

The Cultural Rucksack (TCR) **Extraordinary or inevitable?**

**Evaluating a new arts and cultural programme in
primary and lower secondary schools in Norway.**

Jorunn Spord Borgen & Synnøve Skjersli Brandt

Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education, Centre for Innovation Studies
www.nifustep.no

Themes in this presentation:



1. The Cultural Rucksack (TCR)
2. Evaluation aims
3. Methodology
4. The outcomes
5. Conclusions

1

The Cultural Rucksack

The Cultural Rucksack (TCR) is a national initiative offering an additional arts and cultural program to *support* the curriculum in primary and secondary schools in Norway (students aged 6-16).

The objectives of TCR are:



- “(...) to ensure that students in primary and lower secondary schools are offered a professional arts and cultural programme”
- “(...) to contribute to an overall incorporation of artistic and cultural expression in the realisation of the school's learning objectives” (Report No. 38 (2002-2003)).
- This entails making it easier for students to gain access to, make them familiar with and have a positive approach to all kinds of arts and cultural expressions.
- TCR offers a wide variety of cultural expressions, such as the performing arts, visual arts, film, dance, music, literature, and cultural heritage.

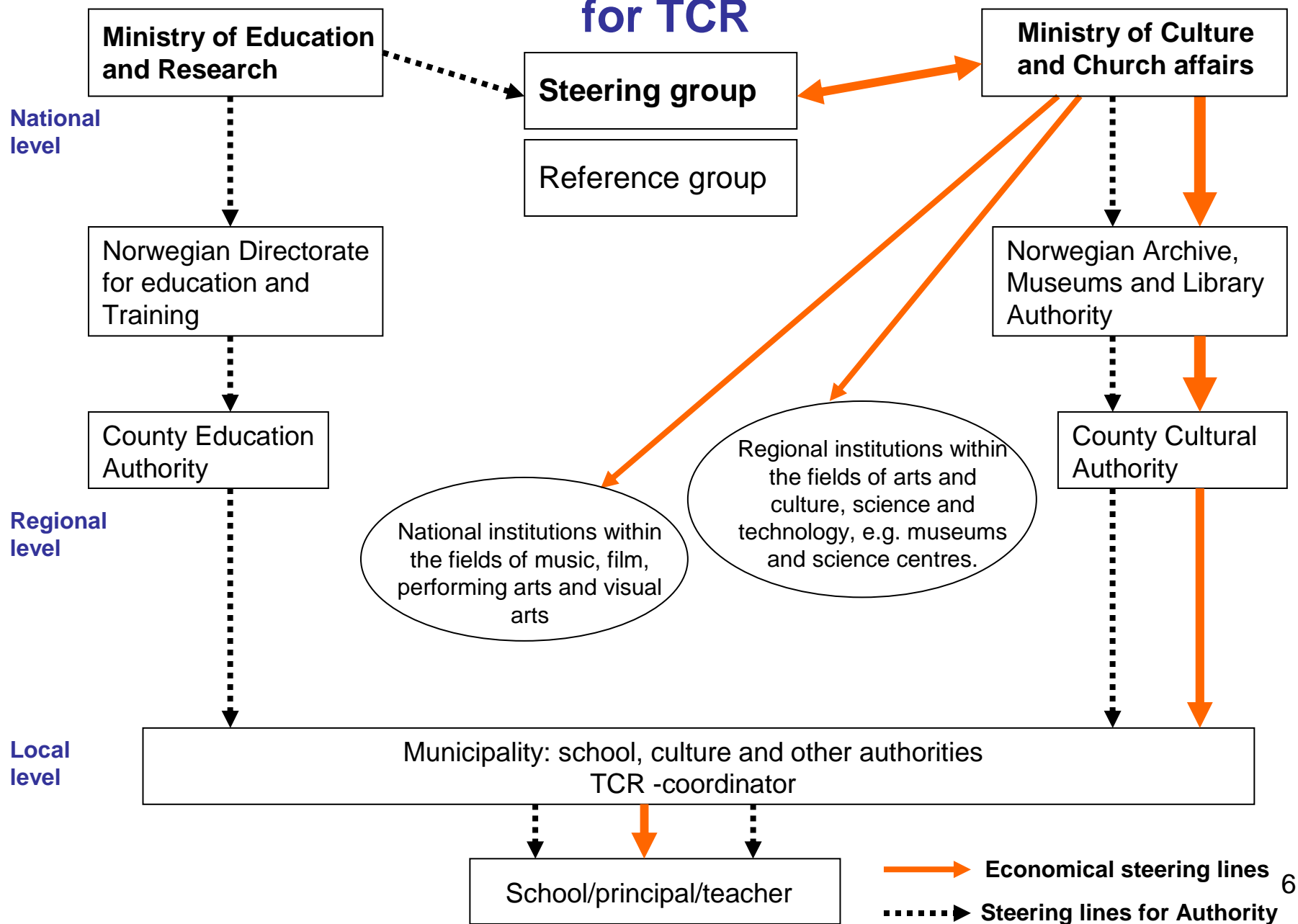
Organisation and economy in TCR

The Cultural Rucksack is a joint cooperation initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research.

TCR is a joint venture between the educational and cultural field at all official authority levels.

According to the success factors for The Cultural Rucksack, neither field is supposed to dispose of this initiative; collaboration is expected, thus challenging.

System of government for TCR



The funding model: 160 mill NOK: profits from Norway's State-owned gaming company (administered by The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs).

National institutions within music, films, performing arts and visual arts

Minimum 1/3

- For coordination and distribution of arts and culture productions

Minimum 1/3

- For allocation to the municipalities for local activities supporting local autonomy and student participation

1/3 voluntarily distribution from county authorities

2005-2007: Model testing in four municipalities

- Municipalities with more than 30.000 inhabitants dispose their own part of the funding.

20% distributed by The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs

80% distributed by the 19 county authorities in Norway

Content and quality in TCR

TCR is offered in different models chosen by each of the 19 county culture authorities; a group of producers, tour organisers and bureaucrats.

Each municipality should have a TCR coordinator.

The programme is on supply rather than on demand from schools, teachers and students.

The arts and culture the educational fields have less control over their traditionally taken for granted quality criteria concerning arts and culture and education.

2

Evaluation aims: Producing knowledge for the development of TCR

Terms of reference from The Ministry of Culture and Church affairs: Emphasising strengths and weaknesses as regards arts and culture content and quality, organisation and governing system and financial basis, and pointing out the potential for improvement after a three year implementation period 2003-2006.

The evaluation took place in the spring term of 2006. The report is accessible at www.nifustep.no.

Arts and culture are essential to future participation in society, and important to democratic education.

- Why is it so difficult to agree upon the consequences for school practice?

Previous research:

- Arts and cultural education has grown out of practice, and is weakly connected to theory and research (Eisner and Day 2004).
- More than changing visions and practices for teaching, arts and cultural education (in Norway) is permeated by continued ambivalence (Borgen 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006).

Ambivalence?

- “A function of societal, political and theoretical contradictions” (Bauman 1991) about children and the arts and culture, and the relationship to society.

Ambivalence in arts and cultural education:

- Children and youths are seen as recipients of arts and cultural education in school, but as culture participants outside school (Drotner 1999).
- Teaching arts and culture to bring up a qualified audience is argument for the culturalisation of the children.
- Formation through a creative/self-expression paradigm constitutes the opposition, the emancipation of the “natural” child.
- The quality of counter concepts is the positive/negative polarisations within an asymmetric structure, relying on different historical, contextual, individual and structural references (Koselleck 1985, see also Bourdieu 1988, 1995).
- **In TCR:**
 - Culture vs. nature
 - Recipients vs. producers/participants
 - Artists vs. teachers
 - Arts and culture experiences vs. learning
 - Emotion vs. reasoning
 - Refinement vs. “instrumental” teaching

The TCR challenges: cooperation between two different political governmental structures and knowledge fields.



- The concept on symbolic practices in knowledge fields can aid the development of understanding the breath of arts and cultural education as part of the social world (Freedman 2003).
- Different knowledge fields have different commissions in society, structured by historical paths, education and knowledge, positions, norms, rules and practices (Bourdieu 1988, 1995, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Educational field:

- Bringing children into the norms, rules and values in society.
- Teaching limited by National Curriculum
- Relatively little autonomy.

Arts and cultural field:

- Questioning norms, rules and values in society.
- Brings with visions of universalism and connotations of the charismatic myth.
- Relatively great autonomy.

Hypotheses and overall question:

Hypotheses:

- “The rich, and sometimes overwhelming, range of motives” of arts and cultural education is characterised by a continued quality of ambivalence (Stankiewicz, Amburgy & Bolin 2004).
- Looking at arts and cultural education through the mirror of ambivalence might explain some aspects to the questions that would otherwise remain inexplicable (Weiler 2005).

Overall question:

1. Will the arts and cultural field, such as artists and cultural bureaucrats, pursue values, standards and rules of the field, or are they, together with teachers, introducing new forms of arts and cultural pedagogy into the TCR practice?

3

Methodology

Given that there should be ground for reflection on the possibilities for future improvements and practices in TCR, there is a need for common understanding knowledge for the two fields involved.

Providing an overall picture of The Cultural Rucksack requires a vertical projection evaluation strategy, covering up the entire effort involved.

This all-level-study into the TCR-system is giving insight to the differences in perspectives and experiences among those involved.

Interviews and other data sources:

Interviews with 134 individuals involved in TCR:

1. Pilot interviews for framing problems and testing relevant informants.
2. Semi structured interviews with informants in operational and coordinating positions.
3. Interviews with 38 ten year old students (fourth grade) at four schools in different municipalities in Norway.

Other data sources:

- Studies of documents, plans and reports, etc.
- Self-evaluation document from the 19 county culture authorities.
- Observations in the arts and cultural field and in schools.

4

The outcomes

Arts and culture offered to students is manifold, and organisation and quality content are coherent.

The county culture authorities are gatekeepers for the repertoire quality, and emphasise economy, field based quality control and effectiveness.

Teachers and schools have little impact – less than expected from the steering documents.

Loose organisation, tension and communication barriers between actors in the two fields, great variety of arts and culture offered to schools, and lack of evaluation tools weakens the vision of TCR as a democracy tool.

Three systems of quality criteria found in TCR:



1. The “sender/receiver” quality criteria:

Who? Artists and cultural bureaucrats want to be in control of the quality, and in charge of deciding what to send to the schools - described as “the receiver instrument” in TCR.

How? In this monologist approach the ambivalence is obvious, combining visions of culturalisation of the child to being a qualified audience, and the naturalisation of the child through the “authentic art meeting”.

Student experiences in this context:

- Few concepts and no help in verbalising their experiences.
- The concerts were “strange” and communicating with the artists “a bit scary”.

Municipal organisation:

- Professionalised outside school-activity.
- The class teacher not involved.
- Arts and culture was seen as an **extraordinary** supplement to the “ordinary” school.

....TCR quality criteria:

2. The “target group” quality criteria:

Who? Some experienced artists, cultural bureaucrats and others who have been working closely with schools and teachers for several years, argue for “target group” quality criteria related to e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, etc.

How? Adjustment to being in dialogue with the actual students, thus avoid losing control.

- **This is a challenging effort.** We find ambivalence in the balancing between the sender-receiver position and willingness to communicate with the students and “lose control”.
- It seems to be huge differences in the ability and competence to successfully do so.

....TCR quality criteria:

3. “Understanding of arts and culture” quality criteria:

Who? Avant-garde artists, and other artists (e.g. artists emphasising tradition and heritage), some cultural bureaucrats, schools and teachers focuses on dialogues.

How? Schools are cultural environments:

Both: Teaching the students to be a qualified audience by experiencing a wide variety of arts and culture, and the conventions, norms and rules related to it.

And: Developing the capacity of the students being cultural active by producing, meeting an audience as a performer, etc.

Student experiences:

- A rich and reflective language.
- Enjoyment, learning experiences.
- Masters key art concepts from the experienced art forms.
- Their families have been a part of the arts and culture experiences.

Municipal organisation:

- Teachers and schools order TCR-programmes in relation to strategic plans.
- Arts and culture experiences are seen as an **inevitable** part of everyday life in the schools.

5

Conclusion

1. There are consecutive relations between organisation and economy, content and quality criteria in TCR:
 - **Monologue** models are preferred when efficiency and quality control in the arts and cultural field constitutes quality criteria. Represented mostly by artists and cultural bureaucrats.
 - **Dialogic** models are preferred when the children's outcome constitutes quality criteria. Represented by artists, teachers, and others involved.

The counter concepts **monologue vs. dialogue** and **extraordinary vs. inevitable** are useful tools for discussing differences in the understandings of TCR aims and means for arts and culture in schools.

Conclusion

2. The concept of ambivalence is also a useful tool for TCR. Handling ambivalence is challenging and very different from searching for the “right” answers to questions concerning quality and methods in arts and cultural education.
3. The student role in Norwegian National Curriculum is based on social constructivist learning theory (Reid 1998).
 - This leads to a more socially constructed knowledge perspective (Lave 1991) towards arts and cultural education than visions of universalism and the charismatic myth about art provides room for.
 - Thus, there are a manifold of successful practices agreed upon by schools, teachers, students and artists together in TCR.

This makes the Cultural Rucksack a promising programme for developing new knowledge for future arts and cultural education in school.

Thank you!

