

# The Magic of One-Day Music Camps: How Reproduce the Magic in Academia?

Hanne Haave, Ole Jørgen Ranglund, Tone Vold, Carl-Henrik Wahl and Jonas Holteberg Jensen

University of Inland Norway, Rena, Norway

[Hanne.haave@inn.no;](mailto:Hanne.haave@inn.no;)  
[Ole.ranglund@inn.no;](mailto:Ole.ranglund@inn.no;)  
[Tone.vold@inn.no;](mailto:Tone.vold@inn.no;)  
[Carl-henrik.wahl@inn.no;](mailto:Carl-henrik.wahl@inn.no;)  
[Jonas.jensen@inn.no](mailto:Jonas.jensen@inn.no;)

**Abstract:** Music camps are intensive one-day seminars where students are tasked with creating lyrics, composing melodies, and producing a song within 11 hours. This experience is demanding for both the students and the faculty. Faculty members must be experienced and adept at monitoring the progress of the various groups, providing different inputs based on each group's advancement. The music camps follow a sequence of activities designed to facilitate song development and production within the given time frame. Over three years of longitudinal study on the music camp practice during the first year of the Bachelor program in Music Business and Production at the Business School of the University of Inland Norway, students have unanimously agreed that it is a highly effective learning experience. Is this possible to utilize in other parts of academia? What needs to be considered if this approach is to be successfully implemented? Hence, how can this approach be applied to other courses and curricula? In this paper we explore the possibilities and seek to suggest some possible solutions for successful integration it into different curricula.

**Keywords:** Reflective practice, Knowledge sharing, Supervision, Evaluation

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## 1. Introduction

The Bachelor of Music Business and Production program at the University of Inland Norway provides students with a comprehensive education that prepares them for various roles in the music industry, such as artists, singer-songwriters, managers or producers. A key pedagogical feature introduced in this program is the organization of one-day music camps. These camps begin at 10:00 AM with a presentation of the "theme of the day" and conclude with a listening session where students receive feedback on their work, which should include a song recording and lyrics. Throughout the day, students receive feedback and guidance to aid their development.

Students report that these pedagogical approaches have significantly enhanced their understanding of the curriculum (Vold et al., 2022). However, it is not only the students who benefit; the lecturers have also become reflective practitioners by examining their own behaviours, actions, and practices (Vold et al., 2024). This process resembles action research, where both researchers and participants engage in a co-generative learning experience (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

Another aspect discussed about these camps is how they simulate the "real world." Students in the Bachelor program gain valuable experiences that they can carry into their future careers. Observing this pedagogical activity over several years and recognizing its impact on student learning outcomes led to the idea of applying its framework to other courses beyond the Bachelor of Music Business and Production. To explore this possibility, a detailed analysis of the activity and its specific features was necessary.

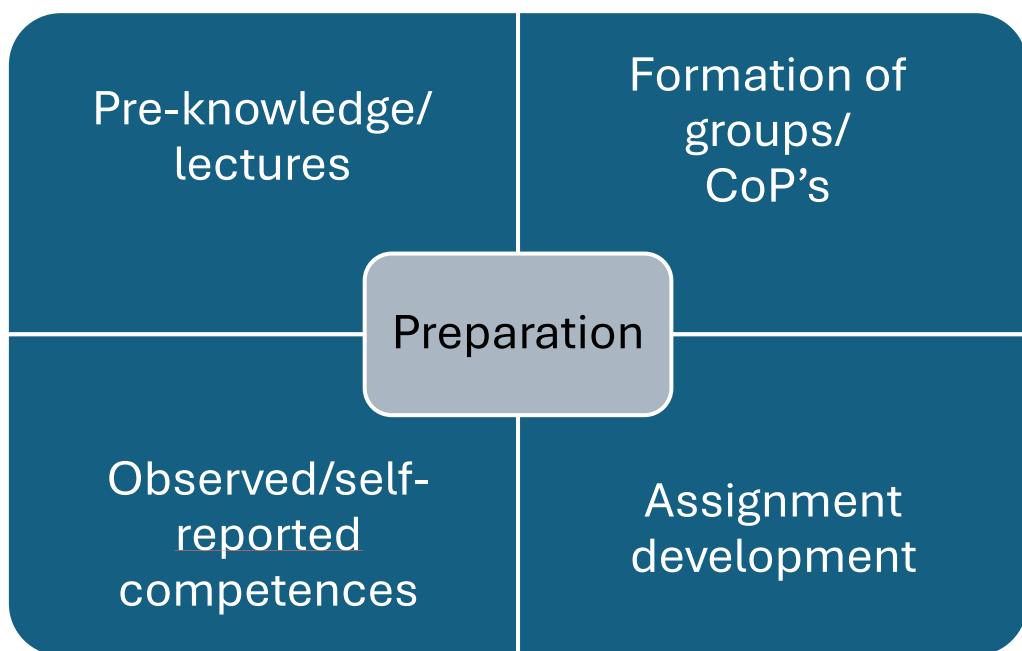
### 1.1 The Camps

The major outline of the activity is about preparations prior to the camp, then to conduct the camp, and then there were reflective activities to evaluate the camp:



**Figure 1: Outline of pedagogical activity**

These activities contain sub-activities. The prior preparation includes an overview of the participants and dividing them into groups based on their (self-reported and observed competencies), and sometimes to lecture on a certain genre and then prepare an assignment based on the learning take aways from the lecture:



**Figure 2: Preparation phase**

The camp typically begins at 10 AM and concludes at 9 PM. The lecturers' activities include presenting the assignment, supervising student progress, evaluating the work, providing feedback, and conducting a brief reflective summary after the camp. For the students, the focus is on interpreting the assignment, collaborating with peers in designated groups to develop a song with lyrics that adhere to the genre's "rules," and submitting the completed work.

**Table 1: Timetable for camp**

Approx. time	Activity – lecturers	Activity - students
10AM – 10.30 AM	Presentation of assignment and outline of the day	Receiving and Interpreting assignment
10.30 AM – 7PM	Supervision based on experiences from previous camps	Working on the assignment in the designated groups
7PM		Handing in the product(s)
7PM-8PM	Evaluate products to provide feedback	
8PM – 9PM	Listening session with feedback	Listening session with feedback
9PM	Round up	

The reflection that occurs after the camp is an activity initiated by the researchers. Lecturers have found this very beneficial, as it has contributed to their development as reflective practitioners (Vold et al., 2024). In fact, their awareness of the timelines, students should follow to complete their tasks has improved, enhancing their understanding of the processes involved in song development.

## 1.2 Research Question

Our research is ongoing, and we are still investigating possible implementations and therefore, we have still not obtained satisfying answers to all our questions. Our primary research question is:

*How can the camp activity be implemented in other courses?*

This leads to additional practical questions:

- What curriculum would be suitable for this type of activity? (RQ 1)
- What constraints will apply to the different activities (as shown in Figure 1)? (RQ2)
- What supervision guidelines should be established for the activities in this particular course curriculum within a camp setting? (RQ3)

Additionally, since the research on music camps has supported the lecturers' growth as reflective practitioners, another question arises:

- How can reflection processes after the camps be integrated into the overall program, rather than being isolated as a research activity? (RQ 4)

In the following sections, we will present the theoretical framework that has informed our study, followed by an explanation of our data collection methods. We will then present our results and discussion before concluding and suggesting areas for further research.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

Here we will present the theory that has enlightened our study.

### 2.1 Communities of Practice

The groups can resemble communities of practice, as they are organized based on self-reported and lecturer-observed skills relevant to the tasks at hand. Each group must possess diverse skills, as few individuals excel in all areas. Therefore, the groups require members to produce, write lyrics, and develop melodies. Depending on the task, one person may be central to the community, while others will participate legitimately on the periphery (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Consequently, lecturers must tailor supervision to the various individuals within the group.

Translating this concept to different course settings means having a detailed overview of the tasks and their components. Tasks may consist of parts that require specialized competencies or skills, necessitating groups composed of students with diverse abilities. This means students must be informed about the required competencies and skills to self-report, and lecturers must observe these skills if possible.

Music Camp and its organization function as a "training ground," according to Senge (1992). It highlights how organizations establish setups for practice and reflection on results. "Such training grounds are integral to core activities in music, theater, sports, and certain professions that use simulation as practice through specialized laboratories. A cockpit crew, for example, can learn critical skills in safe environments using simulators. The genuine learning advantage is the ability to test new methods and approaches without the risk of negative outcomes" (Paulsen, 2021).

Activities at Music Camp closely align with Paulsen's theory of groups as learning workshops (Paulsen, 2021). Natural arenas for testing ideas are not always accessible to those not established in the music industry, often leading to uncertainty and risk. Having access to environments where one can test, experiment, and learn—even from mistakes—is undoubtedly beneficial. Music Camp serves as a training ground where practice situations can be explored through trial and error. Developing knowledge about what works and doesn't in a supportive group environment fosters psychological safety, a crucial prerequisite for learning.

The figure below illustrates a possible way of working within the groups. By analysing the problem, proposing solutions, selecting and testing a few ideas, and then discussing the outcomes (experience sharing), students can generate ideas for moving forward.

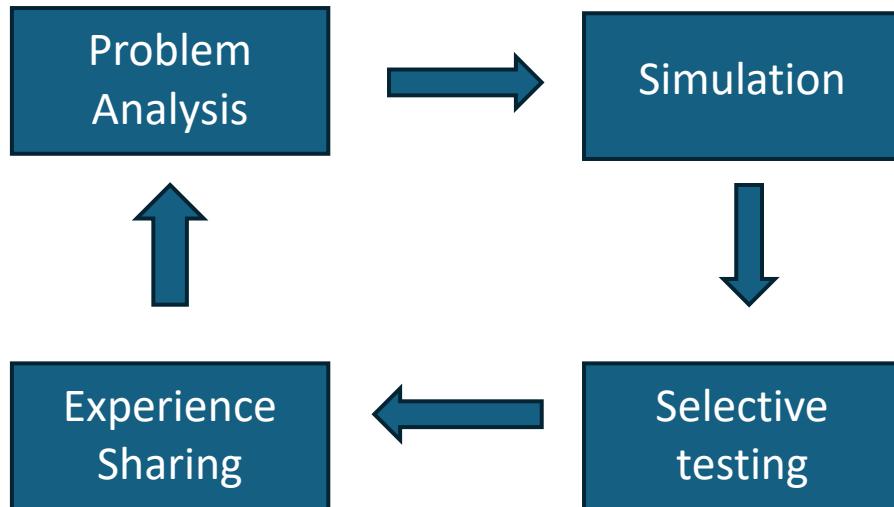


Figure 3: Adapted from Paulsen (2019)

## 2.2 Dialogue

Working in groups, or "communities," requires dialogue. In the music camps, this dialogue is structured by the lecturers, who establish rules for group interaction. The most prominent rule is to avoid negativity towards emerging ideas. If a group member disagrees, they must explain their reasoning in a friendly manner and offer a counter-suggestion. This ensures that all ideas are considered rather than being immediately dismissed. The dialogue resembles a democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 1985, Gustavsen, 2016), where participants are equals and engage in give-and-take interactions to "generate decisions that provide platforms for joint action" (p. 190). Democratic dialogue also involves encouraging active participation from all group members and recognizing when another argument may be superior to one's own (Gustavsen, 2016). These moments from Gustavsen (2016) are largely in accordance with several of Habermas's 5 principles of good communication, where the first requirement is generality. The participants cannot exclude anyone who has an interest in the matter concerned. The second is autonomy. All parties expect to have the same possibilities to express their opinions and criticize the validity of others' statements. The third requirement is about ideal role taking. The members of the group must be willing to understand others' validity. The fourth requirement is power neutrality. The difference of power must be neutralized among the participants. The fifth requirement is transparency. All parties must be open about their goals and aims, and avoid strategic operations such as hidden agendas, manipulation and power struggle (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003). Establishing psychological safety is crucial for enabling this dialogue (Edmondson et al., 2016). This should be part of the community's rules and can also be integrated into how lectures are organized in the traditional classroom setting. Creating a "safe environment" for active participation in both digital and physical classrooms is essential.

## 2.3 The Importance of Reflection

Reflection is essential to learning. Teaching students about reflection and its impact on comprehension and development is crucial. According to Di Stefano et al. (2016), reflection enhances one's "ability to deal with a task" and improves "understanding of the task to drive actual performance."

Kolb (1984), building on Dewey (1938), described the "experiential learning cycle," where active experimentation requires abstract conceptualization and reflection to achieve learning outcomes. Moon (2004b) defined reflective learning or writing in an academic or educational context as involving a deliberate and clearly defined purpose, with intended outcomes related to learning, action, or clarification. This process often begins with an explanation of the reflection's purpose or subject matter and usually culminates in a documented form, such as a written piece, which is shared with others and subject to evaluation. These elements can significantly influence the nature and quality of the reflective exercise.

Donald Schön's seminal work has laid the foundation for understanding reflection. His exploration of the reflective practitioner and the timing and methods of reflection has profoundly impacted our comprehension of reflection as a learning tool. Reflecting in, and on, learning—whether in action, on action, or on action in action (Schön, 1987, Schön, 1991)—has proven invaluable for translating learning into a work setting.

Therefore, it is vital to facilitate reflective processes to support learning in a way that allows students to apply their knowledge effectively in their workplaces.

### **3. Methodological Approach**

The work and discussions presented in this paper are the result of research and reflection conducted over several years (2021-2025). We are a group of three researchers who have been studying a BA-degree program in music business and production, focusing primarily on the music camps component. In their second academic year, the program organizes five camps. Each student group consists of approximately 20-25 students, and while the groups change annually, the teaching team of 4-5 instructors remains consistent.

Our research has employed a qualitative approach using a longitudinal design, observing the teaching program at all stages of the music camps (Patton, 2002). In addition to observations, we have conducted formal recorded semi-structured interviews and informal individual conversations. This includes group discussions with both students and teachers during the sessions (Patton, 2002, Dalen, 2011). Between sessions, we engaged in informal conversations and interviews with some of the teachers to facilitate discussions and learning reflections. Through these interactions, we gained insight into the organization and structures that underpin the music camps' practices.

To explore how the concept of these camps can be adapted to different academic settings, we have chosen to interview students and engage in discussions among ourselves as researchers. Given our involvement in teaching various courses across different study programs, we bring diverse perspectives on implementing this pedagogical activity.

Regarding the focus of this paper, it is also important to highlight the skills and experience we have accumulated as teachers over many decades. This expertise enables us to apply the experiences gained from the music camps to other academic practices.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The results of the investigations indicate that students greatly enjoy the music camps and achieve significant learning outcomes from them. They emphasize the importance of having group members with diverse qualifications, which mirrors the dynamics found in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), where different types of knowledge can be applied to various components of the tasks.

Students also report that the strict communication rules have been beneficial. Since they are familiar with one another and have collaborated in the classroom, they have established the psychological safety (Edmondson et al., 2016) necessary for leveraging the camps as a pedagogical tool. However, there remains a need to remind them of the rules about refraining from negative comments on suggestions and only discarding ideas when the group collectively agrees on a better alternative. This aligns with Gustavsen's (2016) concept of democratic dialogue, which fosters the development of novel ideas into potential final outcomes.

Our observations have highlighted several additional issues that warrant attention. For instance, there may be differing motivations for engaging in tasks during a camp. Bachelor students in the music production program are likely to possess a passion for music and have developed artistic creativity. Consequently, their motivation to participate in a camp may be driven by both intrinsic factors (such as the desire to be creative) and extrinsic factors (such as mandatory attendance). In contrast, students enrolled in less creative programs may exhibit greater external motivations compared to internal ones. This discrepancy may influence how students approach tasks within the camp, necessitating greater effort from the instructor to foster student engagement.

A more instrumental approach may be required to support motivation. While intrinsic motivation promotes learning as students engage in activities for their own sake, extrinsic motivation, which involves providing incentives, can also facilitate their development (Valerio, 2012). This aspect should be further explored through the framework of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

Additionally, we have observed that students exhibit hesitance when it comes to presenting in the classroom. In the context of the music camp, the presentation of a product is significant, as it fosters interpersonal connections among students and enables them to evaluate their own performance in relation to their peers. However, it appears that some students are reluctant to speak publicly, presenting a concern that must also be addressed.

In the following sections, we will endeavor to address the various research questions we have posed:

*Regarding Suitable Curriculum (RQ1):*

The lecturers have proposed curricula that connect with students' professional lives, including organizational theory, learning organizations, knowledge management, and qualitative methods. These subjects allow students to build on prior experiences (Dewey, 1938). Consequently, this makes it easier for them to relate the curriculum to their existing knowledge and follow Kolb's experiential learning cycle in theory, though not in practice (Kolb, 1984).

*Regarding Applicable Constraints (RQ2):*

The lecturers emphasize the necessity of preparing students and designing assignments so that they are perceived as relevant. They express concerns about how to observe students when suggesting group formations. Allowing students to organize groups independently reduces the lecturers' control over the diversity of skills and knowledge within the Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

*Regarding Supervision (RQ3):*

The lecturers believe they need to conduct some testing to effectively organize supervision, as they lack experience with ensuring students in the beforementioned curricula can complete assignments within the camp's scope.

While students recognize the significance of reflection in learning (Moon, 2004a, Moon, 2004b, Schön, 1987, Schön, 1991), they admit to not spending enough time on reflective practices, nor do lecturers emphasize it sufficiently.

*Addressing Reflection (RQ4):*

These issues must be tackled by the teachers and facilitated both during and after the camp. It is crucial for teachers to agree on facilitation methods and develop questions that encourage reflective processes (Schön, 1987, Schön, 1991).

Students are hesitant to suggest that this educational activity could be applied to other courses. This may stem from the intrinsic link between the camps and the creative process of music development, making it difficult for them to envision this pedagogical approach in a broader context. They also do not offer suggestions for other courses where camps could be implemented, indicating a challenge in conceptualizing the broader potential and application of camps.

Conversely, researchers and lecturers involved in the music camps are more inclined to see them as a valuable pedagogical tool. This perspective may arise from viewing the groups as akin to teams or even communities of practice, enabling broader implementation possibilities. One suggestion that emerged was to apply this approach in courses such as Knowledge Management and Qualitative Research Methods. However, these suggestions involve shorter camps of 2-3 hours, while maintaining the same guidelines for execution and supervision.

#### **4.1 Suggested Outline of Utilization of "Camps" in Other Courses**

Our recommendations for using camps as a pedagogical tool begin with a facilitative introduction to the course. The teacher should clarify the course objectives, explain the rationale behind the chosen pedagogical approaches, and initiate the students into reflective exercises.

Observing students during group work is crucial, and this can be integrated into the lecture sessions. Additionally, having students self-report on their experiences and problem-solving methods can be beneficial for organizing groups during the camps. While students typically form their own groups, it has been essential in the music camps to ensure diverse expertise within each group.

Establishing psychological safety in the classroom is also important (Edmondson et al., 2016), and in that connection it's important that the person responsible for teaching actively works to establish a safe culture. This can be achieved by setting communication rules aligned with the principles of democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 2016). Introducing Paulsen's (2021) suggested approach (see Figure 3) can further promote a positive atmosphere for group work.

To introduce the "camps," a case can be developed beforehand with student input or by inviting an organization to propose issues for resolution.

As the groups, now resembling communities of practice, get to work, lecturers need to stay aware of their progress and timing throughout the process. Encouraging reflection is key to fostering reflection in action and on action in action (Schön, 1987, Schön, 1991).

When the session concludes, it is important for students to present their results. As an additional task, they should be encouraged to reflect on their outcomes and consider how these results might be implemented in an organization. They could also be challenged to reflect on their process.

## 5. Conclusion

Although the students did not propose other applications for camps as a pedagogical tool, the teachers offered ideas that we deemed worthy of further exploration. Drawing from our theoretical foundation, observations, interviews with both students and teachers, and longitudinal research, we have developed an outline for implementing a camp in other courses. We recommend initially testing this approach either as a voluntary activity or in a condensed format (2-3 hours) before introducing full-day camps in other courses. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of evaluating the various outcomes of this initiative. In this way teachers can engage in a co-generative learning process with the students.

### 5.1 Further Studies

The proposed shorter version of a camp will be tested in the autumn of 2025 in the courses "Learning Organizations" and "Qualitative Research Methods." In-depth interviews will be conducted with the students participating in the camps to assess their perceptions of the camps' relevance to their own workplaces, their learning outcomes, and their overall views on this classroom approach.

We must also address the challenges encountered related to motivation and reluctance to present and propose strategies to effectively manage these issues.

**Ethics declaration:** All participants in the study have been informed about the use of the data and of their rights to withdraw their statements and for each project we have referred to, an application to our ethics committee have been sent and approved.

**AI declaration:** We declare that this paper is written by the authors and that the content is original and not produced by using AI tools. However, in order to ensure that the standard of English is met, we have used an AI tool for proof reading.

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