

Spelar mindre roll?

A report about the unequal distribution of performing arts to children and young people in school



ASSITEJ
SWEDEN

An English translation of the summary of the report
"Spelar mindre roll?" by ASSITEJ Sweden

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Photograph from the performance

"Moln" by Kompani Giraff.

Photographer: José Figueroa



Relevant information to the reader about the translation

Being a part of an international organization of members, ASSITEJ Sweden have a lot of contact with non-Swedish speakers. Since the release in May 2022 of our report "Spelar mindre roll?", a piece of work into which we put a lot of time and heart, we have received requests for an English version of it. In an attempt to meet this demand, this document is a version of the report "Spelar mindre roll?" translated from Swedish into English, although a very shortened version covering only the summary. The extent of this shortened version is due to limitations of time but also has the aim of only keeping those parts of most relevance to other countries whom we may interest and/or inspire.

It is difficult for us as authors to translate a report that is very much connected to Swedish circumstances. It is also difficult in an idiomatic way. Some of the language might get 'lost in translation'. This may be most clear in the title of the report that in Swedish not only is a rhetorical question about political priorities, but also a wordplay connected to the performing arts saying; "Does it really matter?" and "playing a (theatre) role" at the same time.

Summary

For a long time, the members of ASSITEJ Sweden have attested that the access to performing arts experiences in school in Sweden is unequal. This report aims to contribute to solutions to secure the equal right of all children and young people to continual performing arts experiences in school.

- In Sweden today, there are no national statistics to measure who gets to experience performing arts in school, and who^{*1} does not. On the other hand, studies from the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis shows that cultural experiences of children and young people are to a large extent influenced by socioeconomic background. School is the arena that has the possibility to equalize such injustices. Cultural policy should make use of this opportunity in order to live up to its aim to “promote equal access to arts and culture for children and youth”. The Swedish National Agency for Education’s curriculum also states that cultural experiences should be a part of learning. It can be noted that high school students (ages 15-19) are rarely included in the group who get to take part in performing arts experiences, despite the fact that the majority of them are under 18 years of age (and therefore are considered as children in Swedish legislation).

ASSITEJ Sweden has investigated the access to performing arts experiences in school in relation to Swedish cultural policy goals. This investigation was made through a survey that was sent to all 21 regions and 290 municipalities in the country. All regions and half of the municipalities answered the survey. This report^{*2} also contains a section charting the state’s role in the implementation and following up of national cultural policy goals for children and young people. We have also looked at how our neighbouring countries, Norway and Denmark, have created well-functioning systems for distribution and statistics. We consider Sweden to be able to be just as efficient.

¹ * Meaning school classes, not individuals

² *In the original report, not the English version

Selected conclusions from the survey:

- The access to performing arts experiences for children and young people in school is unequal.
- Sweden lacks a national uniform system for distributing performing arts experiences to schools.
- Sweden lacks national statistics measuring who gets to experience performing arts and who does not.
- There are no governing directives on children's and young people's right to culture in the negotiations within "The Cultural model of cooperation" (Kultursamverkansmodellen).
- The project "Creative School" (Skapande skola) has taken over the funding for performing arts experiences from regular cultural budgets.

ASSITEJ Sweden calls on the government to set up an investigation to ensure equal access for all children and young people to performing arts experiences in school. We also suggest that the government:

1. Introduce a national model for distribution and funding within the performing arts field, where the Departments of Culture and Education cooperate, so that all children and young people are guaranteed performing arts experiences continually during their school years.
2. Introduce a national competence center that works structurally and operationally to ensure a functioning structure for distribution. Through special initiatives for particularly challenged municipalities, the competence center should work to equalize inequalities.
3. Keep national statistics where the achievement of the goals of performing arts experiences for children and young people is analyzed continuously.