

Music Education in a ghetto

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Project motivation

I have spent the last 15 years as a student in Danish music schools and that has given me a great insight in challenges and possibilities within that system. One of my great concerns regarding traditional Danish music education is that it seems like there is a big gap between hopeful newcomers, older and more skilled students and the professional musicians and teachers. I think that a decomposition of this gap will lead to a more inspiring learning milieu and benefit both students and teachers. It seems like BazarMusicShop may offer some interesting ideas regarding this matter.

Summary

In this project I will analyze a project called BazarMusicShop (BMS) based in an immigrant ghetto in Copenhagen. BMS is using music education as a means to integration of young immigrants. My ambition is to develop my own teaching practice on the basis of my findings and furthermore inspire learning environments in music institutions in Denmark.

In this phase I am trying to gather as much information I can and find relevant literature to analyze the learning environment in BazarMusicShop. So far my reflections are based on newspaper interviews with the founder, Amir Ghomi, and other members of BazarMusicShop, and my literature reading.

About BazarMusicShop

BazarMusicShop (BMS) is located in Noerrebro - a part of Copenhagen known for its immigrant ghettos and its problems with crime and violence.

BMS was founded in 2007. It is a collective of immigrant hip-hop producers who help upcoming rappers from the neighborhood produce their own music. The young rappers get access to recording studio facilities, experienced producers and get involved in a group of young people who like them self is eager to express their feelings in words and music.

BMS is a music education project with one primary goal: *"The young people should be given a chance to make music so they stay away from crime. That is the way to a safer neighborhood and a renewal of Danish hip hop music."*¹

Theory

The project's theoretical approach is Lave and Wenger's social learning theory, where learning is regarded as situated in communities of practice and where the concept of legitimate peripheral participation takes a central position.

In "Situating Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation"² the concept of legitimate peripheral participation is described:

"(S)he [the student] acquires the skill to perform by actually engaging in the process, under the attenuated conditions of legitimate peripheral participation. This central concept denotes the particular mode of engagement of a learner who participates in

the actual practice of an expert, but only to a limited degree and with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole.” (Lave&Wenger p. 14)

Methods

I will use qualitative interviews and observations of the participants to analyze the learning environment and teaching methods of BazarMusicShop.

My ambition is to implement and examine the results from my analysis into my own teaching praxis and I will use the methods of “action research” to do this. Bridget Somekh³ provides a useful summary of action research by summarizing the ‘methodological principles’. Especially two of these are interesting regarding my project:

“1. [Action research] integrates research and action in a series of flexible cycles.

....

4. [Action research] starts from a vision of social transformation and aspirations of greater social justice for all”

Reflections

The following paragraph contains a quote from a newspaper interview with the founder of BazarMusicShop, Amir Ghomi¹, and a mission statement from www.bazarmusicshop.dk. After that I reflect on what I think would be interesting to look into.

“We don’t tell what to do but ask them what they want to do and then help them do that. It’s about experiencing success. It means a lot to their identity that they are allowed to play music. In the neighborhood they are now known because of their music and their art and not just as lazy teenagers. Their identity changes from no-one to musicians and artists. This way they feel important and that people listen to them and they don’t feel burned and set cars on fire.” (From ‘Information’ 2009)

“The participants go through a process, which involves different phases such as research, idea development, songwriting, music recording, PR and release party. The purpose is to use music as a means of integration.” (From BazarMusicShop.dk)

When I started to read about this project I found that there were three basic ideas and values in BazarMusicShop that immediately caught my attention.

1. A music production environment instead of a music education environment.

BazarMusicShop is a community creating new art. This is at the heart of the project. I would like to examine what it means to be a “*music production environment*” and how it affects learning and identity-shaping of students and teachers.

2. Focus on product instead of process.

In my own teaching and in music education in Denmark generally we tend to focus a lot on the process. A lot of students attend their lessons year after year but their efforts doesn’t lead to any physical products. Modern technology has made it very easy and cheap to produce CDs, and I think it could be of great value to work more product oriented.

The students in BazarMusicShop know the purpose of the project: the release of a CD. This very clear common goal is essential for motivation and also for the creation of identity as artists.

3. *Newcomers and professional are working together on a common project.*

BazarMusicShop is like a family in which everyone strive to reach a common goal. Beginners and professional work together and it's easy to get to know and learn from your role models and teachers.

References and relevant literature

¹GJERDING, S. (2009) 'Hiphop skal tilbage til rødderne'. *Article from the Danish newspaper Information. 14. august 2009. (My translation)*

²LAVE, J. & WENGER, E. (1991) 'Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation'. *Cambridge University Press.*

³SOMEKH, B. (2006) *Action Research: A Methodology for Change and Development. Maidenhead: Open University Press.*

⁴FAURFELT, R. (2008) 'Hiphop skal få unge på Nørrebro ud af sumpen'. *Article from the Danish newspaper Politiken 2. december 2008. (My translation)*

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Websites:

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