



**Sidsel Karlsen** *Exploring democracy: Conceptions of immigrant students' development of musical agency*

From 2009 to 2011, Sidsel Karlsen conducted a study on multicultural music education in the Nordic countries. The research was funded through a 3-year postdoctoral grant from the Academy of Finland and was based at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. The project, named "Exploring democracy: Conceptions of immigrant students' development of musical agency", sought to explore the phenomenon of immigrant students' musical agency from several angles, and the main question guiding the collection of data was the following: What kinds of understandings exist among music teachers and their students regarding the development of immigrant students' musical agency? Moreover, three research sub-questions focussed more specifically on 1) how the teachers expressed their understandings regarding the development of their students' musical agency; 2) how the students experienced access to musical cultures, practices and forms of knowledge inside and outside music lessons; and 3) which musical paths of identity that were available to students in these contexts.

Data was collected from three classroom practices in immigrant area lower secondary schools (students aged 13 to 16) in Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden) and Oslo (Norway), and the empirical material was collected through classroom observations as well as through interviews with teachers and students. In all, the data comprised field notes from observations of 24 music lessons, six interviews with the three participating teachers, and 19 group and individual interviews with a total of 30 students.

So far, the outcome of the research has been published in five articles, two concentrating on the theoretical and methodological aspects of conducting music education research in multicultural school contexts (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010; Karlsen, 2011), and three reporting on findings derived from the rich data (Karlsen, 2012; Karlsen, in print a; Karlsen, in print b). Summing up the main patterns of the findings, it is evident that the immigrant students observed and interviewed possessed multiple repertoires of ways of being and acting in music, however their musical realities inside and outside music lessons were quite different ones and much of the students' musical competence was not recognised within the school setting often despite their teachers' strong efforts to provide culturally responsive music education. Furthermore, the data gives insight into some of the pitfalls of the content integration and cultural recognition approach and of the complexities involved in negotiating one's homeland music – and thereby a part of one's cultural identity – in a multicultural school context.

Following the above study, Sidsel Karlsen has been involved in intercultural research exploring, among other things, Finnish student music teachers' reflections on learning during a bi-cultural exchange project in Cambodia as well as perceptions of intercultural competencies among Israeli music teacher educators. She is currently writing a book on multicultural music education with Sibelius Academy professor Heidi Westerlund.

## **Biography**

Sidsel Karlsen is professor of music education at Hedmark University College in Norway as well as adjunct professor at the Sibelius Academy in Finland. She has published widely in Scandinavian and international research journals and is a contributor to international anthologies such as *Sociology and music education* and *Collaborative learning in higher music education*. Her research interests cover, among other things, multicultural music education, the interplay between formal and informal arenas for learning and the social and cultural significance of music festivals.

## **References**

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