

Improving conditions for student support in Secondary Schools Vallbacksskolan, Sweden

Context:

School location	Vallbacksskolan, Gävle, Sweden
Details about students	12-16 year old (grade 6-9), approximate 550 students, mixed uptake areas
School premises	built 1897, renovated 2016,
School context	Inner city school, language of instruction mainly Swedish but also immigrant language teaching
Type of activity	whole school,
Stage in design process:	In use reflection/POE



Tool used: Diamond Ranking

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/tools/diamond-ranking/>

Diamond Ranking, the tool is first tested with one of the school development managers and the support team. Date of first testing: November 2, 2019



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Rationale for activity and tool adopted

The case school is a secondary school (Years 6-9, students from 12-16 years of age). It was built in 1897, is centrally placed in a larger Swedish municipality, and was modernised and opened as a secondary school in 2015. In the planning stage of the renovations the school management were given the opportunity to influence the design of the buildings and the equipment. The staff were involved at a late stage in the planning. The renovations of the school were mainly internal, with only minor changes being made to the structure.

At the case school, the principals have overall responsibility for the student support functions, even though the school itself does not employ every member of the student support staff. Principals are also responsible for the collaboration between the different functions. The school has student welfare officers who spend some of their time at the school. The school also employs so-called "school hosts". Other support functions also work in the common areas, such as library assistant, student coach and receptionist. The mix of competencies, experiences and personalities is deliberate, in an attempt to create a diverse school ecology that meets the needs of different students.

Given the school's strong focus on student support functions, in order to create good conditions for high quality teaching, the team that participated in the first test of the Diamond Ranking tool has consisted of the school's student support team.

Case study description: Process

Participants: principal and support staff

In this case study the tool Diamond Ranking was used to begin to explore different alternatives, and to let the participants discuss less tangible aspects, including their beliefs about learning and physical space, by using photographs of a range of different spaces in order to stimulate more general discussion.

Preparatory meetings were held with the vice principal and development leader for the school's support team. Photo documentation of the premises was conducted by the researchers at other occasions.

Every week, the school staff has allotted time to work on different types of development projects, and within this framework, the first testing of the Diamond Ranking tool was conducted by the school's support team.

The test lasted for one hour during which the team development leader led the activity. The participants had received instructions for the Diamond Ranking tool sent via e-mail. The test was thus carried out by the participants on their own. The activity was recorded with a digital recorder and photos were taken on the final version of Diamond Ranking. The recorded activity discussion was transcribed and forms the basis for the analysis of the outcome of the test of the Diamond Ranking tool.

Photo documentation - Diamond Ranking Selection

Photos of learning environments suggested in the Diamond Ranking.



Photo 1: Dining hall



Photo 2: Shelter in a social environment



Photo 3: Playground, highly designed



Photo 4: Unfurnished teaching space



Photo 5: Hellerup stairs in base area



Photo 6: Base area, commons



Photo 7: Traditional classroom



Photo 8: Base area, studios in commons



Photo 9: Playground

Case study description: Outcomes

The outcomes presented here are based on the photos and recorded discussion from the test of the Diamond Ranking tool.

Photo 1: Dining hall

Crowded, narrow, hard to move, bad acoustics and noisy, lighting and daylight seems acceptable, better with greater variety in the choice of furniture, different heights of the tables indicate that some were taken in afterwards, probably due to the increase in the number of students at the school.

Photo 2: Shelter in a social environment

Looks nice, good that there are charging sockets, a little secluded but still visible, good choice of colour, cosy to sit and work there, good place for retreat, soundproof, a space within space, alternative to breakout room, still possible to interact with others in the classroom, a good idea for our big classrooms,

Photo 3: Playground, highly designed

Place for athletics?, place for movement, looks boring, feels impersonal

Photo 4: Unfurnished teaching space

An empty white space?, I like all the windows, the walls are whiteboards possible to both sit and stand up, good for interaction and thinking, more active, it's new thinking - like it,

Photo 5: Hellerup stairs in base area

Cosy, many different uses – math, drama, reading; good that there is a curtain, a space within space, it's new thinking - like it

Photo 6: Base area, commons

Looks like a home base area, looks nice, it is spacious, good thing there were no fluorescents up in the ceiling, nice lighting and daylight, probably noisy,

Photo 7: Traditional classroom

Traditional and looks boring, crowded, This does not feel like you come in and become relaxed, It does not feel like it can suit all students either, Feels like there is nothing here, I want a rug on the floor, so that you can have movement, you can lay it out so that the students can feel with the body as well. Here they are stuck on their chairs,

Photo 8: Base area, studios in commons

This feels a bit cafe-like as if trying to have that look, this a bit cozy, small breakout spaces, It's great for those who need a little more privacy and then the teacher can look in at the same time because sometimes you do not know what happens when they are in the breakout room. There are windows that are transparent, so those students who need privacy might be disturbed

Photo 9: Playground

practical with table on wheels

Final ranking



Hellerup stairs in some base area with curtains, innovative thinking

Shelter in a social environment, positive with space within space

Whiteboard walls, innovative solution

Dining hall, extremely boring