

NNME PROJECT 2011–14: *Sustainable Development in Music Education*

1. Significance of the Nordic Network for Music Education - NNME

Research of music education is a relatively young field in the Nordic countries. The research community has been developed during the past two decades through systematic work with undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students as well as through academic co-operation. Since 1992, the Nordplus-financed Nordic Network for Music Education has included Master students, doctoral students, senior researchers, teachers and administrators (NNME 2010). The results of the Nordic co-operation are now seen, for instance, in the growing interest of the international community and increasing number of joint research projects. There has also been a recent expansion in the network, with Estonia, and Latvia joining in 2008 and Lithuania in 2009. This makes the network a unique arena for co-operation between music educators and music education researchers. At present, the network covers a manifold of perspectives that make it an interesting platform for meetings, dialogues and exchange of ideas.

There are several reasons to why it is important to continue developing the collaboration, through sharing and distributing of ideas and drawing on each other's competences within the Baltic-Nordic community:

Firstly, NNME *builds on the academic variety* within and between the Nordic and the Baltic countries. As a field of research, music education is highly interdisciplinary, and encompasses and relates to numerous other disciplines (e.g. philosophy, general education, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, natural science, linguistics, ethnology, and history). There are also different national traditions in music education; therefore the network is beneficial for increasing the recognition of different competences. Sharing of expertise is crucial, because there are only a few academic positions in music education in these countries.

NNME embraces different kinds of theories and methodologies to develop interdisciplinary understanding within the community. Through its annual intensive courses, the network not only deepens the education of music teachers, but also inspires students to continue their research studies towards a doctoral degree. The network enables participants from eight countries and 19 universities to meet and interact with each other, thus promoting co-operation in a unique way.

Secondly, the interactive model of NNME promotes *economical synergy* in the field. Music education in general, and the education of music educators in particular, are highly specialised and competence demanding. Joint courses allow a young academic field to invest into

developmental work that otherwise would not be feasible. Through increasing co-operation, the network can offer unique opportunities for the students and teachers to share ideas and good practices.

Thirdly, the network *strengthens the international visibility and impact* of Baltic-Nordic music education. The Baltic and Nordic communities of music education have distinct identities that are recognised by international colleagues. For instance, rhythmic music is identified as one of key areas in contemporary music education in our research community. As another example, the Nordic countries are now in the forefront of research about learning of music in informal contexts. Within formal music education, student-oriented learning is common both in practice and as a theoretical point of departure; currently, a strong emphasis is put on empowering students to be actively involved in their own musical formation. A main goal of NNME is that the students are encouraged to reflect upon their own familiar practices, which enables them to take part and contribute in the critical debate of music education in an international context. Reflective practices also help the students to develop a sound professional ethics both in education and in research

2. Thematic emphasis of the network courses in 2011–14

The overall theme of the courses in 2011–14 is Sustainable Development. In the following we will describe the connections between this theme and more specific issues related to general education, education in the Arts and particularly music education. We will also suggest three sub-themes for each of the three courses during the three-year period.

2.1. Sustainable Development and education

In a definition of Brundtland Commission, Sustainable Development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 2010). The key to this is often taken to be environmentality: the capacities of natural systems are considered as critical factors framing the social changes.

Aside with issues related to relationships between people and nature, the discussions connected to Sustainable Development touch upon issues related to economic and sociopolitical factors. In education, Sustainable Development amounts to a vision that integrates the concern of the carrying capability of natural and human resources to social-political and ethical concerns of poverty, equality, human rights, education for all, health, security and interculturality. Education for sustainable development (ESD) aims at helping people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions that help them to deal with the kinds of problems referred to above, and to act upon these decisions (UNESCO 2010).

It has been argued (ibid.) that Sustainable Development can best be promoted in a kind of democratic society that enables transparency, equal expression of opinion, free debate, and politics that support these values. From this standpoint, governance, well-being and equality are key assets taken to enable Sustainable Development. Active citizenship is central to developing the attitudes towards Sustainable Development. Cultural beliefs, values, and norms shape our way of living in society. It is through critical reflection that taken-for-granted beliefs are challenged and developed. Tolerance is one of the key issues helping the attitudes towards Sustainable Development to emerge, as people-to-people relationships lie at the core of a sustainable society. Thus, ESD is primarily concerned with the broader context of social-cultural-political issues, mediated through cultural agency that supports communicative relationships between people.

During the last years, there has been a growing recognition of Sustainable Development in education systems worldwide. For instance, as a central cross-curricular theme, Sustainable Development is supposed to be integrated into teaching of every school subject in Finnish comprehensive school (Finnish National Board of Education 2003 and 2004; see also Curriculum 2006). Sustainable Development has also been proposed as a key area of both pre-service and in-service teacher education. For example, it became an integral part of Swedish teacher education programs when the most recent teacher education was implemented in 2001 (Sustainable development 2005; see also Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2010).

2.2. Sustainable Development and Arts education

Although the concept of Sustainable Development has been most strongly associated with environmental education, moral education, and teaching subjects related to social studies, it has also been a central factor in art education of the last decades (Bamford 2006). In addition to comprehensive schooling, Sustainable Development has been suggested as a key theme in adult education in the Arts. For instance, in Finland, ESD has been an especially strong factor in adult education art courses (Loukola, Isoaho & Lindström 2001). According to Loukola et al (ibid.), “art education give[s] strong emotional and aesthetic experiences to the participants, making them more aware of and open to environmental issues” (p. 99). Furthermore, “the societal importance of the arts...is...seen in a wider perspective than before in Finnish higher education (p. 44). Among other things, this may refer to the potential of art education as promoting “international education” that targets “issues which have application beyond national borders and to which the competencies of intercultural understanding, critical thinking and collaboration are applied in order to shape attitudes which will be conducive to mutual respect and global sustainable development for the future of the human race” (Hill 2007, 255).

Thus, art education can touch both the environmental and the social-political aspect of ESD. As “arts live their lives on the borders of tradition and change” and “modify and channel cultural heritage into new contexts and eras” (p. 43), they can provide an educational context for developing the kinds of attitudes that support Sustainable Development.

2.3. Sustainable Development and music education

The expansion of the network to cover both Baltic and Nordic countries presents interesting new challenges to communication in music education, as well as introduces new ways to conceive the relationship of music education to wider societal issues. Along with other art subjects, music can be conceived as a field of international and cross-cultural education (Field 2010). It has been argued that music has power to create communities and promote creative agency (Karlsen & Westerlund 2010). There have also been voices that emphasize the specific power of music in contributing to positive identity formation, empowerment and access to cultural capital (McDonald et. al 2002; Hofvander Trulsson 2010). Thus, it can be argued that music education has a role in promoting attitudes towards Sustainable Development.

One central theme in current discussion regarding the role of music education in society is related to aspects of *plurality and change in musical life* (Lundberg, Malm and Ronström 2003; Westvall 2007). For instance, through facing the plurality in musical expression, music education faces the diversity in cultural practices, values and opinions that characterizes contemporary democratic culture. Whether a music educator works in general music education, music institutions, or in community music education, today she must possess open-mindedness and tolerance towards different kinds of musical-cultural expressions and values.

The recognition of the variety of musical cultures is especially important in societies that promote the values of democracy, multiculturalism, and equality, and, thus, support the attitudes towards Sustainable Development. Professionally directed music education systems need to be supplemented with general music education that is targeted for the developmental needs of every student, regardless of her social, economical or ethnic background. It can be argued that the prominent role of general music education is at present one of the strengths of Baltic-Nordic countries: however, it can also be argued that general music education systems must be reflective, and constantly alert for changes in society and culture, in order to serve the needs of active citizenship and ethical deliberation.

Along with other forms of art education, music education can be considered as part of *lifelong learning*. While lifelong learning can be defined as a continuing effort to relate to changes in society and culture, it is also connected to ideas of social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Recognition of different needs and styles of learning is important to

maintain lifelong learning. Music education is arguably one field in which there is a need to develop new approaches that support the democratic ideas of music-for-all and music education for Sustained Development.

The ideal of lifelong learning connects with the recognition of the role of tradition in contemporary pluralistic societies. It can be argued that in order to adapt to the rapid changes in the post-industrial society, education must recognize its transformational role in the production of new cultural attitudes instead of representing the tradition. However, these global changes take place against the background of local cultures and societies, carrying on their own traditions that have to be acknowledged as bases on which changes are implemented. In Baltic and Nordic music education, with its strong ties in European music school systems and conservatory tradition, lifelong learning constitutes a specific challenge, encouraging music educators to expand their professional vision to extracurricular learning environments and alternative teaching strategies.

One specific area of interest in current music education is eLearning, with its vast possibilities of responding to the new demands developed outside the formal music education contexts. By recognizing the significance of learning in musical communities online, and by acknowledging the role of digital technology in shaping the musical practices and experiences across the cultural lines, the music education community prepares itself for plurality, multiculturalism and lifelong learning. This is also one way to take into account the challenges of ESD, with its emphasis on democratic, participatory and empowering pedagogical approaches that prepare for active citizenship. Access to digital communication tools is also one of the areas of emphasis in the national strategies that concur to UNESCO cultural politics towards Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2010).

Quality assessment and dynamic evaluation are pivotal issues within the area of contemporary music education. For example, the institutions for higher music education are in the process of being evaluated worldwide (Ferm Thorgersen & Johansen 2008). In terms of Sustainable Development it is crucial to continually consider developmental processes and outcomes from a critical standpoint. This way of thinking challenges the tradition of top-down evaluation by emphasizing teachers' and students' engagement in assessment. If music educators are to meet the challenges of pluralism and lifelong learning, they must develop flexible criterion for evaluating not only the learning outcomes, but their own teaching strategies and institutional structures of education, as well. Consequently, the concept of quality has to be continually redefined.

3. Organization of resources in network courses in 2011-2014

In what follows, we will present a short report from the first intensive course held at Örebro University, School of Music, Sweden in 2011 and a plan of the organization of two remaining courses that focus on the themes stated above. The first course in Örebro, which was held in November 2011, we centered on the theme of *Plurality and change in musical life*. The original theme of the second course was *From reproduction of tradition to production of new culture—lifelong learning of music*, and was supposed to be held at Riga Theatre Training and Educational Management Academy in Riga, Latvia in November 2012. We got no Nordplus funding for this course and we had to cancel our 2012 plans. Based on the critics from the Nordplus administration we have now tried to make a more clear course description concept with the title *Music education for lifelong learning: perspectives on professional competence in the 21st Century* and we hope to receive Nordplusfunding for a course in Riga in November 2013. We have expanded our project period to four years and the third course will take place at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn, Estonia in November 2014. This course will have as its focus on *Quality assessment of music teaching, learning and knowledge* .

To emphasize the common basis of the Baltic-Nordic music education community that this collaboration enables, the lecturers will mainly be chosen from the network institutions. An effort will also be made to include as many different lecturers from these institutions as possible, in order to allow for a multitude of voices to be heard. However, if possible, lecturers from outside the Baltic-Nordic, who are already guest lecturers at the network institutions also can be invited. This will allow us to relate more strongly to the international discussion on sustainability in music education and negotiate our views and practices within the wider international field. Each keynote lecture is followed by group discussions and chaired response sessions, which intend to awaken ideas and thoughts and make possible tensions visible to the students. In addition to these keynote lectures, the students will participate in panel discussions and workshops. They will also have their own presentations based on their master theses in progress. These presentations will be commented on by using resources found within the network, such as teachers and doctoral students. Besides introducing the students to the academic seminar tradition, the purpose is to encourage and prepare for the attending of international conferences. The official language of the courses is English for the purpose of fully include all participants. In addition, the use of the English language prepares the students for international communication in a professional context.

3.1. Intensive course 2011: Challenges and possibilities of plurality and change in music education (Örebro, Sweden)

This course was held in Örebro in week 45 2011 and the report from this course is published on the NNME homepage .

3.2 Intensive course November 2013. Music education for lifelong learning: Perspectives on professional competence in the 21st Century (Riga, Latvia)

This course was held in Riga in week 45 2013 and the report form this course is now published on the NNME homepage.

3.3 Course in 2014. Quality of music teaching, learning and knowledge – perspectives on assessment and evaluation (Tallinn, Estonia)

Introduction

Quality assessment and dynamic evaluation are important themes within the area of Sustainable Development. What does “Sustainable” mean in different times and different contexts? How do we know if music and human beings are developing in a progressive way? What should be the goals for music teaching and learning in schools and for higher education in relation to the development of a democratic society? What kinds of musical knowledge are, and can be, assessed? What is the role of research in this area?

Goal

The goal of this course is to explore, discuss and compare the selection of music education content to guarantee its sustainability in culture specific environments and the alternative possibilities to evaluate outcomes of teaching and learning process on different levels of education ; to model different opportunities in evaluation new ways and forms of supportive feedback to student’s musical activities

Problem areas

Themes that the participants will discuss and reflect upon are:

- Assessment of musical knowledge
- Negotiating achievement criteria
- The function of “critical friends” in musical development
- Response as a pedagogical tool in music education
- Appraisal of musical skills and performances in everyday life
- Assessment and evaluation of higher music education

Course activities

The course will focus specifically on assessing and response in action. The students will practice on responding to each other’s presentations, on giving constructive feedback, and on reflecting on their learning processes.

Course venue

The course will take place in Tallinn 3.–7. November, 2014.

Course credits

Each student will receive a diploma showing ECTS credit acquired during the week. Active participation for the whole week provides 3 ECTS. Additional presentation of student's work with project provides an additional 3 ECTS .

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4. Description of partnership

There is a new host for each intensive course and network meeting each year. The partner representatives at the host institution cooperates with the coordinator for the network and share the main responsibilities for the preparations.

To construct the Nordic identity of the music education community, the lecturers of the Nordic Network for Music Education are mainly chosen from the network institutions. An effort has also been made to include as many different lecturers from these institutions as possible, in order to allow for a multitude of voices to be heard. However, for each of the three years, one or two keynote speakers from outside the Nordic context that are already guest lecturers at the network institutions are also invited. This allows us to relate more strongly to the international discussion on sustainability in the development of music education and negotiate our own views and practices within the wider international field. Each main keynote lecture is followed by group discussions and chaired response sessions, which intend to awaken ideas and thoughts and make possible tensions visible to the students. In addition to these keynote lectures, the students participate in panel discussions and workshops. They also have their own presentations based on their master's theses in progress. These presentations are commented on by using resources found within the network, such as teachers and doctoral students. Besides introducing the students to the academic seminar tradition, the purpose is to encourage and prepare them for attending international conferences. While our network's seminars emphasize interaction and dialogue more than one-sided lecturing, we also aim at developing new paths for the more conservative conference style and tradition. The official language of the courses is English for the purpose of fully including the Finnish, Icelandic and Baltic participants. In addition, the use of the English language prepares the students for international communication in a professional context.

5. Expected outcome

The broad aim of the network is to strengthen the reflection and the discussion in music education, and through this also contribute to the development of the field. The particular strengths and specialties of each country and institution are made use of in the network cooperation and thus it is possible to carry out in-depths studies with perspectives and broadness exceeding the capacity of individual institutions, NNME with its courses offer access to different kinds of theories and methodologies to develop interdisciplinary understanding of the field.

Through the intensive courses it is not only aimed to deepen the education of music teachers but also to inspire them to continue further into research studies later on toward a doctoral degree. The network may also contribute to the strengthening of the international competitiveness of Nordic and Baltic music education.

6. Dissemination of results

The students involved in the Nordic Network for Music Education are expected to publish and share their abstracts and papers for presentation on a web page provided by the coordinating institution, Bergen University College (<http://www.hib.no/studier/internasjonalisering/program/Musikkpedagogisknettverk.htm>) after participating in the intensive. The abstracts and the power points of the lectures are also published on this website. Articles based on the keynote presentations will be published in peer-reviewed international music education research journals such as *Nordic Research in Music Education Yearbook* and *Signum Temporis*. The participating students also have the possibility for publishing their course reports in the Finnish Journal of Music Education.

7. How will you evaluate that your project has met its objectives?

All activities will be reported and evaluated in writing by the participants as well as the partner representatives. The reports and the evaluations are archived by each institution and also published on the homepage of the network. The intensive courses have oral evaluations in the end of each course, followed by a written evaluation and report. Student presentations are evaluated by particular teachers selected by the course leaders from different institutions and countries. Students who present their project successfully will gain 6 ECTS. For active participation in the program during the week the students will gain 3 ECTS credits. Each student receives a Nordplus participation diploma showing the credits earned.

A group of course leaders will also be involved in a research project, financed by their own institutions, that aims at evaluating the concept and the outcomes of the project. The three courses in the project will be investigated as a case study of cross-national collaborative learning in higher education. The research will include a historical background, empirical material consisting of students logs and interviews with students. The results will be reported at higher education conferences as well as published in the Yearbook of Nordic Research of Music Education.

