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Research evaluation of The Cultural Rucksack. Arts and culture at school in Norway.

The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs in Norway has given the task to evaluate The Cultural Rucksack to NIFU STEP, the leading Norwegian research institute for studies in innovation, research, and education. The mission of this independent social science research institute is to provide theoretical and practical insight into the dynamics of these activities, while contributing to relevant policy development. At NIFU STEP, senior researcher dr.art. Jorunn Spord Borgen is project leader and collaborator is researcher Synnøve Skjersli Brandt.

The evaluation is given wide terms of reference, and main questions are the purpose, organization and governance system, financial basis, work processes, and role in school and society of The Cultural Rucksack . This national, cultural policy initiative is to ensure that pupils in the primary and lower secondary school are offered a professional arts and culture programme in addition to the curriculum based arts and cultural education. Demands for the initiative are based on a claimed crisis which holds that the primary and lower secondary school is not responsive to individual and societal future needs for cultural competency and knowledge. The evaluation shall reveal strengths and weaknesses as regards content, organisation and governance system and financial basis, and point out potential for improvement. Research questions are how The Cultural Rucksack is implemented, what characterize the different models of formal and informal organization, and how successful are these models in achieving desired outcomes? What are the contributions of governance structure to success? How are activities evaluated and documented from different standpoints, as from the artists, the school teachers and the pupil's point of view? This evaluation is based upon several empirical data, and national, regional and local perspectives will be brought into the study. These data will be complemented from case studies of schools. The evaluation report will be accessible at www.nifustep.no from September 2006.