

Hver vill vera meistari?

Music creation project with disabled children

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Abstract

This master study is a project which consisted in music creation sessions in the after-school center Garður for disabled children aged 12 to 13. The sessions took place once a week for a period of three months (ten sessions in total). The children worked mostly on song writing, using instruments made from recycled material. The creation process was built on pictures, fairy-tales, movements, as well as their own experience and feelings. The project was developed in the spirit of constructivism and empowerment.

The work with the children was very positive. The songs created are interesting, both because of their musical quality and their expressive content. It would have been possible to improve the quality of the teaching by bringing more practical material and by having a closed group. The work with the after-school center was more difficult, because of lack of motivation from some employees, lack of assertiveness from the project manager and lack of communication on both sides. Involving the parents in the project from the beginning would also have given it better visibility and communication.

Ágrip

Þetta meistaraverkefni samanstendur af tónsköpunartímum sem voru framkvæmdir í Frístundaheimilinu Garði fyrir fötluð börn á aldrinum 12 til 13 ára. Tímarnir fóru fram einu sinni í viku yfir þriggja mánaða tímabil, alls tíu tímar. Börnin unnu mest með lagasmíð og notuðu þar hljóðfæri sem voru unnin úr endurvinnanlegu efni. Sköpunarferlið var byggt upp á myndum, ævintýrum, og hreyfingu, sem og á þeirra eigin reynslu og upplifun. Verkefnið var byggt upp í anda hugsmíðahyggju og valdeflingu.

Vinnan með börnunum var afskaplega jákvæð. Lögin sem voru samin voru áhugaverð, þá bæði vegna tónlistargæða og sköpunargleði. Það hefði verið mögulegt að auka gæði kennslu með því að koma með meira úrval af efni og með því að hafa lokaðan hóp. Framkvæmd verkefnis í Frístundaheimilinu var erfiðari sökum skorts á virkri þátttöku starfsfólks, skorts á ákveðni verkefnisstjóra og skorts á samskiptum milli aðila. Að virkja foreldra í verkefnið frá byrjun hefði jafnframt tryggt betri sýnileika og samskipti.

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Thanks

First I want to thank my supervisor, Valgerður Jónsdóttir, for her very helpful direction in the course of the project. I learned a lot from her. I want also to thank Soffía Huld Friðbjarnardóttir, who welcomed me in Klettaskóli and helped me to understand the children there. I want to thank Ólöf Haflína Ingólfssdóttir, director of the center when I was preparing the project, and Anna Helga Benediksdóttir, who directed the center while the project was taking place, for making this project possible. I will always be thankful to Anna Henriksdóttir, who, in spite of her very busy schedule came with me every Wednesday and recorded the sessions: I would not have been able to do it without her, and it was also very interesting to discuss the sessions together. I want also to thank Björn for constant support, patience, and Icelandic training during those two years.

My greatest thanks go to the children who took part in the project, and to the employees who participated in the sessions.

Introduction

When it came to choosing my Master in Art Education project, I very quickly decided to do something in relation to music and disabled children. I had read in Anne Bamford's report (2009) that if disabled children were very welcome in the Icelandic schools, the music schools were still lacking places for them, and special music teaching was very seldom an option there. This showed that there was a need for more development and research in this area.

It would of course have been very interesting to research what is done today in both music education for children with special needs and music therapy in Iceland. But I really wanted to get hands-on experience and do something myself to meet this need. I decided that my project would consist of music sessions with disabled children. It was also important for me to work on music creation. When I use the term music creation I mean free improvisation, structured improvisation and composition, three aspects that I always tried to include in my teaching. I want to give children the opportunity to play music that they have created themselves. Allowing children to be expressive provides them with a sense of empowerment¹ (Dixon and Chalmers, 1990, as cited in Sze, 2006), and this is particularly important for disabled children. I was also interested in gathering data on the children's and their parents' reactions as well as those of the staff of the center where the sessions would take place. I was indeed curious to know how I would experience this project and what I would learn from it. I actually had some experience in music teaching, but very little of teaching music to disabled children.

When I began my music education in France I was interested in teaching music, sharing my knowledge and communicating with students on my favourite subject, music. I was also interested in music therapy. Having already studied biology I was amazed by the undoubted physiological effect that music has on all living beings. I was fascinated by its possible applications in medicine, notably in pain relief (Cepeda et al., 2006). On the other hand, I had often seen disabled people being displaced in society, which I found to be unjust, disrespectful and a loss of opportunity for society as a whole. But music therapy studies in France are long and expensive, and there are few job in the field. As I had already enjoyed the privilege of long-term studies, I turned with pleasure to music teaching. Since then, I have had the opportunity of taking care of a boy with autism, and got very interested in the subject of mental disability and ways to reach to the child. At the same time, my teacher's experience allowed me to relativize the concept of « special needs » pupils: all my students, children and grown-ups, in their own way were in need of special teaching and special

1 Empowerment will be defined in paragraph 2.c) ii)

care.

In Iceland, the general attitude towards disabled people seems to me much more positive and constructive than what I saw in France, or, more generally, in Europe. To be able to realize this project here was valuable. Through the power of music and the possibilities it holds for these students I hoped they would be empowered to show their strengths. This would hopefully benefit themselves, their families, the people working with them, and society in general.

1. Background research

1. a) Positive effects of music on disabled people

The positive effects of music on people, animals and even plants has been, and still is, the subject of much research. Music diminishes negative feelings, increases stress tolerance levels and soothes. It can improve the quality of life for people with various disabilities in different ways.

The American Music Therapy Association defines music therapy as «the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program » (<http://www.musictherapy.org/about/musictherapy/>, visited on the 2nd of February 2012).

The border between music therapy and music education for children with special needs can be very hard to define. Music education teaches students about music, to use and enjoy music. It aims at developing musical knowledge, musical understanding and musical abilities, as well as enriching the students' relationship to music. In music special education, the aim is the same, but the teaching is more individualized (<http://www.tonstofan.is/is/sidur/hvad-er-tonlistarserkennsla>, visited on the 22nd of February 2012).

Music teachers do follow a national curriculum and have completed a teaching program. In Iceland, music education within the public school system implies singing, reading and writing, playing instruments, movement, listening and creation (*Aðalnámskrá Grunnskóla – Listgreinar*, 1999, p. 55). In the music schools, the general aim is to promote the musical ability, knowledge and development of the students (*Aðalnámskrá tónlistarskóla*, 2000, p. 13).

Many teachers working with children with special needs have also actually followed a special education program, and, in the case of music teachers, have very often been trained in at least some aspects of music therapy. Actually when searching for articles analyzing the effects of special music education on children with special needs, I found out that many articles appearing as such were actually analyzing the effect of music therapy sessions (apart from the ones analyzing the effect of

music as an accessory in teaching, i.e. like background music). This shows how current literature barely distinguishes between music therapy and music special education.

Be it with children with special needs or not, the principal aim of music education is often to help students accomplish their individual goals and make their musical sensibility blossom. It is even more so in the case of music education for children with special needs, with the teacher at times applying musictherapeutic methods.

Music can be used as a tool to reinforce learning, cognitive, perceptual, motor, social and emotional development (Sze, 2006), and so be an effective element in the development of children with special needs. Various research projects on music therapy support this.

- Cognitive and learning development:

Music helps cognitive development, by organizing sound and silences in a flow of time (Sze, 2006); music focuses on and increases accuracy and attention (Sze, 2006; Whipple, 2004).

- Motor development:

Music in intervention with children and adolescents with autism enhances body awareness and coordination (Whipple, 2004).

Rhythm has been used to improve body-awareness (Wigram, Pederson and Bond, 2002, as cited by Rickson, 2006) and motor coordination (Gibbons, 1983, Howell, Flowers, Wheaton, 1995, Moore and Mathenius, 1987, Staum, 1983, Thaut, 1985; all cited by Rickson, 2006).

Both instructional and improvisational music therapy approaches used with children with ADHD increased accuracy on the Synchronized Tapping Task (Rickson, 2006).

- Social development:

Music, in intervention with children and teenagers with autism, increases communicative acts and engagements with others; it increases appropriate behaviors while decreasing inappropriate, stereotypical and self-stimulatory behaviors; it also increases self-care skills and symbolic play (Whipple, 2004).

Both instructional and improvisational music therapy approaches used with children with ADHD did reduce a range of ADHD symptoms in the classroom (Rickson, 2006).

- Emotional development:

The inherent structures in music give a sense of internal order (Sze, 2006).

Music creates physiological responses, which are associated with emotional reactions (Sze, 2006).

Music in intervention with children and teenagers with autism reduces anxiety (Whipple, 2004).

Rhythmic tasks are likely to lead to improvement in internal organization and impulse control (Gaston, 1968, Gibbons 1983 and Thaut, 1992, all cited in Rickson, 2006).

The research cited above supports the possibility of positive gains for children with disabilities participating in a music project. Musical activities in general also have a positive impact on children's self-esteem and self-image, by providing a good environment to « find a lot of different roles for children to be successful » (Gallegos, 2006).

To work in a group is also potentially therapeutic. For example, for people with SEMI (Severe Mental Illness), working in a group offers an opportunity to practice interpersonal skills, share a corporate identity and pursue a common goal, with a common product (Bloch and Crouch, 1985, cited by Grocke, 2009).

Last but not least, the pleasure that children and adults can get from a music activity is very important (Bakan, 2008). In Grocke's study (2009), participation in music therapy sessions was for those adults with SEMI a source of pleasure, joy, and relaxation.

1.b) Importance of creative processes in education and development

Dewey has demonstrated that learning is an active process: the best way to learn is learning by doing, not receiving predigested information (Gestur Guðmundsson, 2008). Searching, researching, is an important part of the learning process. It is better not to decide beforehand on the desired outcomes: the student's personal search will shape the outcomes (Gestur Guðmundsson, 2008).

Creativity and its importance in education are at the core of the theories that Sir Ken Robinson presents in his books and lectures. He defines creativity as « the process of having original ideas that have value » (Robinson, 2006). His point is that as the world is constantly changing, what we need most to survive is to be able to adapt to it, by knowing our talents and develop them, and by being creative in different ways and fields : « In the 21st century humanity faces some of its most daunting challenges. Our best resource is to cultivate our singular abilities of imagination, creativity and innovation » (Robinson, 2011, p. 47). He accuses schools of doing the opposite, of killing creativity in children by formatting them in one way of thinking and one way of seeing the world (Robinson, 2006). This formatting takes place while human society depends on a diversity of talents, which means that a diversity of educational approaches and experiences are needed (Robinsons, 2010). Here he joins the democratic views of Dewey who wanted all children to go to school, but a school that would be adapted to them and that they would enjoy (Gestur

Guðmundsson, 2008).

Eisner (2002) states that the arts are particularly adapted to inspire creativity: « arts [...] provide not only permission but also encouragement to use one's imagination as a source of content » (Eisner, 2002, p. 82). Arts invite us to let the imagination fly, to see things in an alternative way, and then to use the knowledge and the technical skills acquired to realize what has been imagined.

Creating through the arts is also a way of improving our self-knowledge, of increasing our intrapersonal intelligence, like defined in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Armstrong, 2000). Creating art is a way of discovering what we can experience, what is our emotional self (Eisner, 2002). Following on that idea, it can be used as an emotional outlet (Eisner, 2002, p. 32), which can be particularly helpful for children with special needs.

To stay with multiple intelligence theory, interpersonal intelligence is also stimulated by art creation (Armstrong, 2000). Meaning is not limited to what words can express. To learn to express oneself through the arts is another way of communicating with others: « Representation enables one to share one's ideas, one's feelings, one's aspirations, one's images with others » (Eisner, 2002, p. 239). Here again, it is specially adapted to children with special needs, who sometimes have difficulty in talking and so need to find other ways to communicate.

Sir Ken Robinson has also set out a very important aspect of creativity: « creativity is not about a lack of constraints; often it is about working within them and overcoming them » (Robinson, 2011, p. 266). He concurs with the ideas of Eisner (2002): art creation is teaching « to think and create within the constraints and affordance of a material » (Eisner, 2002, p.236). This is exactly what we do in everyday life, trying to do things within the constraints of practical reality. Even more so for children with special needs, who are burdened by the physical and mental constraints that their condition imposes on them.

1.c) Constructivist learning

Constructivism and constructivist learning are today an umbrella term for different views of learning. They originate in the theories of Jean Piaget: meaningful learning happens when people create knowledge (Snowman, 2006).

Four key ideas are at the core of constructivist learning:

- Start from prior knowledge, resulting from students' personal experience;
- Allow multiple perspectives via social interaction and negotiation;
- Self-regulation by learners is the key to succesful teaching;

- Focus on authentic learning (Snowman, 2006).

This means to begin by considering the children's interests, what they know, and choose tasks where the skills needed can be acquired by all the children in the group, with some practice. The idea is not to assume any prerequisite knowledge, but always to find out in advance what the children know and start from there (Selley, 1999).

The advantages of constructivist learning is that it encourages active participation and gives value to the personal experience of the learner, which has a positive effect on the self-confidence and self-esteem of the learner. This is very appropriate to our project. I also liked the idea that there is no right-way, that all trials and experiences are allowed. This is exactly the attitude that I wanted the children to have in the sessions.

On the other hand, constructivist learning often makes it difficult to follow a lesson-plan and is much more time-consuming than traditional teaching (Snowman, 2006). But since the music creation project's first aim was to assist the children in their own creative process, without having any specific « production dead-line », this was not really a problem.

1.d) Situation in Iceland

1.d) i) Music and children with special needs in Iceland

As Bamford pointed out in her report (2009), accessibility to education for all is a very strong concept in Iceland. Children with special needs are integrated in compulsory schools and there receive equitable arts provisions. But more consideration should be given in Iceland to out-of-school provisions in art education for children with special needs, and especially in music: Bamford (2009) reviewed that if 72% of the music schools were willing to accept pupils with special needs, only 46% of those particular schools actually provided some special arrangements for those children. The proportion where a full program was conceived for them was even lower. The only music school in Iceland that specializes in providing music education for children and young people with special needs is the Tónstofa Valgerðar. This school has a constant waiting list of around 50 children, which shows that there is a real need for more schools and programs in this domain. Bamford (2009) also mentions the fact that the general shortage of music teachers is even worse when it comes to music teachers for children with special needs.

This difference between the percentage of music schools willing to accept children with special needs and what is really happening is not due to a lack of interest from the parents, or the Tónstofa Valgerðar would not have so many applicants. It is probable that parents frequently shy away from applying for their problematic child at a regular music school. They might also, and with

very good reasons, wonder if a music teacher who has no special training or experience in dealing with disability, might be able to understand their child. Not to mention the question of the curriculum, exams, compulsory lessons, or physical accessibility to the classrooms.

One other practical point is that for many parents, dealing with the disability of their child can make their schedule quite complicated. Every day is more constraining than for other parents, with longer time necessary to prepare the child, drive to the different locations, more frequent visits to the doctor, physiotherapist and so on. Adding to this schedule one more back and forth to the music school can be a real problem. It can also be a financial problem to add the music lessons cost to all the other extra costs implied by the disability.

But most children with special needs in Iceland are enjoying both school and after-school programs. This is probably the best practical place, especially for those children, to have music sessions organized. I therefore decided to do the music sessions in an after-school center for children with disabilities.

1.d) ii) The project and the national curriculum

The new national curriculum, published in 2011, defines the basic parts of education: literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality and creation (*Aðalnámskrá Grunnskóla, almennur hluti*, 2011).

This project actually fulfills all those requirements. The project is first about music creation, and music creation with disabled children who do not have the same access to music schools as other children. Which already makes us consider the concepts of creation, equality, democracy and human rights, as well as health and welfare. The music creation project being oriented towards song writing, literacy becomes an issue. Then, partly because of the lack of finances, we have been working on researching ways of recycling material to create musical instruments, coming to think about sustainability and applied creation.

I think that the fact that this project touches upon all the above mentioned fields is a very positive and constructive quality. It should also be constructive for future fundraising to sustain other similar projects.

Last but not least, the Icelandic National Curriculum for Music Schools (2000) mentions that the educational and cultural role of music schools includes giving « all interested persons a chance to test their abilities at musical studies » (*Aðalnámskrá tónlistarskóla*, 2000, p. 16, translation Marie Huby). This is not saying that everybody has a right to individualized learning in the music schools, which would probably secure more constructively the access of disabled children. But it stipulates that an introduction to music and musical studies is important and should be accessible to

everybody. This is what this project aimed to do with the children of this after-school center.

2. Preparation of the project

2.a) The aim of the project and guiding questions

The project consisted of music creation sessions in an after-school program, once a week, for three months – ten sessions in total. During this time, data was collected through video-recordings of the sessions, photographs, a personal diary, interviews with three participants, their parents, three members of the staff of the center, and with Anna Henriksdóttir, who recorded nine sessions on video.

Apart from giving children with special needs the opportunity to create music, working on such a project and realizing it with precision, provides a practical experience that can be useful to future project managers.

As this study is not a research, I prefer to use the term guiding questions, instead of research questions. The following guiding questions were formulated to structure the gathering of data and to provide guidance when reflecting on the project:

- How do children with special needs experience participating in a music creation project?

And, as secondary questions :

- How does the staff of the after-school center experience hosting a music creation project?
- How does the project manager, as an active participant, experience a music creation project for children with special needs?

2.b) Choice of the structure, participants, and time-schedule

I was lucky to have defined before the summer of 2011 what I wanted to do as a master's project. It was then possible to get early in contact, with the help of Ásthildur Jónsdóttir, with both my supervisor, Valgerður Jónsdóttir, and the Frístundaheimilið Garður, Kringlumýri, where I planned to have the music sessions. Ólöf Haflína Ingolfssdóttir, director of this center when the project was launched, was from the beginning very positive and welcomed me to work with the children there. I was offered to come as much as I wanted and when I wanted, which was really a blessing for the preparation of this project. The music sessions took place in a little house just facing the center, which allowed the participants to be as « noisy » as they wanted without disturbing the others. This practical matter was very important for me. I wanted the children to feel

free, and I did not want to be seen as a « nuisance » for the children and the staff who did not take part in the project.

I decided to have weekly sessions, every Wednesday at 15 o'clock, of 30 to 45 min. This length was flexible, adapted to the attention span of the children. It was practical for me personally to have something well defined in time, and it actually was also important for the children to have a clear time schedule with regard to frequency and duration of the sessions. This regularity helped to create a feeling of security and confidence. As all children do not attend the after-school program every day, it was good to come always at the same moment in the week, so that the same children would have the opportunity to join every time.

My first plan was to define during the preparation period (see below in 2.c) i)) the group of children participating in the project as a closed group. But it clearly appeared in January that even if some children were the hard core of the project, I was going to work with an open group. First, the participation of the core-children was more or less regular, according to exterior constraints and personal choice. Limiting the sessions to only those children was not really possible either, the place being open for use to other children. Still, the message quickly emerged that this particular time in this particular house was the « tónlistar klúbbur » (music club): no other activities, and especially not watching television, were possible in that place. But I did not want to have to say to children who occasionally had the opportunity and the will to be there that they had to go. In a different structure I would perhaps have dealt with it differently, but I wanted to have a particularly positive and welcoming atmosphere around the project.

The group was an open group, with a hard core of 6 children who attended at least half of the sessions. Here is the list of those participants² and their disabilities:

Amy, Williams syndrome;

Bob, intellectual disability;

Brian, mild developmental disability, some autistic elements;

Juliet, Cerebral Palsy (a set of neurological conditions that cause physical disability), multiple disabilities, severe developmental problems;

Laura, motor handicap, low muscle tension;

Tim, Williams syndrome.

All the children attending the sessions were 12 or 13 years old when the project began, apart from Tim, who was 8 years old. Among the other children participating on a less regular basis, were

² All the names have been changed.

children with autism, Down syndrome, intellectual disability, developmental disability, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, and motor handicaps.

The next table shows the attendance of the core-children:

	11/01/12	18/01/12	25/01/12	01/02/12	08/02/12	15/02/12	29/02/12	07/03/12	14/03/12	21/03/12	TOT
Amy		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	8
Bob	X	X			X			X	X	X	6
Brian	X	X	X						X	X	5
Juliet	X	X				X	X			X	5
Laura	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	7
Tim	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	7

2.c) Organization of the project

2.c) i) Time-line

	Sep 11	Oct 11	Nov 11	Dec 11	Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12
Preparation period									
Music project									
Interviews									
Analysis									
Presentation									

2.c) ii) Preparation period

The preparation period, apart from reading and reflecting on the bibliography, was also used for observation within different structures, to organize a pilot project in the after-school center Garður, and to plan the project itself.

Observation

I had the wonderful opportunity to go to Klettaskóli where I observed the teaching of Soffía Huld Friðbjarnardóttir, who is a music teacher and a music therapist. All the children who took part

in the project were given music lessons there by her and the two other music teachers, Ingibjörg Aldís Ólafsdóttir and Ólafur Ólafsson. Observing the children was instrumental in getting to know them and gaining knowledge about their abilities. It was also helpful for planning my own way of working with them.

I also attended bellchoir sessions in Tónstofa Valgerðar. This group is composed of twelve young adults who have had music lessons in Tónstofan for some years. It was very interesting to follow this group, which has been working together since 1998, and to observe interactions within the group and with Valgerður. It stressed notably the importance of allowing time for socializing during the sessions. This is particularly important for those participants who do not always meet outside of those sessions.

Finally, I went to the Frístundaheimilið Garður once, before the project began, to acquaint myself with its daily routines, and to introduce myself to the children and the employees.

Pilot project

In November and December 2011 I had four sessions with the children of the after-school center Garður. Those sessions were open to all the children of the center, and also to the nearest center (those children were a little bit younger, 8 to 10 years old). It was important to present to everybody what was going to take place, so that they could knowingly choose whether they wanted to be part of the project or not.

It was also a very good opportunity for me to begin to know the children, and what they liked, and to introduce the project to the children and the staff. I could take time to explain what I expected from them, because I actually needed the help of everybody to make it work out. But I could not have a formal meeting with the staff, which would probably have given them all a clearer view of the project. Actually some of the staff changed in January, including the director of the center, so that a presentation in autumn would probably have been too early in any case.

The little house was always occupied freely before I came and I decided not to ask the people to leave and close the doors. I wanted the project to give an impression of freedom and comfort, not of compulsory closed music lesson, even if it was sometimes uncomfortable for me. I think anyway that it was very good to have proceeded like this, instead of the director choosing the children, or beginning in January with a completely open group. The children were also already used to the regularity of the sessions, how they were structured, and to me, which made them feel secure.

I decided to begin with trying different types of activities: singing, playing some easy instruments, dancing, listening to music, moving to it or playing along. I tried to use what the

children knew and liked, for example by inviting them to sing songs that they knew. I also tried to discover from the beginning what musical concepts they already knew, like dynamics, speed, and pitch.

In practice, I was very inspired by the ideas of constructivist learning already presented in the first part (1.c)). I observed the children and tried to build on their actions, but I expected them to be very active in the process. For example, I would introduce an instrument and show one way of playing it, and then ask one pupil to go in the center of the circle and the others to imitate him/her (the pupil is then the master of the game), which led to very original uses of the instruments being shown. This approach seemed to me particularly adapted to the project, as the children and I were really learning together, jointly discovering and creating music. I learned from them ways of teaching creativity and how to work with different types of pupils.

From the first session I had explained very clearly that I was myself doing a project at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, that we were going to work on this together, and that I would need their help. The children were very positive about this and, as far as I could see, very happy to be part of a constructive decision process. I kept asking them what they liked and what not, what they found best to do. It was important to me that they would have a feeling of being part of the decision making. This was a way of promoting their empowerment in the project.

Empowerment is a concept used for different types of populations: women, students, disabled people, employees in a firm, etc. Chamberlin (1997) gives a very precise definition of it, including fifteen different elements. The first five, and most important to me, are:

- having decision-making power;
- having access to information and resources;
- having a range of options from which to make choices;
- assertiveness;
- having the feeling that the individual can make a difference. (Chamberlin, 1997)

In our case, explaining to the children why and how the project would take place was giving them information. Making them say what they liked was giving them decision-making power. The creation process is of course in itself making decisions and assuming them, asserting what they want to say and show it. Finally, the fact that I needed them to make my own project, that I needed to know what they thought, how each of them experienced the project, definitely gave them the feeling that each one made a difference.

2.c) iii) Orientation of the project following the pilot project

After those preparatory sessions, it appeared to me that the children particularly liked to sing and dance. This gave me the idea of trying to work on song-writing and dance creation.

« Songwriting in therapy consists of a process of creating the song and all the musical, verbal and bodily communication involved in that process » (Rolvjord, 2005, p. 98). The work is then not finished, the song being rehearsed, and eventually shared via concert with family, friends, or wider public (Aasgaard, 2002, as cited in Rolvsjord, 2005). And, it is very important to understand, the meaning of the song and its therapeutic potential are « not only connected to the song as a certain expression, but to the relational experiences of the songwriting process and to the use of the song inside and outside the music therapy room » (Rolvsjord, 2005, p. 98).

Participants in song-writing easily identify with a song as « their » song, and so build a strong sense of the group having achieved something together, of each person being an active and important part of the group (Grocke, 2009). Songs are also easy to share with family and friends and have great staying power.

It is very important to have something concrete that can be shown to family and friends, like a CD, which also communicates the fact that the group achieved something (Grocke, 2009). Here we unfortunately had no financial support to make a CD, but we have the possibility of participating in the after-school center summer festival. The sessions and the concerts being documented via photographs and recordings offered another possibility of sharing.

The idea of using instruments created with recuperation material came early in the project. First because of the difficulty of getting instruments, given that we had no funding. Then because working on recycled material to make something useful and nice out of it is a very good experience for children, and teaches them about sustainability through art and creativity.

2.c) iv) Influence of phenomenological research on the data gathered

This master study is, first of all, a project. To actually conduct these sessions with the children was the most important point, a point that holds value for all participants. But documenting the project provides the opportunity to learn more from it (« learning by doing »), and to share the experience with others. This can have very practical value for project managers in the future. And it is important for the people participating in the project to get a perspective on the work done and how the different participants reacted to it.

The guiding questions were elaborated for this purpose. As I mentioned previously (2.a)), the main guiding question is:

- How do children with special needs experience participating in a music creation project?

Secondary questions are:

- How does the staff of the after-school center experience hosting a music creation project?
- How does the project manager, as an active participant, experience a music creation project for children with special needs?

The phenomena observed, i.e. the music creation project, anchors the study within phenomenology. The number of children involved and the duration of the project would not allow me to get statistically significant results with a quantitative approach. The reason for choosing a qualitative approach does not primarily lie there. The questions to be answered focus on the quality of the children's experience as well as that of the employees of the center and myself. I am trying to get a sense of the human experience of this project, to understand it via observation and discussion. The primary focus here is on the participants' experience.

Phenomenological research focuses on the lived experience of a phenomenon. It emphasizes the importance of personal perspective and interpretation with the purpose of identifying phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Lester, 1999). Phenomenological research tends to describe rather than explain (Lester, 1999). Like Kvale (1996) explains it, « A phenomenological perspective includes a focus on the living world, an openness to the experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for invariant essential meanings in the descriptions » (Kvale, 1996, pp. 38-39).

The phenomenological approach is very well adapted to the questions I want to reflect on and to the nature of the project. In this light it was important to gather data from different informants, and to use whatever means the participants have to describe their experience. I decided so to keep a diary of my own experience of the project, and to conduct semi-structured interviews with some children, their parents and some members of the staff. Semi-structured interviews are defined by Kvale as having « a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions » but with also « an openness to changes of sequences and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subject » (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Added to this, all the sessions were video recorded to keep a precise view of what was happening, and how the children, the staff and I were reacting. It helped me in the writing of my diary, given that it was impossible to take notes during the sessions as I was participating actively in them.

2.c) v) Presentation of the project

The master project was presented at the Iceland Academy of the Arts on the 13th of April.

Some of the songs created will be put in a booklet that will be given to both the after-school center and the music teachers in Klettaskóli. The after-school center will also get all pictures taken during the project. Parents will receive a personal letter explaining how the project was conducted, informing them of the availability of those documents and of this report ; and inviting them to get in touch with me if they have questions or remarks.

The master's thesis was written in English in order to share it with other countries and get feedback from them.

2.d) SWOT analysis

The acronym SWOT analysis stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. It is a strategic planning method that is very useful in determining whether a project is realizable or not, and to understand its potential and its limitations. I decided at the beginning of the process to take time to use this analytical tool to gain a more objective view of the project before it began.

Strengths are the characteristics of the project that give it an advantage while weaknesses are the characteristics of the project that place it at a disadvantage; opportunities are the external chances to improve the project, and threats are the external elements in the environment that could endanger the project.

Strengths

The first strength is that there is at the moment no project like this in the after-school program centers in Reykjavík. There is also a general lack of music creation projects with disabled children, which makes the simple existence of this particular project a positive fact.

The project itself is in complete accordance with the new curriculum and the basic parts of education it defines.

To begin early to build up the project in the after-school center Garður was a big advantage. It takes time to get in contact, to meet the people, to get to know them, and to start the project. An early beginning therefore helped me to feel very confident about the time schedule.

It was very practical that the project should be situated quite close to my home. It is especially wonderful when working with disabled children to see them regularly over a period of several months rather than in an intensive one week session.

My own experience as a piano and music teacher was very helpful. I am quite good at reaching children and building a constructive relationship with them. I was also full of ideas and

ready to get as much criticism as possible in order to adapt my input. I am also quite involved in dancing so that even if I am not a dance teacher I am able to help children in finding ways of expressing themselves through dancing.

Weaknesses

The first and easily definable weakness was the lack of financing for this project. No funds could be raised. It was neither possible to buy instruments and material, nor to get an external teacher to come. I could borrow instruments from the Iceland Academy of the Arts, but as I did not have a car it became difficult to bring many instruments at once.

At the center itself there were no instruments available. There was some equipment to listen to music, but as it was often out of order and needed to be manipulated with caution, I did not rely on it.

I could not really take time before the preparation period to talk to the employees of the center. I had a very good meeting with the director, but the employees came at the same time as the children and were then completely occupied with them. I tried to get in contact with most of them to ask their opinion about the sessions, and to chat before and after, but it would have been great to have a real presentation and discussion without them being in the middle of their work with the children.

Another weakness was that in spite of my long experience as a music teacher my experience working with disabled people was very limited in the beginning of the project.

Opportunities

The director of the after-school center was very positive towards the project and it is well known that children generally react positively to music.

There are also future possibilities for this project. An application for funds from the Ministry of Education might guarantee its continuation at this particular center and eventually at other centers that show interest.

The excellent connection I formed with the teachers in Klettaskóli also opened possibilities to share what we were doing in the sessions.

Threats

The biggest threat was that there might not be any children in this particular center who were interested in music (which fortunately did not happen!). But as the project was not by nature compulsory there was a possibility of the children not attending or abandoning the project.

It was also possible that the place that we got to house the sessions would not be available anymore, forcing us into a much smaller room inside the center where we would not have the freedom to do whatever we wanted there.

A negative attitude from the employees was a threat. They might either show little interest in the project, or refrain from involving themselves in a helpful way with the children.

3. Realization of the project

3.a) Introduction

This section summarizes the ten sessions, i.e. the type of activities, which children attended, and how they reacted. A shorter resume of the activities, with precise timing, is available in Appendix 2.

All sessions began with a warm-up. The purpose of the warm-up is to gather the group together, enhance their physical and mental alertness, and focus their attention; it is also intended to create a positive atmosphere and motivate the children to participate in the following activities. The warm-up activities consist of stretching movements, dancing, simple rhythmic exercises and singing. It is especially important as the children are going to the after-school center straight from school and often begin the afternoon by sitting down and relaxing a bit. It is of crucial importance that they begin the session alert and ready.

The length of the warm-up varied with the number of children and the general atmosphere. It tended to get shorter as we advanced in the project. I felt I needed more time in the beginning to get the children to focus. With time passing they got used to the structure of the sessions and did not need as much time.

Concerning those attending, I regard the children who have been present for five sessions or more out of the ten sessions as the core children. Their presence and participation is particularly addressed. The other children are then considered as guests, showing up once or twice. All the names have been changed in this report.

The following table summarizes the length of the sessions, the total number of children (including the guests) and employees attending.

	11/01/ 12	18/01/ 12	25/01/ 12	01/02/ 12	08/02/ 12	15/02/ 12	29/02/ 12	07/03/ 12	14/03/ 12	21/03/ 12	Average
Children	10	8	4	5	5	3	6	5	8	7	6,1
Employees	6	2	1	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3,5
Length (min)	29	32	40	35	43	40	44	52	44	35	39,4

3.b) Progression of the sessions

3.b) i) First session, 11/01/2012

Length: 29 minutes.

Attendees: Laura, Tim, Bob, Brian, Juliet; five guests.

Staff present: Six employees, including one active participant.

1) Warm-up (10 min).

Physical warm-up through dancing and stretching to African music. The vocal warm-up is done on the principle of the master game. The master game consists in having a master, who is directing the others both by imitation and with gestures. I begin by being the master, showing them how to lead. Four children get then to be the master and direct the whole group, me included.



One employee is very participative in this first session

2) Vocal accompaniment in ostinato (10 min).

The idea is to make a simple vocal accompaniment, in ostinato, under a known song or as a base for improvisation. First I sing the ostinato alone while the children sing *Krummi krunkar úti* (which is their proposal). Then half of the group is taking part in the accompaniment with me, the

other half singing the song, and we exchange roles. When everybody has mastered it, we all sing the same simple ostinato while one child is improvising freely, by singing, clapping or dancing. Three children improvise like this, twice each.

Here are two of those improvisations:

The image displays two musical staves, each labeled 'Song' on the left. The first staff is titled '(On lalala)' and contains two staves of music in 2/4 time. The second staff is titled '(imitating the trumpet)' and '(clapping)' and also contains two staves of music in 2/4 time. The music consists of simple, rhythmic patterns using eighth and quarter notes.

3) What is a song / song parody (7 min).

We have a short discussion about the different elements of a song. I invite them to sing a song they know: one child sings the wakawaka song. Then I propose to make a song parody, to change the lyrics of this song to tell another story. I propose to make up a story about an animal. The children choose the lion. One of the children actually works on it, but the general focus does fade.

4) Closure (2 min).

We finish the session by dancing again together like lions to the music used for the warm-up.

5) Concluding remarks on the 1st session.

This is the first session after the Christmas holidays, and I planned too many activities for them to keep the focus so long. They are definitely tired after the ostinato work, and find it difficult to concentrate. As this was the first session, many children came as guests but actually left the room before the end, either because they had to go or because they finally did not want to take part. The session went well. The master game and the ostinato accompaniment worked particularly well, and the children were very active, despite the lack of participation on the part of the staff.

3.b) ii) Second session, 18/01/2012

Length: 32 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Tim, Bob, Brian, Juliet and three guests.

Staff present: Two employees, both passive participants.

1) Warm-up (10 min).

Physical warm-up through stretching and dancing to African music, all together or in couples. For the vocal warm-up, I propose the master game again, but it is not working as well as last time, because the children want to direct, but not really to be directed. One child shows an initiative and asks to do some clapping. We do it, under my direction.

2) Vocal accompaniment in ostinato (3 min).

Three of the children were present in the last session, the others are discovering this activity. We sing the same accompaniment and two children improvise on it, clapping, and/or dancing.

One solo is particularly impressive:

7

3) Song parody (6 min).

I invite them to work on the melody of *Krummi krunkar úti*, and to try to find new lyrics. One girl is particularly involved in this.

The lyrics that we get at the end are:

*Hundur er að keyra og sér annan hund,
Og hann giftir þennan hund fyrir konu.
(bis) Hann er búinn að eignast hvolp
og hann heitir visa. (bis)*

Two children show an initiative and propose to sing a song related to dogs (like this new song). They are given attention and a good clap.

4) Instrument making and playing (12 min).

I brought empty bottles, boxes and rice that I use to make shakers for them. Some more material, boxes and sticks have also been brought by Anna. We finally play those home-made

instruments along with recorded music, all together or making solos, dancing and having fun.

5) Closure (1 min).

We finish the session with a short scream circle. We are all standing and holding hands, screaming more or less as the hands go up and down.

6) Concluding remarks on the 2nd session.

The children were very involved in all the activities, and we achieved very nice things, both in the improvisation and the song parody. I managed better with maintaining the focus by bringing in the instrument making when they began to get tired. The children were definitely interested in the process and happy with the instruments. Some children kept on playing with them after the session was finished. I regretted not being able to let them do it themselves (lack of material to properly put the rice in the bottles). The master game did not work well enough. Probably it was due to difficulties in following directions.

3.b) iii) Third session - 25/01/2012

Length: 40 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Laura, Brian; one guest, who has to leave after the warming-up.

Staff present: One employee, passive participant.

1) Warm-up (7 min).

Physical warm-up through stretching and massage. Vocal warm-up through speaking and singing. Clapping and tapping is also combined to singing.

Child initiative: during the voice warm-up, Laura says actually something else than the others, and as it fits well together, I ask her to repeat it so everybody is conscious of having two voices.


2) Winter-rap (27 min).

We have a discussion about winter, everybody is asked to give words that represent this season. The children then use the words to make short sentences about it and organize it in a song. They also add some movements and instrument playing. While doing this, we are thinking about form : how do they want to organize it in a song, what should come first, last, in the middle, and if we are going to have an introduction, a chorus. The roles are also shared between the children.

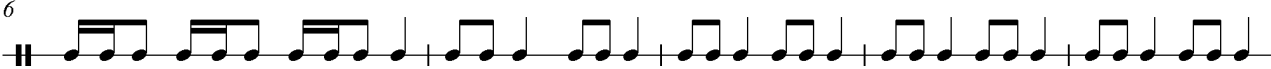


Reflecting about what winter means to us


Here is the winter-rap like the children realize it in the end:



 Tu-tu- tu, (simile) Gleð-i-leg jó!, gleð-i-leg jó!,

6
 

 gleð-i- leg, gleð-i- leg, gleð-i-leg jó! Tu-tu- tu, (simile)

11
 

 heitt inn- i, kalt út - i. snjór út - i, peysa' inn-i rign-ing inn-i -skór, inn-i -skór, inn-i inn-i inn-i-skór

3) Hundalag (6 min).

We review the hundalag that was done in session 2.

4) Concluding remarks on the 3rd session.

The work on the winter-rap worked very well. The small number of attendees was good for this particular activity because it is easier to involve all the children in the creation process and they can take all the time they want to think and express themselves without it being difficult to manage. When it came to reviewing the Hundalag, I realized that it was actually very difficult for them to remember and repeat the three sentences in the song. I tried to make them remember the first two sentences but they only managed the first one.

3.b) iv) Fourth session - 01/02/2012

Length: 35 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Laura, Tim; two guests.

Staff present: Four employees, including one active participant.

1) Warm-up (5 min).

Physical warm-up through a massage circle, clapping and stapping (all together or in pairs).

Vocal warm-up through buzzing, directed with movements.

2) Presentation of the winter-rap (2 min).

Amy and Laura present to the others the winter-rap that was done last time.

3) Happy-rap (15 min).

We discuss what makes each of them happy. Then they work in pairs. One child plays percussions while another sings about what makes him/her happy. They actually sing with a melody instead of making a real rap, which is no problem for me. Some sing with full sentences, others just list words or even just sing in one word a full melody.

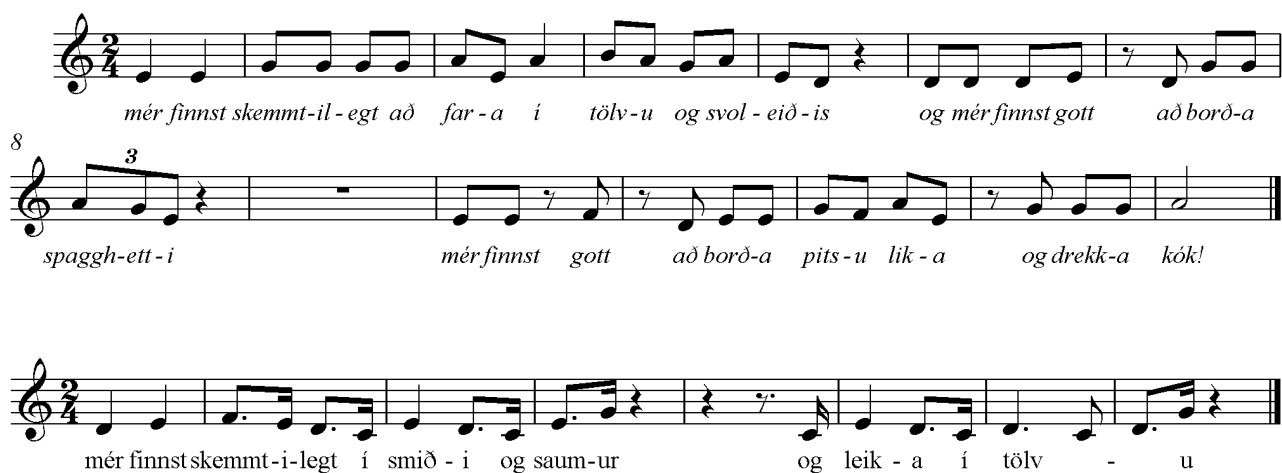


Making a happy-rap is a lot of fun!



Some employees are clearly encouraged to participate

Here are the beginnings of two of the happy-raps (the total product was actually at least twice longer in those two cases):



Two children show an initiative and ask to sing a song which they are allowed to do.

4) Hundalag (7 min).

We review the Hundalagið from the second session. The children take turns to play the characters.

5) Playing instruments (6 min).

We play instruments along with Balkan music. I direct the group and invite the children to do solos.

6) Concluding remarks on the 4th session.

The happy-rap worked very well. They found it very funny to do and were very happy to get a good clap after their performance. They really achieved something in this session. Then I made a mistake by wanting to add to it both the Hundalag and instrument playing, both of which were disconnected from the two former activities. The children wanted to keep on with the Hundalag and I should have been more receptive to this.

3.b) v) Fifth session - 08/02/2012

Length: 45 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Tim, Bob, and two guests.

Staff present: Four employees, all active participants.

1) Warm-up (3 min).

Physical: warm-up through massage. Vocal warm-up through singing.

2) Child initiative: presentation of the guitar (5min).

Bob came with a guitar (with only two strings!). He presents it to the other children and enjoys singing several songs and dynamically directing the children and employees in a sing-along. He also allows the other children to try it. Some children sing and play.

3) Work on fairy tales (22 min).

I begin with *The little Red Cap*. We have a group discussion about the characters, who is going to embody each of them, and what is happening. Then each child is asked to sing and dance about the character he/she is playing, with the help of the group. When all this is ready, we play the entire story.

I ask them to choose another fairy-tale, and they agree on Snow-white. We repeat the same process.

4) Happy-rap (7 min).

Amy is asked to present the happy-rap from the last session. More children, whether they were present last time or not, take part.

Some children show an initiative and propose to sing a song they know.

5) Playing instruments (3 min).

We all play together the same rhythm, then with solos, and then all together totally free. I also brought newspapers and ask them to create sounds with them.

6) Hundalag (1 min).

We quickly review the song.

7) Closure (2 min).

Free instrument playing.

8) Concluding remarks on the 5th session.

Working on the fairy tale was very interesting, even if we did not get real songs. The children worked on constructing quite a long story, remembering all the elements and playing it with focus. There was also quite a lot of initiative from the children. Researching the possible sounds from the newspapers did not get much success, the attention of the children being drawn to the already made instruments.

3.b) vi) Sixth session - 15/02/2012

Length: 40 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Juliet and one guest.

Staff present: Two employees, both active participants.

1) Warm-up (3 min).

Physical warm-up through massage, stepping and clapping.

2) Work on fairy-tale (27 min).

We first spend quite a lot of time (7 min) in choosing what we are going to work on. Finally we decide on Snow-white, like in the last session. We then work on the different characters. Juliet

and the guest are playing the shakers. Amy has the drum box and she is singing a lot. She is creating songs for the prince, the mirror, Snow-white.

Here is the beginning of the prince's song (the whole song is around 2 minutes long, with a progressive switch to English and inclusion of the song « can't stop loving you »).

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The accompaniment is represented by a series of vertical stems on a lower staff. The lyrics are written below the staff.

Measures 1-5: Gam-an að kiss - a Kiss-a mig

Measures 6-9: Litl - a kiss - a litl - a kiss - a já

Measures 10-11: já kiss - a

I try to involve the guest more by asking her opinion on the characters and also by asking her to play. She reacts very positively.

3) *Playing instruments (5 min).*

Master game, everybody imitating the master.

4) *Child initiative: singing (5 min).*

Amy offers twice to sing a song. The guest is invited to sing a song and does so.

5) *Concluding remarks on the 6th session.*

This session was a bit special because the children were so few, and apart from Amy, not as active as the usual children. Actually Brian and Bob did drop by when we were discussing the choice of the fairy tale, but then decided to go away. So they actually made us lose time rather than helping with the process. Sometimes it took time to get things in gear, but it also gave more space to Juliet who generally gets a bit lost among the other children. She was particularly happy, and expressed it by laughing, smiling and cuddling.

3.b) vii) Seventh session – 29/02/2012

Length: 45 minutes.

Attendees: Laura, Tim, Juliet and three guests.

Staff present: Four employees, including three active participants.

1) Child initiative.

Laura asks me, Anna, and some employees about our families and pets.

2) Warm-up (2 min).

Physical warm-up through shaking hands and feet. Vocal warm-up through buzzing.

3) Singing about families and pets (3 min).

Starting from Laura's initiative I suggest that we improvise a family song so that the children can sing about their families and pets, with the accompaniment of shakers.

4) Interview game (3 min).

When Tim gets the toy-microphone he uses it to interview another child, so I encourage the children to keep on like this, and we include more singing.

5) Dance (2 min).

Some free and energetic dancing to let the energy get out.

6) Work on fairy tale, Snow-white (35 min).

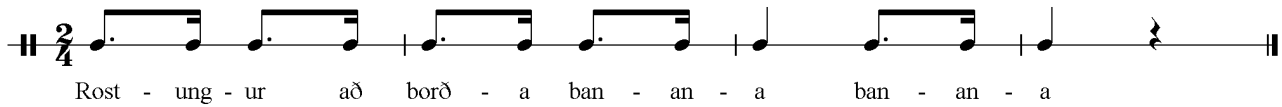
We keep on with the work that was done in the two last sessions, interpreting the characters via song and movements. This time there is a lot of dancing done. We use again the concept of vocal ostinato to accompany the singing and also insist on the characters' traits. We finish by organizing the whole story along a line, with the different characters singing and/or dancing as they like.



Dance of the poisoned apple

Here is one of the songs for the prince (all the lyrics are not understandable):

animal, with instruments. Then they have to choose a meal for those animals in another book, a cook book for children. Sometimes quite surprising connections occur, as can be seen in the next example:



We recapitulate all the animals in the end.

4) Child initiative leading to work on the days of the week (6 min).

Bob is showing a poster on the wall, where the days of the week are listed. I seize on the idea of asking them to each be one day of the week and to sing it, alone or all together, with instrument playing.

5) Playing instruments, master game (11 min).

In the preceding process Bob begins to direct the playing. We naturally keep on with playing the master game. Three children get to direct, and do it in very different ways, sometimes dancing along, making solos, but always very good in controlling when we have to begin and stop playing. They are also quite good at following the given directions.



Directing requests a lot of energy

6) Concluding remarks on the 8th session.

It was a very active and long session. The children loved to play the instruments and did not get tired of it. A very nice and interesting incident occurred. When Bob was directing, he gave the employees, sitting, totally passive, next to the door, some shakers and directed them to play. I actually would often have loved to do this as well, but did not really dare to. So it was wonderful to see him doing this so naturally and decisively. In this session the children were a little bit disturbed by the fact that Anna, who normally films the session, was replaced by Björn. I asked them of course if they agreed with that, and they did. They asked him some questions and Bob also gave him a shaker when he was directing.

3.b) ix) Ninth session - 14/03/2012

Length: 44 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Laura, Bob, Brian, Juliet; three guests.

Staff present: Four employees, including two active participants.

1) Warm-up (6 min).

Physical warm-up through massage, clapping, stamping, short dancing. Vocal warm-up through singing.

2) Playing instruments, master game (19 min).

All the children get to direct. Some children play and ask the others to simply imitate. Some others are really directing with very clear gestures and comments.

3) Creating music from a story in images (8 min).

I brought another book with a short story in images about a little mouse fighting with the wind. The children search for ways to make different winds, with the voice, the instruments, or with movements.

4) Playing instruments / dancing on vocal ostinato (8 min 30).

We are all singing together a vocal accompaniment and each child gets to sing a solo, to dance or to play an instrument along with it. It is also possible to invite someone to join.

5) Closure (2 min 30).

The children create a very short good-bye song:



6) Concluding remarks on the 9th session.

The children were very active in this session. I initially wanted to work again on the pictures of animals, like in session #8, but as I had given them the instruments they were all beginning to play and getting quite excited about it. Thus I switched immediately to the master game, which was a good idea I think. They really enjoyed it, and made solos on the ostinato. It was also good to get a closure to the session.

3.b) x) Tenth session – 21/03/2012

Length: 35 minutes.

Attendees: Amy, Laura, Juliet, Tim; one guest; Bob and Brian are present only for the second activity.

Staff present: Four employees, including one active participant, but not really in the activities I propose.

1) Warm-up (4 min).

Physical warm-up through massage and tapping.

2) Playing instruments, master game (12 min).

The children direct the group. But there is a general tendency to want to direct rather than obey directions.

3) Dancing (2 min).

Amy and Laura begin to dance around the chairs, so I make them follow the one who is playing: dancing when there is music, stopping with the music.

4) Creating music or dance from objects (8 min).

I brought some little objects (stones, toys...), and I ask each child to pick one and to do something about this object, to express it through a dance and/or a song. They like to do it, but are mostly dancing and singing the same tune « allir dansa conga ».

5) Free play with instruments (9 min).

Children play instruments while Tim is playing along with the radio, putting it on and off.

6) Concluding remarks on the 10th session.

This last session was definitely not at all with the same level of focus and attention as the others. I could see the impact of the weather on them (it was one of the first real spring days). Or maybe my own energy was low, knowing that this was the last official session for the project. I should have been more careful in the choice of the objects and brought things that could all be used to dance with (ribbons) or make different sounds with (cubes). The master game worked very well. I proposed it because this is something they all love, and also because Brian had come only at the urging of the staff and did not really want to participate. He sat down saying « ég vil bara sitja kjurr

og ekki gera neitt » (I just want to sit still and not do anything). But he was actually very active in the game, both in playing and directing. Then Laura had a general problem with accepting rules, which made Tim very irritated.

3.c) General overview of the activities

The methods used were very practical. I simply asked the children to do something themselves. For example, play instruments, research sounds from one object, dance or sing. I often started by having them imitate rhythms, sounds, movements, and then letting them find their own way.

Discussion was often used. The children discussed what material they wanted to work on and how to find the material for lyrics (for example, in sessions #3 and #4). They also discussed how to interpret characters in music and movement. Taking time to discuss what made them happy, or what they thought was appropriate to work on, was both starting from their own experience (constructivism) and giving them the power to decide (empowerment).

The material used was both varied and simple. I used pictures (animals, foods), and a story in pictures. We worked at-length on fairy-tales, embodying the characters and expressing with music what is happening to them. As fairy-tales constitute something that children know, some of them by heart, they were perfectly in line with constructivist learning. In the beginning I brought recorded music for the warm-up, the dancing or other activities, but I had to stop because the sound system I was using failed quite early on.

We always worked all together, there were generally no more than six, and always less than ten. Sometimes they also worked in pairs. Solos were always required, and space given to individual initiative, like singing a song. In some work, like on the fairy-tales, each child had a very definite role that he/she was responsible for.

I insisted on respect towards each other. The children had to listen to the one who was talking/singing/playing, respect solo moments, to follow directions in the master game, and pay attention to what everybody had to say. On the other hand, when they were the master, everybody had to follow what they decided. I tried to always keep some flexibility in the sessions, allowing space for initiatives and propositions.

I always began with a warm-up, but did not always take time for a closure activity. Sometimes the employees took the children away when they had the feeling that the session was over, without waiting for me to close it. I should have been more self-assertive in this also.

I tried to provide continuity to the sessions by reviewing what had been done the session

before. For example, the fairy-tale theme was used three sessions in a row. But I abandoned reviewing the songs made at each session. There were always some children present who had never heard the song, so I felt like I was always teaching them the same first sentence each time. I could have been more persistent in this matter. For example, I could have asked some children to clap while the ones that knew the song would rehearse it. This lack of persistence was also linked to the fact that I abandoned quite quickly the idea of preparing a concert.

4. Reflection on the guiding questions through data analysis

4.a) The guiding questions

The main guiding question in this project was:

- How do children with special needs experience participating in a music creation project?

And the secondary questions were:

- How does the staff of the after-school center experience hosting a music creation project?
- How does the project manager, as an active participant, experience a music creation project for children with special needs?

To reflect on those questions, I am using triangulation. Data is collected through different means and from different sources: videorecordings of the sessions, my personal diary, interviews with three employees, interviews with three parents, interviews with three children, and an interview with Anna Henriksdóttir who recorded the sessions.

4.b) The children's experience

Interviews were conducted with three children, but interviews are perhaps not really suitable for this particular group, as will be discussed in section 5.d). A better indicator of the children's experience is their attitude during the sessions and also whether they returned to the sessions or not. Whatever the case, the children interviewed are all very positive towards the sessions and would like them to continue, but they also would like to have more instruments available.

It can be assumed that the children that came regularly are the ones who were most interested in the project. As can be seen in the table presented in section 2.b), the six « core » children did not have the same attendance. Amy was always there. When she did not show up she was actually not in the center. Bob and especially Brian lost interest in the project after some time. When Brian

showed up, he did not stay the entire session. Juliet was there only half of the sessions, but she always wanted to come and was very happy during the sessions. For example, as I came one day to do an interview, she saw me and absolutely wanted to go into the kofinn where the sessions took place. It took time for her to understand and accept that there was no session that day. I wonder if the staff actually had the will to bring her to each session, as she is not able to talk and say what she wants. This fact makes her more dependant on the attitude of the employees that take care of her.

I think that this kind of project has to be on offer, and not compulsory. The employees were all agreeing on this point. For example when Brian was pushed to come to the session, his attitude was not always positive and this did not have a good impact on the general atmosphere.

Some children actually came very regularly, which shows that they appreciated the sessions. That they stayed til the end supports this also. The sessions lasted from 29 minutes to 52 minutes, which is definitely a long time for those children. It also shows that they are able to focus for quite long periods, working sometimes more than half an hour on one particular project and being active participants for most of that time.

The children were also very positive. Every activity that I proposed was welcomed. I always got volunteers to take on particular roles, and the children clapped to each other's solos. One parent expressed that her child was always happy to get something precise to do and to achieve it. Each child had a different way of showing his/her contentment. Some laughed a lot, some always applauded the others, some bowed proudly after a performance, others pushed employees to participate, and yet others came to me for contact. The level of comfort grew during the sessions. The children laughed, asked questions, and expressed themselves. That the sessions were open made it simple. The children who did not enjoy them simply did not come.

There were also quite a lot of initiatives taken. Some children offered to sing a song, to play instruments, to dance. Those initiatives were always welcomed. Sometimes we got really magic moments, like when a little girl who generally does not speak began to sing a song.

The parents I talked to were all very positive about having a music project in the after-school center. On the other hand, only one expressed really wanting more and being ready to invest in it if necessary. The other parents trust the director of the center to organize what she thinks is appropriate. If there is a real demand for music education from the parents, then they turn to the music schools, even if it means a long wait on a waiting list. The fact that some children did go to music school was definitely a driver for the sessions. Getting children in such a project who are used to work with rhythm and singing pulls the whole group forward.

4.c) The staff's experience

The staff is composed of very different people who demonstrated very different levels of interest in the project. My contact was principally with the employees who were interested in the musical project, and therefore encouraged the children to come to the sessions, and who were active there themselves. I did not have real contact with all the members of the staff. The staff arrives shortly before the children, and leaves shortly afterwards. During work hours they might be completely occupied with the children in their charge and if they were not particularly interested in talking about the project it did not happen.

My view of the staff's experience is therefore limited to those employees who showed interest in the project. More precisely, I took interviews with the director of the center where the project took place (another director was there before January), and with two members of the staff who actively participated in two sessions. The other employees only showed up once, and/or were more passive during the sessions. I decided to focus on the ones that did see at least two sessions and who showed interest and motivation by actively participating.

This was the first time in at least four years that the center welcomed an art project. The city of Reykjavík offers some special activities, but the center did not use this opportunity. The fact that I came, proposed something, and did it myself was much appreciated. Getting more ideas and experience was also seen as very positive. One employee mentioned that a dance project would probably work well with those children. But the interviews show that even if the experience with this project is seen as positive, the will to go on from there and to arrange another similar project is still not really there. When I asked the director if she planned to take on future projects she was obviously afraid to commit to something that eventually might not interest the children, or would require the employees to take initiatives she was not sure they would be willing to take. The staff is thus clearly attracted to the idea of something new and different but worried about its actual realization.

The reaction of the employees I interviewed was positive towards the project. They thought it was « clever », and that it had « a good influence on the children ». They enjoyed the sessions they participated in, « because the children were happy ».

The sessions were seen as having a positive influence on the children's concentration, but also as being too serious and sometimes too difficult for them. One employee mentioned the problem of sitting down for some time, another wanted more « funny things ».

Regarding the instruments, opinions differed. Some employees think it would be better with instruments, others think it is actually good for the children to see how much can be done without

instruments.

The employees I interviewed said they did get enough information on the project, but when I actually asked precise questions they did not know what exactly was the purpose of it. All the information they had came from me. What I told the director in the beginning was not transmitted to all of them. For example, in the fifth session, one employee who did not show up before asked why there was someone taking a video and pictures, which demonstrates the lack of communication within the center. There is also a lack of communication with the parents. Neither the employees nor the director know for example which children go to a music school. Most parents never come to pick up their children, and they generally do not intervene in the life of the center.

The pilot sessions were seen as positive and conducive to a better understanding of what might take place. Two employees mentioned that it would have been a good thing to have a music-referee in the staff that could have taken more responsibility in the project. But actually no one offered that kind of help.

The director mentioned that the staff should generally have been more positive, encouraging the children to participate in the sessions. The director had actually recognized from the start that the employees would not all be interested in this project, and had stated that it would have to be their decision whether they participated or not.

4.d) My own experience, as project manager and participant

My experience was very positive with the children. We established very good contact and I am quite satisfied with what we achieved together. I was more frustrated about the relationship with the center, and I regret not having built a relationship with the parents.

4.d) i) Relations with the children

I established very good contact with the children. Their attitude was always very positive, which can also be linked to the fact that the project was not compulsory and that they could choose to come or not. I always felt very comfortable in the sessions, more so as time passed. The children were so active and giving that I sometimes forgot that they were handicapped and had to step back when I realized that I was going too fast for them.

I felt more uncomfortable with the children who presented a physical disability. It seemed more difficult to evaluate what they could do, and if I could ask them, for example, to stand or make certain movements. I did not feel the same limitations with, for example, speech disabilities.

I learned a lot from the children about what I could ask of them and what not, and how to

present activities. Dealing with memory problems can be quite limiting when it comes to working on songs and getting the whole group to learn them. Remembering one sentence in a song is for some children a maximum in one session. On my behalf, there is a need for more reflection.

I did not get much information about the children. I knew the nature of their disabilities, but did not know exactly how it impacted the way I should address them or deal with eventual behavior problems. The incident in session #7, when Laura became upset when the children repeated « hún er vond », is something that could have been easily avoided if I had been informed beforehand about her particular behavior problems.

I was extremely satisfied with the children's level of participation, dynamism, and actually their respectful attitude.

To see the children showing a highly developed sense of rhythm and pitch, and expressing themselves through singing and movement was a great satisfaction. It was especially rewarding for me to see a little girl with a very high level of disability smile and laugh, and show her contentment in different ways. A lot of very interesting material was created during the sessions, as can be seen in part 3. I am very happy to have kept track of it.

4.d) ii) Relations with the center

My first problem was that I had no experience of after-school centers. Nothing of that kind exists in France, and if it does I never worked there. I am used to working in music schools and realized afterwards that my expectations were actually quite high. In addition, I still have generally little experience of how things are supposed to work out in Iceland. This fact was sometimes the cause of surprise with what happened.

When I first came to meet the director of the center she was very positive and offered her help with the project. I expected that she would talk about it with the staff of the center, the children and the parents and so make things easier for me.

But it did not happen as I expected. I had asked for permission to come once to see how the center operated. The day I came, not only had the director completely forgotten about my visit, but none of the employees there knew who I was or why I was there. Because of rapid staff turnover I had the feeling till the very end that there was always someone in the center who did not know what I was doing there. Even the employees I met on my first day there were obviously not kept informed of how it was going to take place. The director of the center also did not want to push any of the employees to take part in the project, which made it difficult for me to demand a positive attitude during the sessions.

From the beginning of the project I talked about informing the parents. The director decided

that she would send a letter herself once the pilot project was over so that we could have a better idea of who was going to participate. But then there actually occurred a change in the directorship, which led to the parents getting an official email only at the beginning of February. Also, not all of the parents got the message, as some mail addresses were wrong. It came as a surprise to me that none of the parents I talked to ever read anything about the music activities in the communication book (samskipta bók) where the employees normally write how the day has been. This makes me question both the quality of the information that the parents generally get from the center, and also of course the general attitude towards the project. It was obviously not seen as something that mattered in the children's day.

I should probably have been more demanding and decisive. For example, I should have asked to get some time for a staff presentation, requested all the parents' email so that I could write to them myself, and put an information poster in the center. I was quite shy. I did not want to give the impression that they were not doing enough for the project, nor did I want to be seen as a nuisance by constantly asking for more support. As a foreigner, I often wondered what exactly I could say/request without being too demanding. I also wondered what, for example «ég skal gera þetta bráðum» (I will do this soon) meant exactly in terms of days. It was a source of frustration for me. I was the one proposing a project and depending on it for my master. But I often had the feeling that the fact that I was there every week, taking care of the children (and so, often lightening the work of the staff), and bringing them something different was not really valued.

Another difficulty came from the system used in the center. Each child is consigned to one member of the staff for some days, and then the pairs switch. So even if on the whole I got the same group of children in the sessions, the staff members accompanying them were always changing. Some were extremely helpful and participating, some were more closed but participated still, and some others simply sat in a corner and waited there for the end of the session. I wanted them to participate as much as possible as I really considered it to be part of their work, and at the same time I did not want to be seen as boring and demanding. I was not in a position to give them directives. Then as the employees change often and work just two or three days in a row with the same child, they do not know the children themselves very well. This general absence of communication leads easily to problems like the one I got in session #7 (see 4.d) i)).

4.d) iii) Relations with the parents

Regretfully, the contact with most parents in this project was close to nonexistent.

I decided in the beginning to try to follow the hierarchy I thought was in place in the center. I did let the director of the center make the first contact with the parents about the project. It seemed

to me that this would add to the project's credibility by showing the center's support. But since the director actually changed jobs within the after-school facility at this particular time, the letter was not sent before February. Added to this there were some problems with the mailing list, which meant that the parents I asked to interview did not know or remember, when I contacted them, that the project was taking place.

I am used to working in a music school where parents are often very involved. They often drive their child more than twice a week to the school, attend all concerts as well as some lessons, and are asked to help their children with the homework. It was of course for me a big change not to have a natural contact with the parents. I felt quite frustrated at the lack of reaction on their part to the first email and to my attempts to get interviews. My feeling that they were not interested in it was probably a bit exaggerated, but nevertheless it was hurtful. It gave me the feeling that the time I gave to their children was not valued as quality time.

The parents actually have a distant relationship with the center. Most children come straight from school and then take the bus home so that most parents do not pick up their children. They generally do not meet any of the employees of the center, except perhaps the director. If needed, they write and consult the communication book that all children keep in their school bags, but generally they do not participate in the life of the center. As one father expressed it, « We have not been following at all with what is happening there. (...) Just that it is ok with them and that they are not sick ». This is probably part of the reason why it was difficult for me to get in contact with the parents. They are simply not really used to it.

But there is a strong need for more communication. As both parents and employees mentioned, these children generally do not talk spontaneously about what they did at home, at school, or in the after-school center. The parents rely solely on the center to get information on what is happening there, and the center relies on them to know what is happening in their family life. All the parents I talked to would have liked to be better informed about the project before it took place.

4.d) iv) What I learned about myself

I had several roles in this project: I initiated it and was the project manager. I was the driving force in the sessions but I was also a kind of researcher analyzing how this project was proceeding. Added to this, I was a student who is learning to be a teacher, a foreign person trying to understand how Icelandic society works, and a human being building relationships with all the people involved in this project.

This makes for a very intense experience, through which I learned a lot. I learned how to organize a project of this kind, I learned about the children and the employees I was working with,

and I learned about myself.

This confirmed to me that I work better in a quiet environment and relaxed atmosphere. I am quite good at making people feel comfortable and relaxed, it is less natural for me to deal with a lot of activity and hyped up children.

I had never really worked with disabled children and I enjoyed it a lot. I did not feel disturbed by their disability, nor did I feel restrained in my work (maybe more with the physical disabilities). I found it very interesting and rewarding to see those children express themselves and be creative. The atmosphere during the sessions was, according to Anna and also to myself, always very comfortable and the contact with the children was very good.

Of course I have to learn more about the different disabilities, what works best for each of them, and also about music therapy approaches. But I also have to learn about visual arts methods and approaches. I work easily with abstract concepts but have used visual approaches for clarification to a limited degree. I need to learn more about such an approach in order to use it in my teaching, and, generally, to use the five senses to reach to different children.

I need to improve my knowledge of Icelandic culture, in particular Icelandic songs and children's songs. It is difficult for me to recognize songs when the children can just sing parts of the melody. This will probably improve with time. My knowledge of Icelandic is also a limitation for me: it is not easy to give very clear and simple directions in Icelandic, because the sentences are not really clear in my own mind. A more in-depth preparation, with help from Icelanders, would increase my self-confidence and my communication abilities.

5. Discussion

5.a) Success criteria, evaluation methods and evaluation of the project

5.a) i) Success criteria

From my point of view, the success of the project lies first in the children's participation. If the children continue to take part and return to the project it shows that they are enjoying it. That they want it to continue indicates that the project meets their interest and fulfills existing needs. And if the director of the center would like the project to continue then that shows that there is a need for such a project within the system.. Those are the hard components of the success criteria.

The soft components are, by nature, more flexible. This would be answered by the following questions. How did we work together, with the children and with the staff? What was the staff's reaction? What was the parents' reaction? Did the project increase the children's participation in

society and/or in their school? Did I learn something in the process?

5.a) ii) Evaluation methods

There is no place in this project for a deep analysis of the data gathered. But there is enough material there to evaluate and reflect on the project.

The videorecording of the sessions made it possible to keep a precise diary of what was done, the time it took, and who took part in each activity. It would have been difficult to both participate in the sessions and, at the same time, keep precise track of what was happening. I can therefore objectively and precisely give an overview of what was done and how the children participated and reacted.

I wrote down some of the songs elaborated, which gives an idea of what has been realized during the project.

My diary and the interviews with the different participants allowed me to reflect on our shared experience.

5.a) iii) Global evaluation of the project

If I consider the hard components of the success criteria, it appears that the children who were interested in the activities proposed took part regularly in the sessions and were very active, even during quite long sessions. Some obviously very much looked forward to the sessions. The parents that I talked to were all happy to know that some special activity was going on in the center, but mostly they let the center decide what was proposed to the children. The employees and the director of the center were satisfied with the project, but the director was not really ready to take the initiative in searching for other projects of this type. The employees that were interested in the project were also interested in getting more music and arts in general, but not all the employees showed interest.

As can be seen in the fourth section, working with the children did go very well. Working with the staff was definitely more difficult as I was getting very different reactions and levels of participation from the employees. In general I needed to have more of a relationship with the people there, and in my opinion there was a definite lack of communication both inside the center and with the parents. As one employee phrased it: ‘you always have to pull very hard to get some information in this center.’

I personally learned a lot from this project, as can be seen in section 4.d) iv).

There was no concert at the end of the project, so that the children did not get an opportunity

to show what they produced outside of the sessions. When I look at what has been realized during the sessions, it is clear that they have substantial creative potential. A longer project, with better follow-up with the families and with the school, would make that visible to all.

I was quite motivated before the project began to prepare a concert and even participate in the Art without Borders festival. But once I began the sessions I realized that if I wanted to prepare a concert then all the focus had to be on this. It takes much time and rehearsing to get those children to know something by heart. I would have had to, for example, only work on one fairy-tale and construct it very precisely with the children until everybody knew it perfectly. This was actually not really working with the first aim of the project, which was to initiate those children to music creation by trying different approaches. I also wanted to leave place for initiative, give the children freedom and make them construct things themselves in the constructivist spirit. I do not think it is a problem that we did not show what we did in a concert. What is important, from my point of view, is that the children discovered different ways of creating music and discovered their creative abilities. In a longer project, with a closed group, a concert would definitely have been easier to prepare, and a very good way to reach more parents.

5.b) Constructivism

I am no specialist in constructivist learning, and I know that it is often very difficult to actually apply ideas that seem very attractive to practical teaching. This is particularly true with ideas that are quite far away from what we are used to, and constructivist learning is definitely not something that I myself had the opportunity to enjoy during my studies in France.

Added to this, children with special needs often lack initiative compared to other children. For example, I very often heard the question « What are we going to do today? » and quite seldom « Can we do this? ». The children were always very positive towards all activities, but not all asked to do something in particular. I always welcomed any proposition, which most often was singing a song, sometimes delaying it if we were in the middle of an activity, but proposing it afterwards.

It happened also that the children began to ask particular questions or reacted to something in the room (poster, objects...). Then I actually did quite often jump on it to propose an activity related to this. For example in the seventh session, Laura began to ask me and Anna about our families and pets, and then I proposed that we try to make a song about our families. In the same session, Tim began spontaneously to use the toy-microphone that he got for singing as a tool for interviewing another child, and I encouraged other children to do the same.

I started many song-writing activities by asking the children to sing a song they knew, and

then building the process on this particular song, the song parody in session #2, for example. Starting from a song they knew was very supportive for them, and this is exactly in the line of constructivist learning.

The work on fairy tales was also inspired by constructivism. Fairy tales are stories that children know by heart, at least some of them. Referring to it to create music was using something that they shared, and that they actually knew better than me, as I am not familiar with the Icelandic versions. Fairy tales also often present very well marked characters and a clear structure, all of which is conducive to music creation.

There was a lot of discussion and interaction among the children during the sessions. Everybody was asked to do something, to share his/her opinion, to provide help to the others.

Music is generally based on a very clear structure. The sessions were also highly structured, starting with a warm-up, and the different activities I proposed. But inside the sessions and inside each activity there was space for initiative and creativity. It seems to me very important, especially for children with special needs, that they feel free within a structure.

5.c) Empowerment

As presented in section 2.c) ii), being empowered can be defined as:

- having decision-making power;
- having access to information and resources;
- having a range of options from which to make choices;
- assertiveness;
- having the feeling that the individual can make a difference. (Chamberlin, 1997).

I was the leader of the project, and I was the one proposing the activities for each session. Then the children had the power to decide whether to join and whether to stay. They could also make suggestions about something they would like to do.

The children were presented from the beginning with the purpose of the project and my involvement in it. When Anna came to videorecord the sessions, I explained to them what was happening and asked for their permission. I also asked for their permission when she was replaced by Björn in the eighth session. I told them that their opinion was very important to me, and that I needed their help to make this project work. In the same line, their parents were offered an access to all data available and invited to contact me if they had any questions.

I did not offer a big range of activities to choose from in every session. I feared that debating which activity to choose might last long and that the most assertive participants would always

decide. But the children were always invited to choose from the different instruments, and to choose whether or not they wanted to do a solo and whether they wanted to sing, play or dance. They could also choose their role from the different characters.

In my opinion, assertiveness presented the most difficult point. The children that came in the session were all very different, some very shy, some very self-conscious and others ready to express themselves as loudly as needed. So I can not really say that each child developed his/her assertiveness. I was still trying to get all of them to express themselves, but some children's opinions definitely got lost in the process.

In activities like the happy-rap, where each child was singing about what made him/her happy, children could express themselves about the same subject in different ways, and each of them was praised for his/her particular version. Same thing happened when we were working on the fairy-tales. We got several versions of the prince in Snow-white, all different and all interesting.

During the warm-ups, and also during instrument playing, I regularly asked the question « Hver vill vera meistari? », which actually is the title of this report. Having directed myself and given some basic gestures to direct the playing, I offered the children to be the maestro, which everybody always wanted to be. The maestro stands then in the middle of the circle and directs the children, myself, and eventually the employees of the center to play. He can reserve solos for himself or the others, dance to the music created, play or sing. The maestro is in total control of what he wants to do and what he wants to get from the others, and everybody is obeying his decisions and directions. This gave really wonderful moments to us all. It was definitely enjoyable for them to take control and to be respected as a master. It showed them what power lies within themselves.

5.d) Limitations of the project

The length of the project was sufficient for getting experience and approaching the matter, but not for undertaking real research. The sessions could have been more frequent. It would have helped the children to remember what had been done from one session to the other and supported the possibility of giving a concert.

The varying attendance of children made it more difficult to keep the flow from one session to the other and to focus on particular children. Both me and the employees did see this variability as a limitation to what could be done. By the same token, having so many different disabilities in one room can make it difficult to find activities that work out for all.

The activities were seen by some employees as sometimes too difficult. I do not share this

opinion, and Anna, who attended nine sessions out of ten, does not either. On the other hand, I should have used more practical and visual material (cf. 4.d) iv)). It would also have been good to work on one concept, for example the rain, in one or two sessions, addressing the concept from different perspectives : movements, active listening, instruments, body, sensations, pictures and so forth. The work on colours, textures, sizes and shapes in relation to sound could definitely have been deeper. Sometimes I also neglected to explain the rules again when we were repeating some activities. For example, in the master game all the children did not remember what gestures were used to direct the group, and I should have explained it to them each time.

I was neither demanding nor self-assertive enough. This fact, combined with the general lack of communication with and between employees, made it difficult for me to get all the information I needed, both on the children and on the center.

Concerning the data gathered, it can be questioned whether interviews are the best way to get information from this particular group of children. As some of them can talk and some not, the interview method can not be used with all of them. In addition, I can not always be sure that they actually understand my questions and that they can give meaningful answers. I would have needed assistance for this. Last but not least, some children obviously wanted to please me with their answers. Getting some exterior person to do the interviews would have protected the significance of the results. It seems to me more relevant to analyze the behaviour of the children during the sessions. Their will to participate, their focus, initiatives, and signs of contentment.

5.e) Recommendations

In general, I should have been more self-assertive and more demanding. I should not have bowed to the existing hierarchy within the center's administration, but instead communicated directly with all persons involved.

5.e) i) The group of children

It is important to work with a closed group that is small and composed of the same children. One employee particularly insisted that having new children with very different disabilities participate each time made it more difficult to work well with each of them. For example, in session #6, Juliet particularly enjoyed being in a very small group where I could give her more attention. Having an open group also makes it difficult to work on the same theme throughout the sessions. It can get close to impossible to rehearse songs from one session to the other when the group of children is always changing.

It might be interesting to offer two possibilities: a group work with the children who are more active and naturally involved in the group, and a very small group/individual teaching with the children who need more personal attention. It is difficult to work with so many different degrees of disability in the same room. As one employee said, some activities work with some of them and not at all with others. The children who are more disabled are naturally less active than the others, and sometimes get lost in the sessions.

5.e) ii) Activities and methods

As mentioned in section 4.d) iv), it is important to use visual material, and, in general, to use the five senses to reach all the children.

Working more with well selected recorded music would be a plus; it also relies on the material being available.

Some children have a need to move a lot and can then be very loud and disturb the more quiet ones. Anna Henriksdóttir came with the very good idea of giving those children material like scarves or ribbons, that they can manipulate. They then create a visual ambiance that adds to the general creation process without overwhelming the group.

On the same principle, getting a dance teacher to work more effectively on movements would definitely enrich the entire work process.

5.e) iii) Material

The children and some of the employees wanted to use some instruments. It opens more possibilities, and making instruments can be also done in relation with the existing ones. Instruments, classical or home-made, allow the children who have speech-difficulties to express themselves in different ways. It can also be very important in building their self-esteem.

It is necessary to be able to listen to music. It would have been best to have a portable sound system for each session. This allows variations in the activities, and also creates an opportunity for the children and parents to share music, bringing disks from home that they want to share with the group.

My personal experience in Garður taught me that it is important to be materially independent from the center. Using the material of the center can create a degree of conflict if some children, who do not want to take part in the activity, still want to use the material. It is also always linked to communication issues. I was actually not told about some instruments available in the center until I conducted an interview at the end of the project. The other problem is that children quickly damage

material, and even more so with children with disabilities. I could never be sure if what was available would actually function. It is then better to come with the material needed, sound system and instruments, and take it back at the end of the session.

If the project leader does not have a lot of experience in this kind of project, as was the case for me, keeping track of the sessions via video allows one to review them and to get a better idea as to what activities work best and what needs to be approached differently.

5.e) iv) Duration of the project

It is necessary that the project last at least one semester (which was the case for this project, if the pilot project is included). It takes time to get to know the children and the employees in order to be able to work well with them. It also takes time for the children to realize the different aspects of music creation. If the plan is to do a concert at the end of the program then the school year will be adapted to this objective and the children given time to practice.

To really research its effects on the children it would be necessary to expand the program's duration. Full agreement and participation of the parents would be required, and psychiatrists would evaluate the children before the project begins and regularly through its duration. This would add a much wider dimension to the project.

5.e) v) Relations with the center

The project's implementation should follow a method to provide a support structure and to guarantee the quality of its presentation.

It is necessary, after having met the director of the center, to ask for an official meeting with all the employees (even a very short one), and hand out posters/flyers about the project that can be consulted if needed. During the meeting, the project manager has to explain very clearly and quite firmly to the employees what is expected from them: an active participation for those who are interested, respect for the sessions on the part of those who are not, as well as communication with the parents via the communication book (samskipta bók). If possible, having one or two employees as referees would be positive. They would come regularly to the sessions, deliver information about the children to the project leader, and keep the whole staff informed on what is going on.

It is necessary to never assume that information will spread by itself.

5.e) vi) Relations with the parents

It is important to establish a relation with the parents from the very beginning.

One month before the project begins the manager sends a printed letter to all the parents of the children attending the center. The letter contains information on the project and a questionnaire to return if they want their child to participate. The questionnaire asks for information about the child, and offers the parents the possibility to share their opinions and ask questions.

Then the project manager can offer a meeting, have some open sessions where the parents can participate, send weekly/monthly reports with pictures. Inviting parents to participate via sharing music, ideas, and having open contact is also important.

In all this process it is important to be quite persistent. Some parents have a lot to do and would not answer very fast, even if they are very interested in what is going on. They are also not used to their attention being solicited by the after-school center, so that insisting a bit can be very rewarding.

5.e) vii) Finances

It is necessary to get funds to buy instruments and material. Teacher's work can not remain voluntary in a long term project. These arguments can be used to support an application for funds from the Ministry of Education.

Asking the parents to participate financially might be also a good idea to get them more involved and help them approach the project from another perspective. For many people, the cost of an activity is directly correlated to its quality. It would also be possible to use the parents' network to get some material or interventions.

The last recommendation is to give it time. The employees of, at least, this after-school program, are not used to exterior interventions and projects. For their part, the parents at this after-school center are not used to communicating with or making requests of the center. It would probably take time to build a trusting relationship with all of them.

5.f) Future possibilities for education and research

There is definitely a need for more organized activities in this after-school center, and this can probably be extended to after-school centers in general. The employees recognize that it becomes difficult to continually come up with new ideas for the children, and external support is therefore welcomed. The children took part regularly, and with a lot of pleasure, in the sessions, which shows that this is something they enjoy and are ready to give time to. As I suspected it, some of them have a very tight schedule. One girl is leaving home for school before 7 o'clock in the morning, returning

around 18 o'clock in the evening. In her schedule there is no place for a music school or an art school in general. For children like her, the after-school center is the only place where they can access art teaching outside the school. There is clearly some demand among parents for more art teaching in the after-school center, but most of them generally trust the center to organize activities.

It would be possible to apply for a fund to keep the project going in the future. This would finance the purchase of instruments and perhaps the making of a CD. It is also important that the teaching not be based only on volunteer work.

It would be interesting to develop the project in partnership with the music teachers in Klettaskóli, to work, for example, on a common theme and particular skills.

The children showed a general interest in movement, so that a dance project would definitely be welcomed. The employees were also interested in that type of intervention.

A lot of data has been gathered in the process, which opens possibilities for further analysis. The videos keep a very precise track of the sessions, so that it would be possible to analyze deeply, for each child, its attention span for each activity, the level of participation, the initiatives being taken. This could be done in partnership with a psychiatrist, and also with parents, if they are interested. They might both learn about their child from participating in such research and would be the source of very precious information.

Conclusion

This project was a very rich experience for me. I now have a much clearer view on how to develop such projects in the future.

If I review the SWOT analysis that I made before the project began, the weakness of not having had enough contact with the employees before is clearly linked to the threat concerning the staff's motivation. All the employees did not show a positive attitude towards the project. I was lucky that the kofinn where the sessions took place was available throughout the project. The most interested children came regularly till the end and participated actively. My experience as a music teacher was of course helpful, but I still have a lot to learn, both about disabilities and about practical teaching methods, such as using the five senses to reach the children.

Robinson defines creativity as « the process of having original ideas that have value » (Robinson, 2006). When I review all the songs being created, I think that those children are definitely creative. I hope that they will have more opportunity to explore their creative abilities in

the future, and that those abilities will be appreciated at the right level in our society.

Having realized this project, I think that there is a need for more artistic activities for all children in Iceland. Especially in music, there is a need for activities outside the quite competitive system in use in music schools. Some children are left on the outside because they do not fit in, and many others just stop playing music because they would like to be able to play without always having to be reaching for the next level. I hope that more music activities will be on offer in the future. Using the ready-made system of the after-school centers to foster them would definitely make them available to more children.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent forms

For the parents:

Ég, undirritaður/undirrituð _____, gef Marie Huby leyfi til að nota myndir og upptökur af barninu mínu, _____, í meistararitgerðinni og meistaramálstofu hennar.

Ég gef henni einnig leyfi til að nota brot úr viðtalinu sem hún tekur við mig og við barnið mitt með nafnleynd í sömu verkefnum.

Dagsetning:

For the employees:

Ég, undirritaður/undirrituð _____, gef Marie Huby leyfi til að nota myndir og upptökur þar sem ég birtist, í meistararitgerðinni og meistaramálstofu hennar.

Ég gef henni einnig leyfi til að nota brot úr viðtalinu sem hún tekur við mig með nafnleynd í sömu verkefnum.

Dagsetning:

Appendix 2: Structure of the sessions and activities

Session	Activities
#1 11/01/12 29 min	Warming-up: stretching and dancing to African music, singing and directing singing, (10 min) Work on vocal accompaniment: Holding an easy ostinato while others sing a song or improvise (10 min) Reflection on what is a song (2 min) Work: How can we change the lyrics of a song we know? (5 min) Dance to the same music as the warming-up (2 min)
#2 18/01/12 32 min	Warming-up: Dancing and stretching to African music, singing and directing singing, clapping (10 min) Work on vocal accompaniment (3 min) Composing lyrics: The children find new lyrics on the tune of <i>Krummi krunkar úti</i> => Hundalagið (6 min) Making instruments with recycled material: Instruments made with bottles, cans, and rice. Different objects used as percussions; The children try them out: Imitation, group improvisation and solo on african music. (12 min) Scream circle (1 min)
#3 25/01/12 40 min	Warming-up: Stretching, body-clap, spoken voice (7 min) Winter-rap: Children make a list about winter, then build a rap with it, with percussion accompaniment and movements (27 min) Reviewing the Hundalagið (6 min)
#4 01/02/12 35 min	Warming-up: Massage, stapping/clapping, buzzing (5 min) Children present what they did last time: winter-rap (2 min) Happy-rap: Children list what makes them happy, and then rap about it with accompaniment of the others on percussions (15 min) Reviewing the Hundalagið with theatrical play of the characters (7 min) Instruments playing on musical background (macedonian music): imitation and improvisation (6 min)
#5 08/02/12 43 min	Warming-up: Massage, stretching, singing (3 min) Presentation of the guitar by one child (5 min) Work on fairy-tale: Little red cap: Musical interpretation of characters and events, by instruments playing and singing (10 min) Snow white: Musical interpretation of characters and events, by instruments playing and singing (12 min) Happy-rap (7 min) Instruments playing: Imitation and improvisation (3 min) Reviewing the Hundalagið (1 min) Free instruments playing (2 min)
#6 15/02/12	Warming-up: Massage, clapping/stapping (3 min) Work on fairy-tale: Discussion about what fairy tale to choose (7 min)

40 min	Work on Snow white: musical interpretation of characters and events, by instruments playing and singing (20 min) Instruments playing: Imitation (5 min) Free singing (5 min)
#7 29/02/12 44 min	Warming-up: Shaking body parts and buzzing (2 min) Family song: Singing about our family, with playing shakers (3 min) Playing with the toy-mike: Singing interview (3 min) Dancing (2 min) Work on Snow white: Embodying the characters by singing and dancing, making an accompaniment under it (35 min)
#8 07/03/12 52 min	Warming-up: Stretching, voice, voice and clap (3 min 30) Clap/movements on different pulses, connected with saying different words (9 min) Singing, playing and dancing: Interpreting animals, starting from animal pictures (10 min 30) Singing, playing and dancing: Interpreting animals and their meals; starting from the preceding animals and book of recipees (12 min) Singing and playing the different days of the week (6 min) Children direct the group playing instruments (11 min)
#9 14/03/12 44 min	Warming-up: Massage, stapping, clapping, singing (6 min) Children direct the group playing instruments (19 min) Creating music from a story in pictures (8 min) Dancing and instrumental solos to accompaniment (8min 30) Creation of good bye song (2min 30)
#10 21/03/12 35 min	Warming-up: Massage, stapping (4 min) Children direct the group playing instruments (12 min) Dance: Dancing with the music, stopping when it stops (2 min) Music and dance creation starting from objects (8 min) Free play with instruments and radio (put on by one child) (9 min)

Appendix 3 : Guidelines for the interviews

Viðtöl við börnin:

Hlustarðu oft á tónlist heima?

Hvaða tónlist? Hver er uppáhaldstónlistarmaðurinn þinn?

Spilarðu á hljóðfæri? Hvaða?

Ef ekki, langar þig að læra að spila? Á hvað?

Af hverju kemurðu í tónlistarklúbb?

(ef ekki er svarað): Finnst þér það gaman? Áhugavert? (*scale of happiness+sign of a person*)

Gerum við það sama í tónlistarklúbb og í tónlistartíma í skólanum?

Hvað gerum við í tónlistarklúbb?

Hvað finnst þér um það sem við gerum? (*pictures of activities => scale of happiness+signs of a person*)

Hvernig líður þér þegar þú kemur í tónlistarklúbb?

Talarðu um tónlistarklúbbinn við vini, foreldra?

Finnst þér þú vera mikilvæg(ur) í tónlistarklúbbnum? (*scale with different sizes of persons*)

Viltu að tónlistarklúbburinn haldi áfram?

Hefurðu einhverjar hugmyndir hvernig mætti breyta tónlistarklúbbnum?

Viðtöl við starfsmenn:

(Starfsmaðurinn og FSH Garði)

Hve lengi ertu búin(n) að vinna í FSH Garði?

Var börnum boðið í sambærilegt tónlistarverkefni áður? Listaverkefni?

Ertu tónlistarmaður?

Hvenær var þér tilkynnt um verkefnið?

Fannst þér þetta áhugavert?

Fannst þér að þú fengir nægar upplýsingar um verkefnið?

Ertu með einhverjar hugmyndir um hvernig mætti breyta því hvernig verkefni var framsett fyrir þig?

Hvernig finnst þér verkefnið vera fyrir börnin?

Finnst þér mikilvægt að þau taki þátt? Af hverju?

Hvernig var fyrir þig að taka þátt í verkefninu?

Ertu með hugmyndir til að breyta verkefninu?

Myndir þú vilja að verkefnið haldi áfram? Af hverju?

Viðtöl við foreldra:

Hlustarðu oft á tónlist?

Ertu tónlistarmaður? Spilarðu á hljóðfæri?

Langaði þig að senda barnið þitt í tónlistarskóla? Af hverju? Gerðist þetta?

Hvenær var þér fyrst tilkynnt um tónlistarklúbbinn? Hver talaði við þig um hann?

Hvað fannst þér um verkefnið? Við hverju bjóstu?

Talarðu við barnið um tónlistarklúbbinn?

Segir barnið þér frá tónlistarklúbbum?

Hvernig finnst þér að hann/hún upplifi þetta?

Finnst þér að þú hafir fengið fullnægjandi upplýsingar um verkefnið?

Hvernig gætir þú tengst betur þessu verkefni? Myndi þig langa til að taka þátt?

Hefur þú einhverjar hugmyndir um hvernig mætti breyta verkefninu?

Viltu að tónlistarklúbburinn haldi áfram?

Myndirðu vilja greiða fyrir þátttöku ef þörf krefði?