



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

”Liksom ett annat uppdrag”

Iscensättning av social rättvisa i
musikundervisningens retorik och praktik

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Akademisk avhandling

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“Sort of another task”:

Rhetorical and practical performances of social justice in music education.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to identify, describe, and problematize constructions of social justice in Swedish music education. The thesis has an ethnographic design, and presents four empirical studies. The studies, in the shape of four scientific articles, emblematised musical practices in community schools of music and art, as well as in elementary schools. The conceptual framework of the concept of social justice precipitates a focus on the prime object of study, El Sistema. Music education as organised by El Sistema explicitly communicates social aims, and the programme operates in both Swedish community schools of music and art, and in elementary schools. All together, the empirical data consist of marketing material (films and written documents), observational field-notes and sound recordings from one semester's fieldwork in a children's music educational group (ages 7-9), as well as sound-recorded focus group interviews with music teachers from both community schools of music and art and elementary schools. Article I shows how different conceptions of music, children, emotions, and social transformation are constructed to legitimate El Sistema in the Swedish community schools of music and art. Here, the objects of study are films and written texts published on El Sistema's Swedish website. Article II elaborates how musical agency is performed by participating children in relation to conceptions of music education and social justice constructed in the educational practice. Articles III and IV elaborate teachers' negotiations and constructions of teacher roles and the educational task in relation to conceptions of social justice. Within a comprehensive social constructionist perspective, participants' opportunities for action and negotiation, in practice, are perceived as determined by societal, institutional and local preconditions, and by overarching and established conceptions that are typical for certain eras. With this theoretical point of departure, both local and societal conceptions of the musical subject, its objectives, means, and aims, as well as conceptions about accessibility, equality, democracy and social justice, are constantly negotiated. Thus, apparently natural and established ideas can be problematized. Based on all studies' results, relations between established conceptions, structural preconditions, and social relations are scrutinised from the way they influence performances of the music educational practice. The final discussion encompasses consequences for teachers' ability to reflect, as well as children's and young peoples' meaning making through musical actions. The thesis' critical perspective aims at evoking new questions, and generating new knowledge concerning the preconditions and the content of institutionally financed music education.

Keywords

Music education, school, social justice, music sociology, social constructionism, musical agency, affective discursive practice, educational work

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