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The Rock Band Context as Discursive Governance in Music Education in Swedish Schools



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The importance of context in musical learning has been the topic of considerable discussion in recent decades in the international music education arena. It is now unquestioned that various learning contexts shape linguistic and bodily communications, which inherently implies that learning processes differ from one another and take divergent paths (Gullberg 1999; Rostwall and Selander 2008). This has become particularly apparent and topical with respect to musical learning, notably in connection with expanded opportunities for children and adolescents to access and learn music via contexts other than those offered by the schools (Axelsen 1997; Feichas 2010; Folkestad 2005; O’Flynn 2006). A number of authors have compared informal learning processes, especially in rock and pop music contexts such as “garage rock bands,” to the more formal, controlled music education in the schools (Byrne and Sheridan 2000; Fornäs, Lindberg, and Sernhede 1988; Fornäs 1996; Gullberg 1999; Green 2002). Research has found that the schools would benefit from the influence of the more authentic learning that occurs in everyday musical contexts. In this regard, rock band musicianship has gained special status as a model (Stålhammar 1995 and 2004; Campbell 1998; Gullberg 1999; Westerlund 2006; Green 2006).

The learning processes of garage rock bands have been studied and characterized as more collective, creative, spontaneous, informal, and open than the more teacher-governed, rule-controlled, disciplined, formal, and closed processes in the schools (Green 2002). In one influential study (Green 2008) attempts were made to implement the informal learning processes of rock/pop bands in music education in the schools. It became apparent that the pupils’ levels of musical knowledge rose when they were given the opportunity to work informally. According to Green, an important issue is thus “the extent to which pupils can

and should, or cannot and should not, be given more autonomy to decide on curriculum content and to direct their own learning strategies” (Green 2008, 185).

This contrast between formal and informal learning is generally less relevant in Sweden, however, because the boundaries between the two have been blurred in most contexts where musical learning occurs. A number of Swedish studies have shown that it is now entirely possible to incorporate informal learning practices within the confines of public education, and similarly to incorporate formal learning within the framework of various kinds of recreational musical practices. In fact, the two forms are usually mixed (Folkestad 2005, 2006, and 2008; Söderman and Folkestad 2004; Bergman 2009). For several decades, the form and content of music teaching in Swedish compulsory schools, especially in the higher grades (upper primary/middle school) has been based on a type of rock band context. The use of autonomous group work is frequently part of this context, and music education is often dominated by the pop and rock genres. Past discussions of the schools’ closer alignment with young people’s popular music experiences and preferences died away some decades ago, and it is now considered self-evident that music education in the schools should build on young people’s everyday musical experiences.

These changes, which took place over the past 40 years, have been described as a transition from “School Music” to “Music in School” (Stålhammar 1995). Music as a school subject has been transformed into an instructional approach built on the students’ preferences and experiences outside school. Thus, Swedish music education is dominated today by singing and playing in pop and rock bands, while Western classical music, jazz, folk music, and music from other cultures are only marginally represented in the music classroom (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010). It is doubtful, however, that current practice is truly representative of pupils’ everyday culture. It might more accurately be characterized as teachers’ everyday culture since more “classical” rock and pop music predominates (Sandberg, Heiling and Modin 2005; Ericsson and Lindgren 2010).

We believe that there is reason to critically examine the outcomes of this development. The school is an institution in which dominance and control serve an important function, since one of the mandates of public education is to foster the growth and development of pupils into well-adjusted citizens. With respect to music education, questions of democracy and epistemology become central in this context. How is the “fostering” mandate incorporated into current popular music oriented music education? What knowledge

formation is being promoted in the popular music context? And how are pupils' individual skills and preferences being taken into account?

In this article, based on the results of a larger research project funded by the Swedish Research Council (Ericsson and Lindgren 2010), we will discuss and problematize the rock band context in music education in Swedish compulsory schools in relation to governance and knowledge formation. The empirical material on which the study is based consists of video documentation of 9th grade music education at eight schools for one semester. Our intention was to make our sample as strategically representative as possible. We covered an area of about 400 km in the western part of Sweden. We also tried to choose schools in settings with different social and cultural structures, and schools situated in both urban and rural areas. Although we cannot claim that the results of our study are generally applicable to all music teaching in Sweden, it was possible to distinguish patterns and trends common among all the schools in our study. Because we assume that similar patterns might well be found in other schools as well, we highlight them in order to initiate discussion and reflection on these issues.¹ The theoretical framework of the study will be presented, followed by a brief overview of the results, which will then be discussed in relation to questions of power and governance and the consequences for pupils' opportunities for musical learning in contemporary Swedish schools.

Theoretical framework and background: Discursive practices and governance

The basis of our argument is that teaching in the public schools, as in other educational settings, may be regarded as a discursive practice. As defined by Foucault (1971/1993), this refers to a practice in which a particular pattern of action arises in accordance with the rules prescribed by the discourse. From a poststructuralist approach, discourse is understood as a social practice in which object and subject have historically been shaped and reshaped in interaction and action by means of specific power strategies. One of the tasks of discourse analysis thus becomes to investigate the historical and political constructions and functions of the discourse in order to provoke deeper discussions of social development. The importance of discourse to social change is emphasized by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) through their focus on the constant negotiation of concepts, norms, organizations, and routines. Some negotiations have long since been settled, while others are ongoing. Antagonistic discourses struggle against one another to establish hegemony. For Laclau and Mouffe, discourse thus

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entails the actual fixation of unambiguous meanings. They also posit that discourses cannot be uniformly identified and described: they are in a state of flux and competition with other discourses to become the dominant meaning.

The relationship between discourse and practice needs to be clarified. On an overarching structural level, the educational, political, and scientific discourses of music education and music teaching ought to shape educational practices in music. Other factors also play a central part in building up a specific practice, for example the identity of the actors in the classroom, the competence of the teacher, the teacher's relationship to the students, and the social situation and cultural background of the students. However, there is also another important factor, which is the physical context. The physical context—a music classroom, for instance—can be regarded as discursively constituted (Krüger 1998) to the extent it is expected to be furnished and equipped with musical instruments. If a classroom lacks musical instruments and the space is instead filled with desks, the setting suggests a practice where activities such as playing music and dancing are rare. In this case, meaning is mediated by the type and positioning of the artifacts in the room. To the extent the practice is governed via the message the artifacts mediate, it can be considered a discursive practice.

In the same way, the other discursive factors mentioned above shape the practices of music education. Every educational context may be unique in some ways, but there are also common features that stem from the overarching educational discourses. A specific discursive practice consists of and is shaped by a complex net of micro and macro discourses. The micro discourses, sometimes called interpretative repertoires in order to distinguish them from larger discourses in Foucault's sense, are shaped by the participants in a given practice: by their attitudes, their language use and jargon, the ways they build upon, interpret, or transform larger societal discourses, and so on (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992; Potter 1996). Participants' interactions create specific institutional practices. However there are also broader societal, educational, and institutional discourses at work, which impregnate and influence all music teaching in one way or another. These broader discourses relate more directly to Foucault's concept of discourse.

In addition to the above considerations, we consider discourse to be multimodal (Kress 2005) and mediated (Scollon 2001; Norris and Jones 2005). Thus, discourse is not manifested solely through the written or spoken word: it also has visual and auditory dimensions. In this study, discourse was assumed to be expressed through the various actors'

behaviors and actions in the classroom, in their verbal and nonverbal interactions, and in their performance of music. As indicated above, practices are also discursively mediated through artifacts and spatial conditions in the classroom. Thus, discourse from our perspective can be understood as a body of signs that carry meaning. This meaning influences and shapes different practices—in this case, the institutional practices of music teaching.

The relationship between discourse/discursive practices and ideology is somewhat blurred. Foucault avoided the concept of ideology, even though it has potentially strong connections to the concept of discourse. One reason for having sought to avoid it may be that, on Marxist views at least, the notion of ideology presupposes the possibility of emancipation— of a true epistemological stance once ideological falsehoods are unmasked. Foucault considered this impossible, maintaining that power relations are embedded in all human activities. Thus, the elimination of an ideological stance would only result in new power formations and forms of coercion. Using the concept of ideology makes possible an emancipatory, utopian view. Using “discourse” instead of “ideology,” on the other hand, is a way to avoid the implication that “truth” somehow exists beyond ideology.

One common way to handle the problems associated with the definitions of these two concepts is to use the term “ideologically functioning discourse” (Thompson 1984, 1990, and 1995), which makes explicit the presence of both power and dominance in discourses. Since our standpoint is that power and dominance are features of all discourse, though, we see little point in the designation “ideological functioning.” The structuralistic concept of ideology (Althusser 1976; Ericsson 2006) is also positioned close to the concept of discourse in its rejection of Marx’s assumption of emancipation beyond ideology. This definition of ideology is in line with Foucault’s definition of discourse (which is unsurprising, since Foucault was one of Althusser’s students).

When Foucault’s work is described it is usually divided into the archeological and the genealogical phases, which can be understood as two different methods with different scope. The archeological method is represented in his earlier work, and as the name points out, its aim is to uncover discourses, and to describe their characteristics and specificities. The genealogical method appeared later in Foucault’s career and focuses more extensively upon the origins of discourses: Which conditions were prevailing when a specific discourse was established? Is there a possibility that other discourses became silenced under the circumstances? Genealogy also affords opportunities to discuss power formations more

clearly than can be done following the archeological method. This study was inspired by both Foucault's methods. We seek to uncover and describe institutional discourses connected to music teaching, but we also want to discuss the conditions for establishment of particular discourses, in this case the discourse of creating music in school.

Schools and music education are and always have been subject to governance, but governance can be understood in various ways. Governance in public education is usually associated with political governance of the schools as institutions, where government is seen as the principal agent of governance. However, we believe that it is problematic to reduce governance to this understanding, and that there is also a need to analyze school governance from a Foucauldian perspective. Foucault (1976/2002) considered self-governance to be significant for modernity, describing it as a technique that is particularly effective because it does not require resources for surveillance. It penetrates all aspects of private life, and is impossible to escape from. Understood this way, governance involves, for example, reflections about oneself or other people that have the effect of shaping, guiding, directing, or administering actions—whether one's own or those of others. Such effects are evident in the ways various techniques of reflection become established as practices (Rose 1990 and 1999). In today's schools, we can, for example, interpret techniques of thought such as portfolio methodology and individual development plans as such practices. This view of control involves a particular view of the individual and of identity: people's identities and social lives are here seen as constituted by discursive practices, subjects are shaped in and by discourses, and various subject positions are thus the products of discursive practices.

The discourse around individual responsibility is another feature of self-governance which, at least in Sweden, has been subject to change both in society and in the educational system over the last three decades, with the focus moving further towards the student's individual responsibility (Ericsson and Lindgren 2010). The new liberal values that entered the society in the 1980s can be said to have fueled a discursive turn, rooted in beliefs that society's responsibility for the individual had gone too far: as a result, people had become excessively passive, taking social supports for granted. An attendant educational conviction is that little learning occurs without the ambition to learn, a view that often further implicates further convictions that self-governance is crucial in helping individuals face the consequences of their actions. Self-governance is thus a subtle or mild form of governance,

where the power and dominance are more implicit compared to more authoritarian techniques of governance. Self-governance is still governance, however.

The concept of self-governance has a lot in common with the concept of self-technologies, also discussed by Foucault. Self-technologies can be seen in many of the techniques for disciplining the body that are apparent in modern Western societies. Eating disorders, extreme exercise, and work addiction are good examples of self-technologies and the strong control they exert over actions and identity. They can thus be seen as forms of governance. We have chosen the concept of self-governance for this article because we believe it makes more explicit issues of discipline and self-control in the contexts that concern us here, and because its similarities to institutionalized governance are useful.

In short and in summary, looking at music education as a discursive practice involves studying practices through which ideologically functioning discourses are expressed. We believe this provides scope for a critical approach and is well suited for studying the kind of knowledge formation that materializes in educational practices.

Collective music creation as governance strategy

The learning contexts that occur in music education in Swedish public schools may, at least on the surface, be classified as informal in approach. The most frequently occurring instructional arrangement is the group work. In virtually all classrooms videotaped during the course of our study (Ericsson & Lindgren 2010), pupils worked in small groups for most of the semester. Group projects were devoted primarily to the creation of music and/or lyrics, and as in informal learning processes, the pupils were free within the confines of peer interaction to independently pursue their own learning and to choose the music they wished to produce. Conventional notions about rock band musicianship appeared to be the norm. The musical instruments pupils were expected to use were the electric guitar, electric bass, keyboards, and drums. Each group consisted of four to five pupils, who made their own choices of the music to play or compose; and rock/pop music was the accepted point of departure.

In the abovementioned study by Green (2008), teachers allowed the students to work by themselves in collaboration with each other—a sort of “hands-off music education practice,” as Lines (2009) has characterized it. However, whereas Green viewed the results of such group work as musical knowledge formation, the results of group work observed in the

present study lend themselves to consideration as knowledge formation outside the field of music. The learning outcomes involved various types of skills that appear to have more to do with self-discipline and norm formation than with music, and the video material we collected revealed an interesting link between freedom and order in the group contexts. That governance is dependent upon individual freedom has been noted by scholars, notably Foucault (1974/2003 and 1976/2002), in many different contexts. In the field of public education, this connection has often been discussed on the basis of society's increasing demands for the expansion of each individual's capacity for self-realization (Rose 1999). This involves self-regulation and self-mastery, a governance strategy that is a hallmark of modern society. This kind of governance also appears "rational" because it is effective and also because it requires few resources: individuals monitor themselves. In several of the videotaped group work sequences, the relationship between freedom and discipline becomes apparent and is sometimes even articulated. On one occasion, a music teacher introduced the group music creation assignment with the words "It's going to be pretty laid back, and you'll have quite a lot freedom, but that demands a lot of responsibility."

The autonomous group work practices are often characterized by a kind of time-related boredom and restlessness. An example of this is when a group, alone in a big empty room without chairs, tables, or books and with one electric guitar, one bass, one drum kit, one piano, and one acoustic guitar, was supposed to compose a melody with hardly any guidance:

Tina and Paul are busy with their cell phones and Lars is strolling around in the room before he finally leaves it. Ola is sitting behind the drum kit, Kajsa at the piano, and Frida has picked the guitar, which she is listlessly strumming on. Each pupil is playing individually and no attempt is made to coordinate the playing. The pattern from the previous lesson appears more and more clearly as time goes on. Restless pupils walk from instrument to instrument, and strum a little on the strings or bang on the drums, but not much else happens. After a while Mikael takes the lead and tries to structure the rehearsal. The order is improved slightly, but the problem is that Frida on the guitar and Kajsa on the piano are playing different harmonies without anyone noticing it.

Due to the unregulated format and the pupils' lack of musical skills, the work was interrupted and the pupils instead engaged in constructing various techniques for killing time using the tools at hand, usually their cell phones. Neither music nor lyrics were created during the 60 minutes of the lesson. The freedom given to pupils in connection with group work became a kind of self-discipline, expressed as learning to manage time. In isolated cases where one of the more skilled pupils took (or was assigned by the teacher to take) the lead, a certain

amount of time was devoted to playing the instruments. In other cases, where no clear leadership was formed in the groups, the work fell apart completely and resulted in pupils leaving the classroom or engaging in other sabotaging activities. Knowledge processes that involve learning to govern and manage one's time thus require some kind of leadership, control, or monitoring.

Our study identified one strategy for exercising governance through assemblies at the beginning and end of each lesson. In these sessions, the teacher expected pupils to recount their plans for the day and their results, and, where appropriate, to "own up" to their mistakes. This kind of reporting is often about the process rather than the product. It may involve reporting whether the group chose to switch rooms or not, being able to number and categorize the lessons, reporting rules of conduct in connection with group work, and so on. In other words, it is a kind of disciplinary process with regard to time, space, and tools. The development of skills related to controlling one's own learning is paramount. Giving pupils full governance over where, when, and with whom they work creates a governance system for the individual.

In these self-governing contexts, rock band musicianship was articulated as a clear template for how and where learning best occurs, one that was to be followed as closely as possible. If a group was in the school's "rock garage rehearsal room" they were expected to be at the end of their process, and were not permitted to switch instruments:

The pupils enter the classroom and sit down on the chairs, which are placed in a circle. Three girls are continuously giggling but become silent when the teacher raises his voice and says in a strict tone, "Today you have to work hard." He looks at the pupils' notes from the previous lesson and says, "Now I'm a bit confused ... your group, Lisa, you were in the rock garage rehearsal room last time but was it a real rehearsal room ... in the sense that you didn't change instruments...?" Lisa sheepishly answers no, whereupon the teacher fills in "No, it was an ordinary ... it was not a real rehearsal room ...". For a minute both teacher and pupils are quiet and then the teacher asks, "What did I tell you last time? Didn't I tell you that you shouldn't change instruments?" Maja answers that they didn't, and the teacher replies, "Okay, you didn't, okay, then it was a rock garage rehearsal room."

In this room, pupils were meant to "practice persistence" on a specific instrument.

Being disciplined into persistence is presented here as part of what was presumed to be authentic musical learning. Part of this discipline was to voluntarily report any violations of the organizational rules. Here, the actions swung between public reports and more private ones. On another occasion, a teacher required the pupils to think about future feelings at the end of the group's process, which might be seen as a kind of psychologization of teaching.

He looked at everyone in the classroom and asked: “How are you going to feel after two sessions?” Here, the teacher backed away from his role as a music teacher with expertise in his subject, and took a position more like that of a counselor, whose task was to support, encourage, and set emotional standards rather than pedagogical ones. This phenomenon of moving toward a kind of pedagogy of closeness (intimization) has been discussed by Ziehe (1986) in association with the 1970s the educational reform he believes came to dominate public education in the late 20th century. The trend involves a subjectivization of the teacher/pupil relationship on the optimistic premise that good relationships will lead to a pleasant atmosphere with few conflicts. In the practice sessions studied within this study, this intimization became a radicalized form of discipline, a kind of gentle power whose function was to guide students towards self-mastery in connection with group musical work.

Ever since their original creation for compulsory schools, Swedish curricula have included personal creativity as an essential element of various subjects, including music. The task assigned to the groups in this study was to create their own music. The rationale in the governing documents has not changed over the years. Creative activity is represented as a mechanism designed to shape a well-adjusted and “whole” person, and the legitimization in the governing documents of creativity in the schools has, since the middle of the last century, been based on assumptions about the pupil as “a fundamentally creative being with a natural and inherent need for activity and creative urges” (Strandberg 2007, 144). This belief about children and adolescents becomes highly influential in the conceptualization of musical creativity, not only in current syllabuses and textbooks, but also in school practices. The notions that everyone, regardless of musical skills, can create music and that no one can be allowed to fail set the tone in current school practices.

Despite frequent initial enthusiasm about the task of creating their own music, however, most of the groups in the schools we studied were failures. The fact that this is something to be hidden by any means necessary shows how important it is that the discourse on the competent individual be upheld. The creative projects we observed often ended with a report in which the teacher became the one who actually created the groups’ music, or used technical recording equipment to hide the pupils’ most glaring failures. The doctrine that everyone can create music is also reflected in reinforcement of social aspects—participation and collective life—that became apparent on occasion when teachers legitimized pupils’

inadequate skills with remarks about the value of fellowship and belonging (“at least you are part of the gang”).

Creative freedom versus standardized order: Two antagonistic discourses

Several of the discourses that govern the studied practices are mutually antagonistic. One of these is the mandated school culture (exemplified above in the requirement that performance be reviewed, criticized, and evaluated) with its goal orientation and attendant concerns with control, efficiency, and achievement. This collides with discursive presumptions about autonomous musical creation outside schools. Two antagonistic discourses are thus forced to find ways of articulation or reconciliation, and hegemonization is the outcome. The rock band context has been transformed to fit the schools’ demands for efficiency and discipline, while the spatial and material conditions of the classroom are such that the work must somehow be standardized. Entirely autonomous experimentation with the instruments could involve a conflict with the school’s demands for discipline and order.

That rock band musicianship in particular is embraced as a model for musical creation in the schools can also be understood in the context of the legitimacy of music as an academic subject (Lindgren 2007). This strategy seeks to shore up the subject by taking the pupils’ personal interests and existing skills as a starting point. However, the rock band model can also be understood as a legacy of the past. The priority of autonomous musical creativity emerged within music education as a reaction to elitist attitudes and practices, and, as early as the 1950s and 1960s, came to replace more romantic notions about the art of musical composition in Sweden.

The foundation for the rock band discourse was created along with the discourse of collectively- or collaboratively-oriented music creation. This latter discourse, now a well-established feature of school music practice, can also be traced to the experimental projects of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s that sought to renounce hidebound reproduction of finished arrangements and to counter authoritarian approaches to teaching and learning (Strandberg 2007). Especially in the 1970s, the discourse of group creativity construed the teacher as part of the collective—as a participant, alongside pupils—in an effort to reconstruct teacher and pupil roles in music and music education. The point was to discard the teacher’s role as a communicator of knowledge, and instead to have the teacher work for the collective—to

engage in shared, democratic musical creativity. In this context, emphasis was put on the value of a safe, peaceful, and experimental setting in the classroom.

We can still hear faint voices from this discourse, but other voices have become yet louder. Indeed, our observations of group work related to music creation were far removed from this 1970s ideal. Collective group work remains the ideal for playing and creating music, and is particularly apparent in the rhetoric surrounding informal rock band musicianship as the model for musical learning. However, the teacher seems no longer to be part of this collective, as was the case in the 1970s. What has evolved instead is an instructional model in which teachers leave pupils' musical actions and decisions alone as much as possible, focusing instead upon controlling and monitoring their self-reflections.

Downplaying the importance of skills in musical creation music remains current, but with a difference: pupils are meant to manage the tasks more independently or autonomously than before, sometimes without even the most basic of musical skills. Ideas about the drive to experiment, intuition, and harmony have been integrated with keywords like self-reflection, control, and rules. As a result, musical learning may fall by the wayside entirely.

Nor does group work seem in ideological terms to be a mechanism for fostering democracy. Instead, anti-democratic tendencies of marginalization and exclusion are revealed in connection with group work and exposed in the subject positions available to the pupils. Since the teacher rotates among the groups and is not always present, pupils have many opportunities to take different subject positions: musically, it is possible to position oneself as anything from a talented pianist or rock-oriented electric guitarist to a passive, more or less invisible onlooker. The positions of the good friend, the responsible student, the assertive group leader, or the marginalized member are also found readily within these discursive practices. However, where no desirable position is available, it is possible—and often tempting—simply to “ditch” the lesson.

Our analysis also reveals how the free group work may function anti-democratically when it comes to construction of gender. Free group work invites different types of gender constructions in the context of leadership. The boys often took the leadership in group work, by seizing power over what is allowed to take place in the room. They prevented attempts to create music in quite a number of ways, including expressions of disinterest. The girls most often adopted a distanced wait-and-see attitude, and, when they attempted to assert responsibility for the group's work, were more or less unsuccessful. The exception to this

pattern occurred when the more musically skilled pupils were allowed to form their own groups. In such groups, no obvious gender related power relations were apparent: playing and musical creativity came to the fore.

Learning control strategies appears to be the primary lesson in groups where the pupils do not have enough musical skills to handle the tasks they are given. Discourses of educational control, efficiency, and achievement—which pervade current public education like a mantra and are clearly evident in the rules that direct group projects—often confuse or distort the learning situation when they encounter discourses around autonomous musical creativity. The antagonism between these two discourses, “free” learning within the practice of garage rock bands and “regulated” learning within the practice of order and discipline respectively, are conflated in the practices we describe here, potentially compromising the musical learning of the pupils.

Conclusions

The fact that pop and rock music dominate music teaching in Swedish compulsory schools today can, to some extent, be explained by the development of music education national policy in recent decades. There has been a decentralization of power in favor of an increased local control. The value of the individual pupil’s freedom of choice and the student’s own search for knowledge has been put forward as well as the importance of paying greater attention to students’ participation regarding both content and form of the school subjects. However, the Swedish system of responsibility and control, the “liberation” from the comparatively strict government control, does not imply liberation from power and control as seen from a Foucauldian perspective. The music activities of the school are controlled by way of certain preconceptions about music learning and music teaching which, on many points, are founded on the ideas of informal learning as a form of questioning of teacher control. In many cases, this discursive governance of teaching seems to obstruct the musical activities examined within this study.

The construction of musical creativity based on notions about rock band musicianship has consequences for whether and how learning takes place in group work. The notion that it is easy and fun for everyone to create music, to feel one’s way forward, and to let the creative juices flow, is articulated as a move toward more authentic practice and thus as a liberating method—but within the confines of strict rules. Several of the groups in this study made

serious attempts to achieve a melody or a chord progression, but interest waned as soon as their own inadequate skills were revealed or the rules became too restrictive. The method was only beneficial in the few groups consisting of pupils with adequate instrumental skills. Similarly, the members of these more musically-skilled groups did not allow themselves to be as fully governed as their fellow students by notions about how musical creation is supposed to proceed.

Since the middle of the 20th century, group work in Swedish music education has been seen as an alternative to the earlier, often reproductive and authoritarian school-based learning. The “informal” learning within garage rock bands practice can be seen as an alternative to this more conventional music education ideology. However, in contrast to previous discourses, the pupils are now directed to manage the tasks by themselves. Often, they lack sufficient skills and personal experience to get musical creation off the ground—regardless of where and when they are in the process. This observation is consistent with other studies, which have shown that participants must have certain fundamental subject knowledge to cooperate and gain from each other in the group work context (Williams, Sheridan, and Pramling 2000).

Like Rodriguez (2009), we question some of Green’s ideas concerning informal learning in music education, even though Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have gone far in bringing popular music into the school curriculum (Ericsson 2007; Stålhammar 2000 and 2003; Ericsson and Lindgren 2010). How can we provide freedom within musical creation without governing individual preferences? How do we deal with pupils who lack musical abilities? Are some pupils excluded because of their personal preferences? We agree with the suggestion that “teachers must make a substantial shift in informal learning, such that they must become experts in helping students make things happen for themselves” (Rodriguez 2009, 39). However, Green’s book was written in the context of the British schooling system, and schools in Sweden differ from schools in Britain. The way of teaching presented in Green’s book (2008), practiced in Sweden since the beginning of the 1970s, is now a well-established activity which is prescribed in the Swedish national curriculum. Given this, it may be asked whether the method can still be categorized as informal (Folkestad 2008).

When the pupils in our study were given a free hand to run their own learning and to choose by themselves what type of music and lyrics they wished to create and perform, they

became incapable of doing their musical tasks. The freedom the pupils are offered is transformed to a kind of self-discipline in order to learn how to manage and give an account of their time. Ideas of open, collective, authentic, and creative music practices outside school have been put together with today's somewhat contradictory discourses around self-reflection, control, and rules. The techniques of governance that are present in the classroom activities can be understood as being mild in character, but nevertheless they govern both teachers and pupils in their work. A technique significant for the school that has also been discussed by Foucault (1974/2003) is the disciplining of the body and the organization of time and space. In our study, this manifests itself in student participation in the rituals associated with the so-called informal learning.

Based on our premise that forms of governance are embedded in all classroom activities, we have attempted in this article to show how critical examination of the educational frameworks categorized in the research literature as “informal” and “formal” can draw attention to other forms of governance. Beyond the explicit aspects such as grades, rules, and regulations, there are forms of governance—such as notions about informal learning in musically creative rock band contexts—which may be so deeply embedded in their activities that neither pupils nor teachers are fully aware that these forms of governance are at work, or in what form. We believe that the study of this type of discursively related problem in music classroom settings is important. Pupils' musical experiences differ, as do their preferences, and in order to create greater opportunities for all pupils to develop musically within the school it is necessary to discover what learning might occur—for each and every pupil—within the rock band context as discursive governance.

Since “informal” learning in school is unavoidably part of a formal education system, it must obey the stipulations of the Swedish national curriculum, which require that teaching must be based on each pupil's needs, earlier experiences, and knowledge. Our study suggests that leaving insufficiently-skilled pupils to their own devices can be very risky.

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Note

¹Another type of generalization, one that is applicable to studies with a limited empirical material, such as even single-case studies, is *receiver generalization* (Donmoyer, 1990). We believe it is possible for music teachers who read this article to judge whether or not our findings pertain to their own settings.

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