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Ideology, selective tradition, and naturalization in the music teacher education curriculum

Jan Sverre Knudsen

Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Contact corresponding author: jansk@oslomet.no

Silje Valde Onsrud

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Abstract

This article engages with critical discourse analysis to explore how ideological values are represented in the national guidelines for generalist music teacher education in Norway. These curriculum documents are understood as part of a selective tradition which serves to naturalize dominating values in teacher education institutions. The analysis engages with historical and current discourses of music preferences, values, and philosophies. The authors argue that the national guidelines largely contribute to upholding a certain school music ideology and a matching community of music educators. The theoretical thrust is based on writings on curriculum and ideology, hegemony, naturalization and selective tradition.

Keywords: *curriculum, ideology, naturalization, selective tradition, cultural diversity*

Introduction

International music education research shows that many music teacher education programs around the world are embedded in a strong “conservatoire tradition” marked by cultural reproduction and resistance to change (Bowman, 2007; Gaunt et al., 2013; Sandberg-Jurström et al., 2022; Väkevä et al., 2017). At the same time critical voices call for a transformation in music teacher education to make it more relevant for the future

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(Conway et al., 2019) and help student teachers develop a stronger teacher agency (Allsup, 2016; Powell, 2019). So how can tensions between progressive and conservative tendencies in the field of music teacher education be understood? In this article we address the situation of generalist music teacher education (GMTE) in Norway. Earlier research (Sætre, 2014) identifies the same conservative tendencies as shown internationally. Still, we lack an identification and deeper understanding of the values and ideologies that constitute and condition GMTE today. Only by digging into such issues, can we understand how the mechanisms of reproduction and resistance to change are maintained despite frequent educational reforms. As a starting point for mapping ideologies and values, we analyse the guidelines for the music subject which are part of the document *National guidelines for generalist teacher education [Nasjonale retningslinjer for grunnskolelærerutdanningen]* (UHR, 2017a, 2017b)¹. This is a key document since it is a representation of the official government policy that teacher training institutions are obliged to follow. It is explicitly required that all local programs “must be prepared on the basis of” the guidelines (UHR, 2017a, p. 13). The 76-page document includes overarching chapters on issues like organisation, internationalisation, teaching structure, assessment and practicum. This is followed by chapters presenting the specific guidelines for each individual subject taught. The section on music, comprising four pages, constitutes the main data material in our analysis.

We view the document text as an intrinsic case (Stake, 1994), and use tools from Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore it. Our analysis also draws on scholarly writings about curriculum and ideology, hegemony, naturalization, and selective tradition (Apple, 2018; Fairclough, 2013; Lim, 2012). Our research question is: *In what ways can the national guidelines for Norwegian generalist music teacher education be understood as ideological, and how can selective tradition and naturalization be identified in the curriculum document?*

We start out by framing our approach to ideology and discourse with reference to theory of education. Further, we present our research design as well as the critical discourse analytical approach. We then present our reading of the text with highlights and discussions of elements we find loaded by values and ideologies. Finally, in our concluding remarks we sum up the ways in which curriculum documents in music education can be seen as ideological and what this entails.

1 There are two versions of the guidelines, one for grades 1–7 (UHR, 2017a) and one for grades 5–10 (UHR, 2017b). This is due to the division of generalist teacher education into these two separate programs. They are almost identical, with only minor, mostly age-related differences between the two guideline texts. Quotations in this article are from the official English version, mostly from the version for grades 1–7 (UHR, 2017a). Full document texts in English can be accessed from the reference list. The Norwegian original documents can be accessed from <https://www.uhr.no/>

Theoretical framework

Ideology

There are different views on what the term ideology involves. The variable meanings of the term correspond to different ideological positions, and have been generated through negotiations and struggles between these positions (Fairclough, 2013). A common understanding is that ideology is a system of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values. Ideologies operate at a certain structural level, linked to political and social movements, states and institutions. At the same time, ideologies are not only a property embedded in structures, but are also a property of events, depending on being implemented and put into practice in order to have any meaning or power (Fairclough, 2010).

According to Michael Apple (2018), arguably the most prominent liberal academic author in curriculum studies, there are three different understandings of ideology:

1. Specific rationalizations or legitimizations of the activities or actions of certain groups (for example, professions such as teachers and teacher educators).
2. Wider policy programs.
3. Comprehensive, coherent worldviews (Apple, 2018, p. 18).

Ideology in music teacher education is primarily about the first point; the curriculum documents we examine legitimize certain forms of practice. They tell us something about what skills and forms of music are desired in education, and prescribe what is to be taught and how. At the same time, the other two understandings of ideology are also touched upon: ideology as politics and ideology as worldview. Teacher education in Norway is a significant part of a larger state political program and political ambitions of the government. The schools and the schools' design are part of the Norwegian – historically social democratic – system put into practice. Additionally, the view of music as promoted in the documents has a fundamental connection to certain worldviews, not least when the views on music are linked to philosophies.

Apple's (2018) sociological understanding of ideology is connected to the legitimation of power, and hegemony. He points out that "ideology has been evaluated historically as a form of false consciousness which distorts one's picture of social reality and serves the interests of the dominant classes in a society" (p. 19). While this view of ideology, and the distortion of reality that it inevitably implies, may seem like a radical perspective in relation to guideline documents for education, we nevertheless basically follow Apple's understanding here. Curricular documents are part of a discourse that naturalizes dominating policies and, at the same time, obscures the role of education as a primary mechanism of social and cultural control. As discussed later in this article, this concerns the building of a cultural "we" in music education as well as the maintenance of cultural boundaries, contributing to the dominance of Norwegian majority culture and the stark under-representation of immigrant groups (Bowman, 2007; Nysæther et al., 2021).

However, from our position as critical education researchers in Norway, we also see a need for widening our understanding of ideology somewhat. We find it striking that Apple's (2018) writings on curriculum and ideology are primarily linked to the power, dominance and hegemony of "others". It is something "they", those who execute political power over the education system promote, and something "we", the democratically inclined educators and researchers should unveil, resist, and oppose as part of a struggle for social justice in education (Apple, 2018, pp. 18–24). It is obvious to us that Apple positions himself in relation to a particular curricular tradition in the United States, referring to curricula constructed in an undemocratic way, in a top-down logic. In our understanding, and arguably also from a general Scandinavian perspective, the picture is more complex. While ideology "from above" is clearly involved in the making and implementation of curricula, the critical efforts aimed at challenging dominant, hegemonic tendencies must also be understood as ideological. As educators and researchers, we also execute power through our words and actions. We are not only exposed to ideology, but contribute to shaping and promoting ideology ourselves through the organizations and structures we are a part of, as well as our own research project, FUTURED², which aims at proposing new directions for music teaching and music teacher education. In other words, *ideological work* is not only present in the making of curricula and guidelines, but also in the efforts aimed at investigating and challenging them (Lim, 2012, p. 62).

Texts are not ideology in themselves, and it is not possible to "read off" ideologies directly from texts. Still, texts may "bear the imprint of ideological processes and structures" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 57). Ideological processes "are processes between people" (p. 57) and meanings are produced through negotiations and interpretations of texts within social settings. A critical study of a curriculum text must address how ideology works to effectively maintain the school system as a dominant, ideologically based institution, but must also search for traces of the various negotiations, struggles and scholarly positionings involved in its shaping.

National curriculum texts are endorsed by political authorities, but they are written by selected educators and other experts entrusted with the task. The national guidelines for teacher education (UHR, 2017a, 2017b) is authored by a government-appointed committee consisting of about twenty representatives from various higher education institutions as well as the main student and teacher organisations. Apparently, the process is intended to be representative and democratic, allowing a multitude of voices to be heard during the process. Still, a process characterised by wide representation and democratic decisions does not prevent the resulting document from being ideological, containing rulings with a governmental stamp of authority and required to be implemented throughout the entire teacher education system.

2 <https://prosjekt.hvl.no/futured/>

Issues of music education and ideology are also social issues. Addressing ideology in music teacher education also means addressing social processes of inclusion and exclusion. Dominant music education ideology supports interpretive moves that construct a particular “we”, a community of music educators surrounded by various intentional or unintentional gate-keeping practices (Bowman, 2007). The national guidelines are a key document in the building and maintenance of this community in Norway, which on an institutional level is upheld by academic networking, as well as often biased hiring processes which assure that the ranks of music educators are filled by people like “us” – people with backgrounds in “school music” who reproduce ideas of what music education “really is” and what it “must be” (Bowman, 2007, p. 120).

The national guidelines text with its implicit or explicit priorities concerning musical practices, musical heritage, and teaching methods unavoidably involve excluding other ideas, but also other people, both students and staff. It is striking that recruitment to Norwegian teacher education in general remains heavily dominated by people with an ethnic Norwegian background. Immigrant student representation is less than half that of other higher education studies like nursing, engineering and kindergarten teacher training (Hovdhaugen, 2020). Following the results of a survey study conducted by Nysæther (Nysæther et al., 2021) the stark under-representation of the immigrant population is much the same in music teacher education in Norway and also corresponds with the situation in higher music education in other countries (e. g. Bull et al., 2022). When we identify and challenge ideology in the national guidelines, we also keep in mind this demographic and social context and the collective professional community the guidelines contribute to shaping and delimiting.

Naturalization

The ideological work of creating a curriculum document involves integrating ideas into the text and making them “natural” ways of social practice. This gives the ideas that are promoted legitimacy and public authority, both as statements of educational ideologies and as prescriptions for educational practice. As argued by Fairclough, values and ideologies become “common sense” in a process of “naturalization”, and what constitutes common sense is determined by those who exercise power over public institutions and society (Fairclough, 2013, p. 76). Through naturalization, ideas gain the position of being universally valid for the members of a particular society, in our case the teachers and students in the institutions offering music teacher education.

National guidelines are instruments of power, and naturalization adds to their legitimacy and position. The anchoring of education plans in higher education institutions run by the state serves to conceal their ideological character and make them appear as neutral or apolitical. Consequently, plans are generally not considered as representing particular groupings within the institution (for example the people involved in making them) but as

representative of the institutions themselves, which in society enjoy widespread recognition as promoters of the common good. “Ideology works through disguising its nature” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 77).

Naturalization can be seen as a unifying force with the possible potential to limit, suppress or contain efforts aimed at promoting multiplicity and strengthening cultural diversity. The naturalization of values means that they are not promoted as one of *many* ways of seeing things, but simply *the* way – the unquestioned, taken for granted, institutionalized way. Consequently, we might think that naturalization by necessity leads to the silencing of difference. Still, as we may also observe in political debates on the school curriculum, the promotion of difference and diversity can also appear as a naturalized value, often under the banner of multiculturalism as a foundation for education. As we discuss further on, in the Norwegian curricula the concepts *diversity* and *cultural diversity* (*mangfold, kulturelt mangfold*) have become staples of the curriculum texts, included in practically all subjects. Whether such naturalised promotion of diversity in these written texts actually accomplishes the intended equality is a different matter, and beyond the scope of this article.

Selective tradition

Music curricula, in both public schools and in teacher education are selective. Shaping any curriculum is a selective process. Among all the possible music cultures, approaches, practices and uses of music, only a limited spectre is selected and found valuable enough to be included in the curriculum. Viewing the entire educational system as integral to the perpetuation of a dominant, majority culture, what is presented, distributed and passed off as “heritage”, “diversity”, “culture”, or “tradition”, is the result of a value-laden process embedded in prevailing ideologies.

Recognizing that curricula are embedded in a selective tradition, there are a number of overarching questions that need to be asked in relation to our study: Who selected it, and whose knowledge is it? Whose knowledge is not represented in the curriculum? And, whose interests does the selection of knowledge serve (Apple, 2018). While addressing these questions brings up major political discussions that go beyond the scope of this article, they constitute a backdrop which is always present for us as critical researchers.

Analytical framework and method

An intrinsic case study

The national guidelines for the music subject in generalist teacher education in Norway is used as a case to identify values and ideologies embedded in this particular educational program. The purpose of the guidelines is to guide local teacher educators in each

educational institution to develop local plans for each music course they offer in the generalist teacher education. Although the music section of the guidelines is only four pages long, it is a crucial text for understanding music teacher education in Norway. We therefore treat our reading of this text as an *intrinsic* case study, implying that the study of a particular case is of interest in itself, and not an illustration of an issue or a representation of other cases (Stake, 1994). *The national guidelines* is the official document that governs generalist music teacher education and is highly significant to our research since it serves as a template for all local plans and provides local educators with key concepts for writing them. As intended, local plans follow the national guidelines, often by copying key terms and formulations to varying degrees. Still, as investigated in a FUTURED sub-study (Onsrud & Kvinge, in review), there are interesting variations when it comes to highlighting particular music genres, teaching methods or music instruments.

Critical discourse analysis

Our analytical approach is based on Fairclough's (2010) critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as literature on the implementation of CDA in analysing written texts (e.g. Machin & Mayr, 2012). This is essentially a linguistic approach, based on a critical investigation of what language is and does. Language is understood as a materialization of ideology, and investigating curricula means investigating language (Fairclough, 2013). In line with this understanding, we view curriculum documents as *communicative events* – socially embedded cases of language in use. They are written in a particular curriculum document genre that constitutes a part of the social structures of teacher education.

In CDA it is understood that values and ideologies may be “buried” in texts, and that the aim of critical analysis is to “draw them out” and expose them (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 25). A key analytical strategy is to look for what is not said explicitly. At the same time, in accordance with social semiotic theories, language does not only represent or promote, but serves to create, maintain, and legitimise values and ideologies as well as the social practices and power structures they encourage and support.

The concrete tools we use in analysing the text concern identifying the semiotic choices involved, finding and examining particular words and phrasings of the music education curricular jargon. It also involves looking for conspicuous absences – what is left unsaid and taken for granted. Most importantly, our analysis relates these findings to the wider social practice in the music education field, involving both historical, social, and political issues.

As researchers and authors of this article, we draw upon our experience from the field of music teacher education over many years. Our analysis and discussion are based on our position as music educators and researchers, and our general knowledge of the history of music education in Scandinavia.

Material and discussion – a case study of the national guidelines for generalist music teacher education

Curriculum language

Like any social or cultural field, the field of music education has its own native language. The national guidelines (UHR, 2017a, 2017b) are written in a “curriculum language” and a music education jargon. This involves the use of certain “endemic” terms characteristic of the field, which appear without definitions and carry taken-for-granted connotations. The guidelines are explicitly normative, and use an assertive “modal” language, telling teacher students what they *shall* learn in terms of knowledge, skills, and general competences, and what they *shall* do in their teaching (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Words and phrasings used in the national guidelines, and any other guiding documents, are the result of semiotic choices made by the authors (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Key terms point to particular views on music, policies, scholarly directions, and philosophies of music education. They echo prevailing music education discourses and, as we shall see later on, may even reflect ideas and agendas that can be traced to the individual educators and scholars involved in making the guidelines.

The language in curriculum documents often relates intertextually to other texts. Intertextuality is the study of how one text draws on other texts in different ways. It opens for an infinity of possible alternatives of combining parts from other texts, while at the same time this potential is limited by social structures and custom (Fairclough, 2013). According to Fairclough, intertextual relations can be manifest (explicit) or latent (not explicit). In curriculum texts they are most often latent. In addition to the semiotic issues mentioned above, intertextuality is another language use to look for in the analysis of the national guidelines for generalist music teacher education.

Absences and presuppositions

An approach integral to critical discourse analysis is to identify *presuppositions*: the ways by which a text implies meanings without clearly stating them or presents ideas as natural or self-evident, when they in fact may be contestable or ideological. At the same time, it is necessary to look for *absences*, missing words, or issues that one might expect to be included based on their presence in relevant discourses (Machin & Mayr, 2012). What is missing from a text is just as important as what is included in a text.

Some of the most basic presuppositions found in the national guidelines are ontological statements about what this thing called music “is”. While there is no explicit definition of music, the introduction which is titled “Music – the subject in teacher education” contains several statements that implicitly tell us what music is, constituting some “truths” that are to be taken for granted by the reader.

It [the subject music] shall provide basic insight into music *as* a performing, creative and listening subject, aesthetic learning processes and creativity, Norwegian and international musical heritage, music *as* a multicultural social phenomenon and *as* a form of expression that creates identity. (UHR, 2017a, p. 52, italics added)

In this example the preposition “as” establishes as natural that the words that follow are characteristics of music; that music *is* a performing, creative, and listening subject, as well as multicultural social phenomenon and an identity-creating form of expression.

Typical for curriculum language is that definitions of key terms, such as these characterisations of music, are absent. There are no explanations or arguments to support them. Their authoritative position as “common sense” emerges from the context in which we find them within the curriculum plans and from the status of the plans themselves. The lack of definitions in the national guidelines is key to the naturalization of terminology and of the document itself. It is inherently expected that teachers acknowledge their value and follow the proposed guidelines accordingly. Concepts and phrasings which indicate how to perform music, perceive music, and think about music emerge as naturalized, with an institutional stamp of authority, as representations of the common good (Fairclough, 2013).

Moreover, as in many political and ideological documents, the national guidelines do not specify the authors. It is the institution that endorses and promotes a curriculum, not the authors. Only the leader of the National council for Teacher Education (NRLU) and the leader of the committee responsible for the guidelines appear as responsible signatories. The authors who have in fact shaped the text remain anonymous, strengthening the ideological, authoritative, and regulative function of a curriculum. As impersonal documents, representing institutional values, they cannot be judged, agreed upon or contradicted as the meanings of particular agents in education politics.

The guidelines also refrain from specifying anything concrete about musical content, and do not give clear evidence as to what genres should be prioritized. This absence is conspicuous, since a great deal of discussion in the music education field has for several decades centred around priorities concerning the inclusion or exclusion of styles and genres, especially in view of “multicultural” ambitions and the politics of representation (e.g. Bowman, 1993; Green, 2011; Kallio, 2017; Westerlund et al., 2020). This concerns, for example, what priority classical music, folk music, popular music, or indigenous Sámi music should be given in education. In view of ambitions aimed at promoting cultural diversity, it also concerns the inclusion of music genres related to immigrant culture. Discussion of content also deals with the exclusion of music that may be seen as inappropriate for use in schools, based on moral or political grounds (Kallio, 2015, 2017).

Since the guidelines avoid mentioning any genre specifically, this could be understood either as a reluctance to take sides in these debates, but could also be linked to an ambition to be flexible enough to accommodate a large variety of musical styles and interests. Interestingly, the recommendation of specific genres and songs has a long history in the

national school curriculum, with for instance, the curriculum L97 (KUF, 1996) suggesting particular songs for different levels, and the plan from 1974 even supplying a comprehensive list of recommended songs (KUD, 1974), virtually a prescribed “school music canon” (Knudsen, 2018). Nonetheless, as we will see further on, a closer look at some of the terms and formulations shows that this absence is not absolute. There are several terms that contain hidden connotations to musical genres that are neither explicit nor obvious, but discursively shaped and established.

Music as activity

The guidelines, promote the understanding that the music subject is, above all, an activity. It is “a performing, creating and listening subject” (UHR, 2017a, p. 52). This is supported by verbal phrasings:

The objective of the subject music in primary and lower secondary education is to give all pupils a musical education that allows them to *actively take part* in music, through playing music, composing and listening. (UHR, 2017a, p. 52, italics added)

[The music subject] shall provide a basis for the students’ general education and academic growth and enable them to *actively participate* in cultural and academic development and the development of the school in their future profession. (UHR, 2017a, p. 52, italics added)

Evidently, teacher students are expected to also be musically active themselves. They are to develop their own “performing, personal and artistic” competences, something that requires “practice and maturation over a long period”. Through practice the music subject “shall develop the student’s ability for communication and personal expression”. (UHR, 2017a, p. 52).

Apparently, music in teacher education is understood as an *activity subject* more than a *knowledge subject*. Activity is key, and musical activity is what students as future teachers are expected to encourage in pupils. Knowledge is present in the guidelines through terms like “insight” and “research-based knowledge”, and as the first of the three areas of learning outcomes: “Knowledge – Skills – General competence” (UHR, 2017a, p. 53). However, it is musical activity that is mentioned first in the introduction, and subsequently referred to the most in the document. As discussed later in this article, support for highlighting an approach to music as a basic human activity can be found in certain philosophies of music education, such as in Christopher Small’s (1998) writings, as well as the so-called *praxial* paradigm drawn up by David Elliott (Elliott, 1995, 2005).

The importance of the students’ active agency is highlighted in the following paragraphs on the learning outcomes of the music course. The students are expected to develop skills in singing, playing, accompaniment, dancing, composing and the planning and leading of musical practices (UHR, 2017a, p. 53).

Grammatically speaking there are phrasings that also suggest, metaphorically, that the subject music is itself capable of being active:

The subject *shall provide* basic insight into music as a performing, creative and listening subject ...

...

The subject *shall familiarize* students with the progress of musical learning ...

...

The subject *will develop* the students' ability for communication and personal expression. (UHR, 2017a, p. 52, italics added)

These verbal phrasings from the introduction, which are typical of curriculum language, apparently attribute the subject music with agency: music “acts” upon the students by *providing, familiarizing* and *developing*, while the students receive *insight, familiarity and ability*. This “passive construction” (Skrede, 2017, p. 48) serves to underline the position of the subject music itself as the primary point of reference. It may also be understood as hiding or downplaying the responsibility of the institutions. We might ask why it is the music subject and not the music teacher educators that “will provide basic insight”, and “develop the students’ ability”. In CDA, to hide the actual subject through such metaphorical constructions is considered an ideological act.

Musisering (playing music)

The understanding of music as an activity is highlighted in the very first sentence of the national guidelines: “The objective of the subject music in primary and lower secondary education is to give all pupils a musical education that allows them to actively take part in music, through playing music, composing and listening” (UHR, 2017a, p. 52). The Norwegian original here uses the term *musisering* for *playing music* rather than the literal translation *å spille musikk*. *Musisering* has some interesting connotations and deserves further attention. It is a particular Norwegian (also Scandinavian) concept that highlights the collective practice of playing together, including informal and private settings. *Musisering* was mentioned (briefly) for the first time in the 1987 national curriculum for elementary school (KUD, 1987). Ten years later the concept was given a more central role in the curriculum L97 (KUF, 1996) as the first of the three highlighted subject areas of music education: 1) *musisere og danse*, 2) *komponere og 3) lytte* (1) playing music and dancing, 2) composing and 3) listening).³ Although the phrasing has changed somewhat,⁴

3 In later plans (2006 and 2020), dancing was left out, so the subject area triad of music remained as *musisere, komponere og lytte* (playing music, composing, and listening).

4 The phrasing is different in the latest curriculum for elementary school (Udir, 2020), with *performing music, playing music* and *experiencing music* as core elements in the music subject, and supplemented by *cultural understanding* as a fourth core element.

this important triad is still part of the template used today in the national curriculum, as well as the national guidelines for teacher education and all the local plans at teacher training institutions. The establishment of *musisering* as a key music education term in Norway can, at least partly, be attributed to music education scholar Magne Espeland, who took part in the development of the national curriculum L97 and encouraged the inclusion of the term (Espeland, 1997). A search in the National Library journal database⁵ tells us that *musisering* made its way into Norwegian scholarly language from around 1960 and was especially frequent in music education journals. Use of the term was at its height in the 1990s, at the time when it entered the national curriculum, but has since then gone out of style and declined sharply – from appearing in 34 journal publications in 1995 and dropping to only four in 2021.

Musisering can obviously be related to Small's (1998) influential writings on *musicking*, but predates this and is somewhat less comprehensive, lacking Small's strong emphasis on the role of music in creating social relations. *Musisering* basically means "playing music together", but not any music or in any way. It highlights the collective process more than the result and is consequently a contrast to both "performing", which requires an audience, and "practicing", which essentially prepares for playing in front of an audience. *Musisering* is often used in relation to everyday practices: playing together with friends in a family setting, or in schools and kindergartens outside formalised lessons or gatherings.

Musical heritage

The national guidelines state that the music subject "shall provide basic insight into [...] Norwegian and international musical heritage" (UHR, 2017a, p. 52). The word heritage, used in this sense, as cultural heritage, is essentially a metaphor, but the term is so ingrained in common discourse that we rarely think of it as such – it has become an "invisible metaphor". (We hardly think of the original meaning of inheritance as something we acquire from a deceased relative). Nonetheless, this idea of heritage has potential connections to ideology and power (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

The idea of a *musical heritage* is related to the prevailing discourse surrounding *cultural heritage*, a term that embraces both material objects, such as historical buildings and works of art, and intangible cultural heritage like language, rituals or music. The modern interest in cultural heritage experienced a boost around 1990, both globally and locally (Aronsson, 2012, p. 34) and has in recent years established a strong foothold in cultural policy discourses, not least through promotion by UN and UNESCO. The notion of an *international* cultural heritage can be linked to UNESCO's listings of cultural heritage monuments, and their listings of oral and intangible practices, including music and dance (UNESCOa;

5 <https://www.nb.no/>

UNESCOb). The entries on these lists are promoted as important to all humanity. When the guidelines prescribe engaging with the national and international musical heritage, it involves an intertextual mobilisation of understandings of heritage shaped by discourses of both nationality and globalism.

It is worth noting that in the Norwegian original document, the term heritage appears in the singular and particular form; we are not dealing with any heritage, but *the* heritage. This indicates that heritage is one – a unity or a unifying force – a common national property shared by the citizens of a nation, or in the case of international heritage, a common property of humanity in accordance with the globally unifying ideology behind the UN and UNESCO.

In accordance with the prevailing curriculum language genre, the national guidelines have no mention of what “the Norwegian and international musical heritage” should include. On the one hand, this might be understood to imply that there is ample space for the individual teacher to put into them whatever musical practices they consider as covered by the terms. On the other hand, we need to be aware that these concepts have been discursively shaped in a certain way. In the Norwegian teacher education discourse, it is taken for granted that Norwegian cultural heritage refers to either traditional Norwegian folk music or older composed classical music, especially of the national romanticist era. “Cultural heritage songs” (*sanger fra norsk kulturarv*) refers to the older oral folk song tradition (e.g. Haukenes & Kielland, 2001).

It is also necessary to point to the underlying presupposition of the concept “*Norwegian and international musical heritage*” implying that music has anything at all to do with being Norwegian, or any other nationality for that matter. While the connection between music culture and nationhood is increasingly being challenged (Corona & Madrid, 2008), it is widely acknowledged that one of the main tasks of the school system in any country is to reproduce the nation as an idea that makes people imagine that they have something in common with others living within historically and arbitrarily defined boundaries (Anderson, 2006 (1983); Pihl, 2009). Music styles, songs and artists have deeply rooted, socially constructed connections to nationhood, and the idea of nationhood is cultivated and perpetuated through culture and education, not least through music education. The school system is a key arena for creating these connections, as underlined by the links between music and the nation in the national guidelines. The point of identifying this presupposition in the guidelines is that it directs attention to the naturalised ideological role of music education in nation building.

Other questions regarding cultural heritage and music in schools should logically follow. What does it mean in practice for music educators to have insight in *the Norwegian and international musical heritage*? Does it mean promoting the genres traditionally involved in Norwegian heritage building? Or, is there space for troubling or redefining the taken-for-granted ideas of heritage found in the presuppositions of the national guidelines?

Youth culture and children's culture

Other concepts that carry taken-for granted connotations to musical genres can be found in the guidelines under the “learning outcomes”, which state that the students shall develop knowledge of “the music of youth culture” and of “children's music culture” (UHR, 2017a, p. 53; 2017b, p. 54). Evidently, the guidelines acknowledge the existence and significance of the pupils' cultures, and seemingly encourage teacher students to make use of musical genres and practices that they would expect their pupils to be familiar with. Since the teacher students are young people (mostly in their early twenties), this could also be seen to encourage them to make use of their own preferred music styles.

In the Norwegian education discourse “the music of youth culture”, invokes the use of music in popular culture, such as movies, television series, video games and social media. For all intents and purposes, “musical youth culture” stands as a contrast to “musical heritage”, as it represents something new and often contemporary. Popular music today has a strong, if not dominant place in Norwegian teacher education and schools, comprising the foundation for the so-called rhythmical music didactics (*rytmisk musikkdidaktikk*) (Hauge & Christophersen, 2000). Learning music by playing basic band instruments has become a dominating teaching method in schools, as well as in teacher education (Christophersen & Gullberg, 2017; Dyndahl & Nielsen, 2014; Kamsvåg, 2011; Onsrud, 2015) and many of the key textbooks for schools have a strong emphasis on popular music (e.g. Johnsen, 2013). Arguably, the discursive construction of “the music of youth culture” as directed towards playing in a band may make other, more recently developed musical expressions invisible, such as making dance videos on Tiktok, making music in video games such as Minecraft, or playing music in software such as Soundtrap. Music teacher programs are continuously faced with the challenge of implementing “youth culture and children's culture” in ways that are updated and less stuck in dominant past understandings.

A recent national survey shows that 87% of Norwegian generalist music teacher students ranked playing in groups and pop/rock bands as the most important skill for a music teacher (Nysæther et al., 2021). Consequently, it seems obvious that the band music discourse is reproduced by teacher students themselves. It is worth noting, however, that there is a considerable gender difference when it comes to performing popular music. In the same survey, 80% of the male students report that they play a “band instrument” versus only 20% of the females. Apparently, the dominant position of popular music matches traditional gender roles in music performance – the boys play in a band and the girls sing.

The focus on youth culture and children's culture in the guidelines also has methodological implications: the opening for pupils and students' “own” music has influenced and changed the role of teachers in profound ways. The informal learning strategies discussed by Lucy Green in her study of how popular musicians learn to play (Green, 2002), and later in her suggestions for implementing informal modes of teaching in the classroom (Green, 2008) have been highly influential. This approach involves a focus on the agency

of pupils, implying that they can take over much of the responsibility for both content and teaching methods. Informal approaches to learning music have influenced a great number of Norwegian music educators in teacher education (Christophersen & Gullberg, 2017; Dyndahl et al., 2017).

Informal learning strategies have been problematized, not only in relation to the role of music teachers as being less important for pupils' musical learning (Rodriguez, 2009), but also in relation to the dynamics between the pupils themselves. For instance, several gender researchers have raised the concern that pupils' own choices often contribute to gender stereotypes in the music classroom, countering efforts aimed at contributing to gender equality (Bergman, 2009; Björck, 2011; Onsrud, 2015). This indicates that it may not be enough to know children's culture and youth culture and include it in the music teaching. Equally important is *how* it is included and handled.

Cultural diversity

The national guidelines strongly encourage diversity in music education, and an engagement with a wide variety of international genres and styles. It is maintained that music is a "multicultural social phenomenon", teacher students are expected to obtain knowledge of a "wide range of music from different cultures, genres and historical periods" and "master a range of both traditional and modern dances from different cultures". Schools are mentioned as "learning fellowships in a cultural diversity" and students are expected to be capable of "reflecting on and discussing the role of music in a diverse society" (UHR, 2017b, p. 56).

Cultural diversity represents an ideology that has influenced the Norwegian and Scandinavian education discourse strongly for at least three decades. The concept is unavoidable for the authors of any curriculum. In the music field it is rooted in policies addressing immigration and attempts to counter discrimination and bullying in schools (Skylstad, 1993, 2004). In music education this ideology draws on other discourses with wide implications: democracy, equality, and human rights. It implies a relativistic stance in the sense that it upholds the equal worth of all cultural expressions. As the national guidelines suggest, implementing an ideology of cultural diversity in music education encourages the teaching of a broad spectrum of music cultures.

It is worth mentioning that in the music part of the guidelines there are two assertive statements regarding what society *is*, namely "a multicultural society" and "a society marked by diversity". Interestingly, these two proclamations of diversity are the only statements that explicitly characterise contemporary Norwegian society.

The ideology of diversity in music education contains different, often overlapping rationales that have influenced the music education discourse and the development of the guidelines (Green, 2011; Knudsen, 2021). At one end of the scale, we find socio-political rationales, which focus on the relationship between music and the social reality.

This implies that through engaging with a variety of music cultures – especially immigrant cultures – pupils can develop a better understanding of the different peoples that make up Norwegian society and learn tolerance for others. Learning the music of a culture is seen as a way to understand the people who make the music or who identify with it. As an extension of this view, we may talk about a global, or humanistic rationale, implying that pupils are expected to develop a global understanding of international relationships and respect for the inhabitants of other parts of the world. Basically, socio-political rationales imply an instrumental view of music as a useful tool for reaching social, educational, or other “non-musical” goals.

At the other end of the scale, we find subject-oriented rationales for encouraging diversity. These may focus on the intrinsic value of any music experience; that music has aesthetic qualities that may be appreciated by anyone, regardless of cultural background. Following such rationales, studying musics of other cultures can broaden the students’ view of music making in general and make them more open to new musical sounds, rhythms, and structures. Learning concepts, performance practices, and instrumental techniques of different cultures from around the world can provide a wider palette of musical ideas, compositional techniques, and improvisational devices, thus stimulating the students’ musical creativity.

It should be noted that in the current educational and political discourse, diversity is understood as *cultural* diversity, and mainly concerns relations between Norwegians and immigrants. According to scholars studying education in a gender perspective there has been a turn from using the term “equality” in earlier school curricula to “diversity” in later school reforms (from 1997). They argue that this has put issues of gender and sexuality in the shadow of the dominating focus on cultural diversity, which above all is used in relation to ethnicity and nationality (Klemp et al., 1998; Onsrud, 2013). While the background for both concepts is the ideological aim of making education more inclusive, the concept equality has mainly been associated with equity between men and women, while diversity, at least in principle, can include all sorts of differences. By using the concept diversity, and not being more specific, marginalised groups other than immigrants can easily be forgotten or left out, such as people with disabilities or people identifying as LGBTQ+.

Philosophies

Other key terms in the national guidelines point to a particular scholarly tradition related to theory of aesthetics, which has had an impact on the Norwegian music education discourse and the terminology of national plans and curricula from 1997 and onward. A key exponent for this direction is philosopher of music Øivind Varkøy (2010). Several terms in the national guidelines point in this direction. “Aesthetic learning processes” is a commonly used marker of aesthetics-based thinking in arts education (UHR, 2017a, p. 52). Other

terms found in the Norwegian original are “*danning*” and “*erkjenningsformer*”. Apparently, these last two terms have been difficult to translate, appearing in the English version as “general education” and “cognition” respectively, while translations more in coherence with current academic use could be “formation” and “forms of experience”. Interestingly, the translation problems might suggest that key terminology used in this branch of aesthetic theory in arts education is not widely established, and consequently, has not been appropriately handled by the official translators of government documents.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go deeper into these concepts, but we would like to point out some international parallels. Music education debates, at least in the Anglo-American sphere, were for many years influenced by heated disputes between an aesthetics-based paradigm as promoted by Bennet Reimer and a “praxial” paradigm, as drawn up by Elliott (Elliott, 1995, 2005; Reimer, 1989). The so-called Elliott-Reimer divide can still be used as a reference for critically analyzing the terminology of curriculum documents such as the national guidelines. Apparently, the choice of words made by the authors of the guidelines connect to both these directions. As mentioned earlier, the guidelines highlight an understanding of music as a practice and an activity (suggesting a praxial paradigm), while at the same time, the use of terms mentioned above – aesthetic learning processes, forms of experience (*erkjenningsformer*) and formation (*danning*) – indicate directions founded on an aesthetics-oriented paradigm. This signals that the national guidelines, intertextually and quite pragmatically make use of elements from both paradigms. Thus, they provide a space for supporters of both directions, who will be able to find concepts and phrasings that resonate with their own thinking and views on music in teacher education.

Still, in view of these tensions, it could be argued that the national guidelines contain incompatible contradictions. Following Wayne Bowman, taking an “aesthetic attitude” is incompatible with the development of a “multicultural” music education (Bowman, 1993; See also Bowman, 2007). In much the same vein, Elliott rejects “aesthetic education” as a foundation for developing a culturally diverse music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2014). A key argument promoted by these scholars is that current directions based on philosophies of aesthetics are deeply anchored in particularly Western ways of thinking, which presuppose the idea of music as an *artwork* and a contemplative or analytical way of experiencing arts, without necessarily leading to any meaningful active participation in *doing* these arts (Elliott & Silverman, 2014).

Concluding comments

This article started out by asserting that the *national guidelines for generalist teacher education* is a value-laden and ideological document. It is based on our view that ideology is not only embedded in institutional systems of power, but can also be identified in the

negotiations and power struggles between various agents influencing the shaping and implementation of this guiding document, from different political and philosophical vantage points.

Our analysis has shown that the text of the national guidelines is related to historical and current discourses of music preferences, values and ideologies in Norwegian schools. While it is problematic to name a specific underlying ideology, the tendencies mentioned reflect teacher education in Norway as a socially and politically constructed product of a Scandinavian welfare state marked by social democratic national policies (Andersson & Hilson, 2009). Traces of a historically and nationally based ideology promote musical heritage as a builder of feelings of nationhood, while at the same time, more cosmopolitan ideological tendencies emerge in the promotion of cultural diversity and international orientations.

The music education ideologies outlined by the guidelines mainly view music as an activity, promote diversity, value the students' personal development, and view students as active agents with the potential to fill the music subject with their own content. Additionally, it is obvious that the guidelines contain traces of contrasting ideologies that have influenced Western philosophies of music education.

As we have shown, some of the terms and formulations mentioned are unambiguous labels of scholarly traditions and can even be traced back to particular scholars who directly or indirectly have contributed to shaping the guidelines for music teacher education as well as the national curricula for public schools. Still, this concerns much more than personal preferences for certain concepts or labels to be used in plans; it concerns a struggle for the power of definition; a struggle between different ideologies and schools of thought, to determine who will set the agenda, both in academic education scholarship, and at the level of guiding documents and curricula.

As claimed in this article, music teacher education constructs and reproduces a certain "we", a community of music educators surrounded by gate-keeping practices. Likewise, the entire education system can be seen as part of the maintenance of a dominant, majority culture in Norway. We have argued that the national guidelines' text on music education largely contributes to upholding these social and cultural constructs by using and naturalizing concepts like "heritage", "diversity", "culture" and "tradition". While such concepts in principle are open to interpretations that challenge the dominant, majority culture, their potential for maintaining prevailing ideologies is strong – dominant, naturalized understandings and practices embedded in discourse are easily taken for granted if alternative interpretations are not explicitly proposed and promoted. For generalist music teacher educators as well as students, it is important to critically study curriculum texts to increase awareness of their ideological content, with the possibility to redefine, challenge, and potentially change the curriculum in order to secure its relevance for music educators of the future.

Author biographies

Jan Sverre Knudsen is a professor of music at Oslo Metropolitan University, Faculty of Education and International Studies. His research interests are related to music education, ethnomusicology and the sociology of music. Knudsen has published widely on the role of musical practices in immigrant communities, amateur hip-hop performers, intercultural concert promotion in schools, and issues related to nationality and ethnicity in music education.

Silje Valde Onsrud (PhD) is a professor of music education at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. Her research interests include music in schools, music teacher education, music education policy, and social justice with particular focus on gender and sexuality.

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