work before the teacher does. This model is congruent with present day understanding of self-evaluation and evaluation with the help of classmates.

The “Learning to Learn” portfolio model has been adapted into the Swedish context and introduced to many Swedish schools. When asking Fox (E-mail, 26.3.2008) for information about the process portfolio, he referred to Ellmin, who has written about the portfolio based on the same ideas which Fox has presented in Sweden. Fox has also presented the model at the International Council of Principals World Conference in Helsinki in July 1999. Lindström (1994), who is a professor of visual arts education at Stockholm University in Sweden, defines the portfolio as a didactic tool that includes the pupils’ artefacts and their thoughts about them. The pupils learn how to look closer at their artefacts, reflect on them and critically assess them. Lindström (1994) states in Portföljmetodik i estetiska ämnen that the portfolio method is a way of teaching, evaluating and assessing. Later on, quoted in Näslund (2003), Lindström focuses on the process of working with a portfolio and he includes creativity, critical thinking and communication as multidisciplinary competence needed in the process.

Fox (E-mail, 26.3.2008) argues that if teachers want their students (or pupils) to be successful in the future, they have to give them the skills to learn how to learn by letting them take increasing responsibility for their own learning and understanding. The students have to learn that learning is something they have to do themselves. The students should be led to become self-directed, independent learners and the portfolio method could guide these changes and empower students to take responsibility for their own learning. They become more motivated through the knowledge that they have the key to learning in their own hands. The students’ self-esteem can develop as they present work of which they are proud, work about which they can say, “I didn’t know I could do so well!” (Fox, 2003). Whilst providing scaffolding towards increased responsibility for students, the structures in portfolio would also support teachers in becoming more like supervisors than directors of learning. The pupils’ claims on the teacher are different as they take more responsibility for their own learning. The teacher needs to show respect for the pupils’ thinking by giving responses and letting all pupils become visible. In a process like this the learner must be actively involved (Fox, 2003). Forsman and Piironen (2006) state that the role of the pupils today is to be more active themselves in describing the learning process as a platform for self-evaluation.
Conclusions regarding the usefulness of portfolio

A student process portfolio with clearly defined guidelines and clearly understood purposes can make a difference to learning outcomes. When reflecting on what they have done, the students look back and think about what they would do differently next time. Reflection helps the learner to focus on areas for improvement. Reflecting develops the students’ ability to know how to think and it encourages them to think about their own thinking. To be able to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, according to Fox (2003), helps to set your own future learning goals. To learn the language of learning (Ellmin, 2006) is when you know how you think; you can do something for your understanding. Emsheimer (2005) talks about reflection as purposeful with the aim of developing new patterns of thinking and to answer questions which are relevant regarding the issue.

According to Fox’s model (2003) of learning, reflection is the key to meta-cognitive development. In order to develop as independent learners the students should “reflect on their progress and look what they can learn from what they have performed”. Dysthe (2003) describes meta-cognition as the ability to reflect on your thinking, understanding and on your learning process. Meta-cognition is about being conscious about how you learn best. Costa (2008. p. 35) defines meta-cognition in the following way: “It is our ability to know what we know and what we don’t know. It is our ability to plan a strategy for producing what information is needed, to be conscious of our own steps during the act of problem solving, and to reflect on and evaluate the productiveness of our thinking”. He states “thinking about thinking begets more thinking” (p. 190). Häikiö (2007) contributes to the discussion about meta-cognition in questioning the validity of the individual’s own knowledge and capability.
The aesthetic learning process
In the arts, a process with no right answers is important since it develops active and open-minded students with interest in continuous dialogue about value and meaning. (Østern, 2006b). According to Østern (2006a), artistic learning processes are improvised and therefore unpredictable. The processes have different purposes, which open up for different interpretations and different outcomes.

Due to the cyclical character of aesthetical learning processes the teacher should plan the teaching in a way whereby the students can start by using simple mental models of learning, gradually gaining competence to use more complex ones, while processing the subject. (Østern, 2006a). The aesthetic learning processes are characterised as being an entrance to a deep knowledge (Häikiö, 2007). It is about a process where knowledge about material, understanding oneself and one’s own learning develops during the working process. The meaning-making is constructed in interaction with others (Costa, 2008).

Sava (1994) uses the notion artistic learning process when she describes the cyclical learning process that is based on Kolb’s experiential learning model. Sava’s cyclical model for an artistic learning process is structured in the following way: the process begins in an immediate sensuous experience, continuing with individual and interactive reflection, going further on to an artistic-aesthetic conceptualisation and further on to a developed artistic activity. This cyclical process leads to new immediate sensuous experience. This process begets a mental process, a transformation.

Transformation is one of the main qualities in a learning process, according to Sava (1994). Artistic learning is characterised by a process of change. It is about a mental change, where nothing is as before, after a strong artistic-aesthetic experience, Sava argues. The artistic activity transforms the reality from another point of view to be more complex, deeper and more engaged than before the artistic learning process. A dramatic, important artistic experience can be seen as an artistic achievement or as an action. “The artistic-aesthetic learning process is learning that changes the individuals’ relation to something” (Østern, 2006b), a new perspective on the world is opened.

Sava (1994) has mentioned three types of change in perspective. (1) A quantitative change, for instance, implies an increasing amount of artistic verbal expression, of the ability to draw, of terminology in different fields
of art and technical skills. It could also imply replacing wrong or defective achievements with, for example, more artistically correct ergonomic functions. According to Räsänen (1997), a researcher in visual art highly influenced by Sava, quantitative change is about growing knowledge. (2) A qualitative change consists of an artistic-aesthetic interpretation and production that is more sensible than before. In visual arts it could mean, for example, a more sensible colour expression. (3) A structural change might occur in artistic creative thinking and in the imagination. Change in pupils’ perception of the surrounding world and change in the individual’s own way of thinking would be of importance (Sava, 1994).

Sava (1994) talks about the social learning process in general, where people learn only by interaction with other people, society and culture. In this sense learning is not only an individual mental activity. According to Sava, artistic learning comprises social as well as cultural interaction. Räsänen (1997) argues that when individuals share experiences and reflect on works of art within a group, there will be an integration of social and personal growth. The curriculum points out that learning situations should be created in a way that provide the students with opportunities to work alone, but also to interact with others and to experience art in general (FNBE, 2004).

I will conclude the discussion about relevant learning processes in arts education with a reference to Säljö (2000), who points out that the question of learning is not about whether you learn or not, since you cannot avoid learning: it is about what you learn in the situation you are involved in.

The visual arts course under study
The visual arts course under study was an optional course consisting of 60 lessons. The eleven student teachers (the term students will now be used instead of student teachers) were told in the beginning of the course that they would have the opportunity to choose a project to work with throughout the course and that their own aesthetic learning process would be in focus during these weeks. Some of the students chose to work alone; others worked in pairs or collaborated in small groups of three students. Since the teacher worked more as a supervisor than as a teaching teacher, the students were welcome to ask the teacher for advice and help at any time needed during the process. The students were, to a large extent, given responsibility for their own learning. In the middle of the course the class was asked to think about the exhibition that was to
be established at the end of the course and as a kind of conclusion for this process. This was part of the examination process, decided by the teacher, not the students. The whole group was instructed to build the exhibition together.

A process portfolio was introduced to the group, as a deepening of the process they already had experienced connected to the portfolio from the obligatory basic course they had finished. The teacher asked the students to write a private diary to support the learning process. The students’ first task regarding the diary was to write thoughts of what they knew about the chosen theme from before. In the diary, as a part of the portfolio, the students collected impressions, questions and answers during the course. The students also worked on their tasks outside the teacher-led lessons. The class and the teacher met for a few hours every week. During these lessons the students were instructed by the teacher to write about certain issues in their diaries. The questions were related to the students’ aesthetic learning process, and could, for example, be about when the students got new ideas; how they came to an understanding and why they made new choices, if they did so. By reflecting on their own process in the diary, or within the group, the teacher’s idea was that the students would deepen their understanding over time. At the end they were supposed to reflect in the portfolio upon the whole learning process during the course, and finally they were asked to think of themselves in a two-fold way: on the one hand as a learner and on the other as a teacher. The students finally were given suggestions and guidelines about how to compile the final process portfolio.

A case study of Anja’s portfolio in visual arts
The following narrative is based on one student teacher’s reflections in her portfolio. I have given this student a fictive female name. There were both male and female students in the group. The narrative is constructed by me as the researcher. The text in this section consists of Anja’s narrative based on her diary and other texts in the process portfolio. The narrative is interwoven with my thoughts as a researcher (called *Researcher reflection*) regarding theory and teaching methods connected to qualified didactical thinking.
**Anja’s planning and choosing a theme (making a sketch)**

Our group found out together, as a result of discussions around many ideas, what the theme for the project of this course should be. After we had decided which theme to explore we knew we wanted to learn the basics about the subject. We also wanted to specialize in the genre portraits in the larger theme of photography because of our common interest in portraits. The members of our group also had chosen their individual goals for the course, and in my case it was to take artistic portraits, which have something to say, a message. My expectation for the course was to take exciting photos, including a message and including an empty space to be filled up by the observer. This was only partly fulfilled but most of the pictures we took are results of experimenting after reading the theory.

**Researcher reflection**

In the group the participants discussed about decisions to be taken, but the student also faced questions to be answered by him/her. Though the result of the project was not fully satisfying, the student had an ongoing inner dialogue of value.

An art teacher interviewed by Gry (2006) says it is about a range of consciousness that characterises quality. The teacher in question points out the importance of communication, which also could be denoted as an inner communication. In this case the student uses an inner dialogue while writing about the learning process. There is a range of consciousness in terms of the individual learning process.

**Anja’s reflection on getting inspired**

Our group started the project by experimenting with the technique, but there was a sudden stop. We didn't know how to go on. We came to an understanding that it’s worth starting by reading the literature. The inspiration to go on with the theme came from the literature and from an increased interest in trying to experiment with what was read about. The knowledge we got from this was that theory comes before practise and how important theory is, at least when it’s about photography.
**Researcher reflection**
One of the aims of the curriculum (FNBE, 2004) was reached when the group succeeded in investigative learning. They obtained an insight into how knowledge and understanding increase. The students also found out themselves the meaning of both theory and practice in a practical course.

**Anja choosing the subject area**

When you choose the subject area or theme and the technique, your own interest is important and so is your own personal need to learn about the subject. Interest in the same subject brought this group of three persons together. The group’s own interest in photography led to this choice of project. Our interest has been to take photos, and to look at the photos with an inspecting eye. This course gave us the opportunity to learn more about photography and to get different results by experimenting. The beginning was difficult, when you don’t know where to put the limit for your work, but by co-operating and discussing around different ideas we could come to a decision. The purpose of the course also directs one’s steps towards the choice of theme, and so does the importance of knowing the basics. The theme is part of the content in the curriculum, which means that you benefit from the result of this project in your own teaching later on.

**Researcher reflection**
The group had to deal with creative problem solving in order to get further in the process. The dialogue informed them and led them to take further steps, when they reflected and acted with the intention of finding the limits for the theme (FNBE, 2004).

The subject area should be linked to some experience that is meaningful for the students (FNBE, 2004). The importance of the starting point being one’s own intention is stressed, as is the importance of co-operation as a means to lead the process forward. When the subject is connected to your own life world, according to Steinsholt (2004), you will be an innovator and be able go into depth with yourself. The process leads you to be somewhere you were not the day before.

The goals were set in a real life context by the student showing that an understanding of what is being learned at school has relevance to everyday life, in this case as a future teacher. Fox (2003) points out the importance of clear purposes as well as of assessment as relevant for improved learning results.
Anja’s reflections regarding the process and completion of the artefact

The technical process was consciously in mind while working: what you do and how you learn. You got knowledge about the technique itself as the technique gave new experience and certainty. When you use and experiment with different functions on the camera, you should really know what you are doing and then document it, otherwise you will get annoyed later when you don’t have the needed information.

Researcher reflection

The student has found knowledge about how to use a tool of visual communication in this technique. The student is aware of what is needed from the technique to be capable of expressing oneself visually (FNBE, 2004).

These reflections point out the importance of practice and experimentation in visual arts. This process of knowledge also taught the student the importance of and how to document an artistic learning process.

Anja on the outcome, the artefact

Most of the photos are results of experimentation after reading the theory about some subject area according to photography, for example about different lighting.

A manual for photography, with focus on the basics and on portrait photography is the result of the photo-project. You can enter step by step when using the manual as inspiration for photography. The idea to make a manual came quite at the beginning of the project. While making the manual for photography, we reflected more about the photos that had been taken. In that way we connected the image with theory. The manual is a result of a process. The manual can be used in education; it’s a material that can be used right away. The manual can also be used as a base when you want to take more artistic photos. In the same manner it can be used in school. It brings the pupils forward and deeper into the process of taking photos and of becoming aware of the society of images we live in. The manual will be of practical help in the visual arts according to the curriculum, where it is mentioned explicitly that one of the core contexts is the media and visual communication.

Advertising images, photography and the digital image are part of the
The pupils could start by experimenting with light, the composition and size of the images. It’s more likely that they then will get the feeling they want in the image. There are many tasks to be done to use the fundamental theory in the manual in an interesting way. The curriculum states that you should learn to understand the difference between the real and imaginary world. The manual contains different tasks for younger and older pupils to get to understand this difference.

It’s important that the pupils get involved in the society of images we live in. The image is an important medium and the digital camera has made it easy for the common man to take lots of pictures. It’s important that the pupils get knowledge about techniques and their effects, and also to learn that an image can lie. They should learn how easy it is to edit a photo and that what you see isn’t always the reality; they should learn to see what is behind the photos. I have by myself and together with the group been analysing photos and images during the course. This is something that the pupils should also do. Young people have the right to get answers to their questions. That’s why it is good if the pupils can get one step further in the world of photography and images.

Researcher reflection
During the course the groups produced different outcomes. This group made a photo-manual, took single pictures, made an exhibition and compiled portfolios of their learning process.

The student’s thoughts on didactics in terms of what the pupils have the right to learn about occurred probably during the individual learning process. Close connections to the aims for the content of visual communication in the curriculum are visible (FNBE, 2004). The development of the pupils’ awareness of the ethical aspect should be supported, which here is described as the right to know what lies behind an image.
Anja’s narrative about the exhibition

The idea for the exhibition came from looking at the artefacts. The idea grew to be an interactive exhibition between the artefacts and the audience. This occurred through a dialogue within the small group. The result after processing the idea made the thought of an exhibition much more interesting than it was in the beginning. Now the audience had to be active themselves and it was up to them how they would interpret the name of the exhibition and what they saw: they completed the exhibition themselves. The feeling you got when you entered the exhibition was not planned, it just occurred. Different people could have different experiences, depending on what they saw in the photos.

It was interesting to work this way with compulsory art; it raised new ideas and experiences. Knowing about how to build an exhibition will make it easier to do the same with the pupils. The attitude has changed from being a little sceptical towards being satisfied. The exhibition is something that still awakes new associations, thoughts about what changes could be made, and therefore the exhibition is still living in my mind.

Researcher reflection

The images the students picked up for the exhibition were instruments for expressing themselves, but also a medium for communication, in this case with the audience. Through the photos, discussion and through the exhibition the students showed how they had learned “to express thoughts, observations, ideas and feelings on a visual form” (FNBE, 2004. p. 236).

According to the engagement of the audience I interpret that this kind of exhibition will complement the statement “the image is there not to say more than thousand words but to say something else than a thousand words” (Benyamine, 2004).

Anja’s conclusions about the importance of the exhibition

To get the totality of the exhibition it is good meeting the whole group to discuss the theme for the exhibition. After working in small groups for a longer period it is interesting to hear the opinions and ideas of the others in the whole group and to work towards the same aim. Cooperation gives you common experiences.
One reason why it’s good to have an exhibition, apart from the fact that others can take part in what you have made, is that an exhibition motivates the pupils to do good work. A good idea for meeting pupils who don’t want to exhibit their artefacts is to let them choose themselves what they want to exhibit, what the exhibition should look like and let themselves decide what they want to tell the audience through it. It’s interesting for all pupils to do so. It’s also interesting to choose only a little part of what you have been working with, and it has not necessarily to be the thing you have worked the most with. The pupils should have the main responsibility for their own exhibition.

Researcher reflection

The importance of co-operation and discussion are recurring themes in the student’s reflections. Together you have to make and justify aesthetic choices. To plan and make an exhibition together with the rest of the group that has not much connection with what you have been working with, demands that the student describes the individual process and talks about it.

Artistic activity is always to some extent a social or a cultural exchange between the artist and the receiver of the art (Sava, 1994), in this case the audience. The student reflects on the exhibition as a learning process where learning is occurring and deepening.

Anja’s conclusions about the learning process and the insight gained through it

You have to know the basics before you start to deepen your knowledge. It doesn’t mean that you have to stare yourself blind reading the rules: a photo, for example, can give you a response on how to take a better photo or show something surprising that would not have occurred if the photo had not been taken by mistake. The learning process is about trial and error, it is testing theory in practise and it is about experiment, to come to an understanding through practice. The learning process has included a lot of practising, looking at the result, and discussing in the group. The process has advanced towards the aim of the course, an aim that everyone has put up themselves or decided together in the group. During this course learning has occurred through experiments and through co-operation. Even though it was about co-operation, there was knowledge about your personal learning process within the group.
Researcher reflection
The student has knowledge about what the pupils need to learn and why the pupils need to learn. This seems to have occurred to the student through the individual learning process.

Critical thinking, making one’s voice heard and problem-solving in the group can be identified in the student’s reflections on the course. These learning outcomes are what an aesthetic learning process brings to the fore, according to Benyamin’s (2004) article about aesthetic learning processes.

Does the education support the pupils to be the subjects of their own acting in order to learn? Sava stated (1994) that the pupils’ capability to have ownership of their own actions varies depending on the trends in society. In this case the student is reflecting about learning from different angles, and when given this chance, the student seems to be able to be aware of the individual learning and also to some extent improve it.

Sava questions (1994) whether artistic learning can be taught or not: if artistic learning is a process of creative and spontaneous character that should not involve too much teaching. Some students in this research wanted the teacher to be even more involved, while some of them did not even reflect on the teacher’s role because they managed well by themselves, except in the beginning of the course, when they wanted some guidelines for their choice of project.

Anja on co-operation

There’s a positive conception about co-operating since you learned a lot by discussing and by reflecting and sharing your thoughts with the others. It’s also in practice easier to be a group when you have different tasks in the co-operation. As many people work with the same thing for the same aim, it feels like having a sounding board to reflect thoughts, feelings and ideas against. There was a feeling of equality in the group, even though we had different starting points at the beginning of the course.

Researcher reflection
There has to be an individual mental and material transformation in interaction with others to produce personal insight into deep learning. Both individual and social experiences are important, and
communication is the key in art production and interpretation. The student obtains self-knowledge through verbal and visual sharing, when reflecting on experiences (Räsänen, 1997).

**Anja on being a teacher**

While analysing photos and reflecting on them oneself or in the group, the thoughts have been related to equal exercises with pupils and how to teach them. While working with this project many ideas for exercises to teach the pupils have occurred. The school and teaching were often in my mind during this project.

After working practically with photography and after collecting and summarising thoughts in a portfolio it will be easier to teach something that is now familiar to myself.

**Researcher reflection**

In the reflections in the process portfolio the student changes perspective from being a student to start thinking as a teacher. There is an understanding that she has learned and what she has learned.

**Anja’s evaluation of her work**

I am satisfied with what I have been doing during the course even though I had wanted to go one step further with the photo project. We found time only for step one, which is to take photos in relation to the theory, not artistic photos. Yet I am satisfied with the process because step one and making the exhibition gave quite a bite. To get through the basics of photography has given me confidence and experience in photography. The exhibition gave experience and new ideas of how to exhibit in a different way, in the spirit of contemporary art. Probably it will be easier to teach something you already know by yourself. A result as a combination of imagination and theory. To sensitize the process on your own is something I also have learned through this course and through portfolio.

**Researcher reflection**

Costa (2008) states that we most likely do not take the time to reflect on what we have done, but it could also be expressed that the teachers need to give students time for reflection.

The student is aware of the learning process and has knowledge about
his/her own thinking. Details about these processes mentioned and about factors that have influenced them have occurred earlier in the text, and a development in the student’s thinking has emerged. Häikiö (2007, p. 265) involves the development of thinking from one level to the next in her definition of meta-cognition, “to learn how to think about how you think”. The purpose (FNBE, 2004) of the artistic work, the documentation of the artistic process and evaluation together with the group is to develop the pupil’s understanding and thinking in visual arts.

The student’s consciousness, through the visual and verbal process, shows competencies in developing personality. The communication facilitates an extended view of the world. Through experiential art learning the students learn “about themselves, about visual communication, and about how to learn” (Räsänen, 1997, p. 35-36).

Working with a portfolio opens the possibility for the learner to ask questions with or without answers. You will probably come to an understanding of your thinking. Working with the process portfolio gives you self-knowledge. According to the student’s reflections the portfolio also helps in sensitizing the learning process.

Anja’s thoughts about the process portfolio

There were difficulties getting started with the portfolio: what exactly should be enclosed and how should the appearance of the portfolio be? One point is that it’s something to be used even later. The individual learning process is focused. Thoughts are sensitized through the portfolio and this leads you towards a deeper understanding of the individual learning process. The diary and the portfolio help in discovering your own ideas and your own process. To sensitize the individual learning process is something that has been done through the course and through the portfolio. The diary is like a sounding board and at the end the portfolio links the learning process together. You get an understanding of the meaning of the diary while writing since you have processed the thoughts through the diary, both individual thoughts and thoughts shared with the group. You can also see your work progress through the portfolio, it contains your own experiences and you become aware of your own process.
**Researcher reflection**

Even if the starting point with the portfolio seemed confusing, the student knows how to document the working process and how to make a self-evaluation, which are also aims for learning formulated in the curriculum (FNBE, 2004).

The portfolio process led to an understanding of the nature of the learning process. An aim of documenting, according to the curriculum (FNBE, 2004), is to understand the artistic process during documentation. In this case the student wrote thoughts about the process while documenting in a diary before compiling the essences into a portfolio.

Developing a plan and keeping it in mind to later reflect on in a retrospective perspective and to be able to evaluate its completion is what the group has done during this project. This is what Costa (2008) is aiming at when talking about major components in meta-cognition.

**Anja on reflecting in the portfolio**

Thoughts in the portfolio help you put yourself in the situation of the pupils. It brings up your own process and how you can work with the pupils; you alternate your own process with didactic thoughts. The pupils in my future class will be able to work with portfolio to some extent. It is a good thing that the teacher becomes aware of the pupils’ thoughts and mental process through the portfolio. This will also help the teacher with evaluation. The pupil as well gets a conception of how he or she works.

**Researcher reflection**

The student mentions, after her own experience, that the portfolio will be partly used in her own class in the future. This is in accordance with Fox’s (2003) thoughts about using the portfolio as an educational tool, to some extent. He also thinks it should be used where it gives the best exchange, which can be understood as it should not be used only for the sake of the portfolio.
Anja considers the portfolio as a mediating learning tool, sensitizing the learning

With the key in hand we can tell it has been an instructive journey we’ve made through the world of photography. We have learned a lot and we are also more certain as photographers. As a photographer you have to be brave and believe in what you do. The “perfect” image is worth fighting for. As we already earlier stated, it is worth taking as many photos as possible and experimenting forward. The pupils should be given a chance to discover the world of photography by experimenting and by using different technical camera functions. By taking “wrong” photos you get knowledge about how to take photos that are “theoretically” right. Furthermore, many photos that have been taken intentionally “wrong” can be very good and exciting ones.

The importance of the portfolio for developing teacher thinking
Anja’s narrative, a case reported in this article, showed the student teacher’s interaction and how her awareness emerged and how she became more and more clear about the characteristics of the individual learning process by discussing with other student teachers and also partly by documenting the process.

The teacher educator obtains a large amount of information about students’ learning processes and thinking through portfolio since all the students in the group deliver extensive amounts of reflections. This also helps the teacher and gives ideas with respect to planning the next course. Both teacher educator and students have the opportunity look back on the process. It is possible to follow the students’ knowledge and performance at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of a course or project (Costa, 2008, p. 168).

Fox (2003) raised the question: “How can teachers allow students to take greater responsibility for their own learning without teachers sensing a loss of control?” There are two different answers to that from the students’ point of view (students from this course in question). One of the students who liked this kind of project wondered how the education at the University would look if subjects other than visual arts were also taught like this. Another student who was not satisfied with this kind of project wrote that he was not prepared for taking this much responsibility himself. This student had chosen to work alone. Reflections in the portfolio might give an answer as to why some
students are motivated for a learning process like this while others are not.

Education is probably teacher-orientated, at least to some extent, because of the character of the subject, or perhaps because of the teachers’ attitude. It could also be because of the students’ attitude. Some of the students in this course wanted to have more teacher-orientated education since they did not feel ready to take this much responsibility themselves. The students with these thoughts were all ones who chose to work alone, not those working in pairs or in groups, who were all satisfied to have been given the responsibility for their own learning.

Concluding remarks: Socio-cultural perspective and semiotic mediation are visible in Anja’s artistic learning process
According to Vygotsky (1978) cultural learning is promoted through semiotic mediation by cultural artefacts. The main cultural semiotic mediator is language. In this case-study the student’s process is described by her own use of visual signs as well as by articulating her understanding of her creative artistic process. So which are the semiotic mediators in this case? If Sava’s three different kinds of changes are considered as signs of semiotic mediation, or in other words signs of learning, it is possible to see signs of quantitative changes, qualitative changes and structural changes in the student’s learning process through portfolio.

A quantitative change is seen when the student through the course learned more about the different steps in photography and became more confident with the technique.

A qualitative change is seen in her emerging awareness of the importance of knowing the basics before going on with the exercise, and also that the basics give confidence and experience. She also mentioned that experimenting with the technique gave insight in how to change the learning strategy to get further with the artistic process. Through practise she found out the importance of documentation. The student could see how trial and error and experimentation can be important in the learning process and how the practical work produces ideas and experiences.

A structural change in the student’s learning can be seen in her sensitizing her own learning process. The socio-cultural perspective
emerges many times in the reflections, for example when she mentions that to work for the same aim in a group is like having a sounding board. She sees the value of communication with others in order to get on with the process. Another important insight about the learning that the student is aware of is when she says that while working in a group, there is an ongoing individual inner learning process. The student’s own thoughts have been related to similar exercises with future pupils; it will be easier to teach something you are familiar with. By doing and experiencing yourself you will gain insight into what is important to teach to the pupils. The reflections in the portfolio were a support for the student to put herself in the situation of the pupils. It is obvious from the researcher’s perspective that the student has taken some important steps in her personal professional development from identifying herself as a student to identification with her future role as visual arts teacher.
References


8. A clown story
- a study of an aesthetic learning process

Birgitta Silfver

Abstract
The specific aim for this article is to investigate the characteristics of the educational process in a clown project in grade seven in a Swedish secondary school. How do the students construct the clown? The research question is elaborated in an analysis of interviews with six students participating in the project. The preferred clown is the Bag lady or The Tramp. The students chose to deal with the clown from at least three different starting-points. The first one is identification. The student sees himself, or at least vital parts of himself, in the clown. Secondly, the clown has characteristics that the student values or perhaps wants to share. Thirdly, the notion of the outsider triggers the students’ curiosity. Silfver discusses characteristic features of the students’ meaning-making process interpreted from a researcher perspective. A learning process including work with form expression and meaning-making makes up an aesthetic perspective. A thematic perspective is elaborated by the exploration of identities. Finally the socio-cultural context and collaborative learning give the social perspective a central place.
Introduction
The specific aim of this article is to investigate the characteristics of the arts educational process in clowning. The research project “The clown story” is a research still in progress. The project has an ethnographic design and I have as a researcher observed and interviewed a teacher and her students in grade 7 in a Swedish secondary school during a clown project. In this article I elaborate the research question: How do the students construct the clown? Furthermore, I discuss the characteristics of the working process from the students’ perspective. Finally, I discuss characteristic features of the students’ meaning-making process interpreted from a researcher perspective.

My experience as a trained teacher, with special interest and knowledge in the drama field lies behind the overall aim to contribute to the body of knowledge in arts education, through the lenses of aesthetic learning processes in clowning. What happens when one puts on the red nose? Often it has a great impact on a person. This happened to me and I have seen it happen to others working with clowning. It is a mystery and I want to explore it. The question arises: How can this “mystery” be included in an educational process? My pre-understanding is that clowning is an art form, which opens up for reflection concerning the great life questions. The clown, just like the child, does not hide himself, but is trusting, and asks questions, often directly, as in H.C Andersen’s well-known story about the emperor and his tailors: “Why is the emperor not wearing any clothes?

The Swedish youth researcher Garpelin (1998) during a period of three years followed a group of secondary school students. His report The classroom group as social drama¹ is built upon an interpretative approach. Garpelin is inspired by symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and he concludes that being brought together in this classroom with these schoolmates is decisive for the lives of the students. Garpelin also uses the theatre metaphor introduced by Goffman (1959) and describes the students as actors in a scene. In the analysis carried out by Garpelin, he underlines the importance of a relational interpretative perspective. He discusses the central question of identity-formation as part of life in the classroom. The question of identity construction is also central in this research project, which I situate in a context of socio-cultural learning.

¹ Skolklassen som ett socialt drama.
In my study I focus on the identity-exploring aspects of clowning. Young teenagers elaborate their different roles through different activities in and outside school. Existential questions like the following: “Who am I and why am I here?” are embedded in the creative processes in arts education. Searching for meaning and identity is more intense during certain periods of life. At stages of transition or at various life crises the questions are closer to the surface. Adolescence is a critical phase of identity-formation according to Giddens (1997).

My pre-understanding of what characterizes working with clowning together with teenagers in the school context can be articulated as three qualitative hypotheses: (1) questions concerning identity are raised and reflected upon, (2) working with the art form clowning is inspiring and motivating, and (3) the art form is open to exploration, creativity and imagination, which deepens the reflections.

**Teen culture – performing self and identity**

The school system concentrates on the study of subjects, while the young people concentrate on creating their identity. Many of the students react more or less reluctantly towards the demands of the subjects, often regarded as being forced upon them. The learning process of teenagers must be seen in relation to identity-making in a wide sense. The school focuses on individuality, and that creates a great deal of opportunities. At the same time the burden of responsibility, to make the right decisions, is a heavy burden for a young person. Often this leads to a period where feelings of insecurity and defeat become obvious. (Illeris, 2007).

The school needs to find opportunities to meet the teenagers, who, at this stage of life, are primarily occupied with matters like, “Who am I?”, “What will become of me?” “What is the meaning of my life?” To find bridges or links between subjects and the urge for performing the self?? seems to be of great importance. In this explorative study I have chosen to explore such a possible bridge by means of learning processes connected to clowning.

**Reflecting upon learning through the arts**

To feel secure is a condition for learning. According to Rogers (1969), learning is only possible when the individual has faith in his/her capability to learn and believes that learning will be of value to him/her. The importance of self-esteem in connection with learning has to be recognized. Cullberg (2000) speaks about an “internal point of
balance” (p. 175) to describe self-esteem. Every now and then a person loses their foothold but the internal point of balance brings you back to an upright position. Giddens (1997, 52) describes as necessary a “defense shield”, that every individual carries. Trust is, according to him, a most important component in that shield. Creativity as defined by Giddens is the ability to act or reflect innovatively in relation to established forms of activities. Fundamental trust is closely associated with creativity.

In today’s school there is a conflict between, on the one hand, core subjects and on the other hand aesthetic and (so called) practical subjects. The core subjects are the recognized and prioritized subjects. Østern et al. (2005, 64) emphasize that learning and teaching is as important in learning by and through the arts as elsewhere in education. Using the art subject drama as an example, the authors give three perspectives on what happens in a learning process:

(1) The aesthetic perspective – which is about the ability to create symbols and a learning that involves both intellect and feelings. In the fictitious space – “as if” uses the symbols that reach far beyond the concrete.
(2) The thematic perspective – drama deals with themes. The existential questions are worked upon through symbols and metaphorical language.
(3) The social perspective - the individual’s own significance and analysis of what is happening on the inside meets with responses from the group members. Together they interpret and reflect, which leads to change and the developing of new understanding.

Aulin-Gråhamn, Persson and Thavenius (2004, 10) suggest that the arts allow “the insecure, the not yet ready, the predictions and the many different ways of interpretations that are possible from facts as opposite of factual knowledge from textbooks”. They stress that the arts are about feelings, moods, the personal and the subjective; conflicts and dilemmas are present. They also point out that how you present reality has a certain form, and the form we have choosen has a significant difference. The authors make a strong conclusive statement, when they connect working within an aesthetic perspective as part of an education towards democratic citizenship. To be able to communicate knowledge, ask questions, reflect and add question marks to so-called “truth” are skills that need to be practiced by students in order to be competent participants in discussions in the public arena, the authors argue. Learning through the arts offers a chance to reflect upon self-identity and the performing self. Meaning-making and identity are considered vital
elements in arts education as well as in the clowning process, which leads on to the study of clown work as an educational process.

*About the clown*

Miller (1956, 31) in *The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder* writes about the difficult task of being oneself:

> To be oneself, only oneself, is something great. And how does one go about it? How do you succeed? It is difficult because it doesn’t take any effort. You try neither this nor that, neither big nor small, neither skilled nor unskilled.

Miller is writing about the thoughts of a clown. Anna Frattelini (1997), a member of a family with long traditions in clowning in Sweden, mentions the paradox in an interview: “The mask and the costume is no disguise. You become yourself when you put on the mask.” With this short sketch of the background for the project “The clown story”, I will describe the actual group under study.

*The clown project in grade seven*

The project took place in an ordinary Swedish school. No extra resources were given by the School Board to carry out the project and it had to fit in with the ordinary activities and the schedule of the particular 7th grade which was the focus of this project. The only exception was the fact that the teacher was able to divide the group into two to enable working with fewer students at a time. The other half of the group were given independent tasks to accomplish. In the class that participated in the project the cultural backgrounds of the students were heterogeneous, with a majority of Swedish students and a minority of students of immigrant origin.

By trying out three clown characters, “August”, “White Clown” and “Tramp/Bag Lady”, a concept that is described in the literature (Schaffer, 1991), the students could compare themselves with the different characters. They could find differences or connections with themselves and in an artistic way deal with the question “Who am I?”

Three workshops were carried out for each one of the two groups, the first workshop with “August”, the second with “White clown” and the third with “Tramp/Bag Lady”. At the workshops the teacher explained the characteristic of the clown they were set to work with. The students chose the make up, clothing, “toys” and different objects for playing. They did various exercises and improvisations according to the clown
character. The workshop ended with the students writing down their reflections about the work that had been carried out. The workshops were videotaped. When all three workshops were completed the students were interviewed individually.

Since this is very much a work in progress, I will report some preliminary findings. So far I have focused only on the interviews with the students, and thus the findings cover only that material. When analyzing the interviews, I was struck by one discovery: six of the students had made up stories, and found an actual character who they in one way or another identified themselves with. These stories and bits of the process are what I am presenting here. The students have allowed me to show photographs of the invented clown characters. Of the six students that made up stories, there are three girls and three boys. The names of the students have been altered.

**The students’ constructions of the clown**

As I have already mentioned, six students out of the twenty participants in the project created stories. In the analysis I use the following structure for the initial description: the person, place, objects of importance and the plot. Finally, the theme of the story is pointed out.

*Main characters*

![Figure 1. The participating clown characters.](image)
Throughout every story it is the Bag Lady or the Tramp that is in focus.

The setting where the plot takes place.

On the street (Eva)
In a song (Anna)
In a Zoo in Egypt (Julia)
In a temple in India (Alex)
On the street (Carl)
In a gas station (Peter)

*The plot*

1. A Bag Lady by the name of Siv, who earlier in life had a family consisting of a daughter and a husband, is the main character. On the death of the daughter, the husband leaves Siv. She ends up living in the street. The only item she takes along is a pillow and a picture of her daughter. She is very sad and disappointed. (Eva)

2. The story of the second Bag Lady is about longing. The Bag Lady is featured in the song “Signatur Karlsson eternal spring”. “The song took place when I was the clown.” (Anna)

3. The third Bag Lady has left for Egypt in the company of two more clowns. They are going to start a zoo. In the zoo there will be crocodiles. (Julia)

4. The Tramp in the next story is a very religious man. The religion gives hope. The cross is the symbol of hope. The religious man is born within the caste system. His parents and brothers are dead but he gets help from the temple. He goes there to eat. He is happy that God helps him survive. Even though he is poor and without good clothes, he has feelings; he can feel warmth, for instance. (Alex)

5. The second Tramp has previously been a big boss in a company. But he has been ruined and now he lives in the street. He is an alcoholic. (Carl)

6. The third Tramp works in a gas station and is a gangster. (Peter)
Important symbols in the narratives
The pillow belonging to the dead daughter and the photography (Eva)
A song (Anna)
The cross (Alex)
A beer can and a hat (Carl)
A leatherjacket (Peter)

Underlying question/ theme
Sorrow; to be abandoned (Eva)
The longing for love (Anna)
Freedom to leave, initiative (Julia)
Religion and hope, poverty, human rights (Alex)
Losing your foothold. Alcoholism (Carl)
Toughness, fear (Peter)

It is possible to distinguish a female theme connected to relations and feelings, and a male theme connected to societal perspectives and feelings. In the following paragraph I reflect upon the characteristics of the character chosen, and upon the aesthetic learning process.

Reflections
My first observation is that despite the short time in which the three workshops were carried out, 90 minutes per workshop, the students created stories about the clown. This was done spontaneously.

The only clown character that was the origin of the stories was the Tramp / Bag Lady. Even in the cases when the students did not consider themselves “being” a Tramp / Bag Lady, this was the one clown they made up stories about. Eva and Anna, who without hesitation said they preferred the White clown, still created stories involving the Bag Lady. All the boys chose the Tramp as their favorite clown. Julia had seen the possibilities that lie in reach of the Bag Lady: the opportunity to travel, perhaps a “a new beginning”. All the created stories deal with existential questions, common for all mankind, such as sorrow, longing to be loved, freedom, religion, poverty, being addicted to drugs.

My conclusion so far is that it seems to be the Tramp/Bag Lady character, with its solitude and harsh life, that draws the most attention. The workshops provided the opportunity for a close encounter with whatever it might be that persons are afraid of; to investigate the scary bits, the things individuals know very little about: what forces a human
person to stand up and leave? Does there come any good out of it? Where can a man find hope? What is life about? All these questions were mentioned by the students.

**The characteristics of the clown and the meaning-making**
In this paragraph I further elaborate the characteristics of the different clown characters produced by the six students. I also make some interpretations of the meaning-making found in the constructions of the clown characters.

Eva clearly identifies herself with the White Clown, its qualities and possessions.

The White Clown was the clown that was me /…/ neat and very proud, /…/ It would be carrying a little flower.

The exercises helped to build identity.

It made me feel proud and superior /…/ though it might be more of what I want to become.

The exercises also pointed out the importance of classmates.

I really liked acting together with someone else. Then the focus wasn’t entirely on me. That made it easier.

Make-up was important for finding the clown, that and clothes.

Makeup and clothing made you feel different and then you acted differently.

Anna chose a clown that had little resemblance to her ordinary self, the White Clown.

It is different from me because of its elegance. It is quiet and calm. I am crazy and wild./…/ One can calm down easily when one is the White Clown.

Make-up was important for her.

I don’t believe I could have done this without the make-up.
The exercises were meaningful.

The best moment was when we were dancing.

Also being with friends was regarded as important.

That everyone opened up and showed who they really were. That helped a lot. Then you can do it yourself.

Julia chose to be the Bag Lady because she had a story to go with it. That Bag Lady was the most creative of clowns. The very first time she saw a classmate being transformed into clown made a great impact on her.

It was great fun when you saw a friend for the first time with make-up on.

The exercises were enjoyed.

It was fun to improvise and that also we had such a short time for deciding what to do.

Alex chose the Tramp because of the depth in its history.

I chose the tramp because of its deep history. ... He can act aggressively but he can also be a person who once had everything but lost it.

The make-up was important in creating the story.

The entire story came to me with the make-up in just one minute. It just appeared. The make-up together with clothing and my own experiences of life created the Tramp. At first I created ... then I mixed a bit and tied together something I had already seen (Referring to a religious man in India).

He discovered a new person within him.

It is only make-up and clothing, but it makes such a difference, especially the make-up. ... It was like a new person.

To Carl the mood that surrounded the Tramp was important.
I preferred the gloomy tramp. ... And to explore something that wasn’t me. ... I tried to create a person who was as unlike me as possible, just to find out what it was like and what it could be like.

The make-up was a nuisance to Carl.

I thought it would be a lot of trouble with make up. ... I cheated and put on a hat which I pulled down my forehead so I didn’t have to put make-up on my forehead.

What initially gave birth to the tramp was the hat.

Yes, the hat was the starting point; after that I kept on thinking.

Peter chose the Tramp because it was different from him.

O, yes, I liked the Tramp. I thought it was fun. ... They are different because they don’t own anything and to be like them...

Clothing was important to creating the Tramp and also objects.

It was fun with the leatherjacket and different tools. ... I found the clothes that I liked, and it all came to me.

He experienced excitement when he looked at the others and saw their transformation.

It was fun to see people who normally were happy suddenly look so sad.

The exercises also were important to Peter.

Everyone shook hands and sat down on the chair in his own style.

He found his personal way of acting as a Tramp.

I thought it was special, I patted it to feel it and then I sat down very cautiously. The ones that looked scary I approached with a bit of caution, a bit scared.
In this paragraph I make a tentative interpretation of the meaning-making patterns found in the material I have analyzed so far. The students have chosen to deal with the clown from at least three different starting-points. The first one is identification. The student sees himself in the clown, or at least vital parts of himself. Secondly, the clown has characteristics that the student values or perhaps wants to share. Thirdly, the notion of the outsider triggers the student’s curiosity. The student wants to find out what perhaps scares him or he wants to get closer to someone different from himself. Curiosity leads the student’s way. The student tests a new way of looking at life.

Experimenting with the clown character in the way that has been described make questions concerning identity rise to the surface of consciousness: “Am I one or many persons?” In the work carried out in this particular 7th grade, questions about identity came to the surface and became reflected upon. The young people showed a variety of approaches to the clown, and furthermore, all six enjoyed the artistic process. Make-up, clothes, and exercises are of great importance for the process. All these objects (symbols) and different clothing work like a key that opens up the students’ imagination. Especially the make-up is important, even if one boy, at one point, took a clear stand against using it. The creative process that has begun makes it possible to play with identities. The insecure or scared person can be transformed into the gangster or the other way around. By acting as a gangster you deal with feelings of fear. The third space, which Winnicott (1971) has written about as significant in all drama, is the present. The fact that we share the experience together with others makes us less vulnerable. It becomes obvious that the three perspectives introduced by Østern et al (2005) - the aesthetic, thematic, and social perspective, can be applied in this clown work. A learning process including work with form expression and meaning-making makes up the aesthetic perspective. The thematic perspective is elaborated by the exploration of identities. Finally, the socio-cultural context and collaborative learning give the social perspective a central place. I will quote, one of the 7th grade students “Anna”. When given the question: “What were you learning and practicing?” she answered:

We have been practicing being ourselves and showing who we are.
References
Abstract
The purpose of the study reported in this article is to increase understanding of the possibilities of using creating-with-textiles as an expression of visual communication in a learning context. Significance is placed on the visual communication and interaction explicit in nursing education, which is why this study contributes to the development of knowledge as regards both creating-with-textiles and ideological care thought. The study rests on the basic premise that, in creating-with-textiles, esthetical reflections promote ethical reflection.

1 This article builds upon my doctoral thesis, Creating-with-textiles as an Esthetic-Ethical Transformation: Mediated Learning in Nursing Education (Ahlskog-Björkman, 2007). The study is an inter-disciplinary one based on the disciplines Education and Sloyd Education; and Caring Science theories are also touched upon.
Introduction
In that this study stresses visual communication and interaction, a view of learning in a socio-cultural tradition is established, given that human beings within this tradition are perceived as participants in social interaction, where actions and learning occur in various practical and cultural contexts (Bruner, 1986, 1996; Lave, 1988, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978, 1995, 1999). Within the socio-cultural tradition, the collective tool known as language is linked to physical artifacts as a mediating tool for learning (Bakhtin, 2000, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). This is interesting for this study, in that such conceptions are supported by socio-cultural thought, where learning starts when a human being processes reality through concrete actions in order to come into contact with his or her surroundings (Vygotsky, 1978). Accordingly, this study investigates in which manner creating-with-textiles as a form of communication can comprise a tool for mediating knowledge to nursing students when the intention is to allow creating-with-textiles to act as a mediating cultural tool between nursing students’ previous experiences and the reality in which they will practice their future profession.

The material used in the empirical part of the study consists of visual communication, conveyed through products created-with-textiles between nursing students and fictitious care recipients during a cultural education course. During the course, the nursing students’ main task was to create a textile product that would better care recipients’ well-being. In order to express themselves visually, the nursing students were taught textile printing. The nursing students were told that the textile products they were to create would be intended for use in a care facility.

The cultural education course was held as an optional course worth one study week at the University of Applied Sciences in Vaasa during the autumn of 1998 for students studying health care and social welfare. The course, “Culture in Care”, was made possible through the financial support of Svenska Kulturfonden. Svenska Kulturfonden’s purpose in financing various cultural education courses is to offer artists within various esthetic areas such as dance, drama, the visual arts, music, literature, and crafts the possibility to go to schools and care facilities in order to realize various projects. Through projects in Svenska Kulturfonden’s framework of “Culture in Care” and “Culture in School”, there is an increased possibility to include more art, culture, and creative elements in students and care recipients’ daily reality.

With the cultural education course “Culture in Care” as a starting point, I consider the learning occurring in the course to be the future readiness
for application that nursing students receive through participating in socially based practice. What I especially wish to draw attention to within this context is the investigation of what meaning-creating potential can be identified in learning when creating with textiles is related to ideological care thinking. The concept of ideological care thinking is used in the study to refer to the content on which nursing students base their thinking when communicating visually through creating-with-textiles. This thinking stems from the students’ previous experiences of people in need of care, experiences from their nursing education or own care experiences. One question addressed in this study is whether creating-with-textiles as a form of visual communication contains qualities with which the development of nursing students’ esthetical-ethical thinking and consciousness in relation to their future profession can occur. In this study, this form of knowledge is called nursing students’ future readiness for application.

Adaptation of processes in reflective thinking
The “Culture in Care” course is an educational innovation, which is why this study is carried out as a qualitative case study; the study strives for better understanding of the cultural education course as a whole (see Merriam, 1994). This case study is divided into three phases emanating from three main subject areas and they are an adaptation of Bouds, Keogh, and Walker’s (1985) model of reflective learning and based on the model’s classification into experience, reflective process, and readiness for application. In the study, the subject areas are named the “Culture in Caring” course as experience, creating-with-textiles products as reflective process and readiness for application. In the study’s three phases, light is shed on the research problem from different angles, which also entails that the methodological approaches used vary.

Phase I
In the first phase of the study, emanating from Bouds, Keogh, and Walker’s (1985) model of reflective learning, the main subject area “experience” is of interest. This phase is entitled “The ‘Culture in Caring’ course as experience. The specified purpose of this phase is to describe the “Culture in Caring” course and the experiences that students have garnered from it, where the fundamental idea is to support the integration of the nursing students’ ideological care thoughts with respect to creating-with-textiles. The description of the “Culture in Caring” course also provides better understanding of the following phases of the study. The partial purpose of phase I is to provide an
overall picture of the educational innovation being investigated. Hence, the study strives to provide as descriptive an account of the course’s organization and realization as possible. Furthermore, this description of the course contributes to the development of an educational method used in creating-with-textiles in nursing education.

Phase II

In the second phase, emanating from Bouds, Keogh, and Walker’s (1985) model of reflective learning, the main subject area “reflective process” is focused on. This phase is entitled “creating-with-textiles products as reflective process”. The specified purpose is to investigate what meaning can be identified in the creating-with-textiles products as related to ideological care thought. The research questions addressed in phase two are as follows:

1) According to the students, in what manner can creating-with-textiles products better care for the recipients’ well-being?

2) How do students visualize the needs they perceive exist in care recipients?

3) What meaning can be seen in creating-with-textiles products?

The creating-with-textiles products are used in the empirical part of this study as data, alongside a questionnaire that students completed regarding their creations and creative process. The products are interpreted semiotically (see e.g. Barthes, 1977; Luutonen, 1977; Nordström, 1989; Peirce, 1965; Sonesson, 1992) in order to answer the questions delineated in the study purpose.

This phase is important to the study in that it is based on socio-cultural theories in which the collective tool known as language is linked to physical artifacts as a mediating tool for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Bakhtin (2000; 2006) also stresses social functions and the importance of language for learning. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) maintain that visual communication equals verbal communication. In this study, creating-with-textiles is considered a mediating tool for learning, in that language, in accordance with Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), becomes meaningful in social contexts, irrespective of the form of communication.

Phase III

In the third phase of the study, which emanates from Bouds, Keogh, and Walker’s (1985) model of reflective learning, the main subject area “readiness for application” is central. The specified purpose of this phase is to investigate which meaning-creating potential can be identified in
learning related to a cultural education course in nursing education focused on creating-with-textiles. Part of the purpose of this phase is to investigate in what manner creating-with-textiles can influence students’ future readiness for application.

Experiences and reflections during the process of creating-with-textiles are important for nursing students’ readiness for application. For this reason, the nursing students’ experiences and reflections are the object of research in this phase. The research questions addressed in phase three are as follows:

1) What experiences influence nursing students’ creative processes?

2) What meaning can be identified in the nursing students’ reflections as relates to ideological care thought during the creative process?

3) In what manner can nursing students apply their new experiences from the creating-with-textiles process in the future?

In order to answer these questions, the questionnaire that the students completed after finishing the course is analyzed. One purpose for having the students complete the questionnaire was that process of doing so would lead them to reflection.

Theoretical foundation
Creating-with-textiles is considered a tool for communication, and accordingly the three subject areas within this topic are studied from a sloyd perspective. The areas investigated are: creating-with-textiles as an activity, intention, and interaction. In this context I will mainly focus on the subject area of activity and determine my definition of sloyd in the study. Creating-with-textiles is defined as proceeding from Kojonkoski-Rännäli’s (1995a) classification of various sloyd forms, where space for the concept “creating-with-textiles” in the “multi-dimensional sloyd” category is created. In Kojonkoski-Rännäli’s sloyd category, multi-dimensional sloyd, a craftsman uses his or her ideas and makes technical decisions, which in turn develops his or her will and ability to take responsibility. The study further emphasizes that a sloyd activity includes esthetical dimensions with an emphasis on visual communication. Sloyd has a common foundation with traditional sloyd and, emanating from such a foundation, sloyd can either follow a path to design or art. In the study’s “Culture in Care” course, emphasis is placed on the dimension of traditional sloyd as art in order to stress free expression and intuition more than product function and rationality.
when the students create products intended to improve the care recipients’ well-being.

The chapter entitled “Creating-with-textiles as a mediating tool for reflection and learning” discusses learning from a social and cultural perspective and esthetical-ethical transformative processes, as well as theories on interaction and reflection. Interaction and reflection are interesting in relation to nursing students’ experiences during the creating-with-textiles process. The study’s theoretical base is supported by, amongst others, Schütz (2002), who maintains that since humans are born into a social world, a fundamental “we-relationship” exists. According to Schütz, when the self reflects over fellow-beings and their behavior, the self turns its attention to something special in the other to gain better understanding. In nursing students’ communication with fictitious care participants, attention is paid to the development of thoughts regarding care recipients’ well-being. When nursing students imagine the needs of fictitious care participants through creating-with-textiles, in order to visually communicate the desire for well-being, processes of an intersubjective character occur (see Vaage, 2001).

According to Mead (1976), reflection comprises an essential condition for the development of consciousness in a social process. Nortvedt and Grimen (2006) maintain that reflection is not enough in a care context, but instead feel that sensibility stimulates reflection and promotes new solutions to problems. It is desirable that nursing students develop a professional care sensibility through creating-with-textiles and the communication they engage in with fictitious care recipients.

When reflection is connected to nursing students’ communication with care recipients, the possibility to increase esthetical-ethical thinking occurs. The study’s theoretical foundation is partially based on ethical theories and partially on esthetical theories, which are brought together through transformative learning theories. As far as the study’s ethical theories are concerned, the study seeks support from Aristotle’s concept “fantasia”, which, according to Nussbaum (2000), contains ethical considerations. In Nussbaum’s view, Aristotle’s concept of fantasia deals with an extensive ability to focus on somebody or something which may be present or absent. The individual engaging in this fantasia-activity chooses prominent qualities and focuses on a specific content. The fantasia-activity cooperating with memory offers possibilities to create new, not yet experienced combinations with the help of the thoughts that rise within the individual. Aristotle connects the concept of fantasia with the consideration of ethically correct behavior. Emanating from Schütz’s (2002) thoughts regarding “wide-awakeness”, the nursing students’
actions can be considered “wide-awake”, in that their attention is actively focused on relaying bettered well-being through creating-with-textiles. The ethical framework also rests on a view important in ideological care thought, namely the development of intersubjective competency (Mead, 1976; Vaage, 2001; von Wright, 2000). This implies the competency to take the other’s perspective and develop competency for sensibility, which involves sensitivity to and understanding of the other’s situation (Nortvedt & Grimen, 2006). These competencies that encompass ethical considerations in ideological care thought provide nursing students the possibility to develop when they visually communicate through creating-with-textiles.

In this study, the esthetical-ethical theories based on Aristotle’s concept “akrasia” involve ethical shortcomings. Akrasia becomes discernable in the lack of contact one has with one’s feelings and empathy with others (Nussbaum, 2000). As far as counteracting nursing students’ akrasia is concerned, the study’s esthetical transformative theories are based in an artistic learning process (Sava, 1993). According to Sava, strong emotional and emotive experiences lead to the changing of one’s inner reality, which is also important for the development of knowledge. Both Mezirow (1991) and Sava (1993) feel that when an individual’s ingrained thoughts are changed, that individual’s mental models are also transformed. Mezirow maintains that an individual experiences this esthetical transformation as a meaning-creating activity. Transformation occurs through a dialogue in an interactive process with the desired effect being that transformation should lead to autonomous thought (Mezirow, 2000; Østern, 2006, 2007). In the study this is considered to be the future readiness for application which depends on how the nursing students feel that creating-with-textiles in conjunction with communication and reflection makes possible.

**Method and realization**

In the “Culture in Care” project, I have held a dual role as both advisor and researcher. Through meticulous reporting of the planning and actualization of the course, I have striven to turn this “insider” perspective into an advantage. I have striven, in the role of researcher, to make the student perspective observable through reflection in relevant theory.

As regards the choice of research approach, the study is naturally hermeneutically directed, in that the understanding of the knowledge sought is how students create meaning during communicative creating-with-textiles processes. Kjørup (1999) maintains that the creation of
meaning is the core of modern hermeneutics, since one is, firstly, interested in the text reader as the cocreator of the text’s meaning, and, secondly, as the person who the text affects and who reacts to the text. Atkinsson (2002) places great emphasis on cultural and social context, in that it is in a context that language is used and gains meaning. The contexts in which the nursing students’ language gains meaning are the “Culture in Care” course, the educational institute that offers the course, and the students’ future profession. Furthermore, the contexts include the course content, which is based on the communication of ideological care thoughts to carers through creating-with-textiles.

As products, the creating-with-textiles products are considered sign-bearers. Kress (2003) maintains that signs are not arbitrarily created, in that the person creating the sign always chooses the most appropriate sign in speech, text, and pictures. Semiotics is the name of the science that investigates signs: their specific character, the systems they create, the various meanings they hold, change, or transfer (Lotman, 1989; Luutonen, 1997; Niiniluoto, 1883, 1990; Nordström, 1984, 1989; Peirce, 1965; Sonesson, 1992; Tarasti, 1990). Through the help of semiotics as a tool for analytical analysis, the creating-with-textiles products seen in phase II of this study are described, analyzed, and interpreted, with analysis divided into denotative analysis, connotative analysis (see Barthes, 1977), and interpretation. Such division of analysis is based in Peirce’s (1965) semiotic tradition, in which he uses the triadic division of “firstness”, “secondness”, and “thirdness” when to the relationship of human beings to reality. Under the heading “denotative analysis”, the product of the creating-with-textiles process is described without analysis. In the study’s connotative analysis, a more multifaceted depiction of the creating-with-textiles product is sought, using the questionnaires completed by the nursing students regarding the origin of the creating-with-textiles product and in what manner they felt the product could better care for the recipients’ well-being. Furthermore, the creating-with-textiles products are interpreted through the interpretation of their semiotic signs’ icons, index, and symbols, in accordance with Peirce’s (1965) classification, and, finally, they are considered culturally-bound objects of varying meaning (Niiniluoto, 1990). As for phase III, I have analyzed the questionnaire distributed at the end of the course, a questionnaire which also functioned as a general evaluation of the course “Culture in Care”. One purpose with the evaluation was also to encourage the students to reflect on the structure, contents and teaching of the course.
Empirical part of the study
The “Culture in Care” course as experience

The first phase of the study, entitled “The ‘Culture in Care’ course as experience”, is a detailed description of the cultural education course which was planned and carried out by two advisors, a visual arts artist, and a textile pedagogue. The course was offered to students enrolled at the University of Applied Sciences in Vaasa’s Health Care and Social Welfare School as an elective course, from which sixteen students were accepted into the course. One aim of the course was that students should be able to connect ideological care thoughts with the surrounding environment through creating-with-textiles. Kolb’s theory of experience-based learning was chosen as the didactic foundation for the course, in that Kolb places experience at the core of learning. Kolb (1984) believes that learning occurs in a process where knowledge is created through the conversion of experiences; accordingly, learning takes the form of a constantly ongoing process rather than merely an end result. Furthermore, Kolb stresses the importance of activating the emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of people’s personalities, which means that the entire person is activated in the learning process. Yet another motive for choosing Kolb’s theory as the base for the “Culture in Care” course is that Kolb stresses the importance of allowing the learning process to be permeated by the structure and feeling of human experiences that are shared in dialogue with others. Kolb’s theories regarding experience-based learning coincide here with the socio-cultural perspective, in that Kolb stresses the importance of dialogue even in learning (see Bakhtin, 2000; Clark & Holquist, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978; see also Holquist, 1990; Wold, 1992; Rommetveit, 1974). These important experiences, which are the starting point of the students’ learning during the actual course, are the students’ previous experiences of care, either school-related or personal, as well as experiences with textiles when the students communicate improved well-being to fictitious care recipients through the creating-with-textiles process and product.

Accordingly, an important starting point for the case study here, as far as the intent to integrate theories in the classroom with external reality are concerned, is Kolb’s theory of experience-based learning (Kolb, 1984). The course, based on Kolb’s theory, offers students: 1) direct experiences of an artistic manner of working with textiles combined with learning about the tools used when creating-with-textiles, particularly concerning textile printing; 2) reflection in conjunction with creating-with-textiles; 3) the formation of abstract concepts by allowing the creating-with-textiles
products to communicate with fictitious care recipients; and 4) the intention to increase learning in the form of future readiness for application.

The “Culture in Care” course set three tasks, which were: the creation of a personal portfolio, the testing of various textile printing techniques, and a final assignment. The students’ portfolios were created with a special type of paper known as “Do It Magic” paper, which becomes adhesive when ironed. The nursing students were first allowed to paint this paper and then rip or cut out various shapes or motives. Thus, portfolio covers were created, emanating from the theme “security”. During the course, students collected their drawings and reflections in their portfolios. The second task was to test various techniques used for printing textiles on one’s own after receiving basic instruction from course leaders. The practicing and testing of textile printing techniques emanated from the theme “communion”. The third task, a final course assignment, consisted of the creation of a product through textile printing, with which to communicate the improvement of fictitious care recipients’ well-being in accordance with a self-chosen target group. The final course exercise was a group assignment. In conjunction with the various course tasks, students were given “reflection” forms consisting of several questions pertaining to how they, the students, visualized the stated course themes. The students' reflections related to the final course assignment were included in the data collection method used in phase II for empirical investigation. For the investigation of phase III the reflections in connection to the finally evaluating is used.

Creating-with-textiles products as reflective process

The focus of the study’s second phase lies in describing, analyzing, and interpreting the creating-with-textiles products in order to investigate in what manner the students feel that the products can better care for the recipients’ well-being. The textile products created for various target groups numbered five in total and consisted of a play-board and a teddy bear for children in hospital; the Sandman (a mobile for a daycare resting room); bocce and pea bags for the elderly; and a support cushion named childhood home for the elderly. These products were separately analyzed and interpreted.

In the denotative analysis, the products are considered intuitively. The following stage consists of connotative analysis, which complements the impression garnered from the denotative analysis by taking into account the answers given in the questionnaire, where students’ views of the
creating-with-textiles products are seen. Finally, the students’ responses are interpreted with respect to the manner in which the creating-with-textiles products can better care for the recipients’ well-being in relation to the caring science frame of reference care for, play, and learn, which are the fundamental substances of care (Eriksson, 1987, 1988). In such a manner, the category that the majority of answers will fall into is discerned, and, thereby, analysis of in which of the fundamental substances in care emphasis is placed occurs.

The play-board, teddy bear, Sandman, bocce and pea bags, and support cushion childhood home are all connected to the fundamental substance “care for”. Of these five products, four can also be connected to the fundamental substance “play”. For example, when carers use the products during play to fantasize, play, occupy people, or create social communion, play can also lead to something more than mere play. With the creating-with-textiles product play-board and Sandman, students connect play to both “care for” and “learn”. In the three other products, the nursing students connect play with caring for care recipients. The nursing students who created the support cushion “childhood home” only connect “care for” with the furthering of the care recipients’ well-being. As part of the substance “care for”, answers have been interpreted as showing that the support cushion “childhood home” can provide positive experiences, memory training, increased self-confidence, and comfort. Based on these results, one clearly sees that the students are able to integrate practical and Caring Science studies, and, accordingly, ideological care thoughts, with creating-with-textiles.

In order to determine how students visualize the needs they perceive exist in care recipients, the creating-with-textiles products are interpreted as bearing signs. Thus, the signs, index, and icons (Peirce, 1965) the students have used when creating their products are sought. The results show that the nursing students’ visualization coincides with the fundamental substances “care for”, “play”, and “learn”. In that the students used various signs, the study is able to verify that they are able to communicate with care recipients through the help of creating-with-textiles. Because caring is fundamentally an expression of reciprocity (Eriksson, 1987, 1988), creating-with-textiles can be considered a manner of expressing such reciprocity. Through creating-with-textiles, the students have received the possibility to practice their competency in reflecting on and producing the fundamental substances “care for”, “play”, and “learn”. Thus, the students have the opportunity to practice adopting somebody else’s perspective and use their intersubjective competence (see e.g. Mead, 1976; Vaage, 2001).
By evaluating the creating-with-textiles products in accordance with Niiniluoto’s (1990) classification of the meaning of cultural objects, the study can verify that the products hold different meanings for different people in differing circumstances, depending on who is looking at them. By investigating meaning as perceived by the producer, inner meaning, hidden meaning, and meaning as perceived by the receiver, the study reveals the creating-with-textiles products as cultural objects containing culturally-bound meanings.

In Table 1-5, the answers to all research questions pertaining to phase II, creating-with-textiles as reflective process, are presented. The three research questions are shown in separate columns and indicate 1) in what way creating-with-textiles products, according to the students, can raise the well-being of care recipients, 2) how nursing students visualize the needs they perceive in care recipients and 3) which meanings can be read in the creating-with-textiles products.
Figure 1. The Play-board.

Table 1. Ideological care thoughts expressed in Play-board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile product</th>
<th>Raising care recipients’ well-being</th>
<th>Visualizing care recipients’ needs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playboard</td>
<td>Care for&lt;br&gt;Disconnects from illness&lt;br&gt;Provides positive experiences&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Play&lt;br&gt;Stimulates imagination&lt;br&gt;Gives impulses to play&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Learn&lt;br&gt;Contributes to:&lt;br&gt;- social development&lt;br&gt;- discovering the world&lt;br&gt;- developing the children</td>
<td>Sign&lt;br&gt;Dolls – imagination and play&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Index&lt;br&gt;Blu-Tack – detachable dolls&lt;br&gt;Mark at window – own place&lt;br&gt;Cheerful dolls of various skin and hair color – different children in same situation</td>
<td>As perceived by the producer&lt;br&gt;As raising level of well-being&lt;br&gt;Inner meaning&lt;br&gt;Hidden meaning&lt;br&gt;As perceived by the receiver&lt;br&gt;Cheering up hospitalized children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. The Teddy bear.

Table 2. Ideological care thoughts expressed in Teddy bear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile product</th>
<th>Raising care recipients’ well-being</th>
<th>Visualizing care recipients’ needs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teddy bear</td>
<td><strong>Care for</strong>&lt;br&gt;Comforts&lt;br&gt;Provides positive experiences&lt;br&gt;<strong>Play</strong>&lt;br&gt;Provides distraction</td>
<td><strong>Sign</strong>&lt;br&gt;Teddy bear as cuddly toy – security&lt;br&gt;<strong>Index</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rosy cheeks, kind eyes – healthy and sound teddy bear&lt;br&gt;Pocket in front – useful object&lt;br&gt;<strong>Icon</strong>&lt;br&gt;Teddy bear depicted as cuddly toy</td>
<td><strong>As perceived by the producer</strong>&lt;br&gt;As raising level of well-being&lt;br&gt;<strong>Inner meaning</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Hidden meaning</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>As perceived by the receiver</strong>&lt;br&gt;Counteracts feeling of insecurity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3. The Sandman.

Table 3. Ideological care thoughts expressed in Sandman.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile product</th>
<th>Raising care recipients’ well-being</th>
<th>Visualizing care recipients’ needs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandman</td>
<td><strong>Care for</strong>&lt;br&gt;Provides relaxation&lt;br&gt;Provides security&lt;br&gt;Provides positive experiences&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Play&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Stimulates imagination&lt;br&gt;Promotes play&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Learn&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Inspires learning</td>
<td><strong>Sign</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Sandman – bedtime, security&lt;br&gt;Umbrella – the night sky&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Index&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Yellow stars – night&lt;br&gt;Magic sand bag – rest&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Icon&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Depicted as the Sandman</td>
<td><strong>As perceived by the producer</strong>&lt;br&gt;As raising level of well-being&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Inner meaning&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Cozier bedroom at daycare facility&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Hidden meaning&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;As perceived by the receiver**&lt;/br&gt;Relaxation for children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4. The Bocce and peabags.

Table 4. Ideological care thoughts expressed in Bocce and peabags.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile product</th>
<th>Raising care recipients’ well-being</th>
<th>Visualizing care recipients’ needs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bocce and peabags | Care for  
Provides positive experiences  
Provides exercise  
Play  
Provides distraction  
Provides social communion | Sign  
Games – play, exercise, socializing  
Index  
Bright colors – easy to see  
Icon  
Balls depicted on the bag | As perceived by the producer  
As raising level of well-being  
Inner meaning  
Hidden meaning  
Own interest in sports  
As perceived by the receiver  
Games give elderly something to think about |
Figure 5. The support cushion Childhood home.

Table 5. Ideological care thoughts expressed in support cushion Childhood home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile product</th>
<th>Raising care recipients’ wellbeing</th>
<th>Visualizing care recipients’ needs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood home</td>
<td><strong>Care for</strong>&lt;br&gt;Provides positive experiences&lt;br&gt;Provides memory training&lt;br&gt;Increases self-confidence&lt;br&gt;Improves comfort of living</td>
<td><strong>Sign</strong>&lt;br&gt;Farm house – old times&lt;br&gt;Sun – heat, light, happiness&lt;br&gt;Pillow – comfort&lt;br&gt;<strong>Index</strong>&lt;br&gt;Old married couple – stability of life&lt;br&gt;<strong>Icon</strong>&lt;br&gt;Depicted farm house</td>
<td><strong>As perceived by the producer</strong>&lt;br&gt;As raising level of well-being&lt;br&gt;<strong>Inner meaning</strong>&lt;br&gt;Counteracts sterile environment&lt;br&gt;<strong>Hidden meaning</strong>&lt;br&gt;As perceived by the receiver&lt;br&gt;Activating elderly persons’ memory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Readiness for application
In the study’s third phase, readiness for application, focus is placed on three areas: experiences during the creating-with-textiles process, reflections during the creating-with-textiles process, and application of the nursing students’ new experiences. By studying these areas, the study seeks to increase knowledge as to in what manner creating-with-textiles can influence nursing students’ future readiness for application. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand which potential for meaning-creating that can be identified in learning exists in this context.

The experiences that influence the nursing students’ creative processes
Both open code and selective coding have been used during analysis. Lindfors’s (1991) generated model for sloyd science’s sub-disciplines, the knowledge content of sloyd, and Lindfors’ model of sloyd as an operational system for selective coding have been used to code the responses from the study questionnaire. For the study’s selective coding, the study assumes that experiences from the creative processes are related to the dimensions “individual”, “technological-esthetical”, “situational”, and “surroundings-based” (see table 6). For these various dimensions, the study identifies various perspectives that, in turn, create various meaning categories. In the individual dimension I have identified the personal and affective perspective and the esthetical and creative perspective. The personal and affective perspective is concerned with experiences pertaining to the nursing students themselves and their personal feelings, whereas the esthetical and creative perspective includes experiences that pertain to nursing students’ creation of meaning.

In the technological-esthetical dimension, I have identified a perspective in which I categorize experiences that touch upon the knowledge-content related to creative activities. In the situational dimension, I have identified, in part, a perspective which includes students’ experiences of social interaction during the creative processes, and, in part, a perspective which includes experiences of the actual course content. In the surroundings-based dimension, I have identified a perspective that includes the students’ experiences of nursing education from a broader perspective.

The students have experienced feelings of acceptance and independence, which shows that the creative processes have provided them with opportunities for self-realization and emotional well-being (cf. Clark, 1979; Heikkilä, 1984; Suojanen, 1993). The students sometimes experience
limitations during the creating-with-textiles processes, such as difficulties in expressing themselves with textiles or shortage of time due to technical problems. These limitations felt by the students are connected to the textile materials or techniques, and according to Kojonkoski-Rännäli (1995a; 1995b), sloyd activities offer students a kind of learning that also includes realizing one’s own limitations.

Table 6. Experiences influencing nursing students’ creative processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences related to:</th>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Experiences of:</th>
<th>Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Individual</td>
<td>a) personal and affective</td>
<td>1) independence 2) acceptance 3) limitation 1) inspiration lack of inspiration 2) insight 3) satisfaction</td>
<td>8 3 3 6 3 5 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) esthetical and creative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Technological-esthetical</td>
<td>a) practical creating</td>
<td>1) new experiences 2) cognitive experiences 3) good end result</td>
<td>7 14 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Situational</td>
<td>a) interactive</td>
<td>1) group-dynamic interaction 2) contributions by advisors 1) course intensity 2) course substance</td>
<td>6 6 9 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) course structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Surrounding</td>
<td>a) education</td>
<td>1) practical-creative creating in relation to traditional education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire responses indicate that meaning-creating experiences, identified through the esthetical and creative perspective, dominate. Amongst other things, the responses show that cognitive experiences, new experiences, and a positive result, which are all experiences of a technological-esthetical character, are linked to meaning-creating experiences. Interaction exists between the experiences related to the various dimensions. The study shows that the nursing students’ esthetical experiences during the creative processes provide strong emotional experiences that, according to Sava (1993), contribute to the creation of meaning.
Meanings identified in the nursing students’ reflections in relation to ideological care thought during the creative process

The three reflection aspects that are interesting include the meaning of reflections in relation to the nursing students’ ability to learn, the meaning of reflections in relation to nursing studies, and the meaning in relation to the care recipients’ well-being. Within the framework of each aspect, I have identified four different meaning categories (see table 7). The majority of meanings related to the nursing students’ ability to learn proved to be reflections that lead to better insight and reflections that contributed to remembering something learned for a longer period. That the reflections led to better insight is indicated by the following quote: “Especially the portfolio with security as the theme made me think about my own life and the security in it. It also made me think about the security of other people, for example those who are hospitalized.” Schütz uses the concept “attention à la vie”, borrowed from Henri Bergson (see Schütz, 2002), when an individual focuses his or her entire attention on something particular in another person for better insight. With the help of reflection, the other individual’s consciousness can be understood and placed in a wider context of meaning.

Table 7. Meanings in nursing students’ reflections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning of reflections:</th>
<th>Identified meanings:</th>
<th>Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. In relation to the students’ ability to learn</td>
<td>1) leads to a developed way of working</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) helps to remember the learned substance for a longer time</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) leads to an ability to analyze</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) leads to deeper insight</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In relation to nursing studies</td>
<td>1) impossible to relate to nursing studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) possible to relate to nursing studies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) develops theoretical thinking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) leads to insight into creative process as form of activity in care</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In relation to the care recipients’ well-being.</td>
<td>1) realizes the meaning of creative activities in care for everybody</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) realizes the meaning of creative activities for everybody</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) realizes that care-recipients need to be given more time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) realizes the influence of the environment on well-being</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the importance of reflections in relation to nursing studies, the majority of students feel that reflections contribute to
understanding of the creative process as a form of activity in care, but also to the development of theoretical thought. The comments show that the students have familiarized themselves with and developed an understanding of the subjective situation of the care recipients, since the students request opportunities for the care recipients to engage in creative activities. These comments also show that the students’ sensibility has developed (see Taylor, 1985; Nortvedt and Grimen, 2006). In the aspect that touches upon the importance of reflection in relation to care recipients’ well-being, it was found that the nursing students see the importance of creative activities in care so that, for example, the care recipients can be provided the opportunity to develop themselves. Through the use of textile processes as communication, the nursing students have had the opportunity to counteract that which Aristotle called *akrasia* (Nussbaum, 2000). Akrasia, which is about counteracting ethical shortcomings, is something students are able to do when they come into contact with their own feelings and insights into others people’s situation. In the study this becomes particularly clear in analyzing the meaning of reflections especially in relation to the care-recipients’ well-being, since the students realize that care-recipients, as well as people in general, are positively affected by creative processes. As a consequence, I note that the creating-with-textiles processes and the reflections as the students communicate a raising of care-recipients’ well-being contain both esthetical and ethical dimensions.

**Readiness for application in the future**
The nursing students have gained an improved ability to act in that in the future, and in various ways, they can apply their new experiences. This is discernable in four identified categories: the mastering of practical-creative techniques; the ability to create something for one’s self; the engaging in creative activities with others; and the supporting of imaginative creative activities in future care activities (see Table 8).
Table 8. Readiness for application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Readiness for application</th>
<th>Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Ability to apply new experiences</td>
<td>a) ability to master practical-creative techniques</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) ability to create for oneself</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) ability to engage in creative activities with others</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) ability to support imaginative creative activities in future professional activities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) is able to apply practical-creative techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) masters practical-creative techniques in various contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) is able to create for oneself</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) realizes the added value in creating for oneself</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) is able to occupy others</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) realizes the added value in occupying others</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) supports imaginative creative activities in the future</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mastering of practical-creative techniques implies added value, in that the nursing students can use such skills in different contexts. They can create something for themselves and see added value in their own creation. According to Heikkilä (1987), a person who engages in sloyd activity integrates his or her own person into creative processes, which in the study is revealed as increased readiness for application when the students realize that there is added value in creating for oneself. Even in relation to being able to occupy others, added value exists in that the students feel that creative activities increase the care recipients’ wellbeing, thus enriching their existence. Furthermore, the nursing students realize the importance of imaginative-creative activities and wish to support such activities in their future work in care as well as comparable courses within nursing education. These results show that the students’ mental models have changed with their insight into the meaning of creative activities for the well-being of care recipients and people in general. It is this insight which affects the future readiness for application of the students. (cf. Mezirow, 2000).
Esthetical-ethical transformation

In the study, the answers to the three research questions are realized as figures that create a gradual model. This model visualizes the processes that contribute to the development of learning during creating with textiles in relation to ideological care thought. In the last figure, the processes that contribute to a theory of esthetical-ethical transformation are summarized (Figure 6).

The figure is intersected by a timeline that represents the communication that permeates the process. There are three triangles in the timeline, of which the smallest triangle, representing the past, visualizes and references the nursing students’ previous experiences. The next largest triangle visualizes current time and includes the nursing students’ new experiences and the “Culture in Care” course, together with experiences and reflections from the creative processes, as well as the students’ increased readiness for application. The foremost triangle, the future, visualizes the students’ conviction to support imaginative-creative activities in the future for care recipients, and, furthermore, to work so that comparable courses can be offered in nurse education.

The students’ readiness for application has increased in that the students have learned imaginative creative techniques, mainly textile printing. Learning has taken place through the esthetical reflection that the
students are allowed to experience in the positive experiences occurring during the creative processes.

Due to these reflections during the creative processes, the students are able to enter into the creative processes and relate their creating to ideological care thoughts on a profound level, which promotes ethical thinking. Thus, one can say that the fundamental assumption that esthetical reflection promotes ethical reflection in creating-with-textiles is correct. Other forms of artistic expression can also in a comparable manner be used to develop esthetical-ethical transformative learning processes. What is essential for advisors using esthetical-ethical transformative learning processes, regardless of the form of artistic expression, is to consider what they wish the students’ reflections to contain (cf. Søndenå, 2004).

Meaning-creating potential in learning related to creating-with-textiles

Used as a form of communication, creating-with-textiles has been shown to consist of comprehensive meaning-creating potential for learning. The meaning-creating potential for learning seen in this study is based on the esthetical-ethical transformation model generated in Figure 1. This model shows that the opportunity to transform readiness for application exists in the following four perspectives: 1) the individual-related perspective, which relates to the ability to be able to create something for one’s self and the insight that doing so provides added value; 2) the esthetical-technological perspective, which concerns students’ ability to master practical-creative techniques in various contexts; 3) the interactional perspective, which relates to students’ ability to be able to practice creative activities with others and an understanding of the added value that creative activities bring to care recipients; and 4) the society-related perspective, which concerns students’ willingness to support imaginative creation in future work in care as well as support similar courses in nursing education.

The comprehensive meaning-creating potential found in creating-with-textiles affirms Sava’s (1993) view that esthetical-ethical transformation leads to a changed awareness of an individual’s self, nature, other human beings, and the world. In this context, a changed awareness of nature relates to a changed awareness of the importance of using explicit textile and or other imaginative creative activities in order to increase peoples’ well-being. This meaning-creating potential is based on the esthetical-technological perspective and is revealed through the fact that the students have become motivated to learn other creative techniques that could be useful for themselves or to occupy others.
During the creating-with-textiles process (communication), nursing students have the chance to develop their learning by using their intersubjective competency. The esthetical-ethical learning processes made possible through the communicative textile expression, together with reflections, are a way to work for something good, and, accordingly, using Aristotle’s expression (Nussbaum, 2000), work against *akrasia*. The ethical reflection associated with the esthetical creative learning process owing to communication has shown itself to possess a great and powerful importance for the nursing students’ learning with regard to the development of esthetical-ethical awareness.

**Closing comments**

The purpose of this study has been to increase understanding of the possibilities for creating-with-textiles used as a visual communicative form of expression in a learning context. The study’s view of learning has been based on the socio-cultural perspective and the study has shown that creating with textiles as a mediating tool, both linguistically or intellectually and physically, contains the potential to develop learning. In the study, such mediated learning is combined with esthetical-ethical transformation processes, which include creating-with-textiles as a resource for developing meaning-creating potential in future readiness for application. This meaning-creating potential pertains to both the students themselves and their ideological care thought.

As previously mentioned, in the “Culture in Care” project I have held a dual role as both advisor and researcher. Thus, I have striven to turn this “insider” perspective into an advantage through assiduously reporting on the planning and actualization of the course, its fundamental idea, and its completion. Furthermore, in my role as researcher, I have striven to make the student perspective observable through reflection in relevant theory. The narrative in this thesis is a possible narrative of esthetical-ethical transformative learning processes.

In that the study’s case study of educational innovation leads to the improvement of practice, this research is important in the development of the creating-with-textiles subject in nursing education. The study results show that students can produce the essential substances of care, care for, play, and learn (Eriksson, 1987) through creating-with-textiles. The study results also provide understanding that the development of knowledge can occur in nursing education, owing to the integration of creating-with-textiles with ideological care thought.
The knowledge that this research has lead to can be useful in elaborating future cultural educational products in nursing education. It is also possible to develop the possibilities that creating-with-textiles may contain as mediated and transformative learning in another educational context. In this study, compulsory education is mentioned as an example of such an educational context where it would be possible for individuals to create products for people other than themselves in order to increase understanding of the other. The continued investigation of this research theme could include investigating creating-with-textiles when used as a communicative form of expression in another educational context, and the investigation of the manner in which learning could be furthered by comparative esthetical-ethical transformative learning processes.
References


10. The dialogue between narrative and dramaturgical tools in transformative contexts
Ellinor Silius-Ahonen

Abstract
In this article the meaning of arts education is explored from a meta-theoretical stance. A three dimensional research model for the reading of complex texts is introduced. These texts are characterised by their transformative potential. Tools from drama pedagogical reasoning, narrative and dramaturgy interact in a rationale to accomplish a broader and deeper understanding of meaning-making as phenomenon in these texts. The notions of meaning according to drama as art form, to education as settings of form and content and to research in humanities, as fact and fiction from a pragmatic - rhetoric position, are focused on the dialogic relationship between opposite perspectives. After an introductory setting of language some examples from social practices and their impact on the underpinning reasoning for the creation of a philosophical stance are given. Finally, a polycentric framework of rationalities is given with conclusions on transformation and on the implications of the rationale.
Introduction
In research my interest has been drawn to a meta-theoretical handling of complexity. For the purpose of highlighting transformation in social practices, I have found it important to avoid reductive solutions. After anchoring the chosen vocabulary for this purpose I come up with definitions of concepts from that language position.

The use of metaphors, not as an application of what could be called a traditional understanding of language, is a rhetorical choice. The metaphor, a double image where a word refers to something concrete and something transcending, creates a tension, an ambiguity. Accepting the linguistic, rhetorical turn, I find it inaccurate to define concepts from either a realistic or a naturalistic paradigm. The rhetorical assumption of language not being transparent challenges the researcher to scrutinize every concept. Defining concepts as metaphors is therefore an opening to a philosophical point.

Transformative contexts refer in the article to cultural practices where transformation is present as a potential through the situated and contextualised human activities that take place. The drama session or workshop, children’s play and a tutorial in educational settings are examples of potentially transformative practice.1 By reading I refer to the research act of analysis and interpretation of living action as a text.

The dialectic relationship between language and practice shapes discourses. The term signals a particular view of language as an element of social life closely interconnected with other elements (Fairclough 2003, 3). Text is understood as the interactive processes of meaning-making that is “written” in situations or events. The matter of intertextuality refers to how texts incorporate and recontextualise other texts. The active mode of text, genre and its function as representation, discourse, mediate social events. (Fairclough 2003). The continuous movement within a multilayered context is regarded in terms of the reader/researcher as semiotic material. People learn by reading and responding to signals, and this is regarded as a semiotic engagement (Stables 2005).

The definition of learning as a social, dynamic act of transformation (Greimas 1987) is a claim for learning comprehended as transformation. One consequence of that statement is that any mechanical attending of

1 Praxis as discursive practice (Foucault 1994, 1998) refers to the interdependence between action and vocabulary that link to underpin assumptions and genres where these discourses are practised.
lessons in schools or educational settings is not referred to as learning. The potential embedded in any ordinary school lesson, as well as a university lecture or a course at a community centre is an argument for transformation to occur in those settings. Learning by actively responding to *affordances* (cf. Gibson 1979) is understood as a human being’s dialogical activities in the world. Informal settings and mere living in the world offer learning opportunities every day. In education the interplay between human inquiry and the concept of knowledge creates a fruitful conflict.

**The learner: an agent in the learning process**

Learning, in formal and informal educational settings, is understood from the actor’s perspective. Distinguishing between the concepts of learning and knowledge is made from a perspective where actor and culture interact.

From the learner’s point of view the process has significance as a process and as a product. Experiencing the productive process is rewarding for the individual as it brings forth insights and new understanding. These insights orientate the learner in his life world, in society or in handling theoretical matters. If this process is not given value in education the learner easily starts to either manipulate, or feel manipulated by, instrumental values.

Education is a good example of how a learner needs to be an agent in his/her learning process to cope with the endeavour. He is not the agent according to what counts as knowledge in that particular context in society. Knowledge claims as epistemic agreements in cultural contexts are often found to be a challenge in educational settings as no absolute truth is given on subject matter in late modernity. I argue that by accepting the challenge, teachers and other educators move to the field of deliberation. Reid (1994) states that a deliberative resolution offers the means to resolve practical matters such as education from a philosophical conception.

**The learner: in constant dialogue**

The multi-voiced dialogism of Bachtin (1988) underpins the idea of a dialectic and asymmetric, non-linear, relationship between subject and culture. Dialogue as the interplay between matter and the transcendence of human exploration is an ongoing process. The confrontation between knowledge, not universal but objective, in the sense of agreements made
outside the learner, and personal inquiry as a subjective expansion, are not found to be an obstacle for learners but a vehicle in the process of transformation. The co-presence of other voices in texts (cf. Bachtin 1988; Bauman 2004; Fairclough 2003) is exposed in transformative contexts within their genre. In educational settings the learner encounters tangible cultural structures. In play the structures are more hidden but they exist within the physical and symbolic artefacts. Artistic work concerns the struggle between form and content.

The arts offer a way of human knowing, of imagination and practical knowledge. Dealing with the arts is regarded in education as cultural knowledge and the production of cultural knowledge. Traditional and emerging new forms are linked to both interpretation and performance. (Gadsden 2008) The demands in terms of skill offer one departure to an aesthetic process, and the urgency of solving a dilemma, another.

**Transformation: personal and cultural change**

Transformation is understood from two perspectives, a close and a distant reading. The former refers to subtle, almost invisible and often not noticed changes within the individual sphere. One example is the child playing, where an object is interpreted differently ad hoc and bodily shifts are adapted to the as-if situations improvised by the child. Another example is personal transformation as a potentiality in human growth. Existential awareness is reconstructed by the individual through transformations in her/his life story.

The latter reading of the concept refers to changes in society and culture. The term has its origin in numerous disciplines such as biology, cultural studies and anthropology, sociology, information technology, literature theory, art, psychology and education. The meaning of *trans* as “across”, “beyond”, “on the other side” gives a hint of something turning into something else, to mechanisms of transfer and a process of converting information into a format. The shifting of shape appears in the core of these definitions. The paradox within the word is that something solid - *form*- is put between two moving parts, *trans* and *-ation*. The latter provides the word with activity, which emphasises the dynamics of a process. This combination – form of movement – I aim to depict in the structuring of transformation.

The alteration is either profound, like shifts of paradigms or ritual states of transition, or subtle, as in the example of a child playing. Individual meaning-making is context-sensitive. It relates to a situated context
where the seed of becoming appears in new shapes. These kinds of changes shape an inner form of understanding\(^2\), of which movement of the body, a state of mind, societal conditions, are examples. The core quality in transformation is the reference to movement and change; of a state of something, where the material is not rejected, but altered and expanded.

Since human beings both structure and story elements to link them and make sense of them, so transformative actions towards understanding have a personal and collective significance. Polytextuality and polycentric perception refer to the ontology of inter-subjectivity. Flensborg (2004) emphasizes polycentric, and what she prefers to call excentric, observation in children’s attention. Adults’ changes of perspective are also promoted by mental and bodily movement (Merleau-Ponty 1962); this concerns both adults and children.

**References to drama pedagogical reasoning**

Examples in this section, derived from social practice with transformative potential embedded, are viewed through the eyes of a drama pedagogue. My point of reference is the shift of perspective. The technique from the praxis of Moreno, where “art”, “therapy” and “play” are integrated for the purpose of the individual’s personal transformation (Rasmussen 1991), is extended to a method of understanding positioning as modes of perception and communication. The conceptualisation of drama pedagogy in Nordic drama pedagogy has drawn attention to how the shifts of perspective create various practices of aesthetic meaning-making. These practices have shaped a discourse, with reference to different practices outside the genre of psycho-drama (Rasmussen & al. 2001).

The first two examples concern the field of drama and theatre. One example emerges from children’s play and the last derives from an educational setting outside the arts.

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\(^2\) Österberg 1977 distinguishes between an outer, an identical and an inner form of understanding.
Example 1
One of the dimensions of theatrical experience is taking the position of the audience in a play on stage. It requires trust, as the fictional contract seduces the observer to a performance outside his/her immediate control. Reality is from the perceiver’s angle what it appears to be. It is not what “one has expected”, nor “what one wishes to see”. What happens on stage is perceived sensitively in the ability to grasp nuances, as an Aristotelian “amazement” (Aristotle 1988). This trustful positioning, resembling inductive research qualities, is found helpful for a researcher when entering an empirical journey, where the familiar is made strange.

In Brechtian and early Boal theatrical agenda, the audience, on the other hand, starts taking a standpoint towards the happenings on stage. The observer finds him/herself in a position of solving a dilemma. Taking charge of one’s own decisions is any researcher’s responsibility. Detachment from a reading close to the object where cultural changes are not revealed aims for clarity. It manifests principles for the choices to be made in a transformative orientation. This form of reading requires structural understanding. Engelstad (2004) visualises a detached approach in vertical lines, disrupting the process of fluency in his description of Forum theatre. In that process an aspect-actor who enters into a Forum play is exploring solutions and alternatives to the conflict on stage. Actions and options interact in the dialectic between what is given and what is to be changed.

Example 2
An example from a drama workshop might give a hint in terms of the creation of knowledge. The reading perspective is close to situated activity. Let us imagine that students explore “Hamlet” and “Ophelia” and that Albert, acting Hamlet, switches roles with Bella, acting Ophelia. They remember the lines they uttered a while ago, the emotions they strived for. When the students enter new roles such as, for example, a five year old Hamlet and a ninety year old Ophelia (if she had lived), their confrontation shapes a new pattern. Every shift between these roles brings forth information to be used in their coming encounters.

My point concerns knowledge, both formulated and tacit, a result of the individual’s inquiry, which is defined as both personal and collective. It

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3 Examples from socio-drama settings like mother and daughter, employer and employee, etc., in child drama, in process drama and other genres role-taking for similar purposes, are endless.
is personal, inter-subjectively grounded, and concerns that very person. It is collective, as the creation is dialectic in relation to former knowledge in society. The agreement that counts as knowledge is cultural. Learning in this light becomes a re-configuration, collectively generated. When former modes of understanding have an impact (conscious or sub-conscious) on the individual’s elaboration of new information, it touches the individual. He/she explores what sense it makes in the context in which s/he is involved.

Form as a core concept in arts education
The focus in drama pedagogy is on its active potential to transform thoughts and feelings, ideas and reflections, into words and movements. The concreteness in the genre, as it appears metaphorically, manifests a fluid relationship between body and mind. A changing of position refers to a shift of physical position. To form is to structure experience and make meaning of what it is like to be in the world as a human being. Meaning as an ethical consideration is of such relevance when reasoning on the meaning of arts in a broad sense. The dimensions of rationality, set in motion in the artistic work, reflect human rhetoric resources in articulating what one is about to tell, to show, to question.

The dialogue between form and content (cf. Thomssen 1996) marks a tension in the core of the aesthetic process. Tension means activity at the boundaries, opening spaces in between. Questions rising from human existence, and questions merging from the material, are encountered. The demands of artistic skill (depending on the context of the aesthetic process) set in motion an interplay between the artist being in charge and him letting things happen. Both subject and object can be described as having intentions. The subject inquires about the surrounding, but as “the world” is regarded as active in this interplay, it offers counterparts in continuous dialogues.

Example 3
The following example is taken from the world of children. A child imagines, for example, that a chair is transformed into a horse, a boat, a circus, etc. The child leads him/herself in constant movement to and from this artefact. Let us continue this story from the horse option. An adult enters the room as the child has already finished riding the horse. The adult greets the chair: “Hallo there, Red Rover” and the child responds promptly: “that is a chair” and then, kindly: “Red Rover already went to sleep”. By this the child is communicating something like this: “I accept your line, but I´m not going to follow it up”. If the
adult had entered the room some time earlier, he/she and the child might together have led “Red Rover” to the stables. In the present time the child has transformed the chair to a boat leaving for Australia and him/herself to a sailor.

My points here are three. One focuses on the seriousness of play. The intense and authentic charging of energy into the as-if is an art form of the moment, where children are experts. Adults often do not bother to seize the moment as it soon will be over, or, conversely, cling to it when it has actually passed. The potential option of entering the as-if exists as well for the adult, which the adult here shows. A mutual playing situation between an adult and child was a potential in the situation. The reason why mutuality did not occur was not buried in the intention by the adult; on the contrary, it was due to timing. I argue that aspects of time function in situations on a structural level.

Another point refers to inter-textuality in meaning-making. The child could not easily transform the chair to a toothbrush, as the function of the chair as a semiotic sign (affordance) has an appeal towards a specific direction (Vygotsky 1978). My argument, that transformation in knowledge production is similar to transformation in play and art, rests on the double tension in drama, where a space in-between occurs between form and content (cf. O’Toole 1992; Østern & Heikkinen 2001).

The actions in situations are never entirely in the actor’s power or control. He/she confronts the realities around, whether they appear as “the past”, “the mountain” or “the troll” (referring to examples of drama metaphors of time, place/space and figure). The individual encounters materiality or subterranean impact, the intrinsic layers in the situation (cf. Engeström 1996, 2005).

Example 4
My last example comes from higher professional education, where the potential process of transformation is placed in a tutorial, within a problem-based learning setting. Learning in this context is framed as epistemic work, since elaboration in tutorials relies on agreement about knowledge in that specific context. These agreements of disciplinary knowledge are formulated in a curriculum fostering professional competence.

In my study (cf. Silius-Ahonen 2005) I found that the turning points required for new understanding and insight from the learners –
transformation of knowledge – were exposed in a specific structure. This structure was a result of analysing verbal discourse and bodily movement. A pattern based on two forms of human modality – narrative and dramaturgical - was interpreted according to Bachtin’s (1988) guiding concept chronotope, the “threshold”. Through observation of participatory activities to and from the topic, critical turning points, metaphorically “climbing the threshold”, revealed a collision. A knowledge dilemma was located when the learner did not continue in the same direction, but a shift of perspective or positioning was demanded. Students going from the experience of “not understanding” to “having a clue” or “believing” to “a deeper insight” or “not seeing any sense” to “finding connections” were pushed into uncertainty, a foray into the unknown.

The learners’ agentive action on the stage exposed the constraints of the environment, here exemplified by learning outcomes formulated in the curriculum. The threshold marked the “conflict on the stage”, the arena for inquiry. The metaphor stage has a double significance (Veresov 2004). Agentive action pushes forward imaginative processes that, according to Vygotsikj (1978), expand both the performer and the stage. Solving a conflict on stage where the actor has to deal with points of no return, with history as is present in current time, and the notions of future where choices have to be made, exemplifies a creative act. Imagination is pushed forward by the urgency and reality of the dilemma (Vygotsky 1995).

The energy (pathos) of meaning-making was found striking in these settings. Narrative inquiry where learning was not about real life but real life itself (cf. Dewey 1999, Clandinin & Connelly 2000) has a value also in formal settings. Educational contexts, forming and formulating experience into knowledge, concern formalities, but simultaneously they have, as Dewey (1934) pointed out, the quality of meaning-making through our senses.

The notion of how situations are charged with personal presence, with commitment, derives from the art of the moment, theatre. An actor on stage, a reflective performer in a drama workshop, a child in the midst of

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4 According to their recorded utterances in situ and statements immediately after tutorials (Silius-Ahonen 2005).

5 Vygotsky’s notion of proximal zone in a new translation shows his use of metaphors from the theatre.
play, are examples of the personal positioning of making things happen. My argument is that learning in school can also be exciting, a risk-taking and authentic exploration, where students are encouraged to bring their own questions. Educatively aims are then charged by dimensions of Bildung.

A point in this example is that aesthetic conceptualisation from drama pedagogy offers a rhetoric rationale to handle complex texts outside the arts. Using the arts in non-artistic contexts does not reduce the arts in contrast to either – or rationality.

**A model of reading a potential process of transformation**
The perspective in this section is the researcher’s. The question I ask is: How to manage to observe, describe, and analyse a potential process of transformation without the pitfalls of reduction, linearity or causality? A convention in drama pedagogy, the image or still picture, depicts form in movement, condensed movement. My contribution, a design where time, space, fable and figure intervene, has been visualised and reshaped for several purposes.

To choose a topological model for my reading of learning events is a solution based on rhetorical reasoning (cf. Fafner 1988). It operates with opposites, enabling the researcher to sharpen the act of reading. It is new as it provides an alternative to hierarchical readings, where the frames connect in a linear way (an inner quadrate included in the outer). Finally, it works against a dichotomisation of opposite perspectives. I strive with the topological model to overcome polarities, since the frames are juxtaposed and not hierarchically stated.

Designing a model with contingent connections was a challenge, as “model” points back to a systemic rationality and openness to narrative rationality. In the following I will describe phases in the process of construction.

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Distinguishing perspectives
The first choice was to distinguish between involvement and detachment, since they bear different narratives of the world. I called the first perspective “closeness”, “going close” and from the actor’s position “to say yes” \(^7\). The opposite perspective marks another departure of looking at social practice. I named it “distance”, “critical appraisal” and from the actor’s viewpoint “to say no”, a metaphor for critique.

Dialogue, understood as the notion “between and betwixt” (Rasmussen & al. 2001) \(^8\) depicts a process of how the first and second perspective interact, requiring a third site based on that confrontation. My third choice was to consider this third location from a double perspective. By doing so, the product of a confrontation was to be kept open. One departure should not blur into another. A post-structural epistemology provided a view where a topological reasoning was no compromise, but cohesive for the model to be accessible for analysis and for applications.

Methodological choices are linked both to epistemological considerations and to mental and ethical attitudes. Contrary to the traces of either-or rationality in critical theory, I chose not to exclude particularity from a socio-cultural strandpoint. Basic epistemology, when moving away from the notion of absoluteness, actualised in the process the contradiction between truth and reality. The concept of truth in the rhetoric pragmatic approach is based on diversity, not universal reason, and functions therefore as a paradigm.

Paradigm: a rhetoric pragmatic contextualism
A positivist epistemology has had a powerful influence on research practice in humanities dealing with education, psychology and civics. The arts have been put aside as the “strange other”. The presupposition of a cumulative progress of knowledge has been challenged thoroughly by the hermeneutic interpretive framework, stating that knowledge is perspective-bound and partial. Knowledge refers to the person knowing differently, rather than knowing more. This view is congruent with my chosen approach, where subject-based and structure-based traditions function in a pragmatic axiology.

\(^7\) See Johnstone 1996 on “to say yes” and “no” in improvisation.

\(^8\) See Buber’s 1990 a, b: reasoning on dialogue.
Critical theory detects and unmasks beliefs and practices. The postmodern scepticism of a secure foundation of knowledge emphasizes the need for the researcher to be self-reflective, just as science itself should be aware of its limitations. The generation and production of knowledge emerges as a practice of languaging, a textual production. It does not conceive a mirror to the world; a structure of significations is simultaneously present. As language both carries and creates a culture’s epistemological codes, these structures are embodied in texts. (Uscher 2003) A socio-cultural comprehension of knowledge being context-sensitive derives from a cultural historical reasoning on the mediated relationship between man and society (Vygotsky 1978, 1995) ⁹.

Being able to offer a critique for emancipating purposes, a rhetoric-pragmatic situationism offered a research position (Kjørup 1996)¹⁰. I thereby argue that agentive knowledge includes sensitivity, contrary to Rorty (2003), who suggests sensitivity “instead of knowledge”. By choosing to consider the individual act from a close position, I wished to avoid the danger of elitism in cultural research. By recognizing and acknowledging particularity I argue that “knowledge” does not tell us how things absolutely are not in the world, nor does it bring comfort to the learner. It orientates him/her in life praxis, both as expansion of the repertoires and as reflective depth.

Three platforms
Three perspectives in a topological guide open up three locations, platforms for perceiving, analysing and interpreting multiple aspects of transformation. This research position enables the researcher to claim what is possible to claim according to the underpinning theories, and not in contrast to them. Incommensurability across disciplines are notified in a spirit of deconstruction, i.e. put side by side.

The platforms are linked to basic existential metaphors of time, space, fable and figure. These four are chosen to emphasize the meaning-making aspect of transformative actions. Space/place stands for physical surroundings and materiality in cultural artefacts such as situation and context. Fable stands for the unpredictable narrative and the emplotment of situational activity. Figure represents the human being, the agent, the subject. Time refers to present time, the past and the future.

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⁹ See also Dysthe, 2001.

¹⁰ See also Flyvbjerg, 2000.
Non-linearity as a guiding principle of dialogic interplay
For reading human action, “the still image”, a technique from drama practice, manifests a metaphor for how both continuity and disruptions are fixed to a strand. The reading act is framed by the optic in use and not regarded as a first, second and third step in a chain. The lenses of observation open up three sites, all in congruence with the departure for the act of observation. These sites stand for different approaches, which limits the view from that location.

Separation of multiplicity into framed units has, in a long tradition of Western thinking, been conducted for the purpose of rejection. Comparison has led to dichotomisation, like the splits between mind and body, play and work, fact and fiction, being and action, subject and object. Non-linearity as a guiding principle of dialogic interplay is implied throughout this construction to overcome such reductive solutions.

Highlighting a potential process of transformation from the idea that human action is unpredictable on the one hand and on the other hand forms patterns that are readable, requiring a polycentric mode of observation 11, a third eye. A basic assumption of opposites interacting without reducing them, of linear or causal simplifications was realized as a third place, not “above” or “sub”, but within each flash of confrontation.

By shifting back and forth from an empirical approach to a philosophical reasoning in a research process, this model was constantly reconstructed. Between involvement and detachment the third sphere created clashes, a collision and a chiasm. The most complex reading, an application “within the third eye” moves beyond the confrontation that takes place. The reading act resembles happenings on the stage in a drama where the conflict becomes a reality of people’s wishes and wills, their contradictory motives for action. Things do not reverse, they move, emplot 12 in various directions. The site of “in between” does not cover and close up, it changes appearance.

11 See Quortrup in Krogholt 2004 for a description of the mode of observation.
12 See Polkinghorne 1995 for emplotment.
First platform of reading: the subject is understood in her movement

“Going close” to living situations forms a platform where human action is highlighted as bodily performance of presence (the performer of flesh and blood). As existence constantly changes its appearance and never shows its “natural” face, situational sensitivity is regarded as a value when the reader perceives the subtleness of transformative movements. Body phenomenology was found decisive for the frame of reference linked to the first platform. The human being is not seen as a mind placed in a body, but understood in its movement (Butler 2004).

Bodily performance as a mode of being in the world sets the individual into action. Performance is a production of intertextuality, where the words are other people’s words, but it still offers authenticity in the sense of never to be repeated (cf. Bachtin 1988; Bauman 2004). Observing how babies and toddlers move, the body, intentional in time and concrete in its action, (consciously or unconsciously) is uncovered. Merleau-Ponty (1962, 151) states “because the arm seen and the arm touched, like the different segments of the arm, together perform one and the same action”.

Performance refers to the stylisation of the body. The individual practices style, but styles are not all available for choice. Butler (2004) suggests that “performative” refers to dramatic and contingent construction of meaning. The cultural inscription acts on the body already defined and located within a context, but simultaneously it becomes a motor of interpretations in the social space.

Plots in stories are readable from a beginning through events to an end. A reading on happenings, unfolded in situ, opens up for narrative reasoning on performative action. The researcher grounds her reading in trust and accepts (no assessment there and then) and describes without detachment. She uses the glasses from sitting in the audience. Narratives of an event are in this reading connected to the significance of personal experience, and vary. Participants tell different stories about participating in an event and the researcher tells from an observant position, textualises the event.

Narrative truth is provincial. It is based on a syntagmic rationality (cf. Bruner 1995; Polkinghorne 1995; Greimas 1987), either linear or parallel. The latter form enables recognition of both continuous and discontinuous movements. The perspective in the reading captures particular ingredients of how action is constituted as effects (and not
caused by) from the sequence of acts where an actor is “done by those acts” (Salih in Butler & Salih 2004, 91). Narrative tools enable the reader to recognize the subtle meaning-making acts in situ, as making sense of what is going on when it is ongoing.

Second platform of reading: dramaturgy as structuring processes

Structural reason is chosen as an opposite, a macro perspective for the purpose of exposing sub-layers in cultural contexts. Reading in a larger scale requires a departure from the culture towards the individual, and not the opposite, as on the first platform. Structural rationality provides tools for a critical reading. To offer a critique for empowering purposes, enhancing practice, the researcher takes into consideration the complex and multi-layered context within situated activity. An understanding of cultural mediation deals with the conditions and constraints for human agency.

Detachment from the quality of immediate experience helps the reader to uncover agendas, ideologies (fables) and search for meaning in the layers of situations (time and space). Structures form perspectives; they do not illustrate these perspectives. Allern (2004) highlights the similarities between epistemology and dramaturgy. Dramaturgy, with its analytical and abstract reasoning (Smeds 2005), exposes structures (form) and the context of settings. A choice of topography of settings, parallel to narratives, functions for clarification of abstract patterns as movements.

Dramaturgy as a way of thinking relates the understanding of the stage in Vygotsky’s vocabulary as an arena for the conflict to emerge. Questions that arise are, for example: Where do things happen, in the corner, in the middle? How do actors move and head towards or from each other? How do they express in utterances or changes of physical position and gestures a direction in relation to what has occurred? Which figure confronts another figure, where and when, and what happens when movement is stopped? A narrative reading puts attention on a fluent shaping of the story, while a dramaturgical one concentrates on disruptions of activity. What kinds of critical incidents push the actors to move beyond commodity?

For the purpose of a commentary reading beyond the individual action, mentioned above, the second platform provides the researcher with a vocabulary from a critical discourse. Putting attention on the characterisers in settings, critical thinking reasons on shifts of perspective that expose hidden impact. Contrasting a phase of trust, nothing is in this
reading taken for granted. Artefacts, social, symbolic and physical, are examined as culturally developed and not looked on as neutral or natural or merely technical equipment.

Paradigmatic thinking is structural, as it has its foundation in “deep grammar”. The form of rationality stands for non-negotiable principles in social practice in congruence with the socio-cultural understanding of materiality. By choosing to consider knowledge from a critical position, the epistemic obligations of education are stressed. Education holds a primary place in moving people towards spaces where critical and global inquiries might begin (Twomey et al. 2007). A critical view is relevant for emancipating voices at the margin to be heard outside the everyday practice and for the purpose of changing social practices.

A dramaturgical rationality is characteristic of semiotic theory, as it points out the sites and borders where meanings cling to. Corporeality and materiality of signs can be related to form, with its relevance for both the arts and research.

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13 A structural concept suggesting verticality in language.
Third platform: A framework and a clash
Exploration manifests a site of improvisation, of a carrying out ideas, of expansion. Formal aspects, contextual boundaries, intervene from underneath when humans act. When two kinds of processes are set in motion, a third site as a space in between emerges as dialogic. The site on the third platform is a liminal place\textsuperscript{14}. Here, the combination of borders (structures) and agency (human transcendence), makes transformative potentiality accessible. The space is unpredictable in content, but topologically discovered from a polycentric optic. The abolition of a specific centre for observation establishes a hyper-complexity for enabling a snap glimpse of a clash. “A third” is in this reading not “the third”, a specific kind of interpretation, but ambiguous.

Both Benjamin’s “now of cognoscibility” as a philosophical statement and Dewey’s “discovery at the moment” in his reasoning on learning\textsuperscript{15}, can be applied in depicting the clash. Benjamin’s \textit{Jeztzeit}, stands for present time incarnated, a dialectic at a standstill. The condensed moment bears a reference to time passed and time to come. Concepts like corporeality and materiality bring forward the asymmetric relationship between stage and actor. Cultural text is produced, referring to societal and physical conditions, where history and mental pictures of future and present interact with human creativity.

The notion of now-time, the integrated temporal relation between past and future, is acted out in a liminal space between them. The present includes more than an extension of time as situated-ness, it refers to place, human body and mind, carrying narratives of what has passed and memories of former actions, dreams and hopes of becoming. As Bachtin’s metaphor chrontope initiates, a space-time is understood as a cultural unit within human existence. Creativity to stretch and transcend\textsuperscript{16}, to make meaning, creates meaning.

Conclusions
In the concluding section I will reason on the making of meaning through the tools actualised. My interest in the readings of complex settings started from a drama pedagogical positioning and has moved into a philosophical view. The view I refer to consists of a statement

\textsuperscript{14} See Turner 1982, Barrett 2006.

\textsuperscript{15} In Wiegel 1994, Bolz & Van Reijen 1993, Dewey 1999.

\textsuperscript{16} According to Vygotsky 1995, human response to environment.
about transformation, a presentation of the meta-theoretical model and some of its implications.

Transformation: movements in continuous shift between distance and closeness
I will give some examples of the metaphors of subject positioning, “saying yes” and “saying no”, as premises for the transformation. Dorothy Heathcote, during a course in 1985, reminded us, the participants, of the shift to the as-if when a child starts to say “I” in role. Participants in a tutorial were observed many years later to shift perspective when they started to negotiate about a case and not talk around it. To say “yes” in improvisation is, according to Johnstone (1996), accepting a message or code by responding to it, driving it further. The time-aspect activated is continuity. The mode of understanding fluency is narrative. Commitment and engagement are qualities of inquiry.

Knowledge conflicts, principles of form emerge as the discourse of situation. Disruption through mediation in educational events from a teacher or a participant marks a “no” to continuing in the same direction. It takes courage for a student to leave certainty and improvise ideas in confrontation with former knowledge. Tension and excitement grow in the sphere of reflection and questioning when somebody is moving into an open space of the unknown. The standstill when a disruption has stopped the direction and the conflict is no more rejected opens up several options. To “say no” to the present situation becomes necessary for the learner to become challenged to move to epistemic or other perspectives\(^{17}\). The collision between engagement and detachment forms opportunities for transformation to occur in their oscillation and interdependence. Contextual layers that are embedded in situations with their subterranean impact, like knowledge claims, provoke the subject to re-conceptualize his/her former understanding. Constraints that pursue questions beyond assumptions bear liminal potential for moving beyond them, by the activity of tackling them.

A subject might choose not to climb the threshold and stick to present beliefs. Without the movement, for example the endeavour of a critical examination, or trying out and elaborating possible solutions, a person remains on safe ground. Transformation is an option in situations, but the choice to try out the unpredictable is also unpredictable. In the current moment of a situation the subject chooses, consciously or

\(^{17}\) See Mezirov 1991 for transformation of epistemic, psychological or meaning perspectives.
unconsciously, a direction for her/his actions. His/her first sensation or small hint is present through the process. An inner form of understanding differs from readings when “misunderstandings or “secrets beneath” are revealed. The access to disciplinary knowledge, the depth of understanding or product constructed, bears the full memory of the faint idea, now expanded and transformed.

Transformation of knowledge refers to settings where knowledge claims are articulated. Con- and re-figuration by collaborative activities produces repertoires and new understanding through participation. Negotiating is about sharing and distributing suggestions. Limits of objectives are not found to limit learners when their elaboration pushes them into new directions. Without collaboration and support an atmosphere of trust is not created and a learner learns to avoid the risky adventure of transformation.

A meta-theoretical model
What makes a model meta-theoretical? A rationale with philosophical ground, according to the movement from universal reason on language, is a suggestion concerning a construction and a vocabulary. A topological framework connects three kinds of optic with their underpinning rationalities. Its topography of three topoi provides a lens, which is polycentric, one close and one distant. Figure 1 illustrates the crossing of vertical and horizontal lines opening a third site. Three dimensions of time cross three dimensions of space/context. The subject (figure) at the standstill takes a stand by articulating a position in between options and his/her activated resources. The location when non-synchronic and asymmetric processes meld is designed in a structure where snapshots of transgression are marked. The site is identified as a liminal space, as turning-points require their opposite, an open sphere. The threshold rises in an improvisatory openness. A transformative movement draws on the oscillation between opposites.

In drawing attention to the impact of bodily presence, the inhibitions of action and the simultaneity of orientations, dramaturgical tools are beneficial. Punctuation of connections enables the reader to stop and reflect on the discursive context by distancing the reading act. The narrative mode of reading gives value to subtle threads in a plot, to how the small hints of authentic questions make a difference in changes of understanding.

Syntagmic rationality confronting paradigmatic rationality is expressed in iconic language (Figure 1.) A narrative logic in scenic emplotment is
broken by dialectical movements of vertical impact. The structure of lines oscillates and generates a liminal space. Focusing incidents of alteration, simultaneous orientations of inhibition and action, the clash incarnates layers in non-linear relationship.

My philosophical point is that an approach of two separate departures confronting each other creates a space in between, where transformation takes place. A place of liminality is ambiguous and functions for complex texts as it provokes the reader to consider non-linear relationships. The concreteness and potentiality of a metaphor provides the overall tool for both dramaturgical and narrative reading of cultural text.

The model itself, growing from an idea to an extended figure, functions rhetorically as a synecdoche of the object examined. Openness in content and form structured create a meaningful connection. The ambiguity is central for understanding how the model can be separated from its applications.

Figure 1. Model for reading transformation.
Implications
My first consideration deals with drama as an aesthetic genre. After that I relate to drama as a metaphor for learning and finally regard the creative act of research as transformative learning.

Drama from a perspective of cyclical rationality
The genre of drama pedagogy, being a hybrid genre, comes close to a manifestation of cyclical rationality. The polyphony of situated activity as a praxis has brought forward a vocabulary to reason on that praxis. Between the separate modes of meaning-making - logos and mythos - a practice and vocabulary has shaped a discourse with its own implications, its history and future development.

Art as a breaking of the ordinary perception and making sense in the universe of mythos (Krøgholt 1997) is not reduced to instrumental values by the interaction with the logos of education. Education is not subordinated from its obligations in society. Intervening is not making a mixture where ingredients from one field either belong to one field or to another.

Human multimodality, physical surroundings and settings, are, as discussed above, interdependent. A drama pedagogical statement, that form shapes content and no content exists without form, is meaningful in various contexts.

In drama sessions the participants negotiate meaning (O’Toole 1992). They play with personal and social identities. Activating a world of fiction from a pretext, the participants perform in hybrid spaces with simultaneous activities being reproduced and reinvented. (Twomey et al. 2007) By locating different perspectives, polycentric observation provides tools for exploring multiplicity. In late modernity tools that enable subjects to transform experience to insight, and practice to a meaningful practice are relevant.

The dialectic between learning and knowledge
The implications for education that I will make relate to the learners as agents on the one hand and to the concept of knowledge in the settings on the other. The impact of what counts as knowledge is in my reading of educational events a provoker for the learner to be aware of the potential in the learning process. The discursive agreements function as vehicles for the learner if the setting allows improvisatory movements around
these claims. When potential knowledge is experienced as a dilemma to be solved or a question to investigate, reflective processes are set in motion. Learning as transformation is inter-textual. Dialogic processes connect individuals’ own questioning to others in negotiation on the agreements. Collaborative activities in communities of practice enhance academic freedom and creativity. Both students and teachers in education require space for improvisation in a trustful surrounding (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Silius-Ahonen & Rosengren 2008).

In a socio-cultural light the relationship between “agency” and “structure” is analogous to the relationship between learning and knowledge. The urgency of the challenge intervenes with personal risk-taking, leaving safe ground for transcending into unpredictability. Personal engagement requires an arena where commitment and sharing are developed through participatory activities. Collectiveness as acting in collaboration as a joint responsibility enhances the required trust. Being and doing are seen as consorted modes of dialogue in a broad sense, between people and between people and the world in which we live.

In the reading act on the first platform the question of “how things happen” is emphasized. This departure has an ethical and existential dimension. Considering authenticity and personal commitment as the required energy (pathos) in meaning-making, transformation might appear in the most modest of events, in children’s everyday play, in ordinary classrooms. This notion has a pedagogical relevance for me. Empowerment in education is nurtured by an appreciation of particularity and sensitivity for nuances. Educators who accept the process in knowledge generation, the more intense the better, the longer it takes the more it starts to mean something, are to be supported in an era of effectiveness and measurable results. Learning as risk-taking, a foray into the unknown, is in education an option to be taken seriously with responsibility.

A de-mystification of learning has a practical pedagogical relevance. When transformation in learning is found to be observable and readable, artefacts uncovered and the necessity of personal articulation realized, efforts to develop settings and activities from the perspective of form and content is emphasized. Configuration and re-configuration, however, require scheduling, but also gaps. Exposing students to a creative space to pursue their own forming activities is an act of mediation. To act like the agent in one’s own learning process is a way to orient oneself in that empowering manner. Placing attention to how modes carry different
functions raises questions of what kind of settings would provide participants with trust and challenges to move beyond commodities.

Research as transformation
In a research process perspectives are flexible in the conscious use of shifting back and forth, in time, between characters, activities within and outside a drama. The three perspectives I have described, a phenomenological closeness to the subject considering the unpredictability of narrative creation (1); a critical distance to phenomena for scrutinizing cultural practice and acknowledging societal aspects of context (2); a post-structural appraisal of diversity and polycentric modes of perception (3), have in common the sub-text of meaning-making as transformative movements.

Three kinds of reading mark three shifts of perspective, from a phenomenological to a critical examination, and from their double perspective to the dialectic standstill. Ambiguity has a special quality with both existential and cultural dimensions. It rests on multiple grounds as a new optic opens up unfamiliar scenery.

The personal creation of knowledge is in research, as in education, brought to a scrutinising audience. Learning processes have an impact on the collective knowledge in a discipline, in an organisation, in society by participating in a continuous dialogue. I have argued that research of complex multi-dimensional processes requires non-reductive approaches. Its philosophical ground concerns a critique of linear rationality in reading complex texts, as they do not succeed in gathering data or reading them. In a frame of cyclical reason, continuous and discontinuous, synchronous and non-synchronous aspects are considered both separately and in an abductive swing.

One example of how empirical data transformed my epistemic assumptions was my realizing of the necessity of “no” in transformation and its dialogue from or to a “yes”. Solving a knowledge conflict as taking a personal stand, choosing to believe in a theoretical statement referred to a “yes” with significance. An example of the transformation of meaning perspectives is how the construction of a model of reading empirical material was transformed to an object for a philosophical reasoning on rationalities. The double perspective of “frame” and “framework” points to separate mediums of language. As an iconic statement, the model shaped an open text into form and “languaged” or textualised the dramaturgical incitement in the narrative.
Nicholson (1993) linked drama pedagogy to postmodernism as a challenge to the notion of universal reason. An opening for negotiation does not lead to a relativistic position, as fiction in solutions is found in any cultural text (op.cit.) In research, “claims describe, interpret, deconstruct, critique, predict and explain living experience” (Freeman et al. 2007). These verbs refer to domains of data and understanding data where imagination is required. Aesthetic tools for reasoning on meaning-making within and outside the arts celebrate ambiguity. Simultaneously, their qualities, their sensitivity to values as based on specific language mediums, provide a researcher with demands of taking charge according to their strengths and limitations.

In education, in research and community art, participation in settings that make sense expands human resources. Engaging people in activities where they deal with identity projects and express “what might be” promotes collaboration. This involvement in something “bigger than me”, “important”, even “urgent”, activates meaning-making in one’s life story. Activities to make sense of situational ingredients push towards existential choices. Human meaning-making deals with responsibility in perceiving and making connections between what is and what could be in the light of what has passed.
References


11. Meaningful musical encounters in school music education

Johanna Ray

Abstract
In this article Johanna Ray argues for a more deliberate and systematic approach towards the phenomenon of music experience, for a growing pedagogical awareness among music teachers, and for the development of relevant educational designs for music lessons. Based on her study of strong musical experiences among teenagers, she concludes that through expansion of the educational space into other musical arenas, students are offered encounters with music in specific cultural, authentic and above all non-school settings, which break up everyday school routines. Ray concludes that ultimately it is important regarding any kind of musical encounter, regardless of whether it takes place during school music lessons or outside school, that it is perceived by the person to be genuinely significant.
Introduction
There are moments in life when one experiences something that considerably deviates from the never-ending flow of everyday experiences. Due to their intensity such moments are assigned a special meaning by the person in question and they will be remembered for their impressive impact. A significant experience like this may occur in varied situations, among others in connection with music, and can take on many different forms. A concertgoer might be so touched by the beauty of the music that he does not manage to hold back tears and suddenly even finds it hard to breathe as he sits. A musician might be playing with such intensity that he completely forgets everything else around him and seems to become totally one with the music. A certain piece of music streaming out from an MP3 player might evoke a strong desire to learn to play an instrument oneself. During a performance, a choir member might suddenly experience himself intensely connected to the other choir members, maybe also to the audience in front of him, or even to the whole of mankind. These are just a few examples of what a strong experience related to music can be. In this article, I shall focus on the question of whether music lessons in state schools also permit such important experiences to take place18.

Background
How people experience music is one of the key issues of the academic discipline called music psychology. This issue has been dealt with in numerous ways, highlighting various aspects of human engagement with music. For a long time, studies focusing on isolated aspects like the perception of tones, sound or melodies dominated the field. Consequently, authentic real life experiences related to music, i.e. music experiences outside laboratory-like settings, remained largely unattended by music psychology researchers. This somewhat unsatisfactory state motivated Alf Gabrielsson (1989) to initiate a new research project at Uppsala University in Sweden. The main idea of this project was to ask people to freely describe the strongest experience that they had ever had in connection with music. The aims of this project were twofold: to describe in detail the content of strong music experiences, and to analyze the relation between such experiences and various aspects of the music, the person and the situation in question.

18 This article is based on one that has been previously published in German (Ray, 2008).
Since the late 1980s, when the first descriptions within the project were collected (together with complementary questionnaires), about 950 persons between 13 and 91 years of age have taken part in the study. A comprehensive content analysis of the free descriptions made by Gabrielsson and his fellow researcher has resulted in an extensive descriptive scheme. This scheme clearly illustrates how complex the phenomenon of music experience is and what manifold reactions – from bodily sensations through emotions up to existential aspects – musical engagement may evoke. A closer inspection of the results reveals a striking pattern, however, that puts the field of music education in focus: only a very few of the reported experiences seem to have been related to typical learning contexts like, for example, school music lessons. Rather, participants describe memorable musical engagement at home, during concerts, in church, even in the car. As a matter of fact, the number of school-related reports showed to be less than 2% of the total material.

**Theoretical framework**

In this section I intend to illuminate some (music) educational and (music) psychological themes that are closely connected to my research interest. However, the purpose with this section is not to give a complete outline of the research field but rather to create a broad frame of understanding for the topic of significant experiences as part of the learning process. One of the first academic attempts to address specifically intense experiences was made by Abraham Maslow. In his studies of the most wonderful experience or experiences of your life- the happiest moments, the most ecstatic moments, moments of rapture - Maslow found that listening to classical music was one of the easiest and most common ways to getting a so-called peak experience. Although music seemed to be a major trigger, Maslow did not devote any explicit research interest to music, and he only scarcely touched upon peak experiences related to school in his writings (see Maslow, 1971). As a matter of fact, he seems to hold the view that the occurrence of a peak experience was highly a matter of chance and, consequently, nothing that really could be deliberately activated (for example in school). Overall, Maslow (1976) holds a negative view on the school system. Too big class sizes, strict timetables and specified lesson contents are described as crushing peak experiences and forbidding their possibility. Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow has received a remarkable response within many different fields, also among the field of music education. A flow experience may occur in moments of total concentration while doing something that is neither too difficult nor too easy (i.e. there is a balance between skill and challenge). Some typical features are lost
perception of time and space and complete absorption in the task at hand, followed by feelings of enjoyment, happiness and satisfaction. Because of the close connection between flow experiences and development of intrinsic motivation, there is a high educational value in flow experiences. However, school does not seem to be any ideal place for such experiences either. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefele (1993), this also applies to instrumental lessons, where:

too much emphasis is placed on how they perform, and too little on what they experience.

One critical aspect regarding the possible occurrence of flow experiences within public school is, again, the size of the classes: it easily gets noisy in big groups and individualized learning can hardly take place. Other critical aspects are tied to the dominant external rewarding system (notes/grades?) and restrictions in time, as the given timetable has to be followed. When wanting to encourage the occurrence of flow in school, pupils are typically encouraged to fully devote themselves to some self-chosen activity. The aim is not to foster the state of flow directly, but rather to help individuals identify activities that they enjoy and learn how to invest their attention in these activities (cf. Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). The teachers’ main role in this respect is to help their pupils continuously maintain the balance between skill and challenge.

One (rare) example of a music psychology study that has touched upon experiences related to music in school is a study by Sloboda (1990), focusing on adults’ remembrances of intense musical engagement. The majority of all memories referred to activities outside school, and informal, safe and “unconditional” listening situations, were the most common form of musical engagement mentioned. Memories loaded with negative emotions primarily dealt with active music making that had taken place in a formal teaching situation. Such memories included descriptions of nervousness, embarrassment, shame and criticism. The two examples of a strong experience related to music in school that Sloboda cites are about a 7-year old pupil who was fascinated by the sound of a clarinet during a school concert, and about a 10-year old pupil who was moved by a sad song about loneliness that was sung during a school music lesson. Both experiences are described to have had personal consequences as active music making was initiated as a result of these musical encounters. A possible explanation for the striking under-representation of (positive) memories stemming from formal teaching
situations is offered by Sloboda and O’Neill (2001), who refer to the typical emphasis within such settings on achievement, success and failure, with concomitant threats to self-esteem and self-growth.

A critical attitude towards traditional formal teaching contexts can be anticipated behind these words as well.

On the basis of Gabrielsson’s comprehensive study on strong experiences related to music, where school-related experiences were rarely reported, together with the other research findings and considerations that have been presented in this section, the possible occurrence of significant encounters with music in school will now be further examined through one of my own studies (Ray, 2004).

**Empirical analysis**

Based on my broad ambition to explore what the actual potential is for school music education to serve as an arena for strong experiences related to music, three different perspectives were chosen: (1) pupil perspective, (2) teacher perspective, and (3) curriculum perspective. The study was carried out in different Swedish-speaking regions in Finland and focused on music education for compulsory school pupils aged 13 to 15 years. The empirical material consisted of essays on their own strong experiences of music written by 168 pupils aged 15 years, interview data from 28 music teachers, and both local and national music curriculum texts. In order to illustrate what a strong experience related to music may mean to a 15 year old Finland-Swede, four exemplary texts will follow.

**Example 1**

Some weeks ago I attended a concert where I was also going to perform myself. There were quite a lot of people and most of them were also about to perform something themselves. First to perform were those who had not been taking lessons for that long, i.e. not until the latter part of the concert could one start to enjoy the music a bit more. The very last one to perform was my piano teacher; however, as a singer this time. I had not heard her singing before; it was an absolute surprise to me. Never had I thought that she could sing that well! It was completely silent in the concert hall and one kept on asking how it could be possible that such a tiny little woman could sing that loud. The song was in a foreign language, so I was not able to understand the words – you only heard the tones, sometimes higher, sometimes lower. I wished that she would never stop singing. Afterwards the song kept on playing in my head, and in that moment I would have done anything to be able to sing as well as she.
This text was written by a boy who is also engaging actively in music in his leisure time. Although the experience stems from a happening where he had been performing himself, it was not his own contribution, but that of another musician, that had made a remarkable impact on him. The experience is characterised through apparent changes in cognition and clear references to his own (developing) musical expertise.

Example 2

I had this experience around 1 pm on a Friday in the hall in my school, where pupils taking extra courses in music were performing. First they were only playing stupid music like classical music and so on, but then it got a little bit better, James Bond and the like. Actually, I had been planning to skip the concert as they are usually pretty boring – as most of the time this was as well. Someone screwed it up completely and we were laughing at the performance. In that moment I really regretted that I had not skipped the concert – but then suddenly a girl who was imitating Tina Turner started. The performance was OK, but the music – it was powerful! I sensed a wave that started in my feet and moved up, somehow with an unexplainable warmth. My pulse rose. I was paralyzed and stared ahead, listened, focussed on the sound. It was a splendid feeling, wonderful! Then some other crap started, I don’t know exactly what it was. But even 15 minutes later my pulse was higher and I had got an unbelievable kick. Probably similar to drug use, I guess – but I don’t know.

This text is one out of a total of 14 essays that described musical engagement related to school. A boy who defiantly demonstrated his lack of interest in attending a school concert wrote the example. However, totally unexpectedly something happened that came to completely change that attitude. This change manifested itself in a certain behaviour pattern, completely opposed to the previous one. For a moment, music held the pupil’s whole attention, and it caused physiological sensations and a state of emotional well-being. The experience came out of the blue, and it made a very strong impact.
Example 3
I play the guitar in a band with a couple of boys, and we had a concert. The first song went very badly, but bit-by-bit it started to go better. The second part of the concert went very well. I have never before enjoyed playing that much. My head was totally empty, I didn’t think of anything at all. My fingers flew over the fingerboard like never before. Unfortunately, our time was limited and I was extremely disappointed when we had to stop. It is such fun to play guitar when we play well together. It was as if you had entered another world, and my head was completely empty.

This narrative description illustrates a situation of active music playing, where the balance between the challenges and existing musical skills seems to have been optimal. After a somewhat unhappy beginning of the performance, a change in consciousness took place in a way that indicates the occurrence of a flow experience.

Example 4
Two weeks ago my friend and I heard a song that had exactly the right tempo and melody. Unfortunately, there were some things that weren’t that good, but these we wanted to change! We went to my place and transferred the song into my computer. Then we cut a little and changed those parts that we did not like. After that we recorded the new final product. We were both extremely pleased and could hardly believe what we had done. I can’t describe my thoughts and emotions. And I am still not completely over it!

The starting point for the creative work described in this example was a song that did not fully convince the pupils. Conscious aesthetic work with the song resulted in a product that bears the marks of the pupils themselves. The intense sense of satisfaction may be linked to the perfect end product as well as to the aesthetic-productive work process that the boys went through. Next, I will exclusively focus on the teacher perspective.
Music teachers’ views on the possible occurrence of strong experiences with music in school

Through a comprehensive analysis of 28 music teachers reflecting on their teaching in general and strong experiences related to music as a potential feature of music education in particular, a deepened understanding of school as a so-called experience arena was aimed for. The interviews were carried out following a qualitative approach and had the character of an open discussion. By using a phenomenological-hermeneutic inspired analysis method, a number of aspects were identified that shed light on certain favourable or restricting conditions for strong experiences of music to take place during music lessons. The following presentation uses an illustrative technique, putting the teachers’ voices in the foreground through direct quotation. By use of a continuous contrast and combination of the “bricks” delivered by the teachers with theoretical consideration and empirical comparison, the premises for school as a place where strong experiences of music may take place are further elaborated.

The classroom as a social arena

Music lessons in school are characteristically carried out in group settings. This means that musical encounters during lessons never occur in private. School may in other words be understood as a public room where pupils and teachers exist in a field of “social staging” (cf. Ziehe, 1993). During my interviews with the teachers it became very evident that everything going on in school is closely linked to something that might be called “social play” in classrooms. How pupils act and what they do or say in a typical classroom situation is determined by a latent, but very effective, “control station”. It is like a hidden classroom conductor, who stipulates what belongs to the repertoire of suitable behaviour and what does not (cf. Hundeide, 2003). The results of my study point to the fact that this regulating system may exert a strong influence on pupils’ willingness to express and share something as personal as an intense experience with music, or rather an unwillingness to do so in a social arena like the classroom. Two illustrative quotes follow:

When we talk about this age group I do think that a lot of them have strong experiences related to music at home. However, in a classroom there are so many other things that influence them, like for example all these roles and so on.
I think that there are always people in a group who you don’t trust, and in front of whom you don’t want to unmask yourself. I think that pupils are not willing to do that. (...) But I am sure there are a lot of strong experiences out there. At the same time, however, I think they are practising a certain control over themselves in the classroom.

The unwillingness to express and articulate intense experiences that many teachers referred to when talking about their pupils indicates what tremendous power various group dynamic factors in a classroom full of teenagers may exercise. It is stated that pupils are extremely aware of how they present themselves and, so to say, how to play their roles in the social arena. An apparently sophisticated self-control, including the repressing of non-accepted behaviour, seems to characterise the typical 15-year-old pupil. Compared to both younger and older pupils this age group do not express their inner feelings during lessons, or at least very rarely, according to my informants.

The dramaturgical model developed by Erving Goffman (1959) describing people’s self-presentation in public, is a useful instrument in order to better understand the dynamics in the classroom. Goffman shows that one’s behaviour is strongly influenced by the presence of other people, and that actions are closely linked to whether somebody is watching or not. When on stage, to use one of Goffman’s concepts, pupils are very aware of their appearance. The audience (i.e. their classmates and teacher) has great impact on what is expressed or not expressed. Things that are not “allowed” in public, like for example strong reactions, are rather expressed backstage, i.e. in private or personal settings.

According to the teachers, pupils normally put great effort in trying to avoid differing from the norm, i.e. to risk being perceived as different in any way by their classmates. A highly effective repression of reactions is assumed to be quite common among teenage pupils. It appears like a collision between the outer and inner world that more or less unintentionally leads to role-conformed behaviour. An atmosphere of collective reservation spreads (cf. Ziehe, 1993). From this point of view, strong experiences related to music may very well exist in school settings, and their assumed absence would rather be a consequence of the fact that teenage pupils have effectively learned how to behave on stage in order not to “break the rules”. This phenomenon is touched upon in the two following quotes:
It is also very difficult to see, from outside, since it is not apparent. Teenagers, maybe adults as well, are world champions when it comes to putting on a poker face. So as a teacher you can never really know what actually goes on behind their masks.

Strong experiences of music do exist in school, but we have to deal with something very personal here. The question is if a pupil really has the guts to show what he or she experiences or feels. Or does he keep it for himself? (...) I suspect that persons of this age do not necessarily show everything.

Crucial for the willingness to take off one’s poker face is a feeling of safety and security. Accordingly, the chances that pupils who feel (psychologically) unsafe would express a strong experience related to music in the classroom are rather small. Here we are dealing with a need that may be considered to be absolutely basic for human existence (cf. Maslow, 1968), but social settings like classrooms are apparently not always successful in meeting this.

The importance of interpersonal trust and group atmosphere is backed up by teacher reflections indicating qualitative differences when working with smaller groups than the normal, full-size class. For example, one teacher recalls an intense listening sequence including a very personal discussion about a song text during a music lesson with only a few pupils present (most of the pupils in this class were taking part in a school-related sports happening). Favourable factors seem to have been a combination of the small group size, the fact that the pupils present knew each other well, and the fact that the lesson took place at the very end of the semester (i.e. without any progression pressure or upcoming tests). The lesson took on an informal learning atmosphere, possibly encouraging the pupils also to articulate their experiences of the music in question.

Another interesting aspect is the stated discrepancy between boys and girls when it comes to the expression of emotions. According to a common discourse, it generally does seem more or less acceptable for girls to have tears in their eyes while listening to a moving piece of music, for example, whereas boys are linked with a tougher image. In other words, my informants indicate that the expression of emotional experiences during music lessons would be more natural for girls.
Signs of musical impact
Since teenage pupils make great efforts to control themselves during lessons, as described in the previous paragraph, music teachers might find it very hard to tell if a particular musical activity has had any specific impact on their pupils. However, there seem to be a set of meaningful signs that serve as a kind of musical encounter index. These signs provide teachers with information; they form the base for hypotheses, or predictions, concerning their pupils’ music experiences, that might be of a certain educational value.

A large group of signs consist of immediate, visible expressions. For example, the informants talk about their ability “to see” or “to perceive” that pupils were moved by music. On the one hand, there are relatively obvious signs like tears in the eyes, red cheeks or physical motion. Physical manifestations like loud laughter or spontaneous applause serve as other concrete signs. On the other hand, there are signs that do not necessarily seem that clear-cut to outsiders: teachers talk about pupils who blossom out, pupils singing with their whole heart and blissful pupils hovering on air – they even seem to notice pupils’ hair standing up. To sum up: external changes in expression, gesture and body language, as well as various distinctive movement features while engaging with music, correspond with authentic experience. In this way, a greater depth of experience is assumed (cf. Custodero, 2002). This kind of interpretation, however, implies a strong ability to empathise with people. Attentive observation is regarded as a reliable method, and by some teachers – as in the following quote – even as the only available method:

Interviewer: You said several times that you see their eyes glitter.
Teacher: Yes, that is what I get back. It doesn’t happen verbally, no, and I don’t even expect it to – ‘Thanks’ and so on. (...) You have to be attentive and keep your eyes open and just observe how they react and behave.

This statement can be seen as an echo of Custodero’s (2002) argumentation, according to which it is important for teachers to develop an ability to “read” and understand their pupils. However, it is a fact that observations provide second-hand information only, i.e. the interpretation can be more or less correct. Nevertheless, the teachers in my study regard their observations, and the interpretations following these observations, as fairly reliable evidence.
here. The claimed accuracy is linked to the spontaneity with which the signs are (unconsciously) produced.

Direct requests for repeated musical engagement, for example in terms of singing the same song once again, or a demand to borrow notes, also point towards the possibility of a deeper experience:

Take such an easy riff like Smoke on the Water on one string – I noticed that it gave the pupils something. (...) They were fascinated, they were absorbed by it. After they had learned the riff they didn’t want to stop [playing it].

Complete silence and/or motionlessness is another example of a striking change in pupil behaviour. As the noise and activity level during music lessons is normally described as rather high, this contrasting pattern serves as an indicator that something happened during listening. I quote two of the teachers who participated in my study:

It is completely silent in the classroom. There are also few comments afterwards, which means that it did make an impact.

Teenagers are often a bit restless and have problems concentrating. But when they find this contact with themselves and with the music they become calm and seem to be one with the situation.

If possible the teachers try to complete the picture with verbal information. However, this “channel” is limited as pupils are not always willing to share their emotions orally in public. The next section is devoted to the verbalization of experiences.

**Verbalization of experience**

One of the seven categories in the comprehensive scheme that Gabrielsson has developed on the basis of content analysis of people’s stories about strong experiences of music deals with how challenging it can be to try to put an overwhelming experience into words. This was also something that the music teachers themselves spontaneously commented on during the interviews while telling me about their own music experiences (“It was *such* an experience that it is impossible to describe.”). The pupils in their essays expressed similar difficulties with strong experiences related to music (“It is almost impossible to describe how I felt.”). Several teachers also touched upon problems related to the
verbalization of experiences in their reflections on public school as a possible arena for strong experiences related to music.

Problems with getting pupils to verbalize their experience during music lessons were explained as a consequence of their being (a) unable, (b) unwilling or (c) untrained to do so. The first aspect, inability, refers both to the above-mentioned problems to find suitable words for what one has experienced and to the linguistic-mental development stage of pupils of this age. The latter implies that their verbal descriptions would be too inarticulate. The second aspect, unwillingness to talk about their experiences, is closely related to the personal character of the subject. Some of the teachers thought that a strong experience one has had would hardly do as a topic to be discussed in public. They predicted a demonstrative silence or persistent and rapid change of conversation topic. One of the teachers mentions that she had already faced such a situation in her teaching: “When the limit was hit, they just shut off! If I had asked anything more, then ... (laughs and takes on a scared look)”.

In other words, her pupils decided themselves how much they were willing to share with her, and apparently they did not want to give her too deep an insight into their inner personal world (cf. Ziehe, 1993). The following quote (from another teacher) illustrates the importance of tactfulness:

I rarely turn directly to a pupil in the way that ‘I see that you are crying’, I don’t dare do that with this age group. (...) Instead, I often use neutral words like ‘one’ and ‘some’, and then someone in the class has indeed started to tell about something more personal.

Hence, under certain circumstances pupils seem to be willing to share something as personal as a strong experience that they have had in connection with music. Commonly, teachers with this kind of experience told about the so-called snowball effect, i.e. once somebody started to tell, other pupils followed and joined in. Still, there seems to be a common opinion that written information is even more authentic and reliable than verbal telling. In addition, pupils are described to be more willing to share their experiences if asked to write them down instead. This assumption correlates with the pattern that Finnäs (1989) found in his study on musical preferences among adolescents.

Finally, the third aspect – that pupils are not trained to verbalize their experiences – implicates that the ability to thematize subjective experiences is improvable. However, my analysis has revealed that the
teachers did not always distinctly separate between one’s own reactions caused by musical engagement and what one thinks that the music expresses. For example, a listener might very well experience that a piece of music expresses great sadness without experiencing sadness himself (cf. Gembris, 1982). This discrepancy was not always clear to the teachers when they were talking on strong experiences of music. It seems to be regarded as much easier to cover “content-issues, i.e. what the music is experienced to be about, than to thematize the pupils’ own reactions during music lessons. That is probably also why most of the teachers were acquainted with the former type of experience and sometimes even surprised by the latter.

Under certain conditions, teachers may prefer not to say anything or not to ask their pupils to verbalize their experiences. For example, one of the teachers pointed out that there are situations when everybody senses something extraordinary just happened. Every attempt to put something like that into words would be needless and uncalled-for, according to the teacher. My material also includes anecdotes concerning situations where the pupils’ reactions made teachers decide not to initiate an originally planned discussion after a listening sequence – this in order not to destroy their experiences.

**Music experience as a pedagogical topic**

All 28 music teachers were invited to dwell on possible strategies for enhancing the occurrence of strong experiences related to music in school. Generally speaking all teachers took a positive view of the school’s potential to serve as an “arena” for memorable musical encounters – at least to some degree. However, it was very striking that some teachers seemed very surprised and even a little confused to think in these terms. It became evident, as the following quote illustrates, that this specific subject matter had never been touched upon before (for example, as part of the music teacher training programme):

> I have never looked at it from this perspective before, but rather - more or less – assumed that music always evokes some kinds of feelings. This was a new thought for me! I would have to think about it first... how I could possible encourage strong experiences. I really have to do some thinking on that one!

Despite specific pedagogical intentions, every kind of musical engagement in school is always linked with a possibility of unforeseen reactions. One the one hand, music is undoubtedly a very delicate
phenomenon, because the same music might, according to Sloboda (2001), reinforce one person’s psychological agenda and simultaneously threaten another’s. For example, due to some past sad happening a certain piece of music may be perceived as very loaded (emotionally) by one pupil, whereas another pupil in the same class does not seem to connect with the music at all. Or, perhaps there is a classmate hearing the music for the very first time, who is completely taken by surprise by the beautiful melody and suddenly experiences various quasi-physical reactions he has never had before (feeling like floating on air, or the like). What the outcome of a musical encounter eventually will be, one can never say for sure, i.e. there is no definite causal relationship. On the other hand, due to the very impact music has, a teaching session may out of the blue take a completely new direction, as the following quote shows:

“Sometimes you don’t even know yourself how and why something happens. Suddenly there is this unbelievably nice atmosphere, for example. Or somebody suddenly starts to cry. You can’t predict those things.”

Nevertheless, all 28 teachers were of the opinion that the occurrence of strong experiences related to music in school is not a matter of chance alone. The next section deals with various pedagogical strategies that the teachers in my study have defined as useful when wishing to promote significant experiences with music in school.

**Outline of educational design**
The in-depth study of different forms of music experience carried out by Gabrielsson has shown that basically every musical activity has an imminent experience potential. Based on my interview study, the didactic repertoire of more or less concrete strategies to be employed in order to promote strong experiences related to music in school is, accordingly, extensive.

The choice of music seems to be a powerful means for provoking pupils’ reactions. Some of the teachers devoted a lot of time to reflecting on the pros and cons of different music styles, but finally picked one particular style as the most adequate for a music lesson aiming at promoting strong experiences. Others seemed to hold a rather simplified view that implied that music basically evokes feelings analogically to its emotional content. According to this, a happy summer song was said to potentially evoke strong feelings of happiness in pupils, whereas sad psalms and a sad
mood were linked together. However, such a view appears rather problematic (cf. Gembris, 1982), as music may very well give rise to diametrically different feelings in the listener than the feelings music is (perceived to be) expressing.

The intense discussion on what type of music may be the “right” one implies that there is actually a particular kind of music that is better suited as a means to possibly enable pupils to experience music more intensely. The following answer to my question as to whether long listening sequences are part of his teaching (which he had previously mentioned as a good way of connecting to the music), clearly shows how difficult it is to pick music that everybody can relate to:

I have come to the conclusion that they would not manage to sit and listen to music all lesson. But on the other hand, if one finds something that really fascinates them, why not? But then we have 16-17 different individuals sitting there, who react differently to music anyway. This makes it pretty difficult to find something that everybody can connect to.

When choosing music, pupils’ preconceptions should be taken into consideration, i.e. in accordance with their (presumed) ability to relate to the music. With reference to flow theory, it appears important to use music with a so-called challenge level that does not exceed the existing skill level of the pupils. In other words, a certain degree of familiarity with and preference for the music in question is preconditioned. Interestingly, there seems to be a certain selection of music that is commonly said to strongly attract teenage pupils. For example, Tears in heaven by Eric Clapton has been mentioned as a song that deeply affects even the toughest guys because of its existential content. Intentional work with the lyrics is therefore another possibility to favour significant experiences with music. However, there are teachers who would prefer to choose music that does not match the existing skill of the pupils, for example very modern music or music that is extremely loaded in some sense (Threnody for the victims of Hiroshima by Penderecki, and the like). Following this strategy, the teachers are directly provoking the reactions of their pupils. By doing so, though, it cannot be ruled out that they will respond with strong negative reactions.

Earlier research, for example by Sloboda and O’Neill (2001), shows a correlation between the degree of one’s own influence over what music is played and the intensity of the following music experience. Listeners’
reactions became more distinct when their degree of influence increased. In line with this, letting pupils decide on the repertoire can also influence the potential occurrence of strong experiences with music. The arrangement of a so-called wish concert where pupils can select the music themselves is an example of such an approach. It was stressed how important it would be to meet the explicit requests of the pupils. If the ambition is to foster strong experiences related to music, it is vital for teachers to identify and allow such situations. However, the limited time available in school is said to sometimes force teachers to interrupt activities that might have resulted in a significant experience, in order to cover topics that are stipulated in curricula texts.

When reflecting on music listening as a beneficial way of promoting strong experiences, teachers took a critical view of the classroom as “concert hall”. Concrete suggestions for improvement included changing the typical classroom seating arrangement, regulating lighting conditions, or telling pupils to close their eyes while listening. One teacher reported that he had once lit candles in order to create the wanted atmosphere in the classroom, and on that particular occasion he had noticed strong reactions among some of his pupils while listening:

Eventually, it is all about trying to create a situation where pupils and music can meet without anything disturbing them. The very fact that there is a group of teenagers sitting in the same room and trying to listen to a piece of music has to be reduced as much as possible.

On the basis of my study, it cannot clearly be determined if background information prior to listening is preferable or not, i.e. if it has a distinct impact on the experience of the music or not. It is noteworthy that many teachers said they would not use specific listening tasks if they specifically wanted to try to promote a strong music experience. On the one hand, listening to music without an explicit cognitive challenge is described as an “experience-inviting” way of engaging with music. On the other hand, this kind of musical activity apparently is not self-evident in formal teaching situations. One of the teachers admitted that she actually finds relaxed listening purposeful, but still feels bad when she allows her pupils to listen to music without any specific task: “It is like I do not teach”, she said, “I don’t do anything!”.

Comments from her pupils, however, clearly show that this particular way of dealing with music does influence the relationship with music in a positive way. Reasoning like this points to the fact that teachers who are not capable of didactical reflection or flexible in their pedagogical practice may even
themselves act as a prohibiting factor to strong experiences occurring during music lessons in school. As the following quote suggests, there might be crucial differences in teacher attitude:

I know some music teachers who don’t want to go that deep. (...) It is a certain type of teacher, who is open and willing, but not everyone by far. There is also a very concrete type of teacher, who plays well and so on, but who is reluctant to go deeper. (...) You know, it is easier to work on the surface (...) and to achieve a lot that way, but that is only superficial.

Depending on teaching style and competence, the ability of teachers to enable the occurrence of significant encounters with music in formal educational settings may strongly vary (cf. Nielsen, 1998). Teachers may feel insecure about (psychological) processes, which they are possibly unable to deal with in school. However, this retentiveness does not necessarily rule out the occurrence of so-called punctual deepening (Ziehe, 1993). Ziehe does not deny that aesthetic experiences may occur in school; one just has to distinguish between experiences that are steered by moral-therapeutic motives and ones steered by aesthetic motives.

According to Sloboda (2001), school music teaching should preferably not only take place in the classroom. Preferably, other settings like school assembly hall, public concert halls, opera houses or churches should be taken into consideration as alternative “experience arenas”. For those teachers in my study who questioned the actual suitability of a classroom environment to act as an arena for strong experiences with music, the idea of an expanded teaching setting appeared inevitable.

Active public performance was described as an activity with great potential to promote strong experiences. This may, for example, take the form of a concert where the whole class performs in front of other pupils and teachers, or by letting pupils play for pedestrians walking by on the street, as one teacher in fact reported as a very significant experience that his pupils once had had. The impact was obvious, according to the teacher:

It gives them a kick. It goes directly into their blood (laughs). You want to experience it again.

However, because of limited resources it is not always possible to offer pupils the opportunities needed to engage in music in a promototional
environment outside the typical classroom setting. This is something that many teachers regret. Also, pupils should be given enough time to practice before a public performance takes place, which may sometimes be difficult from a practical point of view. As the following quote illustrates, the consequences may be very painful for the pupils if they fail to deliver a good performance:

When they are really engaged in something, then it is pure experience. They really experience! But if something goes wrong, it can indeed be something that traumatic that they go home and cry.

Live music appears to be an exceptional source for promoting significant experiences with music. To attend a public concert with a whole class can be problematic, though. There might be economical restraints making such an experience difficult to carry out, or there no concerts taking place in the region. Still, one should not forget that also smaller scale concerts like school concerts can be very impressive, as shown in one of the texts written by a pupil in my study. Even concert-like performances by the music teacher during a normal music lesson have reportedly been experienced as something outstanding, as some teachers reported. Here, we are dealing with an intimate form of “meeting” music that is not that common anymore in our society (cf. Sloboda & O’Neill, 2001). One teacher told about the surprising silence that spread in the classroom when she picked up her instrument and started to play, and the enthusiastic pleas to play more after she had stopped. Another teacher, who had also been performing in front of his class, had never forgotten the reaction of one of his pupils: while playing, he noticed that tears started to roll down on a girl’s cheeks and he could see her shiver. On her way out, after the lesson was finished, she turned to him and said:

That was the most beautiful thing I have ever heard in my whole life.
Concluding discussion
The aim of this article was to examine the phenomenon of strong experiences with music and to thematize the possible occurrence of such experiences in public school. It was shown by several individual cases what a strong music experience may mean from a pupil perspective, and further, under what conditions this may possibly occur during music lessons in school, according to music teachers. With illustrative examples it was shown that a formal music education situation has indeed the potential to stimulate the occurrence of strong experiences in connection with music. However, music experience depends on a complex interplay between various factors related to the music, the person and the situation in question, and therefore represents a particular pedagogical challenge.

From a didactic point of view, we are dealing with a rather nebulous task as the promotion of strong music experiences is not directly tied to an isolated skill. Instead, the focus can be said to be on personally meaningful musical encounter. Further, it is impossible to know for sure what reactions musical engagement may provoke in each single individual. Strong experiences related to music are by nature linked to uncertainty; the things happening may develop their own dynamic that is difficult to manage: teachers risk a loss of control, and it can all end up in chaos. Good subject knowledge in music as well as in didactics appear to be essential requirements in order to be able to successfully deal with strong experiences in school.

From the pupils’ point of view, a feeling of safety with regard to both social context and intra-individual aspects is crucial when it comes to the expression of strong experiences in a classroom setting. A fundamental pedagogical task is therefore to try to establish a conducive atmosphere. The importance of this condition for the outcome of musical engagement in school cannot be stressed enough. Further studies are needed to more specifically define what teaching methods and organizing forms are preferable when wanting to make school a better arena for strong experiences related to music. Here, particular interest should be placed on possible discrepancies between sexes regarding, for example, the phenomenon of self-presentation.

Through expansion of the educational space into other musical arenas, pupils are offered encounters with music in specific cultural, authentic and, above all, non-school settings, which vary everyday school routines. The assumption is that such activities have particular potential to promote strong experiences. Music is performed live and there are
numerous visual and social elements that might contribute to the quality of the listening experience. To let pupils perform in front of audience also appears to be of specific value: remarkable audience responses and/or perception of their own musical competence might be very shaping experiences. Ultimately, it is a question of any kind of musical encounter, no matter if it takes place during school music lessons or outside school, that is perceived by the person to be genuinely significant.

A meaningful music education, I would argue, is equivalent to a situation where the pupils are activated, where development takes place, and where opportunities to meet music both receptively and productively are given. Contrary to musical activities carried out without any engagement, i.e. half-hearted or non-committed and based on isolated and strictly cognitive reactions, strong experiences related to music possess a distinct motivational feature. Perhaps the well-known difference between music in school and music during leisure time can be better understood through the concept of meaningful music encounters. In this light, strong experiences of music play an important function, and it would be of the greatest importance to support teaching approaches aiming at putting people’s experiences first.

In order to avoid dismissing the possible occurrence of strong experiences in connection with music in school as a matter of chance, I advocate a more deliberate and systematic approach towards the phenomenon of music experience, and for a growing pedagogical awareness among music teachers and the development of relevant didactical tools. Student teachers of music should be encouraged to address pupils’ experiences in their teaching. Finally, it is my hope that this paper can inspire further research on strong experiences in connection with music among adolescents and more specifically on the role of such experiences in the music learning process.
References


12. Community theatre as communal work

John Somers

Abstract
The purpose of John Somers’ article is to highlight the importance of community theatre as shared community. His description demonstrates how theatre was used in disparate contexts to bring people together to explore and sometimes celebrate aspects of a shared community. The performances in case studies 1 and 3 grew from written stories, which became performances through a devising process. Both dealt with the past and ways of revealing the community stories and the wisdom embedded in them. The play in case study 2 was written by Somers following extensive research. Each case study represents “theatre making as communal work”, strengthening the social bonding between potentially isolated sectors of a community. They are in this article presented as examples of theatre-making which is founded on attempts to balance social efficacy and aesthetic quality. They are each rooted in narratives which give shared meaning about what it is to live in a specific place.¹

¹ This article is based on another published in: Drama stosowana jako narzędzie społecznej interwencji (2007) Warsaw: Stop Klatka.
Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and over-lapping communities to which we all belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy and resources to shared projects.

(Etzioni 1997)

What is community theatre?
Community theatre has different roots and functions related to its cultural, social and political setting and its purpose in those specific environments. In some cases it may be that community rituals and stories, often deeply embedded in cultural traditions, are performed as an integral part of defining and celebrating a community’s cultural and spiritual identity. Some of the latter date back for many centuries but continue to be performed in spite of the fact that the factors dealt with within the drama have become objects of heritage rather than contemporary life. Other forms of community theatre have political intent, to inform and energise a community in bringing change or in asserting human rights. Theatre for Development in Africa (cf. Salhi & Wa Thiong’o, 1998) or Purna Chandra Rao’s work in Hyderabad, India supporting peasants’ land rights against rapacious landowners it can also be dangerous. Rao’s fellow-countryman, theatre activist Safdar Hashmi, was beaten to death while performing a street play Halla Bol during municipal elections in the Jhandapur Sahibabad area on January 1, 1989.

Alternatively, the exciting work of “Z Divadlo” in the small town of Zeleneč, Slovakia, combines amateur community actors with the expertise of a professional director, Jozef Bednárik to perform original work. In Brazil, the work of Marcia Pompéo Nogueira and Beatrice Cabral (cf. Balfour & Somers, 2006) resonates in communities, some of which are in danger of losing their cultural identity through the arrival of electricity and television. The continuum stretches, therefore, from radical activist theatre to benign celebration. What it excludes is most of the middle-of-the-road amateur dramatics commonly referred to as “community theatre” in the USA.

2 For example, the York Mystery Cycle which originated in the 10th Century or the Oberammeagau Passion Play first performed in 1633.

3 Personal conversation with Swati Pal, University of Delhi, April 2008.
Radical theatre for change has an extensive history in the UK. Given that most authoritarian governments are of the political extreme right, many such theatre initiatives are situated in confirmed socialist ideology (cf. McDonnell 2006). John McGrath’s work with 7:84 Theatre Company in Scotland (7% of the world’s population own 84% of the wealth) is typified by the play “The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil” which toured to rural locations in Scotland broadcasting its protest against the exploitation of that country (especially its off-shore oil) by the English (cf. McGrath, 1981). Such direct political theatre diminished in the UK with the demise of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government of the 1980s, after which radical community theatre seemed to lose its wellspring.

Whatever the source and form of community theatre, it is generally welcomed as a positive sign that a community is prepared to supplement the generally passive reception of stories available in multitude from the print and broadcast media with narratives which are made and performed within, by and to a specific community. In all cases, these forms of community theatre take account of the particular histories and concerns of the communities in which it is made and performed.

In the UK, “community theatre” now generally refers to a particular theatre form. Since Ann Jellicoe’s theatre work in the 1970s, which led to the formation of the Colway Theatre Trust in 1979, it has meant the creation of a theatre event that has relevance for the particular community in which it is created and which is performed, predominantly, by members of that community (Jellicoe, 1987). One objective is to extend participation beyond those who would normally be expected to take part in performance events. There is also an element of celebration of what it is to be part of a community. As such it can be seen to differ substantially from the USA definition of community theatre, which can be characterised as the creation of performances, often of well-known plays, by a group of amateur enthusiasts, usually in a traditional style and theatre building. In the UK, this form of theatre is known as “Amateur Theatre” or “Amateur Drama” and it is not what is being discussed here – except that a few amateur theatre companies do have relatively radical policies in originating and staging theatre.

In the Colway Theatre Trust model, a professional writer and selected members of the community are involved in collecting stories from the community and sifting them for narrative and dramatic potential. A
written dramatic text is produced as a starting point for community workshops that give rise to further modifications of the text. A professional director, aided by community members and a professional designer, then transforms the written text into performance. These performances are often ambitious in the numbers of people involved (up to one hundred and fifty), style of performance (many are promenade style in which the audience walks in the performance space and the performance happens amongst them) and performance venue (large, often “non-theatrical” spaces). Almost always, they involve the performance of seminal stories of a community’s past and are aimed at bringing increasingly fragmented populations together to discover and articulate important events which define the community, this giving those who are relative newcomers an insight into the essential character of the place in which they have chosen to live.

The changing nature of communities

In the space of sixty years, the fabric of rural English communities has changed radically. These shifts have occurred due to a number of influences, among them the changed nature of farming leading to fewer people being employed in agriculture; the migration of the working classes to urban environments; ease of transport from rural to urban areas, the move to the countryside by the middle classes; the decline of many of the rituals of country living which only made sense in a community of shared experience and interdependence; the impact of global cultural values; the impact of television, consumerism and the new technologies; and the growth of excessive individualism (Etzioni op cit). Some of these influences have had positive effects – young people’s increased awareness of wider educational and occupational opportunities and life styles, for example, and the freeing up of restrictive social conventions, which made rural communities uncomfortable for some who failed to “conform”. Conversely, the decline of shared work, interdependency and significant celebrations and rituals have led to the social fragmentation of rural communities. There are many fewer opportunities for community members to meet and engage with each other. Physical proximity is not enough; people living in the same place geographically will not necessarily create the circumstances, which can produce a “community”.

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4 David Orr, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation said in a press release: “Unless we act now, we will create a rural theme park, where only the very wealthy can live.”
A recent UK report shows that the economic and social background of rural dwellers disadvantages them in comparison with urban dwellers. For example, in rural areas, wages are 5% below the national average whilst house prices are 16% higher. The resulting disadvantage is particularly acute in the less prosperous, indigenous, working class members of the community who tend to move to urban areas where wages are higher and social; housing more plentiful (The State of the Countryside, p. 35). The work described later in this article was undertaken in South West England, and the report says:

Outside some parts of London the most unaffordable areas are nearly all rural, with the South West showing as the ‘worst’ area for affordability. There is a consistent pattern .... that areas with poor affordability also tend to have higher levels of inward migration and high levels of homes that are sold for cash (Ibid, p. 37).

Thus inward migration of a middle-class nature is occurring in my locality whilst the less well off disappear to the towns. Those of the less well off who remain are subject to a range of disadvantages:

Disadvantage is likely to be multi-dimensional: not just about financial resources, but also about a range of factors that prevent a person from participating fully in society.

The loss of shared story
One significant loss in current rural communities is the knowledge of community stories. This shared understanding can be as slight as knowing why an oak tree has a large gash on its trunk (a lorry crashed into it in 1953 and Farmer Dickson pulled it out of the ditch with his tractor – and the towing chain broke ......) or extend to intimate knowledge of families, who lived where, scandals, achievements and shame.\(^5\) Residents without access to these, often apparently inconsequential stories therefore lack a “sense of place”, a quality which is best achieved through absorbing the layered meanings accreted through centuries of, often oral, storytelling and shared experience.

\(^{5}\) Just recently, a man in my parish in Devon, knowing that I was directing a new community play which focuses on the crash of a German bomber in 1941, urged me to look in a field outside the village which still bore the groove of a roadway used to move Spitfire fighter planes which were brought out of Exeter Airfield to protect them from attack during WW2.
Such stories have no forum for being shared unless, as Etzioni says, members of a community “dedicate some of their attention, energy and resources to shared projects.” In writing about memory, AC Grayling (2001) says:

...what makes a person the same person through life is the accumulating set of memories he carries with him. When these are lost, he ceases to be that person and becomes someone else, new and as yet unformed.

If we substitute “community” for “person”, the statement still holds true, for if a community’s collective memory is lost, it too has to be reformed. Theatre can be an important approach in building this new community identity and can, through its research and performances, ensure its development is based firmly on elements of the past. Such theatre represents a dynamic exploration and presentation of the defining narratives of a community.

There is evidence that communal activity is decreasing whilst isolated, individual action increases. This is borne out by Robert Putnam’s analysis of the changes in community in the USA:

... the forms of participation that have withered most noticeably reflect organised activities at the community level .... Conversely, the activities ... that have declined most slowly are, for the most part, actions that one can undertake as an individual .... In other words, the more that my activities depend on the actions of others, the greater the drop-off in my participation (p44 - 45).
The concept of theatre as communal work
As previously mentioned, sixty years’ ago, rural English communities were relatively closed and interdependent. At this time, the parish was a site for work. Perhaps 90% of people worked in the community, with only the small number of professionals venturing outside it. Currently, in Payhembury Parish where I live in England, it is probable that 90% of the population of 470 work outside the Parish which is seen simply as a place to “live”. Clubs, societies and more informal meeting points in the Parish are largely stratified by age criteria: the young mothers meet at the toddlers group, slightly older ones at the pre-school, older ones still outside the primary school. Between the ages of 11 and 18, students leave the village to attend school in a town and, together with their parents, they may have no visibility on the community. Older community members meet at the “lunch club”, principally seen as a once-a-month social activity for widows and widowers. The short mat bowls club attracts the over 55s and the youth club caters for teenagers. I estimate that fewer that 15% of the Parish residents are active in such groups, most of which are small in numbers of adherents. I decided that the theatre-making should be a challenge; not just dramatically, but in terms of the “labour” needed to make it happen. I wanted to create a communal focus in the Parish, a shared project that would bring the disparate elements of the community together. This was when I arrived at the concept of “theatre as communal work”, a shared activity, which counters “excessive individualism” and brings disparate people together to discover and articulate the stories of the community within vertical rather than horizontal age-related groupings.
Examples of community theatre
This first example does not concern a rural community, but one, which is in the suburbs of the city of Exeter, Devon, UK. It also involves work with children, the lifeblood of any community.

The school and community
Exwick lies just north-west of Exeter, a city of 110,000 people, separated from the City by the River Exe. It was once geographically, socially and culturally distinct but, with the expansion of both City and village, administratively and in many other ways, it is now seen as part of Exeter. Exwick has expanded forty fold in the last thirty years and the hillsides that overlook the river plain are covered in modern housing developments. Some old buildings remain however, embedded in this enlarged community. I worked here with seven of my university students and 30 school students aged 11-12 years.

The original school was built in 1890. A new school was built above the flood plain in 1971, the old school becoming a community centre, a function it still performs. The village hall and church are nearby, and the old school rubs shoulders with a toll house, built to house those who collected the fees for crossing the Exe using the 'new' bridge built in the 1870s. Until that time, people forded the river in summer or made long treks up or down stream to cross by existing bridges. Exwick lacks many of the facilities that such a large concentration of housing would normally possess but although the City is a short walk away Exwick retains a certain separateness for, although it is poorly served for shops, its pub, community centre, church and school still allow its residents - especially those with young children - to feel part of a, albeit sprawling, community.

Theatre and community
The parents of the school students involved in this project were mostly newcomers to the village and they possessed little knowledge of its history. One of our prime aims was to create opportunities for the school students to discover and understand aspects of Exwick's past, and to articulate that to the community. We wanted to use the performances as a focus to celebrate and broadcast a shared culture.

Communities need community events to continually refresh them.
Community drama can be a celebration of community; discovering
the nature of a community; articulating it to that community (Jellicoe. 1987).

Benedict Nightingale notes theatre’s ability to work within a community to heighten people’s awareness of where they live:

Isn’t it good that a community should learn more, more about the past that has shaped its present, the roots that have determined its identity? Isn’t it good that it should deepen its understanding of itself; entertain itself? (Nightingale 1985)

The aims of the project also coincided with British school curriculum aims. For example:

Material for drama should draw upon local heritage and cultures so that pupils can better understand both how their own community came to be and how it might develop.6

The model that I chose had to satisfy the needs of the seven university students with whom I was working. They took part in a process that expanded their notion of what drama was for and could achieve. It could also be transferred to professional contexts in which they could find themselves after graduation. I actually made two productions – a live performance and a radio play broadcast on local radio. I describe only the live performance here.

“When I was a Boy”
This theatre project was based on local, true stories. The two class teachers covered a range of contextual material to do with the Victorian and early 20th Century period under, relating the topic to areas of the students’ normal curriculum. The aim of the history lessons, for example, was to set the local study (which was to throw up the material for the drama), within an effective understanding of national and world events. General curriculum work in the study area was underway for several weeks before the notion of making a play was introduced.

Older people who had lived in Exwick all of their life were invited into the school to share their memories. In their research, pupils and teachers made use of books, videos, slides, maps, local museum collections and field visits, together with a study of original documents in the County

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6 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI), (1991) Drama fro 5 to 16, HMSO, London.
Records Office. The community was also told of the study, and documents, artefacts and written testimony came in from its members, mostly as a result of children interrogating parents, grandparents and neighbours. The school students were able to identify a number of former farms, their land-less farmhouses now mostly converted to suit modern urban living. They found one where the retired farmer, his land reduced to just a garden due to housing development, talked to us as he sat with his dog in the old barn.

1. Developing the Drama

Once the curriculum work was established, the notion of the play was introduced. This involved inferring story and the detail of human existence from the intriguingly sparse descriptions of events contained in the school’s log-book (the headteacher of each UK school keeps a daily record of events. Some of these logs go back over 200 years). Entries from the Exwick log books, dating from 1892 to 1924 (all made by the same headteacher, Mr Adolphus Rousham), were scanned to identify significant comments that had potential for dramatisation. The selection was presented to the students in booklet form. Students were organised into five groups and each group, aided by university students and teachers selected an entry as a starting point for dramatic exploration. This exploration was informed by the contextual curriculum work already done. One such log book entry read:

1910
Aug. 30th.
Edith Cornall, Standard 111, aged 10 yrs, was drowned in the river during the dinner hour today. She was present at School this morning.

An enlarged copy was glued to the centre of a large sheet of card. The school students then identified key questions raised by the entry. We hoped that speculation about the answers would provide convincing detail about the incident and the people involved in it. The drowning entry prompted such questions as:

Who was Edith?
Where did she live and in what sort of family?
What was she doing down by the river?
Who was with her?
How did the teachers find out about the incident?
Who told the family?
What was said to other pupils following Edith’s death?
Who found Edith’s body?
Were new school rules established following her death?

Each question was explored through discussion and dramatic improvisation. The events they created within the drama had power even from the first improvisation where the scene that resulted found its way into the finished production.

The authenticity of the material we were dealing with was an important aspect of the work. An evaluation of the project revealed:

The school logbook, in itself prosaic in tone and giving little away, nevertheless was a talisman, which conferred historical authenticity on the events which were shaped in the drama. Being able to perform in the old school room and to visit the river, the site of the old mill, the war memorial, the graveyard, all these experiences added to the authenticity and to the children’s growing realisation that they could identify closely with the children they were portraying because they were, in a sense, living parallel lives to their own.7

The performance was created by joining the resulting seven scenes together to form a play. The linking device was the portrayal of a modern group of children who were doing local history research. They visit an aged ex-pupil of the school who, in the course of telling the children of his memories, triggers flash-back scenes in the play. Tickets for the performances took the form of a 16-page programme that contained additional information useful to the audience as context for the drama. Our audience was encouraged to read this before coming to the performance n preparation for the drama.

On performance nights we mounted exhibitions of artefacts, photographs, posters and children’s work in rooms surrounding the old schoolroom. Live and taped music and sound effects and recordings of residents’ memories were played as people viewed the exhibition. Children in character enacted incidents around the old school and in the playground as the audience arrived. The exhibition formed the focus for reminiscence by audience members. These memories were collected and added to the other material that now formed part of the school’s permanent archive. Added piquancy was derived from the fact that the play was performed in the community centre - the old school in which all of the incidents referred to in the log book took place.

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7 Fox, R., Evaluation of the Exwick Project, unpublished paper.
2. The Living at Hurford
This play was created in a deeply rural area of Devon, England. It was an attempt to address two things – the difficulty small family farms are experiencing in the current economic/agricultural climate and the effect of foot and mouth disease which so devastated parts of rural England in 2002. A group of community psychiatric nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, agricultural experts and arts therapists commissioned me to intervene through theatre in a rural community that had experienced foot and mouth disease. They told of a farming community laced with trauma. I wrote The Living at Hurford, an interactive play that focuses on the life of a typical Devon farming family struggling to stay in business. The play allowed audience members to explore and validate their life realities. It was performed in a barn on a farm that had lost its animals to foot and mouth disease.

When buying a ticket, audience members received an envelope containing material, which gave them insight into the personal, financial and agricultural world of a farming family. This includes a map of Hurford Farm, a set of farm accounts, photographs of farm buildings, an obituary from a local paper for Henry Chaplin, a solicitor's letter offering additional land, a school report on Sally, a birthday card from Alan to his mother and a family-tree diagram - presumably drawn by Janet.
The purpose of this pack is to:

• orientate the audience to the story;
• give contextual information that will aid understanding of the story and;
• carry factual information, thus taking from the performance the responsibility to provide all information.

**Story synopsis**
Hurford Farm is owned by Janet Chaplain who was left it by her recently deceased father, Henry Daniel. She is married to a clinically depressed husband, Mike, who is deeply affected by the difficulties of making a living from the farm. To supplement the family income, he drives a milk collection lorry. They have two children - Alan, eighteen years old with a successful Army career, and Sally, twenty, studying Business and Economics at university. Information audience members had gained from the pre-pack was expanded through a performance which ended in crisis. Janet must choose what to do. The audience is invited to help her make that decision and, following a range of interactive theatre approaches, they watch the consequences of their decision as actors play it out. The script used local dialect terms and contained many local references - agricultural agents, local markets, and in the obituary the real name of the local vicar and his church, for example.

Janet’s brother, Greg, left home at sixteen for an engineering apprenticeship and, although he was expected to take over the farm, never returned. Janet had her own career planned, but agreed to a delay until Greg returned. She is now resentful of Greg’s actions and feels
stressed by the farm's financial difficulties and her husband's impaired mental state. After attending his father's funeral (which took place a few weeks before the time period of the play) Greg announces to his sister that he wants to “come home” and help the farm out of its difficulties by investing his redundancy money in it.

The 'now' story takes place in the kitchen of Hurford Farm. The kitchen scenes are interspersed with flashbacks, which show:

- Henry first coming to look at the farm with his fiancée, Betty, in the 1940s;
- a harvest scene from the 1950s;
- a protest scene in which farmers march against the low prices they receive from the supermarkets and;
- a Christmas scene in which Janet warns off her son and daughter from coming back to work on Hurford Farm.

There are two monologues from which we learn something of the internal tensions in the lives of Mike and Janet. Projected imaged were used - of the farmhouse that precede the first kitchen scene, a Henry and
Betty wedding photograph, media shots of a real farmers’ protest, shots of 1950s harvest scenes, and a landscape of “Hurford”, for example.8

The fifty-minute performance ends at a point where Janet tells her brother Greg that she needs time to think about his offer and warns that he must say nothing to her husband Mike. Janet exits and Greg looks at the laptop computer in which Janet stores the farm accounts. At this point a facilitator invites the audience members to consider the options open to Janet. Among these are:

• Accept Greg’s offer and bring him in as a partner in the farm business;
• Sell part of the farm to Greg and allow him to develop his own business - converting some redundant buildings into holiday cottages, for example;
• Refuse Greg’s offer and expand the farm (she has been offered land by a neighbouring farmer);
• Sell part of the land to clear the bank overdraft and farm the remainder to fit a ‘niche market’;
• Sell the land, retain the house and a few acres then get a job;
• Sell up and move elsewhere.

After some discussion with neighbouring audience members, the audience is able to question characters of their choice in a process called “hotseating.”

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8 A copy of the script and pre-pack can be obtained cost price from the author. A video is also available.
After a refreshment break, and led by the facilitator, the whole audience discusses the course of action Janet should take. When the audience has decided this, the actors play an improvised scene based on the audience's wishes. Although the audience has decided what Janet should do, it cannot dictate the outcome of that decision. Cards are distributed giving audience members information about telephone help lines. A full evaluation of this project was undertaken.

Foresight, which I directed, focuses on a real story of a German Junkers 88 bomber which crashed in May 1941 in the River Tale Valley where I live.

![Figure 6. The location of Payhembury.](image)

It was performed in a marquee in a field close to where one of the four German crew fell dead after the Junkers was shot down by a British Bristol Beaufighter. This is a story well known to the residents of this rural area who were alive at the time. During our research of the incident, some of these people revealed photographs and artefacts, which relate to the crash, including a Luftwaffe belt buckle taken from the body of one of the airmen.
The play resulted from a community theatre school I organised in 2004. This comprised three Saturday morning workshops, each of three-hours, on writing theatre, directing, acting, scenic design, technical aspects of theatre, music and marketing. The writing sessions focused on participants writing short scenes, which were then acted out. Subsequently, I worked over two years with a female, first time playwright Rose Watts to bring “Foresight” to production quality.

Two hundred and thirty people of all ages were involved in staging this play - sandwich cutters, parking attendants, actors, technical staff and many others. Original music was written, and instrumental and singing workshops were held. Scenic design workshops were held to design the set and the play was performed in a huge marquee. It was a promenade production so the audience moved and scenes took place on five stages and also amongst the standing audience.
Each night at the end of the performance, the audience was led from the marquee to a place near to where one of the Germans fell dead. Here, lit by blazing torches, the son of the farmer who found the body told his father’s story; as he did so, a Second World War bomber flew over the audience and on up the valley, echoing the final journey of the Junkers 88 in 1941. We simulated the crash further up the valley.
Extensive research was conducted on the incident and a large exhibition was displayed in one section of the marquee. Post production, much of this material was lodged in the local museum so that all may have access to the material in the future. Audience members were brought from the village in 1940s vintage buses and as they approached the marquee they experienced a Second World War vehicle display.

Television monitors played interviews with those who witnessed the incident. At the end of the play, after the aircraft had passed overhead, audience members came back to the marquee for drinks and supper whilst they talk to actors and one another. A relative of one of the German air crew came from Germany to see the play and stay in a participant’s home.
Reflection
Each of the case studies demonstrates how theatre was used in disparate contexts to bring people together to explore and sometimes celebrate aspects of a shared community. The performances in case studies 1 and 3 grew from written stories, which became performances through a devising process. Both dealt with the past and ways of revealing the community stories and the wisdom embedded in them. The play in case study 2 was written by me following extensive research. It acted as a validation of the experience of the many country people involved in agriculture who might never visit a theatre but who would come to a barn on a farm they know well. One farmer said “I don’t know what you know about farming boy,⁹ but how you wrote it is how it is”, whilst another said “That’s my life you put up there tonight”, confirming that they found the story authentic.

They each represent “theatre making as communal work”, strengthening the social bonding between potentially isolated sectors of a community. I present them to you as examples of theatre-making which is founded on attempts to balance social efficacy and aesthetic quality. They are each rooted in narratives which give shared meaning about what it is to live in a specific place.

⁹ The term “boy” is used in Devon by locals when addressing a man if any age.
Putnam maintains that his research shows that:

...art is especially useful in transcending conventional social barriers. Moreover, social capital is often a valuable by-product of cultural activities whose main purpose is purely aesthetic (p 411).

Socially fragmented communities can find a focus in community theatre of the kind I describe here. The fact that the stories are rooted in the community in which they are performed give this work a special power.

Stories shape identity, and social cohesion depends on shared identity .......... [We share] not just a land and language, but also memories and hopes, aspirations and ideals. There are lots of stories to do with places, regions, institutions and nations, and often we don’t need to know them. But when cohesion is a problem, we do .......... sharing a story is the best way of creating shared identity and a sense of the common good (Sacks, 2007).
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13. About the authors

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Birgitta Silfver has been working as a drama educator for many years, the last ten years with the focus on upper elementary education. Birgitta Silfver is a PhD student at Åbo Akademi University in Vasa. The Clown is a companion in her educative practice. The Clown has been investigated as an expression aimed to expand students’ self-image and self-esteem. The Clown has also been a central figure in Birgitta’s personal expression. The Figure Baglady Vera has thus come out and claimed space as both a figure on stage and as patterns in Birgitta’s writing.

Eva Ahlskog-Björkman is Doctor of Education and associate professor of arts education at the Faculty of Education, Åbo Akademi University. Her research focuses on the field of Creating-with-textiles, specifically aesthetic educational processes at the pre-school and primary school levels. Ahlskog-Björkman is first convenor of the NERA network Arts, Culture, and Education for 2009.
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From recent studies of the impact of arts education it is possible to conclude, that competent teachers in an art form have a positive impact on children’s learning in art as well as in other subjects. In this anthology the process of learning is studied informed by the notion of transformation and transformative aesthetics. The transformations taking place in aesthetic approaches to learning can be characterized as character-forming journeys.

When children and young persons are involved in creative activities like producing a film built upon an idea from a computer game, creating a visual symbol, producing a performance connected to the theme bridges, or producing a textile work which promotes the well being of some group in the society – they are all contributing to the culture in the community they are part of.

The authors suggest that a better understanding of the values embedded in arts education is needed. Some of the questions elaborated in the studies presented in the anthology Arts Education and Beyond are the following: What kind of thinking underpins arts education? What does it mean for the learner to make active aesthetic responses, or to transform ideas into artistic expression? What is the importance of the transformations in productive artistic work? What are the key features of the (inter) cultural competence asked for in educational strategy documents? How is eco-philosophical thinking linked to philosophical aesthetics?

The basis for a dialogue is the pre-understanding that art plays an important, but not yet fully known, role in children’s lives and in their learning. To articulate the value basis underpinning arts education, as well as the learning paths in aesthetic and artistic processes is a challenge the article writers in this scientific anthology respond to. The researchers are deeply involved in arts educational thinking and are actively contributing to the ongoing debate about how to develop education with as well a solid knowledge base as skills to reflect upon educational values in a meaningful way.