



Social Sustainability Perspectives on a Music and Poetry Project

Katharina Dahlbäck, *University of Gothenburg (Sweden)*

Abstract

Exploring different issues through art can be a way to provide new perspectives on complex issues in the work of meeting the goals of Agenda 2030. When society has to adapt to ecological, economic and social changes, aesthetic expressions can play an important role in exploring new ways to find solutions and show different possibilities for how to live our lives. Bamford (2009) argues that artistic processes in school can help to provide students with social and intellectual survivability for the future: "The new reality is the critical and aesthetic realm of learning" (p. 19). The study is based on a music and poetry project that lasted for one year. A producer at a Swedish concert hall initiated a collaboration between five different schools' class teachers and three cultural workers with the aim of lowering the thresholds to the concert hall and letting new voices be heard from the stage. The students wrote poems and a selection of the students' poems were set to music. The project ended with nine school performances and a public performance at the concert hall.

The aim with the study is to investigate opportunities and obstacles for artistic collaboration projects in schools, as well as the relationship between spatial, social and didactic inclusion, and the significance of these from a sustainability perspective. What are the opportunities for artistic collaboration projects, in which different actors participate, in school? In what ways can students be included in an artistic process? We investigated three aspects of inclusion; spatial, social and didactic inclusion (Asp-Onsjö, 2006). Interviews was chosen as a method, and Illeris' art theory, Art Education for Sustainable Development, was used as a theoretical starting point for analyzing the material (Illeris, 2012). The results highlight how students were included spatially, socially and didactically in an artistic process. Aesthetic expressions can play significant roles in children's identity building and meaning making and this might lead to transformative learning, i.e. when learning brings about changes in attitudes and thinking patterns, providing opportunities to act in new ways and changing identity formation, which could be considered useful for both themselves and for society. The project was a participant-oriented intervention and can be seen as an example of how different forms of inclusion are a prerequisite for a socially sustainable society.

Keywords Social sustainability, Music, Poetry, Inclusion

References

- Asp-Onsjö, L. (2006). Åtgärdsprogram - dokument eller verktyg?: en fallstudie i en kommun. [Doktorsavhandling, Göteborgs universitet].
- Bamford, A. (2009). The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education. Waxmann.
- Illeris, H. (2012). Nordic contemporary art education and the environment: Constructing an epistemological platform for Art Education for Sustainable Development (AESD). *Nordic Journal of Art and Research*, Vol.1(2), 77-93.