

## **The music project in the Rashidieh refugee camp as a focus area of research and development projects**

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People live with war, threats of war, or repercussions of war in many parts of the world. Civil losses and injuries are extensive. Many of the countries and regions where conditions of war characterize people's everyday lives, also suffer from public as well as private poverty. Societal groups, such as children and people with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable in such conditions. Additionally, large parts of the surviving population may be traumatized and deprived of the opportunity to realize their goals and aspirations. Increasingly, when knowledge about such conditions reaches the rest of the world, international relief organizations such as the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and Médecines Sans Frontières have mobilized to provide assistance. On the national level, this also applies to Norwegian and multinational organizations such as ActAlliance, NORAD, NORWAC and Norwegian People's Aid. These desperate, disheartening circumstances constitute the context of the Norwegian Academy of Music's Lebanon music project. Thereby, they also institute the ground on which scholarly studies of the Lebanon music project must take their points of departure.

### **Lebanon**

One of the countries that suffers from the consequences of war as well as wars in its neighbour countries is Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil War lasted from 1975 to 1990 and resulted in the deaths of 120,000 people, and a considerable number of orphaned children. Many of the religious and cultural conflicts that caused the Civil War are still present and are destabilizing forces in the society. This situation, combined with the Syrian Civil War and internal conflicts in Israel, cause Lebanon, a comparatively tiny country, to receive a constant flow of refugees. Immense newly built refugee camps have been established in the northern areas close to the Syrian border. In addition, 12

older refugee camps exist elsewhere in the country. Despite their congestion, these camps experience ongoing growth in population due to a constant influx of Syrian-Palestinian refugees, and the relationships between the various groups within the camps as well as among the camps' inhabitants and the surrounding Lebanese society are sometimes problematic.

Some of the many international organizations attempting to help the Lebanese people and Palestine refugees also collaborate with the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH), laying the groundwork for the Academy's music project. Being described elsewhere in this volume, they are considered to constitute some of the frame dimensions, discussed below, that research and development projects can direct their attention towards. Moreover, these frame dimensions will also affect the ways in which the project can be characterized as a community music project (Veblen, Messenger, Silverman & Elliott, 2013).

## **NMH's Music Project as Community Music Education**

Community music is a term designating the music making, or musicking (Small, 1987) in a community (Finnegan, 2007), primarily outside formal music education. It can be conceived as including a wide array of self-initiated music making from garage bands to recorder quintets. The learning taking place and the needs of instruction it entails have led to a growth in the attention of music teachers and music teacher educators towards this phenomenon. In this manner, the term 'community music education' (Veblen & Olsson, 2002; Veblen et al., 2013) was coined. Specifically, the interest is directed towards aurally based teaching and learning, the teaching and learning of folk music around the globe; and lifelong learning. In recent years, the concept of community music therapy (Stige, Ansdell, Elefant & Pavlicevic, 2010) has also been developed.

The NMH's Lebanon music project carries clear traits of community music. It offers everyone the possibility of participating in a musical activity that is shaped according to the group of participants. It is not based on a defined curriculum or policy documents of any sort but rather exists as a wish to invite the participants into processes wherein they can experience musical meaningfulness.

The music project has given children and young people in the Rashidieh refugee camp many opportunities to participate in meaningful music-related activities over the years. However, scholarly studies capable of providing the rest of the world with systematic knowledge about the initiative and its outcomes have been less extensive. Some studies have been carried out from the music therapy perspective, and a master's thesis in music education (Jordhus, 2010) has been published. On the senior research level, Brøske Danielsen (2012) discussed how the experiences of the Lebanon music project might enlighten some aspects of student music teachers' professional placement training. Moreover, she also studied the learning outcomes of student music teachers' own participation in the Lebanon music project (Brøske Danielsen, 2013). Storsve (2008) and Storsve, Westby and Ruud (2010) have also documented the project's activities and perspectives. Finally, Boeskov (2019) focused his PhD dissertation on the Lebanon music project. Still, the Lebanon music project demonstrates many characteristics that make it a unique subject of research and development-based projects. Increased knowledge about multiple aspects of the interrelationships between music, humans, and society can be developed. Thereby valuable contributions can be made to fields such as music dissemination, music and health, music therapy, and specifically, music education.

## Music Education as a Research Field

The field of research in music education has developed significantly over the last decades, especially regarding the increasing number of issues to which research interests have been directed. Nielsen (1997) contributed significantly to a needed overview over this thematic manifold by providing a systematic model of dimensions describing the territory and potential of music education research along with suggesting what might be the main concepts and distinctions within this field. His model includes six dimensions of music teaching. They are the *core area*; *frame dimensions*; *reality dimensions*; *historical dimensions*; and *geographical-societal dimensions*. Each dimension can constitute a focus area for scholarly studies of the music project in Rashidieh, enlightening it in various significant ways. When related to each other, the dimensions can also assist in identifying additional perspectives. Below, based on Nielsen's (1997) model, I will discuss and suggest possible themes and issues.

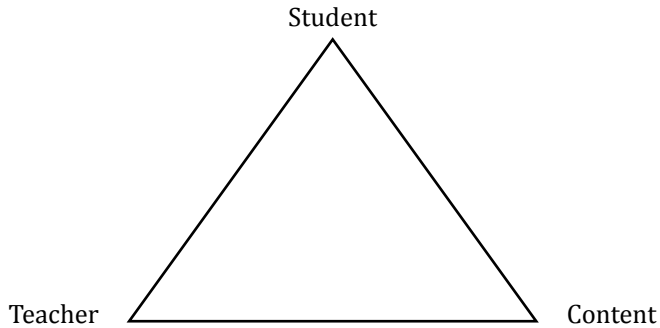


Fig. 1. The *didaktik* triangle (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 165)

## The Core Area

Nielsen describes the first dimension, the core area, by drawing on the *didaktik* triangle (see for example Künzli, 2000; Jank & Meyer, 2003) where the three corners illustrate the positions and functions of the student, the teacher, and the educational content.

The *didaktik* triangle illustrates, among other things, the ways in which music as the teachers' knowledge base differs from music as an educational subject. When a student comes into the picture, the knowledge base changes into a ground for selection of teaching content, since no teacher can teach the totality of the subject or her or his knowledge base in full. Furthermore, the teacher constitutes not only a subject expert but also performs a mediating function with respect to the relationship between the educational content and the student. This relationship is primary in music as an educational subject.

I suggest that this manner of depicting the basic relations in music as an educational subject is also valid for the basic dimensions in music dissemination, music therapy, and music and health, for example, by changing the triangle categories to include musician, repertoire, and audience, or music therapist, repertoire and client. Whether we study the music project in Lebanon within the perspective of music education or any one of the others suggested, the relationship between the participants and the music must be considered primary. The musician, therapist, or music teacher must be perceived in the role as a convener of other people's experiences, learning, or development.

Moreover, applying the triangle relations on the music project in Lebanon affords increased insights into cultural and ethical challenges by making clear that the musician, therapist, or music teacher needs to see her- or himself as someone interfering into and changing other people's relations with music. Such interferences may have different implications in a foreign culture than when operating in domestic arenas.

## Frame Dimensions

Nielsen's (1997) second level of dimensions is called the frame dimension. Here, he points to institutions, external agents, economy, discourses, and policy decisions.

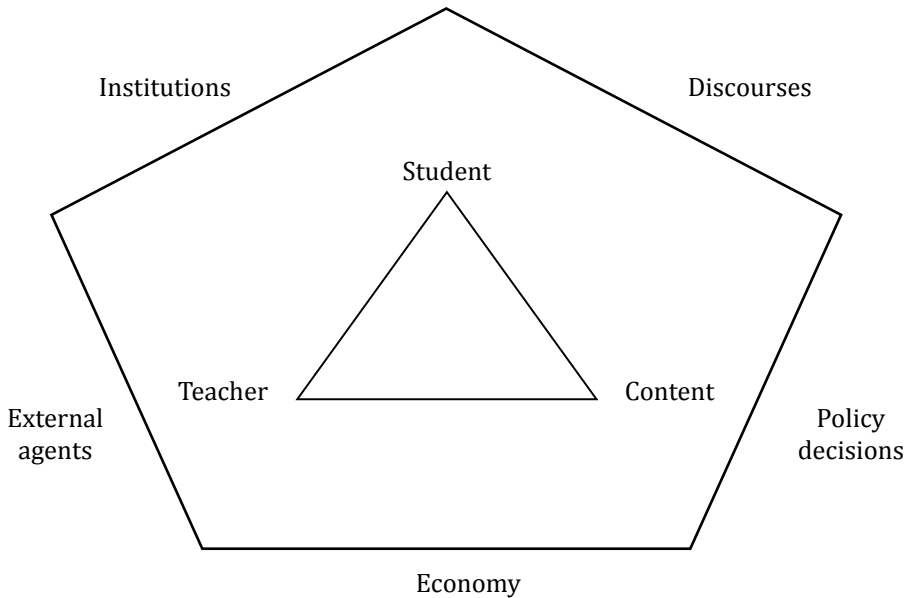


Fig. 2. The *didaktik* triangle and its frame dimensions (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 165).

In the Lebanon music project, the role, which all these dimensions play, might be described based on their specific characteristics. The *institutions* in question might include the refugee camp, Norwegian support organizations, and the Norwegian Academy of Music, all with their institutional frames, structures, and priorities, which constitute

the basis for their contributions in Lebanon. Studies focusing the institutional perspective can observe how such institutions, including changes in their conditions, may influence the actions made possible within the project. From a sociological perspective on institutions, the Lebanon music project itself can also be described according to its own institutional characteristics, and how those traits have been developed and shaped over the years of its existence. With such a notion as a point of departure, research questions can be posed about how the project has developed such traits, what characterizes them, and how they have emerged in relation to the traits of the other institutions involved. Perhaps the contributions made by the project towards other institutions in the Lebanese society surrounding the refugee camp might be addressed as well.

*External agents* include people not directly participating in the project, but who still wield a significant amount of influence. Personal contacts have been, and still are, decisive in the development of the project because they operate in a culture wherein written deals and communication do not have similar functions as they have in Norway. In this connection, the research interest, for example, can be directed towards how the project was established and built via personal contact with external agents, who they have been or are now, and what kinds of influence they had, for example, followed by formative dialogue research over a period of time.

*Economy* has been a basic frame dimension in the project from the beginning and has played a significant role in enabling the Norwegian Academy of Music to make the Lebanon music project part of each student's practicum in the music teacher program. The establishment of an economic basis and priorities made within those frames, as well as the endeavors to find new funding can be established as a research focus. So can also the socio-economic conditions: Which socio-economic conditions and layers exist in the camp, and to what extent do the project participants come from some of these layers and not from others?

In the category *discourses*, Nielsen highlights the importance of revealing and describing discourses, which, in the Lebanon music project may emerge over a continuum from scholarly underpinned considerations to slogan-like, politically biased statements and opinions. It is possible that such studies might contribute significantly to arriving at new knowledge within all the fields sketched above: music dissemination, music therapy, music and health, and music education. This potential relates to the culture dependent, discursive characteristics that can be revealed, in addition to the equally culture dependent ways of influence on the project dynamics that those discourses

may have. This may affect ways in which various religion-based discourses meet, and in turn also meet secular, Nordic discourses on music activity and repertoire, and thereby regulate the participants' room for action. In these connections, the concept 'hidden curriculum' may prove relevant as an analytic tool, enabling fruitful insights in the span between formal and informal learning practices (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Karlsen & Våkeva, 2012).

The category of *policy decisions* includes legal documents, formal curricula, student guidelines and the like (Nielsen, 1997, p. 161). In the Lebanon music project, this dimension proves an interesting connection with the discourse dimension in that the project in Rashidieh is not based on the kinds of policy documents mentioned by Nielsen (p. 161). Discursive regulation of the actions and project processes thereby become significantly higher than in, say, the Nordic countries. Simultaneously, the participation of Norwegian student music teachers is based on the Norwegian Academy of Music's formal curriculum and the institutional connections of the Norwegian project leaders and teachers are also regulated by formal documents with potential impact. Questions about what kind of function such guiding and regulating documents obtained in a project that is as strongly discursive regulated as the Rashidieh project are among those that can be enlightened in this connection, different from what is possible within Norwegian conditions. When frame dimensions such as these can direct as well as specify the research interest of scholarly studies, several interesting perspectives emerge that studies of the Lebanon music project can enlighten. In Nielsen's (1997) model, these kinds of perspectives arise out of turning the two parts of the core area (triangle) and the frame dimensions (pentagon) around their centre so they appear in different positions to each other.

In this connection, I will restrict myself to suggesting two examples of research questions emerging by different constellations between the categories of the core area and frame dimensions. The first example involves the connection between discourses and the student-content relation.

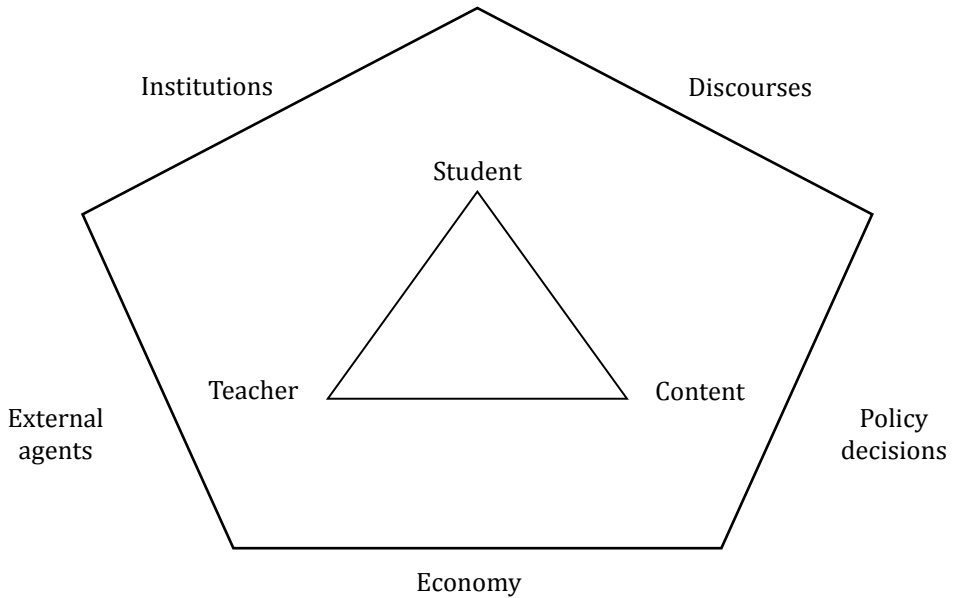


Fig. 3. Constellation no. 1 between the core and frame dimensions (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 165).

Here, questions can be raised, such as:

- How is the relationship between the content and the participants of the music project in Rashidieh discursively regulated?
- Which subject positions are made available for, respectively, girls and boys, children and adolescents when working with the repertoire?

The other example takes as its point of departure a possible constellation that occurs if the two parts of the model are turned so that the frame dimension 'economy' connects with the core dimension 'teacher'. It enables questions such as: How frequently do the economics allow teacher visits to Lebanon from Norway, and which possibilities exist for solving the need for teachers in the periods between the visits?



If we now connect this with the already established connection between the teacher and the content, we might ask:

- What role do economy-teacher relations play in the teacher-content relation?
- How does economy enhance or restrict the teachers' content selection?
- How does access to specific musical instruments and equipment regulate the repertoire as well as the teaching and learning strategies?

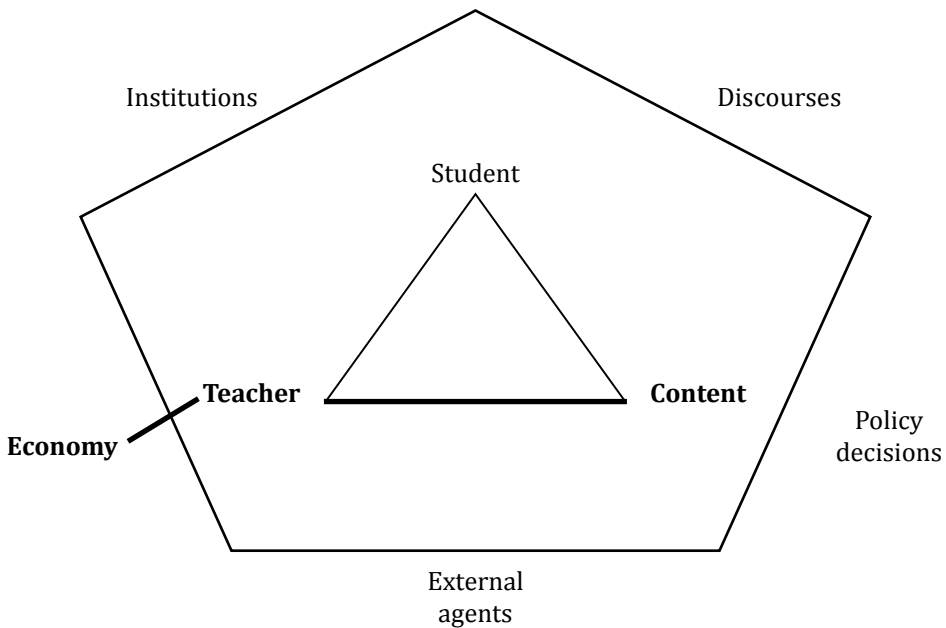


Fig. 4. Constellation no. 2 between the core and frame dimensions (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 165).

As described above, Nielsen (1997) suggests three additional levels of 'layers' surrounding the core- and frame dimensions. These are the dimensions of reality, history, and geographical/social-cultural factors. I will now describe those three dimensions and some of the possibilities they point to before I, towards the end of the chapter, give some examples of how research interests can emerge and be described in various constellations between them as well as in the perspective of the three dimensions described earlier.

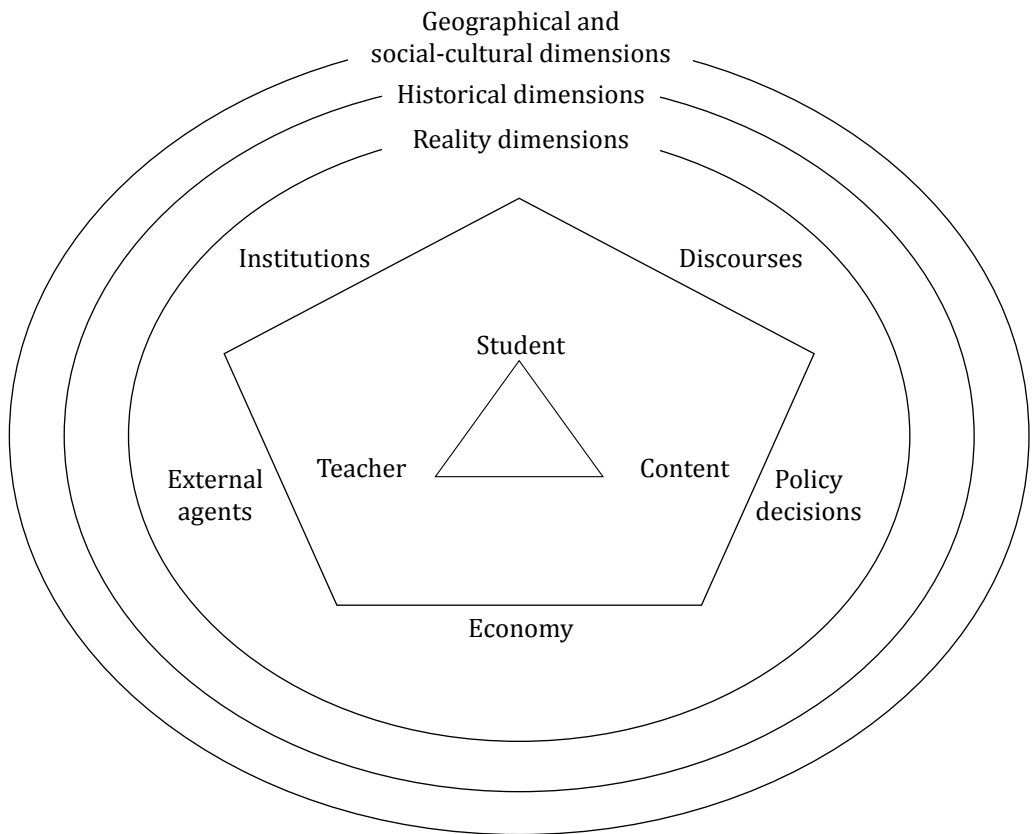


Fig. 5. The dimensions of music teaching (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 165)

## Reality Dimensions

The focus of research in music education can be directed towards various dimensions of reality. *Intended reality* designates the teachers' pre-understandings of the reality wherein the teaching and learning will take place. Such pre-understandings are typical components of planning. In the Lebanon music project, this factor is designated by distance, geographical-cultural as well as time. This is due to the planning going on partly in Norway, while the reality for which the activities are planned is in Lebanon. Here, this intended reality can include the camp, the culture center wherein the music activity takes place, and the activities themselves.

The *experienced reality* dimension designates reality as actually experienced by the leaders, teachers, and participants. A systematic and nuanced description of what you experienced reality might reveal several of the characteristics that make the Lebanon music project unique as an empirical field for research in music education.

Methodologically, *experienced* and intended realities can primarily be attended to by drawing on qualitative interviews. If an observation design had been applied, the researchers' *observed reality* would have emerged. This is Nielsen's (1997) next reality dimension (163). Instead of directing attention towards someone's anticipated or experienced teaching and learning situation, here it is directed towards the situation itself. Seen together, focusing on both the experienced and the observed reality enable several different perspectives on the same practices. This can be particularly fruitful in the Lebanon music project with respect to describing what happens in addition to analyzing and interpreting the observed reality to discover what is expressed thereby.

The *possible reality* (Nielsen, 1997, p. 163) dimension designates a reality that is neither intended nor realized. Here, we face a dimension of reality that can be identified and described by drawing on empirical data from studies utilizing the other reality dimensions, however with heavier weight on the analytical and interpretive sides of the development of results. It thereby poses different requirements to the researchers' creativity. The possible realities that can become visible as different from the intended and observed ones can prove to serve as important contributions to the project's further development. This can be the case with respect to revealing new research perspectives and connecting the actions and research closer to each other by an action research design. Finally, it can assist the participants in seeing new future possibilities for themselves.

## Historical Dimensions

The historical dimension of music education points to the idea that all situations or projects of music education can be seen in a historical perspective. Here, Nielsen (1997, p. 164) points to the terms *past*, *present*, and *future*. In the Lebanon music project, it is natural to look back on what has happened during its first 10–15 years. Traditionally, historical research interests have entailed some challenges for research on teaching practices, Nielsen (1997) states. This is due to problems of documentation. In the Lebanon music project, however, these possibilities are greater. Firstly, there has been no turnover in teachers or leaders during all its history. Furthermore, video recordings have documented much of what has taken place.

A historical research perspective can contribute valuable knowledge about the project's development by comparing what happened in its first years with what happens today. In other words, this would draw on past and present perspectives within a comparative research design. A historical perspective may also uncover how changes in the political situation in Lebanon and the neighbor countries have influenced the music project during the same period. Moreover, knowledge developed with a focus on the 'past' can constitute a fruitful point of departure for considerations about which ways to develop the project in the years to come, attending to the 'future' perspective of the *historical* dimension along with the 'possible' reality dimension.

## Geographical and Cultural Dimensions

Looking closer at the geographical and social-cultural dimensions of the Lebanon music project can contribute to development within two significant areas of music-educational knowledge. One concerns the sociology of music education (Froehlich, 2007; Green, 2010, Johansen, 2013a; Karlsen, 2012, Wright, 2010). The other is the philosophy of music education (Elliott, 1995; Reimer, 2003; Small, 1998; Varkøy, 2003), a field wherein the justification of music education constitutes a recurring theme. The potential of contributing to these areas lies primarily in the Lebanon music project's societal environment as characterized by challenges and problems of vastly different kinds than in the northern countries. These are problems affecting people more directly, dramatically, and existentially than in societies studies of the sociology and philosophy of music education regularly refer to or address. This is a challenging field to approach for research studies in music dissemination, music therapy, music and health, and music education. In sociologically and philosophically oriented studies, an ethical dimension emerges. There is a danger of giving the interesting aspects of

the situation priority above the highly necessary attention to the kinds and degree of the social-cultural problems of the people, and meet them with respect.

There is a danger that simplified and romanticized notions of all the good effects of music dominate the research interest. There is also a danger of directing the research interest towards a simplified problem description built on how conflicts in the Middle East look when observed from Norway. The challenges include to understand the complexity of the problem area. Neither the conflict with Israel nor the internal, religious, and cultural tensions that have smolder since the Lebanese Civil War, the increasing flow of refugees from Syria, or the tensions between the refugee camp inhabitants and the surrounding society can be separated as isolated factors and studied separately as if the others might be held constant.

### Sources of Access to Knowledge

If we now look at the core area and the various connections emerging by turning it and the other layers of the model around their axes, various issues and themes for possible future research studies emerge. However, the emergence of such themes and issues point to another question as well: in what ways and by what means can we gain access to the information we seek? Here, Nielsen (1997, p. 174) suggests four possible sources of access to knowledge: texts, the researchers' own preconceptions, physical artefacts, and non-textual articulation forms. In the Lebanon music project, this might include *texts* such as the described policy documents, various forms of musical notation, and interview transcripts and videotapes. The researchers' *preconceptions* include systematic studies of their own musical experiences and other experiences in the group music situations and contexts as a point of departure for mirroring others' experiences in the same situations. *Physical artefacts* can include musical instruments, instruction tools such as written texts with guitar chords, equipment such as amplifiers, among others. *Non-textual articulation forms* may include spoken language, musical, gestural, and iconic expressions, alone or in combination. In the Lebanon music project, aurally-based ways of teaching have a central position because problems with understanding each other's verbal language often hamper ordinary verbal communication. As a result, non-textual articulation forms can prove to be among the most fruitful communication forms to be addressed by a research study.

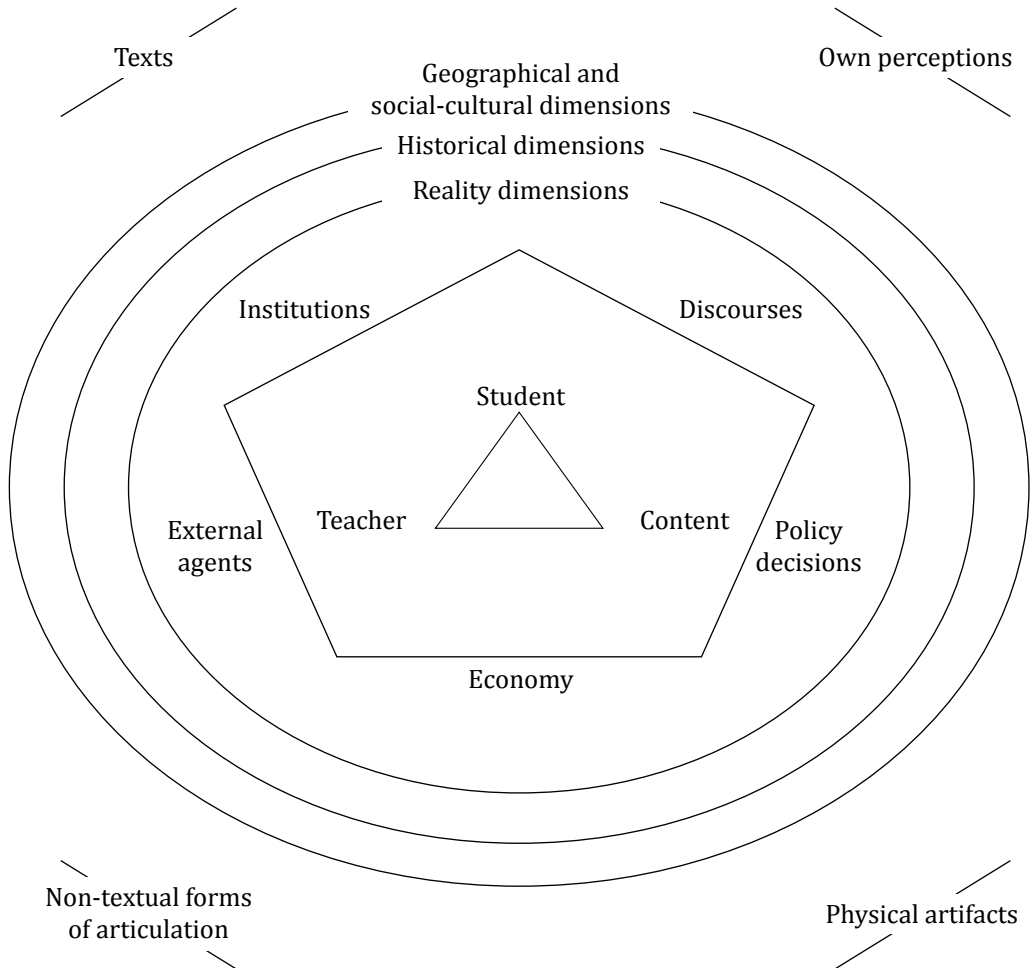


Fig. 6. The dimensions of music teaching and sources of access to knowledge (after Nielsen, 1997, p. 174)

## **An Imagined Project**

Drawing on some of the examples given above, I will now suggest a specific research interest emerging out of combinations of the categories and layers of the model. Thereafter, I will sketch some possible approaches which may prove relevant for arriving at new knowledge in this field. Then I will attend to some of the methodological implications that such points of departure may actualize.

Within the core area, the imagined project can direct attention towards the relationship between the project participants and the educational content, and ask how that relationship can be described as discursively regulated (the frame dimension of discourses) by meetings between various political and religion based discourses (geographical/socio-cultural dimensions) operating in the refugee camp and between these discourses and secular Nordic discourses about musicking, the leading of music projects, and repertoire. Furthermore, one can investigate how such meetings between frame- and social-cultural dimensions affect dynamics in the project, or specific musicking situations. It can also focus on how leaders and teachers conceive these dynamics (perceived reality) as different from what they envisaged beforehand (intended reality).

To enlighten such a complicated research interest, several combinations of sources of knowledge can prove relevant. Here, I will point to the connection between the researchers' own preconceptions, and non-textual articulations, forms, and texts. Preconceptions can provide information about teachers' intended reality. The discursive play going on in the situations can be described by focusing on non-textual articulation forms. Complementary to this, possible texts in use may provide related information.

Methodologically, a research study such as the one suggested would require a thorough triangulation of strategies, an ideal often expressed in the literature regarding case studies (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009), mixed methods (Hesse-Biber, 2010), or Grounded Theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Among the relevant strategies in the proposed study are video recordings (Rønholt, Holgersen, Fink-Jensen & Nielsen, 2003) combined with observations (Bjørndal, 2002), qualitative research interviews, (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and text studies (Silverman, 2006).

Such forms of knowledge development can connect to research studies as well as development projects, separately or in combination. The latter can be carried out by

drawing on various action research designs. There is also a potential for comparative designs (Johansen, 2013) because other institutions in higher education in the Nordic countries also run projects in other parts of the world, similar to the Lebanon music project. Hence, it is not impossible to develop a competence base for developing and exchanging competence with regards to these kinds of actions.

## Other Perspectives

The above sketches and alternatives do not provide an extensive picture of the potential of arriving at new knowledge by studying the Lebanon music project. Among other possible perspectives, I will point to three specifically. The first perspective concerns the relationship between music education and society, as frequently addressed by scholars of the sociology of music education<sup>1</sup>. On such a ground, the project actions and processes can be studied in a sociological macro-meso-micro perspective, wherein the relationship between the individual inhabitant, the camp as a context, and the surrounding Lebanese society can be described and discussed, based on earlier theory and research on such matters. Such a point of departure also enables questions of social change (Johansen, 2013a) that, in turn, can be related to traditional as well as more recent notions of critical *didaktik* and *musikdidaktik*. Knowledge developed this way will be valuable for music education in general and specifically for music teacher education as professional education (Danielsen & Johansen, 2012).

The other perspective concerns the possibilities of making new contributions to some of the subfields of music education, which, in addition to community music, are increasingly discussed in the international scholarly literature. Here, I will point to fields such as formal/informal music education (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Karlsen & Väkevä, 2012), world music education (Schippers, 2010) and the increasing fields of multicultural music education (Campbell, 2005; Volk, 1998), and music education in multicultural contexts (Karlsen, 2012; Sæther, 2008). By drawing on multicultural perspectives, music education as identity shaping and identity carrying action can also be described.

Within the field of music teacher education, significant studies have already been carried out with respect to the Rashidieh camp as a location for student music teachers'

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1 See footnote no 3 above.



professional placement (Brøske Danielsen, 2012; 2013). Here, insights have been gained about the concept of professional placement training and the learning outcomes thereof, something which can be followed-up on in new studies. Finally, perspectives connected with the professional self, professional development, music teacher identity, and educational quality in music teacher education can be studied systematically. A third perspective concerns the potential of comparative research designs (Johansen, 2013). In this connection, new knowledge can be developed by, for example systematically comparing the contexts of the group music making in Rashidieh with the contexts of similar activities in, for example, Norway, as actualized by Brøske Danielsen (2013).

## **Final Considerations**

It is not easy to summarize all the valuable contributions to our knowledge about music, human beings, and society – as well as their interrelations – which studies of the Lebanon music project may entail. We face a unique possibility of getting access to information about such relations that we hardly might have access to otherwise. Firstly, it is due to the context, being so different from the ones of the Nordic countries, affording new insights regarding even traditional approaches and research questions. Secondly, the specific challenges the Lebanon music project presents to teachers and student music teachers as well as scholars, actualize new and different research questions. Research studies of the project can thereby contribute new themes and issues to the international scholarly field of music education. In a worst-case scenario, it can contribute to maintaining a simplified, romantic stereotype about all the good things music can entail. In the best-case scenario, we can arrive at nuanced discussions and insights in musicking as a contribution to peace work and democracy.

### **Acknowledgements:**

This text is dedicated to the late Frede V. Nielsen (1942–2013), a good friend, a great inspirator and in recognition of his great influence as one of the most brilliant and systematical scholars of music education in the Nordic countries.

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