

Kulturverket

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Organisation: City of Umeå, Sweden

Country:

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Education, Recreation, culture and religion

Type: Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2005

Overall development time: 2 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The City of Umeå set up Kulturverket, a new cultural unit in 2005 to implement a new co-production approach to children's services, learning, and arts and culture. "Kulturverket" literally means 'department for culture', which emphasizes the important status of the department within the local council. Its overall objective is to give all children in the municipality access to cultural experiences and to integrate creative learning processes into the everyday work of the schools. Most projects start in the schools and end up being presented professionally, such as at the opera, theatre venues, or in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Umeå. Kulturverket aims to make learning more creative by involving school pupils of different ages in arts and culture projects which they co-produce with professional artists from different fields. Rather than employing public managers to run the programs, the artists and various cultural organizations are brought in to give lectures to the students, and also to collaborate with the students on projects which are then produced professionally.

Why the innovation was developed

- The innovation was developed to improve and expand children and young people's access, participation, learning processes, and training in arts and culture through the school system in partnership with arts and culture professionals and organizations.
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Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

- To make learning more creative by involving students of different ages in local arts and culture projects in which they co-produce.
 - To make arts and culture more accessible to young people and students in the City of Umeå.
 - To create a new approach with regard to education and children's services.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Students, Young people

- Children and young people in the city of Umeå.
- Educators.
- Schools.
- Arts and culture producers.
- Arts and culture audiences.

Results

User satisfaction

- An Assessor of the European Public Sector Awards (EPSA) and was deeply impressed by the way arts and culture projects were targeted at children and young people in the city and were based on co-production methods. Not surprisingly, Umeå won the EPSA Innovation Award in 2007.
- Umeå will be the European Capital of Culture in 2014. This case study demonstrates a different way to 'do culture' with children and young people.
- The City of Umeå has been delighted that its work has been so successful and has engaged a great many children – and has also been recognised in other parts of Sweden and abroad.

Development

Design

The idea for the innovation was generated by Arne Berggren, a former actor, director and theatre teacher, who during this period was the headmaster of the City of Umeå's aesthetic gymnasium. He came to the conclusion that an arts and culture program based within the school system would reach all children, and not only those with an existing interest or exposure. By involving professional artists from different areas in the program helped to incorporate new ways of learning for both the pupils and teachers in an arts curriculum.

Testing

- Since it started in 2006, Kulturverket has developed two approaches, financially supported by the National Heritage Fund in Sweden: 'Kids tell the pros what to do', and 'Where's the art in research?'
 - Both approaches are used in its on-going projects and are still developing, based on what the children and young people want to do, and how the professional artists are involved.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- 'Kids tell the pros what to do' is an approach that Kulturverket has used in all its projects so far. The children's ideas, thoughts and creative work are developed together with older pupils, students and "the professionals" (practising artists and cultural organisations). The children and young people are the creators, and take an active part at professional exhibitions, shows and concerts but it is grown-ups with their experience, knowledge and resources that actually make it happen by implementing the ideas. The children and young people tell the pro's what to do!
- 'Where's the art in research?' is the second method that is frequently used in Kulturverket projects – it brings researchers, artists and school children together in the classroom, where research is turned into art. Kulturverket invites scientists or researchers to give lectures to children of different ages. They then have a discussion about what the research is really all about. When this has become clear, the pupils turn their new knowledge into art, together with the artists from Kulturverket. This way new learning processes are developed, using arts as a learning tool.

Resources used:

- Artists and cultural professionals.
 - Classroom resources.
 - Cultural and performance venues and staff.
 - Yearly contribution of 4 000 000 SEK every year (approximately £400 000) from the City of Umeå.
 - A funding partnership with the Swedish Heritage Fund, which has supported Kulturverket with around 2 000 000 SEK per year (approximately £200 000).
 - Other funds from Nordic funds, the Swedish Arts Council, etc.
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Partnerships

Artists

Private sector

Kulturverket does not employ public managers, but brings in artists from many different fields: filmmakers, musicians and composers, librarians, artists within animation, photography and technology to give lectures on the arts and codesign and produce arts projects.

Arts and Culture Professionals

Private sector

Kulturverket also co-operates with other professionals in arts and culture projects; symphony orchestras, hip hop artists, dancers, actors and so on. This means the children and young people work with practising artists and cultural workers of all kinds in its projects and performances.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- One of the key success factors has been the way that it brings cultural institutions and the local university together with school classes in its projects. This partnership has created unexpected networks and relationships, and combined resources in imaginative ways.
 - The most important success factors in co-producing arts and culture with children are maintaining ambitious goals for each project, making sure each project has a proper “ending ” e.g a show, concert, exhibition, with opportunities for the kids to see what happened with their ideas and artistic material.
 - Sticking to the ideas of children in the project work, without compromise or over-simplification. Children and young people are able to recognise their own words, music and pictures, even after the professionals have worked them up into their final shape.
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Conditions for success

- For our activities and projects it is important that the involved professional artists see a benefit for their own artistic development in their work with children. This way the kids benefit from meeting and working with professionals, giving a new dimension to their school work, and at the same time the artist working with the pupils is inspired in a new creative process.
 - It is important to keep reminding ourselves to think in new ways and not get stuck in old patterns, even where those patterns seem to work just fine at the moment. ‘Kids tell pros what to do’ continually prods professional artists and cultural organisations to find new ways of working and helps to keep their own curiosity and creativity alive.
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