

NORWAY [4] - 2012

THE CULTURAL RUCKSACK

A. BASIC INFORMATION

Country:	Norway
Title of initiative:	[NO] <i>Den kulturelle skolesekken</i> [EN] The Cultural Rucksack
Coordinator/ Organization:	The secretariat for the scheme is the Arts Council Norway. Contact: Vera Micaelsen, +47 21 04 58 39
Key competences addressed:	[NO] <i>Å oppleve, gjøre seg kjent med og utvikle forståelse for profesjonell kunst- og kulturuttrykk av alle slag;</i> [EN] Cultural awareness and expression
Type of initiative and channels used for implementation (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)	National initiatives and activities connecting the cultural sector and schools.
Partners:	Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Research
Scope: (student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national)	Students
Learning context: (formal or non-formal)	Formal and non-formal
School education level/s: (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)	Primary, lower secondary, upper secondary
Target groups:	Children and young people
Time frame: (start and end date)	2001 – ongoing
Relevant links:	The Cultural Rucksack: http://denkulturelleskolesekken.no/english/

B. SUMMARY

The Cultural Rucksack (*Den kulturelle skolesekken*) is a national programme for art and culture provided by professionals in Norwegian schools. The programme helps school students to become acquainted with all kinds of professional art and cultural expressions

The objectives of the programme are:

- To enable children and young people in primary and secondary school to enjoy artistic and cultural productions provided by professionals.
- To facilitate students' access to a wide range of cultural expressions, so that they can become acquainted with and develop an understanding of culture in all its forms.
- To assist schools in integrating different forms of cultural expression with their own efforts to attain learning goals.

As a national initiative that targets cultural awareness and expression as a key competence, the Cultural Rucksack has been successful in initiating and creating activities that combine activities in the cultural sector with education. Still, there are several challenges in improving this as a key competence area within curricula and school focus areas, and to overcome the risk of the Cultural Rucksack becoming just an extra-curricular activity.

C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

This initiative, 'the cultural rucksack', was established in 2001 by the Ministry of Culture to target collaboration between the cultural sector and the school sector. The same year the Ministry of Education and Research also provided funds for competence development connected to the same initiative, making it possible to launch initiatives and collaborative projects, linked to the national curriculum, between the cultural sector and schools. From 2003 the initiative was further developed through national lottery funds targeting the cultural sector. The motivation for the project was to create experiences for young people that reveal the interconnection between cultural expression and education in order to raise their cultural awareness. The initiative was evaluated in 2006 which defined the framework for a new White Paper from the Parliament on further initiatives and developments of the Cultural Rucksack.

The Cultural Rucksack (Den kulturelle skolesekken) is a national programme for art and culture provided by professionals in Norwegian schools. The programme helps school students to become acquainted with all kinds of professional artistic and cultural expressions.

Objectives:

The objectives of the programme are:

- To enable children and young people in primary and secondary schools to enjoy artistic and cultural productions provided by professionals.
- To facilitate students' access to a wide range of cultural expression, so that they can become acquainted with and develop an understanding of culture in all its forms.
- To assist schools in integrating different forms of cultural expression with their own efforts to attain learning goals.

Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

This initiative targets specific areas in the national curriculum. Students at all levels of education have the opportunity to experience cultural expressions supported through the Cultural Rucksack. Professionals within performing arts, visual arts, music, film, literature and cultural heritage are creating initiatives and offering collaborations with schools.

Overall approach (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

The Cultural Rucksack has been part of the Government's cultural policy for primary and lower-secondary schools since 2001, and has recently been extended to upper-secondary schools. This means that all students from the ages of 6 to 19 will be able to benefit from the programme. The Cultural Rucksack offers cultural opportunities representing a wide variety of cultural expressions. The Cultural Rucksack is a joint venture between the educational and cultural sectors at the national and local level. The initiative has a holistic approach involving a broad set of cultural areas and all levels of schooling.

Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:

Through different projects and direct experiences with the arts and professionals within the cultural sector, children and young people will gain a greater cultural awareness and experience different methods of cultural expression. They will take part in high quality projects involving professionals in the cultural sector and artists within a broad set of cultural areas. The emphasis is on cultural expression and production.

Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:

This initiative primarily targets the Arts within school curricula, but is also cross-curricular in approach as it is linked to projects within different subject domains in schools.

How the initiative/reform is being implemented (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

Regional cultural and education departments are responsible for coordinating the programme in their own regions and individual programmes are also designed by the municipalities. This assignment of responsibility to local authorities promotes enthusiasm and a sense of ownership among all parties involved and provides room for local variation.

The Cultural Rucksack is mainly funded by the surplus lottery funds from Norsk Tipping, the state-owned gaming company. The programme receives NOK 160–180 million (€20–23 million) annually, which is allocated to and distributed by the regional and local authorities. The great majority of cultural institutions and a number of related institutions are involved in the content of the programme. These institutions, the regional authorities and many local authorities contribute substantial sums from their own budgets.

Present stage/phase of implementation:

Over the past decade, major policy changes have focused on increasing the quality and quantity of arts and cultural education in Norway. Despite the fact that there has been a reduction in the time allocated to arts subjects in schools, there has been a general belief among both politicians and practitioners that the climate for arts and culture has improved considerably over the past years. The intrinsic aims of the arts are highly valued in Norway, in particular, a sort of 'cosy' feeling that stresses fun, enjoyment, and pride.

Pedagogical issues (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

This initiative puts an emphasis on the practical involvement of students in cultural activities with professionals. This will then raise cultural awareness among all students in school as in everyday life.

What works well (to identify enablers):

Professor Anne Bamford made an external evaluation of the Cultural Rucksack for the period of October 2010 to April 2012. In her evaluation she writes that: "The overall findings of the study suggest that Norway has placed a particular focus on improving the place of culture in society. Within a number of localities and at a national level there has been sustained investment in cultural hardware and software. The real strengths of arts and cultural education in Norway include The Cultural Rucksack (*Den kulturelle skolesekken*, DKS), community resources, amateur arts, general accessibility, and local cultural agents and professional associations. DKS is one of the largest programmes in the world that aims to bring professional arts and culture to children. It has been very successful at reaching all parts of the country, despite the obvious geographic and climatic challenges. Embedded within DKS are rigorous quality-assurance mechanisms that operate at the national and local levels through a system of peer review. Accompanying these evaluations are development programmes, which have in turn led to improved quality. Children as cultural consumers and audiences is a concept that is taken very seriously in Norway, and artists who work with children are often of a high standard."

Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

On challenges Professor Bamford wrote that: “As DKS celebrates its tenth anniversary, it has paused to reflect on ways to move forward in the future. One area that could be improved would be to reduce the high number of experiences a child receives each year, and instead work more in-depth with schools and children. Currently, too, DKS appears to have only a fleeting impact on pupils. This may be because the performances come and go and are not part of a sustained programme, or because the pupils do not perceive the relevance of the performances to their own interests or experiences. In terms of the latter, pupils want a greater say in the content of the Rucksack. There are currently some good examples of partnerships between schools and artists in Norway, but these should be extended, both in terms of the number of schools involved and the duration of the partnerships. In addition, these partnerships (including those with museums and cultural institutions) need to be embedded within policy and practice. ... The arts could play a much stronger role in the after-school (SFO) programmes. Explorations are underway into closer collaborations between the education and culture sectors in terms of after-school activities. While these explorations have focused on the possible role of the culture school in the SFO, it is suggested that libraries, cultural centres, volunteer arts organisations, youth centres, and the broader cultural and creative industries could be brought into these discussions, as these groups tend to have good links with young people of all ages in the community. They provide a valuable link between schools and the cultural and community sectors, but this potential is largely under-utilised at present. As an adjunct to this suggestion, it is also recommended that the theatre and museum sector in particular could play an important role in encouraging teachers – especially trainee teachers – to see the value of museums and theatres (and the cultural environment and other community assets) as a resource for situated learning. While the creative industries form an important and expanding part of the Norwegian economy, this is not recognised in arts education. There is a lack of career guidance and vocational education about the possibilities for employment in the creative and cultural sectors. Attempts to be more strategic in the development of the creative and cultural industries in Norway have resulted in mixed success, with some star individuals or small companies emerging, but in comparison to other developed economies in Europe the creative industries appear to play a far smaller part in the overall economy. One of the challenges for arts and culture in formal and informal education in Norway is to promote more cooperative thinking. This is complex, given that funding for arts and culture comes from many sources, including the National Lottery, central government funding, regional government funding, local government funding, foundations and private benefactors, businesses (industry), parents, the community, and young people themselves. Given this complexity of funding patterns, it is difficult to determine accurately the actual funding, either as a total or as a per-child figure.”

Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

Monitoring has been carried out through a combination of large-scale national evaluations in 2006 and in 2010-2012, combined with small-scale local initiatives of assessing initiatives and progress.

Impact (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

According to Bamford: “In terms of the curriculum, it was reported that there has been a reduction in time allotted to the aesthetic subjects in school. Concurrently, there was a widespread view that the aesthetic subjects in the *grunnskole* [compulsory 10-year education, ages 6-16] and *videregående skole* [VGS, 3-year upper secondary education] – and in the curriculum more generally – had become overly theoretical, and the reduction in the availability of electives and practical subjects has decreased the possibility of pupils choosing more creative subjects. There is a disproportionately high negative impact on arts and cultural education caused by the rhetoric surrounding the PISA testing process. Teachers and school principals spoke passionately about the dangers of the overemphasis on testing and accountability promoted through the PISA process, despite the evidence that suggests the opposite, that in fact high-quality arts and cultural education can be correlated with high achievement in the PISA testing process.”

Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:

This is done through a combination of using the website to communicate upcoming activities as well as an archive of documents with on-going initiatives and activities on local level. Once a year awards are given: one to a school and one to a specific production. The Cultural Rucksack also organises seminars and specific events in different parts of Norway.

Next steps/follow-up:

The initiative is at present in a period of redefining priorities and orientation with a new head of the national secretariat. The main aim is to focus on further involving schools in the Cultural Rucksack. There is a need to bring the students' perspective to the forefront, since evaluations have shown that they often conceive that this is “just” an extra-curricular activity and not linked to more substantial matters of education.

The KEYCONET project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication lies solely with the author, and the Commission is not responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.