

Tónmenntakennsla í íslenskum grunnskólum

Í þessari rannsókn var hlutverk íslenskra tónmenntakennara kannað og fyrirkomulag tónmenntakennslu. Greinin er byggð á viðtölum við tólf tónmenntakennara sem valdir voru af handahófi á landsvísu. Tónmenntakennararnir gegndu lykilllutverki í tónlistarlífi síns skóla og voru, meðfram kennslunni, beðnir að sinna ýmsu öðru sem tengdist tónlist, svo sem undirleik á skemmtunum og umsjón með samsöng. Flestir virtust einangraðir í kennslustörfum sínum og vildu eiga meira samstarf við aðra. Áherslur í kennslu voru nokkuð misjafnar en þó voru tónmenntakennararnir frekar hefðbundnir í vali á aðferðum og efni. Söngur var algengasti liðurinn í tónmenntakennslunni og þótti ómissandi. Sköpun og hljóðfæranotkun þótti einna erfiðast að sinna. Rætt er um mikilvægi þess að þróa nýja kennsluhætti í tónmennt með ákveðnari stefnumörkun í námsgreininni til þess að sporna við stöðnun. Niðurstöður benda til þess að efla þurfi færni tónmenntakennara í fjölbreyttum kennsluáðferðum en þá skiptir þjálfun og símenntun tónmenntakennara höfuðmáli.

Efnisorð: Tónmennt, tónmenntakennsla, tónmenntakennarar, list- og verkgreinar, listgreinar

Current practice in music education in Icelandic schools (grades 1–10)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to document current practices in music education within the compulsory school system in Iceland (grades 1–10). For that purpose twelve randomly selected music teachers were visited, interviewed and observed during teaching. Little is known about the content and methods used in Icelandic music classes. Previous study of exceptionally successful music teachers suggested that the key to success was the teachers' ability to build on their own personal strengths in creating a unique music program (Kristín Valsdóttir, 2009). However, less is known about the strategies of music teachers in general.

Although music is a subject in the majority of Iceland's compulsory schools, it is usually not taught at all grade levels (Helga Rut Guðmundsdóttir, 2008). Most often music is taught by a music educator in the first 5–7 grades which is in contrast to practices in nearby countries where music teachers more often teach older children and at the high-school level (Mills, 2005; Olsen and Hovdenak, 2007; Straub, 2000).

Music educators in schools often have much freedom in their applications of methods and curricular aims (Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 1995; Olsen and Hovdenak, 2007). Therefore, interviews and observations are important tools for acquiring knowledge of current practices in music education.

The music educators interviewed were seven males and five females with an average teaching experience of 15 years, ranging from 1 to 33 years. Each of them was the only music teacher hired at his/her school. Besides teaching music as a subject, it was common for music teachers to have other musical responsibilities at the school and they were often depended on for preserving and nurturing the musical culture of their school. Many schools have a weekly plenum singing session for which they depend on the leadership of the music teacher who often serves also as the accompanist, using either a piano or a guitar. In fact, accompanying skills seem highly valued in music teachers and are put to use during different festivities and parents' nights where students perform. Other obligations included choirs and rehearsing musicals.

Asked about the most important aspects of music education, the majority mentioned singing as very important. In fact, all but one said they would choose singing if they had to choose only one element from the music education curriculum to teach. The consensus was not as clear when asked which element in the curriculum they would omit if they were forced to prioritize. Music theory and notation was mentioned by most as something to omit. Others suggested music history and composer biographies could be omitted, or movement to music. However, there were contradicting opinions as other teachers deemed music theory and history as the pillars of their music classes. Although popular music has entered Icelandic music classrooms, it does not constitute the main music material as has become the trend in other Scandi-

navian countries. This may be due to the fact that music is mostly taught in the lower grades in Icelandic schools, but less in the teenage years as is more common practice in other parts of Scandinavia.

Teaching methods mentioned and observed were predominantly teacher directed methods. Most lessons involved some singing, some rhythmic games, some music listening and some movement to music. Only a few used the recorder as a teaching tool and then only with a particular age group. Teaching settings were either at traditional forward facing desks and chairs or in a circle on an empty floor space.

Most of the music teachers claimed to be interested in more cooperation with other teachers at their school. Those who had most experience in working with other teachers had done so in connection with rehearsals of musicals or as part of theme projects lead by classroom teachers. Some expressed concerns that too often the music teacher is not involved in the initial planning of theme projects and only asked to come and rescue the musical aspect at the last minute. They pointed out the importance of respecting the integrity of music as a subject and as a valid part of the curriculum, emphasizing that music should be integrated into theme projects with other school subjects on equal terms.

The music teachers were not very concerned about the selection of Icelandic teaching materials for the music classroom. They were resourceful in using available material and in making their own. Some even used foreign textbooks as a basis for their own invented material. Furthermore, most of them used the internet to acquire song lyrics for classroom use. Therefore, it is clear that the published Icelandic teaching material is not sufficient, in and of itself, for meeting the needs of the music teachers.

The interviews revealed that randomly selected music teachers used similar strategies as the exceptional music teachers in a previous study (Kristín Valsdóttir, 2009). They were pragmatic and independent in creating music programs based on personal strengths and interests, being more concerned about what works, and less controlled by a curriculum. Although this is probably an important strategy for a music teacher's survival in the classroom, the danger is that this approach may lead to neglected elements of music education and conservative teaching styles. The future development of music education in Icelandic schools will most likely depend on the directions taken in the training and continuing education of music educators.

Keywords: Music education, music educators, arts education, music education in Iceland

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