

## **Finnish Folk Music in Comprehensive Schools: Teachers´ point of view?**

This Master´s thesis study focuses on Finnish folk music in comprehensive schools. The interest to do this study arose from my previous Master´s thesis, which concentrated on grade 9 students´ attitudes and knowledge on Finnish folk music. I discovered that grade 9 students don´t have a lot of knowledge on Finnish folk music. Grade 9 students´ attitudes were either neutral or little negative. Students were aware of the importance of Finnish folk music but they didn´t want to have much to do with it.

These results interested me. If students feel this way about Finnish folk music, how do Finnish school teachers teach Finnish folk music, and what do they think about it? In this study the focus is on teachers´ thoughts and experiences: what is the reality in schools. The subject is important because of the ongoing conversation about the division of teaching hours in school subjects. Nowadays there is 1 hour music per week on grade 7. After that music is an optional subject for students.

## Theoretical Summary

In the theoretical summary of this study I discuss four concepts. The first is *Finnish folk music*. Focus of this chapter is on defining what Finnish folk music is. The history is introduced along with the main features that make folk music Finnish: oral tradition, continuity, variability and learning by ear. There are certain types of songs like Lapp chants and instrumental pieces as well as instruments like Finnish zither (kantele), accordion and violin that are typical for Finnish folk music.

Nowadays Finland has a couple of folk music festivals: Kaustinen folk music festival, Kihaus Folk and Hippa festivals. One can study Finnish folk music for example in night school, music schools, universities of applied sciences, in some universities (main subject ethnomusicology) and Sibelius-Academy.

Second concept is *Finnish folk music in comprehensive schools*. In this chapter the concept of curriculum is first defined. In curriculum one must state for example the values and goals of education, the goals and content of teaching of every subject as well as evaluation.

I then focus on Finnish folk music in national curricula. In Finnish curriculum there are subject combinations that are taught through many different school subjects. Combination relevant for using music both in elementary and middle school is “Cultural Identity and Internationality”. In music lessons music must be playful for grades 1–4 Music should be versatile, and there should be music from different cultures, eras and music styles. In grades 5 to 9 learning is built on things that that are learned earlier. Also in upper grades music should be versatile. When a student graduates from middle school, student should be able to recognize and make out different styles of music and be aware of the basics of Finnish music scene.

I also present ways to teach Finnish folk music. Finnish folk music can be used as repertoire for singing, playing music (musical invention, improvising, learning by ear), listening material and as music for music and movement lessons where children can move freely to music or learn folk dances. The problems of teaching music are also addressed: the status of music in schools, teacher training and its quality and cultural gap between teachers and students.

*Teacher training* is the third concept. The chapter consists of two parts: what kind of education class teachers get for teaching music and what kind of education music teachers (subject teachers) get.

In different universities that provide class teacher training all students have to study music between 3 and 8 ECTS credits. In addition to compulsory courses students can choose between 3–7 ECTS credits of music. Excluding one university all other universities provide basic studies in music (25–26 ECTS credits). Two universities also provide intermediate studies (35 ECTS credits), which with basic studies give qualification for class teachers to teach music also in middle school. The amount of Finnish folk music in studies isn't described accurately in universities curricula.

Universities of Oulu and Jyväskylä along with Sibelius Academy provide education for music teachers. In Sibelius Academy all students of music education study one course of Finnish folk music (5 ECTS credits). In addition student can study Finnish folk music as pedagogic area of specialisation (10 ECTS credits). In Jyväskylä University studies have at least 7 ECTS credits of Finnish folk music and in Oulu University the amount is approximately 7 ECTS credits.

Fourth concept of this study is *musical preference and conception of music*. In this chapter I introduce three conceptions of music: hierarchical, autonomic and cultural (Karttunen 1992). In the hierarchical conception of music there is a belief, that music is independent of outer world and so creators of music are independent of listeners. Autonomic conception of music does not see music as a universal phenomenon, but rather as heterogenic group of phenomena. Cultural conception of music sees music always as a part of its cultural context. It always depends on the listener's point of view how music is seen: good or bad, classical or entertainment music etc.

Musical preference is defined in this study both as individual and social way of telling what music is appealing and what is not. It is seen partly as a model conditioned by society, but also partly as ones individual choices. Musical preference is always learned. It begins to arouse when music arouses certain emotions or experiences in an individual. Musical preference can change for the rest of ones life.

## **Research Problems**

This Master's thesis has three research problems which have subproblems.

1. How do the teachers include Finnish folk music in their teaching?
  - 1.1 What part does Finnish folk music have in their personal curriculums?
  - 1.2 How do they think that students feel about Finnish folk music?
  - 1.3 How do they see themselves as teachers of Finnish folk music?
  - 1.4 Are there some kind of differences in teachers' views as a consequence of their own education or working experience?
  
2. How does the teacher's background affect to their teaching of Finnish folk music?
  - 2.1 What kind of taste and conception of music do teachers have? How they value Finnish folk music?
  - 2.2 What kind of meaning does their own education have on their teaching?
  - 2.3 Have their own hobbies helped them in their work, maybe in ways that their education has not?
  
3. How would the teachers like to change the status of Finnish Folk music in curriculums?  
Or should any changes be made?

## **The making of the research**

The study is a qualitative, phenomenographical study. The research method is an interview through internet. The questionnaire made by the researcher was first formed by the help of theoretical summary and pre-tested by a class teacher. After this questionnaire was transformed to an internet questionnaire with option to discontinue. With this option teachers had the chance to start, discontinue and continue again.

The teachers for this study were selected randomly. There were a couple of criteria for the selection of teachers: 1) There should be both class teachers and subject teachers and 2) there should be at least one teacher from each province of Finland. From each province was selected the provinces center city and from each city was selected two elementary and two middle schools.

The data was collected in the spring 2009. First all teachers got an email with details of the study along with contact information of the researcher and link to the questionnaire. During three weeks teachers got 2 reminder emails. At the end 50 teachers had answered to the questionnaire.

The data was analysed with content analysis. The theoretical summary gave support for the analysis, but the categories came up from the data itself. All the answers were first organized by research problems.