

Margaretha Häggström and Katharina Dahlbäck

Transformative Learning and Identity Building through Aesthetic Experiences in a Storyline



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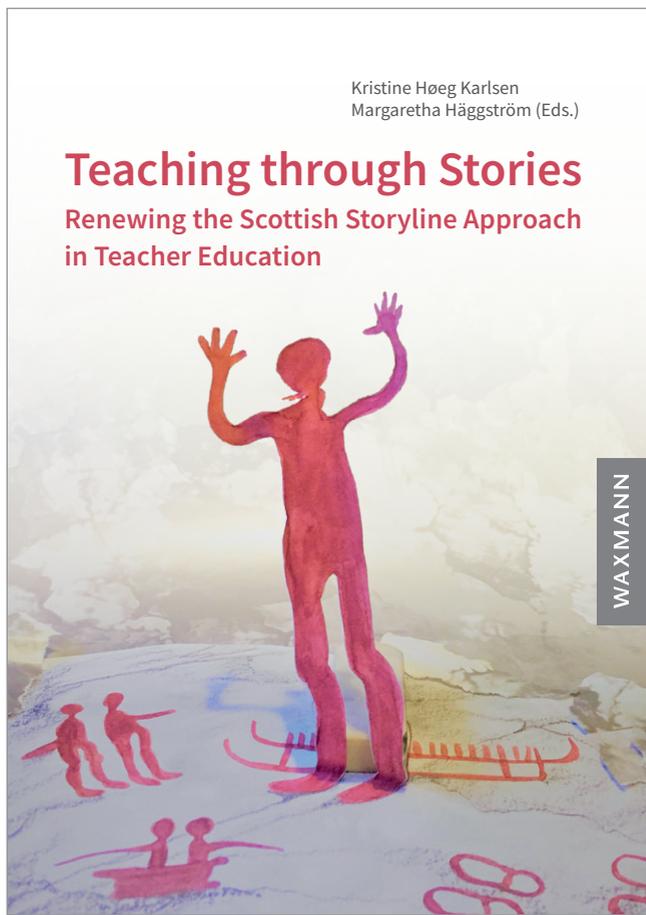
Kristine Høeg Karlsen,
Margaretha Häggström (Eds.)

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48159 Münster

Fon +49 (0)2 51 – 2 65 04-0
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Chapter 2

Transformative Learning and Identity Building through Aesthetic Experiences in a Storyline

Margaretha Häggström and Katharina Dahlbäck

Abstract. This study takes multimodality, aesthetic experiences and transformative learning as a point of departure and expands analysis to include three dimensions of learning: content, incentive and environment. The aim is to develop knowledge and understanding of aesthetic experience, knowledge and activities in the pedagogical approach of Storyline in teacher education. The study builds on a one-week-long Storyline and examines what the Storyline work means to the student teachers, and what the significance of the aesthetic experiences in this particular Storyline is, according to the student teachers. The data material consists of group interviews and discussions which are analysed through qualitative content analysis. Students' critical reflections were shown to be a prerequisite for their learning processes. The students expressed that the Storyline work was both nerve-racking and challenging, but once they had negotiated this obstacle, they felt stronger, more self-confident, and ready to use aesthetics as teachers in the future.

Keywords: Aesthetic learning, Transformative learning, Aesthetic experience, Storyline

Introduction

Our contemporary state is multimodal; thus, it includes visual, textual, aural, spatial and other resources or *modes*. This implies that we compose our messages through a variety of modes in order to communicate (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Jewitt, 2011). Some of the modes are aesthetic modes like visual arts, sound and music, bodily movement and dance. Aesthetic expressions of various kinds pervade more or less all parts of present western societies. We encounter images and jingles from commercials which urge us to consume, we meet external influences that claim to enlighten us and keep us updated regarding current events and we document our own lives through social media. Aesthetic artefacts play significant roles for the development of knowledge in educational settings; thus, aesthetic experiences may offer a learning opportunity, such as identity building (Piaget, 1972; Ziehe, 1982; Drotner, 1991) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Illeris, 2014; Cranton, 2016), that go beyond a cumulative type of learning. Storyline may offer multimodal and aesthetic didactic opportunities for making teaching and learning meaningful (Karlsen et al., 2018).

Although aesthetic experience is often seen as an “extremely ambiguous notion” without a common understanding of its significance (Shusterman, 2004), we have chosen this notion in order to capitalise on some of the complexity of its meaning and

impact. One dimension of aesthetic experience that we specifically want to examine is the transformational dimension as H. Illeris (2016) defines it:

The *transformational dimension* of aesthetic experience is connected to active processes of agency and change. It thereby also connects more directly to the concept of *learning* and in particular to Dewey's famous educational credo 'learning by doing' (see e.g. Dewey 1938/1997). (H. Illeris, 2016, p. 155).

H. Illeris also suggests that aesthetic experience is performative, i.e. it involves an active and progressive interaction between sensoric and reflective experiences of creating, and that the learning process is directed at the capability of experiencing, and hence at the competence of knowing how to experience, create and reflect on sensoric involvement with different aesthetically connected phenomena (ibid.). We link the concept of transformative learning to agency, which may lead to opportunities to act in new ways and change identity formation.

In this study, aesthetics are used to understand and discuss sensoric experiences in relation to aesthetic pedagogical teaching and learning tools, in particular how these experiences are articulated by student teachers who have been exposed to the pedagogical approach of Storyline. The aim is to develop knowledge and understanding of aesthetic experience, knowledge and activities in the pedagogical approach of Storyline. The research questions are: 1) What does the Storyline mean to the students and for their learning process, and 2) What is the significance of the aesthetic experiences and the aesthetic activities in the Storyline, according to the students? We will examine this empirically through a study on student teachers' experiences of, and opinions about, meeting with aesthetics during a one-week-long Storyline, carried out during their first year of education (2018).

This study's Storyline

This Storyline was included in teacher education for primary school teachers in Gothenburg, Sweden, both as a way to implement the methodology itself as a pedagogical approach, and a way to teach and learn the subject of language development. Multimodality, specifically aesthetic didactic tools, is a core theme in the course in which the Storyline was used. This particular Storyline had a number of episodes established by the teacher educators involved in the course, and was developed by the teacher educators and the students together. In Storyline, episodes are planned in sequences and develop the progression of ideas and the line of the story (Harkness, 2007). These episodes drive the topic forward and work as a narrative in any story, such as books or films. They are also the vehicles for contextualising the learning process (Omand, 2014). This particular Storyline is unfolded through a mini-show where the teacher educators are in character as a TV programme host and guests. This serves as an introduction to Storyline as a pedagogical approach. The starting point of the story is then when a teacher educator enters the classroom as a school principal and greets the student teachers as though they were the school's new staff. The teacher has prepared key questions (Omand, 2017) that will drive the story forward. The students create

teacher teams and their own teacher characters that will be challenged in various ways during the Storyline; for example, they have to design better learning environments for the imaginary school, and plan and conduct a multimodal lesson that will support language development. The teacher orchestrates a staff meeting where an angry parent appears, yelling at the teachers for using play as a teaching method. Key questions play a significant role here as the student teachers have to reflect, explore, and explain and to express their views and take a stand. All challenges, episodes and incidents include creative and aesthetic work of different kinds, e.g. visual art, music and drama. Before celebrating the end of the Storyline, the student teachers give a presentation about the learning outcome of the Storyline week in an aesthetic and multimodal way.

Theoretical background

In order to enable us to incorporate a compound view on learning, in this study we take the point of departure from K. Illeris's comprehensive understanding of human learning, defined as "any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing" (Illeris, 2007, p. 3). This broad formulation includes an extensive and complex set of processes integrating various conditions. Illeris emphasises two basic processes and three dimensions of learning. The two processes are actively involved in all learning processes. The first is the *external interaction process*, a process between the learner and the environment (social, cultural and material), and the other is the *internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition*. The external interaction process is in progress during all of our waking time, and we are aware of this to varying degrees. Awareness and focusing are important for learning. The internal psychological process involves impulses and influences imbedded in the interaction with the environment. New impulses are connected to previous understandings, knowledge, skills and experiences, and therefore learning, according to Mezirow (2000), is structured in meaning schemes, partly for different content areas and partly for overall perspective. Learning is thus about creating meaning, and, according to Bruner (1996), a *narrative understanding* about oneself, and this understanding is constantly developed and reinterpreted.

As is shown in Figure 1, the two processes move between three aspects, *content*, *incentive* and *environment*. *Content* relates to what is learned, i.e. knowledge and skills as well as opinions, attitudes, values, behaviour etc. It contributes to building understandings. *Incentive* relates to the mental energy that is necessary for the learning process to occur. It encompasses aspects such as emotions, motivation and intentions. Its function is to ensure a mental balance and to develop a personal sensitivity. *Environment* relates to the external social and material world, which is the general basis for the learning process. The dimensions of content and incentive emanate from impulses originating from the interaction process and are integrated with the internal process of acquisition and elaboration. Thus, the learning content is connected to the incentives in question, that is, what the learning is driven by, e.g. interest, desire or obligations. Consequently, the incentives are influenced by the content.

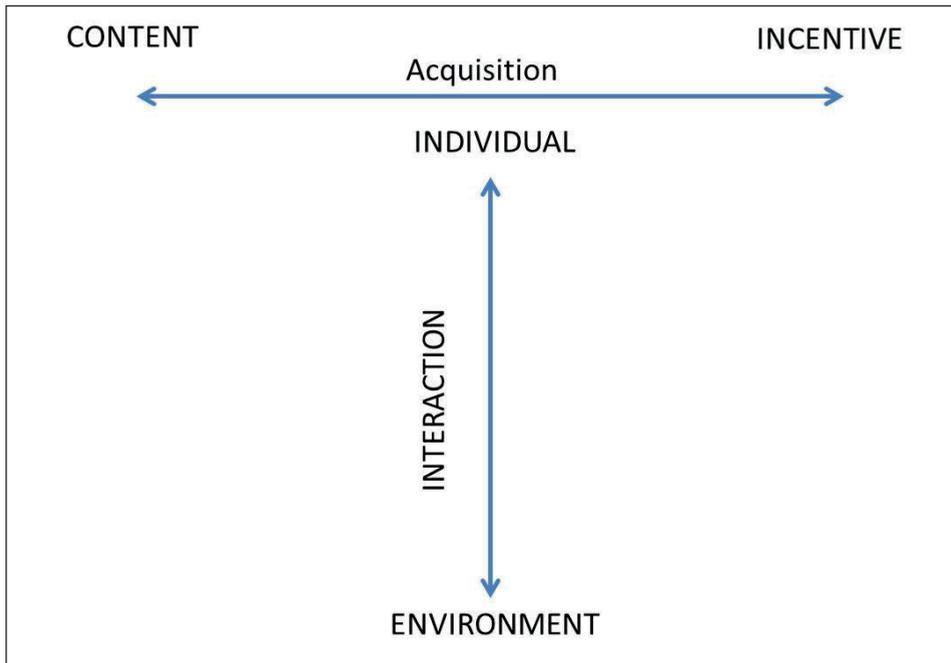


Fig. 1: Processes of learning (K. Illeris, 2009, p. 20)

The significance of Illeris’s comprehensive theory of learning is its holistic approach, i.e. the inclusion of personal development, socialisation and qualification. Learning is thereby considered partly as an integrated process between an individual and the environment, and partly as an internal mental access process consisting of the content and the incentive. K. Illeris’s model is also based on constructive learning theories, where “it is assumed that the learner him- or herself actively builds up or construes his/her learning as mental structures” (K. Illeris, 2003, p. 401). The structuring may be moulded in different ways.

In this holistic understanding of learning processes, and in relation to Illeris’ three dimensions of learning, we would also briefly highlight the impact of affect and embodied experiences. Affect is here understood as an ability to affect and to be affected, and that affects are “trans-individual”, which means that affect is collective and intersubjective (Manning, 2010; Massumi, 2015; Kristensen, 2016). Affective *learning* refers to a learner’s interests, attitudes and motivations (Gurewitz, 2000). One assumption is that emotional values give rise to actions. Gurewitz emphasises the importance of students’ own experiences as a source of knowledge, rather than exclusively “knowledge-based” education, i.e. more traditional fact-based teaching methods.

Aesthetic experience and the transformational dimension

As mentioned in the introduction, we are using H. Illeris’s (2016) perspective on aesthetic experiences and in particular the transformational dimension. This dimension highlights the activity, agency and change in the interplay of bodily anchored emotions

and reflexive experiences during the act of making. It also emphasises the ability to experience, which implies a skill in identifying the experience itself and the competence to reflect on sensoric participation with artwork and diverse aesthetically oriented activities, experiences and happenings. According to H. Illeris, the transformational “potential of aesthetic experiences lies in its productive powers of integration” (ibid., p. 163). H. Illeris highlights two aspects of integration: *the integration of sensuous and reflective aesthetic experiences* and *the integration of reception and production*. In order to examine the aesthetic aspects of a Storyline and how these integrations encourage and influence students’ learning and experiences, we utilise K. Illeris’s (2003) descriptions of transformative learning. We will then connect the transformative learning to the two basic learning processes (external and internal) described earlier.

The aim of transformative learning is to encourage and motivate critical thinking, not least critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 2000). The intention is to stimulate reflections on the learners’ experiences of teaching and learning situations and on their own pre-understandings and beliefs. In turn, this may support changes in attitudes and thinking patterns. In consequence, transformative learning could possibly include learning beyond assimilation and accommodation, that is, it embraces the cognitive, sensitive, social and situated aspects of human learning (K. Illeris, 2014).

In addition, we would argue that when a person is performing an aesthetic activity, the aesthetic experiences have the power to create a feeling of full immersion. Such an energised absorption is known as a state of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This feeling is characterised by losing a sense of time and space. According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow occurs under three conditions. Firstly, the individual is actively involved in a practice with clear goals. Secondly, the activity has immediate feedback, which allows for adjusting the performance to uphold the feeling of flow. Thirdly, there has to be a balance between the activity’s challenges and the individual’s experienced ability to perform the activity at hand.

Aesthetics in this Storyline

In the study’s Storyline, there are several aesthetic elements. In the introduction, where the teachers introduce Storyline, there are elements of visual art, film, music and drama. The introduction is important to show the students that the teachers not only talk about aesthetic expressions: they also use them themselves. During the week, the students will be able to work with several of these aesthetic expressions. The aim is that they gain an understanding of how they can use different forms of expression and communication in their future work with pupils’ language and knowledge development.

On the first day, the students make their own character, a paper doll, with different materials. A large piece of paper is placed on a wall and throughout the week a frieze grows. The students first paint a school on the piece of paper. Then they design different representations of rooms for teaching that will benefit pupils’ learning. These are placed on the frieze, either as images or in three-dimensional form with different materials. During the week, the students are involved in dramas and role playing where they are challenged to identify with the characters they have created. They also make paper dolls

to represent their characters, and these are added onto the frieze, and after the dramatisation with the angry parent, the students make speech bubbles where their characters express what they think about this incident. The multimodal lessons that the students plan and carry out are supposed to contain different aesthetic expressions and the students can choose how they want to combine modalities such as written and spoken language, visual art, music and so on. In the last assignment, where the students are to give an account of their knowledge and experiences about Storyline, there are opportunities to include visual art, drama, film, dance and music in the presentations. There is no room for teaching *in* the aesthetic subjects during the Storyline, but students are encouraged to use aesthetic expressions as didactic tools throughout the week.

Contextualising the study

This study is carried out within the teacher education programme for primary school teachers at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Primary school teacher education in Sweden is a four-year full-time programme, regulated by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) on behalf of the Swedish government. The study is conducted in one of the 22 mandatory courses for primary school teachers, namely the first course in Swedish language and literature. This course differs from most courses in other teacher education programmes at other universities in Sweden through its emphasis on multimodality, including aesthetic modes such as visual art, drama and music, in addition to oral and written aspects of language. The multimodal perspective and creative pedagogical approach in this course relate to the syllabus for the school subject Swedish and to the common curriculum for Swedish compulsory school, which stress the importance of using different pedagogical approaches and practical as well as sensual and aesthetic aspects of teaching (National Agency for Education, 2011). The course, which carries 15 ECTS¹, is called *Language as a communicative resource* (Course Syllabus, 2016), and includes a one-week Storyline that aims at creating teacher teams who have to plan, conduct and analyse lessons that encourage language development based on multimodality.

Data collection procedure and analysis

This study takes its point of departure from a survey that aimed to investigate the students' expectations of the upcoming Storyline week, and their pre-understandings of aesthetics. The Storyline was conducted in one class by Author Two. The students were contacted by the second author who also teaches in this particular course. There were six groups (each with four students) in the class and the two groups for this study were randomly chosen simply using 6 numbered tags, folded in a box, with two tags being picked out by one of the students. The eight students agreed to participate in interviews and were informed of the aim of the study. The students gave written consent to partici-

1 ECTS is the European Credit Transfer System, which refers to the amount of credits within a course.

pate. The study follows core ethical principles (The Swedish Research Council). We use fictional names in order to protect the participants' identities during and after the study.

The survey was answered by 40 of the 59 student teachers on the whole course. Then 24 student teachers (Author Two's class) were asked to keep a logbook during the Storyline week. The two groups of four students that were randomly chosen were interviewed four times; all in all eight group interviews. The class's multimodal group examinations are also part of the data collection. The main part of the data presented in this chapter was produced through the focus-group interviews with four student teachers in each group.

We have chosen focus-group interviews for two reasons. Firstly: a focus group is not just any group, gathered by coincidence. The members of the group are selected for a specific purpose; they are focused on a given topic. Secondly: this approach allows for active and dynamic discussions that include a variety of experiences and understandings (Halkier, 2010; Wibeck, 2010). Focus-group interviews are discussions that are carefully designed in order to acquire views on pre-defined subjects in a permissive, friendly environment (Krueger & Casey, 2009). An open and inclusive approach allows participants an opportunity to express their views, to comment on each other's statements and to share their attitudes. The intention with focus-groups is to promote self-reflection among the participants. This requires trust, effort and courage (ibid.). The researcher has to be aware of the affective perspective, and that the members of the group will affect each other (Manning, 2010). It is the interviewer's responsibility to create an atmosphere that is comfortable and relaxed. This implies an atmosphere in which all participants feel at ease expressing their views and that the discussion proceeds with no one dominating. One specific feature of focus groups is that they can generate data emanating from the interaction synergy.

The groups had already been assembled at the beginning of the course as working teams and in the Storyline, they represented teacher teams. As it is important that members of a focus group feel comfortable with each other, we considered the pre-existing groups to be appropriate for interviews. The authors monitored one group each during the Storyline week, following pre-determined open-ended questions, 1–2 main questions per interview session, with follow-up questions. An example of a question is: "Can you describe an aesthetic experience during the Storyline week?" Each group interview lasted for 20–40 minutes and was conducted at the university. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim by both authors. We interviewed the students four times during the week. In addition, they recorded a discussion on a topic we had asked them to deliberate on. We therefore have 10 recorded occasions.

As mentioned, the students were asked to keep logbooks, which were included as data production, as a way of representing the students as individuals in addition to the group interviews. Three questions guided the student teachers when journalising: 1) What happened today? (kind of activity), 2) What did I feel? (emotions and bodily reaction), and 3) What and how did I learn? These kinds of questions may reveal personal answers that will not be exposed in a group interview. However, Kitzinger (1995) claims that groups may facilitate discussions of sensitive topics since less inhibited members may break the ice and thus encourage shyer members. Using both



Img. 1: Code words were identified in the transcriptions, building on students’ statements, and categories were then created. Photo: Margaretha Häggström.

individual-based and group-based empirical data may reveal personal reflections and meta-reflections. Through a combination of methods, a more complex picture of the results might emerge (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Greene, 2007; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011), and the study may be wider and more holistic (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Cresswell, 2013).

Analysis

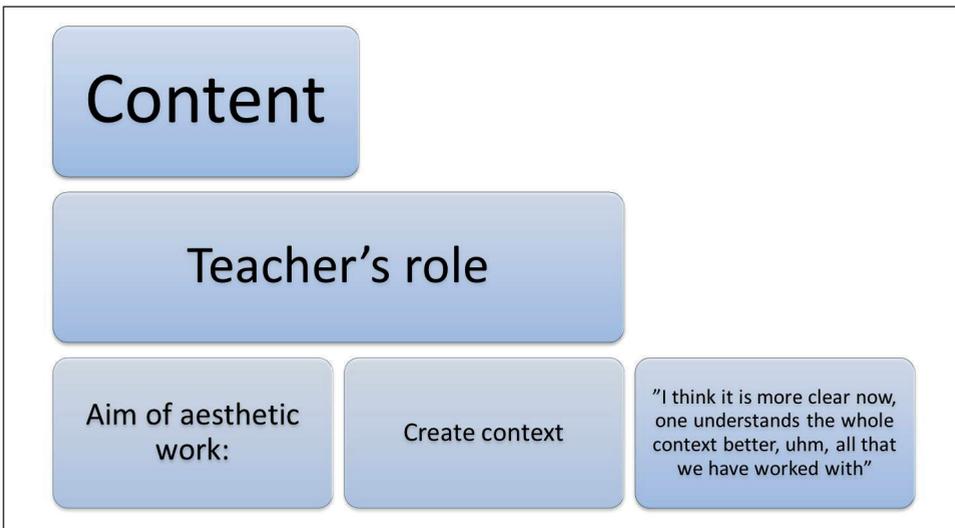
A qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) was used to analyse the empirical data. Following Schreier, we first created a coding frame, then tried out and adjusted the coding frame. We then evaluated the trial coding before carrying out the main coding. During this analysis, the two processes and the three dimensions of learning in K. Illeris’s learning theory were used. The analysis was carried out in four steps: 1) the interviews were transcribed, 2) code words were identified in the transcriptions, building on students’ statements relating to, for example, aesthetics, experiences and co-operation 3) students’ statements were then divided into different categories and 4) we related the categories to K. Illeris’s figure (Figure 1) and realised that the model was appropriate for the empirical material.

Results

The results are presented in three themes in order to answer the aims and questions of the study. These three themes are *the aesthetic content in the Storyline*, *the student’s incentive* and *the aesthetic environment in the Storyline educational context*, which are grounded in the model by K. Illeris, described earlier. We decided to first present the result of the analysis, and then connect each theme with a theoretical reflection.



Img. 2: Students' statements were first placed in different categories and then organised in relation to K. Illeris's theoretical framework. Photo: Margaretha Häggström.



Img. 3: Example of analysis, from main category (Content), to Subcategories 1 (Teacher's role), 2 (Aim of aesthetic work) and 3 (Create context), and student's statement.

The aesthetic content in the Storyline

The students' reasoning about the aesthetic content of Storyline consists of three main aspects. The first aspect is the students' thoughts about the teacher's role, the second aspect is about aesthetics and the third aspect is the student teachers' view of pupils' learning.

During the week with Storyline, the students were given the opportunity to think about *the teacher's role*, and what they consider characterises a "good" teacher. Then they each created a fictional character, a teacher in the form of a doll that became their "alter ego". Several students felt it was fruitful to test the role of the teacher using their character and, as one student (June) puts it: "imagine what this character would have thought and done". They also noted that they themselves had preconceptions about different types of teachers: "All the prejudices about these hippy musicians came into my character, as well." Acting as a teacher in different situations based on their character was instructive according to the students. By trying to act as they believed their character would have done: "This fits this person and that's up to her" (June), they also thought about how they would be able to act in their future roles. A common view amongst the students was that they had practised their ability to speak to people and that it was easier to present a task when they acted together in the group and played a role (their character) than if they had been alone as themselves. Interestingly, the students described how, through the work of aesthetic expression during the week, they had gained a deeper understanding of how they can use aesthetics as tools when working as teachers, and that they have understood the purpose of using aesthetics in teaching. As one teacher (Augusta) says, it's important to dare to "show yourself and ... to show creativity and imagination, and then the children will be infected with it, I think." All the students emphasised that during the Storyline week, they gained knowledge and understanding of how they can teach from a multimodal perspective. It is obvious that the students appreciated trying out different ways of being teachers, a majority emphasising that it was fun to enter the teacher's role as their character. As teachers, they need to be able to switch between different ways of responding to people, for example colleagues, parents and students: "You may have to be a little more academic towards parents and others but creative and flexible with the children" (April).

The second aspect relates to the students' thoughts about *aesthetics*, and they emphasised the importance of reflecting on their own learning and the role of aesthetics: "Well, going deeper and really experiencing it, that you take it to another dimension in a way. Instead of sitting still and being fed with information, it becomes more alive" (April). Putting the learning into words through aesthetic expressions is an important part of the students' own learning processes. The students' view of aesthetics has changed during the week so that they gain an in-depth understanding of how important it is, and they commented that they themselves will dare to be imaginative and creative, and that they will use aesthetic expressions in their future teaching. For some students, expressing themselves aesthetically has previously been associated with anxiety, but during this week, it has been de-dramatised, mainly because they have been working and being creative together. As regards the aesthetics of Storyline, the students

discussed what it means that the content of the tasks during the Storyline largely consisted of aesthetic expressions. At first, they found it difficult; some students would have liked a template for what to do, for example, when they were to create their characters. April, below, realised that it was good to be challenged:

Because then I had to develop and I was challenged because it was a bit scary to do it freehand, because, in my opinion, I'm not so good at it. Then I had to challenge myself, and then I did, and then I showed myself that ... well ... I can.

It also appears that the creative process was important and that the students realised the value of participating in a creative environment. As June put it:

... before, then you do not know what it's all about and the control person within me feels that: now I do not know what it's about and then it becomes scary, and thinks: oh, what should we do and what's going to happen? But after yesterday and today it's more pleasurable.

The students were positive about making and creating things during the Storyline. They argued that they developed their imagination and creativity, and "it isn't every day you need to do that" (Augusta). They repeatedly emphasised that it is fun to express themselves through aesthetic expressions and that it is a combination, a whole of making and thinking, where they can use all their senses, which also gives a bodily and physical knowledge.

The frieze is an example of how the creative process was visualised. It grew during the week and finally it was a finished product that the students were proud of and where they felt that they had contributed to the whole: "It will be like a canvas; that you start with a completely blank sheet and gradually it emerges, and then it will be a finished painting little by little" (June). Together they have created their own world through the frieze. Drama was also an important element which made the situations in Storyline feel authentic, as one student reported:

It gives power. This effect is bigger because they went into the role, than just saying that this would be possible. Now we had to taste it, it will be a small taste of what it's like in reality (June).

The students believed that the dramatised events led them to reflect with all their senses about how they themselves would react as teachers in the situation that was conceived. In the final presentations, it became apparent that the aesthetic parts were important as reinforcement in getting a message across. The groups each recorded a movie using drama, images and music: "our whole presentation is sort of aesthetic" (April). Without aesthetic elements, they claim that the presentations would have become boring and flat: "Because then we would just have stood and talked. It would not have been so effective" (June). Now there was humour, playfulness and joy in the presentations, giving them a "stronger power" (June). In this way, the aesthetic expressions helped the students demonstrate their understanding when they presented their knowledge of Storyline.

The third aspect is *the students' view of pupils' learning*. The students emphasised that teaching can be more fun, alive and playful when using aesthetic forms of expression, and that it is important that pupils use all their senses. They consider it easier to raise the pupils' interest, and that subjects may become more fun with multimodal working methods. As an example, they claimed that they themselves had learned a lot during the Storyline week, in a playful, fun way: "Yes. We had fun; you do not think we have learned anything now ... but we have!" (June). There are no contradictions between having fun, laughing and learning, according to the students. In order to learn and to remember what you have learned, it may be useful to use different forms of expression, and the majority of the students agreed with the statement: "Both get knowledge and get creative" (April). The students also considered that it is possible to achieve a deeper understanding when all the senses are engaged in learning. June thinks it has been "really beneficial" to "get into this world" where empathy is required, and you must use imagination and creativity. In the same way that the students themselves need to put into words what they have learned, they also argued that it is important that their future pupils can demonstrate their understanding and knowledge through different forms of expression and also reflect aloud upon what they have learned.

According to Illeris (2007), the content dimension consists of knowledge, understanding and skills. The students emphasised that they have gained knowledge of both Storyline and the aesthetic forms of expression. They have also gained a deeper understanding of the purpose of aesthetic expressions. During the week, they have practised their skills, firstly by using aesthetic forms of expression and secondly by trying out different teacher roles. The students' statements can be interpreted in terms of transformative learning. The transition that the majority of the students described from having previously had anxiety about expressing themselves aesthetically to seeing themselves in the future as a teacher who can use and dares to use aesthetic expressions is a clear example of transformative learning.

The student's incentive

Incentive – I can, I dare to, I want to, I am allowed to

Incentive includes aspects such as emotions, motivation and intentions. In the students' statements, we have identified that incentive is strongly linked to affective learning, i.e. emotional and experiential learning. We also identified three key ways of talking about this affective learning which we connect to the didactic questions of what, how and why. What kind of affect do we recognise? How do the experiences of the Storyline's content affect the students? Why should such experiences be included in education? In the following, quotations from the students are presented in relation to these key entries.

What

The students repeatedly mentioned that they were affected by the teacher educators' introductory show. They were surprised in a positive way and inspired by the way the teachers "loosened up" and were very approachable. That made the students happy and excited:

April: And that they [the teacher educators] got into character, the roles were a bit funny and not these serious teachers [giggle] (...). It felt important, because then it feels like that we become more relaxed...

June: Exactly, it becomes fun and then one can relax...

May: Yeah

June: And then the imagination can be a bit bigger...

April: One can think more...

In the beginning, they were also quite anxious about what the week would bring but once the story started and they became involved, they described that they felt more relaxed and secure. When reflecting, they also said that the Storyline was challenging in different ways. Some found the creative and aesthetic parts challenging and difficult while others said it was when they had to present the work in a dramatic way that it was challenging. "I am not a person who is handy by nature, nor can paint well, so for me it was very challenging" (June).

One event that is mentioned several times is when the angry parent came in, which was described as a surprising and confusing but also powerful and even shocking event that made the students think about their role as teachers, partly as an inspiring way of conducting the Storyline to engage children, partly as what could really happen to them when meeting parents.

April: They could have just told us: Sometimes, parents get angry, what would you do then? But, instead they became the characters. First, you get a bit shocked ... when she [the parent character] came and yelled like that [the others laugh].

May: And it was like reality, and I started to think: What would I say to a parent who is screaming at you, like that? Instead of if they [the teachers] had, as you just said [turning toward April].

How

When the students described how they experienced the Storyline week, they used words such as being absorbed and committed. They also referred to laughing a lot.

May: One has to identify ... one may be a bit childish... I mean, it is quite seldom one does such things nowadays. And I love, I have very good memories of that from school... because it was really fun. Even so, I had this thought: but, we are not learning

anything, then yes, we are learning ... it just flows along. This is why this is so great when you create and have such a good time, you don't think of it as learning and you do learn.

Why

The students reflected a lot on the importance of affective experiences in teaching and learning situations. They suggested that it helps self-understanding.

June: One really gets to develop as a person and maybe use ways of thinking and reasoning that we haven't done before, so it's really challenging, but also developing.

The students also saw that working with aesthetics promoted self-confidence.

May: I get a little ... gain a little self-confidence through the feeling of: Oh, how good we are, getting our heads started so quickly and coming up with things.

Another aspect mentioned was being placed in a fairyland where everything is possible. Being in character and being able to use one's resources, such as imagination, creativity and handcrafting, was of significance too. June said: "to enter this world and feel at ease is really useful".

The affective aspects are profound in this theme, and personal commitment is essential to the learning process according to the students. It is clear that interaction plays a crucial role in acquisition and elaboration, as Illeris (2007, 2014) claims. The learning is motivated by the students' interests and desires. The incentive dimension is critical for the students' learning processes. It is also evident that the affective processes are intersubjective, and that the student teacher both affect each other and are affected by one another (Manning, 2010). The aesthetic content in Storyline underpins the students' emotional, sensoric and reflective experiences. H. Illeris (2016) argues that these kinds of aesthetic experiences and learning may lead to transformative learning.

The environment in the Storyline educational context

The interviews revealed different forms of interaction that the students considered to be important for their work during the Storyline. The section below describes three parts: first cooperation in the groups, then the group interaction regarding ideas and solutions to tasks and finally the students' descriptions of democratic aspects of interaction.

The students described *the cooperation in the groups* as both fun and important: "We laughed and had fun [...] it clarified a lot for you ... that cooperation is incredibly important" (June). Augusta also emphasised that the collaboration in the group was inspiring and that it resulted in learning as well as joyfulness: "We had a lot of fun so ... at the same time we are talking about something that is very important and which we need to take a stand for". The students said that it was much easier to quickly determine how to work together in the group compared to working alone with a task. They gained confidence in supporting each other in the group, both when they suggested what they

would do and when they gave a presentation together: “Presenting in groups was much more comfortable than just standing alone; that you can support each other a bit and do it together” (April). Presenting through aesthetic expressions was a challenge for some of the students but it felt better with the group’s support: “When you did something you felt uncomfortable with, then it helped that we were in the group” (April). Both interviewed groups emphasised that everyone in the group was dedicated, positive and contributed to the work in the team. In this way, the individuals affected the group and the group affected the individual. Together, students became efficient and contributed different things so that they quickly got started on the various tasks:

We contribute so many different parts, like our presentation today; someone has contributed very good rhymes, someone a scene we would do, so there are many small streams. So you get exchanges and you learn from each other – in the spirit of Vygotsky. (June)

To a large extent, the students described the importance of the surrounding context, which is an external interaction process. The groups that are formed and the activities that are created in this Storyline provide the prerequisites for the students’ learning. The students’ participation is shaped around a common, goal-oriented activity and the more active and committed they are, the greater the chance that they learn something significant (K. Illeris, 2007).

The students reported that during the week they came up with more and more *ideas regarding solutions to tasks* by working together with aesthetic expressions. As June put it:

It’s almost like a snowball effect. In the beginning we had a lot of trouble getting started and did not know what to do but then it just rolled on.

July and April described their concerns at the beginning of the week when they did not know what would happen: April: “Oh, what should I do?” July: “Oh, what should we do and what is supposed to happen”. Step by step, they felt safe and the work was enjoyable. At first, it was about coming up with ideas and sharing them in the group. Decree describes how they were inspired by each other in the group: “Oh, that’s what you can do!” And July stressed that new ways of thinking about something in the group emerged: “You get really different angles.” Augusta felt that her imagination was developed by exchanging ideas in the group: “You get imagination from each other; you learn from each other.” Ideas that were tried out became fun to implement with the group’s support: “Oh, this was also a great idea” (June). Because the students did not know each other so well, it was important to be able to collaborate and choose among the common ideas and then develop the ideas chosen. They described how they inspired and learned from each other and how they challenged each other to “think outside the box” (June). The design of the tasks led them to quickly become solution oriented and eager to start on and develop the ideas they decided on together. There was a sense of flow amongst the students, and they commented that they did not notice that time went by and just wanted to continue their work:

April: And then the hours went so fast! We had kind of no control, we forgot to eat ... When we left, the place was completely deserted.

Marcia: We had so much fun too, when something is fun, you just want to continue.

The students did not get much time for the different tasks. They were aware that they had many good ideas that could have been developed, but that they needed to focus on the idea they had decided to work with. Marcia felt that they had been challenged to dare to do something even if they did not have such a long time: "... it does not have to be perfect; dare... a little more". The majority of students agreed that in the group, it was easier to come up with ideas; Augusta said that her imagination worked better in the group than if she had been working alone. The students emphasised the inventiveness in the groups, for example Marcia said:

Yes, but we get ideas all the time! Like yesterday when we came to think that we would ask about the teachers, we always think, all the time, constantly creating more.

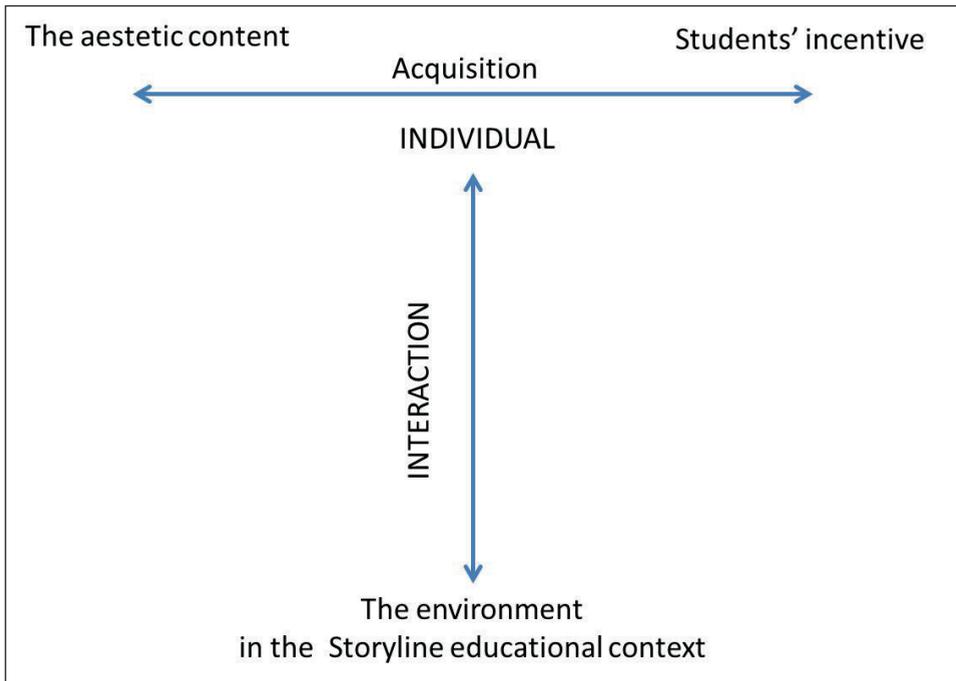
The groups turned out to be of importance for the students' divergent thinking. From the same input, as the students describe, there are many possible outputs, and this can develop creativity and diversity (Illeris, 2007).

Some *democratic aspects* of the cooperation that were observed in the interviews are that it was important for the members in the groups to make their voices heard. June expressed it as follows:

But also this, that everyone can make their voice heard. There is always someone in a group who finds it easier to talk and take up space. In this context, everyone is allowed to make their voice heard.

The students did not feel that there was someone who "ruled over the others" (June), but they could listen to each other and together decide how to work. Both of the groups interviewed reflected on how it would have been if the cooperation had not worked: "Then it would have been a very difficult week" (May). They did not know each other before and were now supposed to work together in a group for a whole week, which could be "easier said than done" (June). Marcia said that someone in the group could have been negative and then it would not have been fun to put forward ideas. Now it was easy to cooperate: "Yes! Let's do that! It's fun and good and we get what we are going to do" (Marcia). According to Augusta, it is necessary to communicate and to listen to each other in a group: "Well, you think so" and learn to compromise.

The learning situation, and the Storyline itself, shape and influence the learning process. The interaction dimension includes action, communication and cooperation (Illeris, 2007). The students clearly described many aspects of interaction, how they collaborated, communicated and acted when they performed different tasks during the Storyline week. They reported how important the context was for their learning and that they were focused on the activities they performed. In the work with Storyline, they participated in a social context and said that they felt both security and community. Through the interaction in the group, students could achieve social integration and



Img. 4: Illeris' model in relation to the Storyline in this study.

develop their sociality. Self-confidence grew with the group's support, the students felt imaginative, creative and productive. According to Illeris (2007), more active and engaging forms of interaction can contribute to transformative learning, often triggered by a process involving participation and implementation of activities (img. 4). The interaction dimension described in this section has mainly focused on the importance of the context for learning.

Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the results in relation to K. Illeris's two processes: external interaction process and internal psychological process, and the three dimensions, according to the figure below. We have developed Illeris's figure by adapting it to our study: *aesthetic* content, *students' incentive* and *Storyline* educational context.

The results show that the students have transformed their frame of reference and changed their perceptions. To achieve this, critical reflection was a prerequisite. The students emphasised the importance of creative processes and creativity, and divergent knowledge, rather than merely acquiring already developed knowledge. This transformative learning was, according to the students, somewhat nerve-racking and challenging, which implies that the students had to put effort into the Storyline work; it was not all enjoyable and pleasant. However, once they had overcome this threshold, they felt stronger, more self-confident, and they said that aesthetics are now an accessible tool that they can use and would use as teachers. The Storyline has inspired them and shown

that Storyline is a way to make aesthetic aspects of learning less dramatic than they used to think, but rather a fruitful means of including all pupils in different ways. This clarifies the entanglement of the two processes. The interaction between the students within the Storyline context has played a crucial role for this acquisition.

We would claim that the aesthetic content in Storyline is an essential feature for three reasons. First, learning *about* aesthetics, second, as a *way* of learning, and third, learning about oneself to understand one's own reactions. In the content dimension, the students' comprehension concerning knowledge and skills regarding aesthetics has deepened. They link the aesthetics to the possibility of reflecting through all senses; thus, they realise that there is no contradiction between on the one hand being creative and having fun, and on the other hand developing knowledge.

Here, we would argue for the significance of the incentive dimension for the learning process. Students' descriptions of being immersed in a feeling of full involvement and enjoyment in the Storyline process was not one that we had anticipated. We found it very interesting that the students expressed this feeling in such a lively way as they did. We interpret the students' feelings of being absorbed, creative and committed as a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Through Storyline work, students have the opportunity to involve all the senses, which may lead to affective learning. The power of affective learning is its importance for identity building, creating an integrated learning situation, i.e. when knowledge is embodied. Therefore, we claim that the incentive dimension should be foregrounded more often. Today, the content dimension often governs the didactic choices, while there are benefits to starting with aesthetic and affective experiences.

The Storyline in this study affords a distinct environment for the students' emerging identity as teachers. For this to happen, an external interactive process and an individual internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition are required. The interaction dimension is highlighted by the students. For example, the cooperation in the groups is stressed as being critical, both during the creative parts and during the multimodal presentations. The students were inspired by each other, their limits were expanded, and they felt comfortable during the whole Storyline week. In particular, we want to pay attention to the importance of reflection, for all participating students in general, and especially for the students who were interviewed. The interviewed students said that, through the interview discussions, they deepened their understanding of the meaning of using aesthetics in education. They mentioned explicitly their understanding of the three key concepts in the course – imagination, creativity and creation – as an effect of their dialogue in the focus group. In the students' multimodal examinations, we observed that the students from the focus groups performed on a higher level and showed a more in-depth understanding.

In this study, the processes and the dimensions (Figure 2) have shed light on the students' identity formation. Some have expressed this as a movement from feeling anxious about aesthetic expressions to feeling self-confidence, and that they can now use and dare to use them in their future work as teachers. This has been enabled through both thinking and doing. Altogether, this is precisely what transformative learning is!

Conclusion

If student teachers are to understand The Storyline Approach, its broad capability to support learning development, and its various ways of reaching different educational goals, teacher education needs to provide opportunities for student teachers to experience, reflect on and critically question this approach. When discussing different perspectives on aesthetics in Storyline, student teachers were given the time to reflect on their experiences, and to learn from each other. This occurred through the study rather than being part of the educational framework, that is, through the group interviews and also very likely by letting the student teachers keep logbooks. Therefore, we would stress that Storyline in teacher education should include different procedures that give student teachers enough time to discuss in depth the features of Storyline with regard to their different learning outcomes. The intersubjective affects, in both The Storyline Approach, and in focus group interviews, could be more deliberated designed in teacher education as a way of acknowledging the importance of students' incentive dimension in learning processes.

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