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Being in the Moment –
An Investigation of the Aesthetic Learning Processes in a Storyline

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Teaching through Stories

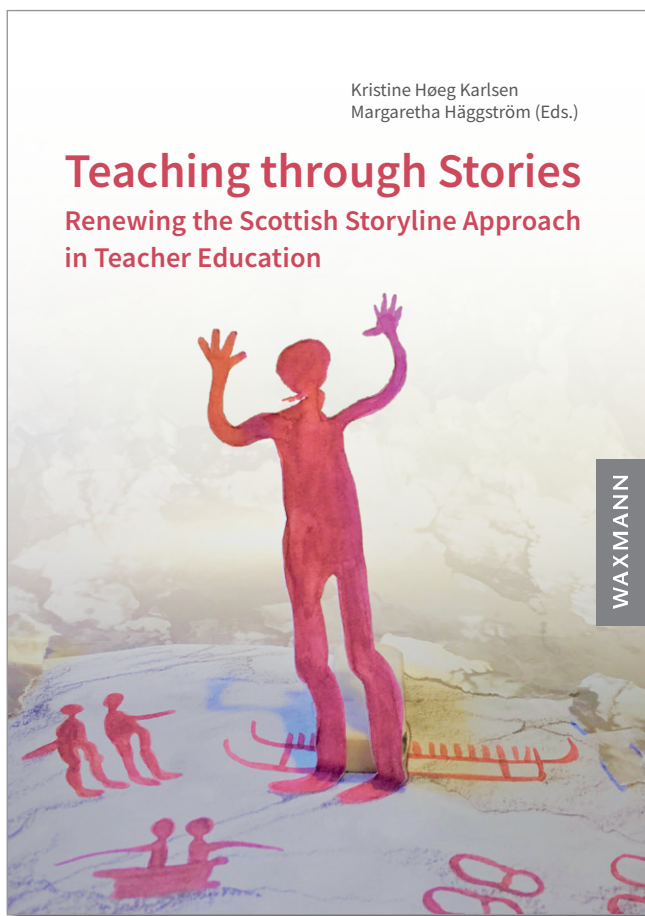**Renewing the Scottish Storyline Approach in Teacher Education**

WAXMANN

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Chapter 13

Being in the Moment – An Investigation of the Aesthetic Learning Processes in a Storyline

Solveig Toft and Gunhild Brænne Bjørnstad

Abstract. This chapter describes a qualitative study that illustrates the aesthetic learning processes facilitated by a specific Storyline conducted in a Teacher Education Programme in Eastern Norway. The purpose is to uncover the types of aesthetic competences that are developed through aesthetic working methods in interdisciplinary projects, and which competences must be strengthened within the aesthetic subjects' own context. Despite Norway's new national curriculum emphasising creative and explorative learning methods, the aesthetic subjects are under pressure. There is no requirement for teacher competence in the subjects, while they are demanded as methods in interdisciplinary projects and for in-depth learning. Our theoretical framework in this study is the four aspects of aesthetic learning processes, learning IN, WITH, ABOUT and THROUGH aesthetic activity, as explained by Lindström (2012), supported by Dewey's (1980) view on aesthetic experiences. The study consists of group interviews with the students after completion of a cross-curricular Storyline.

Keywords: Aesthetic learning processes, student-active learning, interdisciplinarity, learning About, in, with and through art, aesthetic experiences.

Introduction

Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular projects are common teaching methods in Norwegian schools. Such projects often make use of aesthetic tools, such as drawing, sculpture, music, drama and so on, to provide a diversity of impressions and modes of expressions. In the newly developed national curriculum "the Knowledge Promotion Reform 2020" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a) the intention is to provide substantial in-depth subject knowledge, to encourage more topic-based approaches in the classrooms and to increase aesthetic methods in learning processes (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). As the allocated hours for aesthetic subjects in schools and teacher training have constantly decreased in the past 40 years (Espeland, Allern, Carlsen, & Kalsnes, 2011, p. 15), the Ministry of Education and Research (2019b) recently published a strategy note to reinvigorate the practical-aesthetic subjects and creative work methods in general. The strategy highlights the practical-aesthetic subjects' opportunities, their intrinsic value, and the importance of practical working methods in all subjects and in interdisciplinary contexts. The ambitions have, however, been criticised as being unattainable because there are no qualification requirements for teachers in arts subjects in Norwegian schools (Carlsen, Randers-Pehrson, & Hermansen, 2018; Karlsen, Skredelid, & Holdhus, 2020; Sande, 2019).

This criticism may reflect a dilemma in our postmodern era. On the one hand we recognise an interdisciplinary turn in the arts (Condee, 2016), stating that aesthetic working methods provide a way of learning that promotes motivation and in-depth learning and is thus important as a method in all subjects (Sæbø, 1998, p. 19; Østern, 2013; Østern et al., 2019). It is however unclear what type of professional expertise this interdisciplinary teacher may need, as the learning within the art subjects seems to be on a general level, not requiring specific subject knowledge or skill (Condee, 2016, p. 18). On the other hand, there are those who argue that the aesthetic subjects' intrinsic value is that they involve training in materials, techniques, form and modes of expression (Lindström, 2012; Marner & Örtegren, 2003, pp. 83–97; Richmond, 2009). The claim is that more time and professional specialisation is required for learning in the aesthetic subjects, and specific requirements for professional competence of the teachers is essential. Due to the constant pressure to prioritise core subjects of languages and mathematics, one would argue, on this perspective, that it is important to prevent the aesthetic subjects being reduced to only support other purposes in interdisciplinary contexts (Marner & Örtegren, 2003, pp. 50–51).

Aesthetic methods and learning processes are characterised by creativity, exploration, work in different media, and aesthetic experiences (Austring & Sørensen, 2006; NOU, 2015, p. 49). In aesthetic subjects, the learning processes will be aimed at knowledge and expertise in materials, techniques and artistic expressions (Marner & Örtegren, 2003, pp. 83–97; Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a). In interdisciplinary projects, the creative work will often aim at a learning goal independent of the medium itself (Lindström, 2012, p. 176; Marner & Örtegren, 2003, p. 46). Since these two approaches to aesthetic learning processes provide the learner with different competences, it is of interest to clarify which competences the learner achieves in aesthetic activities in an interdisciplinary context.

This chapter elucidates the kinds of aesthetic learning processes that take place in an interdisciplinary Storyline – a student-active learning process evolving through a narrative (Eik et al., 1999) – when the aesthetic subjects are included as a method for an overarching learning goal. This clarification will help to uncover learning processes that need to be reinforced in the art subject's own contexts in order to ensure quality of aesthetic learning. Our research-question is thus:

> What kind of aesthetic learning processes are facilitated in a Storyline based on goals, media and students' experiences?

By applying a model for aesthetic learning processes to analyse selected sequences in the Storyline, we want to understand the types of learning processes facilitated by the Storyline and utilise group interviews to understand how students engaged in, and responded to, the aesthetic activities.

Aesthetic Learning Processes

Our understanding of learning is grounded in Vygotsky's idea of social constructive learning, where knowledge is developed in the constant relation and negotiation between the individual and the social context (Vygotsky, Bielenberg, & Roster, 2001, p. 22). Vygotsky's mediation concept is about interpreting the world through tools that are rooted in different social practices. These tools could be languages and concepts, but also images and other aesthetic forms of expression. Marner and Örtergren (2003) claim that different forms of media are equal and horizontal, i.e. that the verbal language, the image language and other aesthetic forms of expression are equally important for communication and learning (ibid., p. 23).

Lindström (2008, 2012) refers to Marner and Örtegren's (2003) understanding of the media concept, and analyses aesthetic learning processes based on whether the work process is media-specific or media-neutral. Furthermore, he looks at whether the work is characterised by divergent or convergent thinking. His analysis configures a model (figure 1) with four boxes containing different types of aesthetic learning forms with dichotomous properties: Learning ABOUT, IN, WITH and THROUGH art.
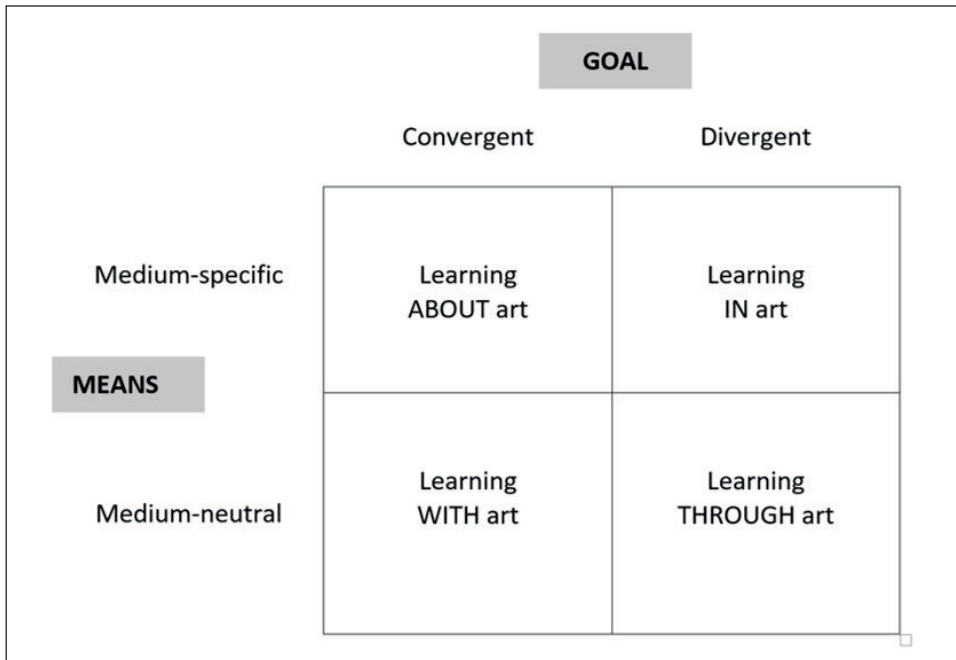

Fig. 1:   Types of aesthetic learning (Lindström, 2012).

The columns describe the goals, i.e. what kind of learning one pursues through aesthetic means. If the goal is given in advance, it is convergent. If the goal is open, unpredictable and a combination of what you know and can do in new ways, it is divergent. Divergent learning processes involve creative work and the ability to combine and apply knowledge in new situations. The rows describe the means and refer to the media, i.e. the materials used to achieve different goals. If the expression is dependent on the

medium and one needs knowledge to handle it, it is referred to as media specific. If the purpose of the media is to illustrate other phenomena, and that one could choose other media to do the same, it is referred to as media neutral. When the goal is set in advance (convergent), for example learning about a specific medium, it is learning ABOUT art. This often refers to the basics of art education. When the goal is set in advance (convergent), and the medium is neutral, i.e. it could have been another medium for the same purpose (media neutral), it is learning WITH art. This refers to the integration of art with subject matter from other disciplines. If the goal is open (divergent), and one combines and applies knowledge for new purposes in the meeting with a specific media in the process, it is learning IN art. This refers to experimenting with materials and techniques to achieve a visual effect, convey a message or express a mood. When the goal is open (divergent), and the medium is neutral, i.e. it could have been another medium for the same purpose, it is learning THROUGH art. This refers to the thinking dispositions that students might acquire by involving themselves in art. The categories are not autonomous, i.e. in an aesthetic learning process several categories can be involved. No combination of goals and means is superior to any other but should be considered complementary aspects of a coordinated learning strategy (Lindström, 2008, p. 63). A balanced approach to aesthetic learning requires a continuous emphasis on all four aspects (Lindström, 2012, p. 170). In Lindström's analysis, the focus was learning strategies (ways of learning), ways of teaching and ways of assessing. We believe the model can be used to focus on the framework and goals of creative activities as well.

An essential aspect of learning in the aesthetic subjects is the importance of aesthetic experiences, explained by Dewey (1980) as occurring genuinely meaningful (p. 44). The aesthetic experiences are embodied, emotional, and reconstructive by nature, allowing new knowledge to emerge. An experience is an interaction between doing and undergoing (ibid., 1980, p. 46) between man and the world in which he lives. Dewey distinguishes between different types of experience. Basically, any experience is a result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives (ibid., 1980, p. 203). When an experience has an emotional quality that gives unity in the various parts of the experience, the experience has an aesthetic character (ibid., 1980, p. 202). If the parts of the experience have an inner connection and move towards completion, the experience becomes an aesthetic experience (ibid., 1980, p. 200). If the aesthetic experience reaches its completion, it is followed by reflection. The unreflected and unprocessed impressions will be given order and context and the aesthetic experience is fulfilled (ibid., 1980, p. 212). Parts will be connected to a whole, the experience gains structure and unity and the aesthetic experience becomes larger, of more vital quality, and is transformed into a completed aesthetic experience (ibid., 1980, p. 48).

Sæbø (1998) claims that the aesthetic dimension of a learning process consists of aesthetic experience, aesthetic praxis and aesthetic criticism (p. 402). These three aspects give an in-depth understanding and must appear in interaction with each other. Being able to experience art (observing and interpreting) combined with the ability to participate in the making of art (practicing and exploring art forms) develops the aesthetic criticism, which can be seen as an understanding of the aesthetic dimension, and having the vocabulary and terminology to express one's own views on aesthetic

work. Austring and Sørensen (2006) define aesthetic learning as being able to transform impressions through aesthetic symbolic expressions (p. 85). This transformation is in line with the concept of in-depth learning, explained by Østern et al. (2019) as a contribution to the metacognitive aspect of learning. The depth can be understood as an embodiment, influenced by affects, such as sensuous, intensities, anticipations and bodily atmospheres (ibid., p. 50). An aesthetic experience involves an emotional reaction, for example when you encounter art or when you are active in a creative process (Austring & Sørensen, 2006, pp. 69–70). Work in aesthetic and creative subjects can, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2008), make you completely focused on the task, losing all sense of time and space, experiencing flow. Such flow experiences constitute an intrinsic motivation to continuously explore and develop new ideas and can be found in what Dewey (1980) describes as aesthetic experience.

In the following section, we will investigate the kinds of aesthetic learning processes that are facilitated in the Storyline, by analysing these according to Lindström's model (2012). In addition, we seek to find how the individual's personal aesthetic experience affects the quality of the learning process. These operations will lead us to a discussion on how to ensure a varied and diverse approach to aesthetic learning processes in cross-curricular projects.

The Storyline and the Aesthetic Activities

Storyline is an interdisciplinary and student-active method where a narrative is the core of the learning process. The method (hereafter referred to as The Storyline Approach (TSA)) includes key questions, professional loops, and it facilitates exploration and creative work (Eik et al., 1999). It is important first to create an arena for events that occur in the story, such as a shared image or installation (p. 32). It is also important to construct figures as a concretisation of the players in the story, such as hand puppets (ibid., 1999, p. 33).

TSA has been well documented for the learning of cooperative and didactic skills for students (Karlsen, Lockhart-Pedersen, & Bjørnstad, 2019; Leming, 2016; Stevahn & McGuire, 2017). The study of Karlsen et al. (2019) also revealed that experiencing a practical Storyline, influences the students' attitude positively towards implementing TSA in their future profession.

This Storyline project was carried out in the spring of 2019 at a Teacher Education College in Eastern Norway and involved approximately 60 students. The topic, which ran over a period of 1,5 weeks, was sustainable development, planned and developed by lecturers from social science, natural science, English, pedagogics, drama and arts & crafts. The competence goals were; extended understanding of the concept of sustainable development, increased competence in natural science, social sciences and English, as well as didactic competence in interdisciplinary work with aesthetic learning methods. For a full description of the Storyline project, see table 1 in Chapter 4, *An exploration of the "mimetic aspects" of Storyline used as a creative and imaginative approach to teaching and learning in Teacher Education* (Karlsen, Motzfeldt, Pilskog, Rasmussen, & Halstvedt, 2020).

Img. 1 left: Reusable materials for sustainable development.
Img. 2 right: Making pulp as reusable material. Photos: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.

The Storyline itself was introduced when the students entered the classroom, which was decorated with colours, items and sounds evoking the sea. Their creative process was triggered by an activity where they had to imagine their way downstream to a river delta. Following other activities, the students were introduced to the concept of river delta in a short lecture, called subject loop. They were divided into groups to create a relief of their own river delta on a canvas with pulp and tissue paper. Their models would later be the scene of the fiction in the Storyline project. At the end of the day, the students were to move to another workshop to design their own puppet and write down the puppet's personality since it would later have a role in the fictional community that was being developed at the river delta. The following day the students faced a new challenge competing to create the best, most innovative, sustainable and environmentally friendly community at the river delta. While they were engaged with this activity, the teachers staged an "environmental disaster" represented by a bad smell and other dramatic effects, and the evacuation of the students. The experiences that the fictional characters had of the environmental catastrophe, were given bodily expressions through a drama exercise called tableaux (Sæbø, 1998, p. 102), where the students had to use their bodies as sculptures to express the feelings of their character. Throughout the Storyline they had to role play, consider different situations and complete tasks from the perspective of their fictional character.

The Storyline had several other activities that could be defined as aesthetic activities, but for the focus of this study we have chosen to concentrate on the creative activities directed and facilitated by drama and arts and crafts, and the students' experiences with these activities, in particular the making of river deltas, puppets and tableaux exercise.

Data Collection and Interpretation

Our research is part of a more extensive research project on TSA in teacher education. All data collection has been approved by the National Data Security (NSD), in line with their recommendations for ethics in research and respondent consent (DPA, 2017). In order to investigate the aesthetic learning processes in this Storyline, we have analysed the framing of three essential aesthetic tasks in the Storyline; looking at the

presentation of the task, its goals and how the media/material are utilised in the task. We have further conducted group interviews to collect qualitative data that assist us in understanding general trends and uncover essential information about the students' experiences with aesthetic learning processes in the Storyline. The group interviews consisted of seven randomly selected groups, named group A-G in the result section, and were designed as a means to obtain in-depth thoughts and understanding of the students' verbalisation of achieved experience (Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2015, pp. 67, 179). The interviews were semi-structured, based on a common interview guide with open-ended questions on several topics related to the Storyline, where one section was focused on the topic of aesthetic learning processes. The interviews were carried out with all seven groups at the same time and were conducted by the academic staff members contributing in the Storyline. The interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed.

In the process of analysis, we have utilised a hermeneutic approach, alternating between a systematic coding and an interpretation of statements, which Thagaard (2010) claims provides a deeper content meaning in the analysis (p. 39). The responses were analysed qualitatively using a coding procedure, as described by Hjerm and Lindgren (2011), where the process started by sorting and reading through the material to find keywords and meaningful statements (p. 89). Regarding the focus of this chapter, we highlighted the answers given to questions on the students' experience with the creative work with materials, with drama and being in "a role". We were particularly attentive to statements that provided information about the students' experiences in the creative elements of the project, words and expressions that conveyed something emotional in the process of the activities. We were also searching for verbalisation of achieved experience on what kind of knowledge and experience the students had gained or learnt, and we interpreted the statements in relation to Lindström's model (2012). In the process, we read through the data several times, reducing the statements to shorter fragments and finally developing codes. Our interpretation of the statements in context aims at uncovering the level of the student's aesthetic experience, as an indication of the in-depth learning of aesthetic subjects provided by the Storyline. The codes that appeared categorised the contents of the aesthetic experiences. One example of how the coding process may look is shown in Table 1:

Tab. 1:   Example of coding process

Student response	Reduced meaning	Code
"I thought it was a lot of fun, and some of the groups had very nice tableaux, or showed a sense of unity […] then you got the feeling that 'our delta is polluted'" (Student response, group G).	Being emotionally moved by observing another group	Emotional observation

Our reflection on the method leads us to believe that there may be some potential weaknesses in the design. Firstly, the interviews were conducted just after the Storyline project ended, thus, there was little time for the students to reflect on their experiences beforehand. The format of group interviews allows the participants to build on each other's reflection, collectively constructing knowledge (Kvale et al., 2015, pp. 335–336). We have therefore not differentiated between the interviewees within the groups but refer to each group as a whole. If we had chosen to identify each student's statements, it could have provided other perspectives in relation to differences in individual student experiences. Secondly, the study was part of a larger programme with an interview guide that contained many questions with different focus. Most of the questions did not encourage deeper reflection on the students' aesthetic experiences. The level of meta-reflection in the responses creates challenges in the process of analysis, considering whether they state something general regarding the Storyline as a whole, or are directed specifically towards the aesthetic activities. Consequently, we have had to interpret segments of the interviews in relation to larger contexts in order to ensure validity. Furthermore, the interviewers may have influenced the results by asymmetric relationship (ibid., 2015, p. 52), virtue of their role, their field of study and their personality. This may have happened through supportive or unsupportive comments, body language and hidden expectations, and in this way influenced the extent and nuances of the answers. In the analysis, we have interpreted the statements by virtue of our pre-understanding and expectations of the answers (ibid, 2015, pp. 211–212). This may have highlighted statements that have made sense to the authors in relation to the focus of the analysis and led to the omission of statements that have been interpreted as irrelevant, but which could instead have given the analysis other nuances. This study is based on only one Storyline project. TSA can be facilitated in various ways where the aesthetic subjects can be integrated, more or less on the subjects' own premises. However, despite sources of error, we believe that the study helps to focus on the aesthetic subjects and learning processes in TSA and at the same time serves as an example of interdisciplinary learning processes.

The Students' Aesthetic Learning and Experiences

We note that each task in the Storyline has several levels of goals and aims, for example the shared overall goal, aiming at increasing competence on the topic of sustainable development. Another more didactic overall goal is related to the development of TSA as a didactic tool for teaching. The aesthetic activity provides yet another level of goals aiming at competences within the aesthetic subjects. An analysis of the overall goal of sustainable development reveals that the goal is convergent, as it is set in advance, according to Lindström's model (2012). We consider it to be media-neutral, as we have multiple ways of gaining such competence. This leaves us in the corner of learning WITH art. This is also transferable to the didactic goal of learning TSA, where the goal (learning TSA) is convergent, and the means are media-neutral (could be done in multiple ways). All of the aesthetic activities in the Storyline have didactic purposes, exposing the students to different teaching methods. In other words, both of these overall

goals, the topic-related goal of competence about sustainable development and the didactic goal, are designed to learn WITH art, indicating that the arts are only methods for these purposes, without strengthening the intrinsic value of the aesthetic activity.

In the following, we will take a closer look at the aesthetic activities in order to determine the types of aesthetic learning processes facilitated in these. We have chosen to look at each activity separately, describing its goals and media, and combining it with statements expressing the students' experiences to determine the quality of the experience.

Making the River Deltas

The task of making the river deltas was done in pre-selected groups after a short teacher-led introduction on the available materials: pulp, tissue paper, glue and canvas. The students worked for two hours to sketch and create their relief. As the topic of the Storyline was sustainable development in river deltas, the main purpose of the task was to use and visualise knowledge of a river delta. The aesthetic purpose of the activity was to provide experience in creating and visualising an idea through flexible and concrete materials in a social setting, thus contributing to aesthetic professional competence. The design of the river delta had unlimited possibilities within the concept, as the students started working individually before negotiating their designs in the group. In this regard, the goal was open and divergent, as nobody knew what the design would end up looking like in the beginning of the process. The materials were specifically selected to encourage experimentation, requiring no previous media-specific knowledge. The task is therefore considered to be medium-specific and aimed at learning IN art with a divergent goal. According to these frames, we consider the aesthetic purpose of the task to facilitate learning IN art, systematised by Lindström's model (2012).

The students' statements confirm this. One student describes how they developed their creative idea through the encounter with the materials, how one idea leads to another while getting familiar with the materials:

> "I think we noticed how it created itself, as we went along. When we thought we had finished, we saw that 'now I see there is a waterfall there. We need a bridge there…' and then it just kept on rolling. […] It kind of made itself, and that was fun" (Student response, group C).

Learning IN art can also be supported with the following statement: "We just skipped the planning, and the more we got into it, the less we planned" (Student response, group C). We interpret this as an expression of a seamless communication within the group and the available materials, allowing them to explore the encounter without having to achieve a certain goal. It appears that through the process, the students were not restricted by the sketch they had made in advance, but rather let the affordances of the materials create possibilities as they gained sensory acquaintance. The ideas appeared in the encounter with the materials, strengthening the aspect of learning IN art, according to Lindström's model (2012).

Img. 3:   Making the river delta. Photo: Hanne Eik Pilskog

The students' experiences with making the river deltas were mainly positive, as one student expressed: "It was a good experience…" (Student response, group D). Some of the groups, however, show signs of being in flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), where they completely lose track of time and space "…we were supposed to decide when to take a break ourselves, but we forgot, and ended up completely exhausted afterwards!" (Student response, group C).

Making the Puppets

The puppets were created individually in two separate rooms with all necessary tools available. The students got a brief introductory video to the basics of making the puppets but were allowed to explore their own ideas. One hour was allocated for the task, with the possibility to finish it the next day. We used recycled materials, such as reusable textiles, socks, plastic bags, yarn, buttons and glue. Within the context of making a puppet, designing the character's personality offered many possibilities and could be done in countless ways. Therefore, the challenge of the task was of a divergent nature, allowing the aesthetic expressions to differ. A range of recyclable materials to complete the puppet was also provided, making this task media-specific as the aesthetic goal was related to the reusable fabrics and materials. According to Lindström's model (2012), we regard this task to facilitate learning IN art.

The students expressed that through the creative process of making their puppet, their views changed, and they became more emotionally attached to the puppet. One student said:

"It started very 'awkward' but became more fun the more life I managed to give the puppet. It became a part of the delta. When the delta and the puppet were finished, I

Img. 4:
Student making a puppet.
Photo: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.

was no longer embarrassed to walk around in the college with it…" (Student response, group C).

Another student said: "[…] ok, I am going to give life to this Bergans sock. The more you devoted yourself to the project, the more decoration it [the puppet] got, and the more special… a real 'loner' it became" (Student response, group C). These statements indicate a process where the creation and personality of the puppet, in other words the aim, appeared through playing with the materials, reaching towards the divergent goal. They had not decided how the puppet was going to look like until they started making it and getting familiar with the materials gave them ideas on how to create the puppet. As the materials were chosen specifically to give the students experiences with reusable textiles, media-specific, the student seems to learn IN art, according to Lindström's model (2012).

Some students expressed the importance of communicating within the group, in the creative process: "my character was developed by the others also. Not just an individual process. It was not only me who defined my [the puppet's] role" (Student response, group C). This statement can be seen as an expression of the collectiveness of creative processes, as explained by Vygotsky, Bielenberg and Roster (2001), where we construct our knowledge through communication and negotiation with others. It strengthens the learning experience of the students, helping them to gain structure and a sense of unity, moving towards a conscious aesthetic experience.

Tableaux Exercise

The drama exercise, tableaux, was facilitated after the staged environmental disaster. When the students came back after being evacuated, they found their deltas littered and the room smelled bad. They were given a few minutes to observe the changes in

Img. 5:
Illustration of a tableau.
Credits: Solveig Toft

the delta, before they were told to stand with the other group members in a big circle in the classroom. Then they were instructed to recall feelings that occurred to them when they were evacuated. After discussing these feelings in the group, they were to create two tableaux (also called freeze picture or image theatre) (Sæbø, 1998, p. 102) expressing the emotions with their bodies, as a sculpture. One tableau should slowly transcend into the other. They worked with their tableaux for 15 minutes, while the drama pedagogue mentored the groups, asking them to think about their positioning in relation to each other, their bodily and facial expressions and to rehearse their expression. When each group had created their tableaux and practised the transition, the students had to share their work in a plenary 'performance' through a collage of bodily expressions, accompanied by music. The aesthetic goal of this task was to use their bodies to jointly express the emotions of their characters. The expressions were not defined in advance, hence a divergent goal. Since they were committed to using their own bodies in this task, we consider the task to be media-specific, not requiring knowledge in advance, but rather exploring the opportunities with the media to express the intended emotion. Due to these circumstances, the task was designed for learning IN art, according to Lindström's model (2012).

Some of the students expressed satisfaction to "do something physical, trying to show feelings in that way" (Student response, group G). This statement identifies the joy of expressing something with the body, in other words transforming an impression to a symbolic expression, which according to Austring and Sørensen (2006) is a key element of an aesthetic learning process. It shows us that the bodily awareness is strengthened, allowing a sense of what is referred to as in-depth learning by Østern et al. (2019), to occur. Other students felt uncomfortable pretending and playing a role in front of people whom they did not know very well: "[…] I don't have any problem presenting in front of others, but not in front of 60 people" (Student response, group C). They state that the task "would have been easier in smaller groups" (Student response, group C). This indicates that the students have been emotionally moved in some way, but not necessarily positively. The experience may seem like a conscious aesthetic experience, as the student clearly has reflected on the frames and outcome of the activity. But since

the experience lacks the quality of creating order and context for the unreflected and unprocessed impressions, it cannot be classified as a conscious aesthetic experience. In some groups, the constructive learning was the evident path of learning, supported by statements such as:

> "My group tried to make this a collective thing, not working individually. We created the development of anger together. So, I think my group had quite fun, even though some were more comfortable than others. So maybe some of us had to pull a little extra to get everyone involved" (Student response, group G).

The experience of seeing the tableaux of other groups also seems to have made an impression on the students. "I thought it was a lot of fun, and some of the groups had very nice tableaux, or showed a sense of unity […] then you got the feeling that 'our delta is polluted'" (Student response, group G). Activating emotions in the audience can also create aesthetic experiences both for the 'actor' and the 'observer', as they recall and regenerate emotions, connecting them to new situations or experiences. This aspect strengthens the aesthetic dimension, as it is described by Sæbø (1998), allowing the students to connect to emotions also by being an observer. It might lead to a greater competence in interpreting expressions and raising the competence of aesthetic criticism.

General Experiences of the Activities and Learning Outcome in the Storyline

When it comes to statements about learning outcomes, several students reflected on the concept of sustainable development: "I thought it was a great way to get an overall picture of sustainable development. I hope and believe that the perspective presented in the Storyline gets more people thinking in that direction themselves" (Student response, group G). Some expressed new and expanded understanding: "In the past, I was aware that sustainable development meant taking care of the environment, but that it also meant socially and economically, I was not aware of, so it was important that this came to light" (Student response, group G).

Several reflected on didactic issues, for example: "…that teachers dare to take roles and join the play and immerse themselves in it – I think it lowers the threshold for pupils to take part in it" (Student response, group G), and: "…dare to become a character, dare to offer a little of himself. I think for a pupil, and for us students, it is important and a little fun" (Student response, group G). Some had reflections on TSA as an approach to teaching:

> "In school, there are many pupils sitting and wondering: why do I have to learn this? They can't see it from a social perspective, how it can help them in life. But by putting it into a Storyline like this, where they hopefully can see the connection between the subjects, and how to use it in society, then they understand why it is important and what impact it will have" (Student response, group G).

The statements about learning outcomes are related to the overall topic-related goal; sustainable development and didactic questions, and they indicate that the students

have learned WITH art as the goals are convergent, and the learning outcomes are media neutral.

In the interviews, most of the students expressed that TSA was a good addition to the everyday lectures, because of the variety of practical and social work methods. One student said: "…the best with Storyline for me, was that we did so much practical work. The days passed really fast for me. And doing things with your hands and talking to people I think is really good" (Student response, group E). The practical and aesthetic activities were mostly mentioned with positive adjectives: "… we had lots of ideas…I got the task to make mountains and some trees, others were putting on pulp, and it turned out supergood. So it was fun, even though we did not know each other so well" (Student response, group E). Another group expressed that the normal day of study does not contain many creative activities, and one said: "I think it is a lot of fun to be creative at school. There is not much creativity in what we normally do" (Student response, group A). Another student is even more critical to the ordinary school day: "… it is lovely with a break from everyday life. From lectures that are just boring, boring, boring again and again. It feels nice to come and do creative things" (student response, group A).

Words that describe the creative activities are mostly positively charged, such as "fun", "funny", "free and creative", "lovely", "you can do what you want and be free". Others thought making the dolls was "cosy", but also "hard". Some associate the experience of creating with both play and freedom, of letting oneself go: "the more you let yourself get into it (the play), the more fun it becomes. You have to dare to let go and feel free, otherwise it will get boring" (Student response, group C). But not all were equally excited: "because I think it is kind of 'pain' to work with my hands, making dolls and stuff" (Student response, group C). We classify these experiences as aesthetic experiences, as they clearly make inner connections and are emotionally filled, but we failed to see the reflection, and processed impressions. It appears that the students were mainly emotionally connected to the activities, without transforming the experience into new reflected knowledge – which is required to bring the experience into a conscious aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1980).

Discussing Aesthetic Learning Processes and Experiences in Storyline

What kind of aesthetic learning processes are facilitated in a Storyline, based on goals, media and experiences? What needs to be reinforced in order to ensure the quality of aesthetic learning? To facilitate aesthetic activities and experiences, it is necessary to ensure appropriate challenges, a feeling of security and ample amount of time (Toft, & Holte, 2017). In the teacher educators' evaluation of the implementation of this Storyline, it was agreed that the time for the aesthetic activities was too limited, not allowing the students to fully engage in the activities. Despite this, the aesthetic subjects appeared to provide a variety of experiences for the students. According to students' statements, the learning that took place encouraged convergent and divergent think-

ing skills, as well as increased knowledge, both media-specific and media-neutral. In relation to the overall goal of Storyline as an approach to teaching, and to the theme of sustainable development, the goal was convergent and media-neutral, that is, learning WITH art. This result is in line with Lindström's own description of learning WITH art: "Learning WITH often refers to the integration of art with subject matter from other disciplines" (Lindström, 2012, p. 170).

Within the activities of the aesthetic subjects: river delta, puppet making and tableaux, the goals were divergent, and the media were specific. Carrying out the analysed activities mainly led to learning IN art. Lindström's own description of learning IN art says: "Learning IN refers to experimenting with materials and techniques in order to achieve a visual effect, convey a message or express a mood" (2012, p. 170). He further argues that when learning in, and experimenting with materials, aesthetic sensitivity is trained. Learning is then conceived as part of a process rather than on what the students might have achieved at the end of the study programme.

Our analysis, as shown in figure 2, demonstrates that the aesthetic activities encourage learning WITH art in relation to the overall topic-related or didactic goals, while the aesthetic goals of the tasks are limited to learning IN art.
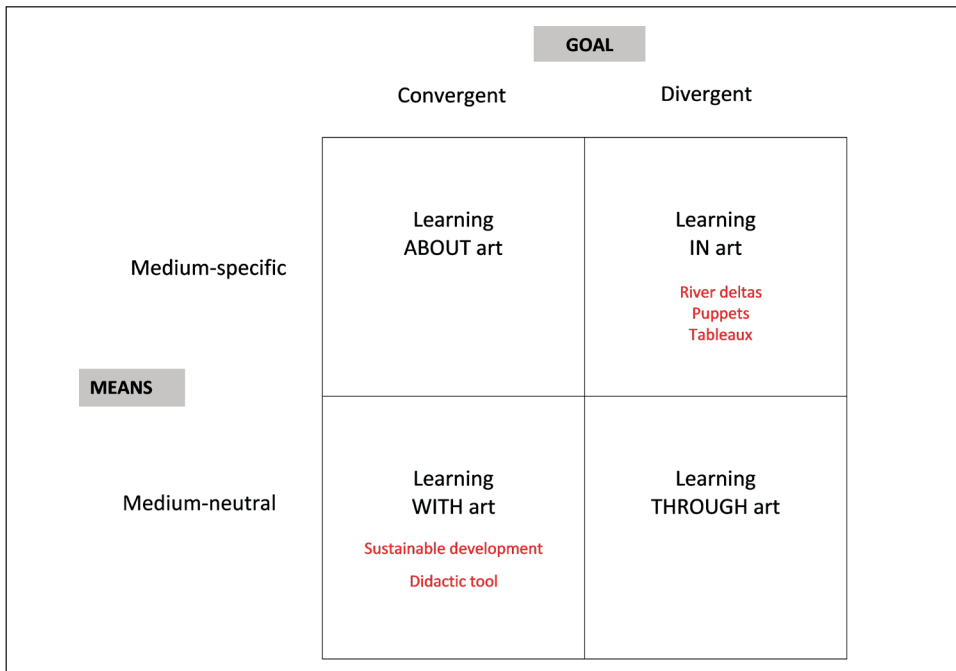

Fig. 2:   Analysis of aesthetic activities in this Storyline.

It appears that through the Storyline, the students have not had aesthetic learning processes ABOUT or THROUGH art. According to Lindström (2012), learning ABOUT art refers to the basics of art education, from the elements and principles of design to knowledge about artists, styles and genres (p. 170), while learning THROUGH art provides mental abilities and abstract thinking: "…thinking dispositions that students

might acquire by involving themselves in the arts" (ibid., 2012, p. 170). We will elaborate on the concept of THROUGH by referring to Richmond's description of art's intrinsic value in education (2009): "Through insight into the aesthetic, students realize the inherent satisfactions in engaging with art, which can provide a deeper, more profound sense of value than those prevalent in a consumer society" (p. 104).

The aesthetic activities provide possibilities for aesthetic experiences, as described by Dewey (1980). According to his definition of aesthetic experience, time is required for reflection, to make the experience mature and embodied, thus constituting a reflected aesthetic experience: "Moreover, he has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole that he desires to produce. To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought" (p. 47). We do not find that the students' experiences have gained structure and unity related to the aesthetic activities, as their descriptions of the aesthetic experiences were characterised by impulsive adjectives, not indicating deeper thoughts or conscious structures. When they describe a feeling of being in 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), and their emotional attachment to the tasks, their reflections do not show the reconstruction of thought, or the ability to use terminologies connected to the aesthetic subjects. We see that the students enjoy being in dialogue with materials, and that it enhances the creative process, contributing with an interest to develop and explore new possibilities. The students easily distributed the work amongst themselves, revealing engagement and focus when making the deltas, allowing each one to make decisions and explore the potential of the materials. Many of them found inspiration by looking at others' work, and the creative process continued in dialogue with the materials and other students. The aesthetic dimension of cross-curricular work implies that the students must experience aesthetic work by observing and interpreting others' aesthetic expressions, as Sæbø (1998) describes her notion of aesthetic experience (p. 410). They must also practise their own modes of expression, by exploring techniques and being in dialogue with the material (including their own bodily expression). Through these experiences and practice, they will develop what Sæbø (1998) refers to as the aesthetic criticism (p. 414), an understanding of aesthetic work based on qualified arguments and terminologies, giving the teacher a chance to demand quality in aesthetic work, rather than just accepting it to be "a tool" for other purposes.

The students are mainly positive to the aesthetic activities, and we see that they have had a certain touch of aesthetic experiences in terms of emotional attachment and feeling of flow. Dewey (1980) describes such experiences as "…inchoate. Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into an experience" (p. 36). The interviews reveal that the experiences of the students do not reach a higher reflection, allowing them to achieve true aesthetic experiences, in the sense described by Dewey as "we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment" (ibid., 1980, p. 36). This could indicate that the aesthetic activities contributed to the acquisition of the overall teaching goals, and contributed to an embodied understanding, in line with Østern's (2019) description of in-depth learning, about the topic of sustainable development and Storyline as a teaching approach.

The four modes of learning in Lindström's model complement each other and are all important in order to achieve high quality in aesthetic learning processes (Lindström, 2012). In addition to the use of aesthetic working methods in interdisciplinary projects, where the aspects of learning WITH and IN art are strengthened, the students therefore also need to learn ABOUT and THROUGH art to ensure that all aspects are safeguarded. This requires further training in the aesthetic subjects' own context to ensure wholeness and quality, and to provide opportunities for progression and reflection on the aesthetic learning processes according to Dewey's understanding of the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic subjects must therefore be strengthened as subjects with time and competence, as well as bringing aspects of them into interdisciplinary contexts. In this way, discipline and interdisciplinarity can be complementary and supportive: "Disciplines can encourage depth and technical mastery, while interdisciplinarity can provide for a broader perspective" (Fuller in Condee, 2016, p. 16).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed the quality of the aesthetic activities integrated in a multidisciplinary project, a Storyline. We found that it is important to give students opportunities to work from a concept and be able to express themselves in different types of media, in a media-neutral way, in order to stimulate creativity and exploration. These types of processes are closely related to interdisciplinary work, but this indicates that the materials and media used do not require a great deal of prior knowledge, or that the students have the academic knowledge in advance. We find that the aesthetic activities are experienced as meaningful and positive. The students were engrossed in the game, forgetting time and place, being in the moment. There is no doubt that the learning processes in relation to the overall goals; learning TSA and about sustainable development, were achieved more easily through the aesthetic activities and contributed to in-depth learning in the overall themes.

With this Storyline as point of departure, the art activities were means to another goal, and there was too little time to go in depth with the aesthetic issues. We find that to develop competence in aesthetic subjects and provide aesthetic experience, it is important to ensure that students both work in a media-specific way to become better acquainted with materials and techniques, develop skills, and be able to reflect on their experiences and the potential of the media. It is important to ensure learning about the basics of art, from the elements and principles of design, to knowledge about artists, styles and genres (ABOUT art), and to develop thinking dispositions and reflection in the art subject (THROUGH art). It is also important to let the students gain experience and time to dwell and reflect on the work with the media. In this way, the basis for a completed aesthetic experience, being in the moment, can be assured.

Acknowledgement

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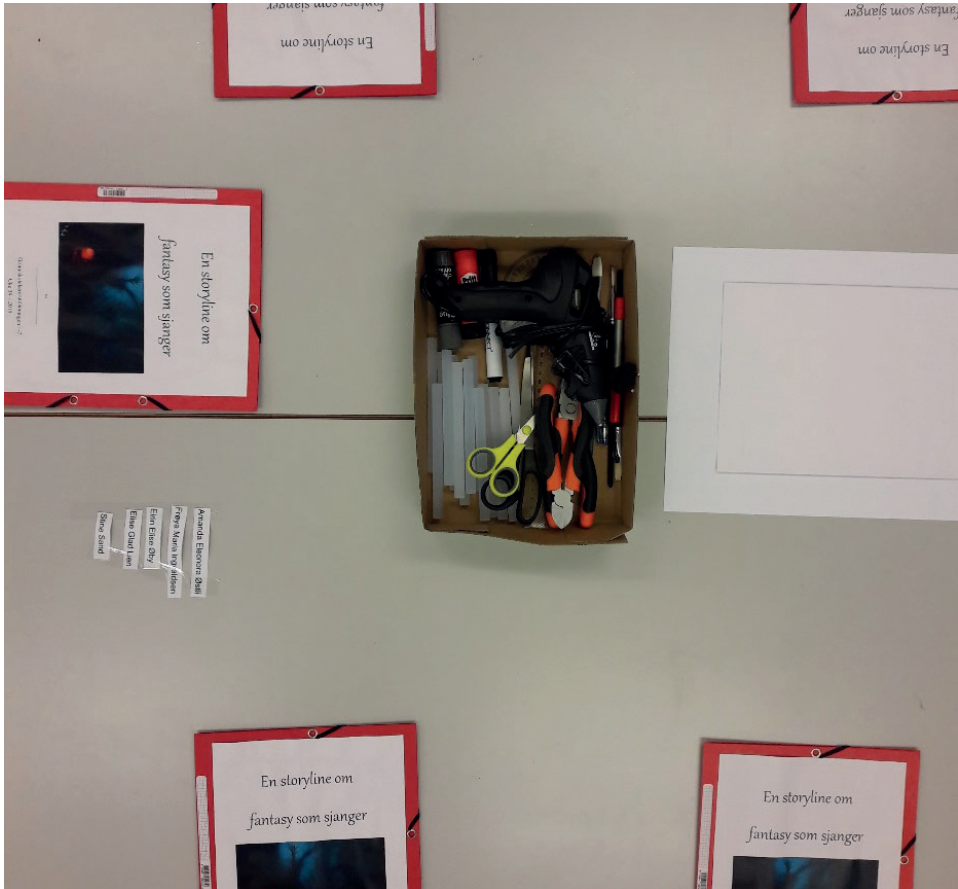
Strand 3

Image from the Storyline *Where good and evil forces fight for power* which shows how the desks were arranged ready for the Storyline. Photo: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.