

JM

01 2025

Vol.28

usiikkikasvatus

The Finnish
Journal of
Music
Education
FJME

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Musiikkikasvatus

The Finnish Journal of Music Education (FJME)

FJME 01 2025 Vol. 28

Julkaisijat | Publishers

Taideyliopiston Sibelius-Akatemia, Musiikkikasvatuksen, jazzin ja kansanmusiikin osasto |
Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Faculty of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music
Suomen Taidekasvatuksen Tutkimusseura

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Ulkoasu ja taitto | Design and layout

Lauri Toivio

Kannet | Covers

Hans Andersson

Toimituksen osoite ja tilaukset | Address and subscriptions

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Tilaushinnat | Subscription rates

Ulkomaille 35 € / vsk., kotimaahan 30 € / vsk.,
opiskelijatilauks 17 € / vsk., irtonumero 15 € (+ postituskulut) |
Abroad: 35 € / Vol., in Finland 30 € / Vol.,
Student subscription 17 € / Vol., Single copy 15 € (+ shipping)
(kaikki hinnat sis. alv | all prices incl. vat)

Painopaikka | Printed by

Kirjapaino Hermes Oy, Tampere, 2025

The journal is included in the RILM Full-text Music Journals Collection

ISSN 1239-3908 (painettu | printed)
ISSN 2342-1150 (verkkojulkaisu | online media)



VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
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Editorial

With this first issue of 2025, the editorial responsibility for *The Finnish Journal of Music Education (FJME)* is transferred to a new team. It is an honor to continue the remarkable work of Editor-in-Chief Professor Heidi Westerlund and long-standing Managing Editor Dr. Marja Heimonen, who have led the journal with unwavering dedication and visionary leadership for nearly two decades. Over this extensive period, their efforts have laid a strong foundation for the journal's scholarly relevance, eligibility, and international recognition.

Under their stewardship, the journal has evolved into a platform serving not only as the flagship of Finnish and Nordic music education research and practice but also as an active contributor to international scholarly dialogues across music, educational, philosophical, cultural, policy, and artistic fields. Stepping into their roles is both a great responsibility and a privilege, and we approach this task with deep gratitude, humility, and a commitment to honoring and building upon their legacy. Thanks to our long-term presence in the music education research community at the Sibelius Academy, as well as our roles on the editorial board of *FJME* and the board of the Finnish Society for Research in Arts Education, which is the publisher of this journal, we believe that we are well prepared for this honorable task.

Another marker of the new era of *FJME* is the transfer to Journal.fi, a national online platform for scholarly journals in Finland. This platform enhances the visibility, accessibility, and impact of the journal through advanced discoverability, while also providing secure digital archiving. This ensures that published content remains accessible over time, even if editors change.

The journal's commitment to ethically responsible scholarship has reflected and advanced the evolving academic landscapes of music education in three languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English), such as collaborative music education practices and research, integration of multiple research areas in innovative ways, and critical curriculum thinking and development. This commitment is something we, the new editorial team, strive to uphold and continue. With this vital challenge in mind, we aim to support a broad range of scholarly voices, topics, and methods, while continuing to promote academic quality, critical dialogue, and global intercultural exchange.

This issue features three peer-reviewed research articles, each contributing to ongoing transformations in music education through diverse lenses and contexts. The opening article by Sergio Garcia-Cuesta explores how collaborative Participatory Action Research can help foster inclusive and participatory music education practices. Through engagement with two Latin American music initiatives—Canto Abierto and Repercusión San Cristóbal—the study offers insights into belonging as both an artistic and interpersonal experience. Garcia Guesta's narrative highlights two central themes: interpersonal care and belonging, and belonging through artistic identity and practice. The article exemplifies how participatory action research can generate knowledge that is both situated and transformative.

In the second research article, Eva Bojner Horwitz, David Johnson, Viveka Lyberg-Åhlander, Petri Laukka, Birgitta Sahlén, and Pia Bygdéus investigate the everyday integration of singing in Swedish primary education. The article not only explores how daily singing-health activities affected the learning environment and well-being of children aged 7–9 but also provides practical recommendations for sustaining inclusive and meaningful sing-

ing practices in schools. Employing phenomenological-hermeneutic analysis, the authors identify six thematic areas, offering readers actionable strategies for enhancing the music education experience.

The third research article, authored by Johanna Antonson in Swedish, explores the music assessment and grading in Swedish compulsory schools. This narrative study examines how Swedish compulsory school music teachers navigate the changing assessment ideals amidst curricular change. Through the analysis of the interviews with four music teachers, Antonson uncovers tensions between analytical versus holistic assessment approaches and between institutional accountability pressures and the pedagogical autonomy of teachers. The findings call for more nuanced understandings of grading and evaluation practices in music education.

Following the peer-reviewed articles, we are pleased to include Alexandra Kertz-Welzel's keynote paper, *"How to change the world: Perspectives for music education"*. Originally presented at the 2024 ISME Commission on Policy, Culture and Media pre-conference, hosted by the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, this keynote offers a timely and thought-provoking reflection on the transformative aims of music education. Kertz-Welzel critically examines the often-idealized belief in music's power to change the world, proposing instead a more nuanced and research-informed model of music education's political and societal responsibilities. Drawing on political theory, utopian thinking, and possibility studies, the keynote invites music educators and researchers to rethink transformation, less as a fixed goal and more as an ongoing, situated process of engagement. It is a pleasure to share this inspiring and forward-looking contribution with our readers, stimulating a deeper understanding of music education and social change.

This issue also includes lectio praecursoria of two recent doctoral defences that offer reflective and practice-informed perspectives on music education. Riitta Rauhala's lectio on interaction in group music teaching and learning explores how pedagogical relationships and situated knowledge influence learning and teaching processes, particularly in collaborative and community-based music education. Analia Capponi-Savolainen's lectio explores what singing means to the children, and what music education and schools can learn from them. Her research suggests that schools could use singing as a medium to link children's experiences in the two most impactful environments of their lives – home and school. Both lectios invite readers to consider how reflexive practice and epistemic diversity can shape the futures of music education.

In their review, Sibelius Academy doctoral researchers Pushpa Palanchoke and Prem Gurung discuss the book *Decolonising and Indigenising Music Education: First Peoples Leading Research and Practice* (2024), a collection edited by Te Oti Rakena, Clare Hall, Anita Prest, and David Johnson. The volume includes powerful contributions from authors across nine countries, exploring how Indigenous, folk, and traditional music(s) could be meaningfully and ethically integrated into formal education. Combining the authors' own experiences in decolonial music education research, the book review deepens the ongoing conversations on social justice, inclusion, and transformation of music education practices.

We express our sincere gratitude to the international reviewers of this issue, whose contribution shows the collective commitment to fostering a critical scholarly music education community in Finland and beyond. We also want to thank and congratulate the authors whose contributions made this issue possible. We hope that the readers will find inspiration and new insights in this issue, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue that advances research, practice, and reflection within our field. ■

Artikkelit | Articles

Co-crafting belonging through Participatory Action Research

Introduction

This article shares the process and findings of a research collaboration with two main goals: (1) to develop knowledge about how music education practices might enable spaces in which participants increasingly experience belonging; and (2) to center the voices of participants as active agents in transforming their own experiences, the researched activities, and the broader field through the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Belonging may be defined as “the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences” (Allen et al., 2021, p. 1). According to Allen et al. (2021), belonging is shaped by four interconnected dimensions: (1) having the *competencies* to belong, (2) having the *opportunities* to belong, (3) having the *motivations* to belong, and (4) having the *perceptions* of belonging. Recent research highlights belonging as a key factor in shaping whether musical experiences empower individuals and support long-term musical engagement—or conversely, lead to disruptive experiences and detachment (Liu et al., 2024). Participatory and co-creative approaches may foster belonging by allowing individuals to engage with music in ways that feel relevant and meaningful to them (Carson & Westvall, 2024). However, this kind of engagement often requires a process of “re-learning”, moving beyond familiar roles or comfort zones to discover new ways of practicing and teaching music (Carson & Westvall, 2016).

Weary of how well-meaning efforts to expand inclusion might result in “one-way processes of normalization, where the marginalized are included, empowered, and taken into the center which remains more or less stagnated” (Laes & Westerlund, 2017, p. 42), this article explores music education initiatives with inclusion-oriented goals through the framework of belonging. This multidimensional lens seeks to enable a broad and nuanced exploration that centers participants’ multiple and subjective experiences—potentially allowing them to explore how to meaningfully take part in music education on their own terms.

To further support this aim, the study draws on Participatory Action Research (PAR), not to research *about* but *with* participants—co-creating knowledge that values their plural and personal perspectives. In line with recent PAR work (e.g. Onsrud et al., 2022; Timonen, 2020), this approach seeks to develop “counter-narratives to dominant and normative discourses in music education” (Laes & Westerlund, 2017, p. 42), by enabling participants to take active roles in shaping both the research and the pedagogical practices they engage with.

Collaborators

This article was developed in collaboration with participants from two music initiatives in Spain, from September to December 2023.¹

Canto Abierto (C.A): Described as “an artistic project for people with intellectual disabilities within a normalized space” (Canto Abierto, n.d.), this choir includes around 40 adult singers and had been running for over 5 years prior to our research collaboration. It publicly performs concerts multiple times a year and has been featured on radio and TV. During the three months of our research collaboration its facilitators combined a diverse range of exercises: from preparing the concerts and working on the technique of their sing-

ers, to improvisation exercises—both singing and using the body as percussion—, movement and breathing exercises—at times led by facilitators and at times by the singers—, as well as musical games.

Repercussion San Cristobal (R.S.C): “A percussion project that aims to bring music closer to a sector of society that faces major difficulties in accessing culture and education” (Repercussion San Cristobal, n.d.). This weekly cajón workshop engages a multicultural group of 4 to 10 teenagers without previous formal musical training, and had been running for a year before the research collaboration. During the research collaboration the workshop took a hands-on approach to learning cajón, teaching participants through improvisation and call-and-response exercises, integrating oral explanations into these practical exercises to build students’ musical knowledge, and connecting the learnt rhythms to popular songs chosen by both facilitators and students.

Research-Facilitator (RF): Garcia-Cuesta is a music educator, researcher, and lecturer at one of Denmark’s conservatoires. Their research interests include collaboratively exploring access and belonging within participatory musical practices. During the research collaboration, in addition to engaging in the research process, they joined the initiatives by singing or playing the cajón alongside other participants, and occasionally supporting facilitators—for instance, by playing the piano during warmups.

Methodology

Researching through Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR is a research methodology that empowers those with embodied knowledge of a subject to explore it, develop knowledge about it, and act to change it from within (Kemmis et al. 2014; Lenette, 2022). It challenges research/researched dichotomies through non-linear, holistic and iterative approaches to inquiry that include: 1) “a shared process of co-participation between researchers and participants to co-construct knowledge”; 2) “the promotion of self- and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective, and/or social change”; and, 3) “the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process” (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1).

We approach PAR not as a fixed set of linear steps, but as a flexible and context-responsive framework—one that “braids” together processes of exploration, reflection, and action (Kemmis et al., 2014; Lenette, 2022; McIntyre, 2008). Thus, our implementation of PAR became a “living dialectical process”, shaped by ongoing “shared criticality,” “dialogue,” and “collective reflection” (McIntyre, 2008, p. 24). These collaborative dynamics enabled us to continually re-engage with and reframe methodological choices, ethical considerations, and our research goals as the work unfolded.

Due to the evolving and non-linear nature of PAR, fully capturing its ethical and methodological complexity often exceeds the scope of an empirical article. As Herr and Anderson (2005) suggest, researchers must carefully choose what to include, based on what feels honest and transparent to them. Within these constraints, our application of PAR took the following general shape:

The process began with us—RF and the participants—introducing ourselves. RF presented different examples, common practices, and possible implementations of PAR—placing emphasis on the ethical challenges often associated with this methodology (see Lenette, 2022; Kemmis, 2014). We raised questions, engaged in critical discussions, and began discussing how to move forward in reciprocal ways that might feel safe and comfortable for everyone involved.

Following this initial meeting, we held eight additional reflection sessions between September and December 2023, exploring the two aforementioned research goals, proposing

actions for change, and reflecting on their impact. Each session generally followed a flexible iterative structure including: (1) sharing and discussing data from both our observations of the initiatives and previous meetings, (2) reflecting on the impact of any actions implemented, (3) analyzing how these reflections contributed to our developing findings, and (4) identifying new directions for action and exploration. Insights were thematically summarized through collective dialogue during the final minutes of each session.

Documentation was made of RF's field notes of the researched activities and reflection sessions, and transcribed audio recordings of the reflection sessions. Participants were given access to these materials and occasionally photographed the field-note journal to support self-reflection before the next session. While participants were invited to contribute to documentation—and often did—RF was responsible for reviewing and summarizing the materials between meetings and then presenting the summaries for shared discussion.

Our actions for change took two interrelated forms. First, inspired by other PAR scholars (Kemmis 2009; Onsrud et al., 2022), we understood the reflection sessions themselves as a form of action—interventions that “change the way people think about and talk about their world (*sayings*), they change the way they act in and on it (*doings*), and they change the ways they relate to others and to the environment (*relatings*)” (Kemmis 2009, p. 9). Through these reflective interventions, participants collaboratively reframed their experiences, transformed their thoughts, and changed how they related and acted within the researched initiatives—reshaping the initiatives from within by transforming the “*sayings*”, “*doings*”, and “*relatings*” of those involved in them (Kemmis, 2009). Second, when suggestions for change required actions beyond the participants themselves, participants and RF collaboratively formulated proposals and took them to facilitators, resulting in practical adjustments to the activities—further enabling participants to shape how they experienced, acted in, and related to these spaces.

Data creation, analysis, and conclusions were intertwined in the reflection sessions through dialogue and storytelling. As narratives emerged, we collaboratively and dialogically explored and analyzed them by inductively looking “for trends, for themes, and for insights triggered in others” (Bray et al., 2000, p. 93) that we could reflect on together. This process involved non-linear patterns of dialogic and shared critical reflection that often meant analyzing conversations just after they unfolded, as well as going back to revisit and re-discuss transcriptions and field notes from previous reflection sessions.

The final two sessions with each group focused on collectively deciding which themes would be included in this article, how they should be framed, and validating our findings and conclusions. Due to participants' concerns with anonymity, their time constraints, and RF being the only person involved in both projects, RF took on the task of drafting the article. However, once the draft was complete, RF proposed a meeting with participants to review the text together—to ensure it accurately represented our shared reflections and process, to consider whether all voices were adequately present, and to adapt the article based on this feedback. In line with Kemmis's (2014) understanding of communicative validity, this process aimed to achieve legitimacy through dialogue—where participants personally assessed whether the article felt accurate, sincere, comprehensible, and appropriate to their circumstances.

Regardless of our intentions to create a horizontal and inviting research space, we cannot claim that our interests were fully aligned or that all voices are equally represented in the research process and in this article. As Lenette (2022) pointed out, there is a tendency for the voices of facilitators, certain participants, and especially researchers to be more prominent in collaborative reflections, and even to appropriate the voices of those they collaborate with. To mitigate these risks, we tried to stay vigilant, co-navigating the challenges by allocating time after each reflection session to bring forward issues of power,

offering one-on-one conversations outside the group setting, and providing anonymous channels through which participants could express their views on the facilitation and research process.

Written informed consent was obtained from participants, or from their legal guardians in cases where participants were not legally independent (Kemmis et al., 2014, pp. 160–162). Since the research was hosted by a Danish institution, approval from a board of ethics was not required, as it is not customary in Denmark to obtain formal board approval for qualitative research.

Considerations on dissemination and structure of the article

Although RF drafted the article and connected the findings to the field, we chose to write the collaboratively generated sections using “we.” This decision reflects our efforts to de-hierarchize knowledge and recognize participants’ contributions. “We” here does not imply sameness, but signals a shared process and a commitment to working through the inherent imbalances between us.

Even though the participants were invited to be co-authors of the article, they collectively decided to remain anonymous. However, we still wanted their voices to be represented. As such, we present direct quotes from participants by using the codes C.A or R.S.C followed by a number assigned to each of them.

Despite the clear differences between the practices and contexts of the two projects, we chose to present the findings in a single article. Participants expressed a desire for their thoughts not to be framed solely as “the thoughts of someone who is part of a minoritized collective” (C.A.3), and emphasized the importance of showing “both the similar and different experiences that people have when trying to get into music” (C.A.6). Presenting these insights together might allow us to highlight shared challenges and systemic structures that shape musical space. However, the knowledge presented here should be understood as situated. As stated by Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 68) “We do not expect people who read our critical participatory action research story to imitate whatever we did. We expect that they will make their own wise judgments about which parts of our story might be relevant to their situations—to their stories and their histories”.

In line with our understanding of PAR, we deliberately moved away from a traditional dissemination structure that separates data generation, analysis, and conclusion. As Given (2008, p. 602) writes, such rigid formats often reflect “forms of knowledge that are imbued with relations of exploitation, power, and control.” Instead, we present our experiences, reflections, and findings as intertwined and overlapping, embracing the “messiness” that Lenette (2022) describes is intrinsic to—and should be forwarded in—participatory research.

As described before, given the holistic nature of PAR, it is not possible to include all reflections, actions, and findings explored throughout our collaboration in this empirical article. Instead, we now will focus on two themes that we collectively identified as especially relevant to understanding belonging. These are illustrated through selected narratives and two specific examples of actions taken during the process.

Surfaced themes

Caring interpersonal relations and belonging

Participants emphasized the importance that connecting and caring for each other had in shaping their sense of belonging. They describe performing care² by showing interest in each other’s feelings, helping with musical tasks, or supporting one another in personal matters. Sharing music in a caring space led to feeling they belonged as “part of a community” (C.A.8). These communal moments amongst peers transformed “how the group and

the person feel, developing new connections to music and to others, strengthening the ones we already had, and improving the group not only personally, but musically” (C.A.2).

The significance of caring interpersonal relations also extended beyond peers. Participants highlighted the importance of facilitators in enabling the “caring and safe spaces” that allowed for these “meaningful connections to both music and each other” (R.S.C.3) to flourish. R.S.C.’s participants connected these caring and safe musical experiences with “being treated as equals” (R.S.C.3) by the facilitator, whom they perceived as a multifaceted person whose profession is music, and “not just a musician” (R.S.C.1). They emphasized him “sharing his stories, musical taste, and opinions just like any other member of the group” (R.S.C.1) without presenting them as universally true, but without withholding them either.

Fellow reflection within C.A illuminated how, probably due to the increased focus on diverse needs that accompanies musicians working with people with diverse capabilities, project facilitators show care and attention to each individual, aiming to listen and respect their different needs, and “adapt to their tempo” (C.A.1) without making them feel that they are dragging the group down. In this project, “a space centered on disability and diversity, has generated a more careful, calmer rhythm” (C.A.6) that we propose could benefit music education also in other contexts.

However, even if feelings of community and the caring attitudes of facilitators contributed to enabling mostly “safe and empowering experiences” (C.A.3), participants in both projects noted that their experiences were not always meaningful, caring, or safe. Despite the best intentions and efforts of facilitators and their peers, practices aimed at being caring were at times experienced as “uncaring,” “uncomfortable” or “silencing.” When discussing these disruptive experiences, participants referred to multiple moments leading to reflections on the uniqueness of each person’s needs and experiences, and on the impossibility of creating a musical space that feels consistently safe for everyone. Yet, by collectively examining these disempowering stories, we came to identify how they were all connected to limitations in communication within the groups—limitations that often resulted in people “deciding what would feel safe and good for you, and get it (how actions would actually be felt) wrong, while having the best intentions” (C.A.5). As an example of this, one of the participants described how the facilitators’ “inclusive exercises”—which they speculated were organized with an intention of care, contesting hierarchies, and distributing agency—actually made them feel discomfort, and that “even though I know that this was to make us feel that we take part in the leading and deciding process, in reality it turned into... they just decided what I do... and I felt like a guinea pig that was free, in the way it was told to be free” (C.A.4).

Reflecting and expanding on the previous example, participants described occasionally hiding some of their discomfort. This occurred even when they felt that facilitators “genuinely cared” (C.A.5) about their feelings—often approaching participants individually to check in, and explicitly reserving time during sessions to collectively discuss how the musical activities were experienced. In both projects, the groups aligned in explaining that, due to the facilitators’ “open” and “caring” attitudes, participants sometimes avoided voicing discomfort in order to shield facilitators from negative feelings, wanting to honor their good intentions, and acknowledge their work and dedication. This tendency to protect facilitators, combined with the perception of facilitators as “musical experts” with “years of experience” who “know more” (R.S.C.4), contributed to participants’ hesitation to validate their own feelings, question given practices, or propose personally empowering alternatives. As C.A.5 described: “It is hard to raise your hand and say, I am uncomfortable, or I want a solo, right? Without them validating you first. Because you are afraid of your voice occupying that space.”

Shared-Action-1. Exploring how to resolve these challenges in our research led us to propose and implement several strategies to address them:

1. We proposed embracing an explicit attitude of contingency and uncertainty—both musically in the researched activities and in our discussions—by voicing moments when we saw multiple possibilities, when we didn’t know, felt insecure, or had doubts. This included presenting our understandings of music, education, and each other as provisional, situated, and open to change, aiming to create space for imagining or experiencing things differently.
2. We worked to invite criticality in, by framing it as a positive opportunity for growth in our reflection sessions, exemplifying this by being self-critical of our own thoughts and positions, and by explicitly emphasizing what we learned from engaging with the diverging voices of others.
3. We sought to collaboratively and continuously acknowledge that power dynamics within the group were always unequal, and aimed to make space for voices that were less represented. This involved seeking to stay aware of the space we occupied—both musically and dialogically—questioning the power relations shaping our thinking, and seeking to notice whose voices were missing.

Even though these actions were at first perceived by participants as “broad” (C.A.3) and “abstract” (R.S.C.2)—and even though we do not believe they resolved all challenges related to power or communication—we observed how they triggered the following transformations:

1. We recognized how participants such as C.A.5, C.A.3, R.S.C.4, and R.S.C.2—who had not been very vocal in earlier reflection sessions—increasingly began to speak up, “feeling a space that was not there before” (R.S.C.4), challenging and engaging with RF and their peers, and making important contributions to both the research and this article.
2. The impact of these shared strategies was also felt in the musical activities. During the very next rehearsal after we introduced the proposals for change, C.A.1—recognized by the group as a confident singer—went over to peers who had previously expressed insecurity about singing and supported their voices by helping them pitch notes and remember lyrics. After singing, we observed how C.A.1 followed up by asking those participants how the gesture had felt, and received an overwhelmingly positive and emotional response in return.
3. Finally, these shared suggestions encouraged some participants—who as described earlier had previously found it difficult to voice discomfort—to ask RF to communicate their disruptive experiences to the activities’ facilitators and organizers, who in turn responded with great care and attention.

Feeling belonging as artists and developing practices to belong

Positioning thoughts and practices as contingent, and discussing power in our reflection sessions, set in motion a process of questioning what “being and feeling as an artist” means.³ At first, participants referred to themes such as “being recognized by society, oneself, and others” (C.A.5), “having excellent technical skills” (R.S.C.6), and “possessing artis-

tic talent” (R.S.C.4) without questioning these terms. However, as the reflections unfolded, participants increasingly began to question these normative and pre-assumed meanings (Assefa, 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008), exploring the role these might play in enabling or hindering musical spaces where unique artistries⁴ can comfortably belong.

Participants in C.A described “feeling like artists by just taking part in the choir” (C.A.5). They connect this feeling with an artistic self-confidence developed due to facilitators adapting their pedagogical practices to make space for diverse forms of self-expression; the empowering and positive recognition of participants’ artistic capabilities and potentials by the facilitators who they recognize as experts, whose opinions they can trust; and—in the case of C.A—the possibility of finding social recognition in the form of concerts, recordings, etc. They agree that “feeling like an artist” provides value, motivation, and meaning to their experience; it contributes to them taking pride in what they do, increases the sense of belonging to the group, raises their self-esteem, and allows them to fight social stigmas and obtain the recognition that their collective is often denied: “People have no idea what we can do, and when they hear us, it shows everyone that we can do something great” (C.A.3).

However, “conforming—or not—to what an artist is” (R.S.C.6) also led to experiences of unbelonging and alienation. Participants of both projects described feeling unmusical whenever the proposed activities did not align with their self-perceived musicalities⁴—diverse musical capabilities, goals, and/or ways of connecting to music. Regardless of both projects often feeling accessible and empowering for most—and despite the aforementioned efforts by facilitators to adapt their practices to align with the diverse needs of participants—these disruptive moments of disconnection still occurred and resulted in some participants feeling “that my voice is worth nothing, that maybe music is just not for me” (C.A.7).

Related to feeling, or not feeling like an artist, participants also started discussing public performances as ambiguous experiences. Participants highlighted how, even if the researched activities and their facilitators “can be a subversive element to hopefully hacking the system from within” by prioritizing diversity and care, public performances still mean “having to conform to what is recognized from the outside, to what society says is a good choir” (C.A.6). Balancing these paradoxical positions demanded using part of the activities’ limited resources and time to align with normative values of quality in performance, “centering the immediate objective and not the long-term ones and preventing going deeper into each individual’s musicality” (C.A.4). Participants also problematized how performances tended to single out some of their voices—for example by giving them solos—which resulted in feelings of jealousy, marginalization, and exclusions, and contributed to the development of a strong hierarchy among participants, where those they considered “better musicians” held very unequal power and influence over the others (C.A.1).

Discussing these disruptive experiences led us to reflect on the need to increasingly and explicitly challenge concepts such as “artistry” and “artist” in order to develop an ethical and inclusive music education space. Discussing these terms resulted in participants raising critical questions such as: “Do we keep perpetuating the same values? Which ones do we want to conform to and which ones do we want to change? When we go on a stage we have this responsibility to perpetuate or not perpetuate these ideas as a collective, but we need the previous process of actually considering these themes openly and collectively” (C.A.4).

Furthermore, opening up these terms resulted in discussing the need to question the music education practices that stem from, and reinforce these normative concepts. It emphasized the need to radically reimagine new pedagogies that may align with increasingly diverse artistries, and the importance of participants in shaping these pedagogies to enable practices where they might belong on their own terms.

Shared-Action-2. In R.S.C, the participants' desire to take a more active role in co-constructing pedagogies that resonate with their own artstries was collaboratively discussed with the facilitator, and resulted in the following actions:

1. Participants and the facilitator proposed complementing their current approach to cajon teaching with a peer-to-peer approach—where students could teach each other during part of the session. Participants describe how implementing this teaching methodology allowed them to “understand both how much they already knew and how much the others also know” (R.S.C.4), creating a more horizontal space between both participants and facilitators and challenging hierarchical understandings of artistry. This proposal also impacted the interpersonal dynamics of the group: “There is more trust within the group...And it was because of the laughter. We were teaching ourselves how to play the cajón, and from that day on things flowed. When the teacher “thing” was undone and learning became...like more fluid” (R.S.C.4)
2. Participants were also invited to lead their peers and the facilitator during the group warm-up at the start of each cajón session. This sought to give participants the opportunity to experiment with new pedagogical possibilities that could better resonate with their own musicalities, teaching in ways “professional musicians would not have thought of” (R.S.C.3)—for example, one of the participants suggested implementing ideas from her experience during circus studies into cajón exercises, and another proposed a less structured and more body-focused approach to warming up that he had learnt from his family, coming from a different culture.

These experiences had an ambiguous impact. On the one hand, they fostered a new sense of comfort and belonging that some participants had not felt before: “In music class... teachers asked me to participate in exercises that don't feel natural to me... but when we were doing this (referring to the exercise they proposed)... it was just like... relax... like I could just let go” (R.S.C.1). However, these empowering feelings coexisted with disruptive ones. For some, leading the warm-ups felt like an overwhelming and vulnerable position that “put them on the spot” (R.S.C.3), and they expressed a preference for more subtle forms of participation. Others questioned whether simply making space for experimentation was sufficient, noting that many peer-led activities replicated the pre-existing practices learnt from the facilitator.

These ambiguous experiences prompted renewed reflection on the diverse needs within a group, and how socially constructed ideas of music already shape participation—even for those with limited exposure to formal training. They supported our argument that enabling spaces where participants can collaboratively surface and challenge these concepts is essential to centering their contingency and making changes in thinking, doing, and belonging possible.

Discussion: Engaging with the field

Reflecting on belonging and care

Belonging is not an individual state, but a relational process, “facilitated and hindered by people, things, and experiences of the social milieu” (Allen et al., 2021, p. 14). In this research, we recognize how participants' experiences of belonging were closely linked to interpersonal experiences of care. However, the link between care and belonging was not straightforward. Care did not always lead to belonging, and belonging was shaped by multiple, sometimes contradictory, experiences of how care was intended, expressed, or received.

Care leading to belonging. Through our research, we identify how different aspects of belonging were promoted through the caring intentions and attitudes of both participants and facilitators.

Aligning with Hendricks' (2021, p. 2) statement that "meaningful musical connections are said to be forged simultaneously between people who care for one another, and between people and the activities they care about," intentions and acts of care among peers resulted in meaningful connections—both between participants and with the activity. These connections, shaped through caring interactions, supported participants' perceptions of belonging: of being seen, valued, and emotionally connected within the group. At the same time, the care they experienced and expressed strengthened their motivations to belong—to return, contribute, and stay engaged in the shared musical space.

We can also recognize how care from facilitators became an important source of belonging for participants. Aligning with Silverman's (2023) depiction of *caring about* as acknowledging different needs to be met, we identify how facilitators *cared about* participants by recognizing their needs and seeking to adapt the proposed music activities accordingly. This attention to difference shown by facilitators supported both participants' *opportunities* and *competencies* to belong, by expanding what counted as meaningful participation and creating space for multiple ways of engaging and contributing.

Our research highlights how facilitators' care—expressed through their presence not as distant experts but as vulnerable, participating humans—opened up new *motivations* and *opportunities* to belong. Scholars of care and education have emphasized that presence and vulnerability are essential to forming caring relations (e.g. Waghid, 2019), noting how facilitators who teach as whole, fallible individuals can challenge hierarchies and foster deeper connection. We observed that when facilitators shared personal experiences or expressed uncertainty, they disrupted traditional roles, allowing participants to relate to them more easily and feel they belonged *with*, rather than were merely guided *by*, facilitators.

Intentions of care not leading to belonging. Care is not care if the cared-for does not feel cared for (Noddings, 2005). As described by Miller (2021), "teachers may value care, and believe they are demonstrating responsive care, but students may not recognize the care as such" (p. 117). Aligning with these statements, our research identifies how intentions of care did not always result in belonging for participants. We identify how participants' disruptive experiences point to the difficulty of recognizing and understanding how others feel, to the unequal power dynamics present in musical activities, and to the limitations in communication that are aggravated by these factors. Our research shows how these limiting factors can result in uncaring experiences, where participants lack the perceptions, capacities, and/or motivations to belong.

Furthermore, our research shows how the desire to care for others can, paradoxically, hinder belonging. At times, participants refrained from voicing discomfort or disagreement in order to protect facilitators' feelings. While this silence may have been intended as care, it limited opportunities for dialogue and co-construction, inadvertently sustaining practices that contributed to unbelonging—the very dynamics facilitators sought to avoid. The tension between caring for others and caring for oneself became apparent, as participants sometimes prioritized the former at the expense of the latter, resulting in situations that felt uncaring for both them and the facilitators. These findings suggest that fostering both care and belonging may not only require openness to dialogue, but also a shared sense of responsibility to express dissent—recognizing, as Waghid (2019) argues, that criticality can itself be a form of care.

Caring with. Our research underscores that in order to foster belonging among diverse participants, caring should not be understood as a set of prescriptive acts, but rather as a stance that embraces skepticism about our ability to fully know others, values dissent as a

way to validate feelings and uncover new possibilities, and treats critical thinking as essential to care—reflecting key aspects highlighted in literature on care as a critical and relational practice (e.g. Noddings 2005; Waghid, 2019). Furthermore, our findings suggest the need to understand care as a reciprocal endeavor—one that supports the co-construction of belonging. This involves centering not only caring for and caring about, but also *caring with* in music education: a collective process in which all participants are “stakeholders in the process, who possess voice toward the ultimate goal of caring” (Silverman, 2023, p. 35). Belonging, in this view, becomes a process that builds on being recognized as someone whose voice matters in shaping care with others.

Expanding understandings of music

As Camlin (2023, p. 26) states, expanding music education “demands not only changing musicians’ practices and habits, but the whole way we think about music itself, what it is for, and what we do with it.” Echoing this perspective, our research underscores the importance of rethinking understandings of music—and the pedagogies that stem from these understandings—as a necessary step toward creating spaces where diverse participants can belong. This shift requires engaging with multiple, often conflicting, views of musicianship and artistry, acknowledging the plurality of what it means to be musical and the various ways in which people can connect with music (Carson & Westvall 2024; Wright 2018). As we present in this section, the ways in which both participants and facilitators understand music—its purposes, expressions, and practices—can become a central and intertwined aspect of participants’ experiences of belonging.

Understandings of artistry and belonging. As described by Liu et al. (2024), the ability—or inability—to align with both internal and external understandings of what it means to be a musician can shape one’s sense of belonging. Our findings build on this claim by showing that such alignment can generate not only belonging in the arts, but also belonging through them—where participants experienced public social validation through music participation and felt recognized as individuals, not just artists.

Yet, when participants could not see themselves reflected in dominant notions of artistry, these same norms fostered self-doubt and unbelonging—whether related to participants not having the *competencies*, *perception*, or *motivation* to belong. As Wright (2018, p. 221) warns, narrow frameworks of musicality may “cause harm” to people “who are innately musical and who are excluded from a music education that... fails to speak to their individual musicality... or to provide them with belief in their own ability”. Our research suggests how internalized artistic hierarchies also silenced dialogue and discouraged participants from validating their own experiences—perpetuating uncomfortable practices and limiting the possibility for change.

We therefore argue that responding to these paradoxes requires more transparent, collaborative, and explicit dialogue between facilitators and participants about diverse understandings of artistry—and perhaps other troubled terms such as professionalization and/or excellence. These conversations, grounded in practice, may help challenge normative assumptions and support healthier, more reflexive relationships with these concepts, supporting their potential to promote belonging and mitigating their potential to harm.

This call aligns with broader efforts in the field to rethink the purposes and values of music education (Camlin, 2023; Carson & Westvall 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Westerlund & Gaunt., 2021). However, based on the impact that engaging with these terms had on the experiences of our participants, our research leads us to suggest that these conceptual discussions should be brought explicitly into practice—into rehearsals, workshops, and classrooms—, discussing them with participants, and becoming an intrinsic part of shaping a music education where diverse musicalities may belong.

Diverse artistry and pedagogy. As Mateiro and Westvall (2016) point out, facilitators often approach teaching through “the lens of values and beliefs that they are accustomed to” (p. 157). Our findings extend this idea by showing how even facilitators’ well-intended adaptations of their current practices to expand inclusion may still be shaped by these underlying values—and thus limit belonging for those participants that do not resonate with them.

The ambiguous experiences of participants across both projects show that—even when music educators adapt their practices towards inclusion—only some participants will genuinely belong. For many, adaptation may offer a way in, but only through a kind of funnel: they may find a way to fit, but one that requires compromising belonging on their own terms. For others, whose musicalities do not resonate with the pedagogies proposed by facilitators, such adaptations may not be enough—leaving them feeling unmusical, or even broken.

As Henley and Higgins (2020, p. 213) remind us, “there are multiple ways to learn, teach and lead, and the practitioner may not yet know the best way to work with every student.” Our findings suggest that co-creation of pedagogies—grounded in participants’ diverse musicalities—might foster spaces where their voices and ways of being musical are not only included, but centered. These co-created spaces may not only improve the participants’ experiences, but also inspire new pedagogical approaches for facilitators. In line with Laes and Westerlund (2017, p. 42), we therefore see potential in “teaching not *about* but *with*, and *by*, people and practices that form a counter-narrative to dominant and normative discourses in music education.”

Conclusion: PAR(t) of the solution

Participants from both projects echoed findings in the field, describing how reflection sessions affirmed that their voices mattered, increased their sense of ownership of the initiatives, and strengthened their belonging within the groups (e.g. Asakura, 2019; Onsrud et al., 2022).

Embodying the impact that participatory research had on their experiences, participants from both initiatives agreed that the most immediate change they would propose to expand belonging in the field is to include regular, critical, and transformative peer reflection sessions—between participants, facilitators, and researchers—as a staple of music education activities. Aligning with the previous sections of our conclusion, we suggest that these shared spaces for reflection may help cultivate an atmosphere of criticality that embraces dissent and reflection as positive forces for growth. They may improve dialogue, open discussions about how concepts such as *artistry* may hinder experiences of belonging, and invite participants to come to voice and take a more active role in co-guiding the pedagogies and practices in which they participate.

Finally, we speculate that embracing these sustained, collaborative, and critical shared spaces for growth may inspire participants, educators, and researchers to remain attentive and in motion—critically reviewing their practices and thoughts to continue developing music education spaces that resist stagnation and evolve towards belonging. While participatory research will not solve all problems, it offers a path forward: one that invites us to keep engaging with one another through diversity, embracing the challenge of knowing that final answers will—and perhaps should—never fully arrive. ■

Notes

[1] All participants in R.S.C took part in the research. For C.A, the original plan was to also research with all participants. However, as RF noticed the time constraints that they had, the need to develop smaller groups so that dialogue could flow, and the need for a slow and comfortable research pace for the participants, RF decided that they could only work with part of the group. Since RF did not know the group yet, the facilitators of the initiative suggested

which participants they believed could be comfortable participating in a shared dialogic space, and from these we worked with the participants who volunteered and could engage in the full research process. As such, the perspectives presented here include the reflections of nine C.A participants, and thus may not represent the entire C.A group.

[2] This article understands care as a relational process which, as forwarded by Fisher and Tronto (1990, p. 40)–also used in Silverman (2023)–may be defined as “a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.”

[3] Even though being an artist, and feeling like an artist are different and complex concepts, participants often discussed them as one intertwined notion—a subjective feeling linked to external and internalized recognition of talent and skills that often draws from normative, socially constructed understandings of the arts (Assefa, 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008).

[4] The use of (unique) *artistry* and *musicality* in this text makes reference to the unique ways in which each person connects to, values, and participates in, musical or artistic processes on their own terms. It refers to the diverse musical/artistic capabilities, goals, and/or ways of experiencing the arts/music of each individual, drawing from the thoughts of scholars such as Wright (2018) or Carson & Westvall (2024) who argue that people connect and relate to arts/music in different and plural ways and warn of the dangers of hegemonic understandings of the arts that may alienate and exclude people by failing “to speak to their individual musicality” (Wright 2018, p. 221).

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Abstract

This article shares the process and findings of a participatory action research collaboration with participants from two music initiatives aiming to expand inclusion and participation (Canto Abierto, n.d.; Repercusión San Cristóbal, n.d.), exploring how to develop music education experiences where participants may increasingly belong. The article begins by introducing the collaborators in the project, and describing our implementation of Participatory Action Research (PAR). It continues by presenting the findings of reflecting over and analyzing the lived experiences of the participants, and exploring their implications for music education in line with the themes of: 1) interpersonal care and belonging, and 2) feeling belonging as artists and developing practices to belong. ■

Keywords: music education, participatory action research, belonging, care

Abstrakti

Tässä artikkelissa kuvataan osallistavan toimintatutkimuksen prosessi ja keskeiset löydökset, jotka syntyivät yhteistyössä kahden inklusiota ja osallisuutta edistävän musiikkihankkeen osallistujien kanssa (Canto Abierto, n.d.; Repercusión San Cristóbal, n.d.). Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, miten musiikkikasvatuksen käytäntöjä voidaan kehittää siten, että osallistajat voivat kokea yhä vahvemmin kuuluvansa mukaan. Artikkelissa esitellään mukana olleet yhteistyötahot ja kuvataan osallistavan toimintatutkimuksen (Participatory Action Research, PAR) toteutusta. Tämän jälkeen esitetään tutkimuksen tulokset, jotka pohjautuvat osallistujien elettyjen kokemusten reflektointiin ja analyysiin. Tuloksia tarkastellaan musiikkikasvatuksen näkökulmasta kahden teeman kautta: 1) vuorovaikutuksellinen välittäminen ja kuuluminen, sekä 2) taiteilijana kuulumisen tunne ja kuulumista tukevien käytäntöjen kehittäminen. ■

Avainsanat: musiikkikasvatus, osallistava toimintatutkimus, kuuluminen, välittäminen

Benefits and challenges of implementing a daily singing activity in a Swedish primary school: A focus group study using a triangulation approach

Introduction

Research on the connection between music and health has increased over the past 25 years, focusing on the positive effects of singing on pupils' well-being in school environments (Gick, 2011; Welch et al., 2020). At the same time, the place of singing in Swedish compulsory education is threatened by cuts to arts subjects and to arts teacher training, which may lead to unequal access to quality vocal education (Hallam & Creech, 2016). Despite research showing clear links between music, health, and positive educational outcomes, singing has shifted from central to peripheral in music education (e.g., Hanna, 2022; Johnson, 2020; Linnavalli et al., 2018; Stacy et al., 2022; Torppa et al., 2014, 2022). However, there is a lack of studies on how singing in schools can support children's cognitive and language development, improve learning environments, and strengthen social relationships.

Singing is regarded as a near universal form of human musical behavior both historically and cross-culturally (Hai & Bannan, 2012; Williams et al., 2015). Research has shown that the practice of singing is related to both belonging and well-being (Barrett, 2012), and that musical activities at home in the early childhood years (13 months, 2–3 years) are linked to developments in children's vocabulary, pro-social skills, and emotional regulation (Williams et al., 2015). We know that having a sense of belonging and well-being is particularly meaningful and important in our educational systems and is a factor that contributes to success in school (Faulkner et al., 2020, Fredrickson & Furnham, 2004). The psychological, physical, and educational benefits of singing in school indicated by a growing body of research (see discussion for example in Balsnes 2018, Glew et al. 2021, Welch et al., 2010) represent a compelling argument for prioritizing singing as a school activity. Research from initiatives in England and Sweden have developed evidence-based frameworks to promote effective school singing pedagogy (McPherson & Welch, 2012; Saunders et al., 2011; Johnson, 2020). The effectiveness of such models may need to be considered within the broader context of frame factor theory (Lundgren, 1972) to better understand how aspects such as school leadership, cooperation between colleagues, and the structure of the school day may all contribute to the successful implementation of school-singing activities.

In this study, we are laying the groundwork for initiating singing activities in a primary school environment. Ahead of this we recognized the need for guidance from experts and practitioners who work with children every day. What kind of advice would we as researchers, need, to effectively prepare singing activities for schools? In this study, we set up a triangulation of inclusion where researchers, teachers, and school principal met to offer their insights and expertise to inform the objectives at hand (e.g., Carter et al., 2014).

This is a preparatory study linked to an umbrella project: *Singing, health and well-being in school – a societal matter* (SiS: *Sånghälsa i skolan*). The broader project aim is to develop models for research-based daily singing activities in elementary schools in Sweden. To be

able to develop a research-based model for singing activities in primary schools, we need to understand what kind of attitudes and resources already exist within the school system. We arranged a primary data collection in the form of a qualitative focus-group interview, where four researchers with different analytical perspectives and skills in music and health were present, together with representatives and leaders from an elementary school where a singing intervention had recently been tried out: a principal, a music teacher, and two elementary teachers, a total of eight participants.

The aim with this focus group interview study is to better understand the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a daily singing activity with children, aged 7–9 years, in a primary school setting in Sweden. Our research question is: What factors are likely to contribute to a successful group-singing intervention in primary schools?

Theoretical perspective

This research draws upon a framework informed by Vygotsky (1978) who viewed learning as a social and cultural process. Since learning occurs in social contexts, singing in a group can be understood to naturally foster interactions and bonds. Shared singing, therefore, can help children to develop strong relationships and reduce social barriers. The importance of social ties for learning, is supported by a strong sense of self. Niland (2015) emphasizes that singing together enhances a positive perception of self, even among young children. This positive sense of self influences the trajectory of the child's life.

We also draw upon the notion of “psychological safety” (Edmundson, 1999; Edmundson & Lei, 2014) which is defined as an individual's willingness to take the risk of expressing opinions or trying out an idea and the courage to ask for/receive feedback in a group. For pupils to take part in this novel singing activity, for them to be able to embrace it fully and form the social ties and sense of self one hopes for, then a “secure” environment may be needed for the participants and/or facilitators.

Method

We used the data source triangulation – collecting data from multiple participants with different professions to strengthen our findings – allowing us to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of problem of interest. The term “triangulation” is drawn from navigational terminology, referring to the way that a location can be determined by calculating intersecting angles from two known points. Triangulation for research purposes usually means “the use of more than one approach to researching a question” (Heale & Forbes, 2013, p. 98). Although we employed a single method, the focus group interview, our selection of participants meant that the data was enriched by a diverse range of disciplinary perspectives. Forms of triangulation in research makes the research more robust and helps to minimize the limitations and biases that we are at risk of when drawing upon a single type of perspective (Patton, 1999; Carter et al., 2014).

Participants

In the focus group interview (composed and led by author 6), eight people participated: two class teachers, one music teacher, and one principal from the school where the singing intervention had taken place, together with four researchers from the research team (authors 1, 3, 4 and 6). Each of the four researchers represented a different area namely: logopedics, music education, music and health, and psychology.

The intervention that was discussed during the interview had taken place and consisted of a 15-minute singing activity held 4 days per week (at the same time of the day) for 5 weeks. The singing activity was conducted in the pupils' home classroom, and both the class teacher and music teacher participated. In total, 31 children participated (an age span 7–9 years) in the singing activity. This singing intervention consisted of a quarter-of-an-hour of singing [in Swedish, *sångkvart*, or literally, “fifteen minutes of singing”], led by the school's music teacher. A more detailed description of the singing-intervention is provided in (Grenner et al., manuscript submitted for publication, 2025).

Interview guide and procedure

To be able to better understand how schools would respond to the proposed singing activities, we needed to understand the common experiences and possibilities of a school environment from the perspective of leaders and teacher capacities.

The questions included in the interview guide were:

1. What kind of experiences did you have with the singing-health intervention in your school?
2. What were the pros and cons of the singing-health intervention as you see it?
3. Could you talk us through your observations regarding the singing-health project overall, and any advice/insights that you have for the research team?

Data collection

The focus group interview followed a set of questions based on the interview guide, which was designed based on previous research findings using a phenomenological hermeneutic approach (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2003; Bojner Horwitz et al., 2017). The preunderstanding of the interviewers, with long professional involvement in music education, music and health, logopedics, audiology, and psychology was useful in the analysis of the transcripts. With regards to the richness of the focus group interview, the saturation point arose before the discussion ended; that is, no new relevant insights emerged during the final part of the interview. By following the quotations from the data collected, all researchers agreed on the saturation point.

Data analysis

We analyzed the participants' conversation through a phenomenological-hermeneutic lens which helped us to identify, organize, interpret, and systematize meaning units and themes that emerged from within the data that mirrors the entire data set. This approach goes beyond a semantic analysis as it identifies underlying patterns and assumptions that shape the semantic content in the data (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2003). The preunderstanding of the interviewers is part of the analytical process and Naïve Reading. A Naïve Reading is the general comprehension of the whole text material which serves as a direction for the structural analyses. In a phenomenological hermeneutic method, a Naïve Reading is an essential first step in the analysis, aimed at grasping an initial holistic understanding of the text without applying theoretical frameworks or detailed interpretations. It allows the researcher to engage openly with the text, capturing its essential meaning as it appears (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2017; Ekman et al., 1993). The phenomenological-hermeneutic method is inspired by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1976), and is well-established in research

methodology (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2017; Ekman et al., 1993; Häggström et al., 1994; Talseth et al., 2000).

In accordance with the problem outlined and the aim of our research, we analyzed the data in the following order:

1. Reading through all the material, after orthographical transcription from the audio recording by Interviewers.
2. Writing a Naïve Reading.
3. Interpreting and systematically categorizing the content of the interview transcripts into meaning units, sub-themes and themes, and associated patterns.
4. Thematising and structuring the text according to the significant meaning (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2017).
5. Writing a structured analysis.
6. Rendering a complete interpretation.

Three members of the research team cross-analyzed the transcribed interview. The preunderstanding of the interviewers added deeper interpretations and helped to ensure richness and details from the material. In the next step of the analysis, the interviewers added their interpretations separately and then together with the research team discussed overlapping and new findings. This multi-step process of building broader knowledge and interpretation from the transcripts can strengthen internal and interpretive validity and is of great value for the *Complete Interpretation*: that is, the final step of the analyses where all the different steps of the structure analysis are set (Silverman, 2014).

Interpretation and verification were conducted involving all six of the co-authors which led to a consensus regarding the categories and themes that were identified. They were thus identified using an inductive approach and not based on pre-existing theoretical frameworks. This process was particularly rewarding due to the unusually broad multidisciplinary backgrounds of the co-authors who represent a wide range of professional competencies and theoretical perspectives in:

- Logopedics
- Music Education
- Music and health
- Psychology

This interdisciplinary mix affords this study a holistic perspective on the subject material.

Ethical considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary and all participants provided their informed written consent prior to their participation. The participants cannot be identified in the study publication and the project was formally approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Dnr 2021-06751-01).

Results

Naïve reading

The essential first step in our analysis, aimed at grasping an initial holistic understanding of all texts, is here summarized in the following naïve reading paragraphs:

- The researchers facilitated triangulation where the teachers' and the principal's discussions broadened perspectives and afforded insights on a deeper level than if the researchers were not included in the interview situation.
- Thanks to good preparation and well-explained information from the principal, class teachers and music teachers, the research group could use the data to better prepare for future singing-health implementation.
- The music teacher's enthusiasm has been decisive for the project turning out well.
- The music teacher's commitment and playfulness have reduced barriers in the classes.
- The singing session has contributed to creating security, as a form of ritual and a bridge to middle school for the pupils.
- Judgmental attitudes have been replaced with "your voice fits here" and "your voice belongs here"
- You can feel left out if you cannot find the right note and isolate yourself from the activity.
- The trick is to bring everyone into the group dynamics, and that requires resourcefulness and playfulness: "Lie down and listen to the tunes if you can't join right now".
- Planning is essential so that the singing sessions do not clash with other activities.
- The singing sessions have contributed to a natural part of the school's values-based work and equal treatment planning and can contribute to conflict prevention.
- By encouraging the inclusion of everyone's voices in singing, every student is recognized as agentic

Results from the structured analyses

The analysis of the focus group interview conversation identified six main themes in the data (Table 1–6). The identified six themes were related to 1) awareness of expectations, beliefs, and attitudes, 2) challenges of a singing-health project, 3) decision-making/clarity/leadership related to awareness and responsiveness, 4) preparations, 5) ritual and 6) support. The following capital letters in the tables represent the people in the focus group who were interviewed: A (the principal), B (one of the class teachers), C (another one of the class teachers), and D (the music teacher).

Theme 1: Awareness of expectations, beliefs and attitudes. Examples of citations and sub-themes are shown in Table 1.

Expectations, beliefs and attitudes need to be shared in the whole school system so all the participating individuals and facilitating functions are in place. If the principal has conflicting expectations to the teachers, this could cause misunderstandings during the implementation of the singing activities and therefore mean that the project is unsustainable. If *"You have both the principal and your co-workers on your side"* and *"this feels inspiring and fun"*, then this helps to create positive anticipation of the activity. On the contrary, negative attitudes could also be contagious. Expectations before the intervention can differ and need to be shared.

Theme 2: Challenges of a singing-health project. Examples of citations and sub-themes are shown in Table 2.

The challenges experienced with a singing-health project are strongly related to the limited time available. In going forward, we must consider how we can help the school system to organize activities that are synchronized with the singing intervention. For example, discussions and communication between the music teacher and class teachers may need to be scheduled as part of the everyday school curricula. In so doing, positive synergies could be developed. It appeared that it was sometimes a challenge to be able to encourage some boys who did not directly want to participate: *"Some boys didn't really get into it or want to be a*

Raw data – illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
"That there is a willingness from both the principal and the staff who are going to work with the project." A	Principal and teachers' willingness to work together	Positive attitude
"Certain kids have an attitude from the beginning that it's going to be boring – that can easily drag down their friends with them; it spreads easily." B	Negative attitude that is contagious	Negative attitude
"Aren't we going to sing with Å now? Unsolicited comments have only been positive." A	Unsolicited reactions of anticipation	Positive anticipation
"You have both the principal and your co-workers on your side" and that "this feels inspiring and fun." C	Inspiration from school leadership and co-workers creates a positive attitude	Inspiration creates positive anticipation

Table 1. Theme 1 – Awareness of expectations, beliefs and attitudes.

Raw data – illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
"There was one time when the time of day for the singing had to be changed or that we had to have it later... they didn't like that. They wanted to have it the way it was supposed to be." B	Difficulty with keeping to routines	Time routines
"How will I make it through so much?" D	Getting everything done	Creating opportune moments
"Unfortunately, there are many kids who don't have that thing where they can hear where the melody is or understand and then they'd rather just stay quiet." D	Becoming conscious of how it sounds to sing in pitch	Sing out and not be silent
"It mustn't be allowed to happen that the singing-health lessons reinforce some kids' (bad) self-confidence" D "Add a little drum so that all the kids feel included." D	Draw in with the support of instruments to build self-confidence	A drumbeat can increase the group's self-confidence

Table 2. Theme 2 – Challenges of a singing-health project.

part of it... don't really know why it's like that" and "some of the kids were hard to win over". Interviewees indicated that some more time would have been helpful to solve this problem.

Theme 3: Decision-making/clarity/leadership related to awareness and responsiveness. Examples of citations and sub-themes are shown in Table 3.

From the data it is clear that the school leadership and other decision-makers need to be in tune with the awareness and responsiveness of the teachers and pupils. Communication and clear leadership are essential in nurturing and sustaining a robust singing school activity. Some quotes also suggest that decisive action from the singing leader is important to the success of the activity, where they need to: "...find solutions when some pupil really refuses to participate" or suggest solutions such as "lie down on the carpet in the middle of the group and then you'll see how all the soundwaves go through you"; "if I don't control the classroom where I am in charge then they can easily get the upper hand and then start up with something else so one has to during those 15 minutes, I have to be fully present to the max".

Raw data - illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
"Always good to have decided beforehand about the encounter." A	Clarity regarding the encounter	Preparation and clarity
"Never force anybody in but rather try to charm them - get them interested." D	Leadership sparks interest	Charming leadership
"Find solutions when some pupil really refuses to participate, lie down on the carpet in the middle of the group and then you'll see how all the soundwaves go through you." D	Solution-oriented leadership	Creative leadership
"If I don't control the classroom where I am in charge then they can easily get the upper hand and then start up with something else so one has to during those 15 minutes, I have to be fully present to the max." D	Take charge of one's leadership with presence	Conscious leadership presence
"I do a lot with my pupils but somebody else has to be in charge of singing and that is for the kids' sakes... I'm really unmusical." C	Knowing when someone else should lead	Delegation of leadership

Table 3. Theme 3 - Decision-making/clarity/leadership related to awareness and responsiveness.

Theme 4: Preparations. Examples of citations and sub-themes are shown in Table 4.

Preparatory work lies in the hands of the principal together with both music and class teachers. Supportive attitudes, skills and preparatory work all contribute to an effective organization of time, so that the activity is compatible with the overall schedule. Considerations may include deciding on best time of year for the singing activities, so it does not

conflict with the national exams or other important tasks: “*Maybe consider the time of year for the singing activities so that it doesn’t run up against other things like national exams in the spring, for example.*” Preparation also includes selecting the best possible facilitators of the singing session, preparing the right group size, equipment, and, during the session itself, preparing so that participants can feel at ease, and having strategies to get everybody to join in.

Raw data – illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
“I always had a little speaker with me.” D	Prepare what can facilitate singing activity	Prepare equipment
“Better to break up group... because otherwise it’s easy for them to reinforce each other.” A	Prepare group size so that good behavior is reinforced	Group size for optimal work conditions
“Maybe consider the time of year for the singing activities so that it doesn’t run up against other things like national exams in the spring, for example.” C	Plan singing activity so that pupils are not overloaded	Plan over the school year to avoid overloading
“Not use instruments but instead do like Å who uses her hands, her whole body, do around the circle to get everybody to join in.” A	Plan so that body language can be used and so that everyone can participate	Find solutions to make body language available
“Maybe the group could have been smaller.” C	Make sure group size is manageable	Optimize group size

Table 4. Theme 4 – Preparations.

Theme 5: Ritual. Examples of citations and sub-themes are shown in Table 5.

One potential use for the singing activity is for it to serve as part of a ritual either to smoothen the transition between classes during the school day, and/or the transition between year grades. “*When grade threes were going to see their new classroom for middle school, we decided to use the singing time with “Å” together with the new teacher to get comfortable.*” The more harmonious and natural the bridges between activities are, the lower the activation energy for all participants. The singing intervention could work to secure the transition.

Theme 6: Support. Examples of citations are shown in Table 6.

There were a range of things identified that supported the singing activity, and which the activity itself lent support to. The school principal was seen as important in granting the time that is needed to develop new ways of learning and teaching, leading to the creation of new enriched learning environments. This supportive work includes access to time, trust, inspiration, and space for regular feedback for the teachers: “*...and I also think it (the singing activity) can prevent conflict. An idea we have, to continue with this.*” Also, using a triangulation methodology between teachers, principal and researchers created a supportive environment during the interview.

Raw data – illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
"What happens when this is over? Won't it keep going?" D	Inform about what will happen with the project in the future	Inform about transitions
"When grade threes were going to see their new classroom for middle school we decided to use the singing time with Å together with the new teacher to get comfortable." A	Transition to something new through singing-health	Security with the singing intervention as transition ritual
"Always end a bit quietly so that they can go on to the next lesson in an even mood and not be too overstimulated." D	Allow the singing intervention to finish in stillness so that the transition to the next lesson will be good	The singing intervention as transition ritual
"This togetherness is seen, like when grade 2 sit and wrap their arms around each other and rock to the beat of the slow songs. To do something together." D	Allow the singing intervention to be a transition towards togetherness.	Togetherness ritual
"The lesson after often started really well- it left it's mark on the lesson, a little calmer song and that feeling followed along into the next lesson afterwards." C	The singing intervention links to the following lesson	The singing intervention as an area of transition to the next lesson

Table 5. Theme 5 – Ritual.

The complete interpretation

Through the singing intervention, everyone's voice can find their meaningful place when the right support is available. The results show that it is a viable outcome that one can discover one's voice through singing at school, whether a principal, a teacher, or a pupil. Singing has beneficial effects whether one's voice is directly involved in the vocalization or not. Positive effects are also felt through active listening to someone else singing, as if their voice was one's own.

Discussion

If 'voice' in the figurative sense, of asserting one's presence and agency, can be facilitated through the audible voicing of singing, then how might we, as researchers, use the insights from the results to create and implement a singing activity that is integrated into the school day? Moreover, one that is robust and sustainable. By bringing in different capacities and research angles from the very start of this singing-health project in primary schools, we have arrived at six insights we believe could be useful when fully implementing singing-health activities systematically in school systems in the future. These insights are:

Raw data – illustrative citations	Quote summary	Sub-themes
"I had a lot of use for my notes even though they were pretty messy. They were a great support." A	Notes as support	Support notes
"Your voice sounds good here and your voice sounds good here. Then even the boy I was thinking of started singing." C	Sound of the voice as method to get everyone singing	Auditory listening in
"Instead of having others looking at him and laughing at the silly stuff he sort of disappeared into the crowd... everyone had a certain place that an adult decided over and this was ... a very important dimension." C	Include everyone in the group	Group as support
"So it's just so that to strengthen our work on shared values and equal treatment that this is a way to strengthen togetherness in the class." A	The singing intervention as support for working on shared values	Support for work on shared values
".. and I also think it can prevent conflict. An idea we have to continue with this." A	The singing intervention as support for preventing conflict	The singing intervention as support for preventing conflict

Table 6. Theme 6 – Support.

1. Share and discuss expectations and attitudes before implementing a singing activity in the classroom. A directed consensus on the motivation behind the intervention is decisive for how the curriculum is implemented and rooted. Any resistance from staff needs to be verbalized and addressed in advance.
2. Prepare the school to organize activities that are synchronized with the singing activity session, in order to avoid splitting up the class into one positive and one negative part.
3. Build and communicate robust management and leadership of the activity to be able to nurture long-term and sustained singing activity. Factors such as flexibility and empathy are key values.
4. Prepare for the best possible environment to facilitate the singing session, i.e. the right group size (to be able to get everybody to join in), the right time, and adapt a space in-between the singing activity and the next lesson. Establish guidelines so everybody is aware of how to organize the best possible singing activity.
5. Lower the activation energy for all participants by finding harmonious bodily movements before and after the singing activity. Create a ritual that is accepted by all and that helps participants to experience a mind-shift of focus.
6. Establish support from the school principal so the teachers are able to feel that singing is accepted and that singing can create new learning environments. Singing in schools engenders something bigger than what we see during the activity itself.

The interaction of thoughts and perspectives from school staff and researchers has strengthened the data during this project. By conducting a qualitative focus group interview right at the start of a broader project, we tried to unearth the potential benefits and challenges related to a possible future singing-health study in Swedish primary schools. Being aware of these factors is essential to informing the development of an effective singing-health intervention, and overall, a key factor in driving change as an outcome of it. A triangulation approach where teachers and principals discuss objectives facilitated by researchers broadens the overall perspective and generates insights on a deeper level than if the researchers were not included in the interview. The flow that was created ‘in-between the lines’ during the interview situation brought out new ideas and insights. In phenomenological hermeneutic methodology, all knowledge that brings new insights is regarded as enriching the research process. Furthermore, research triangulation strengthens the research and helps to minimize the limitations and biases that we are at risk of when using one single researcher (Carter et al, 2014; Patton, 1999). As far as we know, the type of triangulation of voices used in this project represents a novel methodology in qualitative research which was of importance of the robustness of our study results.

To sing together is to interact. Niland (2015) investigated the effect of singing to toddlers and how it shaped their relationships. Niland emphasizes that singing together enhances the feeling and perception of self, already in the small child. The sense of self, in return, influences the child’s life and shapes life’s trajectory. We see in our findings that singing can have a useful and nurturing role in school and that everyone can have the opportunity to make their voice heard through singing if the right space and support are available. Being told that your voice fits into a completely new context, especially one that a pupil may not have initially wanted to join, or had been disruptive in, creates a positive and connected feeling that has synergistic effects in other areas and might influence the child’s feeling of self and belonging, also in relation to others (Bennett, 2011). Showing that “your voice belongs here” means that you are included, and you do not have to disrupt the dynamics of the classroom to be seen.

Following Vygotsky (1978), the social relationships that are formed through interaction in singing can be expected to support broader learning. Feeling included in school is something that we need to learn. The 31 pupils in the study, according to participating school staff, built stronger social ties, improved communication skills and felt a greater sense of belonging, which is in line with Vygotsky’s (1978) view that learning is a social and cultural process. Since learning occurs in social contexts, singing in a group naturally reduce social barriers; fosters interactions and helping children to develop friendships. When the teacher introduces a new song by first teaching the chorus, then the verses, using gestures and mirror activations, this provides ‘scaffolding’ to a new social context through shared musical activities (Vygotsky, 1978). In our primary school setting, Vygotsky’s theory helps to explain why the singing activities foster inclusion and strengthen social relationships. Through peer collaboration, scaffolding, shared cultural experiences, and emotional connection, the singing activity created an engaging, supportive, and inclusive classroom where all children could participate, learn, and build friendships. Therefore, the quote “your voice belongs here” relates to our findings in both literal and symbolic terms.

When comparing our results with what music teachers have experienced when initiating and leading singing activities previously in primary schools, we see many overlapping themes (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2024). Factors presented as key skills and tools when introducing singing activities in primary school classrooms included the role of routines, familiarity with the multimodal dimensions of singing, and the understanding of synergies between singing and other learning activities. There is, accordingly, already a level of awareness in primary schools about how to handle and initiate singing activities in the

classrooms. One problem may be a lack of any specific training for this in our music teacher education programs and in teacher education in general. We therefore need to actively build capacity to integrate singing activities effectively into schools. This would increase the likelihood that singing becomes an integral part of the school day in primary schools. We also need certain forms of support to be in place to attempt such an intervention, including knowledge that music teachers, and other teachers, may currently lack. As seen in previous reports, music teachers may require assistance in cultivating psychological safety (Bonnevill-Roussy et al., 2020). Psychological safety (Edmundson, 1999; Edmundson & Lei, 2014) which is defined as an individual's willingness to take the risk of expressing opinions or trying out an idea and the courage to ask for/receive feedback in a group. High psychological safety in music teachers will not only increase their ability to respond to challenges in the learning environment, i.e. from pupils, but also their own capacity to dare to make one's voice heard.

We can synthesize evidence from neuroscience to show the potential wider use of singing in school systems and argue that music and singing go hand in hand with music's overall evolutionary function – to enable social bonding (Cross, 2001; Tarr et al., 2014). In our interview, the singing intervention supports social bonding among the school staff, principals included. We view this as an interesting outcome: that a supportive dynamic between the children, the music teacher and the schoolteachers emerge when singing with primary school children in their classroom. The cooperation through singing integrates learning capacities and develops a kind of 'school self-esteem'. The trust that is established through singing together regularly may also compensate for the lack of continuity and structure within the school curriculum.

The music teacher's enthusiasm and commitment together with their playfulness has been decisive for the project turning out well. To be able to tune into playfulness, the whole body needs to be part of the session, including body gestures and facial expressions (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2024). It is important that teachers can read the body signals of the pupils and to interpret them in a non-judgmental way so that the environment feels secure and safe. Training may be required to be able to do this successfully. This training may include seeking to enhance teachers' playfulness using pictures, movements, and drama, as seen in the research of authors (Bojner Horwitz et al., 2024). This would require a level of psychological safety, necessary for experimenting and playing (Edmundson, 1999; Edmundson & Lei, 2014).

Everyone's voice belongs in the school and can be heard through song, whether it takes place actively and/or passively. Through singing, hidden voices are heard and through singing interventions in primary schools, everyone's voices can find their meaningful place when the right support is available. Discovering your voice through singing at primary school, both as a principal, teacher, and pupil, contributes to something much bigger than what happens in the classroom during the song itself.

Whilst the multidisciplinary nature of this project means that the results yield a diverse gamut of ideas, this has been essential to fully understanding what is involved in designing an effecting singing intervention in schools, and appreciating the benefits that it is likely to bring. This study provides important evidence with which to advocate for singing-health activities in primary schools, and detailed information that can be used by teachers, school principals as well as singing-specialists when considering how to build, facilitate and review such interventions.

Conclusion

Singing activities enable voice in a dual sense – both literal in the audible vocal expression of a person, and figurative in an assertion of their presence, agency and participation in the social context. The creation of a sustainable singing-health activity in schools requires collaboration where the school principal, the music teachers and schoolteachers work closely together to develop the routines and environment needed. Singing sessions are a way of strengthening the community in the class, support conflict prevention and strengthen our values-based work and work towards singing equality. In planning similar interventions, a diverse group of researchers is valuable when guided by the experts working in schools where the voice of school staff is essential to evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of the singing intervention. The interdisciplinary mix of researchers also gave voice to important insights for this specific research project. ■

Acknowledgements

The authors want to express their sincere gratitude to the teachers and vice chancellor who participated in this study, and to the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation for their financial support. We also thank The Royal Swedish Academy of Music for hosting our research project: *Singing, health and well-being in school – a societal matter*, led by Pia Bygdéus.

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Abstract

Making space for singing activities as an integrated part of the school day can be anticipated to have positive effects on student health and the classroom environment. This study aimed to better understand the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a daily singing activity with children (ages 7–9 years) in a primary school setting in Sweden. The interview was conducted using a triangulation approach. Through a phenomenological hermeneutic method, six themes related to implementing daily singing in schools were found: 1) awareness of expectations, beliefs, and attitudes, 2) challenges related to the singing-health project, 3) decision-making/clarity/leadership related to awareness and responsiveness, 4) preparations, 5) ritual, and 6) support. Recommendations based on these results were developed to provide a framework for successful implementation of integrated singing activities in the school day, establishing conditions that engender spaces where all voices can find a meaningful place in the classroom. ■

Keywords: singing in primary school, singing-health activities, focus group, phenomenological-hermeneutic method, triangulation

Abstrakti

Laulutoiminnan sisällyttämisellä osaksi koulupäivää voidaan ennakoida olevan myönteisiä vaikutuksia oppilaiden hyvinvointiin ja luokkahuoneen ilmapiiriin. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli syventää ymmärrystä päivittäisen laulutoiminnan hyödyistä ja haasteista ruotsalaisessa alakoulussa 7–9-vuotiaiden lasten parissa. Haastattelut toteutettiin triangulaatiomenetelmää hyödyntäen. Fenomenologis-hermeneuttisen analyysin kautta esiin nousi kuusi teemaa, jotka liittyvät laulun toteuttamiseen koulussa: 1) odotusten, uskomusten ja asenteiden tiedostaminen, 2) laulun ja hyvinvoinnin yhdistämiseen liittyvät haasteet, 3) päätöksenteko, selkeys ja johtajuus suhteessa tietoisuuteen ja reagointikykyyn, 4) valmistelut, 5) rituaali ja 6) tuki. Näiden tulosten pohjalta laadittiin suosituksia, jotka tarjoavat viitekehyksen integroidun laulutoiminnan onnistuneelle toteuttamiselle koulupäivän aikana. Tavoitteena on luoda edellytyksiä oppimisympäristöille, joissa jokaisella äänellä on mahdollisuus löytää merkityksellinen paikkansa luokkahuoneessa. ■

Avainsanat: laulaminen alakoulussa, laulu ja hyvinvointi, fokusryhmä, fenomenologis-hermeneuttinen menetelmä, triangulaatio

Narrativ om musiklärares bedömning och betygsättning: från analytiska till holistiskt inspirerade bedömningspraktiker

Inledning

Den svenska grundskolan, som inrättades på 1960-talet, är sedan år 2022 inne på sin sjätte läroplan (Gran med flera, u.å.). I den nya läroplanen, som kallas Lgr22 (Skolverket, 2022a), har det gjorts en del förändringar som eventuellt kan få konsekvenser för många aspekter av musikämnet och musikundervisning, exempelvis vad gäller bedömning och betygsättning. Ett exempel på en förändring i läroplanen och musikens kursplan i relation till bedömning och betygsättning är att vad som tidigare kallats *kunskapskrav* döpts om till *betygskriterier* (Skolverket, 2023a). Betygskriterierna är mer övergripande uttryckta än sina motsvarigheter i den tidigare läroplanen (Skolverket, 2023a), som kallades Lgr11 (Skolverket, 2011). En annan förändring i Lgr22 är att den så kallade *träskelregeln* tagits bort. Träskelregeln innebar att en elev måste visa förmågor motsvarande hela kunskapskravet för betygen E, C eller A för att kunna erhålla respektive betyg (Skolverket, 2015). Regeln togs bort till förmån för *sammantagen bedömning*. Sammantagen bedömning innebär att läraren ska titta på elevens sammanlagda kunskaper och förmågor, jämföra dessa med betygsriterierna och därefter sätta det betyg som bäst stämmer överens med elevens prestation som helhet. Detta ska göras för alla betyg utom för betyget E, där träskelregeln fortfarande gäller (Skolverket, 2023a). Dessutom ska lärare nu planera sin undervisning med ökat fokus på ämnets syfte och det som Skolverket kallar centralt innehåll (Skolverket, 2023b) och minskat fokus på bedömning (Skolverket, 2024).

I denna studie har fyra musiklärare intervjuats innan och efter att Lgr22 börjat gälla. Alla fyra musiklärare har gedigen erfarenhet av bedömning och betygsättning i musikämnet på grundskolans högstadium och har även arbetat med den föregående läroplanen, Lgr11.

Studiens syfte är att synliggöra hur kurs- och läroplansreformen Lgr22 samverkar och samspelar med, samt eventuellt står i konflikt med musiklärares bedömnings- och betygsättningsideal, respektive bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker. Detta görs genom att undersöka musiklärares berättelser med hjälp av narrativ analys.

Med utgångspunkt i syftet har följande forskningsfrågor ställts:

- Vilka berättelser delar musiklärare med sig av om sina bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker i förhållande till kursplanen för musik i Lgr22 och övergången från föregående kursplan, Lgr11, och hur kan dessa berättelser förstås genom en narrativ analys?
- Vilka idealbilder av bedömning och betygsättning i musik på grundskolan framträder i analys av musiklärares berättelser?

Bedömning och betygsättning i musik – en komplex del av musikundervisningspraktiken i grundskolan

Att bedömning kan vara en komplex del av musiklärarpraktiken visar sig i en hel del studier som bedrivits under de senaste decennierna, vilka redogörs för nedan. Först fokuseras studier i svenska och norska kontexter eftersom dessa har en hel del gemensamma aspekter och därtill är relevanta för denna studie. Därefter redogörs för en del studier som fokuserar på mer övergripande och internationella frågor gällande bedömning i musikämnet.

Ett betydelsefullt exempel på studier om musiklärares bedömningspraktiker är Vinges (2014) studie som undersöker bedömning i musikämnet på den norska motsvarigheten till högstadiet. Vinges resultat visar bland annat att ett ökat fokus på summativ bedömning har haft inverkan på musiklärares bedömningspraktik. Lärarna nämner exempelvis användningen av olika tillvägagångssätt som ska öka deras möjligheter att göra korrekta bedömningar som en del av denna mer summativt inspirerade bedömningspraktik. Dessutom visar Vinges studie att ett analytiskt förhållningssätt till bedömning tar stor plats. Vinge beskriver exempelvis analytiska bedömningspraktiker där lärare delar upp mål i syfte att konkretisera dessa för elever. Likaså har Zandéns och Ferm Thorgersens (2015) studie om hur Lgr11 påverkat bedömningspraktiker i musik visat på ett komplext spänningsfält mellan holistisk och analytisk bedömning. Studien fann att analytiska kunskapsmatriser över varje elevs prestationer används samtidigt som en mer holistisk syn på bedömning i musikämnet kan skönjas i vissa delar av de då rådande styrdokumenten. Därtill finns Ferm Almqvist m.fl. (2017) som i sitt arbete utforskar skillnader mellan kvantitativ och kvalitativ bedömning i musik. De beskriver två på många sätt motsatta mål med bedömning i musikämnet; dels finns utbildningssystemets mål, som gärna får vara möjliga att mäta kvantitativt, dels finns de mer kvalitativa musikaliska målen för den enskilda eleven. Dessa två syften med bedömning behöver musiklärare förhålla sig till och navigera mellan.

Zandén (2018) har utforskat vad han kallar ”tydlighetsdoktrinen” i svensk skola, främst i relation till bedömning. Han skriver:

Enligt tydlighetsdoktrinen är det både möjligt och önskvärt att kommunicera mål och kriterier genom tydliga, entydiga formuleringar. En sådan tydlighet är enligt doktrinen nyckeln till en effektiv målstyrning, en rättvis och likvärdig bedömning och därmed även till en höjd undervisningskvalitet i skolan och bättre resultat. (Zandén, 2018, s. 20)

Enligt Zandén innebär detta fokus på tydlighet som en lösning på problem med likvärdighet i bedömning och betygsättning att betygsriterier endast kan behandla ”rätt eller fel” (s. 25). Detta menar han medför att lärare, med tydlighet som mål, förenklar uppgifter för sina elever. Zandén ser dessa förenklingar som ”en risk för att elevernas lärande trivialiseras och läraryrket avprofessionaliseras” (s. 25). Liksom exempelvis Ferm Almqvist m.fl. (2017) finner Zandén i sin analys att mätbarhet är ett samhälleligt ideal i diskursen kring bedömning och betygsättning.

Även Karlsen och Johansen (2019) har uppmärksammat ett spänningsfält mellan holistisk bedömning i musik och ett mer analytiskt sätt att se på bedömning i musikämnet. De skriver om den holistiska synen på lärande i den norska läroplanen att en musiklärare har stora möjligheter att se till att ett musikaliskt, övergripande innehåll kan innefattas i musikundervisning och därmed också utgöra bedömningsunderlaget. I kontrast till detta finner Karlsen och Johansen att formuleringarna i de nyare delarna av den norska läroplanen, där kursplaner ingår, implicerar att skolämnens mål och därtill hörande betygsriterier är av

yttersta vikt. Dessa två aspekter av bedömning i musik medför ett komplext arbete för musislärare som ska ägna sig åt bedömning. Dels ska musisläraren se till att eleverna erbjuds att träna mot, och när, övergripande musikaliska mål, dels ska musisläraren genom att utgå från bedömningsgrunder när hen planerar sin undervisning och väljer undervisningsmetoder skapa förutsättningar för elever att nå specifika kursplansmål.

Även i forskning utanför Norden återfinns liknande komplexitet i frågor om bedömning i en musikpedagogisk kontext. Med utgångspunkt i den engelska skolkontexten uppmanar Fautley (2019) till en syn på musikaliskt lärande, och därmed bedömning av sådant, som inte i första hand fokuserar på kvantitativa resultat, utan ser till musikämnets särart. Därtill menar Kertz-Welzel (2019) att det finns en risk att musikaliskt lärande begränsas till aktiviteter som är lätta att bedöma, i stället för att lärandet behåller den komplexitet som musikaliskt lärande och kunnande implicerar. Därmed behöver musislärare förhålla sig till en syn på bedömning som endast fokuserar på elevers mätbara och lättbedömda resultat, trots att de eventuellt inte instämmer i att en sådan bedömningspraktik är önskvärd (Mantie, 2019). I likhet med Zandén (2018) kritiserar Mantie (2019) den syn på bedömning där tydlighet är det högsta idealet och andra mer visionära ideal försvinner.

Sammanfattningsvis visar tidigare forskning på en utveckling mot att allt större vikt läggs vid mätbarhet och tydlighet i bedömning och betygsättning i en musikpedagogisk kontext. Denna utveckling verkar dock inte vara den önskvärda i sammanhanget; mer komplexa och kontextspecifika bedömningspraktiker framstår i tidigare forskning som mer lämpliga för musikämnet. Tidigare forskning präglas alltså av en komplexitet gällande frågor om bedömning och betygsättning för musislärare. Här kan denna studie bidra med lärarperspektiv från en kursplansimplementering som eventuellt kan utgöra en vändpunkt för bedömningspraktiker i den svenska grundskolans musikpedagogiska kontext, från analytiska och kvantitativa till mer holistiskt inspirerade praktiker.

Teoretiska utgångspunkter

I denna studie har narrativ teori och begreppet *teachers' visions* (Hammerness, 2006), härnäst efter översatt till *lärares idealbilder*, utgjort de teoretiska linser som resultaten har tolkats genom. Därtill används de bedömningsteoretiska begreppen *holistisk* och *analytisk* bedömning samt begreppet *ansvarsskyldighet*.

Narrativ teori

I studien ses musislärarnas berättelser som kontextuellt specifika och konstruerade av intervjuare och deltagare i, och för, en specifik situation. Det finns därmed inte möjlighet att upprepa samma kontext och omständigheter i ett senare skede, och berättelser är helt beroende av de omständigheter under vilka de skapas. Om berättelser som kontextberoende skriver Riessman (2008) dessutom att de ska ses som skapade för den som ska ta emot berättelsen. Detta understryker den specificitet som narrativ teori implicerar, där intervjuaren måste ses som en del av den specifika kontext inom vilken berättelsen skapats. I denna studie kommer lokala, kontextspecifika berättelser att utgöra exempel som kan illustrera hur musislärare konstruerar berättelser om sina bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker. Musislärarnas berättelser har därefter fått vara grunden för de narrativ som genom författarens analys konstruerats för denna artikel.

Trots den kontextbundenhet som Riessman (2008) menar är grundläggande för narrativ teori är människors berättelser relevanta att utforska; exempelvis skriver Goodson (2013) att i de berättelser som han benämner livshistorier, kan mönster framträda och studeras. I denna studie kommer de narrativ som producerats utifrån deltagarnas berättelser att utgöra exempel som illustrerar möjliga konstruktioner av musislärares bedömningspraktik.

Dessa narrativ ska emellertid inte ses som fulländade, konsekventa eller de enda möjliga exemplen; narrativ produceras och omförhandlas över tid och i olika kontexter. Däremot kan dessa exempel på narrativ om musiklärares bedömningspraktik visa mönster som kan analyseras.

Lärares idealbilder

Begreppet lärares idealbilder (Hammerness, 2006) kan förstås som de ideal och visioner som lärare har för att beskriva och föreställa sig sin lärargärning i den kontext och med de förutsättningar som läraren önskar. Hammerness (2006) beskriver även att begreppet kan vara ett sätt för lärare att se hur deras önskade och nuvarande praktik skiljer sig åt. I studien kommer begreppet lärares idealbilder att användas för att bistå i resonemang om de ideala bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker som musiklärarna konstruerar i sina berättelser. Begreppet kommer således inte att användas i den större kontext som utgörs av en lärares hela arbete och lärargärning utan endast i den mindre kontext som utgörs av bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker inom musiklärarpraktiker.

Analytisk och holistisk bedömning

De två bedömningsteoretiska begreppen analytisk och holistisk bedömning är återkommande i bedömningsteoretiska diskussioner. Begreppet analytisk bedömning syftar på bedömningssituationer där bedömningar av delarna i en elevs prestation analyseras (Sadler, 2009). Holistisk bedömning beskrivs i sin tur av Sadler (2009) som processer där prestationer och förmågor utvärderas över tid och där bilden av dessa prestationer och förmågor blir mer komplex ju mer information den som bedömer har om elevens förmågor eller prestationer. Skillnaden mellan analytisk och holistisk bedömning ligger därmed i hur bedömaren tar sig an sin uppgift att värdera en elevs prestation. I denna studie används begreppen analytisk och holistisk bedömning för att beskriva olika bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker som musiklärarna berättar om. Dessa bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker ska i denna kontext ses som delar av en musiklärarpraktik, och som något som inte nödvändigtvis går att överföra till exempelvis andra ämneslärarpraktiker.

Ansvarsskyldighet

Accountability är det engelska begrepp som används för att beteckna lärares skyldigheter att stå till svars för sina beslut och sitt yrkesutövande. I studien används den svenska översättningen ansvarsskyldighet (NE.se, u.å.) eftersom det bäst motsvarar hur begreppet ska förstås i studiens kontext. Ansvarsskyldighet används här för att undersöka de konstruktioner av ansvar och transparens som musiklärare berättar om i förhållande till olika aspekter av bedömning och betygsättning.

Metod

I studien har intervjuer genomförts med verksamma musiklärare som arbetar i grundskolans senare år. Nedan beskrivs urvals- och datainsamlingsmetod, narrativ metod och narrativ analys samt de etiska överväganden som gjorts.

Urval och datainsamlingsmetod

För studien har semistrukturerade kvalitativa intervjuer (Bryman, 2016/2018) använts som datainsamlingsmetod. Fyra musiklärare som är verksamma i någon eller flera av de årskurser i grundskolan där betyg sätts, det vill säga årskurserna 6–9, intervjuades om den läroplansimplementering som genomfördes 2022. Musiklärarna kontaktades på grundval av att de tidigare deltagit i en studie där närliggande ämnen undersökts, och då tackat ja

till fortsatt samarbete. De fyra musiklärarna har anonymiserats i artikeln och har fått de fingerade namnen Anne, Ben, Cecilia och Daniel. För att inte någon musiklärare ska kunna identifieras har beskrivningar av deras yrkeserfarenheter hållits mycket allmänna.

Intervjuerna gjordes i två omgångar. Den första intervjuomgången genomfördes under hösten 2021 när det var knappt ett år kvar tills Lgr22 skulle börja gälla, och nästa intervjuomgång genomfördes under senkvintern 2023 när musiklärarna arbetat med läroplanen i en termin och satt betyg i enlighet med Lgr22 vid ett tillfälle. Inför att Lgr22 infördes tillfrågades musiklärarna exempelvis om huruvida de trodde att införandet skulle påverka deras arbetssätt gällande bedömning och betygsättning. I de intervjuer som genomfördes efter att Lgr22 införts tillfrågades musiklärarna om huruvida arbetet med den nya läroplanen hade blivit som förväntat. De fick också frågor om skillnader de upplevt i sin bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktik – både med anledning av större förändringar, såsom införandet av sammantagen bedömning, och med anledning av mindre, kontextspecifika förändringar, såsom ändringar i specifika formuleringar i musikens kursplan. Musiklärarnas svar på de frågor som ställdes i alla intervjuer ledde till nya frågor och samtalsämnen; även om liknande frågor ställdes under flera av intervjuerna täckte de delvis olika områden eftersom musiklärarnas svar skilde sig åt och gav upphov till olika följdfrågor. När alla intervjuer var genomförda transkriberades intervjuerna ord för ord.

Narrativ metod och narrativ analys

Narrativ metod har vuxit i popularitet inom det samhällsvetenskapliga fältet under de senaste decennierna (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a). Inom det musikpedagogiska forskningsfältet kan narrativ metod bidra med ett sätt att närma sig en mångfald av berättelser i stället för att producera entydiga svar på musikpedagogiska frågor och intressen. Metoden innebär därmed att fler röster, fler berättelser och fler människors liv kan fokuseras och få bli representerade inom fältet musikpedagogisk forskning (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b). Narrativ metod är uttryckligen en lämplig metod för syftet att lyfta fram, ta tillvara och undersöka variationer och motsägelser som kan framgå av det som blir berättat (Bowman, 2009). Därför lämpar sig metoden för denna studie som har musiklärarnas komplexa berättelser som fokusobjekt. I denna studie undersöks endast fyra musiklärare berättelser om bedömning och betygsättning; narrativen som framställts genom analys blir därmed inte heltäckande. Dessa narrativ ska i stället ses som representationer av möjliga narrativ om bedömning och betygsättning i grundskolans musikämne.

Som inspiration för dataanalysmetod i studien finns Emdens (1998) metod för narrativ analys, i vilken sammanhängande narrativ framställs ur intervjudata, tillsammans med vissa inslag av Braun och Clarkes (2006) tematiska analys. Dessa analysmetoder modifierades för att passa studien, dess syfte och teoretiska utgångspunkter, och det resulterade i en analys som fokuserade ömsom på delar av de transkriberade intervjuerna, ömsom på helheter. Ur analysen skapades tre teman: ”betygsättning och betygskriterier”, ”bedömningskommunikation och bedömningsdokumentation” och ”bedömningsfokus”. Resultaten konstruerades slutligen som narrativ, det vill säga det är genom analys av data i form av musiklärare berättelser om sitt arbete med bedömning och betygsättning som narrativ framställts och presenteras i studien.

Etiska överväganden

I studien har de så kallade fyra R:en – *respectful*, *responsible*, *rigorous* och *resilient* – beaktats. En översättning till svenska av dessa begrepp skulle kunna vara respektfull, ansvarsfull, noggrann och motståndskraftig. De fyra R:en beskrivs av Barrett och Stauffer (2009b) i relation till narrativ metodologi som en bra grund för etiska ställningstaganden. För denna studie innebär beaktandet av dessa begrepp exempelvis att resultaten skrivs fram med ett stort

mått av konfidentialitet, att musiklärarna informerats om att deras deltagande i studien är högt värderat, att datamaterial förvarats med konfidentialitet i åtanke och att resultaten presenteras med stor noggrannhet. Dessutom har Etikprövningsmyndigheten gjort ett yttrande för studien (Dnr 2020-07082) där man bedömt att ingen etikprövning behövs.

Forskarens roll som författare av narrativ är viktig att belysa. Richardson (1990) menar att forskarens subjektivitet är viktig att beakta i relation till den text som produceras. Forskaren ska därmed ses som skapare av, eller författare till, den narrativa framställning som forskningsrapporten utgör. Därmed finns det inte möjlighet att framställa någon sanning i den bemärkelse att de resultat som presenteras nedan utgör det som menats av deltagare i studien; denna rapport är skapad av forskaren själv och dessutom har intervjuerna styrts av till viss del förberedda frågor och teman och därmed också forskarens subjektivitet. De berättelser som utgör data för studien ska även de ses som inte bara skapade i en specifik kontext, utan även skapade av de deltagare som ingått i kontexten, både intervjuare och musiklärare.

Resultat

Nedan redovisas varje tema för sig: först redovisas det genom analysen skapade narrativet kring temat 1) betygsättning och betygsriterier, följt av narrativet kring temat 2) bedömningskommunikation och bedömningsdokumentation och slutligen narrativet kring temat 3) bedömningsfokus.

Betygsättning och betygsriterier

Under denna rubrik presenteras det narrativ som behandlar hur musiklärarna berättar att de uppfattar betygsättning och betygsriterier i relation till kursplanen i musik i Lgr22.

Innan Lgr22 började gälla uttrycker en del av musiklärarna en oro för de förändringar som den nya läroplanen skulle kunna innebära gällande bedömning och betygsättning. Exempelvis berättar Anne att hon tror att införandet av den nya läroplanen kommer att innebära en stor förändring i musiklärares bedömningspraktik eftersom formuleringar i betygsriterierna reviderats och formulerats mer övergripande. Hon uttrycker en farhåga om att de nya betygsriterierna skulle göra bedömning i musik mindre likvärdig, särskilt gällande instrumentspel, och hon anser att de delarna borde ha behållits som de var i Lgr11. Det vill säga, Anne formulerar ett analytiskt sätt att närma sig bedömningsfrågor, där idealet är en tydlig bedömningspraktik för att möjliggöra transparens. Även Daniel uttrycker farhågor om bedömning i enlighet med Lgr22 innan läroplanen implementerades. Exempelvis berättar han om en oro kring hur han skulle tolka en del nya begrepp som införlivats i Lgr22. När han får frågan om vilka begrepp det skulle kunna röra sig om svarar han:

Jag upplever det som att i förra läroplanen så stod det ju till exempel när man skulle bedöma sång vad man skulle lyssna efter för typ av kriterier för vad som var det jag skulle gå efter. Och här [i Lgr22] tycker jag det står mycket mer svävande egentligen vad är det jag ska titta efter för egenskaper i detta.

Daniel berättar sedan att han tror att denna otydlighet kommer att bidra till att lärare på olika skolor kan kräva olika mycket för att elever ska uppnå samma betyg, det vill säga att bedömningsgrunderna i musikämnet i grundskolan blir mindre likvärdiga i och med att Lgr22 införts. Detta kan tolkas som att han föredrar en analytisk bedömningspraktik. Efter att Lgr22 implementerats berättar Daniel däremot om både positiva och negativa aspekter av bedömning enligt den nya kursplanen och den nya regel som införts om sammantagen bedömning. Exempelvis berättar han att han tror att elever upplever att de får mer rättvisa betyg eftersom tröskelregeln har tagits bort.

Till skillnad från Anne och Daniel, berättar Ben om en bedömningspraktik där idealet verkar vara att val av angreppssätt är kontextberoende: i vissa kontexter passar analytisk bedömning bättre och i andra är holistiska bedömningspraktiker att föredra. Ben berättar exempelvis att regeln om sammantagen bedömning inte förändrat hans sätt att bedöma eftersom han redan innan regeln infördes gjorde holistiska bedömningar och betygsättningar av elevers prestationer. Men Ben berättar senare att han trots denna holistiska syn på bedömning alltid förtydligar för sina elever på vilka sätt de ska spela för att nå de olika betygsstegen. I Bens bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker finns alltså en komplexitet där han ser holistisk bedömning som idealet men ändå har en praktik som innefattar att han konkretiserar betygssteg för sina elever, vilket tyder på en analytisk konstruktion av bedömning.

Cecilia berättar i sin tur om holistisk bedömning som idealet i den musikpedagogiska kontexten, även om också hon adresserar frågan om likvärdighet som problematisk i sammanhanget. I den första intervjun berättar Cecilia vid flera tillfällen att hon anser att Lgr22 kommer att innebära att lärare kan beakta de möjligheter som elever fått träna sig på olika förmågor när de bedömer enligt Lgr22, vilket hon beskriver som en skillnad från tidigare bedömningspraktiker i musikämnet. Hon berättar även att hon tror att musikens betygskriterier i Lgr22 kommer innebära mindre stress för elever eftersom de nya betygskriterierna är mer övergripande och mindre detaljerade:

Ja, jag ser jättemycket nytta. ... Alltså jag menar man får ju tänka på att eleverna har sexton eller sjutton ämnen. ... Det är otroligt vilken börda eleven har känt. Jag tror att väldigt, väldigt många elever kommer må otroligt bra av det här, att det blir lite mer samlat, det är tre saker att hålla reda på i musik. Och sedan så gäller det ju för oss att på något vis hitta ett sätt att vara tydliga.

I denna berättelse finns en inställning till en mer holistisk bedömningspraktik som mer fördelaktig för elever. Det enda problemet med en sådan bedömningspraktik som Cecilia nämner i sammanhanget är en minskad tydlighet, ett problem som är upp till läraren att komma till rätta med.

Flera av lärarna berättar efter implementeringen av Lgr22 att de inte sett några större skillnader mellan att sätta betyg enligt denna läroplan och den tidigare. När Anne berättar om hur hon tänker kring bedömning av instrumentspel och sång säger hon: "För min egen skull så tänkte jag att: 'Jamen då är det nog ungefär som tidigare, bara det att de har tagit bort det personliga uttrycket'", trots att hon före implementeringen var skeptisk till de mer övergripande formuleringarna i Lgr22:s betygskriterier. Därmed konstrueras i denna berättelse en bedömningspraktik som är mindre påverkad av en läroplansreform än vad som tidigare förväntats. Ändå återkommer Anne senare till att hon upplever att det är otydligt hur hon ska göra bedömningar i vissa situationer.

Även Ben berättar att hans bedömningspraktik inte ändrats i någon större utsträckning av att Lgr22 implementerats. Han menar däremot att andra förutsättningar, såsom "stora klasser och många barn med speciella behov och anpassningar", styr hans bedömningspraktiker i större utsträckning än implementeringen av en ny läroplan och kursplan i musik. En annan aspekt som Ben menar påverkar hans bedömningspraktik är att den digitala lärplattformen som bland annat används för att dokumentera bedömningar och som får förmodas byggas på läroplan och kursplaner, har förändrats. Även i dessa delar av Bens berättelse konstrueras en komplex bedömningspraktik, där lärplattform såväl som olika lokala faktorer har större inverkan än styrdokument. Även Cecilia berättar om ramar som påverkande faktorer vid betygsättning; hon säger att det är "omöjligt att sätta betyg" på ett likvärdigt sätt eftersom musikundervisning på olika skolor skiljer sig i stor utsträckning. Cecilia menar att detta är ett problem som det är Skolverkets ansvar att lösa genom tydligare direktiv.

I berättelserna talas även till viss del om ansvarsskyldighet. Cecilia säger exempelvis:

Vi har väldigt många elever som är duktiga på vår skola, och föräldrar, på att läsa in sig. När vi hade kunskapskraven och den förra läroplanen så var det en del föräldrar och elever som var inne och lusläste och krävde: "Amen, vi vill kunna bocka av sång", "Vi vill kunna bocka av detta" och så. ... Medan nu så äger vi det på ett annat sätt.

I denna del av Cecilias berättelse finns en antydning om ett skifte: att det numera finns möjlighet för lärare att äga frågor om bedömning och betygsättning.

Sammanfattningsvis finns i dessa delar av musiklärarnas berättelser återkommande problematiseringar kring tydlighet i förhållande till en mer holistisk bedömningspraktik, även om en sådan praktik i många fall verkar vara den ideala. Dessutom finns en osäkerhet kring vilka skillnader som olika sätt att närma sig bedömning, exempelvis analytiska och holistiska angreppssätt, innebär. I flera fall verkar det vara andra faktorer än läroplans- och kursplansreformer som styr vilka angreppssätt som används. Även möjligheter till likvärdighet i betygsättning ifrågasätts av flera av musiklärarna. Därtill är frågan om ansvarsskyldighet och ägandeskap i förhållande till bedömning och betygsättning central i en del av musiklärarnas berättelser.

Bedömningskommunikation och bedömningsdokumentation

Under denna rubrik berättar musiklärarna i studien om hur de dokumenterar och kommunicerar bedömningar och betygsättning i relation till den nya läroplanen Lgr22.

I analysen framkommer att flera av musiklärarna har en bedömningspraktik som innehåller ett parallellt arbete med flera sorters dokumentation av elevers kunskaper. Exempelvis berättar Anne vid det andra intervju tillfället att hon behöver dokumentera sina bedömningar på flera sätt, exempelvis i matriser. Att lärare arbetar med flera former av dokumentation parallellt kan bero på problem som rör övergången mellan Lgr11 och Lgr22. Angående matriser som dokumentationsform berättar Anne att hon tycker att fördelarna med bedömningsmatriser är att det blir tydligt för eleverna vilka mål de har uppnått i musik men att matriserna inte går att använda som någon "avprickningsmall". Det Anne berättar om sin bedömningspraktik kan här tolkas som att praktiken påverkats av Lgr11:s mer analytiska karaktär. Detta eftersom Anne berättar att en mer holistisk bedömningspraktik skulle innebära att tydligheten för eleverna skulle minska.

Flera av lärarna berättar att deras val av dokumentationsform påverkas av flera olika faktorer. Exempel på sådana faktorer är hur mycket tid läraren har för sin bedömning, hur många elever som ska bedömas och hur ofta läraren träffar eleverna i undervisning. Anne berättar exempelvis att hon inte ser möjligheter att prata enskilt med varje elev om dennas utveckling; muntliga samtal har hon endast om elever själv efterfrågar det. Tidsbrist, berättar Anne, påverkar även hur hon behöver dokumentera elevers prestationer. Hon menar att hon för sin "överlevnad" behöver ha en matris för varje elev som hon fyller i när eleven visar upp olika kunskaper eller förmågor. Hon berättar även att hon måste "samla ... in bevis" för elevernas kunskaper, vilket hon motiverar med att hon endast träffar eleverna en gång i veckan. Hon berättar att hon dessutom spelar in elevers uppspel på film för att kunna gå tillbaka och granska bedömningar. Även denna del av Annes berättelse beskriver ett analytiskt angreppssätt till bedömning i musik och en bedömningspraktik som är noggrann, detaljorienterad och starkt påverkad av ansvarsskyldighet. Här är dock förklaringen att en stor arbetsbörda i form av många elever tvingar henne att använda sådana dokumentationsformer. Ben, som även han undervisar många elever, berättar att hans ideala sätt att kommunicera bedömningar är det enskilda samtalet med eleven. Även Daniel och Cecilia uttrycker detta. Ben menar dock att det är mycket svårt att genomföra sådana samtal och tar, liksom Anne, upp tidsbrist som en avgörande faktor.

Gällande ansvarsskyldighet har Cecilia en annan syn på hur Lgr22 har påverkat hennes kommunikation av bedömningar än den som beskrivs av Anne. Cecilia berättar i denna kontext att en skillnad mellan Lgr11 och Lgr22 finns i den information som vårdnadshavare kan förvänta sig att få ta del av: "De största förändringarna tycker jag ligger på kommunikationen med föräldrar. Det vill säga att vi får ökad rättighet att inte stå till svars för varenda litet, litet, minimalt beslut och det är ganska skönt." Även här finns spår av den överföring av ägandeskap, och minskad ansvarsskyldighet, som Cecilia tidigare berättat om, men denna övertygelse återfinns inte i någon annan av musiklärarnas berättelser.

Sammanfattningsvis beskrivs även i relation till bedömningskommunikation och bedömningsdokumentation frågor om tydlighet som centrala. Därtill står ansvarsskyldighet i fokus som tydligt kopplat till val av dokumentationsformer vid bedömning. I analysen framstår musiklärarnas praktiker för dokumentation och kommunikation av bedömning som komplexa i förhållande till olika upplevda, eller faktiska, krav.

Bedömningsfokus

Under denna rubrik återfinns de delar av musiklärarnas berättelser som handlar om hur de ser på vilket fokus bedömning fått sedan Lgr22 införts.

Gällande det fokus som bedömning får i undervisningskontexten beskriver musiklärarna elevernas välbefinnande som centralt för hur musiklärarna angriper frågan. Exempelvis berättar Anne att tidigare, när Lgr11 gällde, skulle alla lärare på hennes skola visa upp hur elevernas arbete skulle bedömas när lärarna startade ett nytt arbetsområde. Anne berättar att skolan nu har frångått denna praxis och säger: "Nu ska vi inte prata betygskriterier med eleverna ... utan nu ska vi bara låta dem vara i skolan, vi ska försöka minska stressen hos eleverna." Anne berättar dock att hon tycker att ett minskat fokus på att tydliggöra bedömningsgrunder är komplicerat eftersom eleverna ändå kommer att bedömas. Hon säger också att detta att undanhålla för eleverna vad hon förväntar sig inte överensstämmer med hur hon vill arbeta. Hon menar att eleverna inte ges möjlighet att förhålla sig till information om bedömning om denna information inte delges dem explicit, även om hon medger att ett minskat fokus på bedömningskriterier kan innebära mindre stress för eleverna. Anne försöker därmed förhålla sig till två ytterligheter: att vara tydlig gentemot elever om bedömning och därmed eventuellt öka deras stress, eller vara mindre tydlig och därmed inte ge eleverna en chans att förhålla sig till betygskriterierna.

Ben berättar att han upplever att det är ett för stort fokus på bedömning. Innan Lgr22 infördes uttrycker Ben att det inte är önskvärt med ett bedömningssystem som fokuserar alltför mycket på att elever ska visa upp vad de har lärt sig, i stället för att få möjlighet att träna sina musikaliska färdigheter:

Det är det som har varit min käpphäst. För att det inte bara ska bli ett ställe där de som kanske musicerar utanför skolan tar med sig det in i klassrummet och visar vad de kan och så sitter de som aldrig har hållit i en gitarr eller suttit vid ett trumset och ska bli bedömda på den lilla tid som ges till det. Det blir så fruktansvärt orättvist och deras upplevelse av musiklektionerna på högstadiet måste bli förfärlig. Och min uppgift reduceras ju till vad? Vad ska jag göra? Ska jag bara bli en bedömningsmentor liksom som säger "Du får det, och du får det"? Utan att demonstrera och kanske inspirera och allt det som undervisning handlar om.

Cecilia berättar, i likhet med Ben, att hon inte vill arbeta med bedömning 'på löpande band':

Det handlar verkligen om att man måste färdighetsträna. Man kan inte släppa det och det är liksom det de [Skolverket] trycker på nu att det måste vi få in i vår undervisning att det jobbas in så att eleverna verkligen kan förbättras, och få en chans att lära sig, inte bara komma och visa upp.

I både Bens och Cecilias berättelser framstår musikaliskt lärande som en process och båda framhåller att ett minskat fokus på bedömning därmed är önskvärt.

Daniels berättelse skiljer sig från de andra musiklärarnas när det gäller bedömningsfokus. Han berättar att han redan innan Lgr22 infördes försökte att alltmer planera sin undervisning med utgångspunkt i läroplanens syfte och de delar av läroplanen för grundskolan som behandlar värdegrundsfrågor och grundskolans övergripande uppdrag, snarare än att planera utifrån bedömning. Bland annat berättar Daniel att han tycker att det är viktigt att eleverna får de musikaliska verktyg som de behöver för att kunna musicera utan att en lärare instruerar, exempelvis ”hur man bygger ackord på piano, hur notsystemet fungerar och sjunga lite efter noter. Alltså lite sådana här saker för det är sådant som kommer behövas om man ska ta del av musikaliska aktiviteter på sin fritid”. I denna del av Daniels berättelse finns andra värden än de som uttryckligen återfinns i musikens kursplan och mer av de värden som kan betecknas som en del av en önskan om livslångt musikaliskt lärande.

I musiklärarnas berättelser finns sammanfattningsvis ett tydligt elevfokus tillsammans med ett fokus på att understryka att lärande i musik i grundskolan är en process. Flera av lärarna ser det som önskvärt att eleverna ska färdighetsträna på lektioner och därmed att mindre fokus och tid ska läggas på att bedöma elevernas kunskaper.

Slutligen visar analys av resultaten på flera olika ideal om hur bedömnings- och betygssättningspraktiker bör se ut i den musikpedagogiska kontexten i den svenska grundskolan. Dels finns en övertygelse om att analytisk bedömning, med ett högt mått av tydlighet och transparens, främjar likvärdighet, dels finns idealet om musikaliskt lärande som en process och holistiska bedömningspraktiker som bäst lämpade för musikaliska kontexter.

Diskussion

Oavsett hur musiklärarna i studien berättar om hur de arbetar med analytisk eller holistisk bedömning, verkar dessa arbetssätt vara viktiga för musiklärarna i deras berättelser om bedömningspraktiker i och med införandet av Lgr22, och en pågående omförhandling av bedömnings- och betygssättningspraktiker konstrueras. Vid flera tillfällen berättar musiklärarna att de upplevt en tydlig utveckling mot analytisk bedömning i Lgr11, i likhet med Vinges (2014) beskrivning av den norska kontexten. Emellertid berättar musiklärarna om en rörelse mot holistisk bedömning i Lgr22 med anledning av att den nya läroplanen innehåller mer allmänt hållna betygskriterier och regler om sammantagen bedömning. Inställningen till denna rörelse mot holistisk bedömning varierar stort i musiklärarnas berättelser. Lärarna ger här uttryck för vitt skilda positioner: allt från att mer holistiska bedömningspraktiker främjar lärande i musik, till att en upplevd brist på tydlighet medför en minskad likvärdighet. Att det finns komplexa aspekter gällande analytisk och holistisk bedömning för musiklärare beskrevs även när Lgr11 var ny (Zandén & Ferm Thorgersen, 2015) och i en norsk kontext (Karlsen & Johansen, 2019). Frågan om det komplexa i spänningsfältet mellan holistisk och analytisk bedömning i den musikpedagogiska kontexten har alltså belysts i tidigare forskning. Trots det beskriver inte musiklärarna i studien att de fått stöttning i att hantera de problem som kan uppstå, exempelvis när kontrasterande krav på holistisk och analytisk bedömning i musikpedagogiska sammanhang gör att musiklärare själva måste söka kompromisser mellan dessa krav.

I berättelserna om bedömning och betygssättning finns ett fokus på tydlighet som musiklärarna i denna studie inte är ensamma att berätta om. Både Zandén (2018) och Mantie (2019) menar att en agenda för att tydliggöra bedömning har genomsyrat skolans önskade bedömningspraktiker. Zandén (2018) ser emellertid denna önskan om tydlighet som en utveckling mot en alltför grund utbildning i musik. I linje med detta perspektiv finns uppfattningen att kvantitativa bedömningar i musik är alltför ytliga och inte gynnar den enskil-

da elevens musikaliska lärande (Ferm Almqvist m.fl., 2017). Vad Lgr22 kommer att bidra med är i sammanhanget något tidigt att avgöra. Likväl finns det i musiklärarnas berättelser indikationer på att dessa två perspektiv kommer att samexistera i musiklärares bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker oavsett vilka ideal enskilda musiklärare har.

Viktigt att uppmärksamma är även det antagande som framkommer i studiens narrativ om att tydlighet i form av en mer analytisk bedömningspraktik främjar likvärdighet, något som även belysts och kritiserats av Zandén (2018). I motsats till detta narrativ finns, i musiklärarnas berättelser, en övertygelse om att det finns faktorer, exempelvis antalet elever som en enskild musiklärare undervisar, som har större påverkan på likvärdighet i bedömning i musikämnet än kunskapskrav eller betygsriterier. Anmärkningsvärt i detta sammanhang blir då antagandet att bedömning i musikämnet har potentialen att vara likvärdig om alla yttre faktorer ser likadana ut. Detta i sig ter sig motsägelsefullt eftersom bedömning av musik, eller musikaliska färdigheter, i grunden kan ses som en subjektiv aktivitet.

Med anledning av Lgr11:s detaljerade kunskapskrav (Skolverket, 2023a) och samhällets ökade fokus på formell bedömning (Vinge, 2014) är det ett utmanande projekt som Skolverket initierat i och med läroplansreformen Lgr22. Flera av musiklärarna i studien beskriver ett fokus på detaljer och alltför specifika kunskapskrav som ligger långt ifrån deras idealbilder (Hammerness, 2006) av bedömning i musikämnet i grundskolan. Trots det finns i flera av lärarnas berättelser om bedömning ändå en önskan om tydlighet. Detta är på inget vis orimligt, utan kan förstås som en stark praktik som infördes med den föregående läroplanen. Det hade snarare varit uppseendeväckande om musiklärarna i studien hade konstruerat helt nya bedömningspraktiker och ideal i och med införandet av en ny läroplan.

Däremot är det värt att notera att flera av musiklärarna i studien beskriver att både analytiska och holistiska bedömningspraktiker är en del av deras faktiska verksamhet, trots att de beskriver en idealbild av musikämnet som helhet och bedömning i musikämnet i grundskolan, i likhet med hur dessa beskrivs av Fautley (2019) och Kertz-Welzel (2019). Därmed ligger inte idealen och den faktiska praktiken så som de uttrycks i musiklärarnas berättelser i linje med varandra, utan berättelserna visar på en konstruktion där lärarna behöver göra avkall på sina holistiska ideal för att kunna verka inom skolkontexten. En möjlig följd av denna diskrepans mellan ideal och praktik skulle kunna bli att musiklärare i svensk grundskola lämnar yrket och söker sig till verksamheter som bättre överensstämmer med det arbete som läraren vill kunna utföra, i likhet med vad Hammerness (2006) beskriver angående lärares idealbilder. I sådana fall skulle svensk grundskola förlora utbildade och erfarna musiklärare, en följd som skulle medföra risker för minskad kvalitet i musikämnet.

Alla fyra musiklärare som deltagit i studien berättar att de, på olika sätt, behöver navigera mellan sina egna idealbilder (Hammerness, 2006) av bedömning och betygsättning och de krav eller önskemål som ställs från skolledning, Skolverket, elever och vårdnadshavare. Trots att musiklärarna berättar att de behöver göra dessa i många fall komplexa avvägningar, uttrycker flera av dem att det finns åtminstone delar av betygsriterierna i Lgr22 som stämmer överens med deras egna ideala praktiker. Därmed kan det förmodas att deras konstruktioner av idealbilder av bedömning och betygsättning inte ligger alltför långt ifrån de ideal som Skolverkets kursplan i musik i Lgr22 indikerar, åtminstone i vissa avseenden.

När det gäller ansvarsskyldighet finns det stora skillnader i studien. Å ena sidan äger läraren bedömning och dessutom minskar kraven på ansvarsskyldighet i och med införandet av Lgr22. Å andra sidan finns det andra faktorer som gör att en sådan minskning av krav ändå inte är möjlig. Här syns en dikotomi mellan transparens och ägandeskap som har kopplingar till den ”tydlighetsdoktrin” som Zandén (2018) har utforskat. En problematik kopplad till transparens och ansvarsskyldighet är huruvida elever och vårdnadshavare ska kunna ha samma möjlighet att bedöma musikalisk kvalitet som en musiklärare. Emellertid finns diskussioner om rättviseaspekter och om att elever kan tänkas behöva få information

om vad de ska göra för att utvecklas musikaliskt. Denna problematik kan dock inte en enskild musiklärare lösa, utan det är en fråga för de som faciliterar möjliga bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker på en mer övergripande nivå. Exempelvis skulle olika huvudmän kunna se till att musiklärare får stöttning av varandra i frågor där ansvarsskyldighet motverkar bedömningspraktiker där musiklärare har ett stort ägandeskap. Skolledare skulle även kunna se till att vårdnadshavare och elever informeras om att de inte bör, eller får, ställa alltför höga krav på transparens och tydlighet från enskilda lärare.

Det finns två bestämmelser som båda kan tolkas som att Skolverket menar att en holistisk bedömningspraktik är att föredra framför en mer analytisk sådan: Skolverkets (2024) ambition om ett minskat bedömningsfokus, och införandet av sammantagen bedömning (Skolverket, 2023a). Trots det verkar denna dragning mot holistisk bedömning i styrdokument och bedömningsprinciper inte vara avgörande för musiklärarnas bedömnings- och betygsättningspraktiker. De stora samhälleliga rörelserna mot kvantitativ, analytisk bedömning verkar i detta fall inte kunna uppvägas av att kursplaner har mer övergripande formuleringar om bedömningsaspekter. För att möjliggöra en sådan förskjutning mot mer holistiska bedömningspraktiker krävs beslut av en helt annan omfattning, exempelvis att Skolverket utformar en nationell lärplattform eller att musiklärare ansvarar för bedömning av färre elever, alternativt får mer tid för att kunna genomföra bedömning i musikämnet. ■

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Abstract

In 2022, a new curriculum addressing educational purposes, overarching goals and guidelines was implemented in the Swedish compulsory school, accompanied by syllabi specifying purpose, content and assessment criteria for each school subject. For music education this meant, for example, changes in the assessment criteria in the music syllabus. With the purpose of examining how assessment aspects of the new curriculum and music syllabus interact with music teachers' assessment ideals, four music teachers teaching in the school years 6–9 have been interviewed in this study. Their stories have been analysed using narrative method and thematic analysis creating narratives about assessment ideals and practices in the subject of music education. The analysis suggests that there is a tension between analytical and holistic assessment in the music teachers' stories and expressed ideals. Furthermore, there is a conflict between, on the one hand, different measures of accountability in relation to assessment and grading, and on the other an ideal assessment practice in music education where music teachers are in charge, together with assessment practices focussing on qualitative aspects of musical learning. ■

Keywords: assessment, grading, music education in compulsory schools, narrative analysis

Abstrakti

Vuonna 2022 Ruotsin peruskouluissa otettiin käyttöön uusi opetussuunnitelma, joka käsittelee koulutuksen tarkoitusta, yleisiä tavoitteita ja ohjeita. Sen rinnalle julkaistiin oppiainekohtaiset opetussuunnitelmat, joissa määritellään kunkin aineen tarkoitus, sisältö ja arviointikriteerit. Musiikkikasvatuksen osalta tämä merkitsi esimerkiksi muutoksia arviointikriteereissä. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, kuinka uusi opetussuunnitelma ja musiikin opetussuunnitelman arviointinäkökulmat suhteutuvat musiikinopettajien arviointia koskeviin ihanteisiin. Tutkimukseen osallistui neljä vuosiluokkien 6–9 musiikinopettajaa, joita haastateltiin. Heidän kertomuksiaan on analysoitu narratiivisen menetelmän ja temaattisen analyysin avulla, ja niiden pohjalta on rakennettu kertomuksia arviointiin liittyvistä ihanteista ja käytännöistä musiikinopetuksessa. Analyysi osoittaa, että opettajien kertomuksissa ja arviointiin liittyvissä ihanteissa on jännite analyttisen ja holistisen arvioinnin välillä. Lisäksi esiin nousee ristiriita toisaalta arviointiin ja arvosanoihin liittyvien vastuullisuuden vaatimusten ja toisaalta musiikinopetuksen ihanteellisen arviointikäytännön välillä, jossa opettajilla on keskeinen rooli ja arvioinnissa painottuvat musiikillisen oppimisen laadulliset näkökulmat. ■

Avainsanat: arviointi, arvosanat, musiikkikasvatus peruskoulussa, narratiivinen analyysi

Keynote

How to change the world: Perspectives for music education

Keynote presented in the 22nd International Seminar of the ISME Commission on Policy: Culture, Media and Education 23–26 July 2024 at Helsinki, Musiikkitalo, hosted by Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki.

U*topias tend to be wrong, but they can be useful even in their wrongness if they are sharply formulated. (Mulgan, 2022, p. 114)*

Is there a manual about how to change the world? Could such a manual exist? Or even if it could, would it be desirable to have one? Let's just imagine such a manual existed: What would it contain? Formulas? Magic spells? Descriptions of how the world has been transformed in the past?

While I cannot say if such a manual exists – or whether it might even be a good idea to have one – I would like to present some ideas that could belong in it: the transformative power of the arts and utopian thinking. They have been crucial drivers of societal and political change for centuries, even though they were not the only factors. Contrary to onesidedly optimistic and sometimes even simplistic assumptions about music education's societal mission (Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Hess, 2019), I adopt a critical perspective on the relationship between music education and social change – but without losing the trust in the transformative power of the arts. Utopia as method offers such a critical, yet optimistic framework (Levitas, 2013), as does the concept of pedagogy of the possible (Glaveanu, 2021). Both approaches emphasize the significance of positive visions of the future which are much needed in times of crises like those we face today. Mulgan (2022) observes:

We can easily picture ecological disaster or futures dominated by technology. But we struggle to imagine a world in which people thrive and where we improve our democracy, welfare, neighbourhoods or education. Many are resigned to fatalism – yet they desperately want transformational social change. (p. 2)

The arts and music education can play a vital role in fostering positive, but also critical visions of the future which are a prerequisite for societal transformations. The arts have always been considered to be utopian (Johnson, 2002), offering glimpses of alternative, potentially better worlds through sounds, colors, or words. However, they have often been used in a rather onesided way, as if they were a kind of panacea for societal or individual problems (Hess, 2019; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). But the arts do not have magic powers. Rather, they contribute to broader transformational processes which are largely political.

Acknowledging the limitations of the arts regarding social change and thus questioning their social impact is not a popular position in the arts and arts education. Belfiore and Bennett (2008) highlight:

... a belief in the power of the arts to transform lives for the better represents something close to orthodoxy amongst advocates of the arts around the world. (p. 4)

Instead of blindly trusting in the arts' transformative power, a critical and realistic perspective is indeed needed to refine what we do and develop innovative theoretical concepts

as foundation for the arts' social impact. In the context of music education and social change, this kind of critical inquiry has been rare. My recent book, *Rethinking Music Education and Social Change* (Kertz-Welzel, 2022a), aimed to address this research gap, and this keynote continues in the same vein: to present a critical yet imaginative framework for understanding how the arts can contribute to societal transformation.

The keynote begins with an exploration of the ambiguities surrounding music and social change, followed by a critical examination of utopian thinking, its political dimensions and the politics of change. Subsequently, it addresses the role of the arts in social transformation and concludes with considerations about music education as utopian theory and practice – or pedagogy of the possible – before ending with concluding remarks.

The ambivalence of music education and social change

When examining music education and social change, it's crucial to move beyond idealized notions of their potential impact. In reality, transformations through music and education are complex and fraught with contradictions. These contradictions arise from ambiguities that must be acknowledged in order to understand the true potential – and risks – of music education in shaping society. They particularly concern social change, music, and music education.

Social change

Social change is, by its nature, not inherently positive or negative. It can lead to progress such as a push for social justice or equality, or it can result in harmful consequences, as seen in the rise of autocratic systems. Change happens continuously, we do not need to start it since “change – extremely rapid social change – is the most important fact of life today” (Nolan & Lenski, 2011, p. xiii). Social change is fundamentally about shifts in social relations, cultural norms, behavior, and values (Stroud & Corbin, 2008). It can be abrupt or gradual, and its impacts can affect an entire society or just certain segments of it. It can also be understood as “the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organization, or value system” (Wilterdink & Form, 2020). Thus, it concerns various sections of society that have an impact on individuals, as the Covid-19 pandemic illustrated.

In music education research, the call for social change often lacks a clear definition or acknowledgement of these complexities (Hess, 2019). There is a tendency to assume that social change is inherently good and associated with societal improvement. However, social change can also have negative consequences when driven by oppressive or authoritarian ideologies – and it might not always be easy to detect them.

Music

Music, much like social change, is ambivalent – and has the power to heal or to harm. Music can foster social cohesion and self-actualization (Boeskov, 2019). On the other hand, it can also be used as a tool of manipulation or even torture. As Boeskov (2019, p. 59) points out, music is not only transformative, but can also support the status-quo, since there is a “fundamental bidirectionality of music making in terms of its social effects.” This “bidirectionality” highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of music's role in society.

Born (2012) captures the complex relation between music and the social in her four planes of music's sociality: music making and the variety of relationships during this process; music's capacity to create imagined communities; music's potential regarding exploring different identities musically; music's relation to institutions. Music's transformative power is closely related to its social dimensions since it involves people, their identity and

relationships, but also the societal framework. In the case of participatory music making, music's transformative potential is evident, as it can foster community building, social cohesion and individual change. However, the same kind of music making can also be misused as happened during the Third Reich (Kertz-Welzel, 2022a).

Music education

The relationship between music education and social change is similarly ambivalent. On the one hand, music education has the potential to empower individuals, foster creativity, and support human flourishing. On the other hand, it can be misused by oppressive regimes, as demonstrated by the role of music and music education in Nazi Germany. Under Hitler's regime, music education became an ideological tool, promoting nationalistic values through patriotic songs and collective music-making activities (Kertz-Welzel, 2022a). In this context, music education was used to shape the minds of an entire generation, encouraging loyalty to the state and adherence to its oppressive principles. The case of the Hitler Youth, where music-making was a central activity, reveals the complexity of music's and music education's role in shaping social change. Participatory music making, often seen as a positive, inclusive activity, was misused for a totalitarian agenda.

This short analysis indicates the need to move beyond a naïve understanding of the relationship between music education and social change. While music has the potential to foster positive change, it can also reinforce negative social structures when misused. To ensure that music education contributes to positive transformations, we need a framework that recognizes both its transformational potential and its potential for misuse. One such framework is utopia as a method, which offers a way to critically engage with our visions of social change and better societies in music education – in terms of utopian thinking. By recognizing the ambivalence of music and social change, this method allows us to explore how music education can contribute to positive social transformations while acknowledging the risks of its misuse. Utopia as a method offers a pathway for educators to question and critique the role of music in society without giving up positive visions of the future.

Utopian thinking and social change

Social change, as any kind of transformation, needs visions to follow. Most often, these visions are utopian ideas. While we might have reservations about using utopias because they seem unrealistic, for centuries, utopian visions have guided social transformations – although they have rarely been implemented completely (Levitas, 2013). In recent years, there has been an increased interest in utopia and utopian thinking in various fields such as sociology, historical or political research, but also music education (Camlin, 2023; Kertz-Welzel, 2022).

Definitions and functions of utopias

It is, however, important how utopia is defined. Ruth Levitas (2013) developed not only a model regarding utopia as a method for the imaginary reconstitution of society, but also presented helpful definitions of how to understand utopia: First, utopia can be seen as a conceptualization of a better way of living. But it could also be perceived as a useless fantasy or even harmful idea. A utopia could likewise be understood as a social practice such as the lifestyle of the Hippies. Finally, a utopia can present a draft of a better world such as heaven, guiding actions in the present. These different meanings of utopia show its versatility and ambivalence that needs to be taken into account.

Utopias and utopian thinking have different functions (Levitas, 2013): They can be a criticism of the current reality and a catalyst for transformation by providing a guiding

vision. But likewise, they can also work as compensation and a world to which to retreat. Levitas (2013) suggests to use utopia as a method for the imaginary reconstitution of society. This includes unearthing visions of alternative realities as they might be hidden in different parts of culture or life. She suggests three different modes of utopian thinking helping in this endeavor: The archaeological, the ontological and the architectural mode. The archaeological mode is about discovering hidden utopian visions for instance in political programs, curricula or works of art. The ontological mode develops further the ideas identified in the first phase to get to know more details of the utopian vision. The final step, the architectural mode, tries to flesh out the utopia even more, imagining how it would play out in reality, including possible consequences and effects. These three modes of utopian thinking are helpful regarding identifying hidden utopian visions, no matter if they are complete utopias or just some utopian ideas. Likewise, they can be applied to various fields such as music education. Levitas's concept of understanding utopia as method is a promising way of investigating and transforming our notions of better worlds. But there are also two other approaches to describe notions of a better world: civic imagination and the possible.

Civic imagination and the possible

Civic imagination describes the collective capacity to envision alternatives to the current societal conditions. It is about “the capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions” (Jenkins et al., 2020, p. 5). *The Civic Imagination Project* for instance encourages people to develop visions of a better world, e.g. through story telling (The Civic Imagination Project, 2025). Camlin (2023) connected this concept with community music, exploring how collective musical creativity supports social transformation.

The sociocultural theory of the possible (Glaveanu, 2021) emphasizes the transformative power of experiencing difference and diversity, fostering creativity and divergent thinking. According to Glaveanu (2021, p. 6), “it is undeniable that human beings live lives that are open to the possible and that they are transformed by this openness.” Human beings might even be understood as “beings of the possible” (Glaveanu 2021, p. 7), inherently open to envisioning change. This openness is not only a given, but is something that needs to be learned.

Utopian thinking and politics

Though politics and utopian thinking may appear distinct – one grounded in reality, the other in imagination – they are deeply interconnected. Mumford (1923, p. 22) even states that without utopians throughout history, men might still be in caves, since “utopia is the principle of all progress, and the essay into a better future.” Utopias provide a model for a better society and it might indeed be that they are a “key ingredient of the whole process of modern politics” (Goodwin & Taylor, 2009, p. ix). In political programs or agendas of various interest groups, utopian ideas, e.g. regarding social justice or the environment, play an important role.

Utopia's function in political theory is often to criticize the current situation, but also to provide an alternative model. It is about questioning the status quo, but also about presenting a possibly better future. Thus, there seems to be a complex relationship between utopia and politics. Both depend to a certain degree on each other since “utopianism needs politics, pragmatically and conceptually,” but also “without politics, utopia remains on the page” (Sargisson, 2007, p. 42).

But even in the realm of politics, the ambivalence of utopia is a risk since the way from utopia to totalitarianism is a rather short one: Utopia “expresses much of the best and some of the worst in us” (Sargent 2007, p. 310). Thus, utopias should certainly not be misunderstood as blueprints. They can only show the direction. For sustainable societal

changes taking into account the interests of various groups, knowledge about political and societal processes is crucial.

The politics of change

The politics of change examines processes of political transformation, offering models to understand and guide change (Rosenow, 2013). Incrementalism, path dependency, and the advocacy coalition framework are three models trying to capture the most important features of transformational processes – while social movements and concepts such as real utopias and everyday utopias illuminate alternative pathways for societal transformation.

The foundation of many models in the area of politics of change is incrementalism. It is about the fact that policy making is not always logical and does not necessarily proceed gradually. Since larger changes might be difficult to achieve, smaller transformations or adjustments are frequently part of politicians' work. The model of path dependency also tries to capture this tendency, emphasizing that in politics, continuity is easier than transformation. Since policies are usually embedded in a larger structure of processes, they are hard to change because not only one policy would need to be transformed, but many. However, critical junctures – such as elections or social movements – can provide opportunities for change, though success depends on negotiation and compromise. The advocacy coalition framework describes goal-oriented partnerships among stakeholders united by a specific cause such as environmental sustainability. The coalitions work within existing structures to advance targeted transformations. They are usually no long-term partnerships, but only focused on specific goals (Kertz-Welzel, 2022, pp. 115–118).

No matter how successful the policy making process might have been, the implementation is usually the most difficult phase since it highly depends on people. According to Leung (2008, p. 8), coherence, stability, peer support, training and engagement are crucial factors for implementing a new policy – indicating that people are the most important factor. Even though there are different approaches, depending on the main actors (e.g., top down or bottom up), processes of implementation are often non-linear and unpredictable, requiring time and adaptability.

Social movements complement institutional change by advocating for issues often overlooked by formal politics. They have always been drivers of change and alternatives or even counterpoints to institutions. They can be defined as “social activities that occur outside of formal institutional channels” (Weinstein, 2010, p. 137). Social movements arise from utopian visions, representing ideals not yet codified in laws or norms. Examples include women's suffrage movement and environmental activism. Social movements are a joint behavior, uniting people with similar interests. They can be spontaneous or systematically organized, small or big, sometimes even turning into organizations such as the Green Party in Germany being the result of a social movement interested in environmental politics. They may manifest in protests, demonstrations, or organized campaigns. Social movements leverage the power of collective action to challenge the status quo and highlight alternative futures.

Real utopias and everyday utopias

The notion of utopia generally raises the issue of how realistic certain ideas are – if they could be implemented (even if only partly) or if they are just dreams. The concepts of real utopia and everyday utopia address these issue in different ways.

Real utopias represent a more realistic approach to utopian thinking. In Wright's (2010) concept, real utopias balance ambitious ideals with practical implementations, guided by

scientific knowledge. They are focused on transformations that are possible and can be implemented, even though being driven by utopian visions. A participatory city budget, governed by a participatory city budget assembly, or worker-owned cooperatives are for Wright (2010) examples for real utopias. They are part of an “emancipatory social science” (Wright, 2010, p. 10), not only being interested in describing how society is, but rather in how it could be and what should be changed. The goal of real utopias is to generate “scientific knowledge relevant to the collective project challenging various forms of human oppression” (Wright, 2010, p. 10). The three steps procedure implementing this method starts with a diagnosis and critique, then creating alternatives to finally conclude in a concept of social transformation. Real utopias focus on using the power of utopian thinking for transformations which are possible, based on scientific knowledge, without giving up more ambitious goals (Wright, 2010):

A vital belief in a utopian ideal may be necessary to motivate people to set off on the journey from the status quo in the first place, even though the likely actual destination may fall short of the utopian ideal. (p. 6)

Wright and his colleagues developed an entire theory and methodology of real utopia that can be useful for many processes of social transformation.

Everyday utopias also describe the more realistic side of utopian thinking. This concept (Cooper, 2014) is focused on realizing utopias in a specific space of everyday life for a certain amount of time. Thus, the utopian is “an orientation or form of attunement, a way of engaging with spaces, objects, and practices that is oriented to the hope, desire, and belief in the possibility of other, better worlds” (Cooper, p. 3). The notion of everyday utopia is connected to democracy and a self-determined way of living. Everyday utopias, according to Cooper (2014), are for instance Speakers’ Corner in London’s Hyde Park where public speeches and discussions allow for participating in democratic activities, supporting equal rights. Likewise, Cooper considers a local exchange trading system (LET, see LetsLink UK, 2025) in the U.K. where people trade products without money, thus foreshadowing a different economy, as everyday utopia. Everyday utopias represent “a world at a (temporal or spatial) distance from their own, utopian creators de-familiarize the world they know and inhabit: in the process they enable taken-for-granted aspects to be questioned and rethought” (Cooper, 2014, p. 4.) They stand for the visions of individuals or groups, realizing a utopian idea for a certain amount of time in a specific place, to “capture a sense of hope” (Cooper, 2014):

By creating a world at a (temporal or spatial) distance from their own, utopian creators de-familiarize the world they know and inhabit: in the process they enable taken-for-granted aspects to be questioned and rethought. (p. 4)

The project *Play me, I’m yours* is also such an everyday utopia, placing pianos all over cities to allow everyone access to music making, thus implementing a utopian vision many music educators have (<https://www.streetpianos.com>). Everyday utopias are as well as real utopias highly transformative, even though they might not create a completely new society. They contribute to gradual change and offer glimpses at how the world could be different.

The arts and social transformation

The arts, long seen as both transformative and utopian, can represent the hope for a better world. Johnson (2002, p. 90) describes art as “fundamentally utopian: it embodies the human hope that the world and we who inhabit it might be remade.” This utopian and transformative quality arises from the arts’ unique interplay between sociality and autonomy.

On the one hand, the arts are connected deeply with society, as Born's (2012) four planes of music's sociality, as described above, illustrate. On the other hand, the autonomy of the arts provides a free, transformative space detached from the instrumental, means-end logic of daily life or the instrumentalization of music education for utilitarian purposes.

The concept of autonomy, as articulated by Clarke (2012), highlights music's potential to resist instrumentalization and a utilitarian focus often imposed on it:

... the autonomous moment available to music – embodying the notion of something valuable in and for itself – might still offer a moment of subjective resistance against the social domination of means-end-oriented rationality. (p. 182).

This transformational power embodied in the arts' autonomy or music for its own sake has often been overlooked in international music education. Praxial music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2015) for instance criticizes the arts' autonomy as part of a Bourgeois ideology, particularly related to ideas of the German philosopher Kant (Kertz-Welzel, 2024). If music education's main goal is social change, not being focused on transformational processes seems to promote automatically music for its own sake, possibly supporting the status quo. The transformative power and the educational value of aesthetic experiences aim also at changing individuals – but rather as a side-effect and not as main goal.

The trust in the transformative power of the autonomous arts is particularly evident in the Northern European tradition of *Bildung* and aesthetic education. In this approach, music's transformative power lies in its freedom from specific purposes or utilitarian ends (Varkoy, 2010). The aesthetic power of music and its freedom are transformative in itself, without instrumentalizing music or music education for a specific goal. Thus, particularly in relation to praxial music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), *aesthetische Bildung* (aesthetic education) is an alternative concept that should be acknowledged in international music education (Varkoy, 2010). However, even though the term *aesthetic* might imply a rather Eurocentric approach, similar ideas appear in other cultural traditions. For example, Chinese philosophy emphasizes music's ability to create transformative spaces through notions of nothingness and freedom (Lu & Tan, 2021). These ideas shared across cultures highlight the universal value of music for its own sake and transformative aesthetic experiences.

How to change the world

The considerations above indicate that for “changing the world,” it is important to move beyond a simplistic belief in the arts' power. A critical approach is much needed, acknowledging that the arts have power, although not magic power, and cannot transform the world on their own. Instead, they play a crucial role within broader transformational processes, often related to political initiatives. This perspective invites a reconceptualization of music education policy. Rather than focusing for instance on the political frameworks governing music teaching and learning, this field should also examine the transformational processes initiated by music and music education. Approaches like music education for social change must be informed by research in music education policy that explores the actual mechanisms of societal transformation such the politics of change and the specific contributions of music within those processes. In this endeavor, utopian thinking in its different facets plays a major role, for instance everyday utopia (Kertz-Welzel, 2022b).

Learning utopian thinking in music education

If utopian thinking is central to societal transformation, then, it is important to learn it. While all of us might engage in one form of utopian thinking when we daydream, truly

transformative utopian thinking involves structured, imaginative exploration of possibilities that transcend existing realities. Utopian thinking guides developing and realizing everyday utopias.

1. Fostering utopian thinking through aesthetic experiences. One way is through encountering the arts which foster, according to Greene (1995), utopian thinking in terms of “releasing the imagination.” Aesthetic experiences enable us to think beyond the so far given, towards a potentially better future. This happens particularly through art for its own sake, outside of means-end relations. Art offers a space to develop ideas and play with them, to get to know emotions triggered through musical experiences, facilitating imagining alternatives, sharing and maybe discussing them. Greene’s (1995) ideas can provide a foundation for the transformative power of aesthetic experiences, even though they have been recently marginalized in music education, due to the dominance of praxial music education and its critique of the aesthetic (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). In the context of reconceptualizing music education and societal transformation through the concept of utopian thinking, Greene’s ideas can be one starting point to reconceptualize aesthetic experience in music education in relation to utopian thinking.

2. Studying and creating utopias. Another method of learning utopian thinking is studying utopias from various times and places, such as feminist or ecological visions (Brodsky & Nalibuff, 2015). Historical and contemporary examples can serve as inspirations to develop one’s own visions of a better society. This process may begin with free imagination and continue to more systematic concepts. For instance, utopian elements within educational curricula can be identified and further elaborated, as suggested by Levitas’ (2013) three modes of utopian thinking. Moreover, creating utopias and discussing utopian visions of how the society could be different, from an individual or communal perspective, fosters imaginative thinking. These visions can be expressed through works of arts, e.g. in painting or song writing. Developing concepts for everyday utopias could likewise be a promising way. Everyone could create utopian visions in various art forms, particularly music, to further express, explore or refine notions of possibly better societies.

3. Systematic approaches to utopian thinking. Mulgan (2022, p. 88) offers a more concrete approach to systematically learning utopian thinking. He suggests the methods of *extension*, *grafting*, *inversion*, *addition*, *subtraction*, *mobilizing metaphor and analogy* and *using randomness*. *Extension* means building on existing ideas to expand their scope and application such as the project *Play me, I’m Yours*, expanding it to include various instruments or group sessions. *Grafting* describes combining elements from different areas to generate novel concepts such as music and cooking. *Inversion* concerns, like during a carnival, turning something into its opposite such as laborers becoming kings or music teachers becoming students in musical areas where students have more knowledge. *Addition and subtraction* mean enhancing existing ideas or structures by adding variations or elements such as ornaments in architecture or music. This could, for instance, mean enhancing an existing music program with new elements such as new instruments. *Mobilizing metaphor and analogy* describes reframing societal concepts through metaphors – for instance understanding society in different ways: e.g. not as a battle between social classes but maybe as an organism or a family (Mulgan, 2023, p. 169). *Using randomness* describes something similar to serendipity, utilizing the unplanned in a positive way, to inspire creativity and innovation – such as possibly wrong notes as start of an interesting improvisation. These approaches encourage systematic exploration of alternative futures, enabling individuals and institutions to envision and implement change. Mulgan’s (2023) ideas are related to the sociocultural theory of the possible and pedagogy of the possible, encouraging learners to explore and construct alternatives to current societal realities.

Pedagogy of the possible

Pedagogy of the possible is a concept initially developed in the context of language studies (Murray, 2013). It has since been adopted by the emerging field of possibility studies (Glaveanu, 2021) and is part of educational approaches taking the future into account in education to prepare young people for uncertainty (Beghetto, 2023). Central to this concept is the ability to imagine alternatives to the current state of society and to become agents of change.

While young people may naturally know how to daydream or to imagine themselves as someone or somewhere else, imagining the possible – or practicing utopian thinking – is different. It requires learning and practice. As research in music teacher education indicates, utopian thinking transcends mere wishful thinking such as having more instruments in classrooms (Viig et al., 2023). Instead, it involves systematically learning to envision alternatives – possibilities that have not yet been realized, regardless of whether they seem realistic. Mulgan (2022, p. 246) might be right that “imagination is like a muscle which needs regular exercise.” However, imagination and utopian thinking also require freedom – a space to explore ideas and to create various options. Music education offers such a space where the autonomy of music allows for exploration beyond means-end relations. As Orwell (cited in Mulgan, 2022, p. 38) might note correctly, “imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity.”

Pedagogy of the possible explicitly provides possibility spaces, nurturing the ability to imagine the possible. Glaveanu (2021, p. 173) emphasizes that “openness to difference and to the novelties that emerge from engaging with them is not a given – it is something to be taught.” Thus, “the possible is ever present, but its exploration cannot be taken for granted” (Glaveanu, 2021, p. 173). However, the possible is not merely an abstract idea but becomes tangible when encountering diverse perspectives, challenging assumptions, and reimagining one’s worldview. Glaveanu (2023) offers a methodological framework for fostering the possible in education, summarized in the acronym PROMPT (*positioning, repositioning, original repositioning, making, possibilities transformed*) – a way of opening and using the possibility space. The possibility space is a realm of multiple options from which to choose. PROMPT helps young people to encounter this space. It encompasses different stages and is based on the idea that solving complex problems requires more than one perspective. To explore new ways of thinking and being, there must first be choices, then evaluate them from various angles to identify the best course of action. Mulgan (2023, p. 164) further elaborates what the term “possibility space” means as a term borrowed from mathematics and statistics. It describes the range of options available to an individual or society. While the size of this space is influenced by cultural and institutional contexts, imagination is the key factor in expanding it. For Mulgan (2023), social sciences should play a crucial role in broadening the possibility space by offering new ideas about how the world could be different. He argues for a shift from analyzing the past to exploring the future, advocating for the social sciences to become more exploratory and imaginative.

Music education as utopian theory and practice

Reconceptualizing music education and music education policy by relating them to utopian thinking and pedagogy of the possible provides a new framework for understanding its socially transformative and aesthetic dimensions. It makes the general concept of utopia more concrete. Music education becomes a place for explicitly learning utopian thinking and imagining the possible, as a basis for political and social transformations, informed by music education policy. However, social transformation should not be the only goal of music education since music education is about more than social change. Hesmondalgh (2012) notes about music education and social change:

There is nothing wrong with this question, as long as it is not assumed to exhaust our understanding of the politics, or social significance, of music. Nothing can change anything by itself! However much we want to see the world become a better place, surely none of us would want to see music evaluated solely on the basis of the degree to which it contributes to social change. It has other purposes ... (p. 374)

One of these purposes is music education as a free or aesthetic space, existing for its own sake, not restricted by means-end relations. Although this idea has been criticized in praxial music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), it is an important dimension of music education. Even without following a clear purpose, music education can be transformative through intense encounters with the arts in terms of aesthetic experiences. Music education as utopian theory and practice – or as pedagogy of the possible – needs free spaces where young people can develop their imagination and learn to create alternatives to the present reality. Music and music education for their own sake are not purposeless; rather, they transcend means-end relations and offer a space for envisioning alternatives.

It is essential for music education as utopian theory and practice to offer a possibility space for free imagination. Utopian thinking depends on freedom, and social transformation relies on utopian thinking. This highlights the interconnectedness of music education as a free space and its role in social transformation. While praxial music education differentiates between music (education) for its own sake and its transformative dimensions (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), it may be time to reunite these perspectives. Doing so would honor both the need for free aesthetic spaces that nurture utopian thinking and the long-standing connection between the arts and societal transformation. Thus, I propose two complementary approaches: politically and socially responsive music education as one perspective and (a)esthetic music education as a second one (Kertz-Welzel, 2022).¹ Both are vital for a balanced music education curriculum and for understanding music education's relation to social change. These approaches are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, ensuring that music education fulfills its potential as both a transformative and an (a)esthetic space.

Conclusion

Even if there is no manual for how to change the world, certain aspects, like those mentioned above, could potentially be part of it. Becoming utopian thinkers could be one such aspect, including the critical exploration of what kind of alternative society we envision. Although we might not agree on our visions of a just society, it is crucial to engage in open discussion about the goals of social change. This can help move beyond a naïve understanding of music education's relationship to social transformation. Understanding music education as utopian theory and practice, in relation to the possible, includes a critical approach, but one which acknowledges the power of music while recognizing its limitations. However, it is important to keep in mind that music education is not solely about social transformation, but also about the intrinsic value of music itself, offering a possibility space for utopian thinking. Therefore, politically and socially responsive music education and (a)esthetic music education are complementary approaches that are both essential.

Reconceptualizing music education as utopian theory and practice allows us to rethink its role in relation to social change. This involves framing music education within the context of the possible – perhaps even as pedagogy of the possible – opening aesthetic spaces where alternative futures can be imagined. These spaces can guide societal transformation.

[1] The spelling of esthetic without an a indicates the difference of this approach from aesthetic education as criticized by praxial music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

However, political knowledge, as mentioned above, is vital to understanding to the societal and political mission of the arts. This perspective could also help to reconceptualize music education policy as field also concerned with music education and social change.

As scholars in music education policy, we must critically examine the political frameworks, processes, and conditions necessary for societal transformation – both in research and in practice. Music education policy has much to contribute to the discourse on music education and social change. It carries a responsibility for the future, for realizing the societal potential of music education, and for shaping the future of our societies. Mulgan (2022) captures this responsibility in this way:

If you don't try to shape the future world you will live in, you have less of a right to complain when it disappoints you. (p. 246)

In music education and music education policy, we must embrace this responsibility, not only as researchers, but also as active citizens and artistic citizens – to utilize the power of music and music education in a responsible, but also critical way. Understanding music education as utopian theory and practice – or as a pedagogy of the possible – might be a promising way to do this. ■

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Abstract

Transforming society has been an important topic in music education and related fields such as community music in recent years. To a certain degree, “changing the world” has seemed to be music education’s major purpose. While no one would doubt music’s transformative potential, the belief that it can cause sustainable societal changes is exaggerated. Social change is a complex and ambivalent matter – and one to which various factors contribute. This keynote develops, based on a critique of oversimplified concepts, a new model of music education’s political and societal responsibility. By applying research from political studies, but also from the fields of utopian thinking and possibility studies, this keynote offers a new approach to music education’s transformative potential and its significance for society. ■

Lectio praecursoria

Ryhmämuotoisessa soitonopetuksessa ja -oppimisessa rakentuva vuorovaikutus ja ryhmän merkitys.

Tapaustutkimus luokanopettajien aikuiskoulutuksen kontekstissa

Lectio Praecursoria

12.4.2024 Kokkolan yliopistokeskus Chydeniuksen Ulappa-sali

Arvoisa kustos, kunnioitettu vastaväittäjä, hyvät kuulijat.

*A*vaan pianoluokan oven. Tunti ei ala vielä, mutta neljä opiskelijaa on jo paikalla harjoittelemassa. Jokainen istuu oman sähköpianonsa takana kuulokkeet korvillaan. Jollakin on edessään valokopioitu nuotti tai alakoulun musiikin oppikirja, joku katsoo nuotteja edessään olevalta tietokoneen näytöltä tai tabletilla. Jollakin ei ole nuotteja lainkaan. Hän soittaa kuulonvaraisesti ulkomuistista tai improvisoi. Hiljaisuuden rikkoo vain koskettimien vaimea kopina ja soittajien ajoittainen hyräily.

Edellä oli pieni kurkistus pianostudioon. Kyseessä on yksi mahdollinen tilanne ryhmämuotoisen pianonsoiton opiskelun aikana. Tosin tässä tilanteessa ei oikeastaan ollut kyse ryhmän toiminnasta, vaan opiskelijat olivat päättäneet vetäytyä kukin omaan yksityiseen tilaansa. Tämäkin on yksi ryhmämuotoisessa soitonopiskelussa tarjoutuva mahdollisuus – resurssi.

Olen tässä tutkimuksessa halunnut tarkastella sitä, mitä pianonsoittoa opiskelevassa aikuisopiskelijoiden ryhmässä oikein tapahtuu.

Kiinnostus tähän aiheeseen nousee omista kokemuksistani soitonopettajana. Olen toiminut luokanopettajakoulutuksessa musiikinopettajana ja opetin opiskelijoille pianonsoittoa pitkään yksityistunneilla. Opiskelijat pitivät yksityistunteja tehokkaina ja merkityksellisinä. Sittenmin tästä perinteisestä tavasta opettaa on luokanopettajakoulutuksissa luovuttu ja siirrytty ryhmämuotoiseen opetukseen.

Kun muutos osui kohdalleni, se herätti huolta. Vaatimus tuli ulkoapäin, ja taustalla vaikutti talouden paine, eivät niinkään pedagogiset perusteet. Mutta kun ryhmäopetus sitten alkoi ja ryhdyin kehittämään sitä, huomasin pian, että vaikka ryhmässä ehkä menetetään jotain yksilöopetuksen intensiivisyydestä, sillä saattaa olla tarjottavanaan jotain sellaista, mitä yksilötunneilla ei saavuteta. Soiton opiskelu ja opettaminen ryhmässä näytti monita-
hoiselta ilmiöltä. Halusin purkaa sen osasiinsa ja koota uudelleen, jotta saisin jäsentyneemmän kuvan siitä, mitä ryhmässä tapahtuu ja miten ryhmässä tarjoutuvia mahdollisuuksia voitaisiin entistä tietoisemmin hyödyntää erilaisissa ryhmäoppimisen konteksteissa. Ilmiöön piti siis tarttua tutkimuksen tarjoamin välinein.

Ryhmämuotoista opetustilannetta ja opetustilanteiden vuorovaikutusta on toki tutkittu, ei kuitenkaan paljon soitonopetuksen kentällä. Musiikkikasvatuksen tutkimuksessa taas luokkamuotoinen opetus on ollut tiheämmin tutkimuskohteena kuin instrumenttiopetus (Daniel, 2006, s. 191). Näen tässä tutkimuksellisen aukon, jota omalta osaltani pyrin täyttämään.

Tämä tutkimus koskee luokanopettajakoulutusta. Kyse on siis erityistapauksesta soitonopetuksen alueella. Luokanopettajat ja musiikki on melko vähän tutkittu aihepiiri. Se on kuitenkin tärkeä tutkimuskohde, ei vähiten siksi, että se linkittyy peruskoululaisten saamaan musiikinopetukseen. Onhan opettajan oma musiikkisuhde yhteydessä siihen, miten hän välittää musiikkia oppilailleen (Juntunen, 2007, s. 61; Juvonen, 2008a, s. 96; Sepp ym., 2018; Suomi ym., 2022).

Tätä nykyä suomalaisten peruskoulun aikana saamasta musiikin opetuksesta suurin osa tapahtuu luokanopettajien toimesta (Anttila, 2010; Muukkonen, 2011; Sepp ym., 2018). Aineenopettajan moni oppilas kohtaa vasta yläkoulussa. Toki tilanne ei ole aivan näin synkkä, sillä luokanopettaja on voinut erikoistua musiikkiin (Ketovuori & Tikkanen, 2011). Lisäksi joissakin yliopistoissa on mahdollista opiskella suoraan ns. kaksoistutkinto eli tutkinto antaa sekä luokan- että aineenopettajan kelpoisuuden tai hankkia sivuainekäytäntöjen avulla kaksiskelpoisuus (Muukkonen, 2011, s. 33; Opettajankoulutus 2020, 2007, ss. 23–24).

Keskustelua on käyty – sekä Suomessa että kansainvälisesti – siitä, kenen tulisi opettaa musiikkia alakoulussa. Luokanopettajien kompetenssia musiikin opettamiseen on epäilty. Toisaalta taas on esitetty, että oma luokanopettaja, joka pystyy nivomaan musiikin opetussuunnitelman opiskeltavaan kokonaisuuteen, on luonteva valinta musiikin opettamiseen. (Ahonen, 2009, s. 222.) Aineenopettajamallin vaarana on nähty musiikin irtaantuminen muusta opetussuunnitelmasta erilliseksi saarekkeekseen. Tällöin menetettäisiin musiikin eheyttävät mahdollisuudet ja myös osa Opetussuunnitelman perusteiden ilmiöitä ja kokonaisuuksia painottavasta hengestä (Mäkinen & Juvonen, 2017, s.7).

Joka tapauksessa on myös opettajia, jotka opettavat musiikkia alaluokkien oppilaille ilman mitään erikoistumisopintoja, niillä valmiuksilla, joita ovat koulutuksen aikana saaneet. Tähän tutkimukseen osallistuneet opiskelijat olivat juuri heitä.

Ei siis ole yhdentekevää, millaiset valmiudet, asenteet, itseluottamuksen ja motivaation musiikin opettamiseen tulevat opettajat saavat koulutuksessaan. Osana näitä opintoja on pianonsoitto, jossa perusasioiden ohella keskitytään hankkimaan valmiuksia oppilaiden laulun säestämiseen. On myös todettu, että soittimen hallinta edes jollain tasolla antaa opettajalle itseluottamusta musiikin parissa toimimiseen ja oppilaiden musisoinnin ohjaamiseen (Juntunen, 2007, s. 61; Juvonen, 2008a, s. 96; Sepp ym., 2018; Suomi ym., 2022). Tämä on tarpeen, sillä nykyaikainen musiikinopetus ei ole vain musiikinkuuntelua ja tiedollisia sisältöjä. Opetussuunnitelmat painottavat sen sijaan monipuolista tekemistä sekä musiikin kokemista ja oppimista toiminnan kautta (POPS, 2014, s. 142, s. 264).

Tässä tutkimuksessa olen pyrkinyt muodostamaan kuvaa soitonoppimisesta, nimenomaan ryhmässä ja osana luokanopettajien opintoja. Tarkastelin muun muassa sitä, millaisia mahdollisuuksia ja resursseja ryhmässä on tarjolla (Westberry & Franken, 2013) ja millaisia tehtäviä kielellisellä ja musiikillisella vuorovaikutuksella on oppimistilanteissa.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen pohja on hermeneuttis-praktisessa perinteessä siinä mielessä, että tarkoitus ei ole kontrolloida tai muuttaa tutkimuskohdetta, vaan kuvata ja ymmärtää sitä. En siis pyri kertomaan, millaista soitonopetuksen pitäisi olla, vaan millaista se juuri tässä tapauksessa on. Taustalla on sosiokonstruktivistinen käsitys tiedosta. Se tarkoittaa, että tieto ei ole jotain valmista ja pysyvää, vaan ihmisten rakentama aikaan, paikkaan ja kulttuuriin sitoutunut sosiaalinen rakennelma (Berger & Luckmann, 2020, s. 39; Gergen, 2001; Vygotski & Cole, 1978, ss. 23–24). Oppimista lähestyn sosiokulttuurisen oppimiskäsityksen näkökulmasta. Se tarkoittaa, että oppiminen tapahtuu vuorovaikutuksessa, symbolisten tai fyysisten välineiden kautta välittyneenä ja osallistumalla yhteisöjen toimintaan (Arvaja, 2005; Jarvis, 2009; Mercer, 2000; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Vygotski & Cole, 1978).

Kyseessä on tapaustutkimus, joka kohdistuu yhteen, rajattuun tapaukseen opettajankoulutuksen kentällä, nimittäin yhteen vuosikurssiin ja sen opintoihin sisältyvään ryhmämuotoiseen soitonopetukseen (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Eriksson & Koistinen, 2014; Stake, 1995).

Näkökulma, ikkuna, josta olen tarkastellut ryhmäsoittotunteja, on vuorovaikutus. Soittotuntien vuorovaikutuksen erityispiirre on musiikin osuus. Pelkän puheen ja kehonkielen huomioiminen antaisi vuorovaikutuksesta vaillinaisen kuvan, sillä suuri osa kommunikoinnista on musiikillista (Paalanen, 2020, s. 5; Rostvall & West, 2005, s. 89; Stevanovic & Kuusisto, 2018; West, 2007, s. 142).

Tutkimuksen aineisto muodostui videoiduista ryhmäoppimistilanteista ja niihin liittyneistä haastatteluista. Aineiston analyysissa käytin laadullista sisällönanalyysia ja vuorovaikutustutkimuksen metodeja, kuten sosiokulttuurista diskurssianalyysia. Se tarkoittaa, että tarkastelun kohteena ovat pikemminkin vuorovaikutuksen sisällöt ja funktiot, eivät niinkään rakenteet. (Kämäräinen, 2021; Mercer, 2004; 2010; Lehti ym., 2018.)

Vuorovaikutusanalyysissa olen siis kiinnittänyt huomioni pääasiassa siihen, miten puhetta ja musiikkia käytetään vuorovaikutuksen ja oppimisen resursseina ja millaisia tehtäviä niillä on vuorovaikutuksessa. Olen käyttänyt erilaisia aineistoja ja menetelmiä, koska halusin saada esiin mahdollisimman kokonaisvaltaisen kuvan ilmiöstä, jota tutkin.

Mitä tutkimus sitten kertoi ryhmäsoittotunneista ja niillä tapahtuvasta vuorovaikutuksesta?

Tutkimuksen tulokset tiivistyivät neljään osakokonaisuuteen.

Ensinnäkin ryhmä tuo oppimistilanteeseen resursseja, joita yksilötunneilla ei saavuteta. Näitä ovat ihmiset, laitteet ja välineet, erilaiset artefaktit. Opettajakin on resurssi, kuten myös opiskelijat toisilleen, mutta hän on samalla resurssien järjestäjä ja orkestroija. Tarjolla olevista resursseista oppija voi valita itselleen sillä hetkellä parhaiten sopivat. (Beauchamp & Kennewell, 2010; Luckin, 2008; Westberry & Franken, 2013.)

Ryhmässä osaamista on mahdollista jakaa, ratkaisumalleja on tarjolla enemmän ja osallistujien hiljainen tieto voi tulla esiin. Ryhmässä mahdollistuu toisilta, vertaisilta oppiminen ja myös vertaisten opettaminen. Oppia voi siis myös toista opettamalla. Näin ryhmässä esiintyvät osaamiserot ovat myös resursseja. Ryhmän oppimistilannetta sopii mielestäni kuvaamaan metafora pedagogisista nyttikesteistä, joille jokainen tuo tarjottavaa.

Tunnistin erilaisia toiminnan muotoja, jotka tapahtuivat limittäin, peräkkäin ja päällekkäin. Käynnissä näytti jatkuvasti olevan eri asioita yhtä aikaa. Kuvaan tällaista tilannetta metaforalla *tiheä aika*. Soittotuntien vuorovaikutukselle oli ominaista puheen, musiikin ja kehon kielen kietoutumine yhteen. Ilmaisua saattoi esimerkiksi alkaa puheena ja jatkua soittona tai lauluna. Tai kysymys esitettiin puhuen ja siihen vastattiin soittaen. Puhe, musiikki ja kehonkieli täydensivät näin toisiaan. Yhteissoitto oli merkittävä ryhmässä tarjoutuva resurssi. Se oli virittävää, motivoivaa ja palkitsevaa.

Toiseksi tutkimus toi näkyviin musiikin monet funktiot ja keskeisen osuuden vuorovaikutuksessa. Musiikki esimerkiksi täydensi ja konkretisoi puhetta. Yhteissoitto mahdollisti ilmiön, jota nimitän *soivaksi tukirakenteeksi*. Se vertautuu mielessäni Vygotskin (1978) tunnettuun teoriaan lähikehityksen vyöhykkeestä, jolla oppija voi tuettuna edetä pitemmälle kuin yksin osaisi. Yhteissoittotilanteessa vertaiset muodostavat musiikin välineitä käyttäen kudoksen, jonka tuella edetä. Kukin yksilö voi olla sekä tuen antaja että saaja, sillä kudoksen muodostamiseen tarvitaan jokaisen panos ja jokainen voi myös tukeutua siihen. Tätä ilmiötä pidän keskeisenä musiikin funktiona, ryhmäopetuksessa tarjoutuvana oppimisen resurssina ja yhtenä tutkimukseni tärkeistä löydöistä

Kolmanneksi tutkimus vahvisti aiempia tuloksia (Repo-Kaarento, 2004) ryhmän sosioemotionaalisen ilmapiirin tärkeydestä. Ryhmä toisaalta antaa yksilölle tukea ja turvaa, mutta aiheuttaa toisaalta painetta ja turhautumista. Tämä koskee monenlaisia ryhmiä, mutta musiikki tuo toimintaan omat erityispiirteensä. Saattaahan toisten kuullen soittaminen olla paljastavaa ja jännittävää esimerkiksi aikuiselle vasta-alkajalle. Osallistujat – sekä opettaja että opiskelijat – pyrkivätkin eri tavoin vaalimaan ryhmän ilmapiiriä, jotta osallistuminen olisi kaikille turvallista.

Neljänneksi, kun tarkastelin opettajan, tässä tapauksessa siis itseni ja ryhmän välistä vuorovaikutusta, havaitsin siinä jännitteitä. Vaikka pyrin toiminnallani asettumaan osaksi muuta ryhmää ja antamaan ryhmälle tilaa, määrittelin tilanteita. Oppimisvuorovaikutus poikkeaa arkipäivän vuorovaikutustilanteista, sillä siihen kohdistuu institutionaalinen odotus epäsymmetriasta ja opettajan muita suuremmasta vallasta tilanteessa (Kauppinen ym., 2013, s. 18; Kämäräinen ym., 2016, s. 8; Kääntä, 2011, s. 129; Mercer, 2010, s. 7). Ryhmämuotoisessa opetuksessakin saattavat yksilöopetuksen käytännöt olla osallistujien mielissä eräänlaisina perusasetuksina (Rikandi, 2012, s. 47–48; Gaunt ja Westerlund, 2013, s. 1–2). Opiskelijat eivät helposti ota aktiivista roolia, vaikka siihen kannustettaisiin. Vertaisten vuorovaikutus vaatiikin usein käynnistyäkseen opettajan tukea ja aloitteita. Aikuisen asettautuminen oppilaan – opetettavan – positioon vaatii toisinaan työstämistä ja tasapainoilua ja neuvottelua sekä opettajalta että opiskelijoilta.

Mikä tämän tutkimuksen tulosten merkitys sitten on?

Tulokseni täydentävät sosiokulttuurisen tutkimuksen kenttää tarkentuessaan soiton opetukseen ja oppimiseen, opettajankoulutukseen ja aikuisopiskelijoihin. Tutkimus toi esiin erityisesti musiikin ominaisuuksia, funktioita ja käytänteitä, jotka helposti jäävät hiljaisen tiedon piiriin. Nyt se, miten monin tavoin musiikkia käytettiin vuorovaikutuksen välineenä, tuli sanallistetuksi ja tiedostetuksi. Ryhmän tapahtumista ymmärretään hiukan enemmän.

Kun liikutaan luokanopettajakoulutuksen kentällä, ryhmän soitotunneilla tarjoutuu luontevasti mahdollisuuksia pohtia toimintaa ja musiikillisia käytänteitä myös luokkaopetuksen näkökulmasta. Sinnehän opinnot tähtäävät.

Tulosten perusteella uskallan väittää, että ryhmämuotoinen soitonopiskelu sopii luontevasti luokanopettajakoulutuksen opetusmuodoksi. Osallistuminen ryhmän vertaisvuorovaikutukseen ja vertaisoppimiseen, ja esimerkiksi yhteismusisointiin voi tukea opiskelijan musiikkisuhdetta ja antaa valmiuksia ja rohkeutta oppilaiden kanssa musisoimiseen ja musisoinnin ohjaamiseen.

Jos ryhmän mahdollisuuksia halutaan hyödyntää enemmän ja ryhmän ja sen jäsenten positiota vahvistaa, se vaatii tietoista suunnittelua ja tietoisesti luotuja, mutta tarpeen tullen joustavia rakenteita. Opettajan tulee olla tietoinen opiskelijoiden yksilöllisistä tarpeista ja etsiä tasapainoa oman osuutensa suhteen. Toisinaan ryhmä tarvitsee enemmän opettajan tukea ja fasilitointia, toisinaan taas on syytä antaa ryhmän keskinäiselle oppimiselle enemmän aikaa ja tilaa. Sekä yksilö- että ryhmäopetuksella on omat vahvuutensa. Perinteisen yksilöopetuksen traditio on hioutunut vuosisatojen kuluessa. Ryhmäopetus ei tietenkään koskaan korvaa sitä. Yksilötunnit voivat olla intensiivisiä ja tehokkaita. Ryhmämuotoisella soitonopetuksella on kuitenkin paikkansa esimerkiksi juuri luokanopettajakoulutuksen kontekstissa. Sinne ryhmämuotoinen soitonopetus onkin tullut jäädäkseen eikä yksilöopetukseen ole paluuta.

Lopuksi vielä kurkistus pianostudioon.

Opiskelijat jatkavat soittamista ja hyräilyä ilman sopimista tai ohjeita opettajan etsiessä nuotteja. Soitto hakeutuu vähitellen samaan. Vuorovaikutus tapahtuu musiikin kielellä, ei sanoin. Rinnakkainsoitto hakeutuu yhteiseksi. Kuuluu vain soittoa ja hiukan hiljaista hyräilyä välillä. Joku soittaa murtosointuja, joku pitkiä sointuja, joku yrittää tapailla melodiaa. Videolta ei voi päätellä, kuka tekee mitään. Kaikki soittavat yhtä aikaa. Opettaja ei osallistu millään tavalla.

Tämä oli lyhyt kuvaus tilanteesta, jossa opiskelijat rakentavat soitollaan tukiverkon. Näen tällaisen tilanteen mielessäni veneenä, jossa on useampi soutaja. Jos yksi pudottaa aironsa, jatkavat toiset soutamista, kunnes airot pudottanut soutaja saa pyydystettyä ne takaisin ja pääsee taas mukaan soutamisen rytmiin. Vene ei pysähdy. ■

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Children's singing ecologies in culturally diversifying Finnish schools and society

Lectio praecursoria 15.2.2025, Musiikkitalo, Helsinki

Honoured custos, honoured opponent, dear audience,

Many of us may recall meaningful moments of singing in our childhood. We may remember the surroundings or feelings connected with those moments. Childhood memories and experiences are personal and unique, and so are singing experiences, which involve many feelings and connect with multiple situations, places, people, communities, and cultures. I have memories of my childhood in Argentina, singing in the garden, around flowers, surrounded by elder trees, improvising songs, and often playing my guitar. I remember the emotions that arose when I invented new songs that emerged from my imagination – and when I was singing together with friends.

Over the past decades, music educators have studied children's singing mainly from the perspective of effective vocal skill development or vocal pedagogy or by approaching children's cultures through song repertoires (Davidson, 1985; Dowling, 1984; Rutkowski, 1990; Welch, 1998, 2002, 2006). These approaches reflect the dominant tendency in the field to value the results – or the products – of vocal development. However, little is known about the meanings that young children themselves ascribe to singing, and their experiences of singing, in increasingly diversifying educational and social contexts. Therefore, in my doctoral research, I have taken children's perspectives as the starting point and shifted the focus to understanding their own experiences (Capponi-Savolainen & Kivijärvi, 2017). My doctoral research has been based on the idea that in order to understand what singing *means* for children, we need to listen to their stories with genuine interest and learn about their life experiences (Barrett, 2011, 2012). It offers an interdisciplinary framework to understanding young children's singing as perceived by the children themselves. The framework has been conceptualised as *children's singing ecologies*, using Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theorisation (1979, 1986) as the starting point.

By children's singing ecologies I refer to the intrinsically intertwined connections and relationships that grow out of children's singing experiences within and across the ecologies and ecosystems in which they live, such as home, schools, and the wider community and society. The research question that has guided the process is: *what meanings do children ascribe to singing within their ecologies?*

According to the perspective of childhood studies (James & Prout, 1997; James et al., 1998), childhood is not a singular event but a manifold and multi-layered phenomenon. Just as children have many different ways to relate to their environment, they also have differing relationships to singing. Thus, children's singing ecologies are unique and individual. These ecologies are constituted by children's life experiences within their temporality and relationality. Different values, visions of the world, conceptions of childhood, and the many places that children occupy in society affect how adults perceive, understand, and treat children. In rapidly culturally diversifying societies such as Finland, these processes are manifested in children's daily lives and in their experiences.

The ecological framework for children's singing developed in this research illuminates the complexity of the phenomenon of singing. It constructs a new interdisciplinary un-

derstanding of singing and children's voices in educational and social contexts and helps us move beyond the preconceived conception of children's vocal development to embrace broader socio-ecological aspects of children's singing that connect with their lived experiences. Understanding children's singing ecologies can also help teachers deploy the full potential of singing to strengthen children's agency and public political voices in culturally diverse schools. Such an understanding takes into account not only the functional but also the existential qualities of singing.

This broader ecological framework for singing follows the change in perspective that has already been advocated for in educational research: to re-consider what education means rather than what it produces (Biesta, 2017); in other words, *what singing means for the children, rather than what it produces*.

In this study, the concept of children's singing ecology was theoretically developed through four interconnected dimensions: first, the ecology of children's development and its constituent processes as an existential matter (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986); second, the political voice of children examined through the production of space and the power relationships embedded in diverse spaces in children's everyday lives (Lefebvre, 1991; Foucault, 1977, 1982); third, singing as affordances for the children's ecological agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998); and fourth, through social-ecological systems thinking (Biggs et al., 2021), which allows considering the school as a bridging organisation in a culturally diversifying society. The concept of children's spaces, drawn from childhood studies (Moss & Petrie, 2002), was used to conceptualize the core of understanding singing ecologies and the potential of singing as an affordance in schools.

The empirical material of the research was generated in an ethnographic framework (Atkinson et al., 2001). I spent a period of 4 months in one culturally diverse school in the capital area of Finland. I interviewed the children, who were first graders and 6–7-year-olds at that time. The interviewed children's native languages were Arabic, Finnish, Russian, Vietnamese, Albanian, Estonian, Portuguese, Niger-Congo, Indonesian, and English. During that time, I observed the children inside the classroom and also in the school yard and other school spaces. I also interviewed the children's teachers, who provided a perspective that helped me contextualize the children's stories and understand the school's culture and the pedagogical principles and motivations for engaging students in singing activities.

Methodologically, I leaned on a researcher-participant co-construction of narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). This means that when interviewing the children I encouraged a dialogic conversation with them, not simply to support the fluidity of the interview but also to create a sense of safety and trust during the interview. Narrative analysis methods were combined with thematic analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) within an ecological framework. I utilized Polkinghorne's narrative approach (Polkinghorne, 1995, 1998) to gain an in-depth understanding of the children's individual stories and the variety of their engagements with singing. Eleven children's stories were constructed, of which seven were selected for this dissertation because of the diversity of children's experiences and voices, and the meanings of singing they illustrate.

The interviews revealed that young children aged 6 and 7 know how their singing relates to their social-ecological relationships and can reflect verbally on their experiences. During the interviews, the children described their contextualized singing interactions in different locations, such as home, school, natural surroundings such as the forest, the park, and the neighbourhood; traveling either on public transport or in the family car; in their hobbies and at a shop or other commercial places. They situated themselves in these contexts and described their interactions. They explained how they produce spaces of trust and freedom through singing in order to handle everyday life struggles, how they create new ways of acting and participating while singing, and how they exercise their political voice by address-

ing their stance. They not only described the physical location of their singing, their own feelings associated with these locations, and the presence or absence of other beings and the nature of their interactions, but also explained the influence of these factors on their agency and their own possibilities or impossibilities of action and voice.

During the interviews, it became evident that the question of *where* children sing was intimately associated with the question *with whom* they sing or what the specific location of singing affords. I realized that the physical place was not as relevant as the qualities of the relationships provided by the environment: Who was present, and how the specific social space affords singing. Some children recognized that there are places that are not good for singing, and they reflected on the limitations on singing that were imposed from the outside, for example in classrooms when children are supposed to be quiet and sing only if teachers request it. Children also described how they search for alternative ways to sing, hum, or *think-about-singing* in these contexts. In other words, they create *in-between spaces* in the school, for example by singing in the schoolyard or by humming “in secret” inside the classroom. Children therefore create their own singing spaces, which operate under children’s rules and not under adults’ regulations and instructions.

The existential qualities of singing were evident in how the children described their experiences of singing and the meanings they ascribe to singing, both in general and in specific situations. Importantly, children’s perspectives deviated from the school curriculum, which guides teachers to focus on repertoire selection and individual vocal proficiency. Moreover, as described by children, singing does not just occur *in* concrete places and spaces but is also affected by the constituent *sense of place* (Raymond et al., 2017). Children’s possibilities or impossibilities for action are therefore affected by the socio-cultural, structural, and ecological factors present in the environment. The educational theorist Gert Biesta (2022) has explained how place and meaning are related to each other:

Places are not just physical locations – although they are that as well – and also not just ecosystems to which living organisms are more or less adapted and adjusted. The places where human lives take place are imbued with meaning for those who act within and ‘through’ them. (p. 1)

While describing their singing in general, the children who participated in my study were well aware of the meanings of singing at school and recognized the different approaches to singing and songs inside and outside school. For example, some of the children reflected on the lack of movement associated with singing in school. They considered school songs as “the teacher’s songs”, or the songs that teachers teach, and had learned to accept the teacher’s song selections without questioning. The findings of this study also demonstrate how children navigate between public and private singing, a distinction that is seldom recognized in music education.

In this study, the concept of *children’s spaces* (Moss & Petrie, 2002) was instrumental in understanding *children’s singing spaces* as participatory and meaningful locations where the children exercise their agency in and through singing. The concept of children’s singing spaces, in contrast with places, perceives children as competent and agentic individuals who can take action in their lives and their ecologies. If children’s participation can bridge *places* and *spaces* (Wyness, 2009), singing as a participatory activity can potentially enrich the quality of children’s participatory experiences. The findings suggest that *singing spaces*, as spaces created by the children themselves for themselves, provide them with *a frame of action from where they can raise their voices and influence their own lives*. In other words, children’s singing spaces provide a space for negotiating roles and learning about oneself in and through interactions with others. In singing spaces, children interact, negotiate, and construct meaning. As the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) has explained, by creating social spaces people

constitute themselves as subjects. At the same time, they are also produced by the spaces they inhabit and the power relations embedded in those spaces (Foucault, 1977, 1982). I claim that the subjectivity and political voice of the child develops in this complex spatial matrix, which is intertwined with singing.

The teachers that I interviewed were aware of the different kinds of work they currently do in the rapidly diversifying school compared to previous years. They reflected on the need for specific education for working in culturally diverse schools and developing specific tools to help in their everyday work. Indeed, singing, as a cultural tool, can be seen to help the intercultural professional development of teachers. My study indicates, however, that to fully utilize the potential of singing requires understanding singing beyond learning, as an existential, social, and even political phenomenon.

As a whole, this research shows that more attention should be given to singing as a powerful activity and affordance that can bridge home and school experiences. As I have suggested, the school could function as a bridging organization for making connections with children's experiences within their ecologies. Children create singing spaces outside school, but are also willing to create them inside the school – as they can, even in secret. Children recognize the empowerment, freedom, trust, and enjoyment present in singing spaces. However, singing spaces can also be spaces of confrontation, dissensus, and resistance, and these spaces can help the children put forward their political voice.

According to this dissertation, children's singing does not have one single, universal cultural meaning. Respecting the plurality of children's participation and engagement is the first step to making children's political voices visible. The study clearly shows that children's singing cannot be separated from the social world and its complex power relations where their agency and voice are produced.

Given the increasing cultural diversity in schools in Finland, it is becoming more and more necessary for educators and society to promote profound discussions around children's experiences and meaning-making and to develop sensitivity towards the child's voice and agency (Tesar, 2017). This dissertation has taken a step towards taking seriously The National Child Strategy in Finland (2021) and the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) by responding to the urgent need to consider children's perspectives, especially in critical issues that affect their lives. Allowing children's voices to emerge in school contexts in our culturally diversifying society means listening to the voices of all children, including the silent voices of children who belong to minorities, and the silent voices of the children who choose not to be seen or heard, even when they are offered possibilities of participation. The policy implementation, along with the new challenges in culturally diversifying and socially changing societies, requires, however, supporting the work of classroom teachers and music educators towards a new understanding of what singing for children means. Children should be listened to and respected for who they are; in other words, acknowledging their intrinsic worth as human beings. Children wish for their voices to be heard in a world where they have no or minimal power; to this end, singing can be a powerful cultural tool and affordance. As I see it, singing can potentially open up spaces of connection and caring based on trust and freedom, both inside and outside classrooms – spaces in which children can resist inequalities and injustices, contributing in this way to developing a more democratic and socially responsive music education. ■

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Kirja-arvio | Book review

Book review: Decolonising and indigenising music education: First peoples leading research and practice

Te Oti Rakena, Clare Hall, Anita Prest and David Johnson (Eds.)

The book **Decolonising and indigenising music education: First peoples leading research and practice** is a compelling work that tackles one of the most pressing yet complex questions in the field—how can indigenising and decolonising be meaningfully practiced in music education? This review aims to offer a glimpse into what each author, from Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Nepal, South Africa, Kenya, and Finland, shares about their practices of bringing indigenous, folk, or traditional musics into the classroom—or, conversely, bringing the classroom into these musical traditions. The chapters under review offer compelling insights into the intersections of indigenous knowledge systems, music education, and decolonial praxis. Each author, from their unique positionality—whether indigenous or non-indigenous research ally—engages deeply with the ethical, philosophical, and pedagogical challenges of bringing indigenous musics into formal educational spaces. Through diverse frameworks such as Indigenous Epistemic Resilience, recontextualised authenticity, and activist approaches to teaching, these contributions collectively reimagine the role of music education as a site for resistance, reconciliation, and cultural renewal. What emerges is a dynamic dialogue between tradition and transformation, inviting educators, researchers, and practitioners to rethink not only “what” we teach, but “how” and “why”.

Chapter 1: Introduction; Reflecting on the concepts “decolonising” and “indigenising” / Te Oti Rakena

The introductory chapter explores and establishes the concepts of indigenising and decolonising for this book. For Te Oti Rakena, indigenising involves offering Western academics the role of indigenous ‘norm taker’. These norms stem from “complex behaviors developed over time” (p. 1) by indigenous people. Decolonising, on the other hand, is defined as the “inclusive participation of indigenous peoples supported by *research allies*” (p. 5, emphasis added). Rakena, hence seems to lay a strong foreground for the book, as each contributor, both indigenous and non-indigenous, align with these concepts, situating themselves within indigenous settings to contextualize their work and honor indigenous knowledge—either as indigenous themselves or as allies.

Rakena frames decolonising and indigenising as disentwining from dominant knowledge systems and re-entwining with strategies informed by indigenous knowledge. This approach is consistently followed by other contributors, who prioritize referencing indigenous authors and epistemologies. Thus, it appears justifiable, when Rakena uses observations of indigenous elders: “The better you dance, the more likely you and the collective survive and prosper” (p. 5, emphasis added) and likens each contributing author to be dancers who are illustrating the diverse experiences and commonalities of indigenous epistemologies.

Although the author promises to make the introductory chapter accessible and in close alignment to indigenous oral epistemology using “how I speak” manner, some passages require readers to read between the lines in absence of any (non)verbal clues, which may pose challenges. Despite this, the chapter effectively sets the tone for the exploration of indigenous knowledge and collaboration.

Chapter 2: Bringing back the voices of our ancestors: Developing and indigenising Sámi music education / Annukka Hirvasvuopio

In the second chapter, Annukka Hirvasvuopio reflects on her personal experience with the process of revitalising the yoik tradition through her scholarly work. For the author, yoiking is not only a Sámi form of musical expression; rather, it is a way of living where individuals create yoiks that reflect their own experiences and identities as of a herder. The author explores the historical factors that have impacted the transmission of the yoik tradition, emphasising on how the colonial education system has “severed or severely weakened” (p. 14) its connection to the traditional musical context through suppression of language and culture. The author argues that Sámi music cannot be taught as a purely musical or technical exercise and raises critical questions for implementing indigenous music education in existent academic institutes: who should teach, what aspects should be emphasised, and how the teaching method should be structured.

The author provides a nuanced perspective on how music education can serve as a tool for cultural reclamation while also recognising the complexities of teaching indigenous knowledge within formal institutions. Her reflections reinforce the importance of ensuring that indigenous music is presented not just as a musical form to be preserved but as a living-evolving practice deeply embedded in the people’s culture. However, this raises a dilemma within music education: how can the integration of cultural heritage into formal education serve as a tool for decolonizing music education when it is already being shaped by the very structures it seeks to challenge?

Chapter 3. Indigenous epistemic resilience in music education: envisioning indigenous perspectives in the Mexican classroom / Hector Vazquez-Cordoba

Hector Vazquez-Cordoba establishes the context of the chapter by examining a sixth-grade history textbook in Mexico. Even after 26 years since he attended school, the textbook continues to frame indigenous people and heritage in the past tense, emphasizing colonization, spiritual conversion, and assimilation of indigenous people into a Mexican national identity. This approach fails to acknowledge indigenous peoples and their knowledge in the present. Using this context, the author introduces “Indigenous Epistemic Resilience” (IER) as a strategy to challenge meta-narratives that prevent indigenous communities from embracing, learning, and transmitting their knowledge. Later in the chapter, he establishes music-making as a tool of IER.

Drawing from his work with Huasteco music culture bearers, the author highlights how indigenous peoples have adapted Western and Western-inspired instruments to sustain their routine musical rituals and cultural practices. Indigenous people acknowledge the need to adapt and the “right to universality” (p. 32) to learn anything in the globalised world. However, as the author identifies, there is resistance within the modern education system to integrate indigenous music and epistemologies. He argues that music educators and educational institutes are key allies in indigenising and advancing decoloniality through IER, inviting culture bearers into their classrooms and collaborating with them. Highlight-

ing the importance of incorporating indigenous music into formal classrooms—while also acknowledging the challenges this presents—the chapter is insightful and invites readers to reflect on where the *authentic* component lies in indigenous music teaching and learning: “Is it in how it is taught, or is it in the indigenous teachings themselves that are embedded in the music practice, regardless of the tools—Western theory or oral tradition?” (p. 35). Hence, the chapter places significant responsibility on music educators to bring IER into practice. However, readers are left wondering what Mexican music classrooms look like in practice.

Despite the duel battle for indigenous people to resist the dominance of Anglo-Saxon culture and to continue their civilization, he expresses hope that Indigenous communities will continue to thrive on their own terms against the colonial hunger for authentic natural indigenous experience.

Chapter 4 Te Awa Tupua: Indigenous music analysis for waiata pedagogies / Meri Haami

Meri Haami examines the impact of colonialism on Māori music traditions and the potential for decolonising music education through Kaupapa Māori teaching and learning methods. The author establishes Kaupapa Māori methodologies, which “provide a historic, sociopolitical, and culturally rich context” (p. 42) to indigenous ways of knowing, as continuously evolving through critique, adaptation, and emerging concepts challenging the dominating colonial narrative. The author highlights the need for decolonisation in music education, a starting point being teaching waiata not solely relying on western transcription methods, which often fail to “attempt to translate and contextualise the unique” (p. 43) waiata melodic features, breath control, and rhythmic variations influenced by language and dialect. The author illustrates the limitations of western transcription in conveying the nuances of Māori music. Further, whakapapa is presented as central to waiata music learning. Whakapapa informs about the relational identities embedded in the Kaupapa Māori methodologies; identity formed out of the intersection of the past and future within the present context, which is shaped by environmental and political collectivity. Overall, the author provides a wider perspective that challenges conventional approaches to music education by positioning waiata as a living tradition that reflects Māori identity and historical continuity. The extensive use of local Māori terms enriches the text but also makes it challenging for readers to grasp the meaning.

Chapter 5. Heritage on stage: Music education lessons from folk musicians in Finland and Nepal / Vilma Timonen & Rizu Tuladhar

In this chapter, the authors, who come from two different cultures and have a decade-long experience of working together for “collaborative knowledge building” (p. 53), emphasize the importance of mirroring similar phenomena found in different cultural settings. They argue that this can lead to a “heterogeneous and kaleidoscopic approach” (p. 53) in envisioning ethically and culturally sustainable educational spaces for traditional music within formal music education. While advocating for the teaching and learning of traditional and historical music, they urge music institutions, scholars, and policymakers to apply critical decolonial lenses to uncover taken-for-granted assumptions and valuations of such music. They draw from a study conducted as a collaboration between Finnish and Nepali institutions, where music artists at two sites engaged in educational and musical activities with traditional musics and tradition bearers. The reflections from these artists provide insights into how traditional music can be incorporated into the formal education system. The authors

categorize these insights into several themes: *learning musical material through holistic imitation; developing contextual understanding; aesthetic navigation through ethical engagement, directing the gaze from national towards territorial and local; the interconnected problematics of hegemonics and valuations; and diversity of expressions through creative participation and ethical deliberation*. They prioritize understanding music's connection to its socio-cultural reality, and therefore, its political nature, as essential to learning and teaching traditional and historical musics. This approach, they believe, requires attention to “social justice, equality, and politics of valuations” (p. 57).

This discussion raises important questions about who gets to teach, perform, and define these traditions in institutional settings. For instance, how do educational policies reconcile the need for authenticity with the adaptability required for formal instruction? Additionally, how can music educators avoid appropriation while fostering meaningful engagement with these traditions?

Chapter 6: Contributions of music education to musical identities of Malaysian secondary schools students / Ramona Mohd. Tahir & Michel Hogenes

Ramona Mohd. Tahir and Michel Hogenes explore the role of music education in shaping the musical identities of Malaysian secondary school students. They highlight how Malaysia's diverse musical culture is a result of colonial influences and the distinct traditions of its various ethnic groups. The authors argue that music education plays a crucial role in the formation of musical identity among Malaysian young people. The authors present a case where “Musical Experience and Aesthetic Appreciation” (p. 78) aspects of Malaysian traditional music remain important in the primary and secondary Malaysian music curriculum, hence also indicating its significance to young students' personal and social identity. Despite the dominance of global popular music, students still associate traditional music with their heritage and cultural roots. This connection underscores the potential of music education to bridge generational and cultural gaps that authors establish as a considerable problem among indigenous communities locally and globally. The authors argue that integrating traditional music into music education not only shapes their musical identity but also strengthens their connection to their social identity. As the chapter provides valuable insights into how music education can influence the young generation “to form their personal, social and musical identity” (p. 85) in the age of globalization, it raises important questions about which musical traditions are recognized and included in such a diverse Malaysian music culture.

Chapter 7. Indigenising music education: The cross-cultural transfer of African Indigenous concepts and practices / Renè Human & Emily Achieng' Akuno

The chapter introduces the intriguing concept of “recontextualised authenticity” (p. 89) which can be seen as a response to the fetishization of “authenticity” in heritage and world music scholarship. The authors propose that “cross-cultural approaches, which examine the common ground between contemporary music education and indigenous arts practices and education, provide opportunities for *translation*” (p. 88, emphasis added). This translation, referred to as recontextualised authenticity, is described as an act of negotiation that addresses issues of appropriation and change of indigenous music. The authors argue that translating indigenous musics into other cultural settings can be an act of decolonisation if done in a way that honors the original music. They outline three steps for meaningful cultural transmission: understanding the original context of indigenous music, decoding

the cultural language in the new host context (resulting in *shifts in meanings*), and creating an “authentic interpretation” (p. 89) that lays the foundation for recontextualised authenticity.

The authors later in the chapter go about putting these ideas into their context of African music. They use the term “musical arts” (p. 90) to describe African music, emphasizing its multidimensional nature. As they highlight key principles for African music education: understanding what Africans define as music, developing skills to identify the nature and components of music, and considering the compassionate behaviors of African peoples, whose interactions have shaped this body of knowledge, they prioritize functionality as central to the aesthetic of African music, and advocate for its integration into music education. A learner’s mastery, they argue, should be assessed through their practice of “holism, communalism, interrelationism, and praxialism” (p. 91). Their cross-cultural music education assessment framework emphasizes accountability to society and leadership through music.

The authors also assert that African music education can bridge real-life practice with formal theory. While they recognize the value of learning other cultures’ musics, they advocate starting with local culture and epistemologies to build a foundation for exploring regional, national, and international music. Using the case of African choral culture, the chapter illustrates how translation has been achieved in this case through dialogue between Western and African practices.

It can be challenging to follow the chapter due to the inconsistent use of terminology for similar concepts, nevertheless, authors offer valuable ideas and address concerns about merging different music education systems and honouring indigenous epistemologies within music education.

Chapter 8 Approaches to ethical engagement between Australian tertiary music institutions and First Nations peoples / Christopher Sainsbury & Jennifer Newsome

In this chapter, the first author, with a background in composing, researching, founding, and leading First Nations People-based projects, and the second author, a PhD researcher, contextualize the diverse meaning of “Indigenisation” through the exploration of the intersection between indigenous rights, social justice, and music education in Australia. The authors critically examine the university-based research projects ‘Ngarra-burra First Peoples Composers’ and ‘Developing an Indigenous-informed co-design framework’ and highlight the need for a powerful call for transformative change grounded in indigenous rights and social justice principles for music institutions to be inclusive. The authors challenge researchers to reflect on their role, questioning what their work seeks to achieve, whose interests it serves, and whether it perpetuates existing power structures or fosters systemic transformation. It not only critiques existing frameworks but also provides tangible pathways toward a more inclusive society “by building on the strengths of indigenous community-institution investment and collaboration” (p. 122) through music education. While the authors effectively model a decolonising process rooted in indigenous agency and institutional co-design, it is worth considering to what extent its impact might be enhanced by incorporating a more intersectional lens or situating their work within broader frameworks of systemic equity and social transformation.

Chapter 9. Context and content: Decolonizing education in the instrumental music classroom / Katie Tremblay

The author begins by introducing herself and addressing her white colonial lineage as a scholar working with indigenous music and communities. She structures the chapter using

four teachings from indigenous “Anishinaabe Medicine Circle” framework (p. 128); the teachings being *vision, time, reason, and movement*. While the headings may initially seem disconnected, the concepts in the chapter are skillfully framed through these teachings. For example, the section where she situates herself as a white researcher in indigenous music is titled “Vision: See It,” suggesting a reflective process on her own privileged position while inviting others to do the same. This section leads to subsequent headings where she challenges non-indigenous researchers to confront their “conscious and subconscious notions of meritocracy and superiority learned in life” (p. 130). She critiques the hesitation of Western music practitioners to integrate indigenous musics and approaches, attributing this to the challenge they pose to standard notation repertoires. As an insider, she problematizes Western colonial approaches and encourages non-indigenous scholars and musicians to join the “dance” discussed in Chapter One.

Later, she calls for specific actions in the line of decolonizing and indigenizing, such as negotiating the line of cultural appropriation, blending indigenous education with present day contexts, and acknowledging white stories, experiences, and activism as well. She emphasizes taking new, unscripted steps, as there are no pre-set paths. The chapter is an excellent conclusion to the book, as it repoliticizes music education by asserting that incorporating indigenous music into classrooms also means addressing issues of land, environmental stewardship, and social justice.

The author advocates for an activist approach, urging educators to actively engage in reconciliation and decolonization in music education. While the chapter, as author mentions, derives from her work on decolonizing instrumental music classrooms, it would have been helpful to elaborate a better picture of these classrooms for readers. Is this omission suggesting an implicit colonial assumption that readers already understand the context?

Chapter 10. Afterword / Anita Prest, David Johnson & Clare Hall

In the final chapter, the authors give a powerful conclusion to the whole book, reinforcing the imperative for decolonization and indigenization presented, or “danced”, by the contributors within music education research that offers “multiple theoretical and methodological strategies” (p. 142). The authors articulate how the history of colonization continues to shape present-day educational structures, emphasizing that processes, systems, and institutions must undergo fundamental transformation to address its lingering impacts. To achieve this transformation, they present diverse interpretations of “Indigenous,” “decolonization,” and “Indigenization” made by contributors through collaborative efforts, which bring together indigenous peoples, who lead “dance”, with non-indigenous scholars. The authors argue that for decolonization and indigenization to be effective in music education, the researchers must shift their focus beyond the mere inclusion of indigenous music to understanding and integrating the worldviews that underpin these musical traditions. This perspective challenges conventional Western approaches to music education, advocating for a more holistic and culturally responsive pedagogical framework.

Overall, the authors underscore the necessity of an ongoing commitment to transformation within music education. By recognizing the deep-seated effects of colonial histories and actively working toward decolonized and indigenized music education, the authors open the space and call for readers to a more inclusive representation in music, music education, and research.

In sum, **Decolonising and indigenising music education** is a powerful and timely contribution that not only challenges dominant paradigms in music education but also offers grounded, practice-based approaches for meaningful change. The diverse voices and per-

spectives in the book underscore the importance of relationality, accountability, and humility in working with indigenous knowledges. While some chapters pose interpretive challenges or leave questions open, this reflects the very nature of decolonial work—unfinished, dynamic, and context-specific. For educators, researchers, and practitioners committed to more just and inclusive music education, this book is both an invitation and a call to action. ■

Reference

Rakena, T. O., Hall, C., Prest, A., & Johnson, D. (2024). (Eds.). *Decolonising and indigenising music education: First peoples leading research and practice*. Routledge.

Info

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López-Íñiguez, G., & Bennett, D. (2020). A lifespan perspective on multi-professional musicians: Does music education prepare classical musicians for their careers? *Music Education Research*, 22(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2019.1703925>

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (22.4.2022). *Understand, educate, protect: UNESCO's blueprint for the ocean*. <https://www.unesco.org/en>

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