

Chapter 8

The Professional Development of Music Teachers

Understanding the Music Teacher as a Professional and as a Competency Nomad

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In several articles John Krejsler has discussed what it means to be a professional teacher today amidst changes in the dominant conditions of society (e.g. 2005; 2007a). He argues that “the transition from an ‘industrial’ to a ‘knowledge’ society”, or, as he re-describes it, from “signifying’ to ‘post-signifying’ regimes”, poses some new challenges to being professional (Krejsler, 2007a, p. 37). One of these challenges involves the changing face of work demands and conditions which demands that professionals need to continually develop and update “their competency profile in ways that match conditions under rapid change” (Krejsler, 2007a, p. 41). Krejsler introduces the concept ‘competency nomad’ in order to grasp some of these changes, and to suggest some new perspectives on the professional development of teachers as service-minded portfolio teachers (ibid., p 53; 2007b). In this article we aim to discuss the professional development of music teachers amidst these new challenges to professional lives.

As in many other countries, music teachers in Norway usually work in the different vocational arenas of primary, secondary and tertiary schools, community music schools, and in colleges. In addition, they may work as

leaders of different types of ensembles, or within community music settings (Olseng, 2008). Students who have passed a four-year performance-based study programme in music education are thought to be competent and fully qualified music teachers in all these arenas (Norwegian Academy of Music, 2011), in which recent research has shown that most music teachers operate on a daily or weekly basis (Kalsnes, 2011; Olseng, 2008). For example, they may work in positions that include one-to-one instrumental teaching in community music schools, and in secondary schools teaching popular music. Then again, they may work in a college teaching music theory whilst performing at an advanced level to children in primary schools (e.g. as part of the *Cultural Rucksack Programme*) (Kalsnes, this volume Chapter 7; Olseng, 2008). Working as a music teacher across such different vocational arenas poses specific challenges and dilemmas to music teachers working as professional artists, composers, theoreticians or band leaders. According to Krejsler (2007a, p. 48), being a professional usually involves membership of a profession. The variety of vocational arenas that music teachers work in today includes a wide range of knowledge and competencies, from being a musician in an educational setting to being a school teacher in an artistic setting. Kåre Heggen (2008, p. 323) has proposed that a profession needs a distinctive and accepted description of the specialised knowledge, skills and values that it involves. Because professional musicians and professional school teachers are more or less established as members of separate professions today, the requirement to combine and master these various professional roles poses challenges for music teachers and student music teachers alike (e.g. Bouij, 1998; Ferm, 2008; Johansen, this volume Chapter 9). In this sense it might be advisable to challenge the idea of formal and specific qualifications to another concerning competency (Krejsler, 2007a, p. 50). Such an approach can, for example, question whether music teachers work outside the scope of the concept of 'professions' as 'music learning workers' in primary schools, in music and cultural schools and in different kinds of ensembles. Thus, as educators of music teachers, we are interested in exploring how music teacher students in their pre-service education learn to develop as professionals across such different arenas. In order to manage such diversity, music teachers may need new ways to act professionally.

Firstly, we want to present some theoretical perspectives and analytical concepts that can frame our understanding of the professional practice of music teachers today. Secondly, we present a case study of a music teacher student entering into the professional arena. Our main theoretical perspectives concern understanding the music teacher as a *professional* (Heggen,

2008; 2010) and as a *competency nomad* (Krejsler, 2005; 2007a). Being a professional music teacher demands a high level of personal commitment in order to work successfully. As John Krejsler (2005, p. 336) claimed, professional and personal development in pre-service education and in the following professional career are becoming increasingly integrated. With respect to the identity of teachers, pre-school teachers, social workers and nurses, Krejsler proposed that “it is assumed that professional identity is construed and emerges during a process that acquires professionals and students preparing for those professions to engage and immerse considerable parts of their individualities in these practices, techniques, and values of the pre-service education and professional practice” (ibid., p. 336–337). Thus professional music teachers in today’s knowledge-based society need to develop a professional personal identity within *the collective (professional knowledge)* of the profession (Heggen, 2008), whilst operating as nomads with their own *individual style* (Krejsler, 2005).

Music Teachers as Professionals

According to functionalist theories, a profession is assumed to maintain and develop a well-defined part of the cultural and social values of society (Krejsler, 2005, p. 341). In order to do this, professionals need to develop a collective body of knowledge that qualifies them for their field of work, along with a professional identity based on common norms, symbols and language (ibid., p. 342). This collective identity, or the ‘identity of the profession’ as Heggen calls (2008) it, can be understood both as an internal group-identity, and as a definition that is accepted outside the professional group. Thus music teachers’ professional development involves qualifying to be members of a professional group through pre-service education. In other words, by virtue of her educational qualification, the professional-to-be gains access to a professional group and is thus acknowledged by the profession to be a fully competent performer (Krejsler, 2005, p. 342).

However, music teacher students also meet different arenas of practice and discourses during their study programme that can challenge their individual professional development. For example, as shown by Christer Bouij (1998), music teacher students may develop several individual professional identities during their pre-service education. Bouij (1998, p. 349) used the concept, ‘anticipatory professional role identity’, to describe students’ conception of themselves as prospective music teachers. He claimed that, in such an anticipatory professional role identity, students’

memories meet their expectations and plans for the future. During their pre-service education Bouij's (1998, p. 355) participants navigated between their roles as musicians and teachers. Some of them gave "priority to the musician role, and with that as a base developed their competence as a teacher", while others were often "more interested in developing a teacher role identity, and from that base, learn to master the music which they expect to be useful in their future profession" (ibid., p. 355). In this respect, student music teachers continuously negotiate their identities as both musicians and teachers during their education (ibid.).

Thus, the formation of individual, professional ways of mastering multiple demands of work assignments as student music teachers to-be and music teachers becomes essential for qualifying in the profession. According to Heggen (2008, p. 324), this formation of a professional identity or style is an individual process by means of which students and teachers articulate a conception of themselves "as a good music teacher now and in the future". Tiri Bergersen Schei (2009, p. 221) has suggested that the individual professional identity of a music teacher involves 'identification', meaning that the process of personalising professional identity constantly changes throughout pre-service education and in professional careers, and so much so that the professional music teacher engages in a life-long project of professional development.

Music Teachers as Competency Nomads

Krejsler (2007a, p. 37) has pointed out that thinking about teachers as professionals, or as a profession, as well as their research-based, pre-service training, depends on the dominant conditions of society at any one time. He claimed that there has been a transition from a predominantly "signifying regime [that] can be described as an over coded and centralized regime" (ibid., p. 38), wherein professional teachers transmit "canonized cultural knowledge" (p. 42), to a largely 'post-signifying' regime. The post-signifying regime has no established core, and seeks to install in the individual a quest for self-realization (Krejsler ibid., p. 38). Because music teachers in a largely post-signifying regime have to be capable of arranging multiple learning spaces that encompass a large variety of cultural knowledge, it becomes increasingly difficult to predict what competences they will need in the future (Krejsler, 2006, p. 282). With the erosion of well-defined demands and competences, and the resultant increase in

portfolio careers, the formal music teacher qualification may become less important (Krejsler 2007a, p. 47; 2007b).

As mentioned above, Krejsler used the concept of a ‘competency nomad’ in order to grasp professional development in post-signifying regimes (ibid., p. 49). In terms of music education, teachers as competency nomads are service-minded, flexible music teachers who are able to handle the diverse changes and developments within their professional field (Krejsler, 2005, p. 348; 2007a, p. 50). A nomad sees learning as lifelong and life-encompassing, during which his or her competency vocabulary is subject to ongoing updating (Krejsler, 2007a, p. 50). By understanding the professional teacher as moving towards the condition of a ‘competency nomad’, Krejsler questions the view that teachers’ pre-service education fully qualifies them as professionals merely by dint of mastering the specific skills and knowledge pertaining to the field of education.

This term also encompasses the kind of qualifications that institutions of higher education offer in their music education programmes. Music teachers, when thought of as learning workers in music, have to respond to the changing demands in the society at large, from, for instance, users, administrators and the general public. When music learning takes place in a variety of spaces and by means of numerous agents, such as learning the ukulele by viewing videos on *YouTube*, the nomadic music teacher has to master multiple identities in order to contribute constructively to work assignments that are increasingly cross-disciplinary and changing (Krejsler, 2007a, p. 50).

From the perspective of the professional development of competency nomads, music teacher’s conceptions of their professional identity have to negotiate with both the diverse standards and qualities of the music teacher profession (as one of the main contributors to this identity formation), as well as with the changing demands of the society at large, in order to understand themselves and their work conditions (e.g. ibid., p. 53). As such, professional knowledge, skills, and values become increasingly linked to the individual personality of the professional (Krejsler, 2005, p. 349), whilst the development of professional music teachers becomes more individualized (ibid., p. 335). Thus, gaining access to a multiplicity of professional practices or contexts becomes important to music students’ professional development, whilst raising questions of how professionals’ vocabulary of knowledge must be structured in terms of a competency nomad across these contexts.

Music Teacher Students as Learning Professionals

Lave and Wenger (1991) pointed out that professional development may be described as following different individual learning trajectories in pre-service education, as well as in professional life. Wenger later proposed a model of learning through participation in a community of practice wherein participants pass through different trajectories of learning, from peripheral participation to becoming an ‘apprentice’, ‘journeyman’ or full participant (2004, p. 179–180). According to this model, participation leads to a process of learning in which changes in identity happen simultaneously. But because these learning processes are linked very strongly to the specific context of communities of practice, it is questionable how knowledge acquired in this way can be relevant to other contexts of professional life.

This point was discussed by Anna Sfard (1998), who argued that “if a model of learning is to be convincing, it is probably bound to build on the notion of an acquired, situational invariant property of the learner, which goes together with him or her from one situation to another” (*ibid.*, p. 10). Moreover, there are a growing number of educational researchers who acknowledge that learning is situated and context bound, though only few of them would completely reject the notion of the transfer of learning from situation to situation (Dyndahl & Nielsen, 2011, p. 5). According to Sfard, our ability to prepare today to meet tomorrow’s questions and challenges is the core of learning. This implies that a competent professional music teacher is able to repeat what should be repeated, at the same time that he or she changes what should be changed across situations.

Basil Bernstein (1999, p. 159) claimed that the knowledge of a profession operates in both ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal discourses’. He described ‘horizontal discourse’ as a form of knowledge, usually described as ‘everyday’ or ‘common sense’, which has “well-known features; it is likely to be oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered, and contradictory across but not within contexts” (*ibid.*, p. 159). Such horizontal discourses entail a set of strategies which are locally and segmentally organized. By ‘segmental organization’, Bernstein means how “realisation varies with the way culture segments and specializes activities and practice” (*ibid.*, p. 159). Knowledge within a horizontal discourse constitutes a practical synthesis of the aims of professional performance (cf. Grimen, 2008, p. 72).

On the other hand, vertical discourse takes the form of “a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organized” (Bernstein, 1999, p. 159). It involves a theoretical synthesis of knowledge in professional education. Leif Christian Lahn and Karen Jensen (2008, p.

301) understand this theoretical synthesis as the development of symbolic competence in professional education, and the necessary acquisition of epistemic tools or objects of knowledge.

According to Bernstein, professional knowledge circulates within a practical and theoretical synthesis. The theoretical synthesis has strong distributive rules regulating access, circulation, transmission and evaluation, and “is accomplished usually through explicit forms of ‘recontextualizing’ that affects distribution in terms of time, space and actors” (Bernstein, 1999, p. 159). In addition, there is no relationship between the practical and the theoretical synthesis, implying that it is not possible to transfer knowledge from one context *directly* into another. Both practical and theoretical synthesis are necessary for music education to develop the individual’s repertoire of relevant knowledge within the profession, but neither synthesis is sufficient to define the collective body of knowledge within music teaching, which positions music teachers in their field of work (*ibid.*, p. 160).

Lahn and Jensen (2008) have argued that knowledge in all professional communities is similarly complex, and that professional development always involves approaches and learning strategies that are specific to a particular profession. With reference to the professional music education community, because different practitioners may prioritize different approaches, individual learners may experience changes in how theoretical and practical syntheses are emphasised across different arenas of learning. We will argue that all these perspectives may be fruitful for our attempt to understand music teachers as ‘learning professionals’.

A Student Music Teacher and her Meeting with the Professional Arena

In this section we examine professional development by exploring how a music teacher student experiences her individual learning trajectory in pre-service education. The results presented here are based on a self-report from a female first-year student music teacher, who was participating in a four-year music teacher education programme. Her engagement in this research project was voluntary.

The student operated in different contexts, such as didactic teaching, and discourses from practicum, in addition to recording her experiences over six months. These different practice contexts contributed to experi-

ences that were discontinuous in time, and in terms of space and actors (Bernstein, 1999, p. 159). In order to make these earlier experiences available for herself and other readers, the student was asked to write about her experiences in these different arenas of learning. This task was given to her after teaching, observation and practice in the class (cf. practicum) had been conducted. According to Bernstein (ibid., p. 159), the student's writing process could be seen as a way of 'recontextualizing' her experiences.

In the following excerpts from the student's text, we try to trace and identify some examples of her professional and personal development during this period. The text starts with a reflection of what is going on in didactic teaching combined with memories of being a pupil herself:

The classroom-teaching subject to me has opened a sort of imaginary door into the classroom of primary schools, by presenting basic ideas of music pedagogy. I had a particular moment of clarity when my class watched a video of hands-on teaching of music subjects. I can't remember very much from my own music lessons in primary school, but now as I watched this video, I got an explicit visual impression of how it could be done.

I started to prepare myself mentally. I realized that "I will also be in a situation like this in the future". Your thoughts start spinning; what do I want to do, and what do I not want to do? How do I want to be (or not to be) a music teacher?

As shown in the text, the student, after her first meeting with a real school class situation, combined earlier experiences of didactic teaching with her observations and feelings of being in a classroom with twenty five children. Later she reflected on her gradual understanding and identification of what it means to be a music teacher:

Because of the self-knowledge that was triggered in me by this experience so early in my studies, I felt more secure and at ease when standing in front of a school class. I experienced that, by being mentally prepared at an early stage, I became more aware of my future role as a music teacher. Respect for my future profession, and belief in my own capability to perform in a professional role, gave me more confidence when, for the first time, I stood in front of the class. [...]

When we first visited the class, we had no obligations regarding teaching. We could just embrace the energy shown by the children; study the teachers who were standing in the same position as we would in a few weeks from now, and we could observe and reflect upon the strategies they chose.

In this way experience was like an observation of myself: I really saw myself as a teacher.

The real practicum in the classroom was an extreme period of learning for me. We were, for the first time, fully responsible for a group of children, for their learning and for maintaining good working-conditions in the classroom. We had to make decisions continuously about how to keep silent, what to do with an inactive child, how to ask good questions and how to take control of the time! When we failed, we had to find solutions and try again.

This text illustrates different starting points in her realisation of the hybrid nature of a professional teacher's identity through experiences and observations of different situations at different times. Different actors had been in the same situation, or just as part of the discussion team, and their conceptions of the situation are given into the community of practice. By sharing her experiences with her fellow students and the professional teachers, new understandings of being a professional music teacher opened up for her.

Elements of Bernstein's 'horizontal discourse' could be found in her observations, and in her discussions with other students about how to master the class. A couple of weeks later her written reflections on these experiences had already gone beyond her observations of the class, and towards concerns with what this situation did to her self-understanding of her role as a music teacher.

This could be the beginning of building a *repertoire* based on her own knowledge, skills and commitment to become a good music teacher. During her time in the classroom, she was given access to the professional teacher group, who represented the collective identity of the profession, and who introduced her to accepted "specialized knowledge, skills and values" (Heggen, 2008, p. 323). This professional group represented a sort of *reservoir*, understood as a total set of knowledge, skills and values that are accepted and understood as being specific for this group (Bernstein, 1999, p. 159). This idea of a 'reservoir' refers to a collection of knowledge which confers the possibility to choose among multiple so-

lutions for your task, on the basis of which the student was not left alone with her own skills, knowledge and values. Personal and professional development depends on opportunities to combine elements from the ‘reservoir’ into your own repertoire.

The student described the practicum in the classroom, which is obviously inside a horizontal discourse, as an extreme period of learning. During this period the students and their supervisor discussed daily what had happened to them in their classes and how to find better solutions for mastering the pupils and their learning. An important question is how these discussions influenced her competence to master a situation different from that of the practicum, and whether these discussions were an example of ‘recontextualizing’, which Bernstein understood to be part of a ‘vertical’ discourse.

A student music teacher’s process of recontextualizing experiences can be made accessible to fellow students and teachers by way of taking notes, or, in Ricoeur’s terms, ‘writing texts’. Writing texts may form an important part of student music teachers’ learning processes. According to Ricoeur, who discusses the relationship between speech, text and action, a “text takes care of the speech and makes it like an archive for the individual and the collective memory” (1986/2001, p. 61). When the reader and the author of the text are not communicating directly, as in speech, a sort of absence calls for interpretation (Ricoeur, 1986/2001). Every reader has to interpret the text in terms of his or her own life experiences. According to Ricoeur (1991, p. 149–150) such different interpretations give richer meanings. These interpretations thereby become independent of the special situation that the writer describes.

When intensions and actions depart from a reader’s interpretation, a new level of comprehension emerges. This situation calls for an increased understanding of how one’s own experiences can be linked to those of a community of professionals. Relationships between text and action, and between text and speech, collect together some of the basic teaching and practicing methods of music teacher education. We expect student music teachers to develop their individual professional identity by participating in many different communities of learning and practice. In this way the development of an individual professional style can be linked to different practice contexts and to more theoretical understandings of professional music education. Likewise, students focus on the formation of a professional identity as a personalised individual process. In the real practicum arena, the standards and qualities of the profession are made available for

students by meeting professional teachers and participating in different communities of practice (Wenger, 2004).

Student music teachers search for competence profiles that can match the diverse demands of employers, such as primary schools, music/cultural schools and professional organisations for the arts. Because they are not trained for a specific arena of music performing or teaching, and are often dedicated to being both musicians and teachers, they begin to consciously develop a strong personal and competence profile from the outset. Compared with other areas of professional education, the student music teacher is prepared for a wide spectre of possible employers, and to forge their own career in many different ways. This tendency to take on the perspective of an ‘entrepreneur’ is related to the idea of a ‘competency nomad’ in the sense that student music teachers constantly look to the future and ask themselves: What’s the next step?

Concluding Remarks

In the realm of the new challenges of a knowledge society, this article aimed to discuss the professional development of music teachers and the music teacher as a professional. We have questioned whether acting nomadically is the new form of professional music teacher identity, and discussed how being a professional and developing a professional identity may be understood as a competence to apply your skills and knowledge into more than one community of practice. If you want to succeed in a post-signifying regime you have to master a diversity of professional roles, and you need a personal confidence to handle all of them.

The story of the individual student music teacher and the different theoretical perspectives presented here illustrates that different music teachers may follow different learning trajectories, and develop individual competency profiles within pre-service education and throughout their professional life. Moreover, understanding professional development in terms of a combination of developing collective knowledge and operating as a nomad in an individual style, informs our understanding of music teaching as a profession. We argue that it is important to maintain a broad and open view, both in the development of professional music teachers and in what it means to be a professional.

However, protecting and developing professional integrity as a music teacher requires mastering the ‘battlefield’ by choosing ‘weapons’ according to the circumstances of the particular ‘battlefield’ (Krejsler, 2007b).

With these weapons music teachers can act as an ‘agonic professional’ by “employing an appropriate mixture of commitment, ironic distancing and a sense of humour” (ibid., p. 488), which, as Krejsler puts it (ibid., p. 488), can contribute to ‘inspiring intercourse’ between employer, colleagues and students.

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