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**Educating Music Teachers for the Future: The Crafts of Change** 

Catharina Christophersen

Abstract:

In light of current global educational reforms and neo-liberal discourses, it is timely to ask about the future direction of music education. This chapter discusses the concept of "crafts" in relation to music teacher education, more particularly from a perspective of change. A starting point for this chapter is that the crafts of music teacher education directly concerns the facilitation of development and change, for example by deliberating on what is important to keep and build on in the professional practice of music teacher education, and what is better left out. When deliberating on questions of traditions and change, I suggested that one should take into consideration if and how the educational practices of music teacher education a) actively reflect on and productively try to contribute to the big challenges of the world, b) explicitly address systemic bias and inequalities, and c) provide spaces for student participation and agency.

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Catharina Christophersen

Educating Music Teachers for the Future: The Crafts of Change

Introduction

Music is part of every culture ever known. People around the world "use music to create and express their emotional inner lives, to span the chasm between themselves and the divine, to woo lovers, to celebrate weddings, to sustain friendships and communities, to inspire political mass movements, and to help their babies fall asleep" (Turino, 2008, p. 1). Music thus serves important personal and social functions, such as expression and regulation of emotions, communication and mediation between self and other, symbolic representation, and coordination of actions (Clayton, 2016). Music can be a leisure activity, a job, an industry product, a part of everyday soundscapes, or substantial to transpersonal experiences. Consequently, music is unquestionably a part of people's lives and has therefore also been considered a natural part of general education as well as of teacher education in many parts of the world.

Notwithstanding the lip service the educational value of music has been given, it is probably fair to say that music has never been a major part of school curricula, even back in the 18th century when its main purpose was to support hymn singing in church. Still, the last decades' global educational reforms have, not surprisingly, marginalized arts and humanities in many educational systems (Prest, 2013; Rusinek & Aróstegui, 2015; Sahlberg, 2016). This is also the case in Norway where the neoliberal discourse in connection with pre-determined learning goals, corporate management models, test-based accountability practices, as well as decreased funding of the arts in schools and teacher education have contributed further to this predicament.

In light of these developments, it is timely to ask about the future directions of music education, in this book framed through the concept of "crafts". In this chapter I will discuss "crafts" from a music teacher education angle, and more particularly from a perspective of change. A starting point for this chapter is that a critical and conscious dealing with traditions is necessary. I will discuss why this change is inevitable, and I will also suggest a framework for discussion and decision-making relating to change in music teacher education.

Music teacher education: A mostly Norwegian snapshot

Having been a music teacher educator for two decades, I have visited quite a few teacher education institutions in Norway as well as in other countries. Enter the music department of a teacher education institution anywhere, and the chances are that this is what you will find:

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The music department has one or two large rooms with generous floor space and a collection of Orff and various percussion instruments such as marimbas and xylophones, djembes and congas, claves, cowbells, shakers, rainmakers, boom whackers, and triangles, to name but a few. There are probably one or two smaller rooms, one of which may have tables. These large and smaller rooms will probably have a computer and/or smart board for audio-and video-presentations, a piano, a collection of drums on the floor, some bandstands, a few acoustic and electric guitars (maybe even ukuleles) hanging on the wall, and a garage band rig in a corner. The rooms will have stacks of chairs on one side. On the other side of the room there will be shelves and cupboards containing songbooks, CDs, additional small instruments, cables, musical toys/games, possibly costumes or other accessories. The music department may have a dedicated computer lab, or possibly a small studio, and finally, some rehearsal rooms for individual practice or small ensemble rehearsals.

The rooms of this imaginary yet experienced music teacher education department bear witness of collective classroom music making, individual or small-group performances, as well as activities connected to music theory and analysis. The equipment indicates that several musical genres are represented, although there might be a slight emphasis on popular music making.

This is exactly what Jon Helge Sætre describes in a comprehensive mixed-methods study of Norwegian music teacher education (Sætre, 2014). Sætre's study describes Norwegian music teacher education as a characterized by a fragmented course structure, as being highly influenced by Western conservatoire traditions, where popular music has been included as repertoire, but where the teaching discourses are traditional, teacher centered and performance oriented (Sætre, 2017; Sætre, 2014). Notwithstanding occurring attempts at innovation and renewal within music teacher education programs, such attempts take place within fairly restrained structures, thus limiting the impact and level of change (Sætre, 2017): "Despite development in a range of areas, a course structure representing tradition is kept, suggesting an accumulative logic of recontextualizing rather than one of transformation (Sætre, 2014, p. 14). In other words: Traditions seem to prevail, and structures are reproduced in Norwegian music teacher education.

# Zooming out

Looking to music education research and scholarship internationally, it is widely acclaimed that music teacher education is influenced by Western classical music traditions (Bowman, 2007; Burnard, 2013; Hess, 2018; Pellegrino, 2009; Rusinek & Aróstegui, 2015). A study of music teacher education programs across 27 European and 17 Latin-American countries (Rusinek & Aróstegui, 2015; Aróstegui, 2011; Aróstegui & Cisneros-Cohernour, 2010) finds that despite variations between

countries<sup>1</sup>, there are by and large strong traditions internationally for emphasizing musical content within music teacher education. In the Nordic context, though, popular music has been a natural part of educational programs since the mid-70s, and studies suggest that popular music, particularly garage band music, now represent an inverted hegemony in Nordic music education (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010; Westerlund, 2006). While Sætre's Norwegian study suggests that music teacher educators are more progressive than the structures they work within, a Swedish study suggests that student music teachers have developed far more progressive educational and musical attitudes than their educators due to extensive contact with general education programs (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

The conservative educational discourses and practices described in previous studies could be seen as examples of the "musico-pedagogical practice model" (Laes & Westerlund, 2018) where performative practices of music take precedence over educational practices. Musical diversity, then, may be considered important. However, adding content, as in including new styles of music, does not necessarily mean that pedagogies change to reflect these styles (Christophersen & Gullberg, 2017). Musical diversity does not necessarily equal pedagogical diversity within a musico-pedagogical practice model because of the emphasis on prescriptive teaching and learning, often through the master-apprentice-model that is so pervasive within the field of music. Further, the musico-pedagogical model leads to a performance-oriented and "ableist" focus, where students' talents and skills come to the forefront. Consequently, student selection methods become important, specifying "who is entitled to learn and to perform music" (Laes & Westerlund, 2018, p. 35). The same goes for the eligibility requirements for becoming a music teacher, since access to many teacher education programs are indeed sometimes also regulated through auditions and entrance exams.

I have discussed auditions and other screening procedures with fellow music teacher educators on several occasions. After many years of concern about student music teachers' alleged steadily decreasing musical skills, one institution finally managed to implement screening procedures for applicants, among other things documentation of music reading skills and a self-recorded video of a musical performance. I asked if the screening procedures could involve an exploration of students' motivation to become teachers, for example by asking the applicants to include in their video a brief reflection on their teaching motivation and possible prior teaching experience. My suggestion was declined, as students' personal motivation was considered subjective and too difficult to assess.

Assessing the qualities of musical performance, on the other hand, was considered neither subjective nor problematic. Following the logic of the musico-pedagogical practice model, a sufficient mastering

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Aróstegui & Cisneros-Cohernour (2010) claim to find examples of a reasonably balanced relationship between musical content and educational perspectives within European music education (especially in Sweden and Finland), more than in Latin American countries, where there is a particular strong emphasis on musical content.

of an instrument was in this situation considered the most important pre-condition for entering teacher education.

The focus on certain content and prescriptive pedagogies supporting the transmission of such content "pushes the profession towards the sustenance of the past and preservation of traditions" (Westerlund & Karlsen, 2017, p. 81). Such issues described above are not necessarily exclusive to the field of music, though. Scholars have described teacher education practices as content oriented. Lin Goodwin et al (2014) purport that content specialization in many cases are considered the most important factor when teacher educators are hired; "the assumption is that knowledge necessary for teacher educating is not so much about teacher education pedagogies but about content or discipline knowledge" (Lin Goodwin, et al., 2014, s. 296). The picture is of course more nuanced, since many teacher educators have backgrounds from the practice field as schoolteachers (Ulvik & Smith, 2016). Still, teacher education is a complex educational practice that may require a particular teacher education pedagogy:

... the work of teacher education it is not about 'upskilling' staff to perform in new ways in response to mandated changes in curriculum, policy, or practice, it is about an ongoing process of learning, development, and change driven by the players central to that work—teacher educators. (Loughran, 2014, s. 273)

The lack of a systematic knowledge base for teacher education (see for example Darling-Hammond, 2006; Futrell, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Zeichner, 2005) could reduce teacher education to transmission of content without critical reflection and self-reflection, thus possibly producing stable pedagogies that are resistant to change.

## Why change?

As the editors have discussed elsewhere in this book, the concept of "crafts" in music education is closely connected to future directions of music education, which implies an idea of development and change. The idea of change does not necessarily include revolution or radical altering of positions. Change could be viewed as an inevitable flux, a permanent trait of existence, and therefore also an integral part of education (Jorgensen, 2003; Biesta, 2007; Moss, 2014). Things evolve, things develop, things change: "The contexts in which we live and teach, continue to change, and so must we in order to survive" (Kratus, 2015, p. 340). Change and stability then pre-suppose each other: Not only is change necessary for the sustenance of education, but traditions are also necessary for change to happen:

As one generation gives way to the next, it is necessary to decide which beliefs and practices to preserve and which to change (...). Without schooling, socialization and enculturation, a group would be without the means to transform itself'. (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 19).

From the perspective of transformation, change implies flux, gradual development, where some things are kept, and some things are replaced. A conscious transformation of education implies decision-making on the desired direction, on what to keep, and what to get rid of. Such decisions are difficult as they connect to purposes, beliefs and values, which belong to the philosophical domain of education.

On a large scale, the purpose of education could be said to "prepare people to live well in a world worth living in" (Kemmis et al, 2014, p. 27). A slightly wordier version of the same purpose:

... education ought to be humane. It ought to be directed toward such ideals as civility, justice, freedom, and inclusion of diverse peoples and perspectives. It ought to take a broad view of the world's cultures and human knowledge and prepare the young to be informed and compassionate citizens of the world. (Jorgensen 2003, p. 20)

Educational philosopher Gert Biesta, articulates a three-pronged concept of educational purpose, that of qualification (acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills), socialization (learning the ways of existing orders and developing identity) and subjectification (the ability to live outside the existing orders, which imply freedom and autonomy) (Biesta, 2017).

Educational purposes are enshrined in laws and regulations. The mandatory basis for teacher education, for example, is to qualify teachers to work in schools. According to Norwegian teacher education regulations, teacher education programs should be grounded in the Education Act<sup>2</sup> and in current primary and lower secondary curricula (Regulations Relating to the Framework Plan for Primary and Lower Secondary Education<sup>3</sup>, §1). The same regulations state that teacher training should qualify teachers to do professional work in a society characterized by diversity and change (§2).

The mandate of teacher education is elaborated through the objectives of the Education Act, which state that education among other things is to promote intellectual freedom, respect for individual convictions, local and international cultural traditions, equality, solidarity, democracy, critical thinking, ethical action, environmental awareness, joint responsibility, and the right to participate. Education should further combat all forms of discrimination (Education Act, section 1-1<sup>4</sup>). These objectives are what generalist music teachers should be able to contribute to, and therefore ideally also something that pre-service music teachers should be prepared for through their teacher training, also in music. These objectives further point to pressing issues for education, which in my view could be seen as essential to circling in the crafts of music teacher education. I will elaborate on this below.

A framework for discussing change

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2010-03-01-295?q=L%C3%A6rerutdanning

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61?q=opplæringslov

Making changes in education may be considered necessary when purposes are distorted or unfulfilled, for example by injustice, by rigid routines, by stifling traditions, by lack of knowledge and so on. Purposes, however, are abstract entities, and could be interpreted in a number of different ways. Warranting changing in music teacher education could be considered controversial. Considering cutbacks in resources and recent technological changes, some educators may feel there has been enough change already. Some educators may not want to change since the way we already teach music in teacher education seem to work well. Others may not welcome change because change represents something uncertain and inevitably challenges the familiar. Once something is changed, it may not be possible to go back; however well-intended, change "carries with it the possibility of inadvertent disaster, and change does not come with a money-back guarantee" (Kratus, 2015, p. 340).

Change, then, is connected to beliefs, values, and to possible discursive positionings. Change is not only a matter of implementation, "what is fundamental is the normative and political question about the quality of the change" (Burner, 2018, p. 123). There may not be a shared perception of what such quality is, or how change should play out in certain situations. Claims for change rests on certain beliefs and values of what is good and desirable. By extension, matters of transformation and change may be perceived differently by different institutions and different people.

Still, I assume that the idea of education as contributing to the making of a better world is not up for discussion. I will therefore start from the idea of making a better world, as included in the purposeful objectives of the Education Act and suggest a framework for discussion and decision-making relating to change in music teacher education.

### Change informed by global issues

The objectives of the Education Act point to the very big issues of this world. The 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of globalization, migration, climate change and technological innovation affect us all. The world is rapidly changing, and education must reflect and take on the challenges brought on by such changes. The United Nations' sustainable development goal for education is to ensure inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all<sup>5</sup>. While Norway is privileged education-wise compared to other countries in other parts of the world, improvement of education is a never-ending task for all societies. For example, educational target 4.5 specifically mention equal access to education for vulnerable groups including the disabled, and target 4.7 that says UN by the years 2030 aims to:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (UN Sustainable development target 4.7)

It is obvious that teacher training has a role to play here, and we have to ask ourselves how music teacher training programs can contribute to these bigger, pressing issues, and what kinds of issues we want to address in our music teacher programs. Those questions could, and maybe even should, inform a debate on what should be done in music teacher education programs to ensure they support the United Nations sustainable development goals.

#### Change informed by systemic issues

The objectives of the Education Act call for education to address and act upon systemic issues in our societies and institutions. This goes for education in general, but there are also issues pertaining particularly to music education.

The broader field of music education has been criticized by critical and social justice scholars for reclusiveness and for actively ignoring issues surrounding the educational programs and institutions. According to these scholars, music education has typically been justified by referral to the aesthetic qualities of music (Bowman, 2007), as emotional growth (Jorgensen, 2007) or self-improvement (Vaugeois, 2013), which creates a passive, naive disinterestedness, that is, the "intent to stay unaware or disinterested in world events and the systems that shape our society" (Hess, 2018, p. 19)

There are issues of race, gender, ableism, cultural appropriation, and colonialism that should be addressed within music teacher education programs (Wright R., 2019). Bowman (2007) asks the pertinent question as to who is to be considered the "we" in music education. In so doing, he also points to the ways that a sense of "we" form basis for certain perceptions of professionalism that could result in a systematic exclusion of certain musics, and therefore also of people. Music education, no matter the institution, will always be a political and ethical endeavor. Bowman further describes a procedure of circularity, that serves to reproduce existing values and traditions within institutions:

(1) Start with an understanding of music derived from and well-suited to one particular mode of musical engagement and practice. (2) Craft a definition of musicianship derived from its basic tenets and demonstrable primarily on instruments that have evolved in its service. (3) Privilege curricula and pedagogies that serve to nurture that kind of musicianship. (4) Select students for advanced study on the basis of criteria well-suited to these modes of practice. (5) Hire faculty to serve the needs and

interests of such students. And (6) assess success in terms of the extent to which the norms and values of that tradition and its conventions are preserved. (p. 116)

This goes to show that music teacher education institutions may very well function as "silos" for the reproduction and sustainment of values, beliefs and practices (Väkevä, Westerlund, & Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017), a claim that is corroborated by Sætre's study (2014) of Norwegian music teacher education. Such circularity serves to shut out and stifle alternative voices and practices within music teacher education (Westerlund & Karlsen, 2017, p. 18). This begs the questions of how to promote and facilitate just, open and diverse music teacher education programs. In order to do so, one needs to ask what are the systemic issues in our programs and in our institutions, and what can possibly be done about it?

#### Change informed by agentic issues

The objectives of the Education Act also recognize students' voice, participation and agency as fundamental to education. An important task for a music teacher educator is to help future music teachers develop professional agency, that is, the ability to influence and take control over their professional circumstances. Agency is a "temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect) oriented towards the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and 'acted' out in the present" (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, p. 970 in Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015, p. 24). This flux between past, present and future implies that music teacher education could indeed play an important role in the development of such agency, and that pre-service teachers should be able to experience a sense of professional agency also as preservice music teachers.

I have mentioned the conscious selection of which traditions to pass on as an important dimension of the crafts of music education. Randall Allsup (2016, p. 65) polemically poses the questions: "Do we (...) teach a tradition, or do we teach a child?", or in this case a grown-up pre-service music teacher. Traditions and people are of course not mutually exclusive categories. Traditions are essential when it comes to forming professional identities that enable and motivate professional action, but they can also stifle development. Educators need to be particular when choosing which traditions to hold on to. With the words of educational philosopher Gert Biesta:

... the crucial educational question is about what (or better: who) is coming towards us from the future, so to speak. The educational question is about the 'newness' that is trying to come into the world. Who is it that is trying to come into the world? It is here that we can locate educational responsibility and the responsibility of educators, as a responsibility for the coming into the world of 'newcomers,' of 'new beginnings' and 'new beginners'. (Biesta, 2007, pp. 31-32)

Learning to know our students better is thus essential. The cultural and musical resources that students bring to their education may however not be recognized as competence. As teacher educators we may observe that some of today's students do not read music as well as students did a few decades ago, but do we know what they know instead? What do they bring to the table, how can we recognize and build on it, and how can we work alongside the students to develop the educational practices of music teacher education? If losing sight of the people one tries to educate, if ignoring their lives and experiences, if not acknowledging the human, musical and cultural resources they represent, the people we presume to educate then become incidental to our music education practices. Considering we are trying to qualify future music teachers that are going to work with future generations of citizens, the ramifications may be far-reaching.

A pertinent question, then, is how music teacher education can contribute to opening spaces for "radical listening" (Kincheloe, 2008; Tobin, 2009), where pre-service teacher's voices could be heard, and where action is possible, thus possibly providing opportunities for students to experience that they can indeed affect their circumstances. Are we as music teacher educators willing to listen to students, and, if necessary, change our practices as a result thereof?

#### Crafting change: Conclusive remarks

The crafts of music teacher education, as I see it, directly concerns the facilitation of development and change, for example by deliberating on what is important to keep and build on in the professional practice of music teacher education, and what is better left out. When deliberating on questions of traditions and change, I have suggested that one should take into consideration if and how the educational practices of music teacher education a) actively reflect on and productively try to contribute to the big challenges of the world, b) explicitly address systemic bias and inequalities, and c) provide spaces for student participation and agency.

It is important to say, though, that educational change does not happen by reflection alone. Trying to alter thoughts and beliefs could be a good start but is hardly enough. Educational change must happen in different dimensions and on different levels (Fullan, 2016). Educational practices are for example comprised by language and discourses that regulate our understandings, by physical resources that regulate our actions and by social-political arrangements that regulate the way things in our immediate surroundings are organized and relate to each other, thereby creating rules and practical agreements (Kemmis et al, 2014). Change could be difficult to achieve, at least immediate change. The perceived achievability of new alternatives should not constrain discussion of viability. What is immediately not achievable may be so in a near future, and providing "compelling accounts of viable alternatives to existing social structures" (Wright, E.O. 2007, pp. 32-33) could be a way of stretching the limits of

achievability. If the crafts of music (teacher) education is indeed connected to future directions, then the concept of crafts should also include the ability to envision alternatives thereby "enlarging the space of the possible" (Osberg, 2009).

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