

# Follow your dream, not the stream

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## Abstract in English

Many schools have realised the importance of creating arenas for dialogues about relevant existential issues and to help young people to develop emotional and social competence.

This Project is promoted by the Municipality of Malmö (Sweden), in particular from the Ethnic Relations Unit, which is an office whose work is aimed at integration of non native citizens and at promotion of cultural understanding in the city.

The Unit for Ethnic Relations has been working from 2005 in the upper secondary schools of the city to promote a good working climate in the classrooms and to prevent racist and hostile attitudes.

The Project *Follow your dream, not the stream* aims at creating a pedagogical method that promotes trust and participation among students at risk of exclusion, mostly belonging to ethnic minorities. This project helps to deal with attitudes, values and prejudices together with the teachers and students by carrying out workshops or group activities based on the use of informal and expressive languages. In particular the Project has used the music as a means for communication with disadvantaged and non-native young students.

## Abstract (in italiano)

Molte scuole si sono rese conto dell'importanza di creare delle occasioni di dialogo sulle questioni esistenziali per aiutare i giovani a sviluppare competenze emozionali e sociali. L'unità per i rapporti etnici è attiva, a partire dal 2005, nelle scuole superiori e secondarie di Malmö, con l'obiettivo di promuovere un clima positivo e rispettoso nelle aule e per impedire atteggiamenti razzisti ed ostili.

Il progetto *Follow your dream, not the stream* intende generare un metodo pedagogico che promuova la fiducia e la partecipazione fra gli allievi, principalmente quelli appartenenti a minoranze etniche. Questo progetto contribuisce a far sì che insegnanti e allievi si occupino insieme degli atteggiamenti, dei valori e dei pregiudizi attraverso workshop o attività di gruppo basate sull'uso di un linguaggio informale ed espressivo. In particolare il progetto ha fatto uso della musica come modo per entrare in contatto con i giovani studenti svantaggiati.

## 1. The practice

### 1.1 Description of the project

The purpose is to help young people at risk to find their identity and to strengthen their self-esteem. Throughout the involvement of famous artists, the Project intends to improve the communication abilities of young - and mostly non-native - students. The Project is also meant to increase awareness of personal abilities throughout the use of their languages, considered as a useful mean of inclusion, such as music (rap) and dance (hip hop, break dance).

The purpose is to help young people to find their identity and to strengthen their self-esteem. Throughout the involvement of artist and popular hip-hop musicians who work together with the students: they create lyrics and music, analysed media and commercial advertisings, documented the work with video and still photography. The

Project helped them to reflect about the sexual and gender norms, power-relations and intercultural communication.

This Project, which is still going on, has taken advantage from the work done by Juan Paez, who is a rap-artist and part of a hip hop-group called *Advance Patrol*. Juan meets the teenagers in upper secondary school. They communicate, they produce lyrics together on issues like love, sexual identity, ethnicity, gender, friendship, power structures, future, and everything else they find important. During a semester Juan has met hundreds of young students.

By the end of the first semester 2007 the Project will record the music produced by the artist and the students. The record will be produced and distributed to every student. The artist work has been appreciated by the students and also by the teachers. Relations in the classrooms have been positively affected, both among students and with teachers, because students began to relate with school with more trust: the project, by talking their language, has shown to the students how important is to communicate with them. On the other hand, the students felt to be recognised for their language, habits, that are considered by the Project a good base for the identity building process. This has produced a climate of reciprocal acceptance between the educational services (the schools and the project educators) and the young, that is thought as relevant in order to combat drop out and low achievement at school among immigrant students.

## **1.2 Time, structure and steps of the project**

The Municipality of Malmo was determined to combat exclusion, by focusing in particular on young students or teenagers at risk of social isolation and educational drop-out. *Follow your dream not the stream* was started in 2005 as a result of the recognition of establishing and creating opportunities for communication with young people in an extra-school context, where language used is closed and appealing for them.

## **1.3 Place and context**

The Swedish Parliament has adopted the *Act Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students* (2006). The new Act is intended to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sexual orientation and disability in the activities regulated by the Education Act. Moreover, the Act is designed to hinder and prevent other degrading treatment that is not directly attributable to these grounds of discrimination, such as bullying. The Act entered into force on 1 April 2006.

Most of the immigrants who have arrived in Sweden over the five years have come from Iraq, from former Yugoslavia, from Germany, from Iran and from Bosnia, according to The National Statistics Office Statistical, which does not include immigration from the other Nordic countries. Immigrants from Germany are usually either asylum seekers who come from Serbia and Montenegro, and have been refused a residence permit in Germany but do not wish to return to their country of origin, or persons who have family ties with Swedish residents (Source: *Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe, Country Report, Sweden, 2003/2004*, Eurydice, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture).

In Sweden, the state has governed education through a series of statutes, government orders, curricula and syllabuses. These contain aims and guidelines for all aspects of

education. The curricula start with a section on the fundamental values and tasks of school. The quotation below is from the curriculum for compulsory school education. (Eurydice, p. 7).

*“Concern for the welfare and development of the individual should characterise all school activity. Schools must actively resist any tendency towards bullying or persecution. Xenophobia and intolerance must be actively confronted with knowledge, open discussion and effective measures. The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place great demands on people's ability to live together and to appreciate the values that are to be found in cultural diversity. School is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to foster this ability among all who work there”.*

The basis of these shared values constitutes the foundation on which the organisation and content of school education are built. The national curricula give instructions, and every individual school is expected to work to ensure that these fundamental values permeate all aspects of their work. At national level, the National Agency for Education has drawn up course syllabuses for the subjects taught at school and has compiled supplementary materials, which illuminate the different aspects of this shared foundation of common values.

The National Agency for Education (NAE) annual statistical report regularly examines “students at risk”, considering the percentage of students not attaining the nationally agreed educational objectives. From this analysis it comes out how high is the proportion of drop out among students with non-Swedish background ([http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/044DN/044\\_SE\\_EN.pdf](http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/044DN/044_SE_EN.pdf)).

Malmö is an example of how these preoccupations received some answers throughout the interventions on young people at risk. Malmö is a very diverse city with representatives from more than 160 different countries. Its territory is considered as a very segregated city and in some schools there are almost no Swedish native students. As far as intercultural education is concerned, there are some examples in Malmö that are worth looking into. As an answer to the segregation and exclusion risk faced by many young students, the city has developed a strong tradition in the implementation of projects aimed at preventing exclusion throughout inclusive education for young people.

At the same time, the educational and social system is lacking a well coordinated system which shows what occupies youth's time, those who do not work, study, etc. As a result, it has led to a growing population of exclusion among young people in the municipal territory. This project tries to cope with the lack of interest in the needs of youth as well as solutions which are based on the each individual (Eurydice, 2004).

At the same time, the national curricula show an interest on cultural diversity, in particular on primary education, where “focus is mainly on respect and tolerance vis-à-vis cultural diversity” (Survey: *Eurydice, Integrating Immigrant children into Schools in Europe*, European Commission, Directorate for education and culture, 2004, p. 58): the intercultural approach is meant to influence school culture, meaning all those values on which interpersonal relations (among pupils and among teachers , as well as between both groups) are based. (Eurydice, p. 61).

The intercultural approach is therefore part of educational programmes of Swedish community, but the effective inclusion must cope with phenomena of concentration within areas of the cities, that makes more difficult the process of inclusion and the

attempts of dialogue. Further info on Malmö education on: <http://www.malmo.se/servicemeny/cityofmalmo/education.4.33aee30d103b8f15916800023857.html>

#### **1.4 Target**

The Project addresses young students of multicultural Upper Secondary School in Malmö, mostly belonging to ethnic minorities.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

The Project is based on the use of youth languages (music, dance) in order to keep the students involved in educational life. The Ethnic Relations Unit decided to use very popular musicians or artists who are appreciated by young people, as Juan Paez. This allows the transmission of cultural messages that would find difficult welcome if forwarded with traditional and formal languages normally adopted by teachers and educators.

The innovative aspect of this project is to reverse the conventional pattern of communication between educators and students. The project has preferred the adoption of youth language because this methods assure a better and deeper involvement of youth, especially if non Swedish speakers and with disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. The methodology deemed by the Project is based on the assumption that young people have abilities that school is not able to recognise and that must be considered as resources for the student and for the community.

As far as the use of juvenile language is concerned, today, some of the most popular rappers use Swedish, often in the form of "Rinkeby Swedish", the youth vernacular of many suburbs dominated by immigrants.

Rinkeby Swedish (*Rinkebysvenska*) is a common term for varieties of Swedish spoken mainly in suburbs among immigrants and immigrant descendants. This language has specific characteristic in every suburb.

The proect has been capable to outreach students and young people, also using educators/ animator (as the rapper Juan Paez) who know this language. In some case, *Rinkebysvenska* contains Turkish influences. The everyday use of language among young people in multilingual urban settings in Sweden is an issue of great interest to many people, not only researchers and teachers, but also the young people themselves and their families. This new way of using Swedish has also recently gained a footing in traditional literary genres, such as novels and poetry. The everyday language of these young people is described by some as creative and interesting and by others as objectionable. There is both a genuine curiosity about the new addition to the diversity of Swedish as well as a fear that this use of Swedish will spoil the future for these young people or spoil "the Swedish language". There are many views, fears and wishes, but relatively little systematic knowledge about this sort of everyday language (Source: Research Project "Language and language use among young people in multilingual urban settings", conducted by University of Goteborg).

[http://hum.gu.se/institutioner/svenska-spraket/isa/verk/projekt/pag/sprakbruk\\_eng/](http://hum.gu.se/institutioner/svenska-spraket/isa/verk/projekt/pag/sprakbruk_eng/)

#### **1.6 Authors, Funding and Networks**

*Actors:* Students of secondary upper schools in Malmo, educators, popular artists (rapper, musicians)

*Fundings:* the project is funded by the City Council and received grants from national health promoting funds.

*Network:* the city of Malmo is partner in a network called Social Inclusion ([www.socinc.net](http://www.socinc.net)) which gathers different European cities with excellent practice on the wider field of social integration. This network has, among others, the purpose to report about good practices, and the *Follow your dream not your stream* Project has been included in this database.

## **2. HINTS FOR AN EVALUATION**

### **2.1. Strengths**

#### *2.1.1 The organisation's perspective*

The strength of the programme is that every individual is seen and recognised as a person with at value equal to others and everyone is seen as being resourceful.

*"(...) We think it is important to address emotions as well as intellect when you work with socialising young people and with social inclusion."* (interview to Irene Malmberg, Ethnic Relations Unit).

She affirms that the Project has been able to dialogue with students. The high attendance of workshops (hundreds of students joined until December 2006), demonstrates the quality and effectiveness of the Project.

#### *2.1.2 Interculture map perspective*

The project benefits from the general intercultural approach that is part of educational programmes of Swedish community, as described in point 1.3 Place and context. Also, the Municipality of Malmo, has demonstrated a high level of sensitiveness, by the implementation of a Project that implies a very delicate work, that has nothing to do with the rigid work of a public institution or of a school. This is the result of a capability to assume responsibilities and to cope with challenge and complex situations. The most important aspect of the Project lies in methodology, that is directed at create closer contact with young students. This is a method already explored also by other European cities and Projects, but the innovative elements is the involvement of rap artist as "educators", facilitating the communication with students and the transmission of educational values.

### **2.2. Critical points**

#### *2.2.1 The organisation's perspective*

Personnel of the organisation affirmed that the school structure has shown some level of rigidity and oppressiveness. Another problem is due to the segregation and the socio-economic structure in the city also is manifested in the schools, which makes it hard to preach equality.

Furthermore, since Malmö is so diverse, the global conflicts have an impact in classrooms that is very hard to cope with. The 11<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2001 has negatively influenced relations within the schools, and this had a long term impact which the Project is still trying to combat.

#### *2.2.2 Interculture map perspective*

The critical aspect of the Project lies in the difficulty to link the non-formal character of activities carried out with young people to the formal character of education. This means that more and stronger efforts should be done for the preparation of the school to work out and put into value the results of the project. The most difficult aspect is

probably related to the capability of the Project to allow the school to be lined up. In order to do so a stronger involvement of the school staff during the first phase of the Project is desirable and suitable if considering the non-traditional character of the Project.

The effective inclusion must cope with phenomena of concentration within areas of the cities, that makes more difficult the process of inclusion and the attempts of dialogue.

### **2.3. Conclusion: what is “exportable” in the project**

#### *2.3.1 The organisation's perspective*

Thanks to Project the importance of communicating with young people has been acknowledged, and it has been recognised the value of non-formal youth languages. To adopt the language of young people means to start a peer relationship, which is a valid way to interact with them, by turning the vertical messages in a horizontal interaction. This methods allows professionals to forward to them anti-racist and anti-violent communication.

#### *2.3.2 Interculture map perspective*

Working with young at risk by using their language, expressive workshop, involvement of music personalities recognised by young students, production of music and video that can help young to get out from social invisibility.

Use of instruments and language that can be understood by young students, most of them are son of migrant families, and that can be useful to support the construction of identity.