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## Drama as democratic and inclusive practice

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines how two devising theater projects with 43 seventh grade pupils respond to values in adaptive education: inclusion, appreciation, variation, experience, relevance, context, and participation. We focus on statue work and the formation of ideas through negotiation processes. The project responds to and concretizes democratic working methods and a pupil perspective in adaptive education. The article suggests that exploratory ensemble-based forms of learning offer the pupils an opportunity to discover their own and the other's voice, which opens up inclusion into a community.

### Introduction

The general section of the national curriculum for a primary and lower secondary school in Norway states that in the school of the future, pupil-active teaching methods should be used as a form of democratic practice. It states that “pupils who learn about and through creative activities develop the ability to express themselves in different ways and to solve problems and ask new questions” (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017, 8). The educational activity must ensure that democratic values are promoted and contribute toward pupils mastering participation in democratic processes (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017, 9–13). We consider equality and inclusion to be part of the school's democratic mandate and will in this article examine how a specific drama and theatre work methodology responds to the following values in adaptive education; inclusion, appreciation, variation, experience, relevance, context, participation (Håstein and Werner 2014, 29). The article suggests that exploratory ensemble-based forms of learning offer the pupils an opportunity to discover their own and the other's voice and may prepare/opens up for real inclusion into a community. Our aesthetic approach appears to be close to an operationalization of values derived for adaptive education. We also find that such values and adaptations are important to all pupils, notwithstanding learning difficulties. Meanwhile, professional expertise, experience, time, and space are essential to the preparation and implementation of such drama teaching projects. This study prompts new positions on aesthetic and exploratory democratic ensemble learning forms in classroom drama programs.

### Literature review

Research points out that teaching *about* democracy is not necessarily the same as learning *through* democratic practice (Lorentzen and Røthing 2017). In the context of drama

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teaching, we underline both democracy as active participation and democracy as a common foundation of values (Stray 2011, 27). Based on a collective and aesthetic form of learning, this article will shed light on devising a theatrical production as a form of democratic-educational practice (Govan, Nichol森, and Normington 2007; Perry 2013). This is a practice that aims to include everyone, instruct children's co-responsibility for their own communicative actions, and give pupils the courage to express and process their own voices and knowledge (Rasmussen and Gjørnum 2017). Devising theatre as a form of democratic practice relates to devising *with* community, as a process of collaborative creation, and often without the preexisting, dominant text (Heddon and Milling 2006). Through a devising process, the participants share an artistic journey together (Oddey 1994). Devising is exploratory, and it includes multiple processes, experimentation and forms of creative strategies (Govan, Nichol森, and Normington 2007; Perry 2013). Drama researcher Mia Perry (2013) sees devised theater as a place for learning and as a unique possibility associated with pedagogical potential. Perry (2013) studied how theatre as bodily exploratory work method includes people in a creative community, and how the "self-made" forms help contribute toward greater participation than more traditional "dramatizations"<sup>1</sup> in schools. Perry points to emotional, sensory, and relational factors that arise when pupils work on creating stage expressions. Perry claims that the bodily improvisation complements the dominant verbal discussions. Thus, the practice attracts other participants than those who are verbally strong. Perry also points to the value of "ensemble" work. Jonathan Neelands (2009) is concerned with the theatre ensemble as a democratic form of work, and how an ensemble unites the social and the artistic. Learning through drama in the ensemble is based on "the negotiating and continual re-negotiating of the 'laws' in the learning group" (Neelands 2009, 184), which becomes a democratic principle. This is also how relational forms of work, improvisational and exploratory interaction, contribute to social interaction competence and to artistically exploratory expertise.

The notion of *inclusion* is important in both devised theatre and democratic practice. Furthermore, learning in an inclusive community is also an important aspect of adaptive education. Almqvist and Christophersen (2017) are especially concerned with the arts as essential in inclusive forms of education. Their study examines inclusion of pupils with special needs in arts education. They recognize that the specific facilitation skills required in arts will also be the best facilitation for any child: "... the arts were seen as contributing to creating good learning environments for *some* pupils with special needs, while at the same time being beneficial for *all* pupils" (2017, s. 471). Educational researcher Kyriaki Messiou (2017) emphasizes this in her metastudy of inclusive education publications. She defines inclusive education as dealing with all pupils, not just a few with "special needs." She argues: "the idea of inclusive education as being concerned with *all* children's *presence, participation and achievement*" (2017, s. 148). She also acknowledges the need to focus on how the facilitation responds to diversity. Messiou (2017) moreover argues for the need to articulate values as a starting point for developing inclusive practices: "the issue of values and ethics is central to inclusion." (Messiou 2017, s. 147).

Finally, inclusive and democratic educational practice also involves individual rights, the independent and unique voice interacting with the other (Pettersvold, 2014; Stray 2011).

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<sup>1</sup>Here understood as when, for example, pupils are instructed in the staging of pre-written drama.

This is why participation in devising theatre is closely linked to democratic ideals of dialogical interaction as we find it described in educational research (Dysthe, Bernhardt, Esbjørn 2012). Their foundation is the basic “I – You” relationship (Buber 1923/2003), which involves recognition and appreciation of each other. This brings us to the basic values of adaptive education.

### The basic values of adaptive education

Adaptive education means individually adapted teaching to ensure learning and growth for all. A crucial concern is the preservation of the pupil’s perspective, specifically how the individual pupil is met and how she participates in the adaptive approach (Håstein and Werner 2014). Adaptive education has been a statutory right in Norwegian primary and lower secondary school since 1975, and combined with the concept of equal education (NOU 2014, 7), these statutory instruments closely aligned with the democratic ideal of individual rights and equal opportunities. Equal education should be carried out with varied methods based on an understanding of learning as a social process (NOU 2014, 7, 25). Håstein and Werner (2014) find seven values that relate to adaptive education: *inclusion*, *appreciation*, *variation*, *experience*, *relevance*, *context* and *participation* (2014, 29). Pupils should learn in an *inclusive* community. The education should be characterized by *variation*. The pupils should be able to use their own *experiences* and potential. The pupils must experience being challenged and to succeed. What pupils learn in school should be *relevant* to their future. *Appreciation* focuses on how activities must ensure that everyone is met with positive expectations by the school and their fellow pupils. Furthermore, the pupils must be provided with *context* to be able to learn. *Context* here refers to the pupil’s need to experience coherence in her learning environment. The pupils’ opportunity for *participation* is central to adaptive education and deals with planning, implementation and assessment of school work. We find that Håstein and Werner’s (2014) research on values and recommendations for adaptive education are also helpful in understanding drama- and theatre practice and the democratic experience it may facilitate. The values both guide our analysis and give attention to reflection that makes drama teaching and democratic agency tangible.

### Research design

This research article is part of the Norwegian National Project Drama, Theatre and Democracy. As a basis for studying drama and theatre work methods in primary and lower secondary school with a democratic perspective, a devising theatre project was implemented for the pupils (by the first author as a PhD candidate). Drama is not a compulsory subject in schools in Norway. In our research project, the pupils (through parents’ consent) could choose to participate. The devised work was for in-class purpose and the theme for the devising project was initially open. This resulted in making a crime story at one school. In the other school the class teacher had chosen artwork from four Norwegian visual artists as their starting point for inspiration. This resulted in groupwise showings of different scenes as: a wedding, traveling, murder, dancing, a hulder<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>2</sup>A seductive forest creature from Scandinavian folklore.

humorous police chasing. Further, this provided material for a larger production on the local culture performed at the school graduation party. Data material has been produced from two fieldwork sites in the 7th grade: one in a small village in eastern Norway (21 pupils) and one in a medium-sized city in northern Norway (22 pupils). The groups comprise a diverse population of Norwegian 12 year old pupils where the teaching and research focus on how they experience drama and theatre working methods and how they listen, express, and interact in the context of drama. The data consist of a total of 7 hours of video documentation, 35 school hours with participatory observation and 42 pupil interviews and generates knowledge in a triangulated whole. A trained drama teacher (the PhD candidate), who holds more than 20 years of experience, carried out the fieldwork. The drama teacher is also the researcher in the fieldwork, which took place during one week at each of the sites. The second author observed one of the fieldwork sites for the purpose of being a hands-on discussion partner, while the third author held a critical meta-perspective on the study as a whole and kept distance from the fieldwork. The data material was critically discussed, thoroughly analyzed, and thematized by the entire research group to avoid “bias” (Greenhalgh, Thorne, and Malterud 2018). After analyzing the data, theory was applied to the research process, and in order to avoid “cherry picking,” we looked for rupture, divergence and weak points in the pedagogical process. Through analyzing the data material, categories emerged during the analysis process and were also retrieved from theory (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The perspective of adaptive education was constructed, and the theoretical categories from Håstein and Werner (2014) became useful lenses for further analyses. We point out that some of the data (pupils’ voices) can overlap with other categories, even though they appear under one of the categories in this article.

The project was originally placed in a performative research paradigm (Haseman 2006; Leavy 2017), which is a “practice-led” research design in which drama and theatre working methods are seen to both generate research questions and produce data material. This is a design asking for critical self-reflections from all its participants (pupil and teacher/researcher) (Rasmussen 2013). The drama teacher acts as facilitator, project manager and researcher, roles that all include great ethical responsibility and implications of ethical clearance,<sup>3</sup> consent and depersonalized analysis. The following clarifies how drama work forms generate qualitative data.

Both fieldwork projects started with basic training exercises. This involved imagining and experimenting with the physical aspect of “playing a role” and gaining experience with basic improvisation skills (Johnstone 2007). The exercises serve as reflexive expressions and allow the drama teacher to act as researcher and give insight into the pupils’ attitudes and social relationships. For the sake of analytical delimitation, we will mainly focus on one didactic section, “the statue work” as an aesthetic learning form. It is a form of work inspired by Augusto Boal’s theatre practice, which has gained widespread pedagogical application (Boal 1998, 2002; Engelstad 1989; Sæbø 2016). Three types of statue work were mainly used in the course of the drama sessions: Group-wise “theme statue”, “red light” statues and “3 pictures”. The “theme statue” focuses on the pupils’ expression of thematic and conceptual understanding in bodily “freeze positions.” In the “red light” statues, spontaneous, dynamic situations occur, and the pupil in the observer role

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<sup>3</sup>The project has been reported to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and has followed guidelines for information and consent collection for participation.

interprets, further assigning “roles” and “lines” to those who formed the “statue”. The third statue form, “3 pictures,” encourages contribution to a “series of images” as input to central scenes in connection with a planned theatre production. Through the statue work, the pupils gain experience as actors and observers of their own expressions and interactions. Pupil names in this article are all pseudonyms.

## Analyzing the fieldwork

In our analysis, we will apply the above-mentioned values from Håstein and Werner (2014) as categories to interpret the fieldwork and learning forms of drama and theatre, and we begin with the concept of inclusion.

### *Inclusion*

*Inclusion* refers to learning situations where all pupils participate and everyone in the community is involved. There is a lot of activity in the classroom as the pupils are making freeze pictures of two themes: “the family” and “freedom.”

Pupils lie, sit and stand in different positions. They . . . point and explain, listen to and look at input. They keep trying until they find an expression for their statue, which is then shown to the other pupils (transcribed video, 16.11.2015)

After the drama sessions ended, pupils were asked what, in their experience, worked best as a working method. One of the pupils, Marit, responded: “. . . those sculptures, . . . Then it was a lot of cooperation, like a big mess . . . so then everyone had to think. Show what they meant” (Marit, 12 years old). Line also emphasized the statue work when we talked about collaboration:

That thing with those statues, when you clapped, and with the thought bubbles . . . hear what they want and what the others say . . . Also what we say. Then I feel that you are being heard, and that one can listen to the others (Line, 12 years old).

The quotes suggest that the work invites collective inclusion and subjectively perceived interaction. Jørgen further describes the collaboration:

for example, a person said an idea . . . showed the others how they should stand, without just talking, standing up and showing the movement . . . I did it the same way when I came up with an idea (Jørgen, 12 years old).

This visual and bodily experiential practice makes Jørgen aware of the ideas and meaning in the expression he and his classmates are exploring. Using his body in learning activities provides Jørgen with new opportunities when he includes his fellow pupils. The drama teacher observed that the pupils contributed to and took their place in the work of making the statue, and through it they listened and expressed themselves in an inclusive community which empowers them to accept and confirm each other as people. This also relates to what Perry (2013), points out about how bodily exploratory work method includes more people in a creative community. Still, to prepare to listen, to acknowledge, and collaborate inclusively, Magnus needed some guiding and input from the drama teacher. He reflected on trying different proposals: “. . . we had to try what the others said. And then we had to do

it and then we had to see ... one must try the ideas of everyone before deciding ... ” (Magnus, 12 years old). The acknowledgment the pupils describe illuminates the qualitative encounter when she/he discovers and concretizes her/his own comprehension as an “I” – an individual. This occurs in the encounter with the other, a “You”, which mutually confirms the other’s existence (Buber 1923/2003). This involves recognition and appreciation of each other. In this “I – You” relationship, the pupils manage to look beyond words and activate an awareness of the other’s presence. This form of experiential learning involves the pupil’s bodily experiences, their emotions and reflection, and points toward an education agenda that is inclusive and holistic. Democratic potential is further highlighted by Alexandra’s reflection:

If some came up with not so much ideas and the rest came up with quite a lot of ideas, then those who came up with plenty of ideas [helped] in a way the others to find ideas ... then they came up with various other details about what they can do (Alexandra, 12 years old).

Alexandra points out how the pupils help each other by building on each other’s ideas and including details so that everyone can take ownership of the idea development. A variety of interpretations and perspectives are included, providing multiple alternatives to the correct answer in accordance with curriculum. Through the statue work, we see a concretization of what Håstein and Werner (2014) define as inclusion and the pupil perspective in adaptive education. Specifically, inclusion refers to cognitions that arise from and in bodily interactions. The emotional, the sensory and the relational become explicit and open to inclusion from multiple perspectives and democratic, multiple tolerance.

### **Appreciation**

*Appreciation* means that pupils experience acknowledgment, being seen and heard, in the learning situation by all participants. In the interview, Sigurd reflected on which strategies worked to both be heard and listen to others:

Don’t know if I did well enough listening to others, but ... I think I got better at listening after a while ... maybe I realized others might have some opinions, not just me (Sigurd, 12 years old).

What Sigurd here describes entails a gradually matured understanding of appreciation of “the other,” which includes understanding others have opinions worth listening to. Learning in a drama teaching community often revolves around dramatic tension created by different opinions, so that the individual can discover the other, and experience collaboration (Neelands 2009; Sæbø 2015). Emil’s reflection specifies how he sees his fellow pupils in light of the interaction:

That you get closer to others ... you might find out more about them. And maybe you want to be with them since you’ve become more familiar with them through exercises. For I didn’t think the people were so interesting, but maybe they were anyway (Emil, 12 years old).

Emil and the other pupils worked closely together in the “you and me” relationship in the drama work. Pupils “discover” themselves as well as the other differently when their imaginations and experience are learning material. It also means that the class, or

“ensemble,” in drama and theatre processes unite the social and the artistic, as Neelands points out (2009, 182). Katja also appreciates herself and others through the interaction: “To actually dare to stand before all the others and dance . . . and get to actually create an idea with the others . . . ” (Katja, 12 years old). Katja sees herself here as a person who can contribute both with dancing and creating plays. Emotional and sensory factors are in play in the work of creating an exploratory stage expression, and this offers a way of relational learning: “. . . that one has seen sides of others, which one did not think they had, how funny they are, and such things” (Sølvi, 12 years old). Sølvi has seen, but Theo also points out the value of being seen: “I think they started to respect me more, because I had many suggestions on what could happen” (Theo, 12 years old). This form of education contributes to the pupils’ experience of “knowing the feeling of being valued based on who they are” (Håstein and Werner 2014, 53). The creative work contributes toward letting pupils see their fellow pupils in ways seemingly different from the social roles established in the ordinary classroom. This is one way to experience democratic interaction.

### **Variation**

*Variation* concerns the importance of different approaches to the learning situation. In this project, statues as idiom provided variation in the classroom activity. The teacher-researcher observed that several of the girls who usually behaved quietly and modestly in the background participated actively in solving the task of creating different tableaux for the “slide show”<sup>4</sup> (Reflection conversation teacher, 18.09.2015). The methods of image theatre and statue work are known to do just that; offer a voice for those who cannot, will not or usually do not manage to express themselves orally (Boal 1998, 2002; Engelstad 1989). More pupils are therefore given the opportunity to express themselves through a varied idiom, and more pupils are consequently given the opportunity to discover other pupils’ voices and suggestions for the community. Work with statues as idiom provides a concrete and visual way of exploring ideas and opinions that in some situations can facilitate communication because it cuts through a “wordy” abstract stream of talk. We also see that the staging of visual statues attracts attention to some pupils that elsewhere are for different reasons “unseen.” For example, when Frida constructs her classmates into a statue, without interruption, we see it as valuable variation for the pupils’ opportunity to “make a statement” in an idiom rather than writing and talking. Video documentation (08.09.2015) shows Frida, Vilde and Petter direct and construct their statues in the framing of “red light” statues. Using statues as form brings tension and concentration into the work. The pupils being constructed also allow their classmate to take their time and stay in their “statue position”. It also creates excitement for the pupils observing the building of the statue. The framing of the work with emerging frozen images while statues are being constructed allows time for contemplation. Both Frida and Vilde, who are a bit shy, take their time and move classmates around creating their statues. Petter, who easily loses focus, works physically and engages in directing classmates in different positions in the statue. We can see variation from the perspective of diversity of pupils given opportunities for different ways of expressing themselves.

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<sup>4</sup>Part of the “Red-light” statues.



Through “3 pictures”, the pupils participate in several varied forms of work by drawing up ideas, such as pictures in a cartoon, and/or writing ideas for the course of action on paper/blackboard. They must discuss and try out the ideas, create statues and display to each other. Such variation in activities provides room for the “polyvocality” that Dysthe, Bernhardt, and Esbjørn (2012) encourage. The pupils presentations of their group-wise created statues displayed characters, place, and event. The viewing of the statues served as a visual expression and the reflection conversation served as oral interpretations: “It was quite funny, because there were quite a few who had thought differently, for example that it was a coronation. We had not decided that before anyone came up with it, in a way. So, it was very smart” (Janne, 12 years old). In this way, varied approaches to creating, presenting, and discussing gave Janne the opportunity to understand this scene. The reflexive conversation, which followed every show case, served as a concretization of who it was, what happened, and where the action took place, as the princess coronation scene indicates. The statue work concretizes and makes visible various options for action. The exploratory (devising) strategy which is employed not only facilitates variation, but also enables pupils to vary their approach within the inclusive learning community. This means variation of approaches addresses a theme, but does not excuse all kinds of utterances brought into the discussion. The concept of variation in approaches is the point here. Håstein and Werner emphasize: “If variation is employed in many ways, it is more likely that many pupils may regularly have the experience of working on something that suits them” (Håstein and Werner 2014, 46). In the statue work “3 pictures,” the pupils relate to bodily utterances, sensory and emotional relationships in action and interpretation.

## **Relevance**

*Relevance* points to the meaning, significance, and timeliness of the learning situation, both here and now, as well as for the future. The drama teacher seeks relevance by pursuing the pupil’s interests and choices and facilitates plenary talks in which everyone is engaged and involved. As shown by video documentation (10.09.2015), the drama teacher asks which scene should be the first in the play, followed by a “why” when the airport is suggested. The following discussion clarifies what happens at the airport and who the spies are, etc. In this way, the drama teacher points toward issues the pupils need to define through dialogue, framing the session focused on questions about where, what, and who. The drama teacher ensures that the pupils make the connections between the scenes and apply them to what is relevant for the content of the play.

During a discussion on stage choices for the performance, a crime story, Theo raises his hand and asks: “Why must the princess die? – Must she die?” The question is asked to the group. It is an important question, and almost everyone joins in the subsequent discussion. Relevance, ownership, and motivation are at stake in the drama room. Right there and then, it is absolutely essential that the drama teacher provides an opportunity for all pupils to participate. It is about safeguarding, and it ensures the relevance of the discussion and that their opinion matters. The research diary states: “Virtually everybody got up on their own initiative. We got to point out nuances and possibilities. Heard each other’s arguments and views” (Researcher’s journal, 10.09.2015). Video recordings reveal that time is allotted to let everyone contribute with their verbal input. The pupils argue and find that the choice is important and that much is at stake. Video (10.09.2015) shows that in the discussion

following Theo's question, different suggestions are made, as when Eline says, "She (princess) could faint", Johan suggests to keep the gun but "use the gun to hit", this would avoid killing the princess. Here the pupils approach the situation with suggestions from a point of view taking Theo's question seriously. The imagination is hence of relevance. The interviews also reveal how the engagement is directly related to the fiction: "... it was a bit of an important act, you know. That the Princess died or was injured" (Siri, 12 years old), Siri believes, which Anne also points out: "... because it was a very important part of the play, and then they wanted to ... have their opinion to be part of the play then too" (Anne, 12 years old). We find that relevance also concerns ways in which the pupils experience the theme to be relevant to them in the current situation. Two significant factors relate to relevance: the drama teacher's role and the pupil's experience.

Håstein and Werner consider relevance of value when school experiences are "relevant to their present and future" (2014, 29). This is relevance beyond the isolated curriculum content of the subject matter. It relates to the perceived relevance, when it is linked to the pupils' involvement and learning from the theatre they have created, its themes and idioms. From the fictitious universe, which in the present context is the "crime story," the pupils comment further on what they think is relevant. Vilde states: "Something exciting has to happen ... " (Vilde, 12 years old), and Petter supplements: "... because it was the end and they want the end to be as good as possible" (Petter, 12 years old). Differing opinions are part of this process and encourage pupils to see the matter from a different perspective.

Following Hans Georg Gadamer (1986) and his notion of experiencing art underlines that "[t]he inseparability of form and content is fully realized as the non-differentiation in which we encounter art as something that both expresses us and speaks to us" (1986, s. 51). This work with the pupils emphasizes that aesthetic forms of expression are socially relevant and act as the hub of active participation. A crime story gets relevant for these pupils because it is their choice based on what they find exciting, interesting and amusing here and now. They might be influenced by popular culture and/or have an interest in creating and solving mysteries. From an adaptive education perspective, relevance arises in the pupil's encounter with his/her own involvement and differences of opinion in the community.

### **Experience**

*Experience* refers to how the pupils actively use their own knowledge and skills, and furthermore how they tackle challenges through the learning situation. Håstein and Werner (2014) point out the importance of giving the pupils an opportunity to be challenged and succeed in the classroom. We find that the process of devising their own solutions for managing given tasks provided challenging experiences for many pupils. Berit says in the interview "... I get pretty frustrated and annoyed when they [her classmates] just come up with a lot of ideas and then they have to change a lot of things. Then I get really annoyed" (Berit, 12 years old). Anne states "... it was difficult ... It got a little chaotic because we didn't quite understand what to do" (Anne, 12 years old). The researcher's journal provides insight into the activities that were going on in the classroom:

Someone managed to grasp and solve the task in slightly different ways, such as writing lists/ points on the blackboard – then create statues. Others solved the task more directly on the floor, but also through drawing (Researcher's journal, 10.09.2015).

Berit's reflection on this situation was that "you shouldn't really be yelling at them [classmates]. Instead, try to bring things in [ideas], because they would like to have their ideas" (Berit, 12 years old). Anne describes the experience as "we just had to do something" (Anne, 12 years old). Different possibilities for solving problems affect interaction and give the work a degree of unpredictability. One pupil started to get a little frustrated because he wasn't in control like he was used to. The research diary states: "This is a positive and participating pupil, but one that likes to have control" (10.09.2015). The need for input from the teacher was evident when this pupil and the other team members paused several times to speak to the drama teacher or class contact teacher. The pupil who experienced frustration, but who also did not give up, put this experience into words: "That we succeeded, that we were able to go through with it . . . That it is often possible to find a solution when it seems that there is not going to be a solution" (Sigurd, 12 years old). For Sigurd, it was important to experience success in completing a stage display. It was about experiencing resistance and frustration, yet ending in mastery. Tiril emphasizes the importance of experiencing mastery with a final product the pupils have created themselves: "It was perhaps the work at the end, where we got to try out everything we had practiced, to make a play, so that was very good" (Tiril, 12 years old). The pupils are challenged, through the statue work and in their own creation of a stage performance, to create something for themselves that does not have a correct answer. The representation of the body provides other possibilities for suggestions and the use of and appropriation of experience: "When you use the body, [you] are not as afraid of making mistakes as when you talk . . . because it is a little easier to correct" (Berit, 12 years old). Berit expresses a positive experience with the use of bodily expression. Working with statues and bodily expression are strengthening to some pupils to help dare express themselves. There is no "correct answer" in bodily expressions. The pupils' own experiences are both safeguarded and challenged. Particularly, it applies to experiences of being in the uncertain, not having the correct answer. There is no correct path to the goal, and the pupils must deal with several possibilities. Here, we can also highlight the vulnerability of this work form, because there is genuine risk that one will not succeed. Although success in dealing with uncertainty and risk are also important experiences, experiencing success, as the pupils in this project did, may sometimes be absolutely crucial, according to Håstein and Werner (2014, 34).

## **Context**

*Context* here refers to the pupil's need for experiencing coherence in her learning environment. When working on the topic "freedom" (inspired from Boal's statue work), ideas were interpreted contextually, such as religion and social relations.

Several [statues] had prayer as a theme – we could talk about religious freedom and the personal freedom to pray. We saw statues of "The Statue of Liberty" and "the beggar's cup and the giver" (Researcher's journal, 08.09.2015).

Various representations of the concept of "freedom" provide multiple interpretations, and reflection deepened through interactions: "We interviewed the statue – and they

thought about the idea of giving and receiving money to get out of poverty” (Researcher’s journal, 08.09.2015). This form of work helps to interpret meaning content in a way that offers context and nuance. When pupils involve their own inner world, they draw insights from many subjects and arenas. This facilitates transfer value and refers to another form of coherence in learning. For example, when Alexandra discussed the benefit of “making a story yourself” (Alexandra, 12 years old), she connects experiences from the drama sessions to other areas where she can make use of her new knowledge. Tone reflects on how she personally can transfer experience in school work: “Well, in the English classes we often use acting, but then it has already been written how to do it . . . But I do believe that after what we have done here, [I] am not afraid to express more ideas” (Tone, 12 years old). The data material indicates that the work form builds both a connection between teaching material and the personal self, and relationships between form of expression and formation of opinion. The pupils understand themselves in a context and experience how they can create coherence themselves.

### **Participation**

*Participation* concerns the possibilities that pupils have to contribute to both planning, implementation, and evaluation in the learning situation. In the democratic perspective of the research project, the pupils’ participation is crucial. The pupils’ ideas, suggestions, and choices about the performance they have created themselves have been in focus both when the learning forms were chosen and in the implementation of such forms. Siri says: “Yes, when we had those family pictures (statues). That we could show what we were thinking, show with pictures” (Siri, 12 years old). Siri points to her fictitious, but also real involvement, thereby confirming an important premise for adaptive education: “most pupils can grow from having the opportunity to participate in their own everyday life” (Håstein and Werner 2014, 53). Participation is manifested in this study not only as verbal statements. Adrian participates in a quite subdued manner and with little mimicry in most situations, but in the video recordings, we see that in his work with the “red light” statues, he constantly adds physical expressions (Video, 07.09.2015).

Participation also occurs in the decision-making processes where the pupils themselves decide what to do. This applies to both majority decisions made through voting as well as by decisions made through the power of argumentation and consensus. Such processes put democratic processes into play and provide the community with participation competency and self-awareness. One method of facilitating participation was to put ideas and suggestions in a box, which enabled everyone to contribute their own input independently of the wants and wishes of others. This is positively perceived by several: “. . . Yes, I think it was good, that we could write a note . . . because then everyone got to state their opinion” (Viktor, 12 years old). The fact that everyone is given the opportunity to voice their opinion is central to experiencing that one as an individual is participating in the process. At the same time, it is a “low threshold” form of participation, where one does not risk speaking out verbally in plenary situations. There is an atmosphere of understanding that the majority makes the decision, and that it is fair: “Well, it was settled in a very fair manner, with those there were the most of and stuff . . . and that’s enough for me” (Katrine, 12 years old). Katrine expresses that she is satisfied with the way in which the choices were made, though at the same time one may argue that she probably does not have knowledge of other

ways to decide the vote in such a context. When the concern of those who must “let go of their ideas” is drawn into the discussion, somebody suggests mixing ideas together. (Transcribed video recording, 08.09.2015). The pupils strive for all to be heard, for everyone in one way or another to have some of their ideas and input included, and thus achieve co-ownership. Here the pupils introduce a form of compromise. Sølvi focused on this: “In a way we put everything together, and then we tried to think of one thing for everything . . . and see if they had any meaning together” (Sølvi, 12 years old). Sølvi looks simultaneously for a connection or common meaning, and accordingly it is not simply about putting the parts together. On the one hand, it may be perceived that the pupils choose a compromise to avoid disagreements and that the contributions must be equally distributed. On the other hand, the work to strive for everyone to be heard, and to look for common meaning, is both time-consuming and challenging. Pettersvold (2014) points out the value of a pedagogical practice where children and adults interact:

The way to participate is more complex and demanding, but at the same time the opportunities are great for the children to have ample opportunity to experience what it means to be a democratic participant in the form of taking initiative and listening to others, and they can experience that there is no correct answer. The children can gain experience in participating in different communities in which it is positively binding to participate (Pettersvold 2014, 138).

In the drama sessions, participation and choice dealt with the content and form of expression the pupils wanted to convey. This study facilitates “bodily experiences” of democratic participation. The pupils negotiate both over how to make choices and what they should make a performance about. They find solutions for and through bodily forms of expression for their stage ideas and suggestions. This provides the individual pupil’s contributions with significance and gives the pupils real experience in participation.

## Conclusion

From our analysis, we argue that theatrical statues, ensemble work, and creating theatre performances touch on several aspects of adaptive education as well as an inclusive, democratic approach to a learning community. The application of the statue work, the formation of ideas, and the negotiation processes all seem to respond to and concretize the democratic working methods and the pupil perspective we find in adaptive education research. We find that values emphasized for adaptive education reach far beyond the pupil with learning disabilities, and are relevant to any pupil. By proving how drama work can overlap with ideas of adaptive education we thereby also place drama education within the frame of one accepted and relevant educational rationale for schools – beyond the narrow scope of aesthetic education. We investigated how a specific drama and theatre working methodology responds to the following values in adaptive education: *inclusion, appreciation, variation, experience, relevance, context, participation*. The analysis reveals how the key criteria for adaptive education are handled within an arts educational operation. This operationalization is particularly visible, for example, when Line experiences that she both listens and is listened to in the work on “red light” statues, or when Sigurd realizes that others, too, have opinions worth listening to. In such instances, pupils include each other and appreciate each other in the statue work, the idea development and the negotiation over selected solutions. The pupils experience

varied approaches to creating a performance, something Janne discovers in the work with, among other things, “3 pictures”. Both as actors and observers, the pupils participate by allowing diversity and adopting different perspectives in the work with statues. Our study suggests that coherence and learning connections may be achieved in concrete ways in school by using Boals methods in statue work, making pupils reflect on the interpretations of statues.

Finally, we find that bodily investment, recognition, and interaction contribute to the pupil’s understanding of him-/herself. The opportunity to explore aesthetic idioms in expressive modalities seems to expand their intellectual and embodied expression skills, and it seems to appeal to participants who may marginalize themselves in the school community. This leads to deeper inclusion within that school community.

Drama and theatre education (Boal 2002), here delimited to statue work, stands out in this project as an exploratory ensemble-based form of learning in which pupils were given the opportunity to express themselves through another idiom, and the opportunity to discover their own and the other’s voice. This speaks to the ideals of democratic competency, which is quite different from learning about democracy and human rights. Our application of procedures and thinking from Brazilian theatre pioneer Augusto Boal is not coincidental, since his work was framed as a tool for building democracy, through cultural agency, in close relation to Paolo Freire. Today, his approach and his exercises are valuable resources for the arts teacher in a global context.

We also need to add that an exploratory ensemble learning form is quite demanding. Pupils with special needs, e.g. learning disabilities, will require further adjustments. Already established power structures in the classroom will become more or less visible, and there is a risk that the power of the outgoing pupil will be reinforced, by giving priority to her acts and ideas. Furthermore, when there are no correct answers to be presented, it is required that the drama teacher is able to facilitate and respect ideas to create a felt, real opportunity for the pupil in a democratic interaction. This may not always be easy and requires effective educational routines, such as competence and experience.

The study suggests that under certain given circumstances, the use of drama and theatre with primary and lower secondary school pupils establishes an inclusive learning community. The aesthetic approach appears to be close to an operationalization of values derived for adaptive education. Meanwhile, professional expertise, experience, time, and space are essential to the preparation and implementation of such drama teaching projects. This study prompts new positions on aesthetic and exploratory ensemble learning forms in classroom drama programs.

## Disclosure statement

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