

Music in Future Schooling: Towards Conservation or Reconstruction of Curriculum Structures and Rationale?

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Introduction

This symposium is intended as an open-ended dialogic workshop with an introductory paper aiming to elicit responses from invited symposium participants, one from each of the Nordic countries. The other participants in the 90 minutes workshop will be involved in different ways, e.g. as role-playing advocates for specific viewpoints and positions or as an audience being encouraged to take part in the symposium dialogues. If the symposium is accepted, the chair, in co-operation with the NNMPF board, will invite one responsive paper among seminar participants in each of the Nordic countries.

Context and background

Our point of departure for this symposium workshop is a description of the current and future situation for schooling in Norway. Here, a ministerial committee has recently published two major reports on future compulsory schooling for the ages of 6 through 18. The first report discusses research based knowledge about learning and its relevance for Norwegian schooling (NOU 2014: 07). The second one discusses more directly how compulsory schooling in Norway needs to be *renewed* and what this might mean for contents, organisation, description, and function of the different curriculum subjects, which the committee recommends for a place in future compulsory schooling (NOU2015:8).

The first report argues that learning strategies in compulsory schooling have to be changed in two major and fundamental ways. The first change is connected to the report's characterization of the current situation in schools as dominated by *surface learning*. Pupils, the report says, are expected to master too much in too many different fields. Surface learning should be replaced by *deep learning*. The second change is connected to the first, and has to do with the role of social and

emotional aspects in learning. Referring to OECD research (OECD 2013), the committee argues that the development of social and emotional competence should be considered as a vital prerequisites for any kind of curriculum learning, and that social and emotional aspects therefore should be included and integrated in attainment targets in all curriculum subjects to achieve deep learning. The second report of the committee argues that all curriculum subjects have to be *renewed* paying special to the following four competencies:

- Subject specific competence
- Competence in learning how to learn
- Competence in how to communicate, interact and participate
- Competence in how to explore and create (NOU 2015: 8, p. 8).

In the Norwegian context a number of the committee's research based recommendations seem to represent a radical break with current ministerial policies. The report's recommendation that all subjects to a great extent also should include exploration and creativity shows its concurrence with the EU proclamation that the future of Europe depends on the imagination and creativity of its people.

Given the similarities of music in schooling in the Nordic countries, what we ask in this symposium therefore, is the following:

1. How relevant are the main messages in the Ludvigsen reports for school policies in the other Nordic countries, and for music education in particular?
2. How should the music research community respond to the challenges in the reports, such as the focus on creativity and social and emotional competences?
3. What could be alternatives to music curriculum constructions and advocacy?
4. To what extent should music curriculum be renewed or reconstructed, and what would this mean for the Nordic research community?

Cecilia Ferm Thorgersens comments from a Swedish perspective

Ludvigsen's main results:

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Given the similarities of music in schooling in the Nordic countries, what we ask in this symposium therefore, is the following:

5. How relevant are the main messages in the Ludvigsen reports for school policies in the other Nordic countries, and for music education in particular?

From a Swedish perspective the results are relevant, not at least to have the holistic view in mind, as the “new” curricula puts efforts on subject specific syllabuses, and not least assessment and documentation. Even if subject specific knowledge in music is the starting point, and give guidance when it comes to what dimensions of music that all pupils are to come in contact with, and should process during their school time, it is important to continually have a holistic view of musical learning as a parallel guiding tool. The free space for the teacher is how to organize the teaching, and where the three last point of Ludvigsen are possible to fulfil. Such a way of offering music education is firstly encouraged by a view that the three parts of core content should be processed similarly, secondly that the aim, goals, content and knowledge criteria should be valued equally, and thirdly that the introductory over- arching parts of the curriculum imply for example border crossing work, aesthetic communication, democracy, and equality, responsibilities that lie on all teachers and thereby subjects in school. Thereby the messages are relevant for Nordic research in music education as well. We need to show and try to understand holistic ways of organizing teaching within the frames set by governments.

6. How should the music research community respond to the challenges in the reports, such as the focus on creativity and social and emotional competences?

As there are great risks for instrumentalism in music teaching in schools, research have to engage in and offer possible paths for holistic teaching, within the frames, and also challenge current frames. This could be done in each country specifically, but also in border-crossing Nordic studies, philosophical as well as empirical and historical. In the Swedish curricula it says that:

Awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there.

And in the Music Syllabus:

Music exists in all cultures and affects people, physically, mentally and emotionally. Music as an aesthetic form of expression is used in a wide variety of contexts, has different functions and has different meanings for each and every one of us. It is also an important part of what people share socially and can influence the development of the individual's identity. In our time, music from different cultures and epochs is associated with other forms of art in new expressions. Knowledge of and in music increases the opportunities to participate in the cultural life of society.

In a Scandinavian double-case study of Arts subjects in primary schools, it was seen that One way to offer democratic education is to perform adapted teaching, or inclusive education. A Scandiavian case study (Christophersen & Ferm Thorgersen, 2015) shows that such education demands that arts subjects are

treated like all other subjects, and that pupils feel that they are able, included, heard and listened to, at the same time as they feel connected to something larger. The two schools in this study perceived the arts as crucial for inclusion, which was manifest in the way schools function as arts-rich environments; the schools provided qualified teachers and differentiated teaching in ordinary arts classes, ensured that the arts are visible and audible parts of school life, and incorporated the arts into special education through individual and group activities. This emphasis on the arts subjects was based on values of inclusion: The arts were seen as contributing to creating good learning environments for *some* pupils with special needs, while at the same time being beneficial for *all* pupils. Thus, providing multi-sensory experiences, as well as arenas for mastery, creates a richer school day for all pupils, while at the same time, in the words of one of the principals, giving some pupils a reason to show up in the morning and to staying put during the day (Ferm Thorgersen & Christophersen, forthcoming). The results further indicated that the two schools have made considerable progress in developing an inclusive arts learning environment. Results also suggest that a holistic inclusive view of education encourages a functional and vivid arts education for “all”, both inside and outside the classroom. (Christophersen & Ferm Thorgersen, 2015).

Such studies are important, at the same time as challenges have to be illuminated, for example the growing demand when it comes to assessment, where Swedish music teachers in year six, where grading and connected documentation is a compulsory task for teachers, experience that the new curricula from 2011 (National Agency of Education, 2011) which includes a new assessment system with clear formulated achievement criteria in seven steps have influenced how teachers design their teaching (Ferm Thorgersen et. al., 2016; Zandén & Ferm Thorgersen 2014, Ferm Thorgersen & Zandén, forthcoming). What can be stated is that the teaching has developed towards instrumentalism and criteria compliance, from teaching for learning to teaching for documentation.

On the one hand an agreed upon definition of the musical world can be seen, both per se, and as a guiding tool for the teacher when it comes to offer the pupils musical knowledge.

There is an extended focus on the goals for me as well as among the students. There is a greater understanding for the subject among the pupils. Clear documentation gives fair and clear assessment. My teaching has become broader. The status for the subject music has increased (Music teacher, grade 6).

Based on the reasoning made throughout the current article, it is stated, which could be related to the quotation is that what is offered through education and what is assessed shouldn't diminish what music teachers have agreed upon as the musical world. Instead, the way education is organized and performed need to make the base for an active citizenship. Hence, the importance that *all* pupils get the possibility to internalize music as a form of expression becomes crucial. What can be assessed is the ability to handle music as a form of expression (in broad enough way).

Such holdings presuppose trust in teachers' ability to educate and assess, and space to meet the individual student. If there is confusion between the public and the private, eg the musical world and the formulations in the curricula, that will contribute to a fluffy control that demands documentation even if the teachers don't really know why. Such confusion is visible in the material of the study focusing on assessment in grade six (Ferm Thorgersen & Zandén, forthcoming). Regarding experienced control the music teachers express themselves as following:

As more documentation is demanded, that might be a way to make sure that I do my educational task according to the policies (Music teacher, grade 6).

I don't know anything about the legislators' confidence but as everything has to be steered I suppose they have no trust or confidence in my subject competence or professional judgment (Music teacher, grade 6).

There is no steering regarding 'WHAT' to be documented or 'HOW' but 'THAT' it should be done. As a protection if the school inspectorate should visit. (not aiming to ask about the learning of the pupils, but if there is documentation) (Music teacher, grade 6).

Music teachers have to re-discover their autonomy and professional trust, and be able to use their space of freedom. That's one thing that Nordic music educational research can contribute with.

7. What could be alternatives to music curriculum constructions and advocacy?

To be able to run music education with musical knowledge in focus towards what Ludvigsen is asking for, and what I, speaking with Hannah Arendt, would call cultural citizenship, teachers have to take their responsibility and be trusted in doing it. An ongoing discussion regarding what constitutes the musical world, what genres, style, pieces, and activities that are important in music, and what engaged citizenship can be is thereby needed. Further, when it comes to assessment and judging it is crucial that agreements regarding what constitutes the musical world are broad enough to give space for different ways learning, which in turn is constituted by perceiving, treating, performance and reflection, and of showing musical knowledge and competence which in turn should make equal assessment possible. The question is who take responsibility for such aspects of agreements, at the same time as teachers feel that they have lost their trust.

Too much documentation and too much steering. Hard to find time to check the pupils' different achievements regarding all parameters in the achievement criteria, and take them into account in grading. You loose

some of the joy for the subject when the achievement criteria come too much in focus (Music teacher grade 6).

The quotation makes clear that discussions are to be held regarding whether the current achievement criteria expressed in Lgr11 are broad enough in that sense. It is important that the formulation covers dynamic agreed upon definitions of the musical world that guarantee that no one feel excluded or invisible. How does the documentation demand influence such formulations? Continual work among music teachers, in relation to parents, principals and politicians to avoid that any pupil's are offered a feeling of involvement and engagement. And in the long run, the formulations in the steering document might have to be adjusted.

8. To what extent should music curriculum be renewed or reconstructed, and what would this mean for the Nordic research community?

We have to work for the holistic view and ways of working. Otherwise the neo-liberal political views and expectations of today make big risk for criteria compliance, and instrumentalism. We have to conceptualize music as a holistic school subject, including structural, auditive, bodily, emotional, and existential, dimensions. And I think there are great possibilities for that within the frames that Swedish curricula offer. We have to give research based guidance, when it comes to holistic ways to go, and help music teachers discover their space of freedom.

Based upon for example Hannah Arendt's view of cultural citizenship, music education in schools could be formed as dialogues explored with authority and a dynamic agreed upon view of the musical world as guidance of the exploration. Based on chosen methods and contents pupils are to make their voices heard, and expected to be listened to as performers and composers. The pupils learn and are assessed upon their ability to perform, listen to, and reflect upon musical expressions and impressions, as well as their history and contexts. The pupils are encouraged and expected to become their musical selves in meetings with

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others, and to take each other's perspective musically with musical learning in focus.

To learn to be actors and function as an audience in the musical world is *one* way to develop towards active and engaged citizenship – to develop towards cultural citizenship through musical dialogue.