

Evaluating Socially-Engaged Art projects in primary school environments: challenges and opportunities

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Evaluating Socially-Engaged Art (SEA)

*For any progress to be made in any setting,
there is the need for feedback and practical guidance
(Korza & Schaffer, 2012).*



Evaluating SEA

Challenge and complexity (and suspicion)

- What is being measured? By whom? ***What is the purpose of evaluation?*** (Duncombe et al. 2018).
- Justification of their potential for ***social impact*** (Badham, 2019).
- ***Measuring*** intrinsic and instrumental value of results (Dunphy, 2015).

Evaluating SEA in primary school

Adding to the challenge and complexity

- Educators balancing between curriculum's ***educational objectives*** and ***projects' evaluation***.
- Educators ***unfamiliar with appropriate criteria*** and methods for SEA evaluation.
- Time constraints, ***loose consideration of evaluation***.

Navigating evaluation of SEA in school

Detecting concerns in teachers and literature



Context:

7 primary school teachers in a training on SEA projects in the context of CARE/ss (Barcelona, Spain).

A dedicated session in the course is devoted to **gather collective visions and ideas on evaluation** of SEA, through sharing of field diaries and *Miro* boards.

Context:

2 researchers review and analyse teacher's concerns and connect them with existing scholarly literature on SEA evaluation.

Results:

1. Proposal of **dimensions and criteria** for evaluating SEA projects in schools.
2. Proposal of **methodological approaches** for evaluating SEA projects in schools.

Dimensions and criteria

for evaluating SEA projects in schools.



But first... **Defining **focus** of evaluation**

Teachers identify 2 focuses:

- On **projects' execution, results and social impact** (effectiveness and areas of improvement).
- On **learning outcomes in students**, related to the development of the projects (skills and competencies).

And also... Defining **lens** of evaluation

Teachers consider 3 lenses:

- On evaluating the ***collective***.
- On evaluating the ***individual***.
- On evaluating the interconnection of ***both***.

And also... **Defining lens of evaluation**

Teachers consider 3 lenses:

- On evaluating the ***collective***.
- On evaluating the ***individual***.
- On evaluating the interconnection of ***both***.

Do we want to evaluate the project per se or not, and to which end? Do we want to assess the learning outcomes of participating students or not, and to which end?

Defining **dimensions** of evaluation

Observing teachers' reflections and literature, researchers identify **4 dimensions** and **sets of questions** that relate them with **focus** of evaluation:

Artistic
Participatory
Community
Reflexive

Artistic dimension

Criteria:

- Evaluating **how the process unfolded.**
- Evaluating **the results of the project.**
- Evaluating **how the project intertwines with other curricular areas.**

Artistic dimension

Example questions:

- *Is the project conceptually robust, addressing pertinent social issues with depth and insight? Does it push boundaries and challenges conventional modes of art expression? (project)*
- *How effectively did the students integrate elements from various artistic practices into their project? (students' learning)*

Participatory dimension

Criteria:

- Evaluating **the outcomes of participation.**
- Evaluating **participation itself.**

Participatory dimension

Example questions:

- *To what extent and in what ways were the multiple stakeholders' objectives, goals, and agendas considered? Who was the ultimate decision-maker? (project)*
- *How do students communicate their ideas during group activities? Do students actively listen to their peers' contributions? (students' learning)*

Community dimension

Criteria:

- Evaluating **the ways of relating with the community.**
- Evaluating **the impact of the project regarding social change.**
- Evaluating **the sustainability of the project.**

Community dimension

Example questions:

- *Did the project manage to establish trust between the students and the community? How did collaboration and mutual listening take place between different stakeholders? (project)*
- *How did the student incorporate themes of empathy, diversity, and inclusion into their project? How ethically and respectfully did the student approach their ways of relating with different community members? (students' learning)*

Reflexive dimension

Criteria:

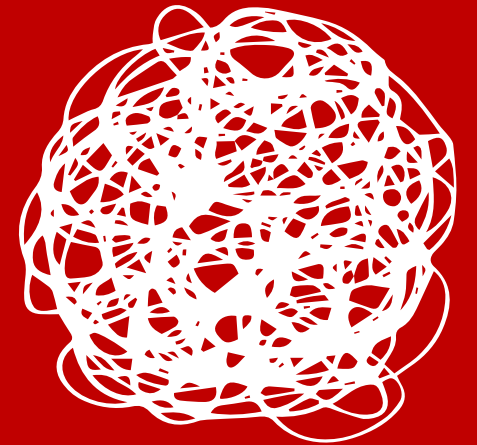
- Evaluating **reflexivity in the project.**
- Evaluating **reflexivity in one's own learning.**

Reflexive dimension

Example questions:

- *Are students able to reflect critically on their experiences, identify lessons learned, and apply insights to improve future projects? (project/students' learning)*
- *What new knowledge, skills, or insights have students gained through their participation in the project? In what ways do students perceive their learning because of their involvement in the project? (students' learning)*

Methodological approaches *for evaluating SEA projects in schools.*



Defining **tools** for evaluation

Teachers identify certain requirements:

- Engage in **continuous assessment**.
- Make evaluation *participatory* (with students and community), in terms of process and outcomes.
- Focus on **self-reflection** in students, regarding roles and involvement.
- Consider **evaluation as a learning space**.

Defining **tools** for evaluation

Literature considers:

- **Gathering of evidence tailored to communities**
(Duncombe et al, 2018).
- Engage in a **democratic and non-paternalistic ways**
(Badham, 2019).
- **Combine creative processes and ‘traditional’ forms of academic research.** Diaries, visuals and notes by students (Vella & Sarantou, 2021), mixed with interviews and group discussions, among others (Stern & Seifert, 2009).

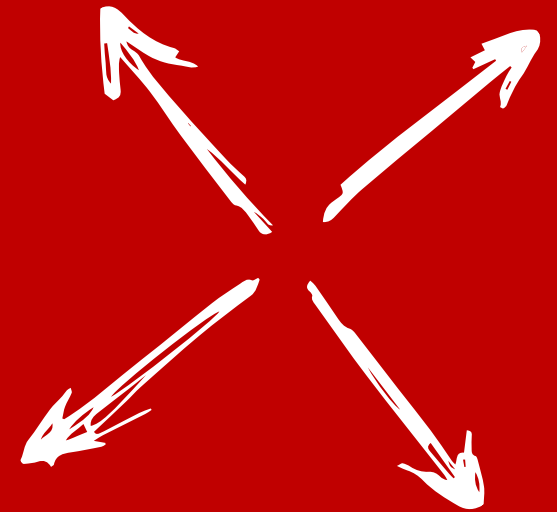
Defining **tools** for evaluation

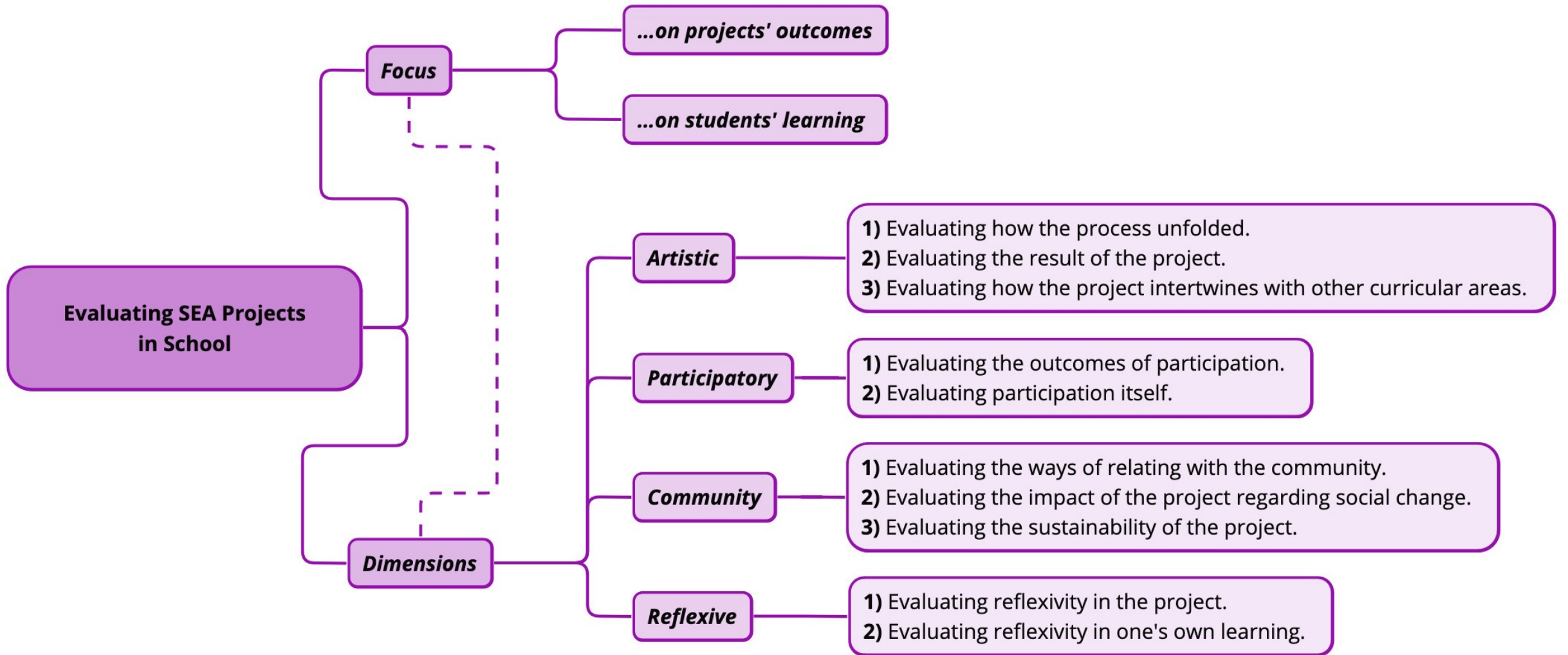
Literature considers:

- Encourage communities to reflect on **how to continue the project without the artist** (Thompson, 2012).
- **Extensive, multi-sided and collective documentation** (Helguera, 2011).

Preliminary conclusions

Ideas for SEA evaluation in primary school





Considerations to evaluate SEA projects in school (Malinverni & Porquer Rigo, 2024).

Ideas for **SEA evaluation** in primary school:

- Create **norm-reference** to develop **localized, site-specific formulas of assessment**.
- Find ways of **tinkering with evaluation standards**: question objectivity in favour of dialogue, comparison and **negotiated benchmarks**. *(‘Good art can bust a rubric’)*
[Smilan & Siegesmund, 2023, 8]).
- Allow **spaces for students’ voices** to be heard in relation with their communities *(How do we shape the common we?)*

BOOM!

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Thank you for your attention!

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