

Project report. Nordplus Intensive Course 2015, October 26. – 30.

Held at University of Iceland, School of Education, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Course host: Helga Rut Gudmundsdottir, associate professor of Music Education

Network coordinator: Torunn Bakken-Hauge

Summary

The course was held in Reykjavik in week 44. There were in total 50 participants in the course. There were 2 guest lecturers, 17 teachers and 31 students participating full time, thereof 9 Icelandic students. Other students came from Norway (Bergen, Oslo, Hamar and Stord), Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The course consisted of a combination of keynote lectures given by teachers and guest lecturers and of 12 student presentations given in six parallel sessions. The keynote lectures were followed by guided group discussions and the student presentations were followed by stimulating and constructive inputs from expert commentators (teachers).

Commentators were assigned their roles before the course and received the student papers beforehand. All participating students, who attended 100% and turned in a report after the course, earned 3 ECTS credits and those students who also presented their masters' projects were awarded additional 3 credits or 6 ECTS credits in total.

The two guest lecturers were from Iceland and Canada. The Icelandic guest lecturer, Bara Grimsdottir, a music educator, folk musician and a composer gave the opening lecture. She introduced the Icelandic music tradition of "rimur" and involved the audience in the singing of several Icelandic rimur and folk songs. The other guest lecturer was professor emeritus Sandra Trehub, a distinguished scholar in music perception research. She presented results from four decades of research on the musicality of infants and defended the proposition that music is a universal human phenomenon.

The course received a highly positive evaluation in the post-course survey, completed online immediately after the course. Students and teachers were thoroughly satisfied professionally and personally after the experience of the intensive course in Iceland. The constructive feedback will be used to continue the tradition of excellent intensive master courses in music education.

Products and materials produced (web pages, urls)

Two Internet pages hosted information regarding the course and in addition there was a facebook group created for the participants of the course, in order to encourage communication and rapid flow of information.

Here are links to the two official pages for the course:

<http://menntavisindastofnun.hi.is/music/events>

<http://vefir.hi.is/rannton/nnme-2015-in-reykjavik/>

2. Project report

2.1. Overall goals

The goals with holding intensive Nordic-Baltic master courses are essentially threefold:

A. To encourage international cooperation and exchange within the higher education of music educators among the participating institutions.

B. To create a larger forum for master students than they usually have access to, and introducing them to teachers and experts in the field of music education from other Nordic or Baltic higher education institutions.

C. To provide a unique opportunity for graduate students to present their work to their peers in an international context.

This time the course title was: "Music, language and communication: Building bridges and intercultural connections in a lifespan perspective." The focus was on the multimodal role of language and music during the lifespan. The keynotes addressed the developmental origins of music, the teaching of music as a universal practice, the self-censorship in musical performances, the universality of music as a culture, controversial concepts in music education and the challenges ahead for music education in terms of universality and globalization.

2.2. Activities and cooperation

The course was held in Reykjavik in week 44. There were in total 50 participants in the course. There were 2 guest lecturers, 17 teachers and 31 students participating full time, thereof 9 Icelandic students. Other students came from Norway (Bergen, Oslo and Stord), Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The course consisted of a combination of keynote lectures given by teachers and guest lecturers and of 12 student presentations given in six parallel sessions. The keynote lectures were followed by guided group discussions and the student presentations were followed by stimulating and constructive inputs from expert commentators (teachers). Commentators were assigned their roles before the course and received the student papers beforehand.

Keynotes

Each keynote was followed by discussions in small groups of students with one teacher to help guide conversations. The groups then gathered in plenum and reported back to the large group. The purpose of this was to engage students as thoroughly in the course topic and discussions as possible.

Following is the list of keynotes and keynote speakers:

Bara Grimsdóttir (Music educator, composer and folk musician)
Title: Icelandic vocal folk music traditions

Sandra Trehub (Prof. emerita, University of Toronto)
Title: Musical predispositions in infancy and the developmental origins of musicality

Lauri Väkevää, (Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts)

Title: *Teaching music as universal practice: considering cultural naturalism as philosophical background for music education*

Tiri Bergesen Schei (Bergen University College, Norway):

Title: *Musical performance - a tacit self-censorship in all cultures?*

Kristin Valsdottir (Iceland Academy of the Arts)

Title: *Music, Culture and Universality*

Eva Sæther (Musikhögskolan i Malmö, Lunds Universitet, Sweden):

Title: *Hybridity versus universality. Playing with controversial concepts in music and music education*

Geir Johansen (Norwegian Academy of Music)

Title: *Music, universality and globalization. Some challenges for music education in the decades to come*

Guest lecturers

The two guest lecturers were from Iceland and Canada. The Icelandic guest lecturer, Bara Grimsdottir, a music educator, folk musician and a composer, gave the opening lecture. She introduced the Icelandic music tradition of “rimur” and involved the audience in the singing of several Icelandic rimur and folk songs. The other guest lecturer was professor emeritus, Sandra Trehub from Canada, a distinguished scholar in music perception research. She presented results from four decades of research on the musicality of infants and defended the proposition that music is a universal human phenomenon.

Student presentations

In addition to the keynotes there were twelve student presentations. In these the students had prepared presentations of their current thesis projects. The student presentations were organised in six parallel sessions and the audience assigned randomly to sessions in order to ensure coherence and similar size audience for all presentations. The audience was encouraged to engage in discussions. Each student presenting was assigned a commentator from one of the teachers attending the course. The commentator would be from a different institution than the student and would also serve as a mentor, giving the student advice and encouragement for their thesis projects. Often the commentators would meet the students before the presentations took place and would continue to mentor and discuss the project with the assigned student throughout the week.

2.3. Results and outcomes

How the goals of the course have been met

The course was successful in drawing attendance from 31 students and 17 teachers from higher education institutions with music education programs from 8 Nordic and Baltic countries.

One of the important over all goals was to lead scholars and graduate students in music education together in an academically stimulating environment. In our post-course survey we asked about the highlights of the course and both teachers and students mentioned this opportunity as one of the highlights.

Some responses to the question: "What were the highlights of the course?"

Teacher: "Meeting everyone. engaged academic workers...."

Teacher: "The academic discussions among both teachers and Master students. Some of the keynotes were especially interesting, and it was nice to see the helpful feedback students were receiving from teachers."

Student: "Meeting people from different Nordic and Baltic countries and sharing thoughts and experiences. Also the keynotes and lectures were really good."

Student : "I think this is my first experience to meet new person from other countries. And I learn lot of things about music education through this course. It was very helpful to my master thesis writing."

Keynotes

The keynotes were intended as the pillars of the course. They were all given in English and all discussions were in English. This was a challenge for a group of Nordic-Baltic graduate students who may not be so accustomed to professional English language in this intensive quantity. Therefore, we asked students to rate the keynotes and give feedback on what they thought of the keynote lectures after the course was over. The keynotes were positively rated by all the students and below there are examples of some of the comments they made.

Question: "What did you think of the keynotes?"

"They were mainly excellent and interesting."

"Excellent! Good amount of keynote presentations and high quality."

"It worked really well! There was a nice progression due to the subject and a wide range of perspectives. I think this was reflected in the fruitful group discussions."

"I really liked it. The lecturers were very professional"

After most of the keynotes, the students were required to gather in smaller groups for further discussion and then to report back to the larger group. When asked about this practice, the overwhelming majority of students were in favor of this method. Only one student expressed dissatisfaction. Below are a few remarks from students regarding group discussions and reporting:

"I liked the group presentation were everyone could share their opinion and thoughts"

"I think this is a good method to know each other. And we can hear the different voice from one point and improved their thinking."

"It was good, and I liked the length of the time there was set to it."

"The group discussions were very fruitful and educating as well as inspiring. Of course, this also means that the Key Notes were good, that the questions for the discussion were well thought through, and that the topic engaged many."

“- Really great to randomizing the groups, so that everyone could get to know each other and addressing different viewpoints in the group. - Great to have an "expert" in the group (a teacher), which helped us gather our thoughts. - Not everyone wanted to report after the discussions, but I found it to be a comfortable situation.”

Student presentations

The student presentations were organised differently than the keynotes. Students would present their current thesis project and receive immediate feedback from an expert commentator and from the audience in the form of a discussion. This can be a stressful situation for masters' students who all were required to present and discuss in English. In the post-course survey we noted that several students listed the student presentation as the highlight of the course. This encourages the course organizers to continue to include student presentations in future courses as an important and valuable element.

Below are two examples of feedback from students regarding the highlights of the course:

“I think it is difficult to say what the highlight was. But if i have to mention one thing i think the most interesting for me as a 1st year student was to listen to the students presenting their master thesis. This was a nice way for me to start thinking about what i want to write about in my thesis.”

“Presenting my master thesis and get constructive and helpful feedback and cheers from different people.”

The conclusion after this course is that we did achieve what we set out to do and even more. The overarching goal to create a scholarly community that is both high in quality in terms of academic standards is an important one, but at the same time, positive personal relations at a professional level are ever so important for the progress of any scientific and scholarly endeavour. It seems that the positive atmosphere created by the attending teachers and students left an impression on all the participants. And we could not ask for more in a world that needs more inter-cultural understanding and more cross-national cooperation.

We will conclude with remarks from participating students who were responding to the question: What were the highlights of the course?

“Meeting experienced researchers who were very friendly and willing to share their experience in discussions with us less experienced.”

“Meeting people from different countries. Creating connections.”

“Keynotes, discussion groups and my own presentation with following comments. I think also it was great to get to meet other students, teachers and professors from the field of music, music education and research, both in formal and informal settings. The setting opened for a lot of good discussions and exchange of thoughts, reflections, knowledge and experiences with others who have the same field of interest.”

2.4. Outcomes and dissemination

Students wrote reports after the course and turned them in to the network contact person at their own institution. Some of these reports will be published in local papers or journals. A book project on the series of the NNME courses is in preparation. Prof. David Hebert will lead the book project and the contributors will be the members and contact people of the NNME network. The book will trace the history and development of the NNME intensive courses for masters' students in music education with a focus on the challenges and benefits of such courses for participating institutions, teachers, scholars and students. The book will highlight the value of developing inter-institutional relationships through Nordplus networks and search for lessons learned throughout the past two decades of the NNME experience.

1. SUMMARY

1.1. BENEFITS, OUTCOMES AND RESULTS OF THE COURSE (max 300words)

1.2. Products and material produced
1.3 Webpages and URLs

2. PROJECT- REPORT (max 4000 words in each column):

2.1 OVERALL GOALS / AIMS

2.2 Activities and cooperation

2.3 Results and outcomes

2.4 Outcomes and dissemination of results