

## **Musicians for the intercultural society: student involvement in international projects**

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### **Abstract**

*This chapter presents three international collaborative projects (in Lebanon, India and Georgia) in which the Norwegian Academy of Music is a partner and reports from an ongoing research study that examines these projects from a learning perspective. Students are involved in the projects in several ways, and the chapter aims to discuss what characterises student learning in the projects. The authors argue that theoretical perspectives on collaborative learning, cultural encounters and the role of reflection in and on action are central to understanding learning in intercultural projects. The research study makes use of a range of ethnographic methods, and empirical data is presented in the form of a narrative. The chapter suggests that the characteristic of the learning potential of the projects is that the projects enable reflective cultural encounters, which may encourage a process of understanding cultural differences and stimulating development of intercultural competence. Furthermore, students and teachers collaborate in a participatory musical and educational practice. In this intercultural participatory practice, comparisons and contradictions occur which may cause and demand reflection and make change of practice, purpose and values possible on both an individual and a cultural level.*

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a series of international projects at the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH) and reports from an ongoing research study examining the projects from a learning perspective. An important aim of the international projects, based in South Lebanon, India and Georgia, is to enable musicians and music teachers to meet, understand and engage musically in a culturally diverse hybrid society by taking an active part in international projects based on student involvement and

teacher collaboration. The research study aims to examine learning issues related to the projects. Data is collected through a range of ethnographic methods. In this chapter we focus on exploring the learning potential of such projects. We anticipate, and we will show theoretically, that there is reason to believe that learning takes place in international collaborative projects, and we therefore ask: why and how does learning take place in intercultural collaborative projects in higher music education?

First we will present the projects in South Lebanon, India and Georgia and the three organisational models of student involvement linked to the projects. Next we approach the research question from theoretical viewpoints, mainly by drawing on cultural and intercultural studies and educational theory. Then we present the story of Astrid, a master student who has completed all three models visiting Georgia and India and who is part of the research team. Her story gives empirical insights from the Norwegian students' perspective in the form of a narrative, an approach that is backed by narrative methodology. The Norwegian student perspective is just one aspect of the overall research study, which in time will provide empirical material from participants in all four countries.

The chapter argues, from both theoretical and empirical strands, that intercultural music and music teaching practice are important arenas for learning and development on a personal, musical, cultural and intercultural level. A key characteristic of the learning potential, we suggest, is that the projects enable reflective cultural encounters that may facilitate the development of cultural understanding and intercultural competence. Furthermore, participants collaborate in a guided, participatory musical and educational practice. In this intercultural participatory practice, comparisons and contradictions occur which stimulate learning by causing and demanding reflection.

## **The projects and the models of student involvement**

### **The Lebanon Project**

The Norwegian Academy of Music has been involved in a music project in South Lebanon since 2002, and it is part of a larger collaboration within culture, health and education

for marginalised groups<sup>1</sup>. A central strand in the project is to help provide music activities for Palestinian refugee children in the Rashidieh refugee camp. Rashidieh has existed as a Palestinian refugee camp since 1948 after the establishment of the state of Israel and following the Arab-Israeli war. Most people here are born in refugee families, and the population is approximately 30,000 within two square kilometres. The camp is characterised by a lack of human rights and educational opportunities, high unemployment, a weak economy, a lack of clean water and insufficient healthcare as well as limited opportunities for participation in society outside the camp, including cultural activities (Storsve, 2013). The music activities in Rashidieh take place in a cultural centre run by a non-governmental organisation, Beit Atfal Assumoud<sup>2</sup>. The core activity is active music making in a mixed ensemble, where 40–60 young people aged 7–20 play together twice a week as an after-school activity. The orchestra is run by four local music teachers and comprises guitars, xylophones, keyboards, violins, saxophones, drums and other percussion instruments. The orchestra is very diverse in terms of age and mix of instruments and not the least when it comes to the children's instrumental experience and skills. This creates a challenging teaching practice.

This music project is located mainly within a Muslim cultural context in which music is neither common as a leisure activity nor as a school subject. Some Muslims consider music *haram* (forbidden) and find that music incites inappropriate behaviours. Other Muslims see music as a valuable and desirable activity (Harris, 2006; Izsak, 2013). The project in Rashidieh aims to promote equal rights and to contribute to cultural democracy. Such ideologies can occasionally be seen as being in opposition to the social and religious hierarchical structures in the camp, and the project is in some ways in itself replete with internal ideological contradictions (Brøske, 2017).

## Education IN Music, India

*Education IN Music*, Bengaluru, India, is a collaborative project between the Subramaniam Academy of Performing Arts<sup>3</sup> (SaPa), Jain University<sup>4</sup> and the NMH. SaPa is a music school, and its primary task is providing instrumental tuition for children. In 2014 SaPa expanded its focus and started the SaPa in Schools programme, aiming to establish music as a subject in several primary and lower secondary schools. SaPa

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1 See more about the project in Storsve & Brøske-Danielsen (Eds., 2013), <https://nmh.no/forskning/prosjekter/libanonprosjektet/>, [https://nmh.no/ansatte/nyheter/studentpraksis\\_i\\_libanon](https://nmh.no/ansatte/nyheter/studentpraksis_i_libanon)

2 <http://www.socialcare.org/portal/home/1/>

3 <http://sapaindia.com/>

4 <https://www.jainuniversity.ac.in/>

also offers training for Indian music teachers to teach in these schools in collaboration with the NMH. All three partners are now involved in establishing a bachelor's degree in music education at Jain University. Another central strand in the project is to bring Indian SaPa teachers to Norway and to send students from the NMH to India to participate in teaching music in schools, in teacher training, and to learn Indian music.

This project is embedded in a culture where music is learned mainly outside schools, and music education has not been available to all. Music teacher training as such does not exist in India. Learning music is traditionally carried out by sitting with a guru within the *guru-shishya* system, and teachers should be highly respected and not contradicted.

### Bridging the Gap, Georgia

*Bridging the Gap* is a collaboration between the Tbilisi State Conservatoire (TSC) and the NMH. The overall goal is to support and facilitate the process of development and reforms at the TSC. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's inclusion in the Bologna Process in 2005, educational reforms carried out at Georgian higher education institutions revealed the need to introduce labour market oriented educational programmes. Despite the fact that educational reforms were directed towards upgrading the systems to European standards, higher education institutions in Georgia still face the rather common problem of a finding the right balance between educational outcomes and the demands of the labour market.

The Georgia project includes several strands, where creating an educational programme in music education at the TSC and teacher and student mobility are the two strands relevant to our research project. The NMH is deeply involved in developing the course in music education, both in terms of curriculum development and teaching the course where both Norwegian teachers and Norwegian students participate. Bringing Norwegian students to the TSC is another important strand on this project. The Norwegian students teach music in schools, participate in workshops for Georgian students attending the new course, and attend workshops learning Georgian music.

### Three models of student involvement

All the three collaborative projects have been established in response to our local partners' goals and needs for renewal and development in music education. The direction and choices made in the projects are continuously discussed and decided in collaboration between the local partners and the NMH. Another common characteristic

is that all projects centre around training music teachers in formal and informal ways. Furthermore, student and teacher mobility and exchange is an important strand in all these projects. Teachers and students from Lebanon, India and Georgia are visiting Norway as an important part of the projects. Since 2005 we have also brought students from NMH into the international projects, within three different models.

*In the first model*, the international project is defined as a mandatory placement component in the integrated performance and teacher training bachelor programme. In the third year of this four-year programme we bring the students into one of the projects. In the period from 2005 to 2014 we brought students to South Lebanon and from 2015 to India building on the same kind of structure and ideas. For ten days student music teachers collaborate on leading music activities for children either in schools or within other structures, contribute in different workshops for music teachers, and give concerts. In this model the community of practice is mostly between the Norwegian students, and the Norwegian teachers supervise and give feedback to the student teachers. The workshops for local music teachers are driven and led by teachers from the NMH with the NMH students contributing by leading a few musical activities.

*The second model* is set up as an elective course available to all students at the NMH. It includes performance and teaching practice components and is now being implemented in Tbilisi. It is not part of the teacher training course in Norway, and hence supervision is not that strongly emphasised throughout the teaching practice. Several of the NMH students choosing this course also participated in the first model of student involvement. Over a period of eight days NMH students perform for children, give workshops and teach music in schools and for music teachers. In this model the NMH students are more independent from the Norwegian teachers. Nevertheless, collaboration between students and teachers in planning, carrying out and evaluating the music activities are central in this model.

*The third model* is to include a small group of students from the NMH with a particular interest in intercultural questions as partners in the international projects. This can be both bachelor, master and PhD students. Forming groups of 4–8 students with 2–3 teachers from the NMH, this constitutes an arena for reflective conversations on issues such as teaching practices, musical material, values and ideologies. The main activity in this model is workshops either for children (in the Lebanon project), teacher training workshops (in India and Georgia) or teaching on the new educational courses (in India and Georgia), all carried out in collaboration between the Norwegian teachers and students and local partners. This model has been rolled out in all three countries.

We believe that these three models related to the three international projects are suited to giving valuable insights into intercultural issues and building competence in different ways for the Norwegian students involved. The first model represents a first meeting with something entirely new. The students are not given the full responsibility, teachers are at hand to supervise, and the tasks are concrete and narrow. In the second model the students are in a more mixed group (students from different study programmes NMH), and they encounter both a new culture and a new situation while at the same time collaborating with fellow students they do not know too well. Furthermore, teachers from the NMH are not that 'hands on' but still provide guidance and are part of conversations and reflections. In the third model teachers and students plan and give workshops and teaching session together, as equals.

## **Intercultural encounters: theoretical perspectives**

We propose that several theoretical perspectives are needed in order to understand the research question: why and how learning takes place in these intercultural projects. In particular, we believe that the issues of *collaborative learning*, *cultural encounters* and *the role of reflection in and on action* are central to understanding learning in intercultural projects.

The projects are centred on highly *collaborative* encounters. Students and teachers collaborate and take an active part in the planning, implementation and performance of musical concerts, workshops and classroom music teaching. This specific setting, which is collaborative, in-practice and reflective, may be seen as a key arena for learning, or even as an example of what characterises learning (e.g. Engeström, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). We propose that the learning potential of this kind of practice can be understood through Rogoff's (1995) three concepts of apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. Apprenticeship involves 'active individuals participating with others in culturally organized activity that has as part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by the less experienced people' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141). Guided participation refers to 'the processes and systems of involvement between people as they communicate and coordinate efforts while participating in culturally valued activity' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141). Guidance, according to Rogoff, 'involves the direction offered by cultural and social values, as well as social partners;' while participation 'refers to observation, as well as hands-on involvement in an activity' (Rogoff 1995, p. 141). Lastly, Rogoff claims that a key understanding of learning is found

in participation itself (and not in the internalisation of external knowledge), and participatory appropriation refers to 'how individuals change through their involvement in one or another activity, [and] in the process becoming prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities.' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141).

The projects facilitate encounters between persons and between *cultures*. Culture is a broad and highly debated concept (Young, 2015) but one which normally concerns social behaviours and norms in human societies. A central question in culture studies is whether culture and cultural identity are more or less fixed or fluid phenomena (Hall, 1989). Even though people in a specific culture probably share a number of characteristics, culture and cultural identity are just as much a matter of difference (Hall, 1989) or of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). 'Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 52). This challenges the idea of identity as related to certain essential characteristics based on origin or location as well as the idea of 'one shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self"' (Hall, 1989, p. 225) or the 'fixity of cultures' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 52). According to Hall, culture and cultural identity is, in addition to similarities, characterised by fluidity and 'deep and significant *difference* which constitute "what we really are"; or rather – since history has intervened – "what we have become"' (p. 225, italics in original). In addition, Hall argues that culture is produced and transformed. Cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as being, and it belongs to the future as much as to the past (p. 225).

Intercultural studies suggest that collaboration across cultures may stimulate development of a particular competence, intercultural competence. According to Deardorff (2006), the term generally refers to the 'ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes' (pp. 247–248). Barrett and colleagues (2013) provide many examples of such knowledge, skills and attitudes: intercultural attitudes entail an appreciation of diversity, respect for differences, a willingness to learn from others – questioning what is seen as normal and tolerating insecurity. Examples of intercultural knowledge include understanding the diversity of cultures, understanding and paying attention to preconceptions (your own and those of others), stereotypes, discrimination and issues of language. Intercultural skills include the ability to take on a multi-perspective, to be able to interpret cultures, to be emphatic, cognitive flexibility, and so on. Studies in this field also reveal that developing intercultural competence means learning about the values, identities and traditions of your own cultural settings and everyday life (Westerlund, Partti & Karlsen, 2015).

In collaborative learning and in cultural encounters, *reflection* seems to play a crucial role. Research suggests quite clearly that educational practice is not just actions, but actions *and their attendant discourses* (Alexander, 2001, Schön, 1987). Alexander (2008) for example, defines pedagogy as the act of teaching ‘*together with the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions, theories and beliefs that inform, shape and seek to justify it*’ (p. 75, italics in original). One element in attendant discourses might then be reflection on different levels, which also can be seen as an important line in intercultural encounters (Broeske-Danielsen, 2013, Westerlund, Partti & Karlsen, 2015). Schön (1987) introduced the terms reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to describe professional competence. According to Schön (1987), reflection at different levels is key to meeting the challenges of the ‘swampy zones of practice’ (p. 3). By connecting the term artistry to reflection at different levels, Schön underlines that the practitioner makes new sense of uncertain, unique or conflictual situations, and rethinks them in ways that go beyond available rules, facts, theories and operations. Indeterminate situations force the practitioner to respond and to find solutions on the spot. In this way ‘thinking serves to reshape what we do while we are doing it’, which Schön expresses through the term ‘reflection-in-action’ (1987, p. 26). Such reflection occurs in the midst of action without interrupting it. What distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action. Although reflection-on-action is different from reflection-in-action, it may indirectly shape our future action, as it is a reflection on our past reflection-in-action. Different levels of reflection play important roles in the acquisition of artistry, according to Schön (1987). Dale (1998) and Lauvås and Handal (1997, 2000) also focus on reflection on different levels, particularly related to educational practices. One of their levels of reflection is directed towards ethical justification based on values (Lauvås & Handal, 2000). A meeting between different educational practices (as well as musical, we suggest) thus means a meeting between different sets of values and theories of practice. Professional knowledge consists not only of the ability to convey a particular content to a group of students (and audiences), but also of an awareness – a reflective attitude towards the ideas, norms, values, beliefs and assumptions which underlie all the decisions involved in planning and undertaking music teaching and musical performance. In other words, our professional knowledge is subject to an ethical and value-related dimension linked to what is relevant, correct and important (Alexander, 2001; Clarke & Yinger, 1977; Lauvås & Handal, 2000).

This line of ideas can be found in previous studies on student music teachers’ learning in intercultural encounters, which show that meeting an unfamiliar and challenging teaching context forces the practitioner to draw on all their previously gained competence and drives the need for reflection on different levels (Broeske-Danielsen, 2013;



Westerlund, Partti and Karlsen, 2015). Reflection both in action and on action can then be seen as conditions for the learning that takes place (Broske-Danielsen, 2013). As the unknown becomes familiar, the practitioner can consider what she knows and then reflect on this knowledge in new ways and through new lenses that could contribute further to challenging her own ethical justification and values in relation to music teaching.

In sum, the points above suggest that a key issue concerning the learning potential of these international projects can be framed as *reflective encounters of intercultural difference in collaborative participatory practice*. If we understand cultures and identities as hybrid, produced and transformed (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1989) and contradictions and multi-voicedness as potential drivers for learning and change (Engeström, 2001), intercultural encounters may cause (in a positive way), and even demand, reflection on different levels that make *change* of practice, purpose and values possible on a personal, professional and cultural level.

## Research methodology

The overall research project is organised as three separate case studies, i.e. Lebanon, Georgia and India, with different subprojects within each case. All subprojects provide data to the overarching research question, why and how does learning take place in participating in intercultural projects. The choice of research design is made in line with Yin's argumentation (2009). The case study design is appropriate in order to investigate a phenomenon (in this case learning) within its real-life context, 'especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Our hypothesis is that important learning takes place in the intercultural projects. However, why it happens and in what ways, is far from apparent. Ethnographic methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), including participant observation, student- and teacher field and reflection logs, semi-structured interviews are used to collect data. The data is discussed and understood through the use of various strategies appropriated to the specific subproject, including qualitative content analysis (Kvale, 2007) and narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). The use of various data collection and data analysis strategies is based on an understanding that the phenomenon of learning, its process and design, may be different in the different intercultural contexts. Data collected through these strategies, interpreted through various analytical procedures, becomes '(...) multiple sources of evidence' (Yin, 2009, p. 18) to the overarching research question.

In this chapter, we use a narrative representation of the data on student learning. The narrative, presented as 'Astrid's story', is constructed in cooperation by the narrator, i.e. the master student Astrid, and the 'listeners', i.e. the research group. Astrid was asked to write a text about her experiences and reflections of her participations in the three models of student involvement presented above. To ensure reliable input to the story, she again discussed her thoughts and understandings with previous peers attending the professional placements with her. Through reading her descriptions, discussing the experiences with Astrid, editing and reshaping what was told, a 'meta story' (Riessman, 1993, p. 13) about what happened was created. The narrative presented as Astrid's story is 'the representation of an event or a series of events' (Abbot, 2008, p. 13), with a number of quotes from Astrid's original text. There are three events presented in Astrid's story. The first is the mandatory placement in Bengaluru, India (student involvement model one). The second is the elective subject in Tbilisi, Georgia (model two). The third is when she enrolled in the master's program attending new projects in the countries previous visited (model three). Astrid's story unveils the process of building teacher confidence, higher reflection and intercultural competence when engaging in different intercultural learning contexts over time.

## **Narrative on student learning: Astrid's story**

### Model one

Astrid's first encounter in the intercultural program was when she in her third year in the integrated music performance and teacher education bachelor programme had a mandatory placement in India. Astrid and 16 fellow students spent a week in Bengaluru teaching music in Indian primary schools to large groups of fourth to seventh graders, giving concerts and learning Carnatic music. In the schools, they worked with Norwegian folk music, improvisation, singing games and dancing. Especially the Norwegian folk song with unfamiliar melody and words evoked curiosity and friendly giggling among the pupils, Astrid remembers. Bringing the guitar and clarinet into the classroom was also met with enthusiasm. Astrid remembers the hours of teaching as intense, but it was never difficult to engage the pupils in singing, playing and dancing.

The students prepared teaching material in Norway and were excited to try it out in a new context. Planning for teaching was a bit difficult, because they were not quite certain how many children attended the classes, the age of the pupils, what equipment

was available, but most of all – how the learning content would be received. In planning, teaching and reflecting on teaching Astrid experienced how it was like to be a part of a big team of student teachers, and the collaboration between students and teachers became a good arena to learn from each other. She had to adapt to a different context, overcoming language barriers and function in what was perceived as a more ‘strict’ context where discipline, assessment and competition was recognizable aspects of the educational culture. For Astrid, the main concern regarding the placements in school was how to find learning activities that would function well, capture the children’s motivation and how to make small adjustments in practice and between hours of teaching. They discussed, helped each other and together made the adjustments needed to adapt the activities to the new intercultural context, Astrid asserts.

‘The musical material we planned to carry out, constituted a frame for our teaching, where the new context and culture influenced action in practice making us take a step back from our own perspectives. This practical experience; being sensitive for the need to make intuitive choices regarding teaching strategies and musical material, contributed to valuable learning.’

The way of being surprised or meeting something very different contributed in new ways of thinking about selecting musical material. It was difficult, and maybe not the best idea, to plan for every detail, Astrid learned.

‘It seemed more important to be aware of the overarching goals and to be able to continuously adjust to the teaching situation.’

The group of students also performed a concert at the end of the visit in the school. Here, the Norwegian students and Indian pupils performed the Norwegian folk song together, with the Norwegian lyric, to the audience’s great enthusiasm.

Astrid and her fellow students also attended different workshops in Indian classical music during the stay. Experiencing Indian discipline and culture through their own playing, singing and improvising opened for knowledge on cultural beliefs, values and perspectives, thus contributing to increased cultural awareness, Astrid asserts.

## Model two

In her fourth year of study, Astrid and eight fellow students elected a course that culminated in a visit to Tbilisi, Georgia.. This time, Astrid felt that being part of a smaller group

of students made it easier for all to participate in concerts and in planning, teaching and all the on-going discussions. Having the prior experience from the India project, Astrid felt that she had resources for making this professional placement extra valuable.

'We found ourselves more confident in the teaching situation and when decisions had to be made.'

The group of students went to a school where they met approximately 40 fifth graders. The pupils were a little shy at first, Astrid remembers. The Norwegian students started the class by performing a quiet version of *Viva la Vida* by Coldplay. Several of the children knew this song, and they were excited to hear it performed by the Norwegians. The students knew that they had to demonstrate and not count on explaining with words. An example was the blues song *Keep on knockin'*. They had prepared an arrangement with guitar, piano, rhythm instruments and voice. The result was that the whole group of pupils were involved in playing, where both the shy and the eager could find their places. Through a rotation principle in circles, the Georgian pupils switched instruments so that all of them could try the djembe, percussion instruments and piano.

Towards the end of the week, the students held a concert in the school. It became a charming, chaotic and fun affair: In small crowded classrooms, they played material consisting of elements from Georgian and Norwegian folk music, to Debussy's *Petite Suite* and Coldplay's *Viva la Vida*.

Although the practical and cultural challenges the students met in Tbilisi differed from the ones they met in India, Astrid experienced and discovered similarities between the two projects. She found similarities through the actual encounter with a foreign culture. Through this meeting, she experienced how her cultural pre-understandings was revised through the intercultural experience, and how a *new* understanding of the culture was created (an on-going process).

'You start paying more attention to your own values. You understand that actual problems can be caused by taken-for-granted cultural viewpoints.'

In this sense, Astrid developed knowledge and skills to understand and adjust to the diversity of cultures.

Astrid experienced that the learning content could meet a certain resistance in India and Georgia. Therefore, she became aware of the need to make quick intuitive choices

in the learning situation to adapt the learning material to different settings, so that it would become relevant for pupils and teachers. Using this prior knowledge from the visit to India, Astrid felt she was able to make decisions based on a 'richer' basis.

'The planning process became a meeting between pedagogical theory and intercultural competence. It made it easier to identify challenges and consider different solutions together.'

Astrid experienced how the intercultural projects combined loose ends in her own music education study programme, and she learned a lot in a very short time.

Model one and two had an impact on Astrid as a musician. The two visits encouraged more reflection about her performance practice, her musical habits, and gave her new musical ideas. In addition, meeting Indian and Georgian music pushed her out of her musical comfort zone, and resulted in experimentation with new genres. A particularly important impact is that she now reflects more about what she wants with her concerts and her repertoire. Do I have a distinct concept, or is it 'just for fun'. She mentions two incidents that sparked such reflection. In Georgia, Astrid experienced teachers discussing whether songs in minor keys are appropriate for small children (are they too sad?). In India, she attended a four-hour long concert with Carnatic music, in which she experienced a connection between musicians and audience that to her was completely new. The audience was an active part of the music making and the musical experience, by following the *talas* with hand and finger movements. Both incidents made her think about what she wants with her music, and what music may mean and express to different people.

### Model three

Astrid's experiences from India and Georgia nurtured a research interest in intercultural issues. In her fifth year, she therefore enrolled in the master's programme, giving her an opportunity to return to India and Georgia for empirical studies. As a master student, she thought of herself more as a colleague than a student when collaborating in the team. She, and two fellow students, were included in planning for workshops for Georgian student teachers at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire. The workshops focussed on active music making and listening, in addition to reflection on educational issues. Astrid attended as well meetings and had late night dinner discussions with her teachers and peers.

'You get inspired by each other, both through practical work and by meeting different ways of thinking. This stimulates reflection on the many issues of teaching, and you get to know your identity as a musician and teacher.'

Together with her previous experiences and her readings of literature on the master's level, this made her more interested and more aware of the ethical rationales for education. The ability to reflect on how values affect practice became important for Astrid, as it was a key element for greater understanding. Although justifications and reasons were still both practice-based and theory-based, her prior experience was of great importance.

'Without experience from the previous projects, it would have been impossible to reflect on a higher level, and you constantly return to the strictly practical matters of teaching. This underlines the reciprocal relationship between different levels of practice.'

The projects make you able to see yourself from outside, Astrid suggests.

'To switch between the role of an observer and the active role of the music teacher and musician stimulates reflection on the many issues of teaching, and you get to know your identity as a musician and teacher. You understand that actual problems can be caused by taken-for-granted cultural viewpoints (the view on play, theory, assessment, authorities and so on). In this sense, you develop knowledge and skills to understand and adjust to the diversity of cultures.'

## **Comments and reflections**

Astrid's story, in our opinion, suggests quite clearly that the three visits to foreign countries have made an important impact on her professional development, which also previous students at the academy have stated after participating in model one (Broeske-Danielsen, 2013). The story also suggests that collaboration, reflection in and on action, and meeting a new cultural setting are promising perspectives that help understand the learning experiences in such projects.

The role of collaboration between students and between students and staff is a re-occurring issue in the story. In the first model, the story suggests, collaboration and learning between students is central. They are working in a big team, finding teaching and learning activities, musical material and gaining practical experience in action together. Collaboration in a big group constituted an important arena for learning, according to Astrid's story, and according to previous research (Broske-Danielsen 2013; Westerlund et al., 2015). In the second model, collaboration continues in a smaller group of students. During the third model, Astrid participated with more experience, in a small team of students and staff. Astrid was no longer 'just' a student, but an aspiring experienced participant, a colleague in the collaborative team. The three models are also designed differently, where the students are given more and more responsibility with less supervision from teachers throughout the three models. Astrid's experiences with the three different models show traces of a certain participatory progression in the three models, in which Astrid's role transforms from a less experienced participant to mature participation (see also Westerlund et al., 2015). In Rogoff's words (1995, see also Lave & Wenger, 1991), Astrid seems to be an apprentice that participates in the practices (through observation and hands-on involvement) on an increasingly experienced level. What helps her develop is collaborative participation combined with the guidance involved in the practice (from peers and teachers, and from the direction offered from cultural and social values in the practice). This suggests that experiencing being a part of a community of fellow students contributes to the feeling of safety and opens possibilities for learning. Previous studies (Broske-Danielsen, 2013; Westerlund et al., 2015) show that collaboration between peers reduces the complexity in a new and unfamiliar context, as there are many peers helping each other. This again decreases the feeling of risk in a contradictory and multifaceted situation where students have to move out of their comfort zones (Broske-Danielsen, 2013).

Collaboration seems to be experienced very positively, yet participating in intercultural settings is far from straightforward, according to the story. There are many traces of Astrid having to cope with uncertainty, insecurity and unfamiliar situations and challenges. In the story, Astrid's says that 'being sensitive for the need to make intuitive choices regarding teaching strategies and musical material, contributed to valuable learning'. Such reflection-in-action is precisely central for being able to handle the 'swampy zones of practice' (Schön 1987, p. 3). Astrid's journey throughout the three models shows that she became more confident in her teaching and in making decisions on the spot. She describes that her reflection also moved to an increasingly higher level throughout her three intercultural encounters. The story of Astrid suggests a high degree of reflection among the students within the projects, both related to planning

and evaluating the teaching practice and related to more overarching issues related to values and justifications. Overall, it seems as the contradictory and demanding teaching context led to increased reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987) where fellow students played a significant role in all levels.

Astrid's previous experience and the enriched intercultural competence contributed to increased interest in and awareness of values and justifications in music education, to exploring her own identity and to increased ability to reflect on a higher level. There is reason to believe that reflection is particularly important in intercultural encounters and at the same time enhanced in such projects, since the students are facing a quite new and unfamiliar situation and context (Broeske-Danielsen, 2013). Astrid's story suggests that throughout the three experiences she felt more and more confident in meeting the unfamiliar and unpredictable. It is therefore reason to think that this is not just a result of meeting different contexts in the three models, but also comes from Astrid's ability to face and meet such challenges. She has gained increased competence as a music teacher and increased her intercultural competence, which relates among other things to being open for new ways of seeing and understanding, and being able to adjust to new settings. The study by Westerlund et al. (2015) underlines the importance of learning to face the unknown and being able to make on-the-spot decisions.

Cultural participation, and coping with cultural and identity issues, seem to be important aspects of Astrid's account of her three visits. In her first visit to India, Astrid met a new cultural context and encountered cultural differences of many kinds, not the least in the music classroom. The learning context was characterized by cultural difference (but also similarities), multi-voicedness and contradictions in several ways (Engeström, 2001). Astrid's story suggests that the students started developing intercultural competence, for example tolerating insecurity and handling contradictions (Barrett et al., 2013), which is in line with the findings of Westerlund et al. (2015). Astrid reports eventually coping (better) with cultural difference, because she already had experience with facing new, unpredictable and multi-voiced settings. Because of having previous experience, Astrid developed what she calls a 'new understanding' of culture, adjusted to the 'diversity of cultures', and paid attention to her own preconceptions, all of which are traces of intercultural competence (Barrett et al., 2013). Astrid directs her gaze both outwards and inward, to cultural difference and to her own preconceptions and identity. Many words in her story suggest that this process probably is rather complex and even troublesome: *Different, new context, new culture, adapt, take a step back, surprised, taken-for-granted, diversity, identity, resistance,*



*complexity, musical habits, values, see yourself from outside.* What is going on, it seems, is a process of accepting and understanding the *hybridity* of both the culture she meets, her own cultural background with all its traditions and values, and also her personal values and preconceptions (identity). The process of learning to handle and face the unknown requires willingness to risk yourself, your understanding and to be ready to let your identity be challenged. This can lead to really starting to understand cultures (your own and others) not as fixed, unitary nor simply dualistic (Bhabha, 1994, p. 52; Hall, 1989, p. 225), and not understanding identities (your own and others) related to origin or location (Bhabha, 1994, p. 52), but rather as hybrid in every possible way. This would be a start of, and always a part of, a journey of not finding out 'what we really are' (Hall, 1989, p. 225), but rather continuously being open for what 'we can become', a journey that belongs to the future.

The empirical material of this chapter is limited, but Astrid's story is still supporting the further exploration of the theoretically developed roles of collaborative learning, cultural encounters and reflection when it comes to understanding learning in international projects. Collaboration between students and between students and teachers seem to be crucial in all the three models, both regarding being able to cope with the many challenges in practice and being able to tolerate insecurity, as well as for making sense of contradictory values and hybrid identities and cultures. Reflection seems to be a central strand throughout all three models, and it seems reasonable to suggest that meeting the multi-voiced and unfamiliar contexts cause and demand reflection, which subsequently may lead to a change of practice, purpose and values (Engeström, 2001). Further examination is however needed in order to discuss these matters in more depth, and on a broader empirical basis, not the least by including the voices from all involved countries in the study.

## Conclusions

The models of student involvement connected to the three international projects, as outlined in the beginning of this chapter, aim to enable musicians and music teachers to face, understand and engage in the intercultural society. As the story of Astrid is suggesting, this aim seems to be met. To answer the questions of why and how learning takes place in the projects needs further exploration, but the present chapter has given some promising suggestions. We suggest, based on the outline of the project organisation, the theoretical strands and the empirical data presented in the narrative, that the

characteristics of the learning potential of the projects is that the projects make possible reflective cultural encounters, which may encourage a process of understanding cultural difference and stimulate development of intercultural competence. Further, participants collaborate in a *participatory* musical and educational *practice*, which is situated in a *cultural context*. In this intercultural, participatory practice, *comparisons and contradictions* occur (cultural, professional and personal), which may cause and demand *reflection* (personal and professional) and make *change* of practice, purpose and values possible, on both the individual and cultural level.

The close collaboration between the students and between the students and the teachers, the shift between the act as performer and observer, the peer assessment and the on-going and highly focused discussions, is the very foundation for why learning occurs, regardless of the intercultural context. We suggest that the intercultural context accelerates this learning. The act of comparison naturally evolves, both with students and with teachers, as the distance between *the known* and *the unknown* may be experienced as wide-ranging. Comparisons are again expedient and fruitful – if reflections contribute to new knowledge and understanding on the professional as well as on the personal domain. Students report a higher level of reflection, not only addressing the execution of learning activities and musicianship and how to improve their teaching and musicianship, but in engaging in reflections about the structural, political, religious and value-based foundation for their activities. As Astrid's story points out, students start to pay more attention to their own values and the taken-for-granted cultural viewpoints that again can both be the cause of problems as well as a 'source for understanding the world'. This kind of reflection, facilitated through the encounter in distanced and often different educational and musical culture, is thus in line with the theory of didactics, and in line with the objectives of teacher education and performance studies. One could say that the students *discover* the theory of didactics. The aspect of distance and comparisons is one interesting explanation for the *why* in the research question. Other interesting themes for continuous reflection is the significance of teaching and presenting music in a second language, forcing to make explicit tacit knowledge and thus facilitating a different higher level of thinking, assessing and executing theoretical, methodological and musical concepts.

Last, to fully understand *why* and *how* learning takes place in intercultural projects, and how we can both *facilitate for* and *learn from* educational development, requires a closer examination of the cultural, political, religious structures regulating the educational and musical contexts. We hope that we will be able to include some

exploration of these broad issues as part of the continuing work on researching the learning potential of intercultural projects in higher music education.

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