

**Utrecht University**

**Applied Musicology**

**MUSIC EDUCATION IN COMPULSORY SCHOOLS IN ICELAND**

**A LOOK INTO THE PAST, THE PRESENT**

**AND A GLIMPSE OF A POSSIBLE FUTURE.**

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*“States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:*

*The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.”* (The United Nations 1989, Article 29)

*“States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to fully participate in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.”* (The United Nations 1989, Article 31)

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## Abstract

In this thesis, I will look into the challenges that music education in compulsory schools in Iceland is facing and try to find possible solutions. I will analyse music education by looking into the regulatory environment, curriculum guides, available relevant research and finally a survey will be conducted in a school district in Iceland for a better understanding of the current situation.

Music in some form has been a subject in compulsory schools in Iceland for over 100 years and a mandatory subject for 50 years. The challenges it is facing, including teacher shortage, lack of specialised working facilities and teacher salary, have been ongoing for all those years.

Music is not taught in 20% of compulsory schools in Iceland. Research reveals that there are enough qualified music educators but they seem to look to other jobs instead of music teaching. The question is how to resolve that; How can we get more people into teaching?

My research questions are:

What are the main challenges that music education in compulsory schools in Iceland are facing and how can they be solved?

What has been done to analyze and find solutions to the challenges?

Which steps have been taken into solving the challenges?

In conclusion, this paper should give a new overview of music education in compulsory schools in Iceland and hopefully shed some light on what could and should be done to lead to a sustainable future.

## Introduction

This thesis will focus on music education in the compulsory school system, the challenges it's facing and possible solutions to those challenges. In work like this, there are many aspects to look at. It is necessary to make some assumptions like how to look at the content and what one is looking for (Björnsdóttir 2008, 4).

For a good art education to thrive, creative, passionate and efficient teachers are needed. Though there have been some worries of low quality of art education in the teachers' education there are several examples of exceptional art education in Icelandic schools. Generally, the teachers are very competent, though there is a lack of art teachers in the rural areas in Iceland, especially music educators in compulsory schools (Bamford 2009, 9).

To get an overview of the status of music teaching and the ups and downs of it, the available research on the matter and the status of the subject according to laws, regulations and the national curriculum guide will be viewed.

When the national curriculum guide was being constructed in 1976 a committee was appointed to oversee the pedagogy of the new curriculum and to compose new teaching material. The educational components that became the supporting factors in the teaching material and therefore of the new curriculum were divided into primary- and skill components. The primary components were: pitch, length of note, form, timbre, volume, tempo, interpretation and musical style (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1976). These components, with slight emphasis changes, have been the foundation of the music teaching parts of all the national curriculum guides to this day.

Music is a mandatory subject in the compulsory school and its requirements are stated in the national curriculum and there it is specified how many lessons the students are entitled to.

The objective of this research is to analyse the development of music as a subject

in the national curriculum for the last 60 years. Sources from various places were scrutinized, including sources from the authorities; legislation, regulations and curricula; both national curriculum guides and school curriculum, municipalities school policies, articles and thesis from specialists who work within and outside the education system.

### 1. On the sources

Most of the sources in this thesis are from Iceland and are originally in Icelandic. All the listings in the bibliography and citations are therefore in the original language. Most of the sources are available online, some of them are available translated into English.

Each source is listed with the real title followed by the title translated into English in brackets. Example: Björgvinsson, Eggert. 2014. "*Stjórnvísla tónlistarkennslu í grunnskólum og tónlistarskólum*" "[*Public administration of music education in the elementary- and music schools*"]]. MPA Thesis, Reykjavik: University of Iceland.

The author also did a survey on the matter in a municipality of his own choice which will be introduced later.

### 2. Research question and research objective

What are the main challenges that music education in compulsory schools in Iceland are facing and how can they be solved?

What has been done to analyze and find solutions to the challenges?

What steps have been taken into solving the challenges?

This thesis consists of a review on the status of music teaching in compulsory schools in Iceland by examining various sources and doing a survey on the current

status.

The various curricula have been studied and analysed, music teaching regular environment observed, and from that what challenges music teaching in compulsory school and how they have been addressed.

According to most findings or research, (Sævarsdóttir 2016, 84; Guðmundsdóttir 2008; Valsdóttir 2008; Guðmundsdóttir 2011) these are the challenges that music teaching is confronted by:

- Teachers deficiency; shortage of educated teachers
- Working conditions, which is twofold; firstly, the working facilities itself, which has sometimes proven to be a reason for the music educators shortage, and secondly, the strain in teaching caused by too large groups of students, frequent group changes and far too much noise in the classrooms.
- Wages; music educators have like most arts and crafts teachers been dissatisfied with their status in the wages agreement. Direct wage cuts and not taken into account the workload contribution has lead to experienced music educators have been looking at other work opportunities or even to quit teaching music and move over to general teaching where the work strain is less and the wages higher

### 3. Description of Research Methods

The author decided to do a survey on the status of music teaching in his hometown of Kopavogur. The idea was to explore the professional's attitudes to music teaching in compulsory schools in Kopavogur, its status towards the national curriculum guide, the reference timetable, school administrations and teaching. The key focus is on music teaching as a subject and the

reinforcement of music education in the schools. This survey was based on document scrutiny and the views of professional groups in the schools and asking open questions, looking for the diverse attitude of the interested parties.

A qualitative research method was chosen to get a deeper understanding of the nature of a specific position in the development of the educational system, meaning that the attempt was to examine the professional debate of the subject and try to get to the core of the debate or to find the actual status of the music teaching reinforcement in the compulsory schools.

### 3.1 The author's status within the research

The author is always an affected party in the conclusions interpretation and their variations. The author is a working music educator and musician. He has extensive experience in the business of music which gives the author a good overview to build his research on but means at the same time that the author's attitude beforehand is not impartial because when good knowledge of the topic can be useful the author must be aware not to take sides in his preparing and implementation.

## 4. Laws, curriculum, the schools and the subject

The function of compulsory schools in Iceland is based on the compulsory school act, set by Althingi (the national parliament of Iceland). The compulsory school act establishes a framework for school activities and should be a tool in the school's daily activities. The compulsory school act is the foundation on which the national curriculum guide and school curriculum guides are built on. The current compulsory school act was set in 2008 (Stjórnarráð Íslands 2008).

The national curriculum guide, set by the minister of education and culture, is a tool to execute the compulsory school act (Olgeirsson 2005). In the national curriculum guide, the state school policy is introduced, request to schools to make their own school policy and school curriculum and a summary of the objectives for school activities. It also covers individual subjects, emphasis, objectives and fundamental pillars of education (Mennta og Menningarráðuneytið 2011). The general section of the current national curriculum guide was published in 2011 with subject areas in 2013.

The reference timetable contains the framework on the weight of subjects and subject area and defines the total hours for each subject and subject areas. Each school decides on its time framework. The reference timetable does not dictate how much time each school allocates to each subject each week. The schools have the flexibility to construct the subject in shorter or longer periods so that they have more weight for a certain time in the student's timetable (Mennta og Menningarráðuneytið 2011).

## 5. The compulsory school

It is the role of compulsory schools to promote the education of its pupils and prepare them for their participation in society. The minister of education and culture is responsible for the general administration of the compulsory school and for the providing of learning materials for the schools and also oversees the quality of the school activities but the operation and the related costs are the responsibility of the municipalities (Stjórnarráð Íslands 91/2008).

Every school is supposed to provide teaching of arts and crafts according to the compulsory school act, and the national curriculum guide, but there is so much decentralisation that it is impossible to know if everyone is following or implementing these guidelines. The ministry sets the curriculum and supervises execution, but the municipalities take care of the implementation. The ministry has no power of control over the municipalities (Björgvinsson

2014). Therefore all supervision is difficult and inconsistent and needs to be increased (Bamford 2009, 150).

Every compulsory school is led by a principal who assumes responsibility for the school's work on behalf of the municipal council and school board according to the compulsory school act and the national curriculum guide (Stjórnarráð Íslands 91/2008).

Support from inspired leaders is necessary for art and cultural education. Creative and imaginative principals stimulate and support art education (Bamford 2009).

### 5.1 Music education in compulsory schools

In 1986, laws on the legal validation of teacher certification were entered into force. After that, every teacher has to apply for teacher certification.

The professional title “tónmenntakennari”, or “music educator in compulsory school” is used for differentiation from a music teacher in the music schools (Valsdóttir 2008, 68).

## 6. The thesis structure

The thesis includes 4 chapters where each chapter addresses different areas of music education in compulsory schools in Iceland. In chapter 1 the historical background of the music education policy in compulsory schools is covered. Chapter 2 focuses on how official school policy has tried to address challenges on a national level. Chapter 3 concentrates on comparing how the challenges have been dealt with in the two largest municipalities in Iceland, Reykjavik and Kopavogur. Finally, chapter 4 includes a look into the future and try to focus on what has been done and what needs to be done.

## Chapter 1: The development of music education policy in Iceland

This chapter will focus on the historical background of music teaching in compulsory schools by looking into laws legislations and comparing curricula. The status and the challenges of music teaching and the education of music educator will also be discussed.

### 1. Historical background

The *Legislation on children's education in Iceland* was passed in 1907. The subject of music was called singing. On the subject of singing and poetry, 14-year-old children were supposed to know some Icelandic poems by heart, preferably national and historical poems. Singing has therefore been part of Icelandic education for over one hundred years and is one of the oldest school subjects in Iceland (Guttormsson 2008).

The first curriculum guide for children's schools was published in 1929 (Elísson 1944). The subject of singing was to be one lesson per week and in years six and seven increased to two lessons per week.

The first national curriculum guide for students of compulsory education age the subject of singing (later music), published in 1960, was divided into three main components: vocal training, rhythm training and hearing training. The main emphasis was on singing. In the curriculum, it was specified what teaching material should be used and detailed clarification of what should be taught (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1960).

Following this curriculum guide, a Vocal Teaching Department (later Music Education Department) was established in the Reykjavik College of Music in 1960 according to regulations about teacher education in music issued by the Minister of Education (Björgvinsson 2014).

The second national curriculum guide published in 1976 was much more comprehensive than the previous curriculum. The name of the subject was changed from *Singing* to *Music* with

broader reference to music in general, instead of only singing. The components of music education were divided into core components and skill components. The primary components were: pitch, length of note, form, timbre, volume, tempo, interpretation and musical style. The skill components were: singing, listening, instrument playing, movement, sight-reading and musical notation. (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1976, 24) the aim of the teaching was the effective training of the skills components, where every skill got special coverage in the curriculum guide, where the music knowledge should be weaved into it. The main emphasis was on musical performance and specifically stated that academic teaching should not be a priority (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1976, 3).

Following the 1976 curriculum, the majority of the music teaching material published in Iceland was released. The objectives of the curriculum guide show signs of that because most of the objectives in it were specially written with that teaching material in mind. The curriculum guide was also very specific on how the teaching should be organized and how the music should be connected to other subjects.

The third national curriculum guide, published in 1989, was presented in one book, where the subject of music was covered in 12 pages instead of 47 pages in the previous curriculum guide. However, it should be noted that every school subject got similar space in the curriculum guide which shows that music is not discriminated against in any way from other subjects. The main objectives and the value of music teaching did not change from the previous curriculum guide and were explained in the way that the students should practise and that the experience of music is the foundation of musical education (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 1989,157).

Teaching methods were not exactly discussed, just mentioned that they should be diverse and adaptable (Björgvinsson 2014, 26-27).

In 1999, the third national curriculum guide was released. The curriculum guide was in two parts, one general and one specific on 11 subjects. A more comprehensive and integrative view was taken on arts, with music addressed with other forms such as visual arts, textiles, dramatic arts and dance (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 1999).

In the introduction of the subjects, the role of music in society emphasized and the integration of music and other activities of the school and the society is discussed (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 1999, 54). There is also an indication that music could be an important profession in society and music education in schools is important for those who want to make music their career (B.K. Björnsdóttir 2008, 24).

There are six main music skill components in the 1999 guide: singing and vocal technique, sight-reading and writing, musical instruments, movement, and listening and creation (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 1999, 55). The first four are considered fundamental and the latter two are supposed to intertwine with the others. The music teaching is divided into three parts: core components topics and skills, historical and social context and musical intuition.

A new national curriculum guide, which was issued in 2007, included a detailed level objectives for students after 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They are divided into primary-, topic- and skill components, historical and social context and musical intuition. In each category are four subcategories: musical instruments, movement, reading and writing and historical context (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2007, 28-36). After the level objectives, music teaching in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade as an elective, which schools are obliged to offer, is discussed, ideas expressed on how the teaching might be implemented but at the same time clearly stated that the teaching could be variable between schools but always building on the same fundamental pillars: tempo, rhythm, timbre, volume and

form (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2007).

The national curriculum guide, published in 2011 and considerable changes can be found in the subject areas published in 2013 where the fundamental pillars of education are: literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity.

A new concept, key competencies, is introduced regarding the aptitude that students are supposed to have achieved at the end of each grade level (at the end of year 4, 7 and 10) (Björgvinsson 2014; Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011). The key competencies are presented in five points common for all subjects. They are expression, creative thinking and initiative in presentation, independent working methods, to find and use the information and the pupil's responsibility for their own education and evaluation of their own work (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013, 55).

The curriculum guide gives schools the possibility to define their unique identities. The chapter on music education reflects this by giving a broader view of the national standards and fewer explicit points for schools to consider (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013, 150-151).

These curriculum guides cover nearly sixty years of Iceland's educational history and when they are compared it is clear that the five fundamental pillars of education: objectives, study aspects, teaching- and learning methods, educational material, teaching equipment and evaluation are well covered in all those curricula, though they appear in a different way with a different balance between them, within each curriculum guide.

The main objectives of all the curricula are to motivate the student's interest in music and to give them focused teaching so that they can evaluate and enjoy music as well as possible. The study objectives are on the other hand not always set in the same

way.

The intent of the 1960 curriculum guide is to increase the pupil's knowledge of music systematically and thus “stimulate the love for music and respect for it, and at the same time submit the foundation to the practice of music in the school and after completion of studies” (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1960, 73). The main focus of the teaching should be to teach certain aspects of knowledge that are then deepened with practical training. In the consequent curriculum, the main emphasis is on the practical aspects of music and the pupils are supposed to gain knowledge through effective training, developing their own music skills by experiencing the music and getting the opportunity to create, express and interpret music rather than learning the mechanics of music (B.K. Björnsdóttir 2008, 30).

In the 1960 curriculum guide, there are no study objectives, but there are very precise study objectives in the 1976 curriculum guide. In the 1989 curriculum guide the objectives are more open and less controlling, one could say they are more like a policy rather than objectives (B.K. Björnsdóttir 2008, 31).

The 1999 curriculum guide includes considerable and clear level-divided objectives. They are considerably narrowly defined and make one think of the objectives from the 1976 curriculum guide and expects students to be able to know, show or understand exactly the same skill components. It is specially mentioned that the schools have the flexibility to arrange the objectives in their own way but on the other hand, the curriculum guide looks like it centrally controls the studies in details. There are little changes in the Curriculum guide published in 2007 except that the level objectives were more like a thing of support and reference, but the schools are supposed to make their own policy and level objectives in their school curriculum (Mennta og

menningarmálaráðuneytið 2007).

The biggest changes between curricula were revealed when the current National Curriculum guide published in 2011, and subject area in 2013 when a new concept, key competence, was introduced, regarding the aptitude that students are supposed to have achieved at the end of each grade level. The curriculum guide is considerably more comprehensive than the previous curriculum guides. On the subject of music, the freedom of the schools and the teachers was increased with more open objectives and emphasis on new components, like cultural literacy and focus on creation (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013).

The evolution of the curricula focuses on three main principles, the structure of the teaching, the components of the teaching and how much of the teaching is being controlled directly through the curriculum. In the current curriculum guide, the precise goal settings from the 1976 and 1999 curriculum guide are no longer present but are open and gives the schools and the teachers freedom to mould the school activities and the teaching after their own emphasis and circumstances which are mentioned and designated in each school curriculum.

## 2. The education of music educators

The Singing Teaching Department (later Music Education Department) of the Reykjavik College of Music and the Teachers College of Iceland provided education for music educators. In 2001 when the Iceland University of the Arts was established the Music Education Department was closed. The Teachers College of Iceland merged with the University of Iceland in 2008 (Guðmundsdóttir 2011). To become music educators students have a choice of a B. Ed

with an emphasis on music or an MA or M.Art in arts education at the Iceland University of the Arts.

Despite claims regarding a music educator shortage, there is no indication that there are too few teachers graduating, but the problem seems to be that the graduated teachers go to other jobs than teaching (Guðmundsdóttir 2011).

### 3. The status and the challenges of music education in compulsory schools

The years before the national curriculum guide 1976 was published, a committee worked on reviewing the curricula of music, teaching materials and overall music education in the compulsory school system. Many musicians in the country worked on the objectives, teaching methods and teacher education for the new subject and as a result teaching material making would be more focused (Oddsdóttir 2014).

After the subject was put into the National Curriculum guide in 1976 the compulsory schools that offered music education increased steadily from 60% to 80% in the years 1981 to 2005. Still today it is a fact that music is not taught in every school, however, the majority of schools are able to offer music education. The lowest proportion of schools who offered music teaching were in the rural areas of Iceland but the highest around Reykjavik (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 71).

Music education is facing some serious challenges in the compulsory school system in Iceland. The main challenges include teacher shortage, inadequate working facilities, and insufficient salary. There are enough educated music educators available, but the problem is that a part of them choose never to teach or leave the profession for other jobs (Guðmundsdóttir 2008).

It is clear that many things in the music educators' work environment and conditions in compulsory schools makes their work difficult. Overlarge groups, small teaching space, lack of musical instruments and other appliances and limited teaching material are some of the key challenges (Guðmundsdóttir 2011, 39).

#### 4. Working conditions for music teaching

There are no official standards of how a music classroom should be equipped in Icelandic compulsory schools. The working facilities in the compulsory school have to fulfil the requirements of the applicable law, regulations and the national curriculum guide on a safe and healthy working environment (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið nr 657/2009). It is expected that special study subjects, such as science, textile, visual arts, home economics and music have their own specially equipped classrooms (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið nr 519/1996).

In the Curriculum guide from 1960 it is recommended that the "singing teaching room" is spacious, well ventilated and bright, equipped with ordinary school furniture, but enough floor space for moving to music and storage room for books and other equipment (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1960, 75).

In the National Curriculum guide 1976 it is recommended that the music room should be spacious, because movement, game playing, choir practice and other things that are part of music education requires quite a lot of space (Mennta og menningarráðuneytið 1976, 21). Later, regulations stipulate that the school facilities' size is based on the maximum number of students, so that working space for 22 – 28 students should be 60 square meters and reduces as the students are expected to be fewer, though never less than 16 square meters (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið nr 657/2009).

Music teaching in ordinary classrooms is not a good option as a rule, where it can be difficult to work with all the factors of the national curriculum guide without the floor space and the instruments and the soundproofing that belongs in a music classroom. It is considered ideal to teach music in a special classroom equipped with musical instruments and other essential teaching materials (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 72).

According to the music educators' experience about the requirements of music classroom, it has to be isolated from regular classrooms. Music education may require anything from a good environment to be able to make a lot of noise whenever it is convenient without disturbing anyone. A music classroom adjacent to an ordinary classroom which is not specially soundproofed, limits that freedom. But above all, the classroom has to be reserved exclusively for music teaching and the teacher must have the professional freedom to use his/her working space and the set up of all the necessary equipment as needed.

In research done in the schoolyear 2004 – 2005, 62% of the compulsory schools in Iceland had a classroom specially equipped for music teaching. Most of the small schools in the rural areas of the country did not have special classrooms for music teaching. In Reykjavik and the nearby municipality, 78% of the compulsory schools had music classrooms (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 67-68).

Principals in schools in the rural areas of Iceland have frequently named the small size of the schools as a reason for not having a specially equipped classroom for music teaching, but have instead mentioned collaboration with music schools in the nearby areas, and sometimes the compulsory music teaching takes part in the music school facilities or in the area's community centre. For this reason, it is possible that the existence of music classrooms in the compulsory

schools is a better indicator of the status of the music teaching in the schools in the area around Reykjavik than in the rural areas (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 72).

A continuing study is needed to see a more precise picture of the equipment of musical classrooms in the country and how it is used (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 72).

## 5. Discussion

The official school policy is mostly implemented in a regulated way. The school authorities, both state and municipalities appear to realize the status of the music teaching nationwide. It is clear that there are specific problems that music teaching have been facing for years and there are ideas of possible solutions. The Icelandic educational system, as a whole, is now facing some of the same challenges that music education has been facing for decades. There is a lack of teachers and people in the arts and crafts professions because the emphasis has been on academic subjects for a long time and focus has been on directing nearly everybody into higher education.

In Reykjavik educational policy to the year 2030 there is a special emphasis on creation and creative subjects. In the spring of 2019, the ministry of education and culture introduced a five-year plan that is aimed for the increase in the number of teachers by introducing paid 2<sup>nd</sup> year in M.Ed students and reduction in student loan debt for all finishing M.Ed in five years, which has already led to a dramatic increase in application to teachers education programs at Icelandic universities for the autumn of 2019. This plan was made in collaboration with municipalities, teachers, universities, parents and the Federation of Icelandic Industries. In this plan

These plans and possible solutions will hopefully be carried out and with them solving not only the challenges of music teaching but the challenges of the Icelandic educational system.

## Chapter 2: Overview of policies and challenges at the national level

In this chapter, the focus will be on the challenges that music education is facing and possible solutions. Previous research will be contemplated and what suggestions have been proposed and implemented will be looked into.

### 1. The challenges of music education in Iceland

Despite claims regarding a music educator shortage, there is no indication that there are too few teachers graduating, but the problem seems to be that the graduated teachers go to other jobs than teaching (Guðmundsdóttir 2011).

In the newest national curriculum guide, it is clearly stated that art should be taught at every level and each subject should have equal weight within the total hours, as reference timetable stipulates. Half of the electives in the lower secondary school level should be reserved for arts and crafts subjects (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013, 143). It is also important that the school's work is ambitiously organised in accordance to that (Sævarsdóttir 2018).

Many arts and crafts teachers have turned to general teaching to reduce work strain and increase wages. That has intensified the shortage and workload among music educators. The administration at national and municipal level needs to take the opportunity to look at what can be done because if they will not do anything to solve this, it is possible that in the future it will be hard to cover art teaching in the schools (Sævarsdóttir 2018).

## 2. Research on music education in Iceland

There have not been much research on the status of music as a subject in the compulsory school system but those who have been made in the past 15 years will be reviewed and analysed here.

The ministry of education, the city of Reykjavik and others have regularly conducted surveys on the status of music teaching. When the results are observed it is interesting that it does not matter if the survey was done in 2003 or 2011, the outcomes are the same. Music is taught in approximately 80% of the compulsory schools in Iceland. Shortage of qualified teachers is the most common reason for lack of compliance with music education. But a lack of specialized facilities plays a role.

The most extensive research is “*List og menningarfræðsla á Íslandi [Arts and cultural education in Iceland]*” 2008-09 which gathered comprehensive data on the extent and quality of arts and cultural education in Iceland (Bamford 2009). The report, was published in 2011, focused on these things: “What is being done in arts education and how is it being done? What is the quality of arts education in Iceland?” And “What are the possibilities and challenges currently and into the future (Bamford 2009, 8)?”

According to Bamford’s research, art education in Iceland is good on an international scale and enjoys extensive public support. The Icelandic education system develops skills and knowledge in individual art forms, especially visual arts, music, textile and design and craft, but maybe less in performing arts (drama and dance). Bamford made five suggestions for improvement; policy formulation and implementation, collaboration, access, evaluation, and teacher education (Bamford 2009, 8, 11). Shortage of music educators means that the subject is more seldom taught than other art subjects in compulsory schools. Many schools have, as a

response to this, outsourced the service from artists or teachers in music schools (Bamford 2009, 44).

Dr Helga Rut Guðmundsdóttir, Associate Professor in Music Education at School Education at the University of Iceland, has done diverse research on music education in compulsory schools (Guðmundsdóttir 2008; Guðmundsdóttir 2011). Her main results are that music is taught in over 80% of the schools that answered the research survey (74%) (Guttormsson 2008) and in most cases, the music educators are certified music educators (Guðmundsdóttir 2011). In schools where music is taught, the conditions for teaching are satisfactory. 62% of schools have a specially designed music classroom which seems to be an important factor in getting a certified music educator. Among music educators, it seems to be a core of experienced teachers who enjoy their work. The difficulties new music educators face is something to research in the future to minimize the dropout and thus prevent music educators shortage (Guðmundsdóttir 2008).

Dr Kristin Valsdóttir, Dean in the Department of Art Education at the Iceland University of the Arts, published her research (Valsdóttir 2008) in 2008. This study looked at the views of successful compulsory school music educators towards their work. It focused on evolving role identity and professional identities in relation to general education, music education, occupational well-being and other significant factors. The results have practical importance for both those who are educating prospective music educators and also for school authorities who create the working environment in which they work (Valsdóttir 2008).

In 2016 the Ministry of Education and Culture published the status of arts and crafts at the adolescent level of compulsory school. There, the ministry highlighted the importance of arts and crafts studies, that should be guaranteed to students in the adolescent level of compulsory

school. The national curriculum guide states that there should be a balance between academic study and practical learning and taking care that no deficit of practical learning when organizing schooling. In the future, the ministry aims at gathering information on study offerings in compulsory subjects like arts and crafts at the adolescent level of compulsory school to make sure those students are not deprived of such education (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2016).

Following that, the ministry of education and culture requested the National Statistical Institute of Iceland to write a report in 2017, where they processed information to check if students in the compulsory school received the arts and crafts teaching they have a right to according to minimum criteria in the national curriculum guide. The result is that 63% of the schools were under the minimum criteria. That means that the rights of students to education in arts and crafts are not sufficiently respected (Hagstofa Íslands 2017).

### 3. Discussion

The educational policy of Iceland is that education in the compulsory school system is inclusive education which means good education for everybody (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011). Every student is therefore entitled to be offered all the compulsory subjects who are specified in the applicable law and curriculum.

Analysing the research on music teaching covered in this chapter reveals that a significant part of children in Iceland do not get music teaching in the compulsory school and may never get it. On the other hand, one can interpret the results in the way that a vast majority of students do indeed get music teaching. It is abundantly clear that the same challenges have afflicted the subject of music for nearly 50 years but with the previously mentioned research and

the words of the minister of education and culture we may have a reason to hope that those challenges will be solved in the near future.

## Chapter 3: How Reykjavik and Kopavogur, the two largest municipalities in Iceland, have dealt with the challenges

In this chapter, the status of music education in the two largest municipalities will be examined. The municipal school policy will be looked at, to see what has been done to solve the challenges music education is facing.

### 1. Music teaching in Reykjavik

Reykjavik is the capital of Iceland and by far the largest municipality with a population of over 120,000. There are 36 compulsory schools run by the city and 7 private schools with about 15,000 pupils which represent about 30% of all student population in compulsory school in Iceland.

The city of Reykjavik appointed two working groups to research and make suggestions for solutions to the challenges that arts and crafts subject have been facing for a long time (Working group Reykjavík 2009). In the first group report, were suggestions for improvement, like reconsidering the working hours of music educators, reduce their workload by splitting up the classes, and increase collaboration with other music educators and planning of joint projects within the schools (Working Group Reykjavík 2003).

In the second report (Working Group Reykjavík 2009), the group's research plan was to investigate the teaching of compulsory art subjects, teacher's education and see how the art teachers endure working in the schools (Working group Reykjavík 2009). One of the working group's suggestions for improvement was to hire a cultural representative who would be the liaison between the compulsory schools, kindergartens, artists and art institutions, an art educated supervisor in all compulsory schools, to work on a positive view to art subjects in the

compulsory school system and encourage collaboration between art teachers in the compulsory schools (Working group Reykjavík 2009).

To follow up those two reports the City Council appointed another working group in 2015 to make suggestions on how to increase emphasis on arts and craft studies in Reykjavik's compulsory schools. The group conducted an extensive survey to look into how diverse the arts and crafts teaching was in Reykjavik, its facilities and the teachers and management view towards it. The study found that two out of three arts and crafts teachers think they are isolated in their work (Working group Reykjavík 2018). That is in compliance with Gudmundsdottir's results (Guðmundsdóttir 2011) and Reykjavik's working group from 2003 (Working group Reykjavík 2003). Only 20% of principals think that arts and crafts teachers are isolated in their work.

It is the teachers' view that the principals' support is considerable regarding the teachers wishes about the teaching but less relating to modifications in timetable and budget. In the principals' opinion, their support towards arts and crafts teachers are considerable and sometimes more than the teachers claim (Working group Reykjavík 2018).

The workgroup emphasizes and proposes:

- To make sure that principals have the opportunity to provide all pupils with the variety in arts and crafts subjects which is expected in the National Curriculum Guide.
- To work on the collaboration of the Department of Education and Youth to artists, museums and cultural institutions guided by the pupil's participation in the cultural life.

- Research if it is possible to offer the schools assistance in arranging participation of cultural events, innovative projects and other projects which stimulate children's creativity.
- The Department of Education and Youth supports diverse art and craft workshops available to all compulsory school pupils (Working group Reykjavík 2018).

## 1.2 Discussion

In the 2009 report (Working group Reykjavík 2009) were suggestions for improvement of art education. There are clear signs that some of them have been implemented in some way. There is a cultural representative working for the Department of Culture and Tourism and the Department of Education and Youth who is an active contact between workplaces and institutions in the field of art. Cultural liaison founded by the art team of the Department of Education and Youth is an attempt to solve the teacher's isolation problem. In collaboration with the cultural liaisons, more student groups have made visits to cultural institutions and more artists visit the schools.

Arts are usually taught by specially trained and educated teachers (Bamford 2009). The principals, the parents and society support art teaching as a part of compulsory education. The arts are a fundamental part of the Icelandic society and are believed to have a personal, social and artistic value. In spite of talks about the diminished quality of art education in Iceland the finding of the working group reveals positive development in art education both in the schools and the Icelandic community (Working group Reykjavík 2018).

In November 2018 the city of Reykjavik published an ambitious education policy to the year 2030 (Reykjavík 2018) and thus systematically seized the leading role in the implementation of art education (Sævarsdóttir 2016, 48). The new educational policy builds on

the core values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and revolves around the children, their educational needs and welfare. The educational policy is built on five fundamental aspects: social competencies, self-empowerment, literacy, creation and health. In dynamic school activities, the children get an education and experience to make their dreams come true and have a positive impact on their environment and society (Reykjavík 2018).

This is an ambitious plan of action. It is likely that the results will give evidence to that in the years to come, although there are still opportunities in more places like a systematic collaboration with the general staff in the compulsory schools, the art teachers and the school administrators (Sævarsdóttir 2016, 88-89).

## 2. Kopavogur municipality school policy

Kopavogur is the second-largest municipality in Iceland with over 36.000 residents and nine compulsory schools. Kopavogur school policy has been under revision within the town administration because the current school policy expired in 2017.

The main emphasis is on self-generated school policy and there are examples that the reinforcement of music teaching in Kopavogur compulsory schools depends on the principals and the music educators instead of official school policy (Sævarsdóttir 2016, 97).

In 2015 Kopavogur launched the Computer-Tablet project. It is by far the biggest school project Kopavogur has undertaken in recent years. This was the first Tablet project of that magnitude in Iceland. In the autumn of 2016, every student from 5<sup>th</sup> – 10 class got their own tablet. This project has been welcomed by teachers and students as a way to show innovation in schooling. From the music educator's point of view, this is a big addition and provides many

opportunities to expand the horizon in the music teaching because suddenly every pupil has their own computer at their disposal and can use various apps to study and create music. It also changes music educators' working environment a bit because the students can perform things with their tablets, which were not possible before, like finding information, recording sounds, playing virtual instruments and really endless other things. As creativity is one of the fundamental pillars of the National Curriculum guide, the tablet project gives more possibilities to creative work in music teaching (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011).

## 2.1 Survey

This survey was introduced in the Introduction. Its purpose was to study the status of music education in the Kopavogur compulsory school because no information can be found that such a survey has been done in Kopavogur before.

Questionnaires were sent by e-mail to the principals and music educators of Kopavogur's nine compulsory schools. Three principals (pr1 – pr 3) answered the questionnaire. A fourth principal answered the email and explained that he/she was not able to answer the questionnaire because the music educator had been on sick leave the whole school year and the school had to solve the teachers' absence from month to month.

Four music educators from three schools sent their answers. For the reasons of low responses, the author was motivated to research the school's curriculum and work plan on their websites and was able to get the additional information needed.

Music was taught in seven out of nine of Kopavogur's compulsory schools in the school year 2018 - 2019. Pr 3 said that music had always been taught at his school but not last winter, but added that the school had obtained a music educator for the next winter.

According to the answers and the information from the school curriculum and work plans, most of the schools offer music teaching for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade and a few up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Interestingly, only one of the schools offered music teaching for all grades (Álfhólsskóli) and one other school offered Electric music as an elective for 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade (Snælandsskóli).

One music lesson per week was the most common arrangement but it varied if the lessons were 40 or 60 minutes. One school had a special choir lesson each week for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and one school offered two lessons per week for 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade (T 4).

The principals agreed on the importance of arts and crafts subjects and their view of the subjects was quite positive. Principal 1 said that arts and crafts are important subjects and encourage variety and provide options on different training than the academic subjects. He also said that they increased diversity in the school because arts and crafts projects are more visible than in other subjects and train other aspects than academic subjects. Finally, he said that foreign visitors who have visited the school are always very enthusiastic about the arts and crafts teaching and are significantly impressed by what they see and experience in classes.

Asked about the importance of music teaching the principals thought it was a very important factor in the school and described how the pupils are participants in music classes, singing and performing with others which have a very positive effect on the school spirit.”

The principals contemplated that music would progress, both as a subject which connects to other subjects because with increased access to technology like computer tablets more options of cooperations between subjects open up and there are the opportunities. Pr 3 also mentioned that more elective options in the subject of music would increase the possibilities of those who are interested in music and want to study it when they get older

The four music educators had vastly different job experience ranging between 1 to 30 years. They all intended to continue teaching. They agreed that the best thing about teaching music was to see the interest awaken in the students and see them grow in creation and

expression. On the other hand, the most difficult thing about teaching music was all the time used for disciplinary control and to have students who deliberately interrupt the classroom. The constant group exchange and lack of teaching material were also mentioned.

When the teachers were asked about what could improve music teaching the answers distinguished in various directions. One mentioned that new teaching material was sorely needed, better-educated teachers and principals who understood the importance of music teaching while others talked about the importance of the music educators themselves taking time to reinforce communication and unity and reinforce respect for music teaching. Following that the necessity of increased cooperation between music educators and other arts and crafts teachers and more special offers for music educators in continuous education was deemed important. Eventually the necessity of more funding for the purchase of equipment, like school instruments and that the younger children would be given more chance to have tablets in music classes was noted. (In Kopavogur children from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade have their own tablets but the younger can get special tablets which teachers have to reserve).

The teachers agreed on the importance of the principal's view towards arts and crafts subjects regarding the status of the subjects within each school. The principals agreed on their influence on what is taught and what is not. They are bound by the compulsory school act and the reference timetable. The importance of having a music educator in the schools was considered to be a key factor. Principal 1 said that the schools that are so lucky to have a music educator have the advantage to other schools while principal 3 said that availability of educated teachers is a great factor in this because he had previously worked in a school that couldn't get a music educator despite the administrator's will to provide music teaching.

They agreed that the principals' attitude is very important and he/she has a great impact on the school culture and principals should have the sense to use the music educator's expertise for the school's progress.

Previous research results imply that though parents view towards music teaching is quite positive the music educators do not seem to get the message (Guðmundsdóttir 2008, 65). The teachers in this survey did not have much contact with the parents but when they did they said that the communication showed a very positive view by the parents towards music teaching.

The music educators were quite positive about the working facility and the planning of music teaching in their school.

Teachers and principals agree on the importance of music teaching and are hopeful for the future for the most part. The teachers are determined in their opinion on the importance of the principal's view on arts and crafts subjects but the principals, on the other hand, mention the importance of schools having a music educator.

## 2.2 Discussion

Kopavogur has not yet composed a new school policy, but many things like the Computer-Tablet project are happening in Kopavogur's school system that shows the authorities' ambitions for the future of schooling.

Though Kopavogur's attitude towards education could be interpreted as somehow careless, the main emphasis on self-generated school policy seems to be working. For many years there have been music educators in all nine compulsory schools in Kopavogur, thus last school year, no music teaching in two schools seems to be the exception. On the other hand, one could interpret this quite differently because a self-generated school policy depends on a successful music educator working closely together with a creative principal. While we have

that, the status of the music teaching is in balance but if a teacher or a principal decides to make a change in their work, like moving to another school, it could have a great impact of the status of music teaching.

In 2017 Kopavogur's education committee appointed the department of education to look into how the layout of arts and crafts subject teaching is arranged in the Kopavogur's compulsory schools. No results have been published yet and despite repeated efforts to gain information the Kopavogur's department of education did not reply to inquiries.

### 3. Comparison of Reykjavik and Kopavogur

The city of Reykjavik has since 2003 sought solutions on the challenges arts and crafts subject have been facing for a long time. There have been three working groups, where the first two did extensive research and made several suggestions for solutions. The third working group had an agenda to see if the former workgroups suggestions had been put into motion and if they had worked. The city of Reykjavik has therefore shown great initiative in seeking solutions to sustained problems music teaching has been facing for 50 years. With all this research, suggestions for improvement and this new policy maybe the future can be viewed optimistically.

Kopavogur school policy is self-generated which means that ambitious music education is reliant upon ambitious music educators working closely with art motivated principals. Kopavogur's most ambitious and biggest school project in recent years is the Computer-Tablet project. The project's goal pivot on the teaching capacity and implementation, the pupil's, teachers and parents' sentiment to the schooling, and the pupil's performance. The Kopavogur department of education is looking into the layout of arts and crafts teaching in the municipality according to Kopavogur's education committee instructions. It will be exciting to see and study the result when they are published.

## Chapter 4: The future of music education

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 clearly states on each person's right to participate in cultural and artistic life and to develop their versatile talents (The United Nations 1989; Sævarsdóttir 2016, 62). Music educators have criticised that there is insufficient supervision to check if the provisions of the compulsory school act and the National Curriculum guide are implemented. In March 2018 the Icelandic Teacher's union and arts and crafts teachers held a joint conference to discuss challenges and problems common to all art and craft subject. On that occasion the Minister of Education and Culture said in her speech:

In the historical light, we Icelanders have prioritised for the benefit of education. It is important that we keep doing that and arts and crafts subjects are very important in this context. We need students with creative thinking, cooperation skills and initiative. It is my belief that the reinforcement of arts and craft education will deliver us more results and a better society (Stjórnarráð Íslands 2018).

If that is true then we are looking at a better future regarding the arts and crafts subjects and what some believe, a better future for the education as a whole in Iceland.

Music educators believe that the most important thing is to work with a principal who respects the subject and provides encouragement and support. It is also important how the principal sets up the framework of the inner organization. The principals state that they look at the music educators as professionals in their subject and trust them to know what is needed for music teaching. The principals also believe that the professional skills and quality of the teaching is very important in addition to the music educators being creative supervisors in their work (Sævarsdóttir 2016, 80).

To summarise the results of all the research provided: about 80% of compulsory schools in Iceland have music educators and therefore some music education. It is unlikely that all of

those schools have enough music teaching that because in 2017, 63% of schools were under the minimum criteria of the reference timetable (Hagstofa Íslands 2017) which is the measurement we have to see if the music teaching is according to laws, regulations and the national curriculum guide. In spite of that, there is a reason to be optimistic because according to Guðmundsdóttir's research from 2008 and 2011 and Valsdóttir's research from 2009, there is a core group of experienced music educators who are happy in their work and want to continue to teach (Guðmundsdóttir 2011; Guðmundsdóttir 2008; Valsdóttir 2008). Today, there is a general shortage of teachers and as a result, current teachers are needed in the profession with a steady stream of newcomers. In her report, Dr Anne Bamford made five suggestions for improvement; policy formulation and implementation, collaboration, access, evaluation, and teachers education (Bamford 2009).

Generally, performing arts, visual arts and music should be taught at every age level according to the national curriculum guide (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013, 146). If we look to Reykjavík, the working group that wrote the report published in 2009 (Working group Reykjavík 2009) made suggestions for improvement of art education:

- To make it possible for principals to offer all students with the mandatory arts and craft study.
- To work on the collaboration of school administration and cultural institutions to make it possible to increase the student's participation in cultural life.
- To offer the school assistance in arranging participation of cultural events, innovative projects and other projects which stimulate children's creativity.

The authorities support diverse art and craft workshops available to all compulsory school pupils (Working group Reykjavík 2018).

There are signs that some of these suggestions have been implemented. There is a cultural representative working for the Department of Culture and Tourism and the Department of Education and Youth who is an active contact between workplaces and institutions in the field of art. Cultural liaison founded by the art team of the Department of Education and Youth is an attempt to solve the teacher's isolation problem. Researchers and working groups have submitted many suggestions on how to strengthen music education in Iceland. The implementation is now in the hands of policymakers at national and local levels.

## Conclusions

According to decades of research, the main challenges of music education in compulsory schools are teacher shortage, lack of specialised working facilities and the teacher's salary. It can then be inferred that we have not found a solution to these challenges because they have been there for 50 years. Possible solutions have been published (Bamford 2009; Working group Reykjavík 2003; Working group Reykjavík 2009; Working group Reykjavík 2018) but have not been implemented except to a small extent in Reykjavik.

Though research shows that about 20% of schools in Iceland have no music educators and therefore probably no music education and there is a serious music educator shortage in the compulsory school system, we should maybe look at the positive side. There are some music educators who have worked for a long time and like their job and we have all this research on the subject and the suggestions for solutions from those research (Guðmundsdóttir 2008; Valsdóttir 2008).

Maybe there are signs of transitions to the better. A great advance for educational issues is announced in the policy statement of the current government of Iceland. The importance of promoting the acknowledgement of the teacher's profession and to react to the teacher's shortage in cooperation of the state, municipalities and trade unions (Stjórnarráð Íslands 2019).

In Iceland, the vision for the future is to give students the opportunity to get an education in a system which you can compare to the best in other countries. The primary strength of the Icelandic educational system is that academic performance is rather equal between schools, students generally feel good and the system is flexible and free of major centralization.

Few but ambitious goals with broad consensus seems to be the most successful for the long term. Concurrently it is important to encourage schools to change, promote teachers' professional awareness, increasing the collection and dissemination of information and analyze,

evaluate and draw conclusions from the results. Solid education facilitates young people to get a foothold in a complex and variable world.

In the compulsory school system, the focus is on comprehensive student development, ability to communicate and collaborate, initiative, independent thinking and the activation of creativity in constant efforts to education and development. Improvement in the educational system can only be established with good teachers and their support is of great value. It is important that good teachers are offered good wages and acceptable working conditions but at the same time, the teachers themselves must be strong in their profession and have trust from the community (Mennta og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2016).

The music teaching reinforcement can be obtained by the increased quality of music education, learning through music by interdisciplinary methods, more collaboration with music schools, art foundations and artists.

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## Appendices

### Questionnaire for music educators

In what classes is music taught in your school?

How many lessons of music does each class get per week?

How long have you taught music in compulsory school?

Are you going to continue teaching music in compulsory school?

What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching music?

What is the most difficult thing about music teaching?

What aspects could be rectified to improve music teaching?

The working strain of being a music educator has often been mentioned. Can you explain your opinion of a music educator work strain?

How do you see music teaching in the future?

According to some research and a conference about art and craft teaching, the status of art and craft teaching depends on the view of the principle of those subjects. The principal has an impact on how much emphasis is on those subjects in the schools. What is your opinion on this?

According to research the view to music teaching among parents is quite positive but music educators don't seem to get that message. What is your view of this?

What rating, on the scale 1 – 10, do you give the facility to music teaching in your school?

What rating, on the scale 1 – 10, do you give the layout of music teaching in your school?

## Music educators answers

The teachers are colour-coded: T-1 -T-2 - T-3 - T-4

### In what classes is music taught in your school?

1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> class

1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> class

1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> class

1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> class but for 8<sup>th</sup> to 10 it can be an elective subject

### How many lessons of music does each class get per week?

Once a week in 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> class. Choir once a week in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> class. Choir is a selective in 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> class

1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> get 40 min per week, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> get 60 min per week.

Once a week 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> class

1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> class 2 hours per week, once per week or less for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> class

### How long have you taught music in compulsory school?

12 years

1 year

30 years

20 years

**Are you going to continue teaching music in compulsory school?**

Yes

Yes – part-time

Yes

Yes

**What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching music?**

To teach the most remarkable subject to motivated students.

To express the creation, experiment and refine my teaching. I especially like to see the students succeed and that they get to express their creativity. It is wonderful to hear some students hum a tune that you have taught them in the school grounds or in the corridor or see them continue a music project/ write songs after they have finished your class. Then you feel that you have encouraged their creativity and enthusiasm to work with music. In my opinion, there is no better feeling.

To open the student's minds to the world of music

I find it most enjoyable to see the pupils grow and develop through expression and creation.

**What is the most difficult thing about music teaching?**

To teach students who deliberately interrupt the classroom

How disciplinary control takes much time. It can be challenging to start to teach classes where students that have a different background in music. Also the great shortage of teaching materials. The Directory of Education stopped printing books who proved successful for

decades. In my opinion, it would have been better to add more material to the already published. That means that much time is spent in the collection of material, adapt and change it so you can use it.

The constant group exchange and some students who deliberately try to interrupt one another.

Bad morale in some working places and bullying and irritation from jealous or aggressive colleges. After those difficult school administrators and/or parents.

### **What aspects could be rectified to improve music teaching?**

Better teaching material and better-educated teachers. And more principals who understand the importance of music teaching.

It would be wonderful if the youngest children could bring tablets more often to music classes to try out simple music apps. Also, it would be great if the school got more funding so it would be possible to buy more musical instruments, we could use more xylophones and glockenspiels.

Smaller students groups, more integration between other art and craft subjects and more collaboration between music educators in other schools. It is my opinion that music educators should be able to meet (on paid meetings) four times over the winter. More special offers in for music educators in continuous education.

The music educators could take time to reinforce communication and unity and encourage each other and show solidarity and fairness. The respect for music teaching could be reinforced, though I think that respect for it has been increased.

Equipment for music teaching could be improved and reinforce choral work in some workplaces in some schools.

**The working strain of being a music educator has often been mentioned. Can you explain your opinion of a music educator work strain?**

Continuous group exchange, a lot of noise, you are always teaching, the students never do some quiet projects. Never a dull moment.

It's a lot of strain teaching music to big groups. A lot of time goes to disciplinary control and not enough time for the music teaching itself. There is also a lot of strain to assess 15 classes (students groups) over the year, especially because I had to write reviews for 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> class. Gave numbers for 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> class and A-D's for 8<sup>th</sup> class. You have to be ready to jump into projects with short notice, assist with technical installations and be an artist manager in all school entertainment events. The music educator has to, with other teachers, be ready to jump into substitute teaching when needed amongst other things.

You teach 80% of your school student population each week. You have to switch between program 2 – 6 times per day, sometimes without a break (depends on your timetable). You spend the majority of each lesson in noise pollution which is probably on the unhealthy side of the decibel meter scale.

The strain is composed of too much noise and the fact that the subject itself deals with emotion competence and I see music as the language of emotions. Individual pupils are unbalanced to the emotional wellbeing that they either show hyperactivity, dysfunction or can break down or be overcome in some way when they start to dive into the expression or interpretation of music. The music educators often teach large groups of students and are

sometimes not able to tend to individual tasks because of the diverse capability and needs of individuals in the group, so it is vital to give support into such large groups or to vary the group size depending on the choice of projects, but in singing or choral work, it can be good to have big strong groups.

Sometimes it can be difficult to maintain classroom discipline because of all the things mentioned above but then it is essential that music educators can handle classroom discipline well.

Communication with many different groups, different teachers and parent groups can also involve a lot of strain so that the music educators has to be diplomatic sometimes. The music educator is also some kind of an event manager in his/her school and should get bonus payments after big events.

### **How do you see music teaching in the future?**

The positive answer: Music gets increased weight in compulsory schools because art and crafts are very important in the schools of the future. Each student gets to learn some musical instrument, increased weight on composing.

The negative answer: It becomes extinct as a subject.

Firstly, I'm worried about how few apply for Music educator study in the University of Iceland and it is my opinion that prolonging the study to five years without salary increase have a great impact of the attendance. It is my hope that more will apply and that schools will offer full positions in music teaching.

If music is to continue as a subject in the compulsory school system the authorities have to understand that all the problems that music teaching was facing 50 years ago are still there. There are three things that have to change if we want to make the best of this.

Acknowledge what all research has been showing for 30 years. Music educators are under inhumane strain in the classroom and therefore many of them don't endure in their work.

It is clear that the majority of compulsory schools in Iceland don't have specially designed teaching area for art and craft. The state and the municipalities have to make policy together and provide enough capital to design and build.

Art and craft teachers have been saying for years that the salary collective agreements discriminate teachers. It is a fact that supervising teachers get higher salary than those who are not supervising, regardless of work strain, education and seniority.

I think that in the future, along with traditional implements of older projects, a great emphasis will be on creation and even in projects that demand integration of various subjects. An example of such project: The pupil is supposed to create a composition about the sun, its make, shape and effect. The pupil talks to the natural science teacher about what information should be in the song and then he/she gets assistance from the Icelandic language teacher or the English teacher to get the lyrics in a good format, the music educator helps the pupil to compose a song and arrange it to a playable or performable format or work on the son with a group of pupils.

I think that in the future there will be great emphasis on a regular and organized singing because it is my opinion that a more connection between singing and language awareness and language development will be revealed in the future. I also believe that there will be more emphasis on concerts and bigger events, like musicals, which are very self-empowering projects.

**According to some research and a conference about art and craft teaching, the status of art and craft teaching depends on the view of the principle of those subjects. The principal has an impact on how much emphasis is on those subjects in the schools. What is your opinion on this?**

**Principals control it all.**

Yes. In my opinion principals and school authorities control the arrangement of teaching hours for each subject. It is important that the principal is positive and supports art and craft subjects so they can flourish. I'm very pleased with the support of my principal but often I've seen a little emphasis on dramatic art and dance which should be taught equally to the other subjects. Dramatic art should be more integrated into the schoolwork. Dance culture is absent in many schools. Art and craft don't get the time criteria set down in the reference timetable and there is no clarification on how to divide the time given for art and craft.

I agree. The principals view matters. If the principal isn't interested in music he/she can reduce the teaching hours spent on music up to a certain level. I'm lucky that my principal is very positive towards music and even sometimes lets me spend some money 😊

Because of the nature of the projects the music educator works on and directs, it is very important that he/she works with an administrator who fosters and raises those projects because their veins run through all the school activities. If the administrator restricts or blocks the projects or the teacher's expression on the teaching it can have a depressing effect, not only to the music educator but to all school activity and the pupil's wellbeing. Certainly, it is important that the collaboration between the music educator and the principal is good but the school culture is

also important and sometimes the past shapes the teaching development in some way. I have resigned from teaching because of a negative principal.

**According to research the view to music teaching among parents is quite positive but music educators don't seem to get that message. What is your view of this?**

**I hear very little from parents but what I hear is very positive.**

I've just heard from a few parents but they are happy with the music teaching, especially those who I see in connections with school entertainment events but usually, I don't hear from parents unless they are checking on their children attendance.

**I've only heard positive things.**

My collaboration with parents have been very good and I have mostly gotten a message of gratitude, interest and support. I think it is very important that collaboration with parents is good in a big project and my experience of that is mostly good. On the other hand, there are individual cases where I have had communication with parents who are not in a good place with their life and throw their anger and irritation towards the teacher, me myself and others. It is a concern how parents want to be in control in the school and often think that their academic prerequisite is better than of the teachers and school personnel and I know this is being debated in the teachers and administrators groups. Among Icelandic parents there are people, who do not respect the work done in the schools, both in music and another subject, transmits negativity and arrogance to their children who will then become negative in all collaboration. I lived in Germany for a while. There the teachers were respected more.

**What rating, on the scale 1 – 10, do you give the facility to music teaching in your school?**

7

8

7

9

**What rating, on the scale 1 – 10, do you give the layout of music teaching in your school?**

9

7,5

8

8,5

### **Questionnaire for principals**

Is music taught in your school?

What classes get music teaching in your school and how many lessons do they get compared to other arts and crafts subjects?

What is your view on the importance of the subjects of arts and crafts within the compulsory school?

What is your view of the importance of the subject of music within the compulsory school?

How do you see the future of music teaching?

According to some research and a conference about art and craft teaching, the status of art and craft teaching depends on the view of the principle of those subjects. The principal has an impact on how much emphasis is on those subjects in the schools. What is your opinion on this?

## Principals answers

The teachers are colour-coded: Pr -1 – Pr - 2 Pr - 3

**Is music taught in your school?**

Yes

Yes

Music has always been a school subject but not last winter. Music teaching has been ensured for next winter.

**What classes get music teaching in your school and how many lessons do they get compared to other arts and crafts subjects?**

1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade

1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade

1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade

**What is your view on the importance of the subjects of arts and crafts within the compulsory school?**

Arts and crafts are important subjects. They encourage variety and provide options on different training than the academic subjects. They increase diversity because arts and crafts project are more visible than in other subjects.

Yes. Important subjects

Very positive

**What is your view of the importance of the subject of music within the compulsory school?**

Music is a very important factor in the school. Music is a great factor in the children's modern environment but few of them participate in it. In the music teaching they are participant, get to sing and perform with others which has a very positive effect on the school spirit.

It's important that students get music teaching.

Very positive

**How do you see the future of music teaching?**

I want to see it evolve to connect with other subjects more effectively. All kinds of collaboration are easier with new technology and access to tablets. There are lots of opportunities in subjects integration.

I see it as a growing subject. Augmented elective and make it possible for those who are interested in music to study it when they get older in the school

**According to some research and a conference about art and craft teaching, the status of art and craft teaching depends on the view of the principle of those subjects. The principal has an impact on how much emphasis is on those subjects in the schools. What is your opinion on this?**

I think that whether there is an educated music educator or not has more effect on that. The schools that are so lucky to have a music educator have an advantage to other schools. Principals should have the sense to use the music educator's expertise for the school's progress.

Principals organize according to the reference timetable. I agree that school administrators can influence what is taught and what isn't. However, the availability of educated teachers is a great factor in this. I previously worked in a school that couldn't get a music educator despite the administrator's will to provide music teaching.

I think that the principals' attitude is very important. The principal has a great impact on the school culture.