Summary on the realisation and results of the MEOK Project

The Integrated Expertise within Special Music Education Project (MEOK Project 1.10.2012 – 30.9.2013) was carried out in the Northern Savo region. The Music and Dance (Musita) Department, Savonia University carried the main responsibility for the realisation of the project, together with the Kuopio Department of the Sibelius Academy within the University of Arts Helsinki and the Kuopio Music Conservatoire.

The aims of the project were to improve and revise know-how, working practices and methods, used by music professionals (i.e. music pedagogues, music educators, school teachers, church musicians and other people who use music in their educational or rehabilitation work). Increased use of special pedagogy in music in their working environments was also sought. The environments include music schools and institutes, schools, music education within church parishes, and various facilities of health care and the caring industry. The project also aimed to develop new methods and produce innovative ideas. The project had four specific goals, namely: to encourage entrepreneurship, to improve possibilities of different (atypical) learners and special needs groups to be engaged in music and to be allowed to take part in music activities, to produce learning materials in this field, and to publish these materials on a publicly accessible web site. An additional goal was to intensify co-operation between the educational establishments that are housed in the Kuopio Music Centre.

The project was carried out within six operation forms: further education, short courses, development of music teacher training, development of working methods and instruments, virtual services, enhancement of interaction and networking between music professionals and representatives of the world of work and employment. The main emphasis was on revising earlier knowledge and skills, passing on know-how, life-long learning, learning in work, further development of the job contents of the trainees of project, and finally, development of the working forms in the field of music.

The know-how the project provided in special music pedagogy entailed professional diversification of the participants and reasserted their position on the labour market. The project enabled the educational establishments involved to improve the teaching content, thus boosting their competitive position on a national scale. During the project, several new working methods were developed in order to satisfy the needs revealed in practical work, and, in the course of time, these methods may be conducive to new professions (e.g. community musician).

As a result of the project, the 20 students who took part in the further training course will make good use of the methods of special music pedagogy in their own fields of work. Also professionals working within rehabilitation, education and music who participated in short-term training courses will develop their operation methods based on their newly acquired know-how. A total of 440 people took part in various training events and the concluding seminar.

Thanks to the project, special music pedagogy and special needs groups’ instruction is now regarded as one field of extensive professional competence of a music pedagogue. The syllabus of a music pedagogue in the University of Applied Science will allow a student to choose special needs pedagogy oriented training practice and thesis, and entrepreneurial activities in different working environments. From now on, as well
as introducing a new elective training programme (Advanced professional studies within special music pedagogy (12+28 credits), the syllabus will offer also the following courses: Introduction to applied music pedagogy (3 credits) and various contexts of pedagogy (5 credits). In the future, a wider range of competence in music pedagogy will be an essential for church musicians and music educators, as it can be capitalised on not only in the traditional learning environments, but also in early childhood education units and in social and health care facilities.

The most significant issue in the training events was to increase and make use of the trainees’ musical skills. The project engendered a new attitudinal and methodical readiness for the promotion of musical equality. By analysing and structuring experiences and results, gained in practical work, the project produced applied research-based information and working models that represent an interesting theme for further research.

The materials produced during the project are freely available on the project’s web site at meok.savonia.fi. These materials include information about methods, working forms and good practices in special music pedagogy, as well as individually tailored music teaching. The web site took shape in interactive process with its users, and it is updatable and easily accessed. By the end of the project, the site had had nearly 8000 visitors.

Working life partners of the project formed eventually an extensive network thanks to the earlier working life contacts of the trainers and trainees, and due to active spreading of information. The educational establishments that were involved in the project have been able to further exploit this network in their own work. The concluding seminar of the project “Music belongs everywhere” on 12 April 2013 was met with enthusiasm and it drew 140 attendees from all over Finland. Successful realisation of the seminar, which received contented feedback, was a demonstration of fluent co-operation.

The Integrated Expertise within Special Music Education Project was based on joint know-how between Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Kuopio Music Conservatoire and the Sibelius Academy of the University of Arts Helsinki, and the willingness within these organisations to lead the way in developing inclusive music pedagogy.