



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

# AN ARTFUL ENCOUNTER WITH DANCE

## – EMPOWERING FUTURE TEACHERS IN CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATIONS WITH THE CULTURAL SCHOOLBAG AS AN EXAMPLE

BY: *Gunhild Brønne Bjørnstad<sup>1</sup> and Kristine Høeg Karlsen<sup>1</sup>*

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**EDITOR FOR THIS ARTICLE:** Dr. Tone Pernille Østern, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology. **CORRESPONDENCE TO:** [gunhild.b.bjornstad@hiof.no](mailto:gunhild.b.bjornstad@hiof.no)

**PROOF-READER:** John Shepherd. **DESIGN:** Trine + Kim Designstudio, Oslo, Norway.

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<sup>1</sup> Østfold University College

## ABSTRACT

This article explores how teacher candidates articulate their experiences of a cross-sectoral collaboration with dance students in creating an artful encounter for pupils in primary schools in Norway. Through an arts-based inquiry, using clay as material of expression, groups of teacher candidates were filmed while creating a sculpture representing their processes. The creation process and sculpture were in turn analysed, revealing that the teacher candidates considered themselves to be scaffolding the artful encounter with the children in school, providing them with greater confidence as key personas in these artful encounters, and a better understanding of the creation of art. The analysis regarding the dramaturgy of the collaboration revealed that the teacher candidates experienced being co-creators in the project when they could focus primarily on unfolding the educational potential of the artful encounters.

*Keywords: Arts-based inquiry, co-creation, the Cultural Schoolbag, visual thinking, dance in education.*

## AUTHOR BIOS

**Gunhild Brønne Bjørnstad** is Associate Professor of Drama/Theatre at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Languages at Østfold University College. She has previously been working at the College of Arts in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, and the Teacher Education Faculty at the University of Stavanger, Norway. She functions as the international coordinator of the faculty, leading several international projects. Bjørnstad is a project participant and researcher in the project *pARTicipED: Empowering student teachers for cross-sectorial collaborations with The Cultural Schoolbag in Norwegian Schools* funded by the Research Council of Norway. Her research interests include performative teaching and learning, intercultural aesthetic expressions, and cross-curricular learning.

**Kristine Høeg Karlsen** (PhD) is currently Professor of Education at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Languages at Østfold University College (ØUC) and Visiting Professor at Oslo Metropolitan University. Recently, she has been a visiting scholar at the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Portland State University in Oregon, USA. She is the project manager of the research project *pARTicipED: Empowering student teachers for cross-sectorial collaborations with The Cultural Schoolbag in Norwegian Schools* funded by the Research Council of Norway. Karlsen has been a member, board member, and vice-chairman of Centre for Dance Practice (SANS) for 15 years. She helped establish the Nordic Journal of Dance: Practice, Education and Research in 2010, and was the journal's first editor.

The Norwegian school system has inclusion at its heart. As there are few private schools, most children attend public schools with a common curriculum. Within this curriculum there has been a decrease of hours allocated to art subjects over the past decades. In line with this decrease, also teacher education institutions are focusing less on arts and aesthetic subjects (Karlsen et al., 2020a), even after the implementation of 5-year master degree programmes of teacher education in Norway from 2017...., concerns regarding the need to strengthen arts in schools are being articulated, encouraging innovative and creative projects across the curriculum. One of the main providers of art for children is The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS), a Norwegian national program for arts and culture in schools. TCS has provided experiences of professional arts and culture to nearly all pupils in primary and lower secondary schools since 2001. With the aim of providing a broad variety of art and cultural experiences for children, TCS engages professional artists and cultural workers from numerous fields. The program was formally established with the parliamentary White Paper 8 (2007-2008), A Cultural Rucksack for the Future, and is today organised under *Kulturtanken*<sup>1</sup> (The Ministry of Church and Cultural Affairs, 2007) (Arts for Young Audiences Norway), bridging the educational field and the artistic/cultural field. Due to the vast need for artistic expertise, TCS is considered one of the most significant employers for artists and cultural workers in Norway. Through the programme children encounter art from various fields and in different formats, expected to assist in identity-building and aesthetic sense.

To achieve these goals, the cultural and educational sector must collaborate at all levels of TCS, according to Arts for Young Audiences Norway (2022). Despite the good intentions of collaboration, studies have documented asymmetric power relations between schools and cultural workers (Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Breivik & Christoffersen, 2013; Christoffersen et al., 2015; Digranes, 2015; Hauge et al., 2017). School teachers experience a gap between the artful experiences of the children and how they manage to utilise these in linkage to the curriculum in school. Some teachers experience the content of TCS as strange and poorly adapted to school (Breivik & Christoffersen, 2013), even though artists often design educational tools for preparation or reflection with the pupils. The artists, on the other hand, see “themselves as providing high quality and varied ‘cultural experiences’ for the pupils”, but refuse to make curriculum art (Karlsen & Karlsen, 2022, p. 15). Combined with a lack of focus in teacher education on how to integrate artistic and cultural expressions in learning processes for pupils, the TCS productions are often regarded as happenings or events not related to what is being done in school.

In Norway, the newly revised national curriculum LK20 requires teachers to focus on three cross-curricular topics; Democracy and Citizenship, Sustainable Development, and Public Health and Life Skills. Children should gain competencies that can be recognised within the subjects, as well as transferred between subjects and topics. This is regarded as a potential arena for exploration and implementation of more aesthetic learning processes in schools. Through the strategy document *Joy of creation, engagement and the urge for exploration: Practical and aesthetic contents in kindergarten, schools and teacher education* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, our translation of the title), such practical and aesthetic methods in teaching and learning are further called for and encouraged.

### ▶ **Empowering teacher candidates as agents of change in cross-sectorial collaborations**

In order to meet the demand for more aesthetic methods in schools, the national research project pARTicipED, funded by The Research Council of Norway, aims to introduce teacher candidates to TCS and aesthetic learning processes through a compulsory course in their teacher education. The aim of the course is to strengthen future teachers in cross-sectorial collaborations by using TCS as an example, in combination with an arts-based approach. As part of the course, the teacher candidates collaborate with dance students to jointly create and facilitate an artful encounter for the children in schools, including artistic as well as educational aspects. The artful encounters are collaboratively designed by the teacher candidates and the dance students, and take place during the teacher candidates' placement practice in schools. As our following literature review reveals, teachers (or teacher candidates) seldom take part in the creation of the art. Our interest as teacher educators is therefore focused on the creative process of the artful encounter, as expressed by the teacher candidates.

In this article we thus aim to explore how the teacher candidates' reflections and experiences of this cross-sectorial collaboration are articulated through multimodal expressions, with the use of clay and verbal statements. The articulations will be further discussed in regard to the teacher candidates' role as co-creators of the artful encounters with the children in schools. As our affiliation is within teacher education, we were particularly interested in the teacher candidates' point of view in this collaborative work. However, this does not mean that the dance students' perspectives are not valuable: these will be addressed in future articles.

### **Previous research**

In the following we identify the research gap in the literature, with the purpose of legitimising the need for more research addressing cross-sectorial collaboration within teacher education with dance as the example. Research on dance in formal and compulsory education (primary school through lower secondary school, cf. K-12 in US) is well established in the field of physical education (Svendler Nielsen et al., 2023). That said, far fewer studies examine dance as a cross-sectorial phenomenon as part of music in school (K-12) (Svendler Nielsen et al., 2023). Some of the most influential dance researchers from Australia, Canada, Denmark, and the USA have nevertheless argued that "collaboration is essential for the maintenance and implementation of dance curricula in our schools" (Brown et al., 2017, p. 2). A prominent example of one such project is co-led by Charlotte Svendler Nielsen (Svendler Nielsen et al., 2020). The project highlights arts-integration and interculturality, involving a cross-sectorial team including artist-educators, teachers and researchers from Denmark and South Africa. The researchers explored the learning opportunities for primary school children in Cape Town and Copenhagen through a series of dance and visual art workshops focusing on the embodied learning of concepts in school subjects and life in general.

In Norway, TCS is established as one of the largest nationwide school programmes for arts and culture in the world (Bamford, 2012, p. 10). Over the years, scholars have examined TCS for a variety of purposes (Christoffersen et al., 2015; Haukelien & Kleppe, 2009; Lidén, 2004), but rather few from the perspective of dance art. The research project *Arts education assemblies – a new model for art-school partnership* (at Østfold ▶

University College), funded by the Oslofjord fund, resulted in two publications on TCS dance. Through in-depth interviews with professional dance artists with extensive experience visiting schools, Joakim Karlsen and Kristine Høeg Karlsen (2022) identified that TCS is experienced as an attractive workplace for dance artists, and that they “rationalise TCS-dance-art as equal to dance art in general” (p. 17). In the study by Kristine Høeg Karlsen et al. (2020b), the value of dance as an artistic expression is discussed in the context of an institutional collaboration between Østfold University College and the University College of Dance Art in Oslo, Norway, and the TCS dance project *Body and Spaces (Rom for Dans<sup>2</sup>)*. In Finland, a comprehensive cross-disciplinary dance/literacy project was carried out as a collaboration between teaching artists, primary school teachers, and researchers. In the project they aimed to explore how creative dance can contribute to intra-actions between dancing, reading, and writing for 5<sup>th</sup> graders in primary school (Jusslin, 2020; Jusslin & Østern, 2020).

Based on research, it is evident that some teacher candidates and newly qualified teachers face challenges when teaching dance in schools (Lindqvist, 2019; Kalyn et al., 2015). According to Barbara Snook and Ralph Buck (2014), change in the dance education in schools “is unlikely to take place until all pre-service teachers come to teacher education with an experience of dance education in their own lives, suggesting that engagement in the arts may be wasted at teacher education institutions” (p. 231). To support and implement changes in dance education in schools, it is of the utmost importance, according to Antti Juvonen et. al (2018), that the teacher education institutions address these changes.

Nationally and internationally, scholars within teacher education, and similar higher education programmes, have addressed cross-sectoral partnerships in arts education in general (see e.g. Huhmarniemi et al., 2021; Lapidaki, 2014) with music education in particular (e.g. Holdhus et al., 2022; Juvonen et al., 2018), and/or visual art education in particular (e.g. Skregelid, 2020). Nevertheless, when it comes to understanding the value creation of dance in cross-sector collaborations between artists, teachers and researchers, there is a dearth of research. Some of the cross-sectoral dance research projects that we know have been carried out in Norway include three with national funds from Oslofjord funds (Karlsen & Bjørnstad, 2019) and The Research Council of Norway (Hoffmann & Karlsen, 2022; Helgesen, 2022), and two artistic collaborations between schools, teacher education institutions and arts organisations (Østern & Strømme, 2014; Østern et al., 2019). Whilst Karlsen and Gunhild Brønne Bjørnstad’s (2019) study seeks to identify teacher candidates’ experiences of the TCS dance project aimed at developing their competences relating to aesthetic learning processes and collaboration with external dance partners as part of TCS, Flavia Ursula Hoffmann and Karlsen (2022) sought an in-depth analysis of a choreography-informed method, *Choreopattern*, developed as infrastructure for participation in teacher education. The abovementioned study and Victor Østberg Helgesen’s (2022) study were both carried out as part of the research project *pARTiciPED (2020-2023)*. But whilst Hoffmann and Karlsen (2022) focus on curriculum design, Helgesen (2022) aims to understand how dance students and teacher candidates collaborate when developing a TCS dance project together, and both of Tone Pernille Østern’s projects (2014, 2019) aim to challenge and develop the dominant views on learning, by exploring how arts and

subject content are intrinsically intertwined and integrated in teaching and learning processes.

### **The context of our study**

The compulsory course on cross-sectoral collaboration with TCS as an example in teacher education was developed as part of pARTiciPED. It was designed through a series of participatory design workshops, with participating stakeholders from the artistic field, schools, teacher candidates, and teacher educators. The content of some of the seminars in this course was developed using a particular multimodal choreography-informed method, Choreopattern (Hoffman & Karlsen, 2022). The method aimed to provide an infrastructure for deep participation among participants in the design workshop and further to divide responsibilities between the professional dance educators and teacher educators.

The course which the teacher candidates participated in consisted of a total of 4 seminars. The first seminar comprised the framing of the cross-sectoral challenges in Norwegian schools in general for the teacher candidates. In the second seminar the teacher candidates were introduced to the dance students, initiating the cross-sectoral collaboration. The task given to the students was to create an artful encounter where dance students, teacher candidates, and children would be involved, exploring one of the cross-curricular topics in the revised curriculum. What the artful encounter would be was the decision of the student group, drawing on their ideas, skills, and experiences. As the number of teacher candidates exceeded that of the dance students, we divided them into smaller groups: a trio of dance students collaborated with three groups of 3-5 teacher candidates, making a total of 12-15 students in each group. Each group of teacher candidates was assigned a primary school where their practice would be conducted, and the artful encounter would take place with a specific class. The dance student trios hence had to serve 3 different schools, which in the following is referred to as the tour, and was organised professionally through TCS. As collaboratively decided in the design workshops, the dance- and teacher educators shared responsibility for teaching the different elements of the course, aiming to diminish the boundaries between the two sectors. The student groups worked together to develop ideas for the artful encounter and agreed how to involve all parties.

The third seminar took place at the higher dance education institution where the dance students were affiliated. As part of the agenda for this seminar, the dance students performed some excerpts of performances they had prepared based on the discussions at the second seminar. The groups decided to use these performances as the basis for the artful encounters, developing them further to ensure interaction with the teacher candidates and the children in schools. As the trios of dance students had to serve three schools, the encounter also had to have some adaptations for the different classes.

The fourth seminar was conducted shortly before the groups started their placement practice. Due to Covid-related circumstances this day had to be carried out digitally in an online class, where the groups made their last preparations, discussed, and tuned their artful encounters to fit the classes they would meet.

During the weeks of placement practice the teacher candidates were encouraged to include the chosen cross-curricular topic of the artful encounter in different ways in

order to prepare the children. During the tour the teacher candidates were responsible for welcoming the dance students at the school, making the necessary preparations, conducting the artful encounter in collaboration with the dance students as planned, and rounding off with the pupils.

After all the groups had conducted their artful encounters in the schools and the TCS tour had come to an end, the course culminated in a final seminar where the dance art students and the teacher candidates were to meet and reflect upon the joint process at the teacher education campus. Throughout the course, the students had been asked to use different media of expression when brainstorming, developing artistic material for the artful encounter, and designing the interaction of the children in the schools, so this was not new to them. Examples of such media were paints, props, movement, and film in order to encourage multimodality and creativity in the process.

### **Emerging knowledge through arts-based research**

Our study draws inspiration from visual arts-based research, described by Gunilla Holm et al. (2018) as “searching for ways to utilize visual arts in studying the human experience in more complex ways” (p. 311). In total, we conducted three focus group interviews with teacher candidates in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of study shortly after the cross-disciplinary student groups had facilitated their artful encounter with children in the school. The questions were open-ended and were intended to create dialogue and reflection around topics related to the creative group process, considering both artistic and pedagogical aspects. Ending the interview, each group was asked to develop a joint sculpture of modelling clay, articulating their collaboration with the dance students. This process of creation was recorded. Our intention was for the teacher candidates to elaborate on the data that could not be fully accessed through the interviews (Leavy, 2020, p. 242). Mari-Ann Letnes (2017) claims that “the visualisation provides the thinking with a catalyst force” (p. 121, our translation). We chose to use modelling clay as a medium of visual thinking, as we anticipated the teacher candidates would feel at ease without critically focusing on the artistry of the product they were asked to make. The clay material, with its smell and colours, brought back childhood memories for the teacher candidates. This encouraged a more spontaneous expression to take place as the material is plastic, but could be shaped into permanent sculptures. It allowed for processes where the feel of the material changed as the teacher candidates worked with it, functioning as an extension and trigger of thought. These sculptures are considered to be the main material for our analysis, being supplemented by statements from the interviews, the reflections of the teacher candidates when making the sculpture, as well as our reflections and experiences as facilitators of the course.

### *Ethical considerations and critical remarks*

As researchers, we are active in the creation of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Our presence in the design of the course, teaching of the course, and our participation in the research interview affect and influence the process, as well as shape our own experiences. While using the clay sculptures as the main source of our analysis, we are aware that interpretations of aesthetic expressions are always characterised by ethical considerations and cultural backgrounds. We allow our own perspectives and

understandings of what is expressed and not expressed to work together with the verbal statements, sometimes causing dissonance in what is being articulated. We know that the students are aware of the goal of the course, and may be affected by how they think we want them to answer in the interviews, but what they communicate through the clay may be something different.

One critical remark may be that the chosen mode of articulation is modelling clay rather than dance, as the artful encounter itself used dance as medium. The main argument for not using dance as mode of articulation is that the level of comfort among the teacher candidates in expressing themselves explicitly through their bodies, varies immensely. We consider the clay material to better allow the teacher candidates to meet on safer ground, co-creating the sculpture of their cross-sectoral collaboration.

Another critical remark on this study would be the one-sided focus on the experiences of the teacher candidates, rather than also including dance students in the study. As we work in teacher education, and the aim of the course was to strengthen future teachers in cross-sectoral collaborations, our main objective while gathering data was to focus on the teacher candidates. For the scope of this article we have limited the data to this part in order to identify the experiences of the teacher candidates in regard to the cross-sectoral collaboration. If we had included dance students in our study, the sculptures may have been quite different, and also not represented the experiences of the teacher candidates alone.

### Process of analysis

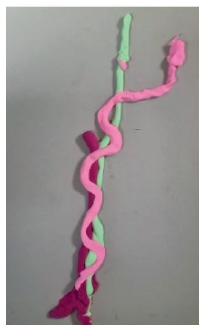
In the following we present the sculptures of each group as ‘cleanly’ as possible, as they constitute the main source of information. In order to easily navigate between the sculptures, we refer to them according to our initial associations when seeing the sculptures, namely *The snake heart*, *The traffic light*, and *The tower*. The analysis of the clay sculptures is combined with the groups’ discussion of the creative process of making their artful encounter. We finally read these articulations with and against each other, with and against theories, and our own experiences.

#### *The snake heart*

#### Figure 1

*Teacher candidates’ visualisation in clay of their process – The snake heart.*

Photo: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.





The teacher candidates in this group started by rolling the modelling clay into a long sausage-like roll. They quickly agreed to make a joint sculpture, initially talking about making a braid. While they were rolling, they agreed that they started far apart from the dance students, stating the “we started on different planets”. The green clay was first placed in a straight line in the middle of the table, while the pink clay was placed across in an interaction, being explained as the first meeting point. They mentioned that at this point they did not understand each other and were insecure about each other’s academic and/or artistic fields, eventually creating a loop with the pink clay, symbolising how they tuned into the project through the days of the course. They let the rolls of clay become more intertwined, and placed the dark pink clay with a starting point further down than the two other colours. As they discussed, they continued to move the pink clay, while talking about themselves, saying “then we worked ourselves closer and closer to one another.” When the pink clay roll ended, they exclaimed with a small laugh: “There you have it! This is art!”

When asked what the end with the dark pink clay symbolised, they responded that it was the end product [the artful encounter], and one student automatically continued to work with the clay, grouping it together. Another of them suggested that he could shape it as a heart, and the student formed a heart shape, but quickly decided to turn it, as it looked more like the shape of an arrow. When the heart took shape, the one who suggested it said: “Then you have a heart at the end, because it turned out so well!”

### *The traffic light*

These teacher candidates started working with the blue and green clay. The blue clay was folded, pulled, and refolded, and the green clay was shaped into a long flat «road» and placed on the floor. The first thing they mentioned was how “we started in very different places, with big contrasts, but then it merges together”. They initially planned to use the green and the blue colour, and one of them explicitly said that the merge was between the two student groups. The other student added: “Very much so. I am thinking about development”. The group further discussed whether they should create a linear statue, and started to connect the green and the blue clay. One of them suggested starting with the red colour in order to express hardship at the beginning of the process.

### **Figure 2**

*Teacher candidates' visualisation in clay of their process – The traffic light.*

Photo: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.



The teacher candidates pulled the green and blue clay apart, and placed the red clay in between. They explained the red colour as an “angry and difficult colour”. They agreed to create a sculpture using the colours as traffic lights. When discussing the duration of the different colours, they stated that “it was very red”, and that the yellow colour should be a bit shorter than the red. The group wished to end with the green clay lifting from the ground, repeating the word “development”. They further explained that they were left with only positive thoughts about the collaboration. When asked to elaborate on the meaning of the green clay, they explained that it was “[...] positive development. We learnt how to meet each other, and learnt how to respect each other and cooperate. A joint goal and a good day!”

#### *The tower*

These teacher candidates grabbed the red, yellow and blue clay. The blue clay was at first pulled out on the table to form a semicircular wall. The group quickly decided that the dance students were to be represented by the green/blue coloured clay, while the teacher candidates would be the yellow/red clay. They started by saying that when they first met, they were “together in this way”, and then placed lumps of clay in green, blue, and yellow a bit apart.

#### **Figure 3**

*Teacher candidates' visualisation in clay of their process – Initial stage of the tower.*

Photo: screenshot from video.



The red clay was not placed on the table by the teacher candidate holding it. The teacher candidates explained that they “were not yet aligned with one another, but we shared thoughts and ideas.” They reflected on having different skills and knowledge which they did not know how to make use of, while they moved the lumps of green and blue as if they were talking. While talking about how they had got to know each other through the process, they moved the lumps closer together. One of the students said that they started building on each other’s ideas, while another student built the lumps on top of each other, keeping the yellow at the bottom, and placing the green and blue on top.

#### **Figure 4**

*Teacher candidates' visualisation in clay of their process – Middle stage of the tower.*

Photo: Screenshot from video.



The remaining yellow clay was divided into smaller pieces and was placed under the tower for support. When seeing the formation, they explained that the lumps representing the teacher candidates placed at the bottom, holding up and supporting the bigger lump representing the dance students, who were said to “think big thoughts”. They claimed to be supportive by celebrating the ideas of the dancers and chipping in some ideas of their own, but they were “always there to support”. Finishing their statue, one of the teacher candidates took one of the lumps representing the teacher candidates, and articulated that after this cooperation they would like to take part more in the creation of the art, and another student assisted the movement by lifting the upper lump to make room for the yellow clay. Together, they placed it in between the green and the blue clay, and explained that they would like to have a bigger role in the creation of the artful encounter, but without taking over the “star status” of the dance students.

**Figure 5**

*Teacher candidates' visualisation in clay of their process – Final stage of the tower.*

Photo: Kristine Høeg Karlsen.



#### **What is articulated? And how?**

While watching the videos of the creation of the sculptures, studying the sculptures, and hearing the students' reflections on the creative process of the artful encounter, we have focused on how the teacher candidates articulate their experiences, and what they experience. We are interested in how they make use of the clay material to express themselves in an arts-based language in combination with the verbalisation of thoughts.

- ▶ We have watched the videos, listened to their conversations, re-watched the videos, and read the sculptures with and against each other and theory, in a non-linear manner. In our process we have discovered two elements that seem significant in how the teacher candidates articulate their experiences, the first being the activation of thoughts through the use of clay, and the other the dramaturgies used. We use these elements to analyse what the teacher candidates express that they have experienced.

#### *Activating thoughts through arts-based language*

The material of modelling clay invites the students to use an arts-based language. In our analysis we want to see how the students utilise the clay and its different qualities to articulate their reflections and insights. We are interested in how the teacher candidates express themselves through the colours of the clay, and how shapes, proportions, and relations are used to create meaning.

Regarding the modelling clay as a means of articulation, we see that the teacher candidates are using the clay to activate their thoughts, as Letnes (2017) also describes. They start by feeling the material, pulling, folding, and shaping it as they start to talk. Two of the groups (*The snake heart* and *The tower*) use the different colours of the clay to differentiate between the teacher candidates and dance students, whilst one group (*The traffic light*) concentrates on their own process. Our immediate interpretation of *The snake heart's* sculpture is that the green clay represents the dance students and the pink clay represents the teacher candidates, while the dark pink symbolises the artful encounter. They make one single-coloured, long roll for each representation, communicating that the two student groups are different, but still indicating a collectiveness within each group. The tower as well includes colours to identify the dance students (green/blue clay) and teacher candidates (yellow), while *The traffic light* uses the colours of the clay to signal the emotions connected to the different phases of their process.

We find it interesting to see how the teacher candidates use shapes to indicate individuality versus collectiveness. The teacher candidates making *The tower* initially create lumps of clay representing both dance students and teacher candidates individually. Later they merge the lumps symbolising the dance students into one bigger lump, while the lumps of teacher candidates remain individual. Our understanding is that this may signal that the teacher candidates see themselves as individuals throughout the process, but identify the dance students as one group. The way they talk about *them* when referring to the dance students, but use names when referring to their classmates, supports this idea. The differentiation between dance students and the teacher candidates is maintained in *The snake heart* until the heart shape at the end, where the two rolls of clay are slightly merged with the dark pink clay. This might indicate that they feel less alienated and more unified in the artful encounter than during the creative process itself. Even the individual lump resembling a teacher candidate is lifted and placed in between the dance students in *The tower*. This move visualises that the alienation experienced at the beginning of the project has diminished, leaving the students with more trust across the artistic/pedagogical groups.

Another significant shape to emphasise is the heart-shape at the bottom of the sculpture made by the students in *The snake heart*. It is said to symbolise the artful encounter and the associated pride and happiness in the result. The heart may be ▶

regarded as a cliché, but is supported by the statements of the teacher candidates, elaborating on how proud they are. With the impact of social media, a heart is a simple symbol of liking something, but the creation of the heart happened quite spontaneously, not having been filtered through critical thoughts, and therefore more truly articulate the emotions of the students towards the artful encounter.

We further unfold how the teacher candidates experience their own role in the project by exploring the *relations* expressed between the teacher candidates and the dance students in the sculpture. The students making *The snake heart* start far apart, and the roll representing the teacher candidates is moved to create a loop over the dance students. One interpretation of this may be that the teacher candidates regard themselves as the ones making an effort to understand and engage with the dance students. We see this further in the way the pink clay, being interpreted as the teacher students, becomes the 'glue' binding together the dance students and the artful encounter, in a snake-like movement throughout the process. This might indicate that the understanding of their own role in the project is to bridge the art and the pedagogic content of the artful encounter. The students making *The tower* portray themselves as a scaffold, supporting the dance students in their quest for art. This is articulated as the lumps of individual teacher candidates holding up the bigger lump of dance students. Our observation during the artful encounter was that the teacher candidates contributed with practical tasks, such as controlling lights and music, or leading the children into different areas of the performance, but not as artistic performers. Even though these tasks were not necessarily artistic, they were carried out in a way that ensured that the magical atmosphere of the artful encounter was upheld.

Another understanding of the relations in *The snake heart* could possibly be that, with the use of the clay, this sculpture signals that the dance students know better what to do in this creative process. The straightforward movement of the clay roll representing the dance students could be argued to indicate this, while the movement back and forth of the teacher candidates could indicate confusion and uncertainty in terms of the creative process. This is supported with *The traffic light* sculpture, which communicates that the yellow clay resembles uncertainty and insecurity in the process, as the teacher students are unfamiliar with artistic processes.

All the three sculptures in different ways indicate satisfaction with the final artful encounter with the children in the schools. The two groups making *The traffic light* and *The tower* make use of the levels to express their satisfaction. Both groups choose to elevate the end product or phase and claim to have obtained new insights and feelings towards the creative process and art in general, while the heart shape in *The snake heart* indicates the group's pride and satisfaction with the artful encounter.

#### *The dramaturgies*

Inspired by Anna-Lena Østern's (2021) analytical, dramaturgical thinking in educational contexts (p. 17), we aim to uncover how the teacher candidates experience being co-creators, linking this to their emotional attachment to the process. Through a dramaturgical analysis we wish to explore how this emotional attachment relates to the different phases of the making of the artful encounters. When using dramaturgy as a lens for analysis, we see that the sculptures in different ways make use of dramaturgy. We are

interested in understanding what happens at which time in the process, and how the teacher candidates express conflicts or turning points. A focus on dramaturgy may also uncover whether there are significant elements that are not being articulated.

The dramaturgies of the sculptures differ. *The snake heart* and *The traffic light* groups both choose to articulate their process in *linear* sculptures, showing the phases of the process in the sculpture. The students developing *The tower* discussed their process in a linear manner, but changed their sculpture to express the different phases of the project, resulting in three sequential sculptures being created. We find it interesting that this group uses their sculpture to visualise the dynamic process they have been through, and end their discussion with a sculpture representing a potential they realise has not been fulfilled.

All three groups emphasise that they started off in *conflict*, being alien towards one another, as they did not know each other or understand what they were supposed to do together - even feeling resistance towards the project. This is clearly communicated in all three groups, although they have chosen different languages to articulate this through. As *The snake heart* sculpture and *The tower* physically create distance between the dance students and themselves in their sculpture, *The traffic light* symbolises this conflict phase through the colour red.

Even though all groups started in conflict, they also express that they moved closer to each other (as expressed in *The tower*) through the days of the course, and indicate that there was a *turning point* on the third day of the course as they got to see the excerpts of performances made by the dance students. *The traffic light* sculpture symbolises this through the yellow light, which they describe as being a phase of confusion. In *The tower* the lumps are moved closer together, and the teacher candidates commence building their sculpture, and *The snake heart* connects the three representations by letting the pink clay intertwine with the two others. After seeing what the dance students had prepared for the third day of the course, the teacher candidates express that their understanding of the task became clearer. In the interviews they claim to have got a better grip of their own participation in the project when they had something concrete (a performance) to work on. It became easier to see how the artful encounter could be shaped with the children in the school, and the groups could more easily make use of the educational expertise held by the teacher candidates. The teacher candidates' knowledge of the cross-curricular topics in the new curriculum assisted their confidence, and they moved closer to the dance students, gaining understanding of the creative process and the potential of the artful encounter, but seemingly also relieved that they did not have to create a whole performance from scratch.

All groups agree that the *climax* of the project was the artful encounter with children in the schools. This climax is presented in colour (green), lifted/elevated and in the symbol of a heart. All these articulations connote positive thoughts, and the groups reflect on how they have learnt a lot about how to create art, what potential there is for learning in artful encounters, and the importance of artful expressions through the project. It seems that the struggles in the creative process were necessary in order to achieve the end product, as if the artful encounter would not have been as good without the doubt they had along the way. But despite the happy ending, it seems that the collaboration between the teacher candidates and dance students still has the

classical hierarchy or difference in *status*, where the teacher candidates regard themselves as less creative and mainly functioning as support crew for the dancers. We see this in *The tower*, where the teacher candidates are placed at the bottom, lifting the dancers and their ideas. Yet the teacher candidates express their wish to engage more in the artistic process and work, and have gained confidence in their own contribution.

None of the groups specifically mention the fourth seminar, which was made digitally in a last-minute decision. As facilitators of the course, we worried that the implications of not meeting one another physically would damage the outcome of the day. It seems, however, that none of the groups experienced this as challenging, and used the day to agree on more details on how to ensure the participation and contribution of the teacher candidates.

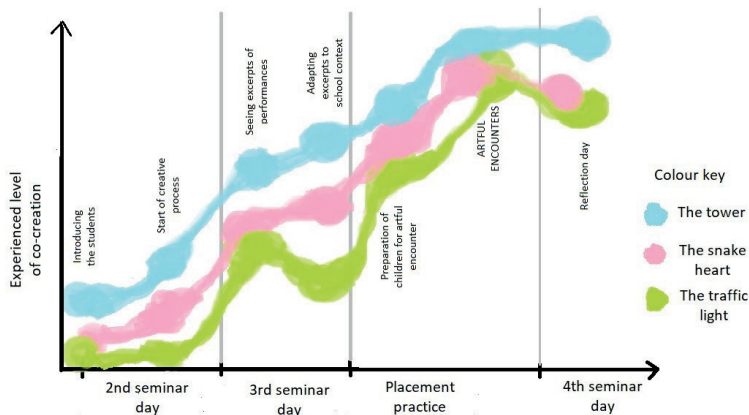
### Gathering the threads

Our intention in this article was to explore how the teacher candidates' reflections and experiences of this collaboration were articulated through multimodal expressions. Through our work with the data material, we have tried to create different expressions of our interpretations in order to visualise our understandings. Our first visualisation is a model of the dramaturgies articulated by the students (Figure 6). We did not include the first seminar day, as this was introductory only for the teacher candidates without the dance students being present. The cross-sectoral collaboration commenced on the second seminar day.

**Figure 6**

*Visualisation of the dramaturgies expressed by the teacher candidates.*

Visualisation by the authors.



It seems that all three groups had similar processes when it comes to the dramaturgies. The initial division between the artists and the teachers aligns with the findings of Karlsen and Karlsen (2022), where the artists maintain their position within the arts without willingness to adapt their art to a school context, while some teachers, as Breivik and Christoffersen (2013) describe, are reluctant to see the potential of arts in education.

▶ All the groups describe similar emotional attachment within the different phases, for instance how they felt alienated from one another at the beginning of the project. We interpret this as a feeling of insecurity, expressed by the teacher candidates. The lack of experience with creative processes and not knowing what the end product will be, may feel like an insurmountable obstacle. The fact that they meet few learning processes in their education to be teachers where they would have to apply their artistic and creative skills over time, may be one of the reasons for this insecurity and lack of belief in their own artistic abilities. But as we see from the dramaturgical analysis of the sculptures, the emotional attachment to the project changes when the groups are relieved from the 'artistic' part of the project and are allowed to concentrate on the educational aspects of the process. As soon as they have an excerpt of the performance to work with, the teacher candidates seem to gain confidence and understand how they can fit into the process, which lessens the anxiety they may have felt. The development mentioned by the teacher candidates making *The traffic light* might indicate their own learning process, and growing appreciation between themselves and the dance students. They have learnt from each other, and moved their fields of knowledge and skills closer by allowing themselves to see possibilities and opportunities for collaboration. It seems like the groups need to talk about and visualise their process in order to justify their final product. They need to express and explain the hardship they have been through in order to allow themselves to be proud of the artful encounter. As implied by *The tower* sculpture, maybe they would dare to take bigger risks and allow themselves to contribute more to the artistic work of the encounter. This shows the importance of encouraging aesthetic and artistic processes in teacher education. Similar to the findings of Snook and Buck (2014), we see that the need for embodied experience and knowledge of such processes is essential for their own belief in and use of aesthetic and artistic work in their future profession.

A continuous exploration of the joins and borders between art and pedagogy may also assist in obtaining a deeper understanding of artistic work, demystifying it, and opening it up to educational possibilities. The second visualisation (Figure 7) as authors have created uses the medium of modelling clay as a continuation of the sculptures made by the students, trying to capture how they see themselves and their role in the process and product of the artful encounter.

**Figure 7**

*Visualisation of the merging of roles in the artful encounter.*

Photo: Gunhild Brænne Bjørnstad.

Visualisation by the authors.





The hierarchy expressed by the teacher candidates, where they consider themselves as scaffolding the big ideas of the dance students, may diminish as they gain confidence in their own creativeness and ability to work artistically. In our analysis we saw how they articulate the division between the two student groups in their sculptures. However, the way they use the terms *us/them* in the beginning of the process is more and more erased and substituted with *it*, meaning the artful encounter, by the end of the project. This may indicate that they feel more on the same level, working towards a joint goal from within the two sectors. They find commonalities between the sectors without necessarily having to step into each other's field of expertise, but with the option and possibility to do so.

### **Moving forward**

Reading the articulations of the teacher candidates' sculptures has increased our awareness of how their self-esteem regarding artistic and aesthetic expressions needs to be built over time and in various ways in order to accomplish the vision of more practical and aesthetic processes in learning, as described in the strategy document by the Ministry of Education and Research (2019). If they are going to implement such processes in their own teaching and be able to integrate artful encounters through the Cultural Schoolbag, their understanding of artistic processes and art itself as an impulse for teaching must be awarded more time in teacher education, which is supported by Juvonen et al. (2018). This provides ample possibilities for further research, as the borders between artistic and pedagogical praxis overlap.

We are also encouraged by the methodological choice of using modelling clay as a means of articulation, as we see that the experiences of the teacher candidates become more nuanced with this arts-based language. This leads us to think that the use of such arts-based inquiries produces knowledge that questions, guides and shapes our understanding as processual and contextual, articulating meaning that cannot be expressed by words alone.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> [www.kulturtanken.no](http://www.kulturtanken.no)

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