What Matters? Empowering Non-Artists to Use Arts-Based Learning: Leading Developmental Projects in Schools and Workplaces

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Abstract

Tomorrow's schools and workplaces need people with new ideas who are willing to be courageous and who can challenge the status quo. This paper suggests that increased use of art-based learning in schools and workplaces can be a solution. There is, however, a shortage of teachers or facilitators with the required expertise and competence in this field. This paper demonstrates how non-artists may develop the competence required to fill this gap. Four empirical cases will exemplify how arts-based learning interventions can activate processes of change individually and collectively in workplace settings. The cases illustrate how involvement in arts-based processes can enhance the creation of new perspectives and ideas and change practitioners' views of perceived challenges in their fields of work. The outcome of these projects reveals how arts-based learning approaches used in a workplace or school setting are well suited to activate moves from the present situation towards the emerging future.

Keywords: Arts-based learning, non-artists, development project, education, workplaces

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There is a need for people in the schools and workplaces of tomorrow to have the new ideas and the will and courage required to challenge the status quo. There is little disagreement in society on the need for people with these competencies and character traits, several leading voices emphasizing the importance of creativity and innovation expertise in education, the workplace, business, management, and organizational development (Bamford, 2006; Buswick & Seifter, 2010; Crossan et al., 2016; Darsø, 2004; Nissley, 2008; Scharmer & Kãufer, 2010; Scharmer & Kãufer, 2013).

One possible solution to meet this need could be to increase the application of art-based learning in schools and workplaces. Many researchers have tried to classify the different approaches used, as these methods are many and varied (Austring & Sørensen, 2010; Darsø, 2004; Springborg, 2018; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). They involve creative processes (such as movement, song, or dramatization), arts-based media (such as photographs, drawings, paintings, or sculpture), or existing works of art (such as theatre plays, films, paintings, or novels). The outcome of these creative processes is used to explore visions, abstract concepts of feelings and perceptions, or as representations of perceived challenges.

Today, a few universities include art-based learning methods in their programs. These learning approaches are primarily used as part of personal and professional development or as a learning tool, applying experiences from artful exercises to other contexts. In general, however, despite the inherent potential in the arts and arts-based learning, these methodologies are still relatively unknown in most workplaces and schools. An important reason for this shortage is that relatively few teachers or facilitators have the needed expertise and competence in this field of learning.

The main purpose of this paper is to show how non-artists may develop the competence needed to fill this gap. It also seeks to demonstrate what expertise and knowledge they need to initiate the use of arts-based learning approaches in workplaces or schools. The aim is to answer the following question: *What do non-artists need to master to make use of the arts at their workplace?*

I will shed light on the topic by referring to 4 different development projects conducted by non-artist students at the course Creative Communication (CC) at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet).

The theoretical section provides an overview of *arts-based learning approaches in education and working life*. Also included is a section explaining the need for *teachers' or facilitators' competence and strength of character* and research confirming *the impact of arts-based learning*. This paper summarises these viewpoints in a model inspired by Winnicott's (1996) theories on "the potential space". Winnicott used this term to describe the overlapping field between baby and mother, between children and family, between individuals, society, or the world when playing and being creative together. The model presented aims to capture perspectives involved in arts-based learning processes in schools and workplaces. The empirical material was collected between 2009 and 2015 and is based on shared experiences and results from four different workplace development projects. Five students conducted these projects as part of their training at the CC course at OsloMet. Three projects were organized in small-scale organizations providing services to people outside the job market, one at a secondary school. These projects involved parts of the staff or fellow employees, people on social welfare with mental health problems, immigrants, and students and teachers at a secondary school.

The findings and interpretation of the data address three concerns. 1. The students' increased their motivation to expand their professional expertise. 2. The students' familiarity with workplace participants affected their choice of arts-based approaches. 3. Anchoring their projects in the organization impacted the long-term outcome. Finally, before closure, some critical aspects are shared, together with considerations, an overview of the projects, and suggestions for a future research agenda.

Theoretical frameworks

Arts-based learning approaches in education and working life

Many have tried to classify the different approaches used in arts-based learning. Darsø (2004) categorized arts-based interventions according to two parameters: the degree of ambiguity and the degree of involvement. She interviewed artists, researchers, businesspeople, and people interested in the field to find what businesses can learn from the arts. She found four primary levels when applying the arts in companies: using the arts in *decoration* or *entertainment*, as an *instrument*, making something function in a group, or as part of a *strategic change process*.

Austring and Sørensen (2010) described five ways when using the arts in education: Making art and aesthetics *a goal in itself*, as *a learning tool*, as *an instrument for personal development,* as *a source of life zest,* or as *part of socialization*. Regarding the last point, they described aesthetic learning as *learning by dint of*, where the individual makes symbolic expressions of their inner ideas and experiences through interaction with the outside aesthetic world. They explained how participation in artistic processes could develop interdisciplinary competencies, foster professional and personal development, and cultivate character and citizenship, locally and globally.

Taylor and Ladkin (2009), inspired by Malchiodi's (2007) definitions of art therapy, examined how and why arts-based methods worked in management education. They identified four areas in which arts-based practices contributed to organizational and leadership development and presented their findings in a model. This model describes arts-based learning through the act of *making, skills transfer, projective techniques*, and *illustration of essence* (Fig. 1).

Springborg (2018) discusses problems related to Taylor and Ladkin's framework. He argues that there are not two forms of knowledge in which we ground our position, only a knowledge where we are aware or not aware of our sensorimotor state. Likewise, engaging in different forms of artwork can make participants aware of the approaches they already use and help them find alternative ones, but not necessarily help them find the most useful ones.

Despite Springborg's criticism, reference is nevertheless made here to Taylor and Ladkin's model. It helps answer the research question, provides a relevant framework for this article, and helps answer the research question. Darsø's two latter levels, using art as an instrument to make something function or as part of strategic change, are also relevant, as they provide for personal involvement in the artworks, not just a spectator's perspective. Likewise, Austring and Sørensen's five practices are also applicable. Their results may also be found as part of Taylor and Ladkin's four categories.

Taylor and Ladkin's model distinguishes between product and process, particular and universal. Here, making and projective techniques are defined as particular, and skills transference and illustration of the essence as universal. Whereas particular focuses on the individual's experience ("making") or meaning-making ("projective techniques"), universal refers to universal skills ("skills transfer") or an understanding universally recognizable ("illustration of the essence").
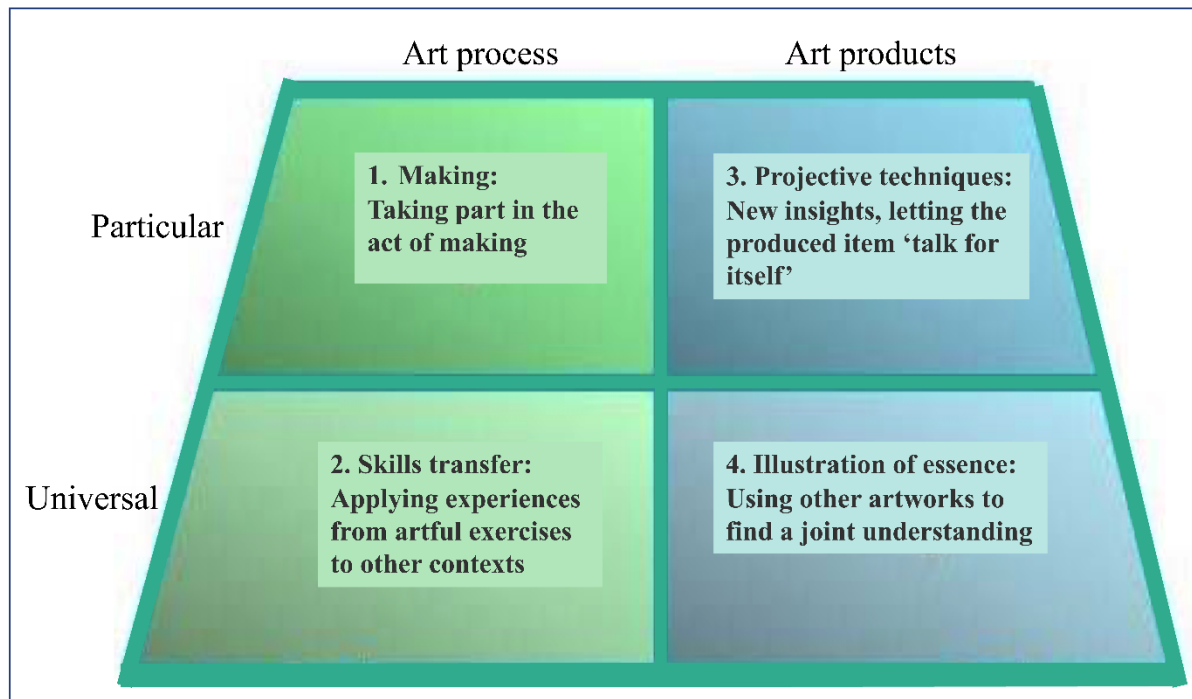
	Art process	Art products
Particular	**1. Making:** Taking part in the act of making	**3. Projective techniques:** New insights, letting the produced item 'talk for itself'
Universal	**2. Skills transfer:** Applying experiences from artful exercises to other contexts	**4. Illustration of essence:** Using other artworks to find a joint understanding

Figure 1: Taylor and Ladkin's typology of arts-based processes

The *artistic process*, making art, and skills transference can be seen in two presented areas. Taylor and Ladkin define "making" as the deep work involved in being creative, the product itself being of little importance. This perspective coincides with Austring and Sørensen's (2010) first point, where creating art and aesthetics is a goal in itself. It also mirrors their third and fourth point, where the participants can develop their natural potential and experience life zest through aesthetic work. They emphasize the sensuality in the act of making, an activity enabling students to experience the fascinating power and educational value of art in expressing, communicating about, and sensing how it affects their emotions. Here, Taylor and Ladkin see the kinship between the art-making process and spiritual practice, how engagement in art-creation for its own sake can bring a sense of personal integration and wholeness. Springborg (2018) sees the similarity between creating something without any purpose in mind and spiritual practices. He emphasizes how this experience comes through as pure, fresh, and direct, activating states like prolonged concentration, single-mindedness, feeling of connection, relaxed with a sense of not knowing, and unbound sensory awareness.

According to Taylor and Ladkin, "skills transference" also focuses on the process rather than the product. Skills discovered in, for example, works of art or revealed in a theatrical production are used to reach a deeper understanding of the art of management and leadership. This approach corresponds with Darsø's (2004) third point, using the arts as an instrument for team building, leadership development, and problem-solving. Also, Austring and Sørensen's (2019) second point is relevant, using the arts as a learning tool in schools. Here, Bamford (2006) distinguishes between education *in the arts* and education *through the arts*. When learning through the arts, the aesthetic subjects are primarily not seen as valuable in themselves, but rather as mediums, as didactic tools for teaching and pedagogical work. For example, The Art of Science Learning Project (Seifter, 2016) used the arts to spark creativity in science education, integrating hands-on-arts-based work into science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) training.

Dewey (2005) proposes other aspects related to involvement in creative processes, describing how participation in a creative process can render an experience complete in itself as something that stands out from what went on before and what comes after. He explains how this involvement activates a drama containing a plot and that "a plot requires

a stage, a space, whereinto develop and time in which to unfold" (2005, p. 43). According to Dewey, working with art can represent an arena where struggle and conflict may be enjoyed and give meaning despite different emotions during the process. Here, non-artists may gain process awareness by involving themselves in unpretentious and non-committal art projects (Meltzer, 2015). According to Meltzer (2015, p. 66), "a returning involvement in creative work and experience with the creative processes involved can be knowledge that can be transferred to working with other kinds of developmental work that requires a creative approach, process experience, and understanding."

Art products are focused on in two areas, in "projective techniques" and "illustration of the essence." Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) emphasis here is on using art products to learn a lesson. 'Projective techniques' use the arts as a tool for fostering reflection through projection. An artistic form, an individual's creative expression, or self-created artifact is used as a symbolic representation of a specific situation or challenge. According to Langer (1957, in Reese, 1977, p. 47), a work of art represents a created form that is expressive of human feeling. She states that if "a created sensuous symbol – a work of art – is to be in their image (the image of feeling), it must present itself somehow as a version, or projection, of the living process; it must be of a logical form that is commensurable with the essential forms of life." Also, she conveys that whereas language helps us understand and conceive our objective reality by giving outward experience its form, the arts enable us to understand the nature of our subjective experiences and reality, our "inward life".

These perspectives coincide with Austring and Sørensen's (2006) third and fifth points, using the arts for personal development or as part of socialization. They describe how making an artifact or creative expression may serve as a symbolic reflection of one's inner beliefs or experiences. In this way, the aesthetics may represent a qualitative way of seeing the world, experiences bringing meaning, and a sense of wholeness in life.

Springborg, however, criticizes current literature on arts-based approaches, primarily viewing sensorimotor experience as something "to reflect *on*, rather than as potential sensory templates to reflect *with*" (Springborg, 2018, p. 157). Here, an arts-based inquiry may represent an approach accommodating the deficiency pointed out by Springborg. This approach, not projecting thoughts and feelings into a symbol or artwork but instead stepping into the chosen object and lending it its voice, offers a new way to reach a sensorimotor experience (Meltzer, 2019). In this approach, the inquirer needs to "be in felt and sensed touch with the artifact or symbol, expressing any thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations and behavior that might occur" (Meltzer, 2019, p. 155). Current challenges are in this manner addressed in atypical and productive ways, making new solutions possible. Together with other arts-based methods, an arts-based inquiry may increase reflexivity and create a new understanding of what is being investigated.

The area "illustration of the essence" uses professional artists or works of art as a way to discover their "universally recognized qualities, situations, emotional responses, or ways of being" (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009, p. 59). They exemplify how the process of illustrating the essence can draw on great works of art, like literature, films, and theatre, to reach new understandings and views of complex organizational matters. This approach coincides with Darsø's (2004) fourth level; integrating the arts in a strategic transformation process, for example, using professional actors to initiate improvisational theatre to animate a company's culture. Springborg (2018) explains why professional artists' work and approaches in these settings function better than works created or formed by laymen. According to Springborg, "artists will often capture aspects of experience everyone else overlooks or avoids or aspects which everyone knows well but do not have words for" (2018, pp. 189–190). Years of training have made them specialists at capturing essential elements of human experience and life, enabling them to convey what it feels like to be in that specific situation or what was of importance at the time.

Finally, it should be noted that Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) model can be seen as a schematic representation of reality, as most arts-based approaches combine two or more of these fields. The projects and examples from the training at the university course presented later in this paper will show how closely the different approaches, with smooth transitions in between, relate to one another and are part of a whole, sometimes making it hard to distinguish which part had an effect or not.

The teacher or facilitator's competence and strength of character

Crossan et al. (2016), emphasizing courage as a prerequisite character dimension for leaders, acknowledge that a person can carry out acts of leadership in all parts of society without holding a leadership position. May (1994), adding creativity, claims that every profession requires some creative courage, describing this courage as the discovery of "new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which society can be built" (1994, p. 21). However, in addition to courage, being creative requires trust, as being creative involves ambiguity and emotional challenges (May, 1994; McNiff, 1998).

May (1994) argues that even if the process of forming and making involves heightened awareness, these processes do not increase self-consciousness, suggesting that reaching new insights or ideas requires a person's conscious and purposeful will and dedication. Another point is that using the arts as part of learning processes, a field operating between art and psychology, requires professionals who know how to master this balance (Drotner, 1995). Also, a teacher's or facilitator's familiarity with the target group is essential, whether they are managers in an organization, colleagues at a workplace, students or fellow employees at a school, or people outside the ordinary job market.

Many of the methods used in arts-based learning are inspired by art therapy, and it is reasonable to draw attention to the close connection between these two disciplines. Taylor and Statler (2014) explored the field of expressive art therapy to understand how and why materials affect learning and the effect these materials might have on the learning process and the outcome. Here, the art therapists consciously choose the materials they use "to manage the level of expressed emotional energy among the participants" (2014, p. 593). These results led to Taylor and Statler's central idea; that "educators can manipulate the level of student engagement by intentionally selecting materials and integrating them into a learning process and in so doing increase the effectiveness of the process" (2014, p. 595).

Taylor and Statler's (2014) findings confirm that taking part in arts-based learning processes can be emotionally demanding. Sometimes these processes move outside one's comfort zone, exposing parts of self that might be hidden or unknown. Also, it is essential to be aware that people's responses to and involvement in artistic expression may vary significantly, sometimes triggering demanding issues and emotions. Participating in unfamiliar learning approaches may activate feelings of vulnerability, confusion, and stress. Seeing a situation from a different perspective requires being open and willing to change, and change can hurt. Participants' responses depend on their openness and familiarity with arts-based learning processes, their sense of security and trust in the facilitator and the group, and whether the given theme in some way or other triggers their personal history or life experiences. These aspects, and whether they approach them analytically or emotionally, may influence their instinctive reactions (Darsø & Meltzer, 2020).

These perspectives accentuate the attention towards the challenging line teachers and facilitators in arts-based learning need to balance between the emotional energy and learning and art and psychology. When the art therapist merges the creative and the therapeutic, the teacher, using arts-based approaches, merges creative work and expression with personal and professional development and learning. Drotner (in Austring & Sørensen, 2006, p. 13) underlines how making room for aesthetic learning processes places significant demands on the teacher or facilitator as aesthetic approaches may represent complex material for the participants. According to her, as a consequence, the

teachers must be good craftsmen, even artists, and good psychologists. They also have to be sensitive analysts, distinguishing between the educational, aesthetic role and the psychologists or teachers' role (Drotner, 1995). As in art therapeutic settings, teachers' sensitivity towards movement, vision, and sound may encourage more play and improvisation in the learning space. Here, they need to be present, open, and grounded to create a potential space for learning, change, and development (Robbins, 1998).

According to Robbins (1998), a teacher and art therapist, this presence, encompassing the inner and outer reality, is part of "the intermediate space that is neither inside nor outside but somewhere between"; an area where therapeutic work takes place (1998, p. 32). This intermediate position indicates that teachers applying arts-based learning methods at schools and workplaces need substantial competence, professional expertise, and knowledge in these learning approaches. Likewise, they need competence and experience with the arts and psychology to choose exercises suited to the situation, theme, and participants.

Some experts have chosen to collaborate across different professions to safeguard the outcome of these learning processes. For example, Lotte Darsø, researcher and psychologist and one of Denmark's leading experts in creativity and innovation, collaborated with a wide range of artists when conducting the course Leadership and Innovation in Complex Systems at Copenhagen Business School. Likewise, Michael Ray, a psychologist and business professor at Stanford University, also called "The most creative man in Silicon Valley" (Sittenfield, 2000), joined forces with artist and musician Rochelle Myers when establishing and implementing the course "Creativity in Business" (Ray & Myers, 1986).

Rebillot and Key (1993) put forth another essential aspect: a group can only evolve to the level of the person leading the process. They encouraged group leaders and teachers to stay in contact with themselves and continue to work on their growth process. Here, a strength of character, acknowledging the importance of continuous work with personal issues, may ensure their confidence if their participants experience confusion or ambiguity (Crossan et al., 2016; Darsø, 2004). Springborg (2018), likewise, argues the need for managers to have extensive experience with arts-based interventions activating their sensorimotor dynamics to develop valuable managerial skills from such practices. These sensory experiences and feelings from engaging in arts-based practices may, equally, help them comprehend and engage in situations at work.

The impact of arts-based learning

In recent years, numerous articles and books have described the use of arts-based learning interventions in education and workplaces. The research of Goleman et al. (2016), related to The Art of Science Learning Project (Seifter, 2016), confirmed the impact of using these learning approaches on adolescents or adults in high school groups. Goldman et al.'s results proved that arts-based learning had a most profound effect on high school student groups. Here, they found several statistically significant increases from pre-test to post-test, as *improved creative thinking skills, enhanced collaborative behaviors,* and *more substantial innovation outcomes* in these groups compared to the control groups. Also, the participants experiencing arts-based learning gave significantly higher scores to *the skills transferability to future academic work, home life, and extracurricular activities* than the control groups. Their research supports results from qualitative research, conveying how artwork and participation in creative processes can contribute to personal and professional development (Buswick & Seifter, 2010; Darsø, 2004; Scharmer & Kãufer, 2010; Springborg, 2014; Taylor, 2015)

A model is created here (Fig. 2) that attempts to capture the various properties involved when using arts-based approaches at schools or workplaces. The model is based on Winnicott's (1996) idea of the 'potential space.' Winnicott (1996) saw the ability to play as universal, a field belonging to health. He defined this playful potential space as an

"intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality; an area retained throughout life in the intense experiences belonging to the arts, religion, imaginative living, and to creative scientific work" (1996, p. 14). His idea of potential space has been an essential reference in art therapeutic practices, describing how the field between the therapist and the client expands through artistic media. In this paper, this model is transferred to arts-based learning practices, showing how the close connection between the teacher or facilitator's professional competence, their familiarity with the arts, and their participants affects the outcome of these learning approaches.

The model includes Robbins' (1998) focus on the required characteristics of the teachers and facilitators using the arts. It also consists of Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) framework, classifying how and why arts-based learning approaches work, and Goldman et al.'s (2016) key finding when examining the impact of arts-based learning in science education. Reference is made to these different properties when making sense of the outcome of the students' projects at the CC course.
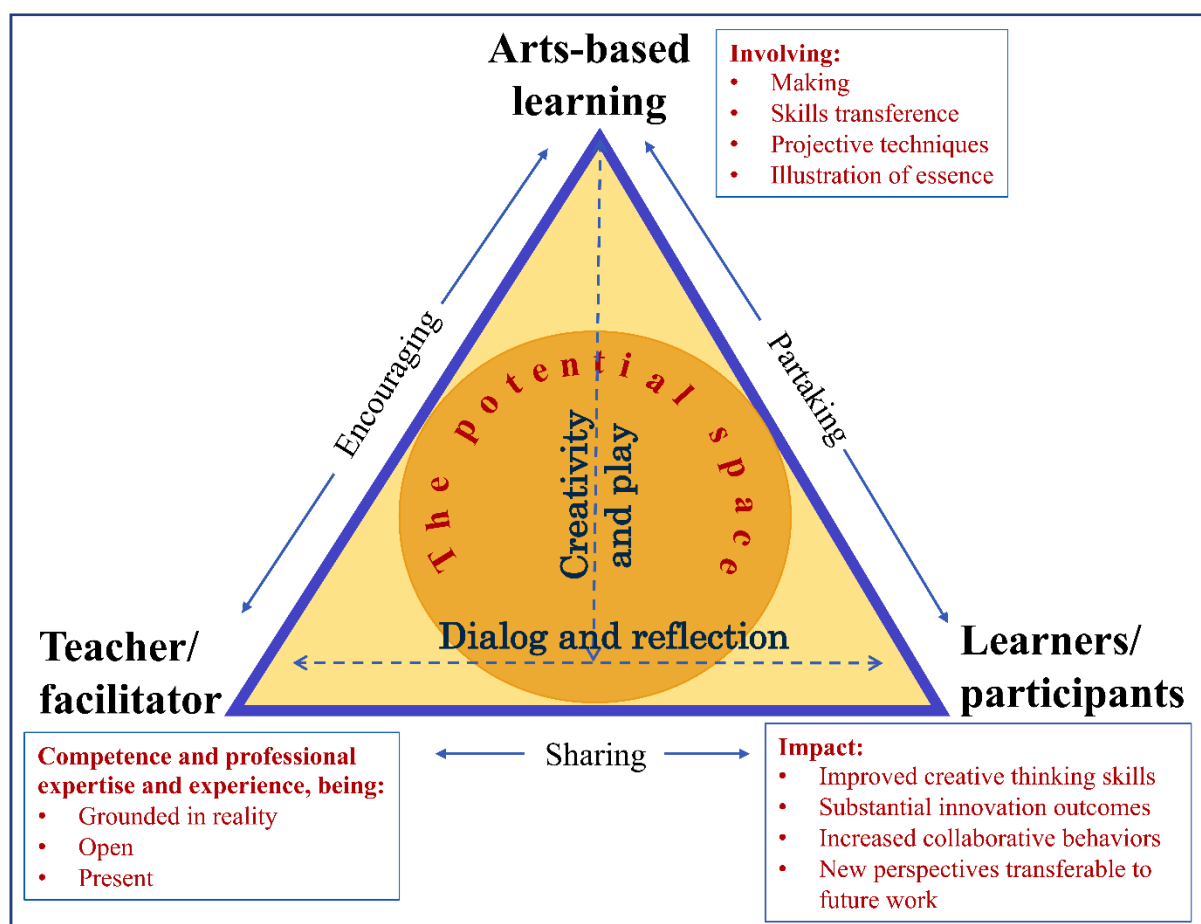

Figure 2: A model exemplifying different properties involved when using arts-based learning at schools or workplaces.

Content and context

The Creative Communication courses and their participants

The 34 students, aged between 30 and 65 and split into four groups, came from different vocational backgrounds and work experiences. Some were teachers in schools; others were managers, supervisors, or advisors in organizations providing services to people not in employment. A few were self-employed artists. Others were unemployed or out of work.

Several in this group attended the course as part of a state-funded re-education and retraining for working life program.

A key course admittance requirement was that applicants had an interest in creative work and artistic processes. Another important condition was that the students planned, implemented, documented, and conducted development projects on their own or at a suitable workplace during the course. The author was, with a colleague, responsible for teaching these learning processes in the CC courses.
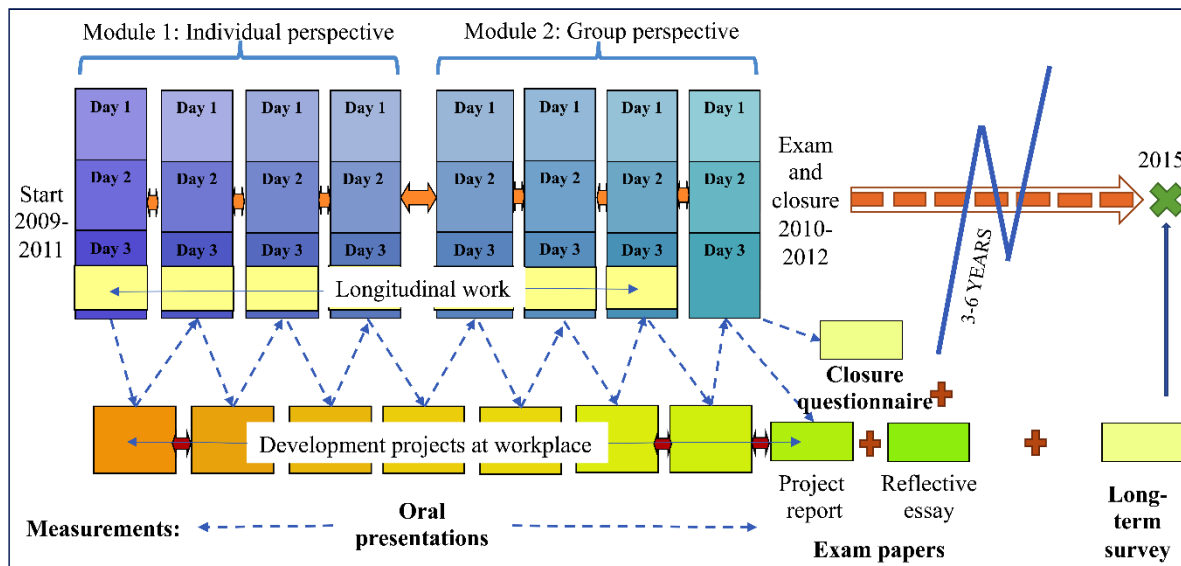

Figure 3: Course study design and measurements

Research material

Data (Fig. 3), collected between 2009 and 2012, are derived from five students' oral presentations, exam project reports, and reflective essays. Also included are their final evaluations in the closure questionnaires and results from a long-term follow-up survey conducted in 2015, 3-6 years after course closure. Their oral presentations, exam project reports, and reflective essays provided comprehensive and in-depth information on their development projects. The closure questionnaire and the follow-up survey contained closed and open-ended questions, thus generating descriptive data for all variables. The questionnaires asked for detailed answers on course content, the use of arts-based learning approaches, and their personal growth as learners and project facilitators. They also addressed the course's learning objectives, pedagogical methods, the balance between the different parts, and the students perceived personal learning outcomes when facilitating and implementing their development projects. The long-term survey captured the extent to which the CC course had impacted the students' creativity, leadership and working identity, sense of self, and work situation. The results were semi-anonymous, organized into selected groups.

The five students referred to in this paper have agreed that their feedback may be used in research. The workplaces and participants presented in the practical examples have been anonymized.

These 5 students had an established job affiliation. Their projects represent a limited range of the development projects implemented at the CC course. The reason for choosing these specific projects was not because they were more successful than the others. On the contrary, all students completed interesting and fruitful development projects with or without an established job affiliation. In our experience, however, students not in direct employment encountered additional challenges when carrying out development projects in

workplaces that were new to them. Many struggled to find suitable places to conduct their projects and were also, as "outsiders", unaccustomed to the workplaces' work, culture, and day-to-day routines. This unfamiliarity made it difficult for them to anchor their projects, establish contact and motivate workplace employees to participate. These experiences deviate from the focus of this paper.

The four development projects were chosen to provide a glimpse of the wide range of possibilities the use of arts-based interventions in schools or workplace settings can offer. They show how non-artists managed to tailor the use of art-based approaches at their workplace. They also demonstrate how individuals from all levels of society, students, employees, immigrants, and those outside the ordinary job market can benefit from participating in arts-based learning situations irrespective of their age, gender, cultural background, or religion.

Course structure and content

The CC course centered around three core subjects: creative work, personal development, and planning and organizing development projects, equal time given to each. The course's learning objectives were ambitious with its threefold goals: "Increasing creativity and acquisition of new skills," "Cultivating personal and professional competence" and "Using arts-based learning approaches when conducting development projects at suited workplaces."

The course was designed as a block-study course, illustrated in the outline given in Figure 3. The students assembled for 3 days 8 times a year on campus (a total of 168 hours). Each module, combining lectures, hands-on-arts-based work, discussions and debriefs, and practice, had a structure and content that added more detail and depth to previous parts of the course. The follow-up lectures, in which relevant literature was presented, were preferably given after practice sessions with specific art forms and techniques.

The creative work on campus had a clear structure; individual expression was always sought before group work. Making artifacts and participating in arts-based learning processes were closely interlinked. This type of work is process-oriented rather than goal-oriented. The students worked in silence in the art-making process, avoiding making comments or sharing their thoughts. These restrictions were introduced to foster safe environments for creative expression and to deepen their attentiveness to their experiences. Being creative and participating in the "making" provided an opportunity to focus inward, let their "hands speak", and be more mindful of their spontaneous impulses. Mixing pigments to create new colors or exploring different sculpting materials encouraged the development of new skills.

The artifacts were never evaluated as right or wrong but seen as unique and original sensory and emotional responses. Here, they examined a perceived challenge by studying the objects and setting words to the projections they might carry or letting the symbol speak for itself through an arts-based inquiry. The intention was to show how a reflective or sensorimotor approach to the artifacts might reveal new and unthought-of perspectives and thereby influence habitual ways of thinking and being.

Each module contained several repeated activities. One example was that the students drew 5-minute spontaneous sketches every morning that portrayed their feelings and thoughts in the here and now. In addition, they repeatedly returned to a canvas they painted on throughout the year, using set symbols to imply how they perceived themselves (a tree), their relation to their workplace (a building), and their professional identity (a body) (Meltzer & Schwencke, 2019). They also wrote logs and shared their experiences in pairs, smaller groups, and plenary sessions. These longitudinal exercises, adding new paint to the canvases or making new notes or sketches, provide space to express and reflect upon their experiences, learning, and thoughts from their days on campus and their ongoing development projects.

In the painting project, the students were encouraged to notice the changes they added to their work, the different emotions occurring during the process, and to reflect on the source of their actions. These repeated exercises were an essential part of their work with personal development. Through these recurring sessions, the students experienced and reflected on the different phases involved in creative processes, sensing how their emotions changed, sometimes feeling resistance, other times joy or sorrow. Their self-experience and understanding of the phases involved aimed to increase their courage and trust when utilizing development projects and arts-based interventions in their present and future workplace settings. Their encounter with creative work processes could also help enhance their openness, sensitivity, and perception of their own and others' expressions or reactions (Meltzer & Schwencke, 2019).

They also took part in a wide range of short-term and closely linked arts-based approaches, new insights being sought through making and projective techniques (Meltzer, 2020). They made sculptures in tinfoil, scrap, Lego, or clay or created spontaneous paintings, sketches, drama, and creative writing. Fairy tales, picture cards, or animal figures were also used to reach a shared understanding of the essence. The sessions, referring to related themes, demonstrated that any material or item could be used to activate an exploratory process. These exercises were designed to expand their awareness and familiarity with arts-based methods as a whole and help them assess possible approaches they could use in a workplace setting.

They could, for example, use animal figures to study the group's interaction and progression. First, they shared the qualities they projected onto the animals they selected in pairs. Then they placed the figures on a tabletop, telling the group how their chosen animal mirrored themselves and how their position reflected their sense of themselves in the group constellation (Meltzer, 2016). After this, in the breaks, they moved their figures on the tabletop in response to their sensed changes during the program. Finally, they could examine their placement in the group constellation by standing on the floor in the same position as their animal figures, from where they could explore their bodily sensations when part of a "group body".

Another example was students making individual drawings that could illustrate the part of the story that moved them most after listening to a fairy tale. Later, they shared their drawings, using them as reflections of current personal or professional themes. Awareness of one another's selected fairy-tale parts and how these scenes could inform something in a person's present life situation could heighten empathy and a sense of togetherness. Increased awareness of the storyline in the fairy-tale could similarly provide recognition of the structure and build-up involved in any narrative, creative process, or development process.

The development projects (see Figure 3) were an essential and integral part of the course program, carried out at suitable workplaces between campus gatherings. These projects were required to be of importance to the student and the workplace. The students were to address the need for change and development in the companies. Their projects should be well planned, well-founded in the organization, be of value to the company and have a lasting effect. In these projects, the students used arts-based learning approaches to help strengthen the workplace participants' competence and communication. Here, the CC students' experience with arts-based learning from training on campus was reconned to be of utmost importance. These experiences and understandings assisted them in planning and conducting their workplace developmental projects.

Practical examples

The following section presents four CC student development projects conducted at four different workplaces. The information is derived from five students' oral presentations, exam papers, reflective essays, and the long-term survey conducted in 2015. In their exam

papers, they present and describe the process of planning and implementing development projects in their workplaces. The survey results show the long-term effect of participating in the CC course.

The objectives of these projects were different (Table 1). All projects focused on the process and on establishing better communication and collaboration between participants at different levels of an organization. Two projects, however, also aimed at creating new products. The first, second, and third projects were initiated at job centers providing services to the local labor and welfare administration (Arbeids og Velferdsetaten -NAV) for people outside the ordinary job market. The fourth project took place at a secondary school. In the first and third projects, students were managers at the workplaces at which the projects were conducted. The second and fourth project students were non-management employees.

No	Student role and workplace	Participants	Product goal	Process goal
1.	Manager at a job center	Staff from all levels in the organization		Improved communication and collaboration
2.	An employee at a job center	Sheltered employees	Creating new products	Improved communication and collaboration
3.	Manager at a job center, collaborating with a qualification center	Immigrants	Creating new products	Improved communication and collaboration
4.	Teachers at a secondary school	Secondary school students and teachers		Improved communication and collaboration

Table 1: Overview of the students' employment, workplace affiliation, participants, and main learning objectives.

1st project: recreating a sense of company coherence

A student who was a manager at a job center initiated this project. The workplace had recently moved to a larger location, and the number of personnel had increased. A survey revealed that the employees reacted to these changes, triggering a loss of unity and familiar communication.

The manager's vision for his development project was to *establish a workplace with a creative mindset* in which the employees, as the company's ambassadors, discovered new ways to communicate and collaborate with the ultimate aim of regaining a sense of unity. He wanted to use arts-based learning processes at all levels in the organization to help search for new ideas and answers to perceived challenges. He also acknowledged his need to develop in his profession as a leader and reach a deeper understanding of his ways of being.

He included different short-term arts-based interventions throughout the year as regular contributions to staff meetings. No guidelines were given on themes or directions of the discussions. The intention was to facilitate a free space with room to exchange thoughts and ideas and enhance creativity. Here, the participants expressed previously unspoken ideas and wishes concerning the company's direction.

He also integrated short-term arts-based interventions into board meeting agendas, challenging the members to participate, be open-minded about and trust the process, to allow a joint strategy and *future-oriented plan for the company* to develop. The board and staff were also invited to a 2-day workshop. They created individual paintings that

envisioned what the company would be like in a year. They used impressions and inspiration from these paintings to express and form sentences that conveyed improvement plans for the company.

2nd project: developing an internal newsletter

The second development project was carried out at a job center that offers permanent and sheltered employment to people on social welfare with mental health problems such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorders.

The CC student who implemented and ran this project was an employee at the job center. This student admitted openly at campus gatherings that she struggled to find a role for herself in the services offered at the workplace. Also, in her reflection notes, she described her uncertainty and acknowledged her lack of confidence and courage to stand up for her ideas and what she wanted to do. She was motivated to attend the course to *deepen her self-understanding* and to work creatively with a developmental project.

She shared her idea with her leader, i.e., *creating an internal company newsletter* with the sheltered employees, suggesting that their involvement in her project could elucidate the company's values and increase their mutual sense of togetherness. Throughout the year, she combined her experiences from the CC course with her professional knowledge of her target group, acknowledging that the best toolkit for creative exercises resided within her. For example, drawing and painting could be experienced as unpredictable and frightening for people with schizophrenia. She, therefore, introduced non-threatening creative activities like collage work, the cutting out and sticking of photographs from magazines on pieces of paper, as this activity had more explicit constraints. The employees' expressions of self were later used as projected images when reflecting on their present situation, potential needs, and actions that could be taken. They decided to interview both staff and participants, share recipes from the canteen, write about joint excursions, and include photographs and texts written in a free-flow form.

3rd project: fashioning multicultural glass design with immigrants

A jobcentre manager, responsible for developing, designing, and producing glass artifacts, involved immigrants from a nearby qualification center in making *colored glass lamps with a multicultural design*. The qualification center provided work assessments and vocational training for people who wanted to work but needed extra follow-up to achieve this. A crucial part of their job rehabilitation was *boosting their self-confidence and achieving a sense of mastery.*

The manager assumed that by including arts-based learning methods in the fashioning of new glass designs, he could enhance the participants' creativity and increase their awareness of their abilities and resources. He hoped to strengthen their mutual bonds irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, or cultural background. He also wanted to develop his leadership character, seeing this project as an opportunity to challenge, understand and alter his way of being and acting as a leader.

The project was designed as a four-day closely-knit workshop. Six participants, mainly from African countries, volunteered to take part. Two interns from the job center and two employees from the qualification center who worked with career guidance and working ability assessment also took part on an equal footing with the participants.

They sculpted tinfoil figures as representations of themselves and painted as if they were "children" perceiving and marveling how colors blended and forms emerged. They also used colored pencils to draw lines and shapes that could illustrate their experience of different emotions. Later they decorated a piece of paper with an outline of a female figure with the

colors of the costumes of their native countries. After a brief introduction, they were thrown directly into glass making, transforming their drawings onto glass sculptures and lamps.

4th project: improving classroom collaboration and communication

Two students, both employed as teachers at a secondary school, conducted the fourth project. Inspired by previous art-therapy training, they had already implemented some creative work in a few classroom settings. However, they both held reduced positions at the time due to a workload that they found unsatisfactory and stressful. For some time, the high tempo, many meetings, and rapidly alternating roles at the school had made them demotivated, losing their enthusiasm and sense of presence. They applied to the CC course to develop their skills and explore their professional identity, seeing the development project as an opportunity to reach far more people in the organization and call attention to arts-based ways of learning.

The school's goal was to be caring and engaging. However, a recent survey showed that the school lacked several factors essential for achieving an optimal learning environment. Their colleagues confirmed that there was an absence of enthusiasm and lack of collaboration in the learning situation. The school's students responded similarly, giving low scores to academic achievements, satisfaction with their learning outcome, and opportunities to work undisturbed.

The CC students experienced that the school used a pedagogy focused on subject-specific competencies at the expense of reflection and curiosity. Consequently, they suggested a project that could *improve classroom communication and collaboration*. Their development project could provide a process of change. By applying arts-based learning they hoped to increase self-awareness and enhance the interaction between the students and the student-teacher relationship.

Their project involved 3 student groups at different year levels, in general, or vocational subjects. In total 65 students and their teachers participated on an equal footing in several brief and closely linked exercises in a one-day class-based project. They created masks and used them to express caregiving, used animal figures to establish a sense of community, drew colored lines around tin foil sculptures to probe their boundaries of accepted closeness and created sculptures in clay as images of their inner critic.

Findings and making sense of the data

This section provides a brief outline of the outcome of the students' projects, referring to the three different properties linked to the use of arts-based learning at schools and workplaces (fig. 2). Three perspectives become apparent from the outcome of these projects. 1. The students' increased their motivation to expand their professional expertise. 2. The students' familiarity with workplace participants affected their choice of arts-based approaches. 3. Anchoring their projects in the organization impacted the long-term effect of their interventions.

The students' increased their motivation to expand their professional expertise

Scharmer and Kãufer's (2010) research proposes using the arts to stop repeated patterns of behavior and thought, claiming that "both the processes and products of the arts provide training tools that can help leaders assess the current challenges in atypical and productive ways" (2010, p. 22). They emphasize the need to challenge the present situation and create a shift of consciousness, seeing the surrounding reality with new eyes and experiencing it with an open mind.

However, expanding one's repertoire of perspectives and actions requires a determination to improve oneself and a willingness to reflect on one's behavior (Crossan et al., 2016;

Rebillot & Key, 1993; Robbins, 1998; Scharmer & Kãufer, 2010; Springborg, 2018). Here, the CC course program profile emphasizes the need for a strength of character, as participation can be personally demanding. The CC students, having extensive experience in their respective fields of work, wanted to expand their repertoire and toolbox and find renewed motivation to continue their work. Acknowledging their need to strengthen their professional competence, they were willing to embrace their self-development through sometimes personally demanding arts-based processes.

The CC students' former experience with the arts and arts-based learning approaches differed considerably. The two teachers conducting development projects at the secondary school were trained as art therapists and had included some of these learning approaches in their previous classroom teaching. The two managers had previous experience with the arts but no training with arts-based learning. Their practical skills from different fields of art had given them a degree of confidence and familiarity with the emotional ambiguity involved in creative work.

In contrast, the employee working with sheltered participants had no previous experience with the arts or these learning approaches. In her oral presentations, she shared her initial lack of mastery, performance anxiety, or worry of misunderstanding the task or doing something wrong, finding this learning approach strange and challenging. However, this experience of discomfort and uncertainty, knowing from the "inside" the ambiguity involved in creative processes, became valuable when she introduced and used these learning approaches at her workplace. Her experiences made her acknowledge the distress others could feel when taking part in learning methods differing from the conventional teaching and didactics they were used to or expected.

Crossan et al. (2016) proposed creativity as one of the dimensions of leadership character, generating unique and original ideas and finding innovative, practical solutions and ways of doing things. The CC students' courage and openness to learning new skills and their willingness to work with themselves through arts-based approaches provided them with the required competence when implementing their development projects in their workplace. Here, as "leaders", they played a crucial role in modeling the behaviors they wanted to promote in their organization.

The student's familiarity with workplace participants affected their choice of arts-based approaches

Taylor and Statler (2014) examined how the teacher's choice of material may affect the level of expressed emotional energy, thereby increasing the learning processes. They explored the relationship between materials, emotions, and learning, questioning how different materials mattered in learning processes. Referring to Zull (2006), that high levels of emotional engagement produced increased learning, they assumed that "the choice and use of materials to manage that emotion may be crucial" (Taylor & Statler, 2014, p. 588). Taylor and Statler's (2014) findings also underline that caution is required in the application of arts-based learning approaches. Any teacher or facilitator using aesthetic learning approaches needs to know how to balance between the choice of material, learning objectives, and possible vulnerability in the participant group (Drotner, 1995). Here, in-depth knowledge and understanding of the participants may help the facilitator decide what options or limitations to consider.

Likewise, all the CC students' familiarity with their workplaces and participants was a major factor when conducting their projects. Alongside their knowledge and understanding of the culture and day-to-day routines of the workplaces, they were sensitive to potential challenges in the target groups. To ensure a safe and non-evaluating space for a creative outlet, they applied the same restraints that were used on campus. That meant working in silence, avoiding comments, never seeing the artworks as right or wrong, and focusing on individual expression before group work. They were also aware that some participants might

avoid becoming involved when challenged to take part in activities they experience as unfamiliar and strange due to a fear of losing control. Equally, feelings of uncertainty may arise when encouraged to share thoughts and results with other group members.

The CC students needed to be attentive and appreciate the courage and trust displayed by their participants. This sensitivity and knowledge, combined with their experiences from the CC course and their former professional expertise, enabled them to create tailor-made programs for their participants. Here, their self-experience in arts-based learning approaches was an essential prerequisite for supporting and leading others in this process work. Depending on focus and goal, the students switched between Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) four areas of arts-based learning approaches: "making", "skills transfer", "projective techniques", and "illustration of the essence". The most profound difference in how the students worked was whether they used single short-term exercises or had several closely linked activities. Their choice of approaches was also related to whether they had several short-term projects over a single or a few days or carried out several interventions throughout the year.

For example, the two teachers' broad experience in the field rendered the competence they needed to use a wide variety of closely linked exercises. Their in-depth knowledge of and previous experience with various art therapeutic methods gave them confidence when tailoring arts-based approaches suited to their target group. They observed how the creative activities produced a different type of dialogue, affecting the classroom energy and the participants' body language. Humour and laughter replaced insecurity and introversion. The participants treated one another with more understanding and respect, were motivated to learn, and listened and waited their turn. Questionnaires revealed a widening of perspectives.

The employee working with people with schizophrenia instinctively knew which exercises would work, avoiding activities that could activate too much emotional expression. Here, a deeper understanding of their collage work brought resources into the open, an awareness which in turn led to new ideas and topics they could use in the newspaper.

No	Role	Arts practice	Participants	When?	Main approach	Product outcome	Process outcome
1	Manager at a job center	Musician	Staff from all levels in the organization	At staff meetings throughout the year	Short term arts-based interventions		Re-establish sense of unity and a familiar way of communicating
2	An employee at a job center	None	Sheltered employees	Repeated meetings throughout the year	Non-threatening short-term creative activities	Establish a company newsletter	Elucidate company values and strengthen their sense of togetherness
3	Manager at a job center, collaborating with a qualification center	Experience in glass production	Immigrants	Four-days closely-knit workshop	Short-term creative activities. Hands-on glassmaking	Design new glass products	Strengthen mutual bonds, boost self-confidence and sense of mastery
4	Teachers at a secondary school	Training as arts-therapists	Secondary school students and teachers	Three one-day class-based projects	Short time and closely linked exercises		Improve collaboration and communication

Table 2: An overview of the students' background, participants, and projects.

The manager working with glass production suggested tasks that related to the participants' resources and ethnic roots. He found that the project built mutual bonds and increased the participants' self-confidence, their awareness of their abilities and resources, turning initial tension and uncertainty into laughter and curiosity. Participants discovered common aspects, binding them together and bringing a collective sense of familiarity and security.

The project also helped clarify their career wishes. They asked for further guidance or applied for work in other creative disciplines.

The other manager found that his project had made room for a diversity of ideas in the crossing between quality and creativity, resulting in the build-up of an open, collaborative working atmosphere. He described his employees as having a new set of 'eyes' in their perception of each other.

Table 2 provides an overview of the students' role and workplace, their background within the arts, their participants, and how many times they took part in arts-based learning approaches. The table also displays their main approaches and learning objectives.

Anchoring their projects in the organization impacted the long-term outcome

Goldman (2016) referred to significantly improved thinking skills, enhanced collaborative behaviors, and more substantial innovation outcomes as the impact of The Art of Science Learning Project. We received similar feedback from the CC students. Here, the results of their projects were not dissimilar, despite different roles and working positions. The survey conducted 3–6 years after course closure highlighted some general long-term effects, like enhanced creativity, acquisition of new learning skills, and improved personal qualities and professional competence (Meltzer, 2022).

According to Andersen and Schwencke (2020), founding their projects in the organization or workplace is essential to achieve a long-lasting, meaningful, and valuable project result. Likewise, the CC students ensured that they received the required support within their organization and secured a network of "ambassadors"; people interested in their work and engaged in how the projects progressed.

All students reported renewed visibility in the organization or elsewhere. The manager, working with glass production, involved two employees from the job center and two employees from the qualification center in his project. He shared how leading the project and sensing how he performed as a role model increased self-awareness and improved his professional competence as a leader. Another outcome was that this project later generated new ventures with partners outside the workplace.

The other manager, wanting to establish a workplace with a creative mindset, shared and anchored his ideas and thoughts with the board, the leadership team, and the employees before starting the course. He described how the early involvement of his co-workers was crucial, establishing joint ownership of the project. He shared how taking part in the course and implementing the development project improved his leadership character, making room for traditional and creative management. He also referred to feedback from his employees, who now saw him as a leader who conveyed hope, optimism, and challenge.

The two teachers ensured they had secured acceptance for their project by the principal and the school management. Later, they involved several colleagues when planning and conducting their project at the secondary school. Through their project, they established a stronger sense of themselves and their resources as employees. They generated a collegial network by involving a resource group and other colleagues in their work. These colleagues were supportive and were familiar with their way of working, improving the two teachers' engagement at the school. The teachers described a move from being withdrawn and cautious to feeling freer, braver, and more straightforward as employees. A reinforced awareness of their competencies and professional identity at the CC course changed their working life for the better. Seeing, acknowledging, and questioning the status quo through arts-based approaches was a starting point for change. Several years after implementation, their development project had provided legitimate visibility for them in the organization,

with arts-based interventions now being used at different organizational levels to better understand current challenges.

Long-lasting results were also profound for the student following her "dream" to establish a newsletter in her workplace. She had shared her newsletter plans with her leader and invited a few sheltered employees at the workplace to brainstorm possible ideas. This student, who initially told how she lacked confidence and could not stand up for her thoughts, conveyed how the course increased her self-awareness and made her more appreciative of her resources. This understanding enabled her to initiate change. She found new ways to stimulate participants' imaginations and creative outlets by trusting her imagination and inventiveness. The newsletter was included in the company's day-to-day operations in the following years, again leading to new and inspiring tasks.

Critical aspects and considerations

The outcomes of the four projects demonstrate how learning via, through, or by dint of the arts can be transformative and can start holistic processes of change. The course's ongoing processes proved to be of personal value, connecting art with individual experiences and personal and professional development. It is essential, however, to emphasize that participation in arts-based learning processes can be emotionally demanding and does not necessarily work for everyone or fit in every context. These aspects also underline the importance of the teacher's professional and personal competence in fostering a safe learning environment.

One aspect that may weaken the reliability of the material presented in this paper is that the exam project reports and reflective essays represent a required part of the course program. Here, the students may have focused on results that they thought were expected and held back information or experiences they did not trust to be accepted. The research interpretation of their texts can be inadequate as data supporting the ideas in the study may have been unconsciously selected.

An overview of the projects

The projects which have been described in this paper involved smaller groups within small-scale organizations, not organizations as a whole. It is in many ways impossible to compare the projects as they took place in unalike workplaces and aimed to reach different participant groups. In addition, the projects' learning objectives varied, tailored to meet the specific needs for change and development in the various workplaces. Therefore, a model has been created here to increase clarity and identify some resemblances (Fig. 4). The model somewhat resembles Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) typology of arts-based processes (Fig. 1), which maps process and product on the horizontal axis and particular and universal on the vertical. However, whereas Taylor and Ladkin's model identifies key dimensions within arts-based processes, this model identifies and clarifies *central focus fields* and *learning objectives* at the CC course.

The top left field combines particular and process work. Fig 2 is shown in this field, indicating the CC course's learning objectives. The primary learning focus on campus was individual and process-oriented, involving the students in arts-based processes to develop their personal and professional competence and enable them to carry out projects at their workplaces. Their interest and experience in arts-based learning processes became crucial points of reference when they conducted their development projects. Their repeated encounters with their artistic expressions helped them go deeper into themselves and discover subconscious resources and possibilities. Their professional expertise, experiences from the arts-based processes, and familiarity with the workplace and the participants provided the competence required to choose exercises suited to the company's situation and the desired outcome.

In varying degrees, all project participants took part in the four arts-based processes described by Taylor and Ladkin (2009). However, the categories in figure 4 identify the students' main ambitions for their development projects. The outcome in project 3, fashioning new glass designs, was based on figures the participants made as representations of themselves (product/particular). In project 2, the participants used their collages as inspiration when creating an internal company newsletter (product/universal). Projects 1 and 4, however, focused on the outcome of the arts-based processes, aiming to improve collective soft skills. In these projects, the students emphasized the development of interpersonal qualities like collaboration, communication, teamwork, creativity, and confidence (process/ universal). These categories are not explored further in this paper – they may be a field for further research.
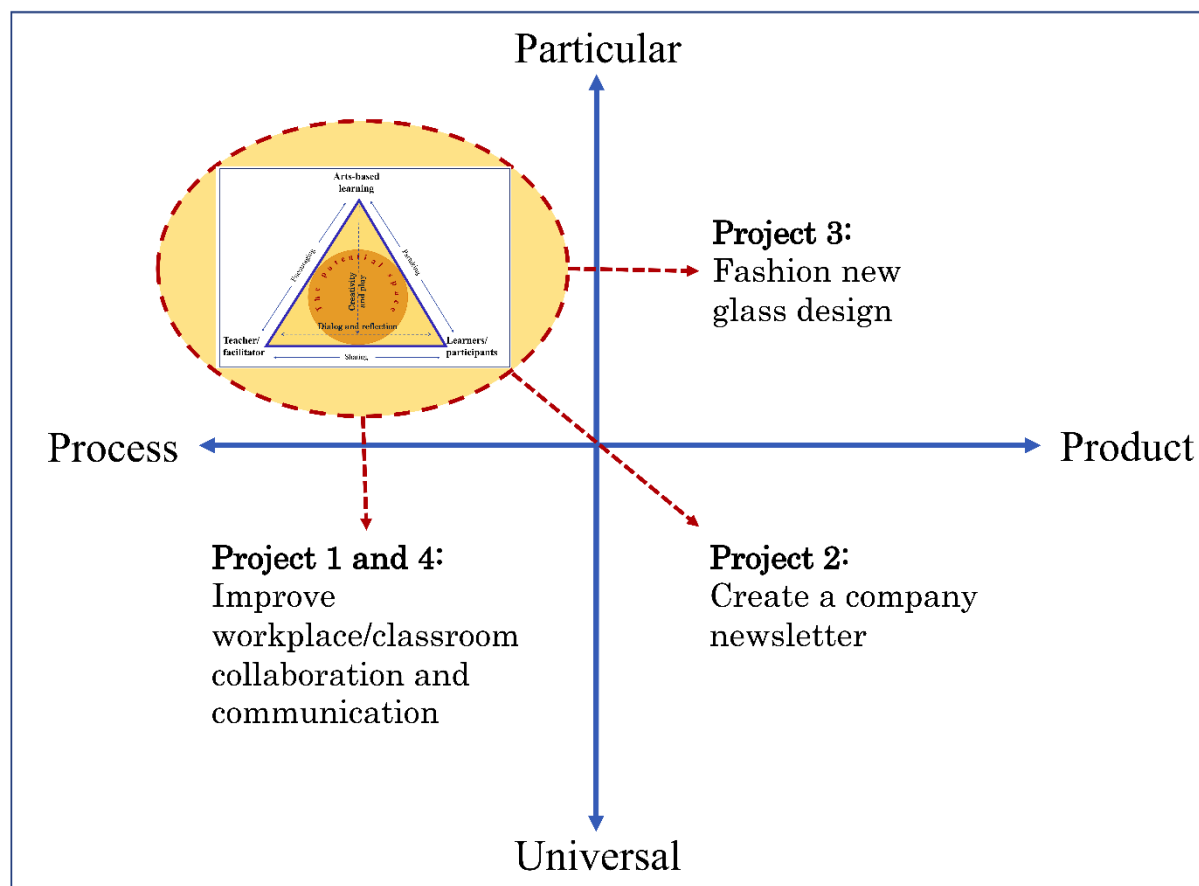

Figure 4: A basic overview of the projects, classified according to their outcomes

Future research agenda

As mentioned, the outcome of the four practical examples suggests further consideration. Recent research (Meltzer, 2022) showed that CC students' familiarity with their workplaces and target groups made it easier to tailor and implement their projects. Here, students carrying out projects in workplaces new to them found it challenging to establish contact with unfamiliar workplaces and to set up worthwhile projects with unfamiliar workplace participants. Here, a future research project could use empirical data from the CC course to categorize all students' focus and intended outcome of their development projects. These results could be divided into two categories; projects carried out at a familiar workplace or an unfamiliar workplace. Comparing project focus and outcome versus the students' workplace affiliation might show points that reinforce or limit the results when using arts-based learning in different organizations.

Future research can also be done to see if arts-based approaches can be used when scaling up to meet needs in larger organizations.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the use of arts-based interventions in 4 workplace settings. Although they were small-scale, these development projects brought about lasting changes at the individual and group levels. The practical examples show how the CC students used arts-based interventions to improve dialogue and a sense of unity among employees in a workplace and between teachers and students at a school. The results also show how creating new products enhanced and cultivated the natural resources in a group of immigrants outside working life and fostered self-esteem and a sense of community among people in a sheltered workplace.

A summary of the results from these projects demonstrates *what mattered* when empowering non-artists to use arts-based learning approaches at their workplace:

- their previous personal and professional competence and expertise.
- their willingness and courage to grow professionally through personal development.
- anchoring their development projects with colleagues and leaders at the workplace.
- tailoring arts-based approaches according to their core objectives and workplace participants.
- their personal experiences with art-based learning on campus and in their workplace.

This paper demonstrates how non-artist practitioners who have acquired personal and professional expertise and competence within the arts can break away from traditional ways of seeing and learning to initiate transformational work. Also, their familiarity with workplace participants, tailoring suited methods and material may create the trust and willingness needed to enter the potential space for play and creativity. After all, it is the journey that matters in these processes, transcending the current reality and striving for a better world.

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Cecilie Meltzer, professor emerita in arts-based learning, has a background as an artist, art therapist, teacher, and researcher. Many years of artistic activity within textile, sculpture, and painting cultivated her ability to be innovative and explore other professional fields. Her training and working as an art therapist demonstrated the healing powers of art, showing how creative expression can be a tool for reflection, awareness, and transformation. These practice fields merged in her work as a teacher and researcher, resulting in her use of arts-based learning approaches when teaching in educational and working life settings. She is one of the tailor-made course Creative Communication founders at Oslo Metropolitan University. Cecilie Meltzer has presented her work at numerous seminars and conferences, nationally and internationally. In her articles and book chapters, she shares how arts-based learning approaches and increased process awareness can release latent resources personally and professionally, support individual and group creativity and promote change in life and working life.