



Directorate for Education  
Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), OECD

## Innovative Learning Environments (ILE)

### INVENTORY CASE STUDY

### **Kuopio Culture Path Program**

### Finland

*The Culture Path Programme is targeted at students aged 7-16. It aims at enhancing the social, emotional, and physical well-being of the children through culture and art, by ensuring that every student has access to the city's cultural services. This is realized with practical tools for teachers to implement goal-oriented cultural education, and by strengthening the cooperation between schools and cultural institutions, supporting the development of schools as cultural communities. The programme is divided into nine "paths" related to art, libraries, theatre etc, which are designed for the needs and curriculum objectives of a particular grade level, within and across different subjects. As part of the paths, students visit at least one local cultural institution outside the school environment every year. After eight years on the Culture Path, 9th graders can use the city's cultural services for free with a K9-card. Research-based evaluations of the programme focus at learning of both individual students and teachers.*

This Innovative Learning Environment case study has been prepared specifically for the OECD/ILE project. Research has been undertaken by Anna Mikkola, Antti Rajala, Leena Tornberg & Kristiina Kumpulainen from the University of Helsinki under the supervision of Juho Helminen from the Finnish National Board of Education, following the research guidelines of the ILE project.

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## Foreword

The Culture Path project serves as an example of how the services provided by cultural institutions and school education are tied together as a fixed entity, which is incorporated in the official local curriculum. The learning environment extends outside school and a seamless cooperation is created between different organizations of local government. The active role of the learners is the key element of the model since it allows them to express themselves in different ways, depending on the cultural services available.

As far as the cooperation with cultural institutions is concerned, the model can naturally be transferred anywhere, but it could also be expanded, for example, towards cooperation with actors of the local economic life. It is essential that the possibilities found in the schools near environment can be exploited in its everyday activities.

*Finnish National Board of Education*

# 1 Introduction

This research report is part of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation – CERI's international study on *Innovative Learning Environments* (ILE). The report provides a description of one Finnish learning environment project – the *Kuopio Culture Path Program* (in Finnish *Kuopion kulttuuripolku*).

The structure of the research report is as follows. In Section 2, we'll describe the data collection and analysis procedures. An overall description of the Culture Path Program in terms of its aims and structure is presented in Section 3. In Section 4, we'll describe the actual learning activities as they were realized in one classroom participating in a drama workshop. Finally, in Section 5, we'll draw some conclusions concerning the possible impacts of the Culture Path Program.

The present research was conducted within the *Learning Bridges: Learning and Teaching at the Intersection of Formal and Informal Learning Environments* project in collaboration with the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). The Learning Bridges Project was a three-year (2008–2010) multidisciplinary research project funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education. The project was carried out at the University of Helsinki at the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences.

## 2 Data collection and analysis

Following the Inventory protocol provided by the OECD/CERI, multiple data sources were utilized in the present research. These data sources included documents, two facilitator interviews, interviews of the project coordinator and cultural planner Jonna Forsman, and the cultural planner Liisa Hämäläinen, in addition to one student group interview. Field notes were taken by two researchers to capture the learning activities of a class of fifteen 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the Theatre Path, as we did not receive permission from all the students' guardians to use a video recorder.

The selection of this particular class and the specific activities under study were reflected on with Jonna Forsman, the project coordinator of the Culture Path Program, Kuopio, and decided upon by the research team. This particular case was selected due to practical reasons, as at the time of data collection there were no other ongoing workshops. In addition, the case was selected, because there were some problems of group dynamics and bullying in the class, which are, in general, emphasized in the Culture Path Program. The research data was gathered in fall 2010 when the group participated in an hour and a half drama workshop. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for further analysis in accordance with the analytic categories of the Inventory Protocol. In addition, the analysis was complemented with such materials that were regarded relevant to the entire Culture Path Program.

### 3 The Kuopio Culture Path Program

#### Goals of the Culture Path Program:

- ✓ Ensure that every elementary school student in the City of Kuopio has access to the city's cultural services
- ✓ Create new experiential learning environments
- ✓ Give teachers practical tools for implementing goal-oriented cultural education
- ✓ Strengthen the schools' and cultural institutions' cooperation
- ✓ Support the development of schools as cultural communities

#### Key points in Section 3

- ✓ The Culture Path Program aims at improving the overall well-being of the children and youth by means of culture and art, as well as contributing to their healthy and secure schooling in the City of Kuopio.
- ✓ The Finnish National Board of Education and the City of Kuopio provided the necessary resources for the Culture Path Program at the beginning of its lifespan, and hence enabled the program to develop to its current form.
- ✓ Today, the Culture Path Program is considered as a basic operation in the city's educational and cultural services, as well as in all elementary schools and cultural institutions in Kuopio.
- ✓ The program is divided into nine cultural paths that are designed for the needs of a particular grade level – within and across different subjects and cross-curricular themes.
- ✓ The utilization of the paths does not incur any costs for schools as transportation between schools and destinations, as well as materials, and teacher training are all covered.
- ✓ The Culture Path Program opens the way for students and their teachers to experience the joy of culture and art together – within and out of school.
- ✓ In 2009 there were total of 23 schools and 9,000 students, 1,000 students for each class level, participating in the program.

The *Kuopio Culture Path Program* (in Finnish *Kuopion kulttuuripolku*) was a three-year learning environment project funded by the City of Kuopio and the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). The project ended in 2009, and since then the program of cultural paths has been regarded as an integral part of the schools' and cultural institutions' everyday operations, i.e. all costs for the paths have been accounted for in their budgets, as the project's coordinator and cultural planner Jonna Forsman stated. The project was administrated by the Center for Cultural Services in Kuopio in collaboration with the city's educational services, and it is part of the ensemble of programs under the banner of Active Childhood and Youth in Kuopio (City of Kuopio's website <http://w3.kuopio.fi/englishhome.nsf>).

The Culture Path Program is targeted at all students aged 7-16 in the City of Kuopio. It aims at enhancing the overall well-being – i.e. social, emotional, and physical - of the children through culture and art. The program was initiated by the City of Kuopio's Educational Services, Cultural Services, and the Center for Leisure Time Activities in 2006. When Kuopio was revising its Child and Youth Policy agenda in 2007, special attention was given to developing a preventive model for the Child Protective Services. This in turn gave impetus to the development of the Culture Path Program, as Jonna Forsman, recalls. She described the rationale for the program as follows:

“[...] Kuopio has quite big problems with child protection, and our social services expenditures are high. There's news about child protection issues every day. Therefore, we should pay more attention to [...] so that corrective actions would be minimized. So, it is better to use these kinds of cultural curators than school curators and psychologists.”

The project was implemented in close collaboration with the city's cultural institutions, schools and teachers, as well as other relevant interest groups such as the Eastern Regional Center for Dance, Children's Cultural Center Lastu, many cultural associations, and private culture activists. Together with these various organizations the project actors aimed at producing a service that would be easily accessible, and which would enable both students and teachers to experience culture and art as a source of learning, joy and well-being. According to the cultural planner Liisa Hämäläinen the Kuopio Culture Path Program is an innovation born out of the partnership between the city of Kuopio's cultural institutions and Cultural Services. According to Liisa Hämäläinen the driving force

behind this partnership was “a certain communal idea of cultural education being something the city is jointly responsible for”.

The program is divided into nine paths – Library, Art, Museum, Media, Environment, Dance, Music, Theatre and K9-card – one for each grade level (See, Table 1). The paths are planned according to the requirements and curriculum objectives set for each grade level – within individual subjects as well as larger subject areas. With the K9-card a 9<sup>th</sup> grader can use the city’s cultural services for free, or at little cost, after “trekking” for eight years on the Culture Path.



Group of students in the Media Path

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Table 1: Description of the Paths

1<sup>st</sup> grade level: Library Path

- Kuopio City Library - Northern Savo Regional Library, Main Library, Branch Libraries
- Library presentation, story-, or playtime session at library

2<sup>nd</sup> grade level: Art Path

- Kuopio Art Museum
- Exhibition, related exercises at school

3<sup>rd</sup> grade level: Museum Path

- Kuopio Natural History Museum, Old Kuopio Museum, Finnish Orthodox Museum
- 2 museum exhibitions, workshops at school

4<sup>th</sup> grade level: Media Path

- Movie Theater *Kino Kuvakukko*, VB Photographic Centre
- Movie, photographic exhibition, related exercises at school

5<sup>th</sup> grade level: Environment Path

- Cultural environment of students own neighborhood

6<sup>th</sup> grade level: Dance Path

- Dance Theatre *Minimi*, interactive dance game
- Dance performance, dance game at school

7<sup>th</sup> grade level: Music Path

- Kuopio Symphony Orchestra
- Concert or rehearsal, related exercises at school

8<sup>th</sup> grade level: Theater Path

- Kuopio City Theatre
- Theatrical performance, drama workshops at school

9<sup>th</sup> grade level: K9-card

- Cultural institutions in the Kuopio area, movies
- Students independent use of different cultural services, Kuopio Dance Festival



Making an animation in the Media Path

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As part of the paths, students visit at least one local cultural institution or other cultural destination outside the school environment during the school year (See, Table 1). In the Theater Path, for instance, eighth-graders visit Kuopio City Theatre, which gives them an opportunity to get better acquainted with the theatre, an actor's profession, as well as to understand the creative process of theatrical performance. Teachers guide their classes during these field trips themselves. This affords them valuable learning experience as the project's coordinator Jonna Forsman puts it: "[...] she [the teacher] learns much more when she does things herself, than by just being a passive bystander." Nevertheless if necessary, teachers are assisted by the cultural institution's staff during the visits. And as Jonna Forsman observed:

"Teachers also have an opportunity to visit the destination prior to the field trip without any charge, and, if they prefer a staff member of the destination to be present during the visit, they can ask for one beforehand. The Orthodox Church Museum, for instance, is a destination that teachers find unfamiliar, and therefore more often ask for assistance from the museum staff."

In addition to the field trips, there are various pre- and post learning activities done in the schools that are all related to the theme of a particular path. For the most part, the activities are carried out by teachers themselves as part of the normal school work, and are based on the materials drafted by the project actors. Exceptions to this are the Dance, Environment, and Theater Paths, where workshops for the students are arranged at the schools, and planned and executed by cultural actors, or artists. All the materials for the paths are available at the cultural institutions websites, as well as at the website of the Culture Path Program (<http://www.kulttuurikasvatus.kuopio.fi/>).

As one of the program's goals is to give teachers tools for implementing goal-oriented cultural education, and hence support the creation of learning communities based on cultural values within schools, the project organizers thought it important that teachers actively take part in all the activities alongside their students. Jonna Forsman emphasized the importance of teachers' participation thus:

“So that the teachers would get tools from it, so the teachers do not just come to the events and forget everything when the instructor leaves, but that they get something from it, for their own teaching, and for their future courses.”

Moreover, to enable teachers to become active users of the paths, they are offered a variety of materials, seminars, and projects within the paths. In addition, to encourage teachers' independent use of the material, and execution of the field trips, the project actors have planned special teachers' training courses for the paths. These courses are taught twice a year by the staff of the city's cultural institutions as part of their duties. To ensure that the training follows the content of the paths directly, Jonna Forsman pointed out that in cases where there is a need to hire an outsider, for example an expert in media education for a movie project, the city will hire this expert to train the teachers.



Teachers' training and the interactive dance game

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As another resource for teachers, Jonna Forsman mentioned a brochure (in Finnish *Kulttuurikello*) which is published every semester by the Center for Cultural Services in Kuopio in collaboration with different cultural institutions. *Kulttuurikello* is given to every elementary school teacher in Kuopio. From this brochure, as well as from a handbook (*Opettajan käsikirja perusopetuksen kulttuuripolulle*), teachers get practical information about various cultural events in Kuopio, and about the paths. In addition, every elementary school in Kuopio has its own “culture courier”, a teacher who informs the school’s staff on issues related to culture.

The materials and services are provided for all private schools in the Kuopio area, too. In contrast to public schools, private schools have to pay for transportation themselves. Schools take part in the program gradually according to an advance plan, which is published in *Kulttuurikello*. From the list schools, and individual teachers, are able to check when, and which paths they can take part in. As a representative of the city's cultural services and as the project's coordinator Jonna Forsman acts as “a link” between the schools and the cultural institutions as she “reminds teachers and schools of their opportunity to take part in the paths at the beginning of every school year”.

## 4 Theater Path - An example of eight-grade students on a theater path

### Key points in Section 4

- ✓ The six exercises of the drama workshop aimed to develop, among others, students' abilities to concentrate, express themselves, improvise, perform as a group and individually, solve problems, receive and give feedback, and to take others into consideration.
- ✓ In overall, the emphasis of the drama workshop was on practicing students' social skills, as well as on fostering constructive peer interactions, and in this respect promoting the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies.
- ✓ During the course of the workshop the instructor aimed at giving students positive feedback, and encouraged their participation and mutual interaction, and positioned them as "enabling", "creative", and "caring", and hence supporting their positive identity.
- ✓ The drama workshop afforded students, as well as the teacher, a possibility to experience and take part in drama practices used by the community of drama artists.
- ✓ Students found the working methods of drama distinct from what they regarded as normal school work as it involved "doing", "talking", and "acting".
- ✓ Students considered the drama workshop a welcome variation, which gave them an opportunity to express their own creativity.

Theater is the penultimate path of the Culture Path Program and it is aimed at elementary school students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In fall 2010 a total of 18 classes, with their teachers, from six schools in the Kuopio area took part in the Theater Path. The related drama workshops started in fall 2010 and they will continue until spring 2011. For the academic year 2010–2011 the workshops are led by a drama instructor, Anni Marin, who has been hired by the City of Kuopio Center for Cultural Services.

The focal class was a class of fifteen 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in a drama workshop in fall 2010. At the time of data collection, the group had already had two sessions, and this particular workshop was the third and last one. Earlier in the fall, as part of the Theater Path, the class had also seen a 45 minutes long theatrical rehearsal at the Kuopio City Theatre, in addition to a lecture by a theater curator. The curator's lecture dealt with issues such as occupations in the theatre, how students felt while watching rehearsals, and what they remembered about it.

We also observed a lesson led by instructor Anni Marin with another class. This lesson proceeded much more smoothly than the reported lesson. However, the reported lesson was selected for close examination, since it dealt with the problems of group dynamics and solving issues involving bullying which are emphasized in the Culture Path Program, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, we aimed to describe in detail the way instructor Anni Marin tackled these problems that arguably demonstrated her admirable professional skills.

Table 2: Description of the drama exercises

## EXERCISE 1: Concentration exercise

- Students formed a circle
- Student (A) picked another student (B) by looking at her/him
- Student B said 'yes' to acknowledge that eye-contact was made, and student A started walking towards student B
- Before student A got to student B, student B looked at another student (C), and freed his/her spot in the circle for student A

## EXERCISE 2: Who's the Leader?

- Students selected one student who went outside the classroom
- Meanwhile the others picked up a "leader" that began to repeat a motion that was in somewhat specific to him/her
- Other students started copying this motion
- The student outside the classroom was asked to come back in and guess "who is the leader?" based on the motion the other students were making

## EXERCISE 3

- Students formed 5 three-student small groups
- The instructor asked the groups to think about something that they all have in common
- The instructor asked the students to think about how they could illustrate it to others without using any sound
- Each group presented their work

## EXERCISE 4

- The fourth exercise was done in small groups
- The first group member said a word, and the other student next to him/her continued by saying another word that began with a letter the previous one had ended.
- There were two variations of this exercise that were based on word associations

## EXERCISE 5

- For the fifth exercise the group was divided into two rows facing each other
- One row at a time, the students used their bodies to form statues that illustrated different emotions (sadness, anger and fear) without using any sound

## EXERCISE 6

- The sixth exercise was done in small groups
- Each group planned a "3-snapshot" story of the seven deadly sins (greed, envy)
- The stories were performed to the rest of the class

*Engagement and group interaction*

The instructor Anni Marin had planned the lesson structure in advance, and mostly dictated the way the assignments were to be carried out. According to the students, her way of carrying out the instructor role resembled the way their teacher usually organized their normal lessons. In the interview, they described the instructor role in the drama lessons as follows: “She first explains what we should do and then we have to do it, and then she gives guidance. [...] it is like in the normal lessons, but here we can move. The instructor is the leader.”

During the lesson, the students either worked as a class or were assigned small group tasks in the form of, for example, spoken word games, concentration exercises, and small performances (See, Table 2). These performances were conducted either spontaneously or after a short design phase. The exercises and games involved the use of the students' bodies, such as pretending to be a frozen statue in a group, and exercising eye-contact, which are common in drama but rare in general school activities. As a group, the students mainly responded to the instructor's initiatives, i.e. followed instructions, answered questions, or conducted the assigned small group tasks. However, the levels of engagement were different for individual students; they ranged from passively sitting in a crouched posture and not saying anything to enthusiastically performing the task. Furthermore, the composition of the group appeared to influence the level of engagement, as some students after being actively engaged in one group changed their orientation into a much more passive one when the group composition was changed.

The lesson gave many opportunities for the students to come forward and express themselves. When performing together as a group, the students expressed their emotions, but they seemed reluctant to stand out as individuals when the instructor Anni Marin asked for volunteers. This may indicate that the students did not feel safe among their peers. The interviewed students confirmed this interpretation, as they report feeling uncertain about saying things when there were students present that they did not know: “It's like our thoughts do not necessarily operate in the same way, or we are not interested in the same things. [...] The other may not feel like listening.” This may reflect the social organization of the class into “groupings” or “cliques” that operated according to

the literature teacher on the basis of “little consideration for other group members”. These groupings played a significant role in student peer interactions. For example, when the instructor divided the class into five non-friendship small groups, the students were faced with an unusual situation as they were expected to work together with classmates they did not normally interact with. As a result of this, the functional integrity of some of the groups deteriorated. This was observed by the participants just standing in a detached manner with no interaction between them.

These problems in the small group interactions were differently interpreted by the instructor and interviewed students. The instructor attributed the cause to the problematic group dynamics and the dominating behavior of some of the students. At this point, it is important to note that the interviewed students were those that were identified as dominating others in the class. These students, in turn, attributed the problem to students whom they called “heroes”.

“They [“heroes] don’t like to do or say anything. They just are there. [...] You say something to this guy and he just becomes silent. [...] Maybe the reason is that he’s just shy or then he doesn’t feel like talking.”

The interviewed students did not want to work with the non-contributing students, since they did not want to fail the assignment, in their own words: “Then our own thing could be spoiled.”

There were only a few initiatives taken by the students to start new topics in the public dialogue. Nonetheless, in response to the instructor’s teaching some students, mainly boys, developed their own counter activities. These involved them sometimes commenting on each others’ input and creating versions of the tasks using a coded language understandable only to some participants. The students themselves felt that in the drama lesson they were allowed to act in this way:

“In the normal lessons you can’t shout like in there [in drama], I mean talking. [In normal lessons] you need to talk in a nice way and not use swearwords. There some [swearwords] came up once in a while. [...] She [the instructor] didn’t mind that.”

The instructor Anni Marin and the literature teacher reported that the counter activities had decreased tremendously over the three sessions. This can be interpreted as a certain re-contextualization of, and adaptation to the situation, and its demands. The instructor positively noted the change in behaviour of the students, and it gave her the opportunity to thank the students for making progress. In general, the larger incidents of counter activities as compared to normal lessons may reflect the fact that the instructor was not a teacher in the school, too. The literature teacher reflected on this after the final workshop thus:

“[...] the situation was so new to the boys that they did not know how to deal with it other than fooling around. It was surprisingly they were kind of acting the way they would behave towards a teacher they knew, however she was still it was an unknown adult, and this confused me. On the other hand, they must also have had some feelings of familiarity for them to be able to behave that way towards a stranger.”

One motivation for the counter activities was expressing peer relations. In the interview one of the students stated: “I am eager when things are enjoyable. When they are not, every now and then you need to make a fuss. For example, say a funny thing and try to make others laugh.” In the interview, these boys felt that being allowed to behave in this way allowed them to express emotions that were usually forbidden, for instance, the uttering of a swearword when something went wrong. Although, these incidents created minor disturbances to the lessons, at the same time, they appeared to have contributed, however, to the domination of the classes’ emotional atmosphere by these boys.

Even though the students found the instructor’s role to be similar to that of a teacher, they also experienced a stark contrast between the drama workshop and their usual classes. During the interview they recurrently mentioned writing as a dominant practice in normal lessons, and that they enjoyed the drama workshop precisely because it afforded a possibility to “do things” instead of writing. Although they mentioned that there are also occasional group work or student presentations in the normal lessons, they described their usual lessons, as follows: “The students copy what the teacher writes on the blackboard, then we do assignments. The teacher teaches at the front, and we have to take notes”. In contrast, in the drama workshop the studying involved “doing”, “talk-

ing”, and “acting”. The students also noted that the drama instructor did not ask questions with right or wrong answers that their teachers usually ask, and the students did not have to ask for permission to talk. Yet, they acknowledged that in the normal lessons the practice of raising one’s hand in order to talk is a necessary rule to prevent chaos. Finally, they thought the drama assignments gave them an opportunity to express their own creativity. For example, they could decide what kinds of contents they brought to the assignments and the way they performed them, whereas they felt that usually their school teachers dictated the way assignments were to be done.

*Resources for learning: Scaffolding and instructional support*

The instructor Anni Marin supported the students’ learning by using various instructional techniques. Her actions can be described by what learning researchers call “scaffolding” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), that is, contingent support based on students’ current capabilities and a gradual handover of responsibility for the learning tasks to students. In practice, she used such techniques as asking questions, offering alternatives, instructing, giving feedback and when necessary modifying the assignment and its requirements.

For example, during the course of the workshop, the instructor molded her instructions and changed the structure of the lesson flexibly in accordance with the needs and progress of both individual students and the whole class with the intention of directing the lesson activities. The following excerpt from the field notes illustrates how she guided one small group by altering the assignment in accordance with this small group’s progress:

The instructor made comments on group dynamics. She talked about what consequences there would be if some group members did not participate. The instructor pointed out that the other groups had finished, and asked the group “would you like to do one photograph, if you feel that doing three is too demanding”.

The above excerpt demonstrates the way the instructor explicitly guided students' actions during group activities, and encouraged students to practice their social skills by describing, what kinds of interactions successful group work requires, and what are the consequences of individual student's actions on the whole group.

The following excerpt from the field notes further illustrates this:

The instructor highlighted the fact that the group performances are not evaluated on a basis of how good they are, or whether they were successful or not. The instructor commented on groups' actions by pointing out that everybody needs to participate, and that no individual student can decide issues on their own, and dictate to the others. She pointed out that the exercise was being done to make sure that students' normal interaction skills were appropriate and that the groups need to do their performances together with nobody dominating their group.

These situations involved the instructor Anni Marin's initiatives to foster constructive and productive students' peer interaction. As mentioned earlier, she made a great effort to influence the nature of the students' behaviour and interactions, and consequently didn't try to stop the students' counter activities, apart from occasionally requesting the students to concentrate on the task. Instead, she used indirect methods to promote constructive interaction, for instance, at the beginning of the lesson, she forbade the use of certain words and expressions pertaining to the students' code language and involving the bullying of one of the students. Finally, a good example of her strong personal commitment to influencing positive group dynamics is that she openly and directly confronted one very influential student during a small group work. She claimed that this particular student had dominated the others in the group and did not accept his proposal for the script of the performance the group was rehearsing. Instead, she demanded that the group should negotiate a shared view that eventually led to the group not completing the performance. This was a strong and courageous pedagogical move to transform the group dynamics in a more constructive direction.

Overall, during the course of the workshop the instructor aimed at giving students positive feedback, and encouraged their participation and mutual interaction, and positioned them as "enabling",

“creative”, and “caring”, and hence supporting their positive identity, too. For instance, at the end of the session she said to students: “As a group you have the power to make changes in one direction or the other. Work on it, so that you will all be able to be yourselves and express your opinions. You are all good eight-graders just as you are [...]”

The instructor Anni Marin considered it as important to take into account the characteristics of a specific learning situation and of the group, and adapting her role and actions as an instructor accordingly. After the session, Anni Marin said that she was a bit disappointed that she didn't have enough time to continue with an exercise she noticed the students clearly found interesting, and enjoyable. However, she clearly put emphasis on getting students to practice their social skills and interactions, perhaps at the expense of her own professional goals as an instructor, as well as at the expense of the workshop in terms of reaching specific goals, and mastering contents.

#### *Integration of the Theater Path into school activities*

Building bridges between different contexts and spaces of learning is regarded as a valuable resource for student learning. Accordingly, the literature teacher had made an effort to integrate the drama workshop and its contents into the students' normal school work. This is illustrated in the following excerpt by the teacher:

“[...] this [drama workshop] is about opinions, so that you need to listen to others and to allow them to express their opinions. And now I'll continue from here so that – straight from the textbook – that you make this kind of impressive speech, which everyone gives in front of class. So that you have some topic and you need to present arguments and get the listeners to agree with your points of view. So in a way, this continues that way, you've been “on the carpet” in groups, pairs and individually as well and now there is a continuum for this kind of interaction.”

However, these goals were not communicated to the students beforehand and therefore the experience remained somewhat unconnected to the students' normal school work, as the students reported in the interview. As mentioned already in the previous section, the students found the working methods of the drama workshop distinctly different from normal schooling. Therefore, they had difficulty in assessing the merits of the learning experience afforded by the drama workshops. This difficulty was associated with not knowing what kinds of future profession they would find themselves in. The students mainly associated the productive outcomes of the drama workshop to be relevant to the acting profession, but in passing, they also mentioned having learned such skills as communication, concentration, and "being with the crowd". Moreover, they identified one purpose for learning general communication skills: "if you work as a taxi driver, the old people will start to talk with you." Nevertheless, the students treated drama as less important and less goal-directed than normal schooling, and emphasized its potential in creating a welcome variation to their normal boring school experiences.

Although the students had experience of preparing and performing plays in the primary school, they starkly contrasted these with the working methods of the workshop. Thus, it may be concluded that participating in drama the workshops afforded students, as well as the teachers, a possibility to experience and take part in drama practices used by the community of drama artists. The school plays described by the students may have mostly reflected traditional school plays rather than being influenced by the drama practices used by professional artists.

In addition to the ambiguity of learning goals, the students also pointed out how they thought that their behaviour during the workshops would not be accounted for in any way as the instructor Anni Marin had emphasized that she does not evaluate students individually or whether they succeed or not. As a consequence, the students found it liberating that their performances would not be evaluated. One of the students illustrated this as follows: "If it goes wrong, you don't have to think about it, that it went bad." Yet, the literature teacher reported that she is going to address the issue of students' behaviour collectively after the final workshop, and perhaps takes it into account when she gives students their final marks after the academic year.

Regarding the Culture Path Program in general, the interviewed students said that although they

had heard the name Culture Path before, they were unaware that the drama workshops were related to it. Neither, did they know what else the program entails; they just knew that it was something the city had funded. Earlier in the fall, the literature teacher had told the students about the Theater Path, and that they would take part in it. But, in parallel to what the students reported, the literature teacher herself reckoned that, in general, students in Kuopio had not yet grasped the concept of the Culture Path Program.

## 5 Impacts of the Kuopio Culture Path Program

### Key points in Section 5

- ✓ By providing financial support, access to resources as well as support for building a network of collaboration the project aims at making the model of cultural paths an integral part of the schools' and cultural institutions' everyday operations.
- ✓ Teachers are offered various resources, i.e. materials, teacher training facilities to enable their independent use of the paths.
- ✓ Teachers are able to utilize the paths in a way that best suits their needs, which contributes to overcoming some of the barriers that may hinder teachers from exploring the possibilities in an out-of-school environment.
- ✓ The use of professional cultural actors and their expertise contributes to the development of cultural communities within schools, and helps teachers to tackle the social and emotional problems of their students at the classroom level.
- ✓ The Culture Path Program draws strength from the natural resources of the area, as the City of Kuopio is a city with a strong cultural heritage, and high quality cultural services.

According to the project coordinator Jonna Forsman committing schools and cultural institutions to the program has operated on a “top-down” basis. She illustrates it by saying: “[...] we took it as a binding target for cultural institutions, as a basic operation, by making it free of charge for children and young people, and at the same time the school side has budgeted for the transportation.” But as there were two actors in the project – the cultural institutions and schools – the project organizers had to “double their efforts” in order to build a common vision between them, as Jonna Forsman pointed out. Although the commitment at organizational level is crucial, Jonna Forsman also pointed out that initiatives, and bottom-up incentives, for instance from individual museums, are important. If these contributions had been more forthcoming, perhaps commitment by the staff of the cultural institutions and schools would have been more in evidence. Yet, she continued:

“[...] in our institutions, we have faced a problem because there haven’t been any lecturers or curators, not until this year when we piloted this theater curator project. The Orthodox Church Museum has a museum lecturer. Unofficially there will be a museum educator at the museum as well, and then he will plan these [paths] for specific target groups, and he will be able to directly contact the schools. We will then have the partner to work with the schools.”

Cultural planner Liisa Hämäläinen pointed out that as the model is incorporated into the city of Kuopio’s Program of Cultural Education for basic education, every elementary school in Kuopio area is obliged to take the paths into account in their annual planning. There are no major differences in the implementations of the paths within schools as one of the program’s goals has been to ensure that every school has equal opportunities to take part in the program. Nonetheless, as teachers are responsible for integrating the paths into their school teaching themselves, and making the necessary adjustments to their schedules accordingly, some variation at school level in using the paths is evident, as the cultural planner Liisa Hämäläinen pointed out. For instance, although teachers are given the opportunity to utilize the materials for the paths freely across different subject areas, they don’t necessarily do so. Therefore, to what extent, and how the possibilities granted by the Cultural Path Program are used, depends on how active schools are. In general, as Jonna

Forsman pointed out, the schools' overall commitment to, and interest in the program is relatively high, but she concluded that “[...] probably it would be more powerful if the paths were integrated into the curriculum”.

Jonna Forsman also said that the implementation of the paths, in general, relies on individual headmasters' interest and initiative, as their role in committing teachers and building a positive school operating culture is crucial. The literature teacher also agreed with this, and described the school headmaster at her school as supportive, and mentioned that when an offer comes along to take part in a project, the headmaster supports it, within the realms of possibilities. The literature teacher also pointed out that without collegial support and flexibility, these kinds of activities would be hard to execute. This reflects the characteristics of the operating culture of a school, as well. It is evident that these kinds of activities require flexibility from individual teachers, too, as the following quote by the teacher illustrates:

“The information [drama workshop] came at a time when the academic year had been already planned for some months. And when I found out about it I had to change my plans, so that I don't think I could start going through the sentence elements then, because it would interfere with the project. So I just redesigned the course so that I could do the grammar lessons after Christmas.”

Jonna Forsman said that the feedback on the Culture Path Program that she has received from teachers has been mainly positive. She stated that the biggest obstacle hindering the teachers' utilization of the paths is probably related to time, as teachers are often overwhelmed with various other school projects, as well, in addition to their normal work. Jonna Forsman also pointed out that because the field trips usually take several hours, especially if the school is a long way from the target paths venue, the teachers may find the visits interfere with their normal school work too much. But overall, teachers have found it “refreshing” to be able to leave the school environment from time to time, according to Jonna Forsman. The literature teacher also commented on this when she said “it is always a nice change to everyday teaching at school to be able to explore the possibilities outside the school environment”.

The project aimed to support and encourage teachers to take part in the paths alongside with their students. The literature teacher considered this as a valuable resource for student learning – but for teachers as well, as during the workshops, such as the drama workshops, the teacher is able to step outside the teacher’s role, and to view the classroom situation from “outside”. She illustrated this as follows: “When you take part in these tasks, you realize how students may feel nervous, because you’re nervous yourself because you have this different role in the student group.” She also said that this role of an observer, as she described it, has made her realize how valuable, but at the same time demanding her work as a teacher is.



Students and a teacher experiencing the joy of dancing

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What was of special interest, as illustrated in the previous section, was that the drama workshops were executed by a professional drama instructor. In our opinion, this can be regarded as a valuable resource for teachers as it enables them to adopt new ways of operating – perhaps otherwise unfamiliar in school context. Consequently, it also contributes to student and teacher learning, as well as expert knowledge dissemination, which in turn enables teachers' independent use of the paths. This kind of shared expertise, and making use of the so called intellectual funds of knowledge (see Kumpulainen, Krokfors, Lipponen, Tissari, Hilppö, & Rajala, 2010), were realized in one school in Kuopio area where a local actor worked together with the school teacher for three months (33 days), and participated in planning and executing the lessons. Through this model of multiprofessional collaboration the school was able to bring about new contents and pedagogies, and hence contribute to the creation of experiential learning environments at school, as Liisa Hämäläinen pointed out. The artist also took part in other activities during that year, for instance, led the drama workshops related to the Theatre Path. The cultural planner Liisa Hämäläinen reckoned that this experiment has had an influence on developing the Culture Path Program in general. For instance, as a result of the experiences gained from this experiment the number of drama workshops in the Theatre Path was increased from two to three. Liisa Hämäläinen concluded that the workshops already are a significant part of students' and teachers' learning processes.

When we asked Jonna Forsman whether she finds the model of Culture Path Program transferable, she answered “yes, of course”. According to her, every city, regardless of its size, has its immediate surroundings, and therefore the natural resources to build upon. She continued by pointing out that “you don't always have to go several hundred kilometers to the theater; you can bring the theater to school by organizing these workshops”. The cultural life in Kuopio is regarded as an important resource for the region, and this is what makes the Culture Path Program unique.

## 6 References

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