



Research paper

Third space moments: Exploring a university-school partnership through collaborative action research

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ABSTRACT

This article explores multi-stakeholder practices of negotiating and delivering a partnership model, including pre-service teachers. The authors discuss how third spaces can be jointly created in teacher education partnerships including pre-service teachers. In particular, issues regarding expertise as well as possible disruption of existing knowledge, understandings, and practices are explored. Results show that third spaces could be difficult to establish and maintain as continuous and lasting experiences within fixed educational structures. Informed by ideas of place-based pedagogy, the authors suggest an expanded and temporal understanding of third space in teacher education, that of third space moments.

1. Introduction

Partnerships between universities, schools, municipalities, and other stakeholders are increasingly considered essential to the success of teacher education (Farrell, 2021; Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Mutton et al., 2018; Smith, 2016), and international policy documents on teacher education identify partnerships as crucial for improved teacher education (Council of the European Union, 2014; OECD, 2019). Teacher education is frequently criticised for a disconnect between theory and practice, as well as among different sub-disciplines (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Smith, 2016). Partnership between universities and schools as well as other stakeholders is commonly identified as a way of bridging gaps and establishing connections among different domains (Farrell, 2021; Flores, 2016; Korthagen, 2010; Ma & Green, 2023; Trepper et al., 2023; Zeichner, 2010). Further, an important vantage point for partnership ambitions in teacher education is the wish to navigate complex professional situations while also trying to avoid fixed notions of expertise (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011a, 2011b; Williams, 2014).

Expertise has traditionally been perceived as knowledge and skills belonging to professional domains, and the boundaries built by professionals to mark their own expertise (Risan, 2022). Expertise, then, is often seen as vertical and hierarchical, thus making it possible to distinguish one profession from another (Abbott, 2005), those who are experts from those who are not, as well as whose expertise counts or not

(Daza et al., 2021). Recent teacher education research, however, points to a need for integrated forms of knowledge and expertise within teacher education (Risan, 2022), thus opening up transformative opportunities for all participants in partnerships (Beck, 2018), the potential to negotiate professional identities (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013; Zeichner, 2010), as well as possibilities for boundary crossing (Williams, 2013). Educational partnerships could therefore potentially create so-called 'hybrid' or 'third spaces', which are joint spaces of deliberation where different knowledge, expertise and identities can intersect and possibly take new forms (Beck, 2018; Daza et al., 2021; Gutierrez, 2008; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Trepper et al., 2023; Zeichner, 2010). An important precondition for the emergence of such spaces, however, seems to be the disruption of existing authority and hierarchies within professional collaborations (Cook, 2016; Daza et al., 2021; Zeichner, 2010).

This article seeks to expand the ongoing conversations about partnerships as third spaces. Previous studies tend to explore university-school partnerships and hierarchies between mentors and pre-service teachers. Often, however, community experts are also involved in partnerships with schools, yet community-based knowledge is often disregarded in teacher education research (Zeichner et al., 2015; Dobber et al., 2012).

In this article we critically discuss negotiations of expertise and joint creation of third spaces in multi-professional partnerships. In situating the study within the field of music education in a Norwegian school

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placement context, we explore the concept of third space within the multi-stakeholder practices of negotiating and delivering a partnership model within a classroom setting that involved music teachers, pre-service teachers, a community expert (musician) and teacher educators/researchers. Our research questions were: What kind of expertise appeared during classroom collaboration, and how can partnerships potentially disrupt existing knowledge, understandings, and practices?

2. The Norwegian context

The current study is situated within a Norwegian lower secondary school during the practicum placement periods (a total of six weeks) of four pre-service teachers in their second year. To provide contextual information, we will briefly describe the Norwegian school system and initial teacher education.

Compulsory schooling in Norway is ten years (ages 6 to 16), and 96 % of pupils in Norway are enrolled in state schools (Udir, 2019). Although allotted relatively few hours compared with other subjects, music is part of the national curriculum and is taught in all grades. Approximately half of those teaching music in the Norwegian compulsory school have formal qualifications in the subject (Perlic, 2019), and teaching music in lower secondary school teaching requires a minimum of 30 ECTS¹ credits, which is the equivalent of a half-year of full study.

Teacher education in Norway is delivered by universities and university colleges. It has undergone many reforms and reorganisation over the last few decades, and far more than comparable areas of education (Advisory Panel for Teacher Education, 2020, p. 34). Moving from a three-year education where students were broadly qualified to teach many subjects on most levels, a 2011 reform required that pre-service teachers enrolled either in a programme for lower and upper primary teaching (grades 1–7), or for upper primary and lower secondary teaching (grades 5–10). A new teacher education model was implemented again in 2017, the main purpose of which was to professionalise teacher education by improving subject knowledge, improving research & development in both teacher education and the practice field, and by connecting theoretical and practical dimensions of education (Skagen & Elstad, 2020). From 2017, teacher education was made to be a 5-year education with an integrated master's degree. This degree includes mandatory courses in pedagogy as well specialising in 3–4 school subjects of the pre-service teachers' choice. There are several options available regarding the choice of master thesis subject: Pre-service teachers can choose to continue one of their school subjects, or choose a more general orientation, like pedagogy or special education. The pre-service teachers participating in this study were all second-year students enrolled in the 5–10 program with music as one of their subjects but had not yet selected their master thesis subject.

The 2017 teacher education reform connects to what is called the 'university/research' turn within teacher education, where increased emphasis on research and academic skills is considered essential to teacher education improvement (Cochran-Smith, 2016). Considering that teacher education has also been criticised for a theory-practice-divide, it is not surprising that the university/research-turn in Norwegian teacher education also comes with a 'practice turn', reflecting the assumption that better university-school collaborations are considered essential for teacher education quality (Murray, 2016). Official Norwegian educational strategies are increasingly highlighting partnerships (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2018) and pre-service teachers' participation in such collaborations (Advisory Panel for Teacher Education, 2020; Faglig råd for lærerutdanning, 2020). This article seeks to contribute further to this development.

¹ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used by most European countries as their national credit system.

3. Partnerships as possible third spaces

When Bhabha first introduced the concept of 'third space', it was premised on the notion of 'hybridity'. Using a stairwell as a metaphor for the interaction of individuals and cultures, Bhabha writes:

... the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994, p. 5).

Within third spaces, identities are constructed and reconstructed as 'hybrid', as a response to the specific context in question but also because of reciprocity within relationships. The third space can thus function as a neutral ground, where tacit and taken-for-granted knowledge in one's own culture or field is made explicit through questioning from others. A joint space for deliberation may therefore appear, and new knowledge may be created. Edward Soja pushed the concept even further to explore how third space opens both a perceived (real) space as well as an imagined or conceived space. Thus, a third space has 'unlimited scope' to re-interpret 'real' spaces into spaces of new possibilities and meanings (Soja, 1996, p. 311). The concept of third space has also been used to explore hybrid and multi-voiced learning contexts since the 90s (see for example Engeström et al., 1995; Gutierrez et al., 1997; Gutierrez et al., 1999), and was later coupled with professional teacher education practice by Kenneth Zeichner (2010). It has since been frequently used in research about participatory and collaborative approaches to professional teacher education practice, mainly regarding university-school partnerships (Daza et al., 2021) and particularly denoting a reflective space in-between actual educational, epistemological, and professional spaces.

Beck (2018), for example, describes a teacher education system that privileges first- and second-space programmes whereby theory and research are completely dismissed in the first, and community/school knowledge and values are not recognised in the second. In a self-study, Flessner (2014, p. 242) describes third spaces as providing "opportunity to return to the first and second spaces to implement changes devised within the reflective third space". Studying Chinese and Spanish student teachers, Quin et al. (2021) used the concept of third space to investigate how student teachers navigated the transition from university to placement schools, particularly how they negotiated and bridged the theory-practice divide. In a study of a UK university-school partnership, Jackson and Burch (2018) highlights the role of a boundary broker (in their study an experienced teacher educator), who helped negotiate and facilitate third spaces as interactive spaces where new meanings could be generated and explored.

Research on partnerships in teacher education highlights the potential offered through such third spaces, but also challenges related to tensions and conflicts, professional dissonance, differing expectations, changing roles and identities, lack of trust, asymmetrical power relations, and authoritarian expert knowledge (See Andreasen, 2023; Daza et al., 2021; Klein et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2011; Zeichner, 2010). Arts education research, too, frequently finds that creative partnerships in the form of teacher-artist collaborations are fraught with tensions (Christophersen & Kenny, 2018; Christophersen, 2013; Kenny and Morrissey, 2021). Researching school-community partnerships, Ishimaru (2019) grounds their work in the necessity of creating equitable collaborations between schools and the "outer world". Another study (Farrell et al., 2019) suggests that the institution hosting external partners need to be equipped with what they call "absorptive capacity", that is, the ability to absorb or take up new kinds of knowledge. An absorptive capacity, however, is no guarantee for escaping hierarchies. On the contrary, Ridgeway and Yarrick (2016) found in their study of a school-community STEM partnership involving a local artist, that the community expert immediately positioned themselves as the authority. The results from this study corroborate arts education studies finding

that artist-teacher relations have traditionally been asymmetrical, positioning the artist as holding the power of definition, and teachers accepting and even expecting such asymmetrical relationships (Christophersen, 2013; Christophersen & Kenny, 2018; Holdhus, 2014). Bringing a musician to a school research project is therefore more than just adding a “community representative”, it brings with it a classical conundrum of art versus pedagogy (Bourdieu, 1996; Brinck, 2018).

The openness embedded in the spaces described by Bhabha and Soja resonates with ideas of boundary crossing, which happens when professionals navigate unfamiliar situations and ‘face the challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from different contexts to achieve hybrid situations’ (Engeström et al., 1995, p. 319). A hybrid space is by nature broad, multi-voiced, multi-dimensional and non-hierarchical (Gutierrez et al., 1999; Martin et al., 2011). Notwithstanding the transformative potential of partnerships in education, rigid perceptions of professional expertise could hamper potential hybrid spaces (Taylor et al., 2014; Zeichner, 2010), and third spaces could be difficult to fulfil and sustain over time (Lillejord & Børte, 2016).

University-school partnerships can offer fertile ground for openness to be nurtured; by their very nature, they involve ‘thirding’ through multiple stakeholders within a new partnership space, thus possibly allowing professional contributions and growth for all participants (Andreasen, 2023). Whether such partnerships become third spaces, however, requires stakeholders to be open to negotiation, and new ways of thinking and acting. Individual relations and negotiations may not be enough, however, if the political and institutional conditions do not facilitate the development of third spaces.

In this study, we bring ideas about third spaces into conversation with place-based learning. Within place-based learning relationships, temporal activities are essential (Somerville, 2010). Ellsworth (2005) grounds ‘spaces’ to be more context-dependent within ‘places’, seeing the learning within them to be ‘embodied experiences’. Ellsworth (2005, p. 37) advocates for such learning experiences to be inter-relational, putting ‘the inside and outside in relation’ so that learners can gain increased sensitivity to the context they are learning within, while also being receptive to self-change through relational ways of interacting (see also Ma & Green, 2023). Through such a lens, partnerships can create highly immersive, collaborative, contextualised third spaces within which to (de)construct knowledge, make meaning and inform identities (Kenny, 2021). Ellsworth further describes ‘pedagogical pivot points’ as facilitating ‘moments of becoming’ or, ‘the force through which we come to have the surprising, incomplete knowings, ideas and sensations that undo us and set us in motion towards an open future’ (Ellsworth, 2005, pp. 17–18). These moments, ‘pedagogy’s hinge’, are when persons experience their own learning or knowledge, but not as a thing: ‘The pivoting moment speaks to the becoming, learning self, the self in movement and in relation to the outside’ (Sojot, 2018, p. 895). Such moments can be characterised by hesitation or stuttering (Ellsworth, 2005, pp. 64–65), where habitual responses are disturbed, which again may disrupt fixed and hierarchical notions of learning, teaching, and expertise (Sojot, 2018). Third spaces can thus be seen as transitional in-between spaces of learning, characterised by movement, emergence, and uncertainty. Importantly, they are conceptualised in this article as ‘moments’, adding a further consideration of and emphasis on third space experiences as not only spatial, but also as temporal experiences.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Collaborative action research

The study’s design was inspired by a collaborative approach to action research. Collaborative action research (CAR) is typically characterised by a joint effort of investigating problems of mutual concern involving various parties (Day & Hadfield, 2004; Somekh, 2006). The team is considered “a collaborative group who work together to address issues of concern to all of them striving for openness, the development of

Table 1

Study participants.

Pre-service teachers	Hollis, Israel, Phoenix, and Ramsey
Main music teacher	Charlie
School co-teachers	Armani and Skyler
Musician	Lennon
Researchers and university teacher educators	Justice and Quinn

shared meanings, equality of esteem and equity of involvement” (Locke et al., 2013, p. 114). Participants are seen as equal contributors with specific competencies and roles (McNiff, 2013, p. 23). CAR projects are typically designed and carried out by collective discussion and effort. As such, CAR aligns with the purpose of striving for more horizontal and hybrid situations, in which expertise and professional identity can be negotiated and developed among all participants.

4.2. Recruitment

The study took place in two 9th grade music classrooms during student teacher practicum periods (three weeks in October 2019 and three weeks in February 2020). The pupils were 14–15 years old, and there were approximately 28 pupils in each class. The school was recruited through an existing university-municipality partnership agreement. An initial meeting with the music teachers and the school’s head of department revealed a wish to work with digital composing in the classroom as a means of professional development. A freelance musician was hired to participate in the study, and four pre-service teachers self-selected to participate after having attended a voluntary information meeting about the project. Practicum coordinators from the university were involved and facilitated the process by placing the four pre-service teachers in the same practicum group. A total of 10 people participated in the project.

As shown in Table 1, the participants in the study selected gender neutral names for themselves, and so we will use the pronouns ‘them’/ ‘they’ within the discussion. The two researchers/university educators are the first two authors of this article, while the third author functioned both as critical friend during analysis as well as a co-author of this article.

4.3. Data generation

The classroom work took place in 9th grade in Emerson lower secondary school, where the music teacher team had previously decided that the project should include composing with digital tools. Before entering the school, the whole team had explored various software and decided to use a digital audio workstation (DAW²) for creative work in the classroom.

The first cycle of events took place during the student music teachers fall practicum placement at Emerson Hill. The classroom work was structured around a four-step lesson plan³ that covered basic software features. The plan provided a basis for comparison between two software options, and having tried both DAWs, the team decided on *Soundtrap*. The work in Cycle 1 moved back and forth between plenary and individual work: The musician demonstrated software basics in front of the class, the pupils spread out in the school’s music department

² A DAW is a software for multitrack audio recording, mixing, and editing that is used to make music in settings that can range from a professional studio to a bedroom studio. Well-known DAWs are *Ableton Live*, *Pro-Tools*, *Logic*, *Cubase*, *Cakewalk*, *Garageband*, and *Audacity*, to mention but a few. For this specific purpose, the possibilities were narrowed down to two online DAWs (*Soundtrap* and *Bandlab*), both of which had loop libraries, and that would work with the school’s IT setup.

³ The four steps were to select and combine loops, play on top of the loops, edit and use effects, and add voice if time.

Table 2
Overview of data.

Conversation and interview data	1 meeting with the school (researcher notes) 10 planning and evaluation team meetings (recorded/transcribed) 4 qualitative interviews: 2 group interviews with pre-service teachers, 1 with main teacher and 1 with musician (recorded/transcribed) 2 team focus group conversations (recorded/transcribed)
Observation data	7 observations in the classroom (researcher notes)
Reflection data	28 participant logs (22 written logs, 5 audio logs and 1 video log)

and tried out these features while the team moved around to assist, the pupils reassembled in the classroom for demonstration of the next feature, and so on.

The next cycle of events took place during the spring practicum placement period. The class was split into pre-decided groups, and each group was co-taught by two student teachers, who took their group of pupils through selected software functions in much the same way as in cycle 1. An assignment of creating and submitting a song⁴ was added to give direction to the pupils' work. The student teaching was mostly directed at helping the pupils master the functions needed to finish the assignment. As the pupils started to master the software better, the team focused on supporting the pupils' creative musical work by providing formative questions and comments.⁵

The teachers, pre-service teachers and the musician actively carried out the classroom action, while the researchers took on a more active role in-between classroom sessions, where we facilitated the collaborative reflections and discussions. Following an initial planning phase involving all participants (selecting and learning to use the digital tools, discussing the purpose of the study, and deciding on classroom strategies), data generation took place during the pre-service teachers' practicum, before ending with a more extensive reflection period. The data generation period lasted approximately 7 months (September 2019–April 2, 2020⁶) and included two main action research cycles in the classroom (see Table 2 for an overview of data and section 5 for further description of activities in the two research cycles). Each cycle started with joint planning and ended with joint evaluation and reflection. During classroom actions, there were daily meetings consisting of evaluation, (re)planning and refining next session as well as (re)assigning tasks. A considerable source of data are the researcher notes. These notes did not follow a specific protocol, but issues concerning participant collaboration were explicitly highlighted in the notes as well as in the development of interview guides.

Each cycle started with joint planning and ended with joint evaluation and reflection. During classroom actions, there were daily meetings consisting of evaluation, (re)planning and refining next session as well as (re)assigning tasks. A considerable source of data are the researcher notes. These notes did not follow a specific protocol, but issues concerning participant collaboration were explicitly highlighted in the notes, which also functioned as a catalyst for developing key topics and questions for the different conversational settings with the participants. The daily meetings during teaching sessions were often participant-led and concerned experiences with that day's sessions and the implications for the next session, however, researchers also brought up issues

⁴ The assignment was to create and submit a song with a clear structure, by dragging and dropping loops, making their own drum loop, and by using effects.

⁵ All pupils managed to submit a song that fulfilled the assignment criteria, still, the songs were different in style and length, and showed different musical skills and preferences. The team listened to the songs as part of a joint reflection on project outcome, but the songs were not included as data.

⁶ Due to lock-down, the data collection remaining after March 2020 was conducted online.

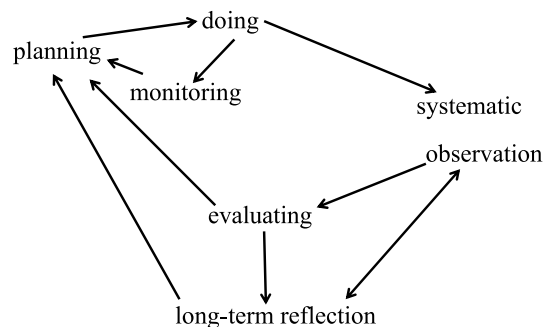


Fig. 1. Action research spiral (Griffiths 1990, p. 43).

noticed during observations. Questions for the participants' reflexive logs, as well as the qualitative interviews concerned participants' perception of the classroom work, the collaboration as a whole, as well as their own and others' role in the collaboration. While starting from the participants' experiences, the focus group interview questions focused on quite broad issues such as the use of digital technology in the classroom and interprofessional collaboration in schools.

Data generated during the whole study consisted of:

The data generation not only encompassed issues of multi-professional collaborative teaching within the classroom, but also included reflection on how the work could feed into teacher education.

4.4. Analysis

Our analytical approach was abductive, taking as its starting point that data are never pure, but always interpreted. The abductive approach was iterative (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018) and shifted between data collection and analysis, as well as between theoretical perspectives (including relevant research) and empirical data.

The following model (see Fig. 1) was used to analytically distinguish between practical classroom work, project purposes and organisation, and implications as different empirical and reflexive modalities.

The inner loop included classroom work (*doing*), practical discussions and problem-solving during and immediately after the classroom session (*monitoring*), as well as adjusting and making decisions about the next classroom session (*planning*). The data generated in this loop consisted of observations, conversations, and logs. The middle loop included a broader perspective on the classroom actions (*doing*). Separated in time and space from the classroom actions, participants reflected on the project, individually and jointly, through topics like roles and relations, the use of music technology in the classroom, and classroom management (*systematic observation*). These sessions also included reflection on the project organisation and its possible outcomes (*evaluation*), as well as further direction (*planning*). Data generated in this loop included interviews, focus group conversations and reflective logs. The outer loop was initiated after the classroom work had ended and included researchers' and student teachers' further probing into concepts and topics emerging from the project (*systematic observation*) as well on educational practices of teacher education, the link between the experiences in the music classroom and music subject in general teacher education as seen from the student teacher perspective (*long-term reflection*). Data generated in this loop consisted of group interviews.

In our interpretation and use of the model, the three loops represented nested reflexive modalities which are again characteristic of abductive analytical work. The practical classroom work and the associated reflections in the inner loop formed the basis for the reflexive work as well as for the coding of data. The data in the inner loop represented broader topics that were reflexively connected to broader themes. The themes in the outer loops were built on the two previous loops and were expanded to include implications for teacher education. The participants' reflections and the researchers' simultaneous

analytical work thereby moved back and forth between these modalities. In this way, all loops were reinterpreted in light of each other (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017, p. 5), which also allowed for a certain degree of creative interpretation (Danermark & Karlsson, 2019; Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018).

4.5. Ethical considerations and methodological limitations

All adult participants signed an informed consent form. The pupils were not studied in this project, but they and their parents received written information about the study, and the pupils were also orally informed in the classroom. The research adheres to Norwegian Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, and Theology (NESH, 2022). The generation and management of data in this study has been reported to and recommended by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (notification form 294194), and the research in this study is therefore considered to adhere to European data protection regulations.

There are obvious limitations to the study, which was small in scale and conducted within a Norwegian teacher education context. The results of the study are therefore unique to this particular case and context and are not necessarily directly generalisable to other contexts. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study provides an in-depth insight into collaborative processes and university-school partnerships that can be recognizable and valuable in other contexts than the one studied. Not least, the results and implications of the study contribute important conceptual and theoretical insights to teacher education research on partnerships.

5. Findings

The abductive analysis of our data resulted in several broad themes that were connected to and interpreted in light of our theoretical foundation. In the following we will describe and discuss these findings from our study, using hybridity, third space and expertise as theoretical backdrops, together with Ellsworth's (2005) place-based pedagogy. We explicitly present different kinds of expertise that emerged throughout the empirical process. We also highlight how the negotiation of such expertise and roles within the project may have contributed to moments where knowledge, understandings, and practices were disrupted.

5.1. Expertise and authority

On a Friday morning in September 2019, twenty-eight 9th graders entered the music room at Emerson Hill lower secondary school and sat down in a semi-circle facing the smartboard. On the screen was a slide displaying musician Lennon's photo and name, as well as brief mention of some of their musical merits. Charlie says: 'Good morning, everybody! Meet Lennon, who's come to teach us about digital tools, because we're not very good at that' (Researcher notes, Cycle 1, day 1).

The emergence of third spaces relies on non-hierarchical and intersecting types of expertise (Beck, 2018), however, establishing a level ground among participants in partnerships can be challenging, as is also found in several previous studies (see for example Risan, 2022; Taylor et al., 2014). As is evident in the snapshot above, musician Lennon was positioned as 'the expert' from the first day in the classroom; their expert status was in fact established several months before when the teachers hired this experienced digital musician/producer to be part of the team, thereby accommodating the teachers' wish for wanting to work with music technology. Because of the obvious outside expertise regarding music technology, the teachers upheld traditional hierarchical views of the artist as all-encompassing genius (Christophersen, & Kenny, 2018).

Positioning Lennon as the expert inevitably put Lennon in front of the class from the beginning, where they took main responsibility for the teaching of a self-designed lesson plan that the other accepted without question. These first days revealed a traditional teaching pattern

consistent with a so-called "observation model", which is also characterised by low levels of collaboration (Simons et al., 2020): Blackboard (or rather whiteboard) teaching with the expert showing and telling in front, the pupils trying to model the expert, while receiving support from all other team members. None of the participants had taken the time to learn about the pupils' previous experience with digital music tools, but rather assumed that they knew very little. The progress was quite strictly controlled, for example by the adults pre-selecting certain loops and grooves, thereby preventing the pupils from spending too much time exploring the options embedded in the software.

Three experienced teachers, two university teacher educators (who were also researchers in this study), and four pre-service teachers willingly let a musician's expertise define the activities within the classroom. A similar positioning of the community art expert as an authority, even within an educational setting, is also found by Ridgeway and Yarrick (2016). The pre-service teachers of our study stated they felt that 'Lennon is the class leader, and the other pre-service teachers and I walk around and help' (Phoenix), that they were a 'support person' (Ramsey) or 'an assistant' (Hollis). Lennon was granted surprisingly much authority and responsibility, considering they had little pedagogical experience, and was also quite articulate about their pedagogical insecurity and reluctance to stand in front of the class: 'I would very much like to be in charge, but I would prefer not to be in charge as much as I currently am, completely alone' (Lennon, evaluation meeting).

A hierarchy was thus rapidly visible, where educational criteria were seemingly not recognised as equally important as mastering the technology and the software, or at least it seemed essential to master the technology first:

We are always expecting too much in terms of how digitally competent we think that young people should be, naturally, we also expect far too much from professional adults. We don't spend enough time on training when we introduce systems (...). That is how so much technical stuff gets between us and what we want to do. (Charlie, final interview)

A content-oriented practice was thus established, the main aim of which was to ensure that everybody mastered the software. Expertise was in this respect directly connected to this mastering, which again positioned Lennon as an authority, and the most prominent team member. As Lennon said in an interview: If they were indeed there to 'help with something', one couldn't at the same time 'expect the others to be on equal footing'.

The team evidently agreed that mastering the software basics was important, however, there seemed to be some disagreement on the nature and scope of these basics. According to Lennon, mastering the software was a precondition for teaching it. The preservice teachers did not disagree but seemed mostly concerned with mastering it *well enough* to facilitate pupils' creative processes, which also implied figuring things out on the go, if necessary. According to pre-service teacher Israel, you would need some sort of basic knowledge but 'you don't have to be an expert to help the pupils.' Also, Israel contended in the conversation, that if the teacher does not know all the software features, it can forge more independent learning, as 'it forces us to learn ourselves'. Israel here points to another kind of teacher expertise than modelling, namely pedagogical improvisation (Sawyer, 2011), which is a more relational and dialogical way of teaching (which also entails teacher vulnerability). We thus view the pre-service teachers' improvisational and relational teaching approaches in this project as a means to disrupt established practices and understandings (Aspelin, 2014; Sorensen 2022).

The only person capable of keeping up musically and technologically with Lennon was main music teacher Charlie. From early on the two of them - musician and main teacher - established a close relationship, based on a mutual respect for the other's competence. Lennon praised the collaboration with Charlie: 'it has gone phenomenally well, I think Charlie is extremely skilled, they approach both music and composing

differently than me' (Lennon, log entry), and Charlie expressed similar views: 'It was quite a fun process. I found Lennon a nice and pleasant person to be with, and really knowledgeable' (Charlie, interview). These statements show the potential for an equal and non-hierarchical collaboration that blurred professional boundaries. The challenges of disrupting the mentor-preservice teacher hierarchy as described in other studies (see for example Canipe & Gunkel, 2020) were evident also in our study: The potential third space collaboration between the musician and the main teacher did not extend to the co-teachers and the pre-service teachers, who throughout the project, seemed to end up in a third place behind Lennon and Charlie rather than in a joint professional third space that included all participants.

5.2. Disrupting the hierarchies

During cycle 1, the prevailing perceptions of expertise positioned musician Lennon as an authority in the music classroom. Considering the teachers' original wish for professional development, having Lennon in front may very well have been expedient from their perspective, but Lennon was uncomfortable with the near-like teacher role. Also, it seemed difficult for the pre-service teachers to find a place within the collaboration.

These experiences were in keeping with the scholarly literature in the field showing that teachers, university educators and pre-service teachers tend to end up in predefined roles with asymmetrical power relations inscribed during collaborations (Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Taylor et al., 2014). This study did not avoid such pitfalls despite attempts to promote and facilitate equal collaboration within the team. Introducing the musician to the university-school partnership was not sufficient to disrupt common roles and perceptions of expertise but repeated and reproduced well-known hierarchies from arts education instead: In collaborations involving professional artists, teachers often surrender to the artist's performative expertise and take on a rather submissive role within the collaboration (Christophersen & Kenny, 2018; Holdhus, 2014; Holdhus & Espeland, 2013) As was also evident in this study, the expert role tends to put musicians in situations that demand more than may be reasonable to ask from a visitor in the classroom (Kenny & Morrissey, 2021).

As purported by Lillejord & Børte (2016), participants within a partnership must necessarily participate on different premises, still, the researchers wanted to disrupt the emerging hierarchies. A decision to find a more flexible role for Lennon that involved the pre-service teachers more, had started to form among the participants during the first cycle:

Hollis (Pre-service teacher): It might be better with zones where we are responsible for a few pupils each.

Ramsey (Pre-service teacher): Yes, and then we can help those pupils who need it. Some of them, perhaps, don't need any help at all.

Charlie (main teacher): You can be sort of a libero.

Lennon (musician): Yes, I could do that.

(Cycle 1 conversation)

Based on these suggestions, and inspired by Lillejord & Børte (2016), the researchers decided to move the project from an *assistant teaching model* with the musician in charge to a more collaborative *parallel teaching model* (Simons et al., 2020), which put the pre-service teachers at the centre of the activities. This new teaching model (see figure 2) was based on two pre-service teachers co-teaching a group of pupils each, and with the rest of the team supporting the student teaching and the pupils' creative work.

Although originating from the participants' suggestions, this reorganisation was a deliberate attempt from the researchers to 'third' the collaboration. The aim was to create a more neutral, possibly hybrid ground, hopefully opening up the close relationship between main

teacher Charlie and musician Lennon to include more participants, thus also allowing for more open and blended types of expertise. Pre-service teachers' ways of engaging relationally were thus made possible more often within this reorganised framework, however, this type of engagement never turned into the groups' mainstream approach.

5.3. Hesitations and provocations

When further analysing the material, we have been searching for 'stutterings' (Ellsworth, 2005), i.e., traces of hesitation and confusion, indicating possible disruptions of hierarchies and habitual reactions. Co-teacher Armani voiced their confusion during a conversation:

I have been so confused. There are so many layers, so much happening at the same time. What is this? Are we testing a digital platform? Are we focusing on the pupils or is it a part of teacher training? Suddenly I was completely lost: What should I have had an opinion on and what is it I should have done? (Co-teacher Armani, Cycle 2)

As Armani pointed out, thereby inadvertently anticipating the analysis, the project was complex and multi-layered. Every action and event were at the same time research data, practicum placement experiences, a classroom teaching/learning situation, professional development for the teachers, and a paid job for the musician. The multi-dimensional nature of the project enabled different, sometimes conflicting, identities and interpretation of roles, which gave rise to confusion and even frustration, thereby pointing to the uncertainty such hybrid situations create (Bhabha, 1994). This was evident in Lennon's case. Lennon clearly identified as a 'musician', but constantly navigated different roles, not all of which they were happy with. Lennon perceived themselves as a 'consultant' from the beginning, meaning a software and music expert who advised others on how to use and teach the software in a music production context. Lennon functioned as a sort of 'teacher', but they were clearly not happy with having to stand in front of a class, even if acknowledging that drawing a sharp distinction between the musician and the teacher role may not be feasible: 'You can't sit on a chair and say 'I'm not going to be a teacher, just a musician'. It's not like that. When you enter a classroom, you become a teacher' (Lennon, final interview).

When the pre-service teachers took over the teaching, musician Lennon became more of a facilitator together with main teacher Charlie, who had assumed such a role from the beginning. The two of them made sure that equipment was in place and that everything worked in the classrooms: 'I get nervous when assumptions are made about which room we will be using –there were many vague answers, so I had to test out techniques in four rooms to be on the safe side' (Charlie, evaluation meeting). Charlie also made sure that new pupils were brought up to speed on the activities, helped the pupils with their compositions and supported pre-service teachers with classroom management issues. While Charlie seemed comfortable being a jack-of-all-trades and in-between fixed roles, Lennon questioned this position on their own behalf, calling it 'a technical janitor'. Despite the confusion, Lennon seemed to gradually negotiate an acceptable solution by assuming the role of the 'producer'. When the pupils were tech savvy enough for things to work, Lennon could focus on the pupils' music by moving around, listening, commenting upon musical choices, and making suggestions about how to proceed:

... emotionally, it's been kind of ... but at the same time I sort of figured it out (...). I wasn't frightened of interrupting, because I thought that if I was to listen to the music and have an opinion on it, I had to listen to it (Musician Lennon, Cycle 2 focus group conversation).

Lennon's 'figuring it out' enabled them to help the pupils in the classroom in another way than was possible when they had to be the expert. It hints at a third space moment where another position can emerge, where the 'either/or' of musician-teacher is (reluctantly)

abandoned in favour of ‘something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation’ (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). The new classroom set-up provided Lennon with an opportunity to ‘come up with some other way of being’ (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 164), which is exactly what a transitional space can contribute.

The pre-service teachers in the project showed awareness of their professional futures while their attention often revolved around their needs as learners in the present. They were at times directed towards their professional future demonstrated by statements as ‘in my work as a teacher’ (Israel) and ‘things we will be teaching pupils and young people’ (Ramsey). Phoenix expressed a desire to be granted more autonomy in their teaching: ‘[the responsibility] didn’t really mean that much, because there were so many adults (...), and there were also many criteria we had to abide by (...), so it was slightly limiting’. Some seemed overwhelmed by the workload that resembled that of an ordinary teacher: ‘We’ve had an awful lot of teaching, a lot more than in the past, so it has been a bit hectic’ (Hollis). While appreciating the challenges and responsibilities, the pre-service teachers also voiced subtle critique of not having received enough specific feedback on their teaching: ‘I feel that much of the practicum part - like providing feedback to us as teachers - disappeared from the project’ (Phoenix, focus group conversation).

Within the context of teacher education, a third space can be seen as a site of ‘negotiating, bridging and navigating across differences’ (Martin et al., 2011, p. 300), which is what the pre-service teachers did. Still, as previous research shows (Daza et al., 2021; Klein et al., 2013; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Martin et al., 2011), tensions and asymmetrical power relations are inextricably part of teacher education collaborations, and perhaps especially so when pre-service teachers are involved (Taylor et al., 2014). According to Martin, Snow, and Torrez (2011), simply trying to empower pre-service teachers will not necessarily lead to a ‘more equitable distribution of power’ (p. 308), they instead suggest viewing pre-service teachers as increasingly empowered members of communities of practice. This view is echoed by Trepper et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of creating relationships within shared settings, thereby “flattening the hierarchies” (p. 3). The pre-service teachers in our study showed an emerging professional agency. At times they resisted the schematic lesson plan that was decided by the team and left for them to execute; sometimes they felt the instructions weren’t clear enough so they re-interpreted plans to fit with their own competence and preconceptions, and on one occasion decided to drop most of the preparations altogether and more or less “wing it” in the classroom, due to excessive practicum commitments that week. In this way, the pre-service teachers subtly resisted the established order, while simultaneously showing a quite flexible and pragmatic attitude: ‘The plans are good starting points. The reality is always a bit different from what we hope will happen, but then we have to do some improvising’ (Ramsey, log). On occasion, the pre-service teachers made discretionary judgements based on their pupil-centred philosophy of teaching, rather than adhering to predetermined plans which to a large degree centred around the software. Phoenix and Ramsay, for example, decided in a spur of a moment to drop a planned pitch presentation to let the pupils have more time to finish their assignments. Pre-service teachers thus, advocated for their own learning in the project while also caring for pupils (Aspelin, 2017).

In these ways the pre-service teachers showed small acts of resistance against the current hierarchical order and what was expected of them. Ellsworth (2005, p. 164) claims that to be creative and avoid compliance, pedagogy must have an aggressive component, in which existing knowledge is seen not as something fixed, but as a ‘provocation and call to invention’ (2005, p. 165). In their moments of provocation, the pre-service teachers also provided a glimpse of themselves as future professionals, which signals a hinging moment that ‘occurs in the relationship of experiencing the learning self and of the growing awareness of the learning self’ (Sojot 2018, p. 899). In their hybrid position as

in-between learners and professionals, the pre-service teachers themselves embody a third space between school and university. Their small acts of resistance during classroom work can then be understood in light of inherent tensions that may arise within that hybrid space.

6. Conclusion: third space moments

In this article we have explored a multi-stakeholder collaboration within a university-school partnership context where researchers, teachers, pre-service teachers, and a musician facilitated a digital music making project within a Norwegian classroom. Acknowledging the inherent tensions and challenges of multi-professional partnerships as described in teacher education research (Daza et al., 2021; Klein et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2011), the current study was designed to involve pre-service teachers in a double partnership (university-school and musician-teacher) as an attempt to disrupt established perceptions of expertise. In particular, the research explored how collaborators negotiated and navigated differences to create a ‘third space’.

As a response to our research questions about expertise within collaborations and how such collaborations can potentially disrupt existing knowledge, understandings, and practices, the study showed that including preservice teachers in such collaboration was challenging. The musician was immediately positioned as an authority, and a hierarchical notion of expertise made it difficult for the pre-service teachers to function as more than ‘helpers’ in the classroom. A decision to reorganise the classroom with the purpose of placing the pre-service teachers at the fore (Lillejord & Børte, 2016) did to a certain degree disrupt hierarchies and put professional roles and perceptions of expertise in play. However, the changes that followed emerged as small and temporary. While the preservice teachers in their already hybrid position easily accepted the uncertainty embedded in the project, others were less inclined to let go of professional identities and assume hybrid positions that might allow for boundary crossing and the creation of new ground. Should the project have continued, it seems likely that a continuous nurturing of roles, relations and responsibilities would be necessary to keep the collaboration from relapsing into traditional hierarchies and fixed roles.

Our findings therefore highlight well-known challenges regarding both relational issues and sustainability within third spaces (Daza et al., 2021), i.e., of how to both establish and maintain third spaces as continuous and lasting experiences over time and within fixed educational structures. While the idea of establishing a neutral ground where knowledge communities and discourses converge to equally distribute authority and expertise is appealing, the transitional potential of third spaces seems difficult to realise. Not least because it would entail a systematic, continuous, and critical exploration of how expertise is perceived, enforced, and taught within educational structures. In our study it was possible to spot glimpses of third spaces involving pre-service teachers, but these only occurred after hierarchies and authorities were disrupted and the professional expertise of musician and teachers was utilized through a facilitative approach. These results are in accordance with a study by Canipe and Gunckel (2020), who found that when pre-service teachers’ status is elevated, there can be brief moments in which hierarchical relationships are interrupted.

As our study shows, the hybrid concept of third space, originally articulated by Bhabha (1994) and later adopted by teacher education scholars, could be difficult to establish and maintain as a continuous and lasting experience within fixed educational structures. Informed by Ellsworth’s (2005) ideas of place-based pedagogy and ‘hinging moments’, we therefore suggest an expanded and temporal understanding of third spaces in university-school partnerships, that of ‘third space moments’. We understand ‘third space moments’ as moments of insight and transition that are characterised by uncertainty and movement and taking place in-between fixed professional positions and roles. Third space moments allow for experiencing oneself as both and/also, which can provoke reflection and new experiences (Sojot, 2018). A third space

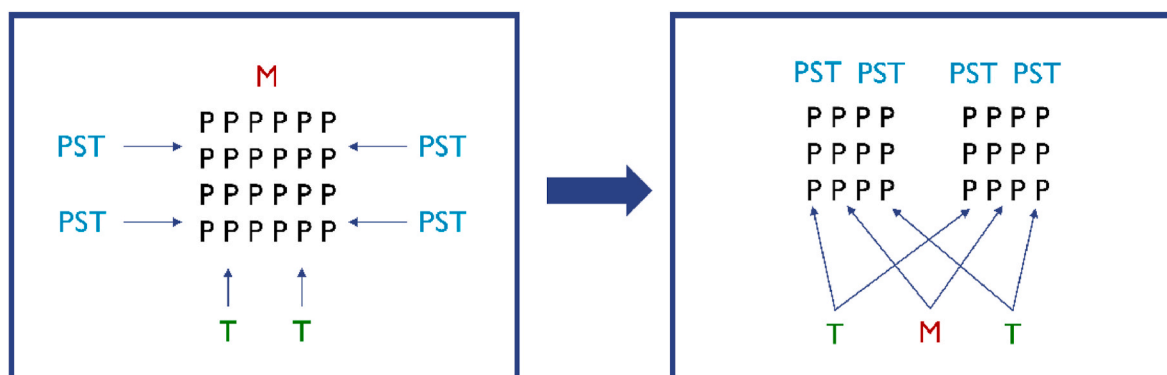


Fig. 2. Assistant teaching model (cycle 1) and parallel teaching model (cycle 2). M = Musician, T = Teacher, PST = Preservice teacher, and P = Pupils.

moment passed almost unnoticed in the project when co-teacher Armani reflected upon the many layers of the project and wondered ‘what should I have had an opinion on and what is it I should have done?’. Even if long-lasting third spaces within teacher education partnerships are hard to achieve, participants may be able to create and sustain third space moments by recognizing, naming, and reflecting upon these moments. Pursuing and facilitating these moments is therefore well worth doing and more importantly, within reach.

There are important considerations and implications stemming from these findings. Recognizing, understanding and valuing third space ‘moments’ is critical for educators, professional collaborators and students. In particular, such ‘moments’ allow pre-service teachers to explore third spaces in ways otherwise not accessible to them, due to their emerging professional identities. Temporary moments however can disrupt hierarchies to potentially lead to ‘pedagogical pivot points’ that Ellsworth speaks of (2005). It would be interesting to see how such moments emerge within future studies across other subject areas and contexts.

As outside experts continue to enter into formal education contexts, there needs to be continued studies on how relationships, expertise, skills and knowledge are negotiated in practice. The very idea of involving a designated outside expert could be seen as paradoxical to facilitating third spaces. This study highlights the need for professional positions within collaborations to be fluid, not fixed. Therefore, if entering multi-professional collaborations, critical engagement is needed by all involved to manage expectations, find respectful collective ways of working and negotiate professional identities.

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Catharina Christophersen: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Kari Holdhus:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Ailbhe Kenny:** Conceptualization, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial

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Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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