

Tradition, Identity, Learning: A methodological discussion

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This presentation draws upon an ongoing research project that explores learning of Swedish folk music across six learning areas. These areas span from what is generally considered formal arenas to informal ones: (A) Music academy (performers programme), (B) Folk high school (full time course), (C) Folk high school (distance course), (D) Fiddlers' group (spelmanslag), (E) Professional musicians, (F) Informal, regularly occurring jam sessions. While our presentation at last year's NNMRE conference focused on our theoretical frame work, situated learning and communities of practice (Lave, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Lave, 2011), we now present and discuss our methodological considerations.

Our study is conducted with an ethnographic approach, making use of our own musician identities as flutist and fiddler. We are using a range of methods, such as participant observation, observation, interviews, survey and group interviews. Presented with this wording, it sounds as if we are following an already decided plan, making use of established methods within qualitative research. Working and living within the field of music education, our being-in-the-world with music, has already influenced our ways of performing research, however, there might be more to it, connected to the idea of "sensuous scholarship" (Stoller, 1997).

In exploring the relation between experience and theory, Hastrup (1995) concludes that the task of a researcher with ethnographic ambitions, is to construct a world outside time and place, a space for shared social experience. Following this insight, the researchers' position can also be described as creating and investigating the "in-between", moving between distance and proximity

Following this line of thought, Law (2004) introduces situated inquiry as a way of dealing with the world, as the world cannot be understood in general by holding tight to methodological rules. Rather, deliberate imprecision might be a technique for grasping with the indistinct. The messiness of research that comes with an improvised and intuitive study design opens up for "///...a way of pointing to and articulating a sense of the world as an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities" (pp. 6-7).

Consequently, this presentation opens up for discussions on qualitative research methods, researcher positionings, and ad hoc research designs which unfolds during long-lasting collegial research projects.

References:

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