

Artistic supervision in collaborative creative processes

Narrative aspects and dialogues between art and education:
Fruitful as inspiration for finding good interventions in supervision?

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Abstract

In the key note I will explore artistic supervision by a choreographer in a collaborative production process of a performance targeted for children 2-3 years old. The problem formulation is: What contributions to development of an aesthetic approach to supervision might be identified in an artist's supervision of artists in a collaborative creative project?

The theoretical framework consists of multimodal learning theory with a focus on semiotic mediation inspired by Vygotsky (1878), Kress (2010) and van Leeuwen (1999). I have a special focus on the affordances given by remodalisation (or transduction) as a way of broadening the meaning making potential.

The analysis is informed by Dewey's theory about transformative aesthetics (1934/1980), developed by Sava (1995) as a description of transformations in artistic learning processes. The foundation is in aesthetic approaches to education informed by Wolfgang Iser's (1978) notion of aesthetic doubling, his notions about fictive reading like becoming a co-author filling out blanks and gaps with your own interpretations.

The main characteristics of the artistic supervision can be summed up as corporeality in the communication, use of semiotic signs from different modalities, a strong presence in the supervision situation, a clear instruction, and a very sensitive listening to the contributions from the collaborators, the floating back and forwards until a certain point, where the structure is fixed, and the use of positive response, as well as avoidance of negative feedback because of the vulnerability in the situation. The supervision situation is a group supervision.

These characteristics can serve as inspiration for multimodal approaches to supervision in general, and the special tools provided by different art forms, different ways of telling, sharing and communication stories which can be meaningful for the participants.

Introduction

To vitalize and renew the supervision discourse is the purpose of a planned project where the prevailing discourses of supervision in teacher education are challenged by more concrete and bodily founded supervision discourses in the arts. In a pilot study undertaken spring 2011 a

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research group at NTNU, Programme for teacher education, has been developing analytical concepts for a more extensive study within the frames of the project Space me (to be carried out autumn 2011 and spring 2012). In Norway there is already an extensive body of studies on supervision in education, developed within a tradition of cognitively oriented reflection around the theme of supervision in teacher education. As I have been educating drama teachers and teachers of language and literature, I have become aware of the potential of ways of thinking in the arts, which might contribute to the renewal of model thinking in supervision context. Especially the dramaturgical thinking opens up for complex affordances by use of other semiotic resources in addition to verbal language alone.

Howard Gardner (2006) has in *Five minds for the future*, based on a lifelong exploration of learning, suggested five minds for the future. He writes that an individual's thinking needs to encompass breath, depth and stretch. The five minds Gardner suggests are a disciplined mind, a synthesizing mind, a creative mind, a respectful mind and an ethical mind. Howard Gardner has inspired the research project focused on the affordances in artistic supervision.

The challenge for education is to open up for a broader understanding of what learning is, what there is to be learnt something about, by including the aesthetic ways of knowing, to sense something aesthetically- thus adding to the multi layeredness of human insight.

In the arts the learning processes are considered cyclical, they are considered transformative, they are definitely multilayered and multimodal. In the artist's work emotions and feelings are considered valuable sources of human experience. In this key note I will present some of the results from the pilot study about artistic supervision of artists..

The pilot study of artistic supervision in "Oranges and lemons"

In this presentation I will focus on the supervision by a choreographer in a collaborative creative process connected to the production a performance for children aged 2-3 years. The performance is presented in this way¹:

“Appelsiner og sitroner” is a poetic, comical and wonderstruck presentation about oranges and lemons, moons and suns, owls and stones.

It is an encounter between a dancer, a clown and a musician, and was inspired by several children's poems by Spanish poet Federico García Lorca.

The production is suitable for children 2-3 years old.

The evening is chanting
a berceuse to the oranges.

My little sister's chanting:
the Earth is an orange.

The moon weeping cries:
I want to be an orange.

¹ <http://www.dansenshus.com/en/performances/orangesandlemons/>

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You cannot be, my child,
even if you were reddened.

Not even if you turned lemon.
What a shame that is!
(Federico García Lorca)

The data gathered and the research persons

For the pilot study the research team observed rehearsals during a three weeks' period spring 2011. Some of the observations were video recorded. The choreographer and the director were interviewed before the rehearsals started. The director and the choreographer wrote reflexive logs connected to the production process (8 diary entries from each). The director was the owner of the concept idea. She had invited the choreographer to cooperate in the creation of the performance. The production team also comprised a person working with scenography, a music responsible, and a song text writer. The performers were three: a dancer, a clown and a musician playing trombone. I have for this presentation chosen to focus on the observations of the choreographer's supervision/instruction/guidance of the performing group of artists, and on the choreographer's log texts. The concept idea is based on collaboration, and co-production through improvisation within given frames. The intensions with the production were explored through the initial interview (See Appendix 1 for the interview manual).

The log writing instruction

The log writing is preferably 5-10 minutes after each working day (3 days a week during 3 weeks gives 8-9 log texts). It is important that the log text is not edited regarding your experiences of the working process.

The log is focused. The focus is on direction/choreography as supervision in collaborative creative processes.

Write about:

1. My sensual experience of myself right now (How do you sense your body after today's work?)
2. What is the most important you can say about your supervision of others in the project. What did the supervision consist of?
3. What am I satisfied with? Something I want to make different next time? (What was blocking?)
4. Mention a supervision moment that led to development of idea or form? What did you do then?
5. Mention a movement dialogue/verbal dialogue/music dialogue which you considered co-creative!
6. What importance has the fact that the target audience consists of small children? How does this influence the choices?
7. Name the phase in the working process now: (for instance probing, developing, form giving, rehearsal for performance, repetition of the performance...)

In the next section I will elaborate a transcript of a video sequence (Video clip 1), where the choreographer collaboratively works with a piece of choreographing. I will connect this clip with the diary the choreographer wrote about this particular sequence after the session.

Transcription choreography sequence 1

(From 46' 22" to 50' 04" on the dvd)

(In this sequence the choreographer is working with the dancer and the clown. The director is watching, and the musician is playing the trombone.)

...

All: Laughter

Chor: OK. Now it was too long

Dancer: We have to make variations I feel

Chor: That we do not do it such a long time, it has to build itself up. It must become quite clear,

Dancer: It is a bite loose when we whirl around.

Chor: But after that it must become clear- we can do like that – whirl (finger snap) – whirl (finger snap) and so it has to be there, like that it may go, but it is almost what there has to be

Dancer: Yes, but then also this one could come. (Shows)

Chor.: Yes, that is good. OK så we take – whirl – whirl- bow 1-2-3- bow – stand on hand.

Dancer: OK then I come, but when we turn around, are we turning the same direction

Chor: (to the director watching) – what do you think?

Dir.: (Laughter) I don't know.

Chor: But – hm-m- I do not think you should turn quite alike, but in the same direction.

Clown: I follow her?

Dir.: Can I ask something? /.../

Chor.: She must end up with the gliding jump.

The choreographer's diary entry about this day:

Tuesday 8th march 2011

Today was the first time I experienced a little bit of slowness, resistance and feelings in the system were noticed. I felt it partly when I was working, and partly when the director was working.

I actually felt first in me, when I should start in the morning and knew that we should work with a pre-planned choreography. I like more to work like more playful, instruct a round about material, which can be altered in the performers' bodies. In the same time I very much like that some short sequences are stringent and defined. And then they have to be choreographed in a different way.

The process was like this: I wanted to work with creating a choreography swinging (vippe), which I can see many toddlers do. Yesterday, Monday, we played around this, improvised, played in pairs. Decided upon a round about structure. It worked well.

Tonight the movements the performers had improvised around whirled around in my head and in my body and a feeling of a choreography, a rhythm, a swinging structure. In waltz-tact, because the music had been a waltz. The waltz just had played itself from the musician. This little structure I instructed and demonstrated today, as the first thing to do after warm up. I counted the waltz-rhythm 1-2-3, 1-2-3 ... swing back and forth, fall down, stand on your hands – a little resistance. Why? Too little co-creation I think. Both the clown and the dancer

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are very co-creative artists, and I think they become less motivated by being given instructions. And something more: the clown seemed to be tired. Very little clown simply. Conclusion: choreography does not fit into the clown's world. The clown continually works with improvisation and communication, to use what the space gives.

... There happened many other things throughout the day, too. The energy was found again, and the laughter was bubbling up. ...

One place a creative artist must be in peace with her ideas. She must supervise, instruct, demonstrate and have peace around.

Heaven and sea! What subtle, but at the same time very concretely experienced processes. Now I have all the others' bodies, feelings, thoughts and rhythms close to me, with me. Slowly they drip away, but it takes time. [choreographer]

Through the analysis of some video clips from the artistic supervision process I will guide the listener through a possible artistic supervision process. In this analysis I am using Giorgi's (2009) model for a phenomenological analysis step by step. I start with the meaning unit 'Artistic supervision' based on video transcriptions. I identify central recurring themes in the supervision process, and I sum up giving a basic description of the themes identified.

The following central themes are identified so far:

1. Corporeality
2. Concrete instruction
3. Giving model
4. Scaffolding; giving frames and freedom within them to improvise and try out
5. Being very present in the situation
6. Being very attentive and listening to response
7. Uptake of ideas from the artists
8. Elaborating and probing ideas
9. Autopoietic feedback loops (the participants inspire each other to greater performance)
10. Many ideas are tried out, only a few of them remains in the final product
11. The supervision is different in different phases of the process. (first giving frames, then floating back and forwards; finally structure and exactness; meeting the audience)
12. The vulnerability of the participants is acknowledged.

Theoretical framework

The epistemological approach is informed by a constructivistic interactionism (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen, 2005) because the collaborative, and co-creative production process can be seen as a floating, not stable phenomenon, and as a phenomenon that can be interpreted in different ways, formed in the interaction. (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen, 2005, 9).

Multimodality and semiotic mediation

A performance is multimodal in its expression, which makes multimodal meaning theory relevant as frame of reference. A central idea is that there in the in-between-space between different art forms is a learning potential, which challenges as well feeling as thoughts in meaning making. The different art forms use different semiotic resources, which together form meaning clusters, which can be interpreted simultaneously or subsequently.² Gunther Kress (2003; 2010) has described multimodal meaning theory just like an emerging meaning, which is not very fixed, but fixed enough to make sense. Literacy in the age of multimodality is a broad concept encompassing visual symbols, dance, graphs, notes, movement and physical theatre as text. Communication is understood through use of symbols, different semiotic signs and semiotic tools. The use of semiotic resources other than the verbal system is demanding and dynamic. In translation, interpretation and transformation from one sign modality to another there is a possibility for broadening of the meaning potential.

In the empty spaces between what is said, what is shown, and what remains unsaid is a surplus of meaning, which interpretation might activate as meaning production. Lotman (1988) talks about the univocal versus the dialogical text function. Univocal text is carrying a meaning, Dialogical text points at the possibility to produce new meaning. An affordance is a potential for meaning making. In order to catch the semiotic value it is necessary to contextualize semiotic systems historically, culturally and socially. van Leeuwen (1999) has written about the question forward, into the future:

Semiotics was supposed to be 'the science of signs' and science, in turn, is supposed to be about 'what is', not about 'what could be' or 'what might be'. Still when you systematically describe 'what is' you find gaps, you find yourself wondering why certain options are not available and why certain things cannot be done in certain semiotic modes. Which is only one step away from *unlocking semiotic doors*, from asking: Could it be done? Does it have to be impossible? And if we are going to do it, how shall we do it?" (van Leeuwen, 1999, 10).

In artistic supervision the creation of something new by recirculating already existing material is relevant. As work in art forms usually functions at least in a double hermeneutic way, it is important to pose the question what meaning making that is made possible through the interplay between Garcia Lorca's poems, the dancer, the clown, the musician and the supervising choreographer and the director forming the concept. Interpretation in another modality might bring fore other aspects of an experience and the world which already is represented in the modality you start from. Rustad (2010: 240, my translation) suggests that this translation is called remodalisation. He also points at aesthetic values as central:

Defamiliarisation as a result from the remodalisation forms an otherness that is part of the aesthetic quality of the product. The interplay between modalities insists on the sensuous dimension of the meaning, and underline the aspects with the former text which goes beyond semantization where the text not can be given conceptual meaning/.../ Remodalisation is a creative process which produces something as more adequate, or more perfect, in another way. The remediated and remodalised text develops the world and the experiences which are created in the former text.

In Vygotsky's (1978) theory about the child's development towards higher mental functions, he gives the semiotic mediation a central role. He gives the social interaction with a more competent peer or an adult a central role in the acquisition of for instance language. Vygotsky

² For a more detailed account of multimodality concept cf Østern, Karlsen & Angelo (forthcoming) or Kaihovirta-Rosvik, Østern, Heilä-Ylikallio (forthcoming).

underlines that there has to be a mediating function in this learning process. The artistic supervision might be such a mediator in the production process. In this process my presentation is focused on the importance of how aesthetic approaches represent an added value, because to get an insight aesthetically means to grasp relations, concepts in a sensuous way using as well feelings as thoughts.

Transformative aesthetic theory and artistic learning processes

In *Art as Experience* Dewey (1934/1980) outlines a transformative aesthetic theory, where he gives everyday experience a vital role as a starting point in an artistic process. Dewey describes interactions as a series of transformations: I-me, I-others, I- the technique, I-the task. Finnish researcher in arts education Inkeri Sava (1995) has developed this thinking into a model. In figure 1 a modified version of Sava's model for an artistic learning process is visualised. The process is cyclical and consists of a series of transformations. The form expression is the nodal point (level 5 in the model) which generates a series of transformations. Starting from a sensuous experience of any kind (level 1) the learner chooses a material, a technique based on aesthetic and ethical considerations. Through a dialogical process the form expression is developed metaphorically in the language of art, as well as conceptually in the language of science. In that way a product is formed. Sava writes that this is an artistic learning process which is characterized by change: the learner might learn something quantitatively (more about the chosen technique), qualitatively through gaining insight in some relationship, or structurally in that the learner starts thinking in new ways.

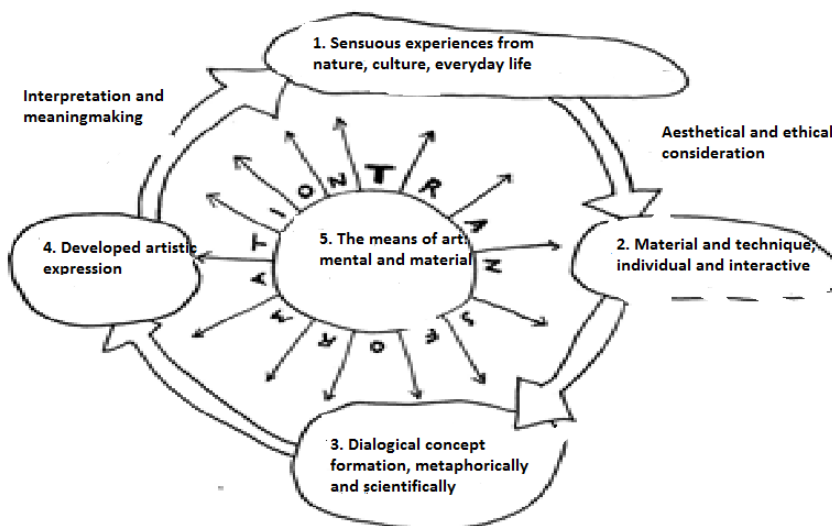
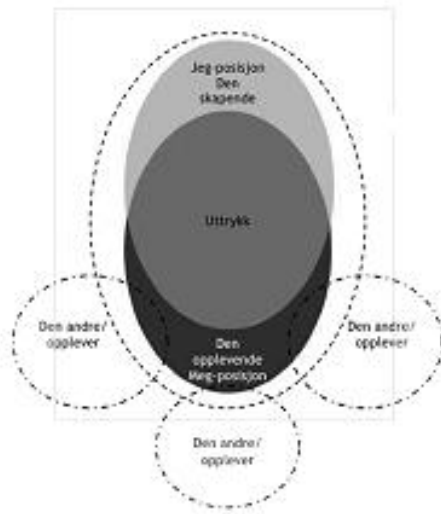


Figure 1. Model of a transformative artistic learning process (Modified after Sava, 1995).

In Schøien's (2011) description of phases in an artistic process, she has pointed at the necessity of distancing in different phases of an artistic process as shown in figure 2.



Figur 2. A series of distancing in an artistic creation process. (Schøien, 2011).

In the first phase I create (already there is a distance because I have to make decisions about what and how to create). In phase 2 I take step backwards as me and look at what I have created (formative evaluation) and reflect upon what I have done so far alone, or together with others. In the third phase I have to let go of what I have created, and in this phase I have to let the artistic expression meet the audience, and its evaluation of the quality.

How the coreographer works in a collaborative forming process

Transcription choreography sequence 2

(From 40'28'' to 44'14'' on the dvd 2) In this sequence the choreographer is working with the musician and the dancer. This shows an example of a collaborative creation process, where the choreographer and musician first explores a movement pattern, and a little bite later the musician and the dancer develop the movement pattern into a well working form.

Chor.: (movement contact with the musician)

Mus.: A bite unusual (Laughter)

Dancer: (Laughter)

Chor.: Can you play now then?

Mus.: No (Laughter) [the trombone] can stick out to one side. Nice if we come up, a bite from distance.

Chor. Work further now you two a little, find out what is possible.

Dancer : From there ? up and down? (Laughter)

Wop! This one was a bite heavy, because it was a little twist. You were really strong.

Mus.: How was it... I think you must be on the other side. If we shall manage this..

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Dancer: Can you do this with only one leg /.../ this is fine. You do not need to cling to me with one arm...

Mus.: Heavy?

Dancer: It's OK.

Chor.: I think there is a little structure emerging there..I think it is a little trip – you run between the trees – you can just continue to explore how you are doing it..

Dancer: It is much easier when you do it like this...

Chor.: Yes, it's much better when you work corporeally (Shows), include that one – it is very joyous.

Dancer: yes

Chor.: /.../ you follow her with the music

This video clip shows a collaborative, creation process. It starts very exploring, trying out possible ways of playing and dancing, first the guidance of the choreographer is leading the process. Later on the dancer and the musician continue to explore possible movement patterns. Finally the structure is chosen and fixed. It strats more floating back and forwards, but ends up with an emerging form, a choreography. The choreographer is first in I position, so she moves to me-position, and finally she takes the it-position, making the choice of which choreography that should be the result.

Outline of an artistic supervision model

The model for an artistic supervision process is (a) cyclical (b) an interplay between I-me-it in a series of distancing, and (c) multilayered. You work very concretely with form, but as you have the music, the dance, the stage props, the physical theatre you can use different fictitious layers like concrete (what they do), abstract (use of symbols pointing at the story, like movement patterns and ways of playing the trombone supporting or leading), and finally metaphorically creating the poetic universe. The collaborative process consists of a series of interplays between the I position, the me position and the it position, where” it” is the product created, the artistic expression.

The cyclical movement can be identified like the transformations in Sava's model.

Concluding discussion: Applications to other supervision, counseling and guidance contexts?

In the final discussion I will take the central themes identified and look at them one by one and make an assessment of the possibilities introducing the technique and way of working in supervision in general.

| Characteristics of artistic supervision | Applicable to supervision in teacher education/ in school? |
|--|--|
| 1. Corporeality | A wider repertoire of semiotic resources can be used like drama and narrative techniques |
| 2. Concrete instruction | Concrete instruction is part of teaching. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| 3. Giving model (in movement) | Can be done. |
| 4. Scaffolding; giving frames and freedom within them to improvise and try out | This can be done. Improvisation could be part of training. |
| 5. Being very present in the situation | This is an ideal in all supervision sessions. |
| 6. Being very attentive and listening to response | This is an ideal in dialogical supervision. |
| 7. Uptake of ideas from the artists | Acknowledgement of good ideas |
| 8. Elaborating and probing ideas | Can be done to a certain degree. This can be subject to metareflection. |
| 9. Autopoietic feedback loops (the participants inspire each other to greater performance) | This is part of a creative process at its best. |
| 10. Many ideas are tried out, only a few of them remains in the final product | More ideas could be tried out, even if only a few remains in the repertoire. |
| 11. The supervision is different in different phases of the process. (First giving frames, then floating back and forwards; finally structure and exactness; meeting the audience) | In supervision in pedagogical context the opposite is the case. Limited freedom, strong frames for a beginner, then more freedom and responsibility to the more experienced person. |
| 12. The vulnerability of the participants is acknowledged. | The vulnerability of the person being subject to supervision should be acknowledged and respected. |

As a conclusion regarding the juxtaposition in the matrix it is possible to say that some of the characteristics coincidence, while some others could be ideals to thrive towards, and others again could be introduced as vitalizing elements in the educational supervision discourse.

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Especially the corporeality and the larger repertoire of semiotic resources seem to intensify the learning experience and transforms it to an aesthetic experience.

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