

Relations between educational quality in music teacher education and students' perceptions of identity

Geir Johansen

ABSTRACT

Relations between educational quality in music teacher education and students' perceptions of identity

Six music education student focus groups of both sexes, with a minimum of two years seniority in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, were interviewed about their perceptions and opinions of how student learning relates to identity. The aim was to map and describe how relations of identity and learning affect the quality of teaching and learning in a particular subject of music teacher education: Musikdidaktik. Drawing on late modern theories of identity, and supported by theories of learning from within the pedagogy of higher education and the educational theories of didaktik, a highly complex field emerged. Connections between identity and learning appeared to be multiple and many-sided, and regulated by the interplay of students, teachers, the selected subject content, and the institutional culture at large. Indications of how to act to enhance educational quality, as well as to the need for further studies were revealed. Keywords: music teacher education, educational quality, student learning, identity

Introduction

One consequence of the world-wide quality initiative in higher education (Johansen, 2007a; 2008; Stensaker & Maassen, 2005)¹ is the development of action plans and systems for securing educational quality on the institutional level. To create such plans and systems the institutions have had to decide upon functional categories for their quality work. For example, at the Sibeliusakademin in Helsinki a project for the development of internal quality assessment has introduced eight criteria for assessing the education of each department (Broman-Kananen, 2007). Likewise, in the action plan for educational quality at the Norwegian Academy of Music (2005), the quality concept is broken down into *entrance quality*, *frame quality*, *relevance quality*, *management quality* and *teaching and learning quality*.

The category of teaching and learning quality is not limited to any one academy. On the contrary, it has attracted broad interest from within the international literature on educational quality in higher education (see e.g. Stensaker & Maasen, 2005). The concept of students' learning orientations and of notions of deep and surface learning (see e.g. Bowden & Marton, 1998) have been elaborated and discussed by for instance Ricardson (2000) and Pettersen (2004), whilst Johansen (2007a) has discussed these issues with respect to music teacher education. In this literature, learning orientations are thought to comprise the interrelations between learning styles, strategies and approaches.

The present study investigates the quality of teaching and learning in music teacher education at institutions for higher music education from the perspective of *Musikdidaktik*, which is regarded as a central part of that education in all the Nordic countries as well as in several other parts of Europe. In addition to its centrality in music teacher education, *musikdidaktik* was selected in order to turn that subject's fundamental understanding of teaching and learning theory against itself in a genuinely reflexive (Beck, 1994) project.

This inquiry has been conducted from three perspectives. Sociologically, the late modern condition of society and culture called for studying local issues of quality through bottom-up designs (Johansen, 2008). Secondly, this essay contests the language formations and definition power of commercial life that dominate the educational quality discourse (e.g. Johansen, 2007b; Naidoo, 2005). Thirdly, studies of the implementation of external quality actions in higher education (Anderson, 2006; Dill, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Johns & De Saram, 2005; Newton, 2002) have revealed that academic staff think that these commercial definitions are inappropriate to the realities of teaching and learning quality. In sum, this debate has directed interest towards what role identity and learning play within the practices of particular educational subjects, as perceived by students (Johansen, 2006a; 2007c).

Several scholars have been concerned with questioning to what extent the formation and functions of music teacher identity is related to learning. Bouij (1998) identified four basic identity profiles among Swedish music education students. Roberts (1991a) and Mark (1998) highlighted the different opinions of music teacher students concerning the identity of a musician and that of a music teacher. Dolloff (1999a; 1999b; 2006; 2007) focussed on student music teachers' images of their earlier teachers and themselves, their stories of their identity and the emotional aspects of its formation, whilst MacArthur (2005) reported on how music teacher identity unfolds in the interplay between an individual's personal and professional identities.

The notion that identity is connected to learning in teacher education is supported by Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop's (2004) overview of the literature on professional teacher identity. With reference to Korthagen (Beijaard et al., 2004:114) and to Nias (Beijaard, et al., 2004:114), they suggest that the formation of a professional teacher identity arises when students "relate experiences to their own knowledge and feelings and [...] integrate what is socially relevant to their images of themselves as teachers". As such, identity formation arises out of complex and meaningful social interactions with peers and other 'professionals'.

Furthermore, now with reference to Bullough (Beijaard, et al., 2004:109), they hold that student teachers' beliefs about themselves as teachers form the basis for making meaning and decision making later on. Hence, in addition to viewing identity formation *as* learning, they seem to perceive the formation of teacher identity as a precondition *for* learning.

It is from these perspectives that I raise the question: *What are students' perceptions and opinions of how the quality of teaching and learning connects to aspects of identity in musikdidaktik as an educational subject?*

Method

Focus group interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kreuger, 1988) were chosen as the best instrument for collecting information about students' perceptions and opinions since the interviews focussed on a definite subject area and some particular, predetermined perspectives within this. Furthermore it was presumed that the opportunity to exchange experiences with peers would enhance the thinking and encourage the interviewees to talk. In order to elicit rich information, a structured sample of students was selected according to a maximum variation sampling strategy (Lindlof, 1995). *Musikdidaktik* is taught in various versions and at various kinds of institutions. The sample consisted of student focus groups at six institutions for higher music education in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, comprising a total of 24 students. The students were of both sexes and represented a variety of instrumental and music-cultural backgrounds. To ensure rich information, the students selected were in their second and third year of studies. The interview guide was constructed around three main questions concerning identity, learning processes and the selection of content, with optional sub-questions designed to elicit more information about any particular theme. The interviews took place in the second half of the spring period to ensure that the students' statements included experiences from that year as well as earlier years. Information about relations of identity and learning appeared as parts of the students' reasoning within all the three areas. The analytic procedure was begun by reading through each interview as a whole, and inductively coding statements about identity and learning, regardless of the various interview questions. Thereafter, the selected statements were deductively cross-analysed according to the study's theoretical grounds in identity, *didaktik* and learning.

Identity, *didaktik* and learning

Identity

Identity is looked upon in various and partly contested ways within the social sciences. Hall (1992) points to three conceptions which may sum up many of those variations. The three conceptions are those of the Enlightenment subject, sociological subject and post-modern subject. The Enlightenment subject refers to a conception of a person whose centre consists of an inner core that unfolds while remaining essentially the same throughout the person's life. The notion of the sociological subject include an inner core which is not autonomous and self-sufficient but is formed in relation to 'significant others' (1992:275). The post-modern subject is conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity: "The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'" (1992:277).

Speaking from the perspective of identity as an analytic lens for research in education, Gee (2001) seems to depart from Hall's (1992) sociological and post-modern notions of self. Without denying the existence of a 'core identity', he connects identity to being recognisable as a certain kind of person in a given context. "In this sense all people have multiple identities connected not to their "internal states" but to their performances in society" (Gee, 2001:99). This leads to four ways of viewing identity. Nature identity (N-identity) is a state developed from forces in nature. In *musikdidaktik*, notions of the 'born teacher', 'born musician' and the like may belong to this category. Institutional identity (I-identity) is a position, authorized by authorities within institutions. Being accepted as a music education student at an institution for higher music education can be seen as such an authorization. Discourse identity (D-identity) is the discourse of individuals who are not speaking or acting on behalf of a formally given position, such as that of an institutional authority. The source of the 'power' (2001:103) that determines it is the discourse or dialogue with other people. Discourse identities can be ascribed to a person by others, or they can be the results of a person's active attempts to achieve them. Being an excellent band director can be ascribed by her fellow band leader students but can also be an identity that a person actively strives to achieve, not to speak of being a good performing musician, even if one's institutional identity is as a music education student. Following this, one can see discourse identity as mainly an ascription or achievement (2001:104). Gee's fourth perspective is Affinity identity (A-identity). This refers to belonging to an affinity group that the subject has chosen to join. The 'power' that determines it is a set of distinctive practises (2001: 105) among a group of people that share little besides their interests in a certain case or activity. Their allegiance is primarily to common practices and secondly to other people, in terms of shared culture or traits. Affinity groups among music teachers seemingly exist as connected to particular teaching methods like those of Kodaly or Jaques-Dalcroze.

***Didaktik* perspectives on identity and learning**

From a *didaktik* point of view, sayings like “a good teacher knows his subject, but does he know how to teach it?” point to a distinction between an academic discipline and the corresponding *educational subject*. This distinction emerges when a selected subject content of that discipline is taught to students (Johansen, 2006a; 2007c). The characteristics of an educational subject can be described in terms of a *didaktik* triangle (e.g. Nielsen, 1997; Künzli, 2000).

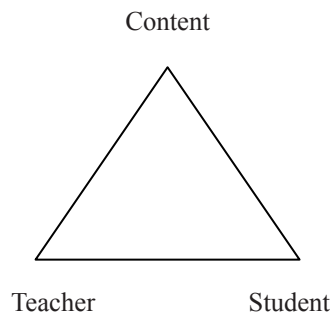


Fig 1. The didaktik triangle.

As opposed to the two-part relationship between the staff member and the discipline, the three-part triangle highlights students' relations to the teacher *and* the educational content, as well as the teacher-content relation (a relation of second degree) as basic characteristics of the educational subject. Seen this way, questions of identity and student learning can be comprehended in terms of all the triangular relations. For instance, students' learning can be regulated according to how meaningful they perceive the educational content to be from the perspective of how they look at themselves as students and future professionals. In other words, learning is regulated by its connections to identity within the student-content relation.

Hence, these triangular relations can provide a fruitful point of departure for studying the interplay of identity and learning within *musikdidaktik* as an educational subject. One example of this is how students' ways of looking at themselves can be apprehended as decisive for how they approach the content. In other words, we can see an identity-learning connection within the triangle's student-content relation. Seeing oneself as a singing or composition student studying *musikdidaktik* may cause different approaches to the content of that educational subject. Furthermore, students' impressions of the teacher's attitude to the subject content, which signals the teacher's identity, may have impact on the students' motivation. Thirdly, the subject content may be comprehended as central or peripheral to students' self-images as students as well as future teachers, according to how it has been selected by the teacher. Also, teachers' expectations of how the student relates to

the content, such as “I expect you to approach the subject content in *musikdidaktik* by seeing yourself as a student music teacher and as a future music teacher”, or “when you study instrumental teaching it is most important to see yourself as a musician”, may play a vital role in students’ learning, and thereby affect their compliance or confrontation with these expectations. Finally, the triangular relations are played out within the *musikdidaktik* subject and the surrounding institutional culture as social contexts² for the negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 2006:12).

The theoretical lens

Summing up, the theoretical lens for viewing the interviewees’ statements was based on how Gee’s (2001) processes of natural, institutional, discursive and affinity identity can be comprehended in the light of Hall’s (1992) Enlightenment, sociological and post-modern notions of self, and how they are played out in relation to the students’ learning orientations in *musikdidaktik* as an educational subject, as seen through the perspective of the *didaktik* triangle.

Results: Students’ perceptions and opinions

The students’ statements reflected perceptions and opinions of identity, in which identity formation was looked upon as learning as well as a precondition for learning. To make room for descriptions and focussing of the latter, the notion of identity formation as learning will not be pursued in this results section. However, I will come back to how the two relate to one another in the concluding discussion.

When analysed according to the theoretical framework, along with the search for patterns that emerge from the empirical material, students’ statements pointing to identity as a precondition for learning were inductively sorted into four main groups:

- *Identity types.*
- *Identity processes.*
- *Experienced and envisaged identity.*
- *Core identity vs. parallel identities.*

Identity types

When the students talked about identity in connection with learning, their reasoning reflected a distinction between two main identity categories. Not unexpectedly (see Bouij, 1998; Mark, 1998; Roberts, 1991a), one group saw themselves as student music teachers.

I feel very strongly as a music educationalist and I deliberately chose to enter the music education department.

Meanwhile, the other group showed a more performer-oriented identity:

I have followed one educational aim for very many years and in several countries: to become as good as possible at playing my instrument. I see myself as an instrumentalist who wants to teach my own instrument.

This was connected to a certain way of discursive (Gee, 2001) labelling, in that students studying to become general music teachers were called student teachers or student music teachers, while those envisaging a future as teachers of musical instruments or singing, for example in municipal culture- or music schools, were referred to as student music instructors or student music instrument teachers. Both inferred a significant element of performer identity. Following Gee (2001), this labelling came into view as clearly discursive, ascribed by peers as well as actively achieved by the individual student her- or himself. As such it appeared to be embedded within the institutional culture (Ferm & Johansen, 2008; Johansen, 2006a) and that culture's interplay with the *musikdidaktik* subject. In other words, discursive identity seemed not only to be ascribed and achieved in relation to students' peer discourses, but also in relation to the cultural knowledge discourses carried by teachers (Johansen, 2006a; 2006b), and communicated to their students as parts of a hidden curriculum (see e.g. Margolis, 2000).

Identity processes

The identities that the students related to learning were not stable. On the contrary, they reported that the ways in which they looked at themselves as students and future music educators were continually changing. As such, their identity-learning relations were closely connected to processes of identity formation, maintenance and revision. For example, changes were connected to moves from other branches of music education.

I was restrained in my performing studies and had to take a one year break. Then I decided to use that year to study music education. So, how I look at myself now... of course, it is education that I do and think about and am going to learn, so right now I think about myself as a music instrument teacher.

In the subsequent conversation, this student confirmed the impression that the move from performance studies to music teacher studies had resulted in a change of identity from student performer to student music instrument teacher. Furthermore, she expressed a high probability that if and when she returned to performance studies she would return to seeing herself as a performance student. However...

Even if this is the general picture, I see a lot to be gained from music education studies for the performer. I learn to be my own teacher. So when I go back, I will take with me parts of what I have learned.

This particular student thereby confirmed that studying music education had contributed to the further formation and revision of her performer identity. This suggests that identity formation, maintenance and revision can follow a kind of spiral movement.

Teachers' expectations were seen to be a significant influence on identity formation, maintenance and revision. In some cases such expectations might cause conflicts, revealing how identity appeared to be at play within the triangular relations between students, teachers and the subject content of the *musikdidaktik* subject.

In my relations to my instrumental performance teachers I have struggled a little with the fact that I am going to be a general music teacher and instrumental teacher. Those teachers seem to imply and expect that all students want to become performers. And when I have told them that I will not, they sort of signal "but you will manage", like it is my self-confidence that is the problem. And on the other hand we had a teacher in educational theory that had no musical background and only came here to give a few lectures a week. That teacher had difficulties in understanding that educational theory was not what we filled our lives with.

The *didaktik* triangle perspective includes how teachers relate to students (teacher-student relations), how this particular student related to the educational subjects of instrument performance and educational theory (student-content relations), and how she was expected to relate to the teacher-content relation (student-teacher/content relations). As can be seen, the latter comprised the teachers' attitudes to the contents, meaning the subjects they taught.

In some cases, contradictory identity expectations were reported with reference to one and the same teacher:

My main instrument teacher asked "do you want to become a music teacher? Fine! Let us fix that, now we are going to do so and so". But on the other hand I was told that "even if you are a music education student and everything that it includes, you have to play up to the same requirements as everybody else. I expect you to practice 3-4 hours every day and give concerts regularly.

What the statements about teachers' expectations may illustrate is how they affect student learning through institutional and discursive identities. Hence, what seemed to be at play for the student was how contradictory institutional identities (Gee 2001) met inconsistent discursive identities (2001:103). Constructing an identity as a student performer and as a student of educational theory, as in the first statement, is connected to the institution's structural dispositions and formal curricula. Such identities refer to that of the institutional authority to which the students were subject (2001:100). Simultaneously, they can be

understood as discursively *ascribed* (2001:104) by the teachers and contradicted with *achieved* discursive identities, as well as those ascribed within the student's peer group. For example, the second statement was articulated by a student whose peer group identity as a future music teacher was challenged by the relatively unclear expectations of being a teacher. This play of institutional and discursive identities illuminates the challenges of identity formation, maintenance and revision that student music teachers face, and underlines how students' identity work (Karlsen, 2007) may promote or hinder deep learning in *musikdidaktik*.

Identity processes were explicitly related to learning in such a way that students' learning outcomes increased as consciousness of one's own student identity became clearer:

Initially, musikdidaktik was a difficult subject to grasp. [...]. But suddenly, I found out more about what I would do and how I could consider or judge what was useful for me. And then suddenly there was a lot to learn. It took me a long time to see that connection. I do not know to what degree it is to do with thinking about myself as a student music teacher but it is definitely connected to finding myself as a student. Or being conscious of where I want to go in my life with such a subject content.

The students also implied and sometimes pointed to how connections of identity processes and learning were related to the wider context of institutional culture, including other significant fields of their education. Thus, their statements revealed traces of these connections' vast complexity. For instance, offers from teachers to take part in performing might strengthen the musical sides of their understanding of *musikdidaktik*. Simultaneously it might influence the musician-educator balance of the students' identity by lending status to the musician side:

As a music teacher student, you have a smaller repertoire than a performance student. There should be a difference. But on the other hand the music teacher students often get the opportunity for extra performance, something which is seen as a "bonus" or "privilege".

When opportunities for additional performance are ascribed value as a bonus within the institutional culture, it can be interpreted as ascribing greater status to students' identity as a performance student than as a student music teacher. Such an interpretation is congruent with findings in, for instance, Vienna (Mark, 1998), and provides a parallel to how the general status of the *musikdidaktik* subject within institutional culture impacts on deep versus surface student learning (Ferm & Johansen, 2008). Valuing certain identities above others and other subjects above *musikdidaktik* can also be interpreted as symptoms of the institution's hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2000).

Experienced and envisaged identity

As indicated, the material revealed dissimilarities between students' experienced identity as either a music student or student music teacher, and their anticipated future profession at the other hand. This actualised an analytical distinction between experienced and envisaged identity.

Learning and experienced identity

Explicit connections between experienced identity and learning were expressed as being related to *interest* in the educational subject in question:

I think that students who look at themselves as music education students and are genuinely interested in music education will obtain better learning outcomes in musikdidaktik than I have myself.

To what degree they are interested can be comprehended as a significant part of the students' learning approaches, possibly affecting their intentional as well as motivational sides (Johansen, 2007a). Thus, the statement illustrates how interest may affect students' learning orientations (ibid.), with further consequences for deep versus surface learning. Furthermore, in the above statement it is possible to assume that deep learning is connected to an experienced coherence between institutional and discursive identities (Gee, 2001).

Another identity feature, which was thought to regulate students' learning approaches, was the shift of institutional identity from that of a high school student to an academy or university student, causing a perceived obligation to learn:

When I started here as a student, I got a very strong feeling that now that I am a student I can not expect to get everything "served on a plate" any more. It is like if you do not understand that to learn is a great assignment in itself, then you will fall off very quickly.

Well inside the academy or university, insights emerged into how the characteristics of the various educational subjects were related to identity and learning approaches. One student experienced a challenge to reflect as a characteristic of *musikdidaktik*:

If I would come to my musikdidaktik lectures with the same approach as to my instrumental lectures, It feels like I would not reflect that much on why I do things [...] and the very meaning of the musikdidaktik subject feels like reflecting upon how I can do things better and why it became like this.

Indirectly, this student indicated that the identity with which you go to the lectures of one particular educational subject regulates how you approach the learning challenges of that subject. Hence, the statement exemplifies how identity and learning are connected as factors

influencing the student-content relation of the *didaktik* triangle, and the establishment of meaningfulness (Wenger, 2006).

While some students reflected upon learning in relation to themselves as *musikdidaktik* students in general, others connected deep learning with particular branches of *musikdidaktik*. One student chose the notion of involvement to describe such a connection:

I am the kind of person that is more deeply involved in what I experience as connected to my identity. In pianodidaktik I feel this deep involvement. Because that is my subject, my "thing". Then, there are other parts of my education in which I just do what is required of me without the same degree of involvement.

Learning and envisaged identity

The music educator identities that the students envisaged for their futures seemed mainly discursively constructed, and revised in accordance with their interactions with peers as well as teachers. These negotiations were located within the institutional culture and its mutual impact on the *musikdidaktik* subject. Here is an example of how envisaged, professional identity-affected learning was expressed by a student who connected the two in this way:

Even if I can utilise some parts of the [musikdidaktik] subject, I perceive other parts of it as being far away from my future professional work.

Relations between envisaged identity and learning were further illustrated by more sophisticated connections of identity to particular branches of *musikdidaktik*. As with experienced identities, the information suggested that institutional identity (Gee, 2001) might be in conflict with students' mainly discursive notions of their future roles as music teachers. For example, one student held that if the institution allocated too much time to branches of *musikdidaktik*, which are not congruent with their foreseen professional identity, it may impact on the identity-learning relation in a negative way. This was evident in *musikdidaktik* for primary school music teaching:

Quite personally: I would have managed to do that [change my identity into a primary school music teacher student] if the amount of hours for this had been smaller. Then I would have really been able to focus on that identity and that learning.

A follow up statement concerning musical aspects of the student-content relation contributed to seeing the breadth of this identity-learning link, as well as its connections to factors outside the envisaged identity category. These aspects appeared to be really at stake as regards *musikdidaktik* for the teaching of beginner instrumentalists:

It is so difficult to pass the entrance tests at this institution. And when you finally get in, you feel like having a quite high level of musical competence. And then, you are

taken down to the most elementary stages. If I put away or change my identity, it is like asking me to get less competent!

In this case, obstacles to deep learning were caused by two problems that amplified each other. One was the inconsistency between the *musikdidaktik* repertoire studied – music teaching for beginners or elementary general education – and students’ envisaged identity as professional music teachers for others than beginners. The other obstacle was a conflict between an experienced identity as highly musically competent, and having to deal with elementary repertoire and teaching strategies.

Core identity vs. parallel identities

The students also expressed identity positions that could be related to sociological versus post-modern notions of self (Hall, 1992). Accordingly, some looked at themselves as maintaining one core identity in all the subjects they studied:

Through my four years of study I have established a firm identity, me as a musician in all my educational arenas – as a music teacher, as a singer and so on. So, when I operate in those various arenas, I am the same all the way, I think.

Others perceived of themselves as changing between parallel identities (Doloff, 2006; Hall, 1992; MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002; Roberts, 1991a; 1991b) from one subject to another:

Yes, that’s me. I feel like having different identities from one subject to another.

How these different basic conceptions of self affected the students’ learning was illustrated in several ways. The ‘core’ position involved adapting one’s identity anew for each subject:

I look at myself as a musician student who studies several various subjects simultaneously, but all the subjects that I take, I take because I want them as a musician student. I try to adapt each subject to how I am as a musician student rather than adapting myself to how the subject is. Next year, I will study both performing and ensemble conducting. But I do not think that I will look at myself as a fifty-fifty performance student and ensemble conductor student. On the contrary, I will see myself as a musician student specializing in the two.

This anchoring of learning in a core identity (Hall, 1992) and a sociological notion of self (ibid.) indicates connections to the intentional as well as motivational sides of students’ learning approaches, as well as learning strategies.

Preferences for a core identity perspective were also expressed in terms of an envisaged identity, or looking at oneself as a future music educator:

I think at all the lectures – and I also tell the teacher – I want to see the subject from the perspective of a future music teacher or instructor. And also in my singing lessons, even if I think that I can use these things in the performing that I do all the time, I also let the teacher know that I want to see those lessons from the perspective of a future music educator. That I want to find the aspects of teaching also, and I also write down what my teachers do, to kind of reflect on it: how to perhaps use it later.

The ‘parallel’ position expressed deep learning as dependent on one’s ability to change between *parallel identities*, like seeing oneself as a musician during instrumental lessons, musicologist in music history and analysis lessons, and student music teacher in *musikdidaktik* lessons. Being linked to motivation and indirectly to intentional aspects it clearly concerned learning approaches:

I tend to change in the ways I look at myself according to what suits me. When I am at an instrumental performance- or ensemble lecture I have to look at myself as a musician. If I look at myself as a music teacher in those situations I get big problems with my motivation.

It is not like when I am at the musikdidaktik lectures I think of how I can use the things I learn to interpret that sonata [...]. I think mostly on the musical stuff when I am at my piano lectures – and vice versa.

The necessity of changing between parallel identities in order to achieve deep learning was made even more explicit by one of the interviewees, who connected it to the application of acquired knowledge:

When I am at my instrumental lectures I can not think in the same ways as at my lectures in, say, music teaching methodology, because the focus is different. At the instrumental lectures I am a student but at the music education lectures I have to think: “what would I do in a teacher role?” It is another kind of student situation. [...] when I go to my instrumental teacher I see myself as a student solely. But at the methodology lectures I also have to consider what my teacher role will look like. So in other words I have to see myself as a teacher, too.

Another student expressed the same necessity by pointing to different aims, adult roles and responsibilities:

[...]contrary to the performing and artistic subjects, when I think of the educational parts of our studies quite different aims emerge along with a different kind of adult role which includes different kinds of mediation and responsibility.

In the above quotations, the teachers’ expectations of students’ identity positioning were seen to be significant for the students’ identity processes. Those expectations also impacted

on the connections between students' 'core' versus 'parallel' identities and learning. One student felt that expectations of changing between various identities opposed her preference for seeing herself with a core identity (Hall, 1992):

I perceive most teachers as signalling that "you are here to study my subject". Thus, both with regard to time and subjects, the different parts of my education get highly separated. The result is expectations about "when you are at my lectures you are a music education student", "a music history student", "a music performance student" and so on, opposed to an identity as one kind of student who comes to take that subject as part of that identity.

Here a play is revealed between I- and D-identities and between attained and ascribed versions of the latter, as expressed by a student who found teachers' expectations hard to combine with a wish to gather all learning from various subjects into one student identity.

Contrary to this, another student expressed an opinion that pointed more clearly to a preference for various identity expectations from one teacher to the other:

I think it is good when the teachers signal that "you are here to study my subject". That way, each subject becomes one "world": "now, we close the door and this is what we do in here" I think it is a good feeling, because I become so focussed, concentrated and effective.

For this student, learning seemed to be enhanced by changing between parallel identities. Again we can see how the identity position is connected to learning approaches. In this example it concerns a good feeling of focus, concentration and effectiveness which once again points to the approaches' motivational as well as intentional sides, this time also in connection with emotional aspects (Dolloff, 2007).

Not all the students reported a stable preference for either the 'parallel' or 'core' position. On the contrary, for some a change from one to the other significantly enhanced learning. This kind of change was exemplified in the material by a change of direction from a 'parallel' to a 'core' position. It was communicated by a student who reported that the learning in *musikdidaktik* as one educational subject in a series of others was experienced as significantly deepened after having ended his attempts to define himself as a different kind of student from one subject to another. Having changed to a self image as a music student who studies each subject in the light of that identity, he said:

... the musikdidaktik subject has become very much more comprehensible: much more useful both for my own utilisation, that is for myself, and with my own pupils.

Concluding discussion

When seen through the theoretical lens sketched in section 3.3, the students' perceptions and opinions of how identity connects to learning in the *musikdidaktik* subject revealed that certain of the theoretical perspectives were the most central for further discussions. These were the sociological and post-modern notions of self (Hall, 1992), institutional and discursive ways of viewing identity (Gee, 2001) and students' learning approaches (Johansen, 2007a). Consequently, notions of the Enlightenment self with 'natural' and 'affinity' ways of viewing identity, along with students' learning styles and strategies were shown to be peripheral. A subsequent question is why this was so. Another question concerns whether or not this is generally more valid. A third question may be how the interplay of these central and peripheral theoretical aspects may contribute to further understandings when combined with one another. Together they point to a need for follow up studies of larger student populations.

The theoretical features that became central contributed to seeing nuances in the way that identity-learning relations were put into play by the students in several ways. Through this they supplied insights about the initial question about how relations of identity and learning affect the quality of teaching and learning.

First of all, the quality of teaching and learning was connected to the dichotomy of surface and deep student learning. Hence, the question is how identity relations may influence the students' learning as to become deep or superficial and how this can be influenced by teaching.

I distinguished above between the notions of identity as learning from that of identity as a precondition for learning. A closer analysis revealed that the two also had to be recognised as intertwined, since learning new dimensions of *musikdidaktik* also influences further identity formation, or provides new tools for identity work. This interplay appeared like the processes of a developmental spiral. The spiral movement conveyed significant relations of experienced and envisaged identities, which in turn were mutually related to the interplay of institutional and ascribed, as well as achieved discursive identities.

Among the insights into how the interplay of experienced and envisaged music teacher identities related to student learning was that there was a risk that an experienced identity might promote deep learning within a field, which might be conceived of as irrelevant for the envisaged future music teacher identity. This picture is made even more complicated by the fact that there is no guarantee that the student(s), the teacher(s), and the in-service supervisor(s) regard the priorities of the future labour market similarly. This raises questions about the teaching, for instance of how teachers and supervisors select the educational content (see Johansen, 2007c) that they expect the student to work with, and how that content in turn coheres with students' (experienced) identity as student music teachers.

Detailed insights into identity-learning relations were also promoted by applying the institutional and discursive (Gee, 2001) ways of seeing identity. This raised the questions

of whether there is a risk that ascribed and achieved discourse identities may conflict, whether in turn students' institutional identities are contested, and what consequences this may have for students' learning orientations. Again, a relation to teaching was seen: Is there a risk that teachers, through their teaching, ascribe discursive identities to their students that contest those students' institutional identities? How is student learning affected in this case? Furthermore, what part do such relations play in the dynamics of the institutional culture, and what part do relations to the institutional and discursive identities of other, non music education students and teachers play?

The difference between core- and parallel identities was helpful to further understandings of the above reasoning. Firstly, it highlighted the question of to what degree an ability to change identity from one subject to another promotes deep student learning and hence learning quality. This challenge was recognised by the students, who said that it *was* possible to handle. Still some students experienced deep learning when changing their identity, whilst others achieved deep learning when adapting the notion of a sociological self (Hall, 1992) and a core identity. Secondly, the notion of parallel identities helped to see how learning tended to be surface-oriented when students struggled with simultaneous, contradictory institutional and discursive identities, and furthermore how such a parallel could strongly enhance learning when those identities do not contradict each other. However, one could ask if struggling with various identities is or should be avoidable in music teacher education, since it is the dynamics of identity contradictions and consolidations that nurture development and hence identity-learning relations.

An additional way in which teaching affected students' identity-learning relations was exposed through the students' experiences with teachers' identity-expectations. In addition to being expressed as explicit expectations, one could ask if and how such expectations also appear as more indirectly expressed through teaching in general. As such, the performance of teaching itself may be comprehended as signalling the narratives teachers tell themselves about who they are as professionals. A subsequent question is to what extent this may be perceived as suggestions for, or offers of, identities for the students to relate to. That is, whether they could adapt to them, adopt, oppose or use them as ingredients in their own identity constructions (Johansen, 2006b).

While underlining the need for further studies of the issues like the ones discussed, it is still possible to draw some preliminary conclusions without running the risk of over-interpretations of the empirical material.

From the perspective of the *didaktik* triangle these issues lend insights into how the described identity-learning interplay is carried out within the student-content-teacher relations of *musikdidaktik* as an educational subject. One example of insights revealed by the triangle perspective is that the teachers' selection of content impacts on students' identity-learning relations.

To promote deep learning and hence good learning quality amongst their students teachers should be aware of the students' narratives which they tell themselves of who they are and who they will be, and in particular the ways in which they express those

narratives to others. As regards the quality of teaching, this can be utilised explicitly by having students write theses, make presentations and discuss their own experienced and envisaged identities as well as identity relations. Some of the interviewees in the present study highlighted this by declaring that issues like the ones of the interview would have enhanced their *musikdidaktik* studies if included as a part of the educational content.

Similarly, teachers should be aware of their own narratives, and how they are signalled to the students as identity models or suggestions.

The social conditions for the mutual identity interplay of students and teachers should be studied in depth as well as breadth. As suggested by Ferm (2008) and Ferm & Johansen (2008), this interplay includes the *musikdidaktik* subject as well as music teacher education generally and its surrounding institutional culture.

Notes

¹ For a worldwide list of quality agencies, see <http://www.inqaahe.org/generic.cfm?mID=8&sID=16>

² To what degree the *musikdidaktik* subject or the institutional culture can thereby be comprehended as a community of practice is however open to further discussions. This applies in particular to its components of intentional instruction as opposed to the notion of peripheral participation (see Lave & Wenger 1991 p. 40 f.).

References

- Anderson, Gina (2006). Assuring Quality/Resisting Quality Assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities. *Quality in Higher Education*, 12 (2), 161-173.
- Beijaard, Douwe, Meijer, Paulien C. & Verloop, Nico (2004). Reconsidering research on Teachers' Professional Identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20 (2), 107-128.
- Beck, Ulrich (1994). The Reinvention of Politics. In U. Beck, A. Giddens & S. Lash (Eds.), *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (pp. 1-55). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bouij, Christer (1998). Swedish music teachers in training and professional life. *International Journal of Music Education*, 32, 24-31.
- Bowden, John & Marton, Ference (1998). *The University of Learning. Beyond Quality and Competence*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Broman-Kananen, Ulla-Britta (2007). Quality that counts. Intended and unintended consequences of quality assurance systems in higher music education. In F. V. Nielsen, S.-E. Holgersen, & S. G. Nielsen (Eds.), *Nordic Research in Music Education Yearbook vol. 9* (pp. 61-92). Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music.
- Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

- Dill, David D. (2000). Designing Academic Audit: Lessons Learned in Europe and Asia. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6 (3), 187-207.
- Dolloff, Lori-Anne (1999a). Imaging Ourselves as Teachers: The development of teacher identity in music education. *Music Education Research*, 1 (2), 191-207.
- Dolloff, Lori-Anne (1999b). Building Professional identity. The role of personal story in music teacher education. *Canadian Journal of Research in Music Education*, 40 (4), 35-37.
- Dolloff, Lori-Anne (2006). Celebrating and Nurturing the Identity of the Musician/Teacher. In B. Stålhammar (Ed.), *Music and human beings – music and identity* (pp. 123-136). Örebro, Sweden: Universitetsbiblioteket.
- Dolloff, Lori-Anne (2007). It is not what she taught me, it's how she made me feel: The role of emotion in evolving teacher identity. Paper presented at *The Fifth International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education*. Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, July 2nd -5th 2007.
- Ferm, Cecilia (2008). Playing to teach music – embodiment and identity-making in musikdidaktik. *Music Education Research*, 10 (3), 361-372.
- Ferm, Cecilia & Johansen, Geir (2008). Professors' and trainees' perceptions of educational quality as related to preconditions for deep learning in musikdidaktik. *British Journal of Music Education* 25 (2); 177-191.
- Gee, James Paul (2001). Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99-125.
- Hall, Stuart (1992). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, D. Held & A. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 274-316). Oxford: Polity in association with the Open University.
- Harvey, Lee (2002). The End of Quality? *Quality in Higher Education*, 8 (1), 5-22.
- Johansen, Geir (2006a). Fagdidaktikk som undervisningsfag og basisfag [Subject didaktik as educational and basic subject]. In F. V. Nielsen & S. G. Nielsen (Eds.), *Nordic Research in Music Education Yearbook* vol. 8 (pp. 115-135). Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music.
- Johansen, Geir (2006b). Identity and Educational Quality in Music Teacher Education. In B. Olsson (Ed.), *Research Alliance of Institutions for Higher Music Education, Proceedings of the 8th international symposium* (pp. 55-66). Göteborg: University of Göteborg.
- Johansen, Geir (2007a). Educational quality in music teacher education: Components of a foundation for research. *Music Education Research*, 9 (3), 435-448.
- Johansen, Geir (2007b). Educational Quality in Higher Music Education: Why Bother? Paper presented at *The Seventh International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education*, London, Canada, June 6th -9th 2007.
- Johansen, Geir (2007c). Didaktik and the selection of content as points of departure for studying the quality of teaching and learning. *Quality in Higher Education*, 13 (3), 249-261.

- Johansen, G. (2008). Educational Quality in Music Teacher Education. A modern project within a condition of late modernity? *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109 (March-April 2008), 13-18.
- Johnes, John & De Saram, Don D. (2005). Academic Staff Views of Quality Systems for Teaching and Learning: a Hong Kong Case Study. *Quality of Higher Education*, 11(1), 47-58.
- Karlsen, Sidsel (2007). *The Music Festival as an Arena for Learning. Festsipel i Pite Älvdal and Matters of Identity*. Doctoral dissertation. Luleå, Sweden: Luleå Technical University, Department of Music & Media.
- Kreuger, Richard A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.
- Künsli, Rudolf (2000). German Didaktik: Models of Re-presentation, of Intercourse, and of Experience. In I. Westbury, S. Hopmann & K. Riquarts, (Eds.), *Teaching as a Reflective Practice. The German Didaktik Tradition* (pp. 41-54). London: Erlbaum.
- Lindlof, Thomas R. (1995): *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. Current communication: An advanced text series, vol. 3. Thousand Oakes, California: Sage publ.
- MacArthur, Linda (2005). The Shaping of my Music Teacher Identity. *Canadian Music Editor*, 46 (4), 28-29.
- MacDonald, Raymond A. R., Hargreaves, David J. & Miell, Dorothy (Eds.). (2002) *Musical identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Margolis, Eric (Ed.). (2000). *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.
- Mark, Desmond (1998). The music teacher's dilemma – musician or teacher? *International Journal of Music Education*, 32, 3-23.
- Naidoo, Rajani (2005). Universities in the Marketplace. The Distortion of Teaching and Research. In R. Barnett, (Ed.), *Reshaping the University. New relationships between Research, Scholarship and Teaching* (pp. 27-36). Berkshire, GB.: Open University Press.
- Newton, Jethro (2002). Views from Below: Academics Coping with Quality. *Quality in Higher Education*, 8 (1), 39-61.
- Norwegian Academy of Music (2005). *Handlingsplan for utdanningskvalitet 2005-2007 ved Norges musikkhøgskole* [Action plan for educational quality at the Norwegian academy of Music 2005-2007]. Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music.
- Nielsen, Frede V. (1997). *Den musikpædagogiske forsknings territorium: Hovedbegreber og distinktioner i genstandsfeltet* [The territory of the research in music education]. In H. Jørgensen, F. V. Nielsen & B. Olsson (Eds.), *Nordic Research in Music Education. Yearbook 1997* (pp. 155-177). Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music.
- Pettersen, Roar C. (2004). Studenters lærings- og studiestrategier: Kvalitetsindikatorer i høgere utdanning? [Students' strategies of study and learning: Quality indicators in higher education?] *Uniped*, 27 (2), 44 – 65.

- Ricardson, John T. E. (2000). *Researching Student Learning*. Buckingham, GB: SRHE & Open University Press.
- Roberts, Brian (1991a). Music Teacher Education as Identity Construction. *International Journal of Music Education* 18, 3-16.
- Roberts, Brian (1991b). School music teachers as musicians: Professionals with an alternative relationship to traditional school knowledge. Proceedings: *Professionals' Ways of Knowing and the Implications for CPE* (74-79). Montreal.
- Stensaker, Bjørn & Maasen, Peter (2005). Kvalitetskonseptet i høyere utdanning – Oversettelser, omfortolkninger og operasjonaliseringer [The Concept of Quality in Higher Education – Translations, interpretations and operationalisations], *Uniped*, 28 (2), 16-27.
- Wenger, Etienne (2006). *Learning for a small planet. A research agenda*. Retrieved 2008.01.08 from <http://www.ewenger.com/research/index.htm>.

Førsteamanuensis, ph.d. Geir Johansen
Norges musikkhøgskole
Postboks 5190 Majorstua
N-0302 Oslo, Norge
Email: geir.johansen@nmh.no