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Title: Teaching music in our time. *Student music teachers' reflections on music education, teacher education, and becoming a teacher.*

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Abstract

This article concerns students of music education in Sweden. It investigates the student teachers' perceptions of their ongoing music teacher education, with a particular focus on the task of teaching music today. It considers whether they believe their teacher education prepares them for this undertaking, and in that case, how. Their various experiences from their school-based in-service education are considered, and the findings lead to a discussion of ideological issues with a bearing on democracy, the value of music, and the function of music as a curriculum subject.

About the authors

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Teaching music in our time. *Student music teachers' reflections on music education, teacher education, and becoming a teacher.*

Introduction

What can be considered to be relevant content and practice in music education? Should music teacher education have an experience-based focus or a more academic, subject-oriented focus? How does the organization and content of music teacher education affect prospective teachers' competences, approaches and views of teaching music? These are some central and enduring questions in the current international (music) teacher education debate. In this article, our intention is to highlight these aspects from the perspectives of music teacher education students in Sweden.

Teacher education in Sweden was reformed in 2001. In the previous music teacher education the crucial skills to develop were the artistic and practical teaching

competences. A significant change due to the most recent teacher education reform is that the academic element, that is to say scholarly subject studies, has been accentuated. Today artistic, scientific and pedagogical subjects are equally included throughout the whole music teacher education.

The study referred to in this article was conducted amongst a group of student teachers who commenced their studies after the most recent teacher education proposition (of 2001) was launched. The full study encompasses the various subjects covered in their teacher education, while this article concentrates in particular on the student teachers' experiences and reflections on their school-based in-service education, and how these experiences shaped the process of their becoming teachers of music.

The overall aim of the study was to identify student music teachers' opinions on their on-going music teacher education. To this end they were questioned about the school-based in-service education and hands-on experience of teaching music in school. These are among the central themes in this article, addressed in the following questions:

- Do the student teachers find that their education prepares them for teaching music in schools?
- How do the student teachers define the goals of music education?
- Do the student teachers find that the goals of the current curriculum are evident in the music education they have observed and participated in? In that case, how are they accomplished?

For the purpose of this investigation we used focus group interviews as the core method. Our intention was to operate these meetings in the form of a democratic conversation.

Background

Reform – the state of music teacher education

As the result of a political decision, Swedish teacher education was reformed in 2001. The objectives with reforming teacher education were several, the principal one being to form stronger links with research and the academic ethos. The assumption was that these links would improve the quality of teacher education as well as of general

education. The call for reform to teacher education in Sweden mirrored a major societal transformation, and in the political debate, education was singled out to be the key factor for future changes on a local, national, and international level. In the debate, Sweden, like many other European countries, was now said to be a *knowledge society* (Prop. 1999/2000:135 p. 4). Consequently, the expectation was that higher education should promote knowledge and competences that would lead to mobility, employability, and competitiveness. At the same time the general education system became more decentralised, and the resultant changes had a direct effect on teachers' roles and methods. The teachers' most important tasks became interpreting curriculum goals and local school plans, and organising their students' learning opportunities accordingly. These objectives call for a teacher education that enables future teachers to analyse their own pedagogical approach in a more holistic perspective. Teachers are expected to broaden their skills in assessing how learning goals are achieved, and to form a picture of school as a living organisation, while collaborating with teachers from other subject areas and deciding with the students how curriculum objectives should be implemented and achieved. Such would be the foundations for life-long learning.

Meanwhile subject knowledge and general teacher competencies are accentuated as the basis for teacher education to a greater extent than before. As a consequence, the current teacher education programme is now designed to afford qualifications required for teaching as well as for further academic studies. Since the reform in 2001, all teacher education has been integrated within one common scheme, covering all subjects and educational levels from pre-school to upper secondary school. The duration of teacher education in Sweden is between four and a half and five and a half years, depending on the student teachers' individual choice of elective courses. From a music-education perspective the reform can be described as a transition from '*Music* teacher education' to '*Teacher* education in music', indicating that the educational dimension has been highlighted since the reform. During their education, student music teachers take courses in general education with student teachers studying other subjects.

Teacher education takes place in two main physical contexts. One context is the university campus, where subject studies and general education studies are taught. The second context is the universities' partner schools where their school-based in-service

education takes place under the supervision of local music teachers/mentors from compulsory schools.

Today, the teaching profession requires that each individual teacher obtains and develops competences in various aspects of learning, subject knowledge, and the intentions of the curriculum. From this foundation, teachers are expected to design their work based on their own independent choices. This position could be referred to as the professional orientation which academia (which now also includes teacher education) strives to develop. Furthermore, it could be understood as an expression of an active citizen's participation in society. Fundamentally, democratic values in a society are built on certain ethical principles such as equity, inclusion and justice. According to the Democracy Report (SOU 2000) democracy also relates to the individual's prospects of an active citizenship and participation in Swedish society. A diversity perspective is also addressed as an important goal, not only as a societal resource.

Music teacher education as a university education

University education in Sweden, including teacher education, has undergone a democratic transformation over the last decades (Sjögren 2005). This has led to what was earlier considered to be an 'elite education' – only intended for a minority of the population – being modified into a 'mass education', intended for all. Many institutions have traditionally passed on values from a time when human conditions were different, and when higher education was more segregated and addressed fewer people, but the roles of the institutions are changing. A more globalized existence, including social, ethnical, and knowledge-based diversity, calls for a restoration of deeply rooted conceptions of teaching and learning (ibid.).

Music teacher education is part of this transformation. Yet, what is typical for higher music education is that students and student teachers enrol by audition, which is primarily based on their vocal, instrumental, and music theory skills. This convention indicates that higher music education is not aimed at 'all', but rather to those who have previously developed the expected skills in order to be accepted as a student music teacher.

Brändström and Wiklund (1995) argue that higher music education is conventionally built on a conservatoire tradition where instrumental skills and aesthetic ideals are passed on from teacher to pupil in what can be defined as a master-apprentice relationship (Nielsen & Kvale 2000). Such principles generate a particular approach to the teaching and learning of music, regardless of the genre. This in turn is reflected in the way in which music education is undertaken and understood in schools. It also affects what (musical) background students must have if they want to be accepted for higher music education.

Over the last decades, however, the content and courses of higher music education have inclined towards a broader approach, and the number of students with more diverse musical backgrounds is slightly higher now than previously. That said, the values and conduct related to the conservatoire tradition is still present in the field of higher music education in Sweden.

School-based in-service education – a reflection on the whole educational context

While it is common for education strategies to reflect a society's views on school, education, and knowledge (Boman 2002; Carlgren & Marton 2000), this is particularly true for teacher education, as it represents one of the most frequently reformed, transparent, and centrally managed forms of education (Lindberg 2002). Teacher education struggles with recurrent questions such as how to determine relevant teacher knowledge and whether teacher education should have an experience-based focus gained in schools, or if it should have a more academic, subject-oriented focus. A core question is the relationship between subject knowledge and educational skills and competences (Högskoleverket 2008 [The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education], pp. 23–27). The balance between academic and vocational studies should not be thought unique to teacher education; the problem has been discussed by various scholars from several disciplines (for example, Ax & Ponte 2008; Heyman & Perez Prieto 2000; Olsson 2002; Swennen & van der Klink 2009).

Current music teacher education in Sweden comprises music studies (including subject didactics), school-based in-service education, and general education studies – just like the earlier teacher education. A significant change, however, is that the academic

element is more strongly accentuated. A recent music pedagogy study involving student music teachers and their lecturers revealed the importance of a connection between general education studies and the professional setting (Ferm & Johansen 2008). This is one of the current objectives of music teacher education.

One significant feature of the current teacher education is the mentors in the school-based in-service part, who are expected not only to *supervise* future teachers – advise them in their actual teaching – but also to play a significant role in their entire education by encouraging them to reflect on topics such as learning, conflict management, and teachers' teamwork. Student teachers are requested to follow a line of inquiry about the particular school's ethos, for example, or to work with democracy issues and equal rights in the school. Thus student teachers are not only required to 'train up' their teaching skills; in dialogue with their mentors, they must develop various teaching competences and strategies, to reflect school as a versatile institution.

Music in Schools

A transition from 'school music' to 'music in school'

Music education in Sweden has undergone major changes since the 1960s when attendance at school became compulsory for all children aged between 7 and 16. In the first national curriculum, music education was based on music literacy, singing songs in harmony, and the Western history of music. Today, Swedish schools are governed by policy documents that advocate the consideration of each student's entitlement to have his or her individual needs and interests recognised in school (Zackari & Modigh 2002). Consequently, the national music syllabus emphasises that music education in compulsory school must encompass the students' own world of musical experience and be based on singing, playing instruments, and music making.

In 1995, Stålhammar described the development from the 1960s and onwards as a transition from 'school music' to 'music in school'. During this thirty-year period, music education went from being primarily a school subject to a topic which aspired to incorporate the students' own extra-curricular musical interests. A major factor to this shift was the declared aim of 'A school for all' in the general curriculum. This motto

incorporated an increased emphasis on democratic values and students' active participation (Sjögren 2005).

Music and the curriculum

The Swedish government and parliament govern schools and education, including the national curriculum and syllabi, through the Education Act. Fundamental values that determine school activities are articulated in the national curriculum. The syllabi are designed to clarify the education requirements in each specific subject, but they do not prescribe fixed ways of achieving this. Instead, each syllabus articulates goals for what the students should learn, and by its open design offers considerable possibilities for teachers, teams of teacher, and students to decide on the subject content and working methods.

The current music syllabus (Lpo 94) emphasises that music relates to the individual's world in several ways. Music is stated to influence the individual on a number of different levels of perception, but equally to be an important tool for expressing ideas and impressions, and for developing social skills. Thus the syllabus states that music education should aim to ensure the development of students' musical knowledge and the encouragement of their confidence and ability to sing and play music both individually and in groups. Moreover, their ability to listen to music and create their own music should be considered, together with their collaborative skills. In addition, they must be acquainted with the functions and traditions of music from various cultures (Lpo 94).

An important feature of the ways in which music education is carried out in Sweden is that there are no specific guidelines that need to be considered, no particular textbooks or fixed music repertoire. Instead, the content is developed jointly by each teacher and his or her students, making music education a fairly diverse practice in Swedish schools (Myndigheten för Skolutveckling [The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement] 2007).

The general view amongst music teachers is that music teaching should provide ample opportunity for students to discover their own musical abilities. This reality calls for

teachers of music with a professional orientation, exemplified above. Students are no longer objects of their teacher's actions: they are acting subjects (Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2004b, pp. 115–117). There is a strongly expressed hope that each student will be considered as an individual, and that all teaching will start from this viewpoint. This involves the conjunction of the students' personal experiences with the school's programme of knowledge acquisition, together with the policy documents by which Swedish schools are governed (Zackari & Modigh 2002, Georgii-Hemming & Westvall 2010).

What happens in a music class?

The Swedish National Evaluation of Music in compulsory school of 2003 (NE-2003) revealed that few music teachers actually employed the national curriculum and syllabus while planning and practicing their teaching (Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2004a & b; 2005). Instead, teachers' choices of content and goals were often based on their own individual competences and interests together with their students' musical interests and experiences.

Music teachers generally put their emphasis on their students' development as human beings, on 'musical craft', and on musical activities. The songs used in classroom are predominantly easy pop and rock songs from the 1950s and onwards (Karlsson & Karlsson 2009).

According to the most recent National Evaluation of Music Education (Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2004a & b; 2005) and previous research in the area, music teachers generally consider it their main task to be social and musical guides or mentors in school, strengthening the students' self-esteem in musical and social matters. Music teachers say they want to support their students in becoming 'complete human beings'. They describe their overall aim when planning their teaching as being enjoyable, engaging and stimulating lessons (Georgii-Hemming 2006; Myndigheten för Skolutveckling 2007; Sandberg 2006; Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2005).

Recently a debate on the effects of the current goals and strategies within Swedish music education has emerged. A core issue is whether music education has grown to be too concentrated on individualization and informal approaches. However, behind the pedagogical strategies employed by music teachers there seems to be a general, strongly democratic intention. A central query in the present debate is therefore whether music education in its current existence leads to students' inclusion and participation in a musical and social context (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, forthcoming; Sernhede 2006).

Becoming a music teacher

In order to graduate and become a professional music teacher, students have to take courses so as to develop both their musical and their teaching competencies. The students need to develop both their personal skills and knowledge, and to learn how to teach others (Stephens 2007).

A vital process in teacher education is to shed the role of the student and adopt that of the teacher. While studying to become professional music teachers, the student teachers' expectations of themselves as prospective music teachers and what their working life will bring are central. These considerations are shaped by personal experience of school, the public debate – on teachers, music and education – as well as by views and values provided by teacher education (Cochran-Smith 2008; Westvall 2007; Swanwick 1992).

During their education, student music teachers are part of a versatile pattern of external and internal influences and interactions that affect their occupational socialization (Froelich 2007) in becoming teachers of music (Bouij 1998; Roberts 2000; Westvall 2007). This interaction can be understood as their development of self-identity in relation to music pedagogy. On an applied level, they meet other students from various backgrounds, and along with university teachers, mentors, and students in the state compulsory schools. On a more implicit level, student music teachers' personal experiences of music in school encounter traditions, values, and objectives within the cultural frame of music education.

The 'space between' is defined as the fluid gap between previous musical experiences and future expectations of musical encounters. In this space, ideas about musicality and music teaching are in a constant flux. These ideas, however, are often located in two places at once, as strongly held beliefs interact with new impressions. The space between functions as a switch between before and after musical encounters, and may result in previously strongly held convictions being abandoned or in other ideas being maintained and reinforced (Westvall 2007).

Westvall (2007) describes this occurrence as a 'space between' (Swanwick 1999; Blumer 1986) in which a person holds two opinions at the same time based on opposing influences drawn from society, education, and from personal experiences. This can be described as an interaction between the past, the present, and the future (Georgii-Hemming 2007; Westvall 2007).

The issues discussed above, are connected to some of the central contradictions between art for art's sake and music as a largely social and democratic experience. Music education can either be viewed in terms of a normative discourse that assumes that music is an object, or of a socio-musical discourse in which music is regarded as a process and the focus is on the people involved (Georgii-Hemming 2005; Swanwick 1999; Westvall 2007). This raises the questions of the role of the teacher, the choice of subject content, and the forms of music-making within music education.

Data collection and data analysis

The method used in this study was the focus group interview since it not only enables the investigation of ideas expressed in the group, but also the interplay and dialogues within the members of the group (Puchta & Potter 2004; Wibeck 2000). The achievement of these two goals is central in gaining an understanding of how attitudes and ideas are formed, developed, and put to use in a specific social or cultural context. The participants also became 'co-researchers' in direct relation to the study. This gave the research a transparency that can be considered to have increased the value of the study.

The focus group interviews took place during the participants' music education course as a way for them to get acquainted with focus group discussions as a scholarly method. In the case of this study there was a central educational aim behind the use of the method. We informed the participants that, with their permission, the conversations would also be used in a research project about student music teachers, and all participants agreed. It was held important to clarify that the participants' opinions and their degree of participation in the conversations would not be measured or graded, but that the researchers' interests were in how the conversation progressed and what was said.

Two groups participated in the study. Each group consisted of fifteen student teachers who were in their third year. The reason why these particular student music teachers were asked to participate was that they were in the middle of their education, at the juncture when they had already commenced their courses in music studies, teaching practice, and general education as an academic subject, meaning that they had experience of all three areas of their teacher education.

We first met the student teacher groups four months prior to the actual focus group interviews. They were given the task of reflecting in writing on their ongoing teacher education and on their own previous and current experiences of music and music education. On the same occasion we also introduced focus group interviews to the groups as a scholarly method. After this meeting, the student teachers sent their written accounts to us, and after a careful reading we pinpointed recurrent and central themes that were to be discussed in the focus group interviews. The central themes included music teacher education, past and present; the relationship between university-based and school-based teacher education; and the question of whether music education exists to entertain students or whether it mainly should have pedagogical and musical aspirations.

At the focus group interviews we researchers acted as facilitators. One of us presided and introduced a number of themes and the other listened, made notes, and summed up. Finally the participants were given the opportunity to comment on the summary given at the end of the meeting. Both for the participants and for us as researchers, the process of

verification gave a stimulus to further reflection on what had been discussed. The conversations were audio recorded, for which the participants' consent was obtained in advance, and later transcribed.

The next step in the analytic process was to read the transcriptions of each focus group interview. First they were read as two separate documents, then in comparison, in order to identify new central themes that had emerged from the data. These themes formed the basis for an in-depth analysis in the light of previous research and theories in the field.

In this article the themes are related to the students' perceptions of teaching music today and whether, and in which case how, they find that they develop knowledge and skills for that task in the course of their teaching education. Finally their various experiences from their school-based in-service education are considered.

Findings

The findings reveal three main areas that are of particular interest. One concerns the student teachers' observations and impressions from music education in schools, the second refers to their own aspirations and opinions on how to teach music, and the third relates to their personal experiences (from before and after entering music teacher education) of how to teach music.

Observations on school-based in-service teacher education

The findings reveal that the student teachers highlighted problems with music teachers' lack of use of the curriculum in their teaching. A further concern was that music teachers and their students seemed to be 'struggling on without any particular purpose'. It was also noted that the purpose and long-term goals of music education generally appeared to be unclear and undefined, and that a lack of progression in the music classes had been observed.

Interestingly, while reflecting on their own aspirations in teaching music, the student teachers did at the same time refer to their own music education as students in compulsory school, and suggested that music education must pinpoint the connection between personal emotional experience and social experience, something which can be

understood as a strong connection between music and the individual of which they had been critical when assessing music lessons during their school based in-service education.

It was the general opinion that music teachers in secondary school ‘all seemed to be doing different things’, indicating that it was difficult to recognise any significant resemblance in teaching style or subject content between the teachers of music. This discovery implies that what happens in a music class relies on each teacher’s personal qualities, individual competence, and sense of innovation, rather than the contents of the music curriculum. There was a strong concern that music teachers in schools seemed to pay little attention to the curriculum. It was mentioned that, ‘the teachers who have been out in schools long enough ignore the goals of the curriculum’. Instead they reason, ‘I do things the way I have always done’.

Music teaching – aspirations and opinions

A recurrent topic of interest was whether a teacher’s primary goal should be to facilitate ‘entertaining’ music classes. The student music teachers’ considered that entertaining or ‘fun’ one-off experiences seemed to have had priority in the music classes they had attended. These observations led to further reflections on whether an entertaining approach in the classroom causes a lack of continuity and/or progression in the music classes. It was questioned whether the purpose of music education was to be amusing or if it should centre on the idea of learning and long-term development. One participant asked, ‘Is music education really “fun” for students if they do not realise the purpose of the activities in a class?’

It was implied that their task as teachers of music was ‘to provide opportunities for each student to find their role in music’. The vital factors here were the individual student’s personal, emotional experiences with music in a social context that should have the potential to be repeated in school. Such experiences had been central for the participants themselves during their own schooldays, and they wished to help their own students to similar experiences.

It was particularly emphasised that in order to awake an interest for music amongst students in schools music education ‘must lead somewhere’, and it was suggested that music education in schools should be project-based because ‘it is when you do things together with other people you develop an interest for it’. The participants also cautioned that they ought to ‘offer an alternative picture to the media picture of music’. Furthermore, they debated how commercial aspects related to the media affect music teachers in their work. It was said that ‘on the one hand this influence supports the subject in school, but on the other hand you have to work against these influences, as music is much more than what is shown and heard in the media’.

Learning how to teach music

When it comes to their own music teacher education, the participants brought up the relationship between the student teachers and their mentors in the local schools. The student teachers described a gap between the status of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ teacher education that – for them – created a sense of uneasiness. It was said that teachers in the field generally consider the new teacher education of music to be poor when they compared it to their own ‘old’ teacher education, which had entailed more compulsory elements such as musical skill education and more teaching practice. There was an understanding amongst the group that their mentors were generally concerned that the ‘new’ teachers’ knowledge and competences would not be sufficient. One participant in this study, however, suggested that an important aspect of knowledge is the ability to discover correlations between things rather than learning a set standard of skills. This perspective was said to have been developed for the most part during their general education studies.

The findings illustrate a variance in approach between the different elements of music teacher education. The student teachers commented on how during their general education studies they had had a great deal of guidance from the university lecturers in ‘transforming’ the goals of the curriculum into practice. The lecturers in music teacher education, however, did not seem to apply the same approach. Interestingly, there was general agreement amongst the participants that curriculum-related matters were rarely – and in some instances never – discussed with their mentors during their teaching practice.

Discussion and implications

This study discloses some major points that call for further examination. One is whether music education should – or should not – be primarily based on what might be defined as ‘musical knowledge’ and a more defined progression. The idea of music education’s task to facilitate every person’s musical growth is underlined. Just as Westvall’s (2006; 2007) research indicates, it is noted in this study that music needs to be part of a child’s full education. Education in compulsory schools needs to provide a musical foundation for every person, regardless of social, ethnical or musical background (cf. Wright, 2008). Another finding indicates that the student teachers, both on a practical and theoretical level, strive towards an inclusion of democratic, inclusive ideals and goals in music education, as is stipulated in the current curriculum. They have critically considered the practical forms of music education as it exists in Swedish schools today, and they generally find that it does not live up to these ideals and goals. One interesting aspect to examine further is whether these democratic ideals are culture-specific or whether they are globally understood as the criteria for a sustainable music education (cf. SOU 2000; Myndigheten för Skolutveckling [The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement] 2007).

The music syllabus (Lpo 94) emphasises students’ social, interpersonal and intrapersonal growth to a greater extent than their development of musical skills. Teachers and students are expected to settle the content and methods of music classes together, and the aim is that this collaboration will promote student motivation and shared impact. As mentioned earlier, the music syllabus is open for interpretation and its design is non-linear. An intentional idea in the Swedish decentralized school system is that local differences in how music education is carried out will occur (Ericsson 2002; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall 2010). In the teachers’ assessment of students’ development, an open and non-linear curriculum has, however, shown to be a problematic factor in ensuring the equivalence of education and grading (Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2006; Myndigheten för Skolutveckling [The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement] 2007).

Issues concerning equality in music education are raised, as the content and methods seem to differ significantly from school to school and from teacher to teacher. These differences are said to be highly influenced by many teachers' distanced approach to the curriculum guidelines (Skolverket [The National Agency of Education] 2004; 2005). Possibly this custom relates to the idea that a music teacher traditionally has been assessed on his or her personal qualities and engagement, perhaps to a greater extent than teachers in other areas. This position, however, is dual. On the one hand, such focus on the teacher might lead to an engaged, inspiring and creative way of carrying out music education. On the other, it can also turn out to be too subjective, designed according to the teacher's personal opinions and values with regards to musical participation and musical genres. If the latter instance, students risk being deprived of musical opportunities that are actually prescribed in the curriculum. In this study both positions are apparent within the same group of student teachers.

What is generally defined as a strong master-apprentice orientation has previously been applied in music teacher education, and democratic values related to equal musical participation and active citizenship have not been a major concern. The current music teacher education has a stronger theoretical foundation than the previous ones. The present situation, however, does not signify per se that music teacher education itself has become more democratic. However, it indicates that the current student teachers, thanks to their experience of theoretical reflection as part of their education, have developed an ability to analyse the curriculum goals and focus on these in their education.

The current Swedish curriculum is designed in a way that is open for interpretation. Thus teacher education needs to provide tools for student teachers in putting the goals into practice. The student teachers in this study argue that they have developed a broader perspective on both education and music than did their 'predecessors'.

The task of teaching music in the present educational climate raises several issues. The findings indicate that the current student teachers are shaped by their cultural and educational contexts, including a wide perspective on education 'for all' (Sjögren 2005), based on the democratic values communicated in the current curriculum (SOU 2000,

Lpo 94). This brings up a conflict between the conservatoire tradition in higher music education, of which their predecessors had been part. A master-apprentice orientation has ancient origins, yet has not been clearly problematised to date.

The findings of this study, however, reveal that the cultural and educational context of higher music education in Sweden is presently undergoing a transformation. Throughout their teacher education, the current student music teachers develop a rich picture of their undertaking as future teachers that includes the whole school context, of which music is a part. They also have a stronger association with their teacher education in general than previous student music teachers had. During their academic study of general education they interact with student teachers from other disciplines. The latter are generally not familiar with the conservatoire tradition that, in contrast, the student music teachers have experienced before, and perhaps continue to experience in their subject studies. Instead, the student teachers from other subjects represent the outcome the 'mass education' where participation and democratic aspects in education are key elements (Sjögren 2005). As a result, their experiences from the interaction and content within their general education studies challenge the student music teachers' previously held attitudes towards music and music education.

The study displays how future 'music teachers of our time' primarily seek to equip their students for musical participation on a personal and societal level, but also to provide a broad musical basis from which a professional commitment to music may grow for some of the students.

The study also discloses how the student music teachers' own aspirations for teaching music in schools were somewhat contradictory. To start with, they criticise music education for generally being too loosely organised, and they believe that this is the consequence of an openly designed curriculum, free for individual interpretation. They also noted that the generally loose organisation of music classes is the result of teachers' ambitions to give positive feedback to their students' requests and expectations. This finding proves that student teachers' ideas and beliefs are influenced by – or fluctuate between – their personal experience, their experience of teacher education, and their experience of societal discussion on the same topics (Westvall 2007; Sernhede 2006).

A significant outcome of using focus group interviews in this study was that they enabled a democratic conversation in which critical issues related to music education were problematised and discussed. Each participant was expected to express his or her personal opinion, and everyone was encouraged to take an active part in the interviews. The discussions led to a wider awareness of matters related to the teaching of music, and possible solutions for the future were articulated and processed. This finding reveals that focus group interviews have the potential to serve as an important forum in teacher education; a forum where student teachers can collectively process curriculum goals and didactic issues.

In this particular group there was a clear acceptance of the present curriculum as the steering document for education. The strong emphasis on democratic values and equal participation amounted to an undisputed principle amongst the participants. It is particularly interesting to note that this group of student *music* teachers emphasised the values communicated in the current curriculum, as many of them have been exposed to a strong master-apprentice tradition prior to – and in some instances even during – their teacher education.

The findings outline a ‘new’ picture of music as being ‘public property’. Music is conveyed as a certain form of human knowledge and expression that all people should be able to access through a music education built on inclusion and the relevant principles and practices. There is a clear sense that music is an active pursuit leading to development, rather than a passive interest or a second-hand experience of other musical actors. Accordingly, an appeal for ‘active musicianship’ is put here in terms of active citizenship in education and society.

The urgent matters that have been highlighted in this study, and demand further investigation, are whether compulsory music education and music teacher education properly address such preconditions for democratic values as students’ participation, inclusion, and right to musical development. This needs to be explored by looking at students, music teachers, general education, higher education, and policy makers.

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