Equity in music education in Finland

A policy window opened through the case of "Figurenotes"

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Abstract

This article illustrates how a social innovation, *Figurenotes*, has contributed and can contribute, through conceptual change, to the advancement of equity in Basic Education in the Arts (BEA), Finland's publicly funded system of extracurricular music education. BEA has traditionally been characterised by structures and pedagogical practices–such as the use of Western standard music notation–that influence the accessibility of music studies. The theoretical framework for this interview study consists of change-theoretical concepts: namely, social innovation, multiple streams, and policy windows. The findings are presented at two levels. First, the innovation process of Figurenotes is described to explain social innovation development. Second, three different strands of discourse on the concept of special music education expose the educational policy change generated by this innovation. The findings suggest that the use of Figurenotes has raised awareness of inequity in the institutional agenda and has encouraged this problem to be addressed through the public policy process. The opening of this policy window is critically discussed in relation to the establishment of the field of special music education, and in relation to inclusion and equity policies as well as exclusion.

Keywords: *educational equity, Figurenotes, multiple streams framework, policy window, social innovation, special music education*

Introduction

This article illustrates how a social innovation, Figurenotes, has contributed and can contribute through conceptual change to educational equity in Basic Education in the Arts (BEA), Finland's publicly funded extracurricular music education system. Like all Finnish government-coordinated basic education, BEA is based on an ideal of educational equity

in which factors specific to one's personal condition should not interfere with one's access to education. However, BEA has traditionally used selective means to determine who gets to study within the system, thereby overlooking certain groups of students, such as those with cognitive disabilities (Laes, 2017). Accordingly, it must be noted that in comparison to other art forms, music has a particular role in BEA in terms of popularity and the allocation of lesson hours and other resources. The greater emphasis of music in BEA has roots in the history of the music school network established in the 1960s and 1970s that eventually formed the basis for the BEA system, which also included other art forms. It has been argued that music education in BEA is deeply path-dependent (Heimonen, 2002). For example, Väkevä et al. (2017, p. 134) state that "The historical development of the Finnish music education system has created a structure that affects students' access to extracurricular music education and influences supply and demand through public regulation." This structure creates procedures that influence educational equity within BEA in various ways (Väkevä et al., 2017, p. 134).

The integral role of Western Standard Music Notation (WSMN) is another example of a mechanism that can limit accessibility in BEA. WSMN has been central in BEA music education since the system was founded, as music teaching in this context is generally organised in line with the Western conservatory model where instrumental and theory lessons form the core of the studies (Björk, 2016). The prevalent use of WSMN in BEA can be attributed to the fact that Western art music has been the most common musical genre studied within the system. However, the increasing focus on other genres (e.g., popular musics), specifically in music schools that follow the basic part of the national core curriculum,[1] suggests that the situation might change. Thus, there is a need for critical reflection on the applicability of notation systems in this context (Kivijärvi & Väkevä, 2020).

In the evolving situation regarding equity issues in BEA, an emphasis has been placed on advancing accessibility. Among the recent BEA developments is the invention of the Figurenotes notation system that is based on different colours and shapes indicating pitch levels.[2] It has increased access to music education for many student groups who were previously excluded (Kivijärvi, 2019), largely within the field of special music education that lacks a comprehensive definition in the literature. The present article focuses on the innovation development and adoption of Figurenotes by examining how the application of this pedagogical approach has contributed to the concept and practice of special music education within Finnish music education as well as the establishment of the Resonaari Music Centre, a forerunner organisation providing goal-oriented music education for students

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1   There are two curricular tracks for BEA music schools: basic and advanced. They have different goals in terms of how goal-oriented the studying is as well as the amount of allocated teaching hours.

2   Figurenotes has primarily been utilised in popular music pedagogy, particularly with pitched instruments such as electronic guitars and keyboards. See examples of Figurenotes in Kaikkonen and Uusitalo (2005; 2014).

with disabilities. To interpret education policy processes and change in BEA music education, the analysis in this article applies the concepts of social innovation (e.g., Murray et al., 2010), multiple streams and policy windows (Kingdon, 1984/2003).

The motivation for this study stems from the necessity to understand the developments in an educational system in order to inform future policy processes in music education domestically and abroad. The aim is to make sense of how the social innovation evolved by answering the following research questions: 1. In what ways can Figurenotes, as a social innovation, advance educational possibilities in BEA music education in Finland? 2. What kinds of values are influencing this process?

Education policy change examined through the concept of social innovation and a multiple streams framework

While topical education policy research suggests top-down mandates, policy is ultimately shaped by bottom-up initiatives and centrally and locally driven strategies (Fullan, 2007). Recent research in music education has offered insights into a more pluralistic understanding of policy (Webster, 2017). For example, Schmidt and Colwell (2017) suggested that "policy can consist of rules and regulations, legitimised because of custom or historical precedent, but it can also consist of ideas, whose adoption and implementation can lead to profound outcomes" (p. 2).

Social innovation refers to efforts "to design initiatives in a particular part of society – an organisation, a practice, or an area of activity – that signal a promising path of wider social change even as they meet a pressing need" (Unger, 2015, p. 233). More generally, social innovations take the form of ideas, actions, processes, models, systems, services, or regulations that profoundly change a social system by impacting established practices, beliefs or values over the long term (Westley & Antadze, 2010). Recent music education research has studied social innovations from the standpoints of institutional resilience (Väkevä et al., 2017), music instrument learning (Galmiche, 2018), and multicultural music education (Saether, 2018).

Diffusion and scaling are prevailing terms used to describe the growth and institutionalisation of social innovations. According to Rogers (1995), innovations spread in social systems through the *diffusion of innovation*, "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 31). The social innovation process begins with prototyping and piloting, after which the innovation is diffused, predominantly through social organisations (Nicholls et al., 2015).

Rogers (1995) suggested that the diffusion of an innovation is a social development with five relevant categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late

majority and laggards. If the first adopter group sees an innovation as useful, then the second adopter group is more likely to adopt it. The early majority is more conservative than the second adopter group and decides more slowly whether to adopt the innovation. The late majority is even more sceptical; they are in contact with the early majority but are seldom opinion leaders. Laggards are usually isolated in their own social systems, meaning they interact only with others in the same group and seldom see the benefits of proposed innovations. (Rogers, 1995.) Accordingly, in the innovation adoption process, the historical institutional context of the education system plays an important role (cf. Pesonen et al., 2015).

In addition to diffusion, a social innovation may also be scaled. In such situations, innovations spread to new sectors or fields or may even impact broader society (Mulgan, 2006). The scaling process is typically prompted by an experience or event addressing a social need or injustice (Murray et al., 2010).

In this article, the development and adoption of social innovation is anchored by the multiple streams theory (Kingdon, 1984/2003), which has been widely utilised to explain educational policy processes (Holderness, 1990; Lieberman, 2002; Stout & Stevens, 2000). This framework opposes policy-making theories and models suggesting that decision-making is rational and systematic (see Turnbull, 2006). Instead, multiple streams theory proposes that policymaking is unpredictable (Nutley et al., 2007), as it happens in an ambiguous environment (Pollitt, 2008; Zahariadis, 2003, 2007).

Kingdon (1984/2003) argued that, in the multiple streams framework, recognition of an ethos or ideal (e.g., equity) in an institutional agenda involves three streams: a *problem stream*, a *policy stream* and a *politics stream*. Kingdon (1984/2003) stated that the problem stream involves problem recognition, which is often based on focusing on events, while the policy stream refers to policy actors or communities that produce proposals to tackle the problem. The policy stream includes policy alternatives that must fulfil the criteria of value acceptability and technical feasibility to be accepted by policy communities (Spohr, 2016). The political stream refers to changes in public opinion or administration (Kingdon, 1984/2003). Although their actors can overlap, these three processes function largely independently. Successful policy or agenda change occurs when the streams converge, opening a "policy window" for further policy or agenda transformation. In Kingdon's (1984/2003) words, "The separate streams of problems, policies, and politics come together at certain critical times. Solutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces" (p. 21). The issue is then acknowledged on the institutional agenda and addressed by the public policy process (Béland & Howlett, 2016).

At critical points in time, these streams, all driven by different forces, converge for policy entrepreneurs to influence agendas and advocate policy alternatives (Kingdon, 1984/2003). Policy entrepreneurs, who could also be referred to as innovation developers or early adopters, are individuals who use personal resources (time, energy, money) in

order to achieve policy objectives (Kingdon 1984/2003; Rogers, 1995). A central concept in Kingdon's (1984/2003) multiple streams framework is a *window of opportunity*, which is also referred to as a policy window in the literature on policy change. A policy window opens when a political or problem or political stream leads to combined efforts by policy entrepreneurs. Such couplings or points of intersection could be caused by a variety of factors, such as institutionalised routines (e.g., curriculum planning) or "focusing events" requiring the attention of actors in all three streams (Howlett et al., 2014). When the streams merge, a policy window opens "because of change in the political stream or … because a new problem captures the attention of governmental officials and those close to them" (Kingdon, 1984/2003, p. 176), providing momentum for policy proposals and alternatives. If stream integration does not take place when the problem or politics streams set the governmental agenda, it is unlikely that an issue will appear on the actual decision agenda or be made actionable. Thus, when a problem is recognised along with an appropriate political environment, the policy stream should bring out applicable alternatives; otherwise, an issue is likely to fade from the decision agenda. Further, the policy window theory is bidirectional, meaning that some conditions are not defined as problems before solutions (i.e., policies) are available and acknowledged by practitioners, stakeholders, and other policymakers. (Kingdon, 1984/2003.)

The multiple streams framework has been criticised by scholars and policymakers over the past decades, as recent arguments question whether the streams in Kingdon's approach are independent (Sabatier, 1999). As Robinson and Eller (2010) state, "This is difficult to ensure, given the ever-changing and ambiguous nature of reality" (p. 200). Kingdon (1984/2003) also notes that the three streams are loosely connected throughout the entire policy process. However, as the three streams provide adequate analytical categories, Kingdon's theory seems to work as an analytical tool for examining the complexity of policy change and policy making. The multiple streams framework is grounded in the idea that policy processes do not follow systematic "policy cycles" with ordered steps (Kingdon, 1984/2003).

Equity and the curricular, structural, and pedagogical traditions in BEA music education

The educational system in Finland provides music education in comprehensive (grades 1–9) and upper-secondary (grades 10–12) schools as well as the music education institutions within the BEA system. Music is also taught in adult education institutions (e.g., folk high schools) and by early childhood education providers. This article focuses on the music education organised in music education institutions in BEA, which is legislatively part of the Finnish system of basic education (Basic Arts Education Act 633/1998). Thus, similar requirements for equity can be made of BEA as of Finnish comprehensive education.

While equality refers to "sameness" (e.g., allocating the same amount of resources to every student), equity aims to promote social justice by addressing the disadvantages that restrict students' educational accessibility and achievement (Ainscow, 2016). Equity is an ethical concept based in the idea of distributive justice (Rawls, 1985) consonant with legal and political human rights principles (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003). Human rights are interconnected, and the right to education cannot be distinguished from other rights, e.g., freedom from discrimination and to societal participation (Bjørnskov & Mchangama, 2019). To address equity in education is to address the most important social and economic determinants (Pink & Noblit, 2007).

BEA music education is driven by a national core curriculum that prescribes the overarching educational goals and values (FNBE, 2017). The national core curriculum for BEA is divided into two parts: basic and advanced (also referred to as the basic and advanced *syllabuse*s, although the texts do not include any lesson plans or detailed descriptions of how to organise teaching). As outlined by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE, 2017), the advanced part aims to provide students with the competencies needed for vocational and higher education, whereas the basic part is more flexible and focuses on promoting students' personal goal achievement. While the national core curriculum describes general objectives and content areas of music education, municipalities and schools are expected to specify these goals at the local level, leaving plenty of freedom to the teachers to decide how to implement the core curricula. This freedom pertains, for example, to the pedagogical approaches and assessment criteria applied, musical genres taught, use of music notation (i.e., Western standard music notation, another notation system, or no notation at all), and student selection in the BEA context.

The national core curriculum for BEA music schools provides opportunities for greater equity through individualisation of the studies. Yet these possibilities are seldom actualised and this is because of several factors, including entrance examinations in some institutions, and teachers' self-doubt about working with students who have disabilities, so relatively few of these students participate in music education (see Kivijärvi, 2019). The conflict between equity requirements and limited resources, combined with prevailing traditions, potentially explains some of the selective premises found within the system. Music is an exceptional BEA subject in terms of its high demand, large number of providers, and heavy emphasis on the advanced part of the national core curriculum (Koramo, 2009). The popularity of music education and an emphasis on the advanced part of the national core curriculum lead to stricter student selection criteria, which has an effect on the enrolment of students with disabilities.[3]

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3   Music therapy has been kept separate from BEA and comprehensive school music education in Finland (Lehtonen, 1992).

Resonaari Music Centre and educational equity in BEA

Since its establishment in 1995, Resonaari has increased accessibility within BEA music education by providing opportunities for students who have disabilities to participate in goal-oriented education. In 2004, the centre started to organise its teaching according to the advanced part of the national core curriculum for BEA, and in 2019 it started to receive a government subsidy based on teaching hours.

Joining the BEA system and music school network was possible for Resonaari as the new national core curriculum provided flexible opportunities for individualised study plans and assessments. Resonaari has demonstrated that the BEA system can be made accessible to a broad group of students. Currently, approximately 300 students of all ages are enrolled in Resonaari annually which makes the centre the main provider of BEA music education for students who have disabilities. In addition, several senior citizens who have been systematically overlooked by the BEA system take lessons at the school on a regular basis. In the context of Resonaari, special music education as a concept thus comprises marginalised students in general, and not only students who have disabilities.

Resonaari's pedagogical approach is based on the idea that students with so-called special needs can learn (and be taught) skills that are in most cases reserved for students without any such needs (Kivijärvi & Kaikkonen, 2015). Thus, the centre represents something exceptional within the field of Finnish music education. For many music schools in the BEA system, entrance examinations measuring musical aptitude play a significant role in determining admissions (see Kivijärvi, 2019). This kind of pre-assessment is not applied in Resonaari. Instead, the students are admitted on a first-come first-served basis. Unlike many BEA music schools in Finland that still emphasise the classical music repertoire (Björk, 2016; Väkevä & Kurkela, 2012), Resonaari's musical repertoire is frequently drawn from popular music. The development and application of Figurenotes is directly connected to the establishment of Resonaari, where almost all students begin their studies with Figurenotes. They may later switch to Western standard music notation, another notational system, or continue to play by ear (Kivijärvi, 2019).

Research methods and data

Methodologically, this case study based on interviews relies on two approaches. First, the interview data is analysed descriptively in order to understand the social innovation's development and diffusion and to provide context for the policy change process. Second, discourse analysis is utilised on the interview data regarding the connections between Figurenotes and the concept of special music education. Overall, research is understood

here as an undertaking where researchers examine people's understandings in specific contexts (Cohen et al., 2011). In Yanow's (2000) terms, policy analysis is seen as sensemaking through context-dependent interpretation.

The data for this case study was generated through 17 semi-structured thematic interviews. The first author invited the interviewees using snowball sampling (Creswell, 2014), meaning that each interviewee suggested one or two future interviewees. The first author evaluated their suitability (e.g., how their field of expertise and work experience would contribute to the data's versatility) in relation to other interviewees and recruited the interviewees based on these considerations. Seven interviewees were recommended by all interviewees and the rest by individual interviewees. The interviewees were two developers of Figurenotes and fifteen experts in the fields of music, special and general education, education policy, music therapy, volunteer work, and business. Familiarity with Figurenotes was a criterion in the recruitment process. All the experts were widely acknowledged in and responsible for development in their specialised fields. They had prolonged experience and privileged access to decision-making processes (cf. Creswell, 2014 on expert interviews).

The first author conducted one-on-one interviews with the selected interviewees between February 2014 and July 2014. The first Figurenotes developer was interviewed three times and the second developer twice; each of these interviews lasted approximately two hours. The interviews with the other experts lasted from 40 to 60 minutes each and the data set as a whole comprised approximately 24 hours of recordings.

The interview themes were based on the insights from the first interviews with the Figurenotes developers. During these semi-structured but conversation-like interviews, the developers were asked to freely describe the development process of Figurenotes and the history of Resonaari. The following themes were selected for the main set of developer and expert interviews: (1) the interviewee's background; (2) the applicability of Figurenotes; (3) the history and development of Figurenotes; and (4) the implications of Figurenotes. The interviewees were asked to reflect on the importance of Figurenotes on music education and music therapy in Finland. The interviewer asked concrete open-ended narrative questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?" and "Why does that matter?" or "Do you have anything to add?" (see Odendahl & Shaw, 2002).[4]

The first author who conducted and audio recorded the interviews took notes and highlighted the key research themes already during the interviews, and the recordings were transcribed into 700 pages of text. The data and notes were read carefully to acquire an overview of the contents after which a thorough coding process was implemented using the ATLAS.ti system.

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4   The findings based on this data are reported in two articles that address different research questions. While the current article focuses on the education policy process generated by the invention and diffusion of Figurenotes, another study on the applicability of Figurenotes is to be found in an article published in the *International Journal of Music Education* by the first author (see Kivijärvi, 2019).

As part of the descriptive content analysis, principles of basic qualitative inquiry (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were employed. Key phrases and concepts were recognised and encoded with headings to establish their specific relationships to the research context and conceptual framework. The first author coded the transcripts several times with the greatest possible openness to different interpretations that might be gleaned from the data. Once this step was complete, the codes were reviewed, grouped into four larger categories, and labelled accordingly.

In the discourse analysis, language use was analysed at the micro-level, and the relationship of different discourses in a broader historical and social context was emphasised (Cohen et al., 2011). Discourse in this study is understood as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 7). The contexts of the meaning generated by this study may reveal conflicting discourses that underpin the purpose and professional ethos of Finnish music education in terms of policy change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Identifying such discourses may reveal different values influencing the process of social innovation and equitable educational policies. The range of meaning was analysed at the level of the group rather than the individual (Creswell, 2014), and the process included several steps. First, data was coded line-by-line using the research questions to identify broad themes in the transcriptions. As the analysis proceeded, interpretive codes were given to the passages of data, which were re-examined and read in relation to other codes in order to create broader categories. In line with general coding principles, the initial stage highlighted several quotations deemed essential to the research purpose (Check & Schutt, 2012). These selections were refined in five subsequent rounds of analysis to reduce the number of codes. After receiving the reviewers' feedback for the article, the research questions, codes, and categories were revised once more (by adding some quotations to codes and renaming some categories).

Direct quotations from the interview data were selected to illustrate the findings. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish, and the quotations were translated into English by the authors. The interviewees were anonymised according to the following abbreviations: D1 and D2 (Developer 1 and Developer 2), and E1–E15 (Expert 1–Expert 15).

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer briefed the interviewees on the timetable, purposes, and possible consequences of the research. She affirmed that all the interviewees would remain anonymous and were free to withdraw from the study (either in part or in its entirety) at any time. The developers of Figurenotes have agreed that their names can be revealed in any publications based on the interview data. In this study, they are referred to as "Developers 1 and 2." Having closely collaborated with the Resonaari Music Centre, the first author was already acquainted with some of the interviewees before the research process began. She reflected on her own perceptions when analysing the data. Throughout the study, the authors, with adjacent members of their research communities,

frequently elaborated on the theoretical framework and research questions as well as data collection and analysis.

Findings

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews yielded a number of themes that were divided into two categories that are presented in the following subchapters. The first category (Figurenotes as a social innovation) is based on content analysis and the latter (Scaling of social innovation through conceptual development) on discourse analysis.

Figurenotes as a social innovation

This section uses the semi-structured interviews to illustrate the development and diffusion of Figurenotes. The aim here is to examine in which ways Figurenotes was seen as a social innovation and how that may have influenced the creation of a policy stream. As described above, following Kingdon's (1984/2003) view, a policy stream refers to potential policy solutions that initiate from groups of policymakers (e.g., experts in a particular field).

Innovation of Figurenotes

The initial concept for the Figurenotes system was developed in 1996 within the field of music therapy. Developer 1 (D1) created the initial version of Figurenotes by himself, and the development work continued through a collaboration with Developer 2 (D2), who worked as a music educator at Resonaari. Developer 1 explained that he created Figurenotes for the purpose of music therapy, but that it started to expand into the field of music education:

> I did not understand that it was a new idea or something unique. I was pretty sure that this kind of system already existed. [Nor] did I know anything about music education. […] I made this innovation [Figurenotes] for the field I was working in … music therapy in Finland [where] this kind of tool did not exist, and I expected it to work well in that particular context.

Developer 1 described how crucial it was to have a colleague with whom to continue the development work: "I just wanted to create something new, but it was difficult to take things further. Without this collaboration [with D2], Figurenotes would not have been disseminated." Developer 2, the founder of Resonaari, was introduced to Developer 1 by a common colleague in 1997, approximately two years after the Resonaari Centre was established to address inequities in the Finnish music education system, which previously offered only goal-oriented studies to students without disabilities. This situation contradicted constitutional rights that stated that the public education system should guarantee everyone equal

opportunities to receive all educational services according to their ability (Constitution of Finland 731/1991, Section 16).

Figurenotes is central to Resonaari's pedagogical approaches, but it is not categorically used with all students or in a particular standardised manner (Kivijärvi, 2019). This was exemplified by one of the interviewed experts (E9) who said, "One can teach in various ways with Figurenotes. That is why I would define Figurenotes as a system instead of a method." In addition to being used at Resonaari, Figurenotes is applied in early childhood music education, comprehensive schools, and universities in Finland, as well as several other countries such as Italy, Japan, Sweden, the UK, and the USA (www.resonaari.fi). According to a survey on accessibility issues in the BEA system, Figurenotes is commonly used to individualise music education practices (Juntunen & Kivijärvi, 2019).

All the interviewed experts noted that the invention and implementation of Figurenotes influenced the establishment of the field of special music education in Finland. Figurenotes was first used in the field of music therapy, and the Resonaari Music Centre subsequently expanded the system to include special music education in the domestic context. One expert (E3) even stated that "[w]ithout Figurenotes notation, there would be no special music education [in Finland]. It is a very important pedagogical tool in this field."

Diffusion of Figurenotes

As described earlier, according to Dees, Anderson, and Weiskillern (2004), innovation diffusion is about "providing information, and sometimes technical assistance, to others looking to bring an innovation to their community" (p. 28). According to Developer 1, his development work with Figurenotes was not supported by his colleagues. Despite the national and international dissemination of Figurenotes, almost all the experts who were interviewed emphasised that its potential is insufficiently recognised both on the domestic and on the international level. From a financial perspective, this limited recognition is likely connected to the limited marketing of the Figurenotes books. Neither the Resonaari Centre nor the Finnish publisher of the Figurenotes books (the Finnish Association on Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities) developed any type of commercial marketing strategy to promote this pedagogical tool. Instead, the public funding of the Finnish music education system has advanced the diffusion of Figurenotes. As Developer 1 stated:

> There is a small, marginal group of professionals using Figurenotes, and this group truly values it. I think the primary reason for this [slow diffusion] is that the [free courses and workshops] – almost charity – that we offer [at Resonaari] are not enough. We should have a commercial marketing strategy.

The experts highlighted that some professionals and potential students might view Figurenotes as a tool solely for people with cognitive disabilities since it was developed by a special education centre. However, the system is clearly useful in other contexts as the

disability perspective can further develop theoretical and practical understandings of educational phenomena. Such pedagogical innovations often have a wide applicability (Vaughn & Swanson, 2015). However, they may also be viewed as educational methods or tools for specific target groups (see Regelski, 2002; Vehmas, 2010). One of the experts (E8) stated:

> I think one of the reasons [for the slow dissemination of Figurenotes] is that professionals associate Figurenotes with people with cognitive disabilities. […] This does not necessarily indicate that the professionals resist Figurenotes. People just simply cannot – or tend to not – think 'outside of the box' and realise that [Figurenotes] might also be relevant in their teaching practice with students without any disabilities.

Based on the interviews, the decision to apply Figurenotes is often made in relation to context-specific traditions and norms (see Honig, 2006), which differ across the field of music therapy, music education in comprehensive schools, and BEA music education. Nonetheless, as previous research on education policy development shows, teachers and principals are the key decision-makers for policy on pedagogical applications (Wilson, 1989). One of the experts (E1) said, "School principals, of course, play an important role in pedagogical development. They are the ones who pass on information and encourage others. They should also be aware of new pedagogical solutions." The diffusion of Figurenotes may also be hindered by some teachers finding it difficult to adopt new pedagogical tools. As E3 explained, "Teachers are not willing to update their knowledge and pedagogical understanding. They are not interested in professional development."

In the innovation adoption process, place refers to the education system's historical institutional context. Thus, in the diffusion of an innovation, continuity is essential, as innovations that comply with earlier practices are more likely to be used (Murray et al., 2010). The interviewees frequently highlighted the changes in Finland's music education system that accelerated the diffusion of Figurenotes. The general ethos of equity in Finnish general education was considered especially important for the development of the BEA system, and this ethos also influenced the invention and diffusion of Figurenotes. In the Finnish comprehensive school system, all students, including those with disabilities, are offered basic music education (FNBE, 2014). As E4 stated, "It was quite a change when the comprehensive school system was organised in the 1970s. It meant that all students, regardless of their capabilities and skill levels, suddenly had the right to study music." Furthermore, the current national core curriculum for BEA emphasises equity to organise teaching. One expert (E9) affirmed:

> Nowadays, there are clear regulations that BEA music schools must offer education that is accessible for students who have some additional support needs. Individualised study plans should be made if needed, not only at the comprehensive schools but at the BEA institutes as well.

Other recent changes have also widened the scope of pedagogical adaptations in BEA music education. Historically, the prevailing tradition in BEA music institutes was to teach students who primarily planned to continue their music studies at a degree level. The BEA national core curriculum updates in 2002 and 2017 (the advanced part) and 2005 and 2017 (the basic part) have changed this premise and paved the way for alternative teaching approaches. One expert (E4) reflected on the "hegemony of so-called classical music" in the music institute system where "students have been pushed to learn the conventional notation as early as possible." This expert also explained that "[BEA] music institutions have preferred students with the potential for building professional careers. Educators have tended to prefer teaching these students since their own career paths were similar" (E4).

However, as attitudes have changed, more attention has been given to students who want to pursue music as a hobby or with goal-orientation but without an interest to become a professional musician, potentially reducing the need to learn and teach conventional notation. One of the experts (E14) described this shift:

> Conventional notation no longer plays the same role it had [in BEA music institutes] a couple of decades ago. The entire system has changed in many ways. [There are] fewer individual lessons and more and more group teaching situations. The hegemony of classical music has changed.

The innovation and diffusion of Figurenotes seems to follow a social innovation process including phases through which an innovation develops from prompts and proposals to prototyping, sustainability, and scale (Murray et al., 2010). The use of Figurenotes has widened the realm of Finnish music education by diversifying the scope of pedagogical practice and music education. The application of Figurenotes has influenced the purpose of the Finnish BEA music education system by challenging prevailing views on who gets to study music.

Scaling of social innovation through conceptual development

This subsection examines how the development of Figurenotes and the concept of special music education are intertwined and connected to the opportunity for policy windows. The *specialisation*, *inclusion,* and *equity* discourses reveal conceptions and values associated with special music education based on the discourse analysis of the interview data.

Specialisation discourse: Special music education as an exclusionary practice
The interviewees' understandings reveal a discourse that emphasises the segregated nature of special music education. This specialisation discourse can also be seen in music education research, which presents a distinction between "abled" people and students with "special needs" or "special educational needs" (e.g., Adamek & Darrow, 2010; Lapka, 2006; McCord & Fitzgerald, 2006; Melago, 2014; Ockelford, 2012). The following accounts exemplify the

connection between the concept of special music education and the curricular level of such exclusionary policies which call for specialised curricula or schools for those with special needs (for the definition of special education, see Vehmas, 2010). The following quotation from E1 exemplifies this: "I think that special music education as a niche exists, mostly at Resonaari. But … there are no university programs [on special music education] anywhere." Another expert, E13, explained:

> In special music education, I consider it very important that there is a specialised curriculum for those who have various kinds of difficulties. I would say that the function of Figurenotes becomes even clearer [in the context of special music education compared to therapy]: It is a special education approach.

Traditionally, music education and music therapy have been kept separate. According to the interviewed experts, special music education has been seen as a form of therapy or rehabilitative instruction in an educational setting. This aligns with the rehabilitation model employed in the welfare state service system, in which people with cognitive and/or developmental disabilities are assigned to rehabilitative practices that segregate them from normal community life (Hakala, 2010). The following reflection by E9 highlights this point:

> Special music education is music therapy in such a form that can be applied within the basic education setting. The MAIN purpose is to combine music learning and the transfer effects of music learning; for instance, to improve social skills or how to behave in a group.

It must be noted that the rehabilitation rhetoric specifically addresses students who have developmental or cognitive disabilities and who have typically been grouped into student categories separate from students with other types of special needs (Hakala, 2010).

The following quotation expresses how diagnosing different disabilities and defining people's special needs are seen as means to achieve required pedagogical support. However, this diagnosing creates segregation, as "'special need' implies an undesirable state of functioning or being" (Vehmas 2010, p. 94). Vehmas (2010) notes that special education is "dedicated to remedying children's deficits" and this creates a dichotomy between "abled" people and people with special needs (p. 94). E15 stressed this issue in the context of BEA music education:

> The [national] policy regulations say that everyone has a right to his or her own individual learning path and ways of learning so that we would not segregate anyone. But it does not work that way. We still need terms like that [special music education]. (E15)

Regarding the need to categorise students, Kauffman et al. (2017) stated that special education requires that the individual characteristics referred to as disabilities are identified.

They pointed out that "any education, regardless of its level or focus, even the 'flexible' or 'tiered' general education so ardently promised as an alternative to special education as traditionally practiced, must sort, categorize, and label students or become derelict" (Kauffman et al. 2017, p. 4). While categorising students is a central function of special music education, standardised measurements are rarely used to recognise special needs in the Finnish music education context. Instead of categorising individual students and addressing their needs with particular interventions, educators employ a rough categorisation of students: those eligible for BEA music education in a typical setting, and those who can receive such education in a special school, such as Resonaari.

Inclusion discourse: Special music education as a catalyst for a paradigm shift

Since the establishment of the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice in Special Needs Education in 1994, the notion that (music) education should be inclusive has gained international momentum (UNESCO, 1994). The stepwise, partial, or full integration of students with special needs into general education was previously a common policy to ensure for them a basic level of education. Integration was intended to achieve fairness; however, the exclusionary or segregative logic of music educational structures remained. The integration "paradigm" began to receive criticism for maintaining policies that were similar to de-institutionalisation or mainstreaming. (cf. Allan, 2008.)

Discussions on whether music therapy should be offered to students with special needs have been integral to the development of the music education field (Dobbs, 2012). The present study's data reveals a certain ambivalence regarding music therapy. Though the segregation discourse suggests that the therapeutic approach involved in special music education creates exclusion, the interviewees also suggested that the use of Figurenotes by clients with developmental and cognitive disabilities has challenged Finland's music therapy traditions. The concept of special music education reinforces the idea that people with disabilities deserve access to education in music. According to Developer 1, the application of Figurenotes "addressed the fundamental problems of clients with developmental and cognitive disabilities in music therapy."

The expert interviews also supported this notion. As one expert (E9) stated, actual learning is "the best type of therapy for people with cognitive disabilities. Figurenotes makes this possible." Along similar lines, another expert elaborated on the meaning of special music education for the field of music education:

> Special music education became visible through it [the application of Figurenotes]. It also brings the concept of inclusion to the discussion. Like, should everyone learn music and not only those who become musicians? This [emphasis] is because the teachers have gone through the same path [where goal-orientation towards professionalism is emphasised]. Instead, classroom teacher education emphasises that everyone should be taught. (E4)

Evidently, special music education might be a precondition for inclusive education. This interpretation suggests that music education should follow the wider education terminology and paradigm shift (from special education towards inclusion). Another expert agreed:

> This concept, special music education, it is not a method … it is music education with a wide variety of pedagogical approaches. Same with Figurenotes. You can use it in any [music educational] approach, so I don't see it as a method. Perhaps special music education is simply music education, but as a concept, it guarantees the [United Nations] Convention on the Rights of the Child. Like, everyone can participate from their own starting point. (E15)

Indeed, the concept of inclusion was intended to generate a policy change not achieved by integration (Kiuppis & Sarromaa Haustätter, 2015). Instead of categorising students based on one characteristic (e.g., disability, gender, or religion), inclusion emphasises every student's right to participate. The present discourse suggests that the embracing of therapeutic epistemologies and practices in Finnish music education for children with disabilities has changed because of Figurenotes' support for students' meaningful participation.

Equity discourse: Achieving equity through special music education

The third discourse on special music education concerns educational equity. This discourse suggests that equity is the starting point for advancing an appreciation of all students' individuality. Vehmas and Mäkelä (2008) wrote that it is unclear whether naming and categorising differences in terms of, for example, educational needs automatically conflict with ideals like equity. The following account by the Figurenotes developer 2 describes how special music education can help change the mentality towards all students: "Special music education as a mindset guarantees that I appreciate the students' individuality and approach them as musicians from a wide perspective. This leads to actual learning and accessibility" (D2).

According to the equity discourse, special music education must be student-centred (i.e., based on understanding students' diverse identities, learning experiences, goals, and needs). At best, individualised learning tasks effectively connect students' current skill levels with the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in a balanced way and in a way most suitable for them. The following expert quotations exemplify this approach:

> [In special music education], the starting point is that you have to concentrate on the student and find ways she learns. It [the appreciation of individuality] is a starting point. I don't think special music education is something particular. (E3)

> It [special music education] is music education; the students are just different. I think it is so simple. I don't see any big differences. Maybe the learning paths are different or learning takes more time, but I think there is nothing special in special music education. (E5)

These quotations suggest that special music education can be a means to achieve all students' equitable access to music education by embracing their individual characteristics, needs and backgrounds. The experts feel that special music education does not contain any pedagogical approaches different from those of music education in general, nor do they think it should be understood as a method that can be applied only by professionals with backgrounds in special education.

When music education researchers Laes and Schmidt (2016) studied the practices of Resonaari (while also mentioning Figurenotes), they discovered that skilful education policymakers must find a "balance between meeting present needs and addressing future challenges" (p. 13). In relation to this balancing act, Schmidt (2015) stated that "It is important to note, then, that policy and social justice are both constantly permeated by questions of authority, deference, and legitimacy. Indeed, said questions often actively play a role in prescribing the normative boundaries of official forms of knowledge, which in turn qualify what is deemed appropriate, deviant, able, immoral, feasible, or utopian" (p. 78). This statement may apply to both special music education and music education in general.

A policy window opened through the "Figurenotes" case

Using Kingdon's (1984/2003) multiple streams framework as a theoretical lens for far-reaching conceptual change, the research identifies three streams that interact to produce a window of opportunity for agenda-setting in Finnish music education:

The problem stream: historically, the purpose and identity of BEA have been path-dependent (i.e., the system is based on the premise of students' development towards professionalism). This ethos has affected policies related to public funding, curriculum, and equity. Opportunities to participate in BEA music education vary among educational institutions (Koramo, 2009; Regional State Administrative Agencies, 2014; Tiainen et al., 2012) and are restricted for many people due to, for example, disabilities. This reality contradicts constitutional rights which state that everyone should be able to receive basic educational services (Constitution of Finland 731/1991, Section 16).

The policy stream: the use of Figurenotes has challenged the BEA system's narrow ethos by not only encouraging and advancing the participation of new student groups but also widening the scope of pedagogical practice. By offering students with cognitive and/or developmental disabilities access to education that is typically available only for students without disabilities, Figurenotes has challenged the prevailing views on the purpose of BEA music education and the sort of musical abilities it enfolds and wants to develop.

The politics stream: Figurenotes has prompted administrative changes with the Resonaari Music Centre joining the BEA system and achieving official music school status as well as government funding. The use of Figurenotes has allowed students with disabilities to successfully participate in BEA music education and, in some cases, pursue professional musicianship. Some of Resonaari's students have launched careers as nationally and

internationally well-known professional musicians.[5] Their success has presumably affected public opinion regarding equity in music and music education.

As described above, according to Kingdon (1984/2003), the three identified streams move through different channels and keep largely independent until, at a specific point in time, a policy window opens and the streams merge. Our analysis suggests that the policy window for a shift towards greater equity in Finnish music education is now open since the use of Figurenotes in Resonaari brought inequity issues to the institutional agenda and encouraged them to be addressed through the public policy process (see Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014; FNBE, 2017).

Discussion

In this article, a multiple streams framework was applied to analyse the Figurenotes notation system as a social innovation that has served as a basis for broader objectives within BEA music education. Within the multiple streams framework, Figurenotes has helped reveal a *problem stream* in the music education system: students with disabilities have been overlooked, and opportunities to access music education vary among educational institutions. The *policy stream* stems from a practical Figurenotes initiative, which has identified new ways of understanding and dealing with educational inequity. Finally, by paving the way for a different conceptualisation of special music education and for the establishment of Resonaari in the BEA system, Figurenotes has expanded general views on equity, inclusive educational possibilities, musicianship, and professionalism; collectively, these can be defined as the *political stream*.

Although this study's findings reveal ambivalent conceptions associated with special music education, the equity discourse indicates that Figurenotes has opened a policy window to centre the individuality and agency of each student; in the context of the Resonaari Music Centre, distinctions are not made between students who need special music education and those who do not. This aligns with the underlying goal of general music education

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5   A captivating showcase is the success of the internationally renowned punk band Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät (PKN), which became publicly renowned after participating in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2015 (YLE, 2015). All four members of this band have cognitive disabilities; three of them studied at the Resonaari Music Centre and achieved their instrumental skills with Figurenotes. Over the years, PKN has performed independently in various domestic and international venues. In addition, the group has been active in public speaking, particularly on disability rights, without receiving continuous assistance from outsiders. As a result, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006)–among other equity issues–was widely discussed in the Finnish media (HS, 3 March 2015; YLE, 4 March 2015). However, PKN's level of success and independence may present a skewed image of the social status and rights of people who have disabilities in Finland. All in all, the number of supported and public employment jobs available to individuals with disabilities remains low (Vesala et al., 2015). In the field of music, Resonaari Group is another well-known orchestra based on supported employment that performs as a group and gives concerts and music education workshops in Finnish universities.

to strengthen all students' individual learning paths: an approach in stark contrast to the narrow professional ethos employed in the BEA system.

One may question whether maintaining the category of special music education is still legitimate (Laes, 2017, p. 16), when various domestic and international education policy documents aim to promote accessible music education for everyone (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2002, 2004, 2014; Laes et al., 2018). Based on the discourse analysis, Figurenotes can be seen as a policy instrument for constructing music education that supports participation for everyone without categorising practices as special education.

Through the application of Figurenotes, Resonaari Music Centre has taken advantage of the autonomy that is assigned to individual BEA music schools and teachers through curriculum flexibility. Instead of building a segregated system for students with disabilities, the Resonaari Music Centre has developed practices that motivate teachers and academic communities to consider diversity and equity as means to advance the development of music education in general (e.g., Kivijärvi & Kaikkonen, 2015; Laes & Westerlund, 2017). This work has been characterised by various long- and short-term objectives: while the Centre is an established organisation with a music school that has been operating for over 20 years, it is also a project organisation that experiments and innovates with various collaborators, including teacher education programmes at universities. Furthermore, Resonaari is formulating practices and knowledge for the use of systems other than BEA. Finally, Resonaari breaks system boundaries through its financial management: unlike more traditional BEA institutions, the Centre has received funding from the City of Helsinki's cultural and social work departments (Laes & Schmidt, 2016). These are examples of how Resonaari has taken further advantage of existing policy windows within the BEA system – despite the limited marketing of Figurenotes – as part of the development of social innovation.

Another perspective on Resonaari's position in Finnish music education is that it legitimises the existence of a separate music school for students with disabilities that is not only exclusionary, but also prevents other educational institutions from developing their practices. Particularly in the metropolitan area, other institutions can guide potential students to Resonaari without reconsidering their own policies. All in all, the invention and application of Figurenotes has the potential to support a policy change towards equity in Finnish publicly funded music education. However, this potential may be undermined, as the application of Figurenotes can also support exclusion and the building of a parallel education system for people with disabilities. Given this drawback, music education policy processes should be developed with an understanding of the effects of Resonaari on equity rather than on special education. Accordingly, as the findings of the study exemplify, inclusion as a concept involves a paradox, as inclusion is always connected to exclusion and thus maintains segregation. Therefore, using equity as a starting point may offer a way forward in developing music education practices from the social justice standpoint. In the future,

recognising the wide variety of social initiatives launched by the Resonaari Centre and defining the connections among these initiatives could yield insights into decision-making processes by, for example, supporting a deeper understanding of the leverage points for change in the Finnish music education system.

Acknowledgments

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