

# Aesthetic Competence and Life Skills

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Lately the Norwegian education system has been undergoing a process of reforming the curriculum Kunnskapsløftet from 2006. The aim of this reform is to clarify what the core elements of the curriculum are and to ensure greater depth in learning. Three interdisciplinary themes have been introduced to be integrated across all subjects. These themes are: *Democracy & Citizenship*, *Sustainable Development* and *Public Health & Life Skills*.

Dans i Skolen is located in a relatively new house in the centre of Oslo called *Seilet – huset for kunst og kultur i skolen* (*the Sail – house for art and culture in school*, my translation). They work with a number of other organisations to develop and support the creative subjects in education. These organisations have worked together in the last few months to arrange a series of public debates about the three interdisciplinary themes.

Agathe Waage/Elevorganisasjonen. Photo: Lars Opstad



Anne Sælebakke. Photo: Lars Opstad

On November 6 2018, Public Health and Life Skills was on the agenda. The event was curated by Bjørg Åsta Flatby (Kunst i Skolen) and myself. We had three presenters with individual perspectives on the topic. Elevorganisasjonen (Pupil's organization) has 140,000 pupil members. They were represented by Agathe Waage. In her presentation she focused on the fact that many teenagers suffer from various emotional challenges, including issues related to self-esteem, identity, and loneliness, and that some turn to violence due to an inability to understand or express their feelings. Agathe's key point was that life skills must be included in schools to prepare pupils for the future.

The second presenter was Anne Sælebakke, a teacher, physiotherapist and author. Her presentation was called: «Life skills and public health—in a relational perspective». Her main point was that schools must have a universal approach to prepare children and young people for future challenges. She argued that this approach should include mental exercises that strengthen the pupil's relational competence: to herself, to others, and to the community. To achieve that, the teacher's relational competence must be appreciated just as much as their



*Hans Christian Arnseth. Photo: Lars Opstad*

professional expertise. Sælebakke emphasised the utility of mindfulness exercises for this approach.

The last presenter was Hans Christian Arnseth, Professor in Pedagogy and Head of Research at the Department of Education at the University of Oslo. The title of his presentation was «Life skills, creativity and engagement in school—new competences for tomorrow's challenges». Arnseth indicated that in today's world we adopt various identities in different contexts; today, more than ever before, we can choose

our own identity—regardless of who our parents are and where we grew up. He also talked about social media and that young people can choose who they want to listen to and what they want to believe. He gave one example: 'likes' from people you hardly know are not something that you should allow to have a large impact on you. Arnseth also talked about Makerspaces as a tool for creative collaboration in school subjects.

Dans i Skolen would like to continue working on this issue. We would like to promote dance in the interdisciplinary theme of Public Health and Life Skills in schools. We believe that dance can teach many life skills that address the challenges mentioned in this debate. On February 1 2019 we organised a seminar called «The Body in School—life skills through dance» to discuss this in further detail.