

Chapter 13

Why Should Music Teacher Educators pay Attention to the Global Crises of Economy and Climate?

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When major crises occur, like those on the world economy, the global climate; or the 2010 oil leak in the Mexican Gulf, it entails global attention and worry. Music education, however, and the education of music teachers as one of its branches, seems to proceed as before. Within the philosophy as well as the sociology and anthropology of music education, let alone the fields of teaching and learning music, we continue our traditional debates like the ones about aestheticism or praxialism, on justifying our endeavors by musical or non-musical reasoning, on the influences of formal and informal learning practices or about the consequences of our increasing knowledge about world music.

In this article I will address this apparent paradox by suggesting that paying attention to such dramatic and sometimes tragic events can enlighten and inform music teacher education on several levels. In addition to clarify and actualize our obvious, moral obligation to ask how we, as music teacher educators can contribute in the formation of a better future for people all over the globe, such crises affords an opportunity for systematic analyses of music teacher education and its structural and educational conditions in relation to the macro, meso and micro level of society.

Structural and Educational Conditions

Even if the traditional issues of our field along with their debates constitute vital parts of the very foundation of music teacher education, the word 'parts' indicate that they do not constitute the whole picture. On the contrary, the grounds on which the education of music teachers are built consist of other components also. Among those other grounds are the priorities of educational politics that guide and regulate the structural as well as educational conditions of higher education.

During the last decades we have seen some particular developments in that respect. Among structural priorities a turn from smaller to larger units, such as the gathering of music conservatoires or academies together with other sorts of higher education institutions into polytechnic universities or universities of applied sciences have been evident. Furthermore, a cross national organizing of a bachelor-master-PhD system have been introduced, in Europe as part of the so called 'Bologna process'. Finally, the introduction of international rankings of institutions for higher education such as lists of the world's best universities have come to play a more important part than earlier in the public debate as well as the politics of higher education. Since the ranking lists do not include all university discipline areas they tend to influence the structure of higher education by highlighting the disciplines and subject areas that are actually measured and compared, such as the natural sciences. As a consequence the attention towards, for example, the humanities is decreasing. Consequently, in many countries disciplines like for example musicology face a reduction of resources or a threat of being shut down.

Reducing resources also impact the educational conditions of higher education. On the micro level it can be observed in the reduction of the time allotted to courses and subjects as well as research in combination with the enlargement of the sizes of student groups. On the meso level the educational conditions are affected by the formation of global principles and priorities about educational quality in higher education. This quality approach connects to the establishment of quality agencies around the globe along with audits and subject assessment systems and procedures. In turn, these systems and procedures give priority to descriptions of educational ends and standards at the expense of discipline-internal, philosophical considerations on values and meaningfulness. On the macro level such priorities appear as being connected to some prevailing, political priorities.

Political Priorities

The political priorities in question are guided by a business life inspired rhetoric and philosophy, which has established concepts like knowledge production, knowledge as a commodity; and students as customers as central in the dominating, global discourse on education. Along with this follows a supply and demand based view on the development of higher education which is accompanied by quality ideals and control systems inspired by the so called Japanese industrial “wonder” of the 1960s and 70s (Stensaker & Maassen, 2005). The grounds for this effective spread of the industry and commercial quality concept to all parts of the public sector was laid by the globalization of economy paired with the strengthening of the political Right in western countries. Neither critics like Hackman & Wageman (*ibid.*) holding that the whole quality concept was a ‘management fad’ nor the lack of empirical evidence of its effect were of importance to this diffusion.

What remains to be analyzed are the connections between these two components of the basis for music teacher education – the traditional issues of our field and the impact of the priorities of educational politics: How do the structures and actions that rest in the business life inspired educational politics affect the basics and prospects of music teacher education? As I have already indicated some connections between music teacher education, higher education and the prevailing politics in general I suggest that looking further into such connections would enrich and inform the debate on present as well as future priorities of the education of music teachers.

Pointing to the need for greater attention to the connections between music teacher education and its global, political environment does not entail that music education lack research and other scholarly works addressing political issues or their consequences. Among several examples (see for example Johansen, 2007; Nielsen, 2010; Elliott, 2010) I would like to draw the attention towards the symposium entitled *Rethinking standards for the 21th century: New realities, new propositions* that took place at the Research In Music Education conference in Exeter in April 2009 (Woodford, ed., 2011). Here, “the controversial and international phenomenon of national music education standards” (*ibid.*) were discussed along with their principles and outcomes. What has been more rarely addressed, however, is how general political priorities on global as well as regional and national levels influence music teacher education in particular.

Hence, one could ask: Are connections between crises at society's macro level and music teacher education too obvious to become analytically interesting or is the outspread lack of interest a sign that in the eyes of music teacher educators such crises have nothing to do with music teacher education at all? I would suggest that if we direct our attention to such possible connections we will enable ourselves to grasp some vital challenges and dilemmas of music teacher educators, rooted in the political as well as professional sides of music teacher education.

The Contemporary Condition of Society and Culture

To illustrate and present my reasoning I chose to take one step back and observe the environment of music teacher education as characterized by concepts such as value relativism, multiculturalism; and the democratization of knowledge dissemination within which people learn from a "bewildering, ever-expanding sources of music" (North, Hargreaves & Tarrant, 2002, p.604). Some fruitful, explanatory theories and models connect to the concept of modernity, including Liquid modernity (Baumann, 2000), Post-modernity (Lyotard, 1984) and Late modernity (Giddens, 1990; 1991). Proving more or less obvious connections to the notion of late modernity, we find positions like reflexive modernity (Beck, 1994; Luhmann, 1995), which will serve as a ground for much of my further reasoning.

While Luhmann (*ibid.*) observes and describes the contemporary condition as characterized by a highly complex, ever changing, self-driven dynamical network of social systems, Beck (1994) looks into some vital consequences entailed by these dynamics. Suggesting the concept of 'risk society' (*ibid.*, p. 5) he envisages challenges like "...nationalism, mass poverty [...], economic crises, ecological crises, possibly wars and revolutions [along with] states of emergency produced by great catastrophic accidents [...]" (*ibid.*, p. 4). Furthermore, people today are "being expected to live with a broad variety of different, mutually contradictory, global and personal risks", Beck (*ibid.*, p. 7) holds.

In our attempts to handle "the turbulence of the global risk society" (*ibid.*, p. 7), and even if postmodern analyses hold that the metanarratives of society and culture have fallen (Lyotard, 1984) we tend to maintain constructing them. It can be noticed and observed at various levels and

areas of society, among which I would like to draw the attention towards the area of education.

Three Metanarratives about Education

Post modern analyses of the contemporary condition of society and culture are characterized by incredulity toward metanarratives (ibid.) such as the ones about the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth (ibid. xxiii). Within a modern condition metanarratives function as reference grounds for legitimating e.g. arguments, decisions and actions whilst in a post modern condition the legitimation ground consist of local micronarratives and language games, it is held (ibid.).

In the following I turn from the notion of post-modernity with its presupposition that we have left modernity and entered into a new condition, and turn to the theory on late modernity holding that we have not left the modern condition albeit face it in its extremes (Giddens, 1990). This turn enables us to argue that despite a possible incredulity we still can observe the establishment and growth of metanarratives functioning as coherent reference grounds of large sectors of society such as the education area. I suggest that among those reference grounds are three closely related but still to some extent contradictory metanarratives, which have proven heavy impact on the structures and actions of higher education globally: The ones about *Neoliberalism*, *Control* and *Back to basics*. Despite of their mutually contradictions these narratives overlap in interesting ways that make them constitute a significant part of the foundations of the global discourse on higher education.

Neoliberalism

On the macro level of society traits such as the structural turn to larger units, the student mobility enhanced by the cross national organizing of university degrees and the ranking system of universities can be described as framed by the metanarrative of market liberalism or Neoliberalism and connected to one of its mantras: competition and competitiveness. The metanarrative of Neoliberalism emerged in the collapse of the binary logic of the cold war and in the administrations of Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980ies (Smith, 2003) along with a vision of the free operation of a global market system as the primary means for solving social problems (ibid.). Among a multitude of effects on education such as “giving strict financial

accounting procedures precedence over actual pedagogical need” (ibid., p. 38), it is connected to music teacher education through the turn to the above mentioned ideals and principles of business life as guiding devices for how higher education in general as well as educational quality should be maintained and improved. It has impinged the discourse of higher education by introducing core concepts like knowledge as a commodity, students as customers; and the school authorities as stakeholders questioning the educational institutions’ accountability.

Control

As Woodford (2005) points out by referring to David Frum, proponents of the New Right are often critical of the managerial role of government. However, even if freedom of choice and keeping public expenses and bureaucracy at a minimum are among the core principles of Neoliberalist ideology, when it comes to education another metanarrative, the one about *improving quality by rigid control* has arisen as a mantra, including the establishment of a system of quality agencies like the Norwegian NOKUT, the Finnish FINHEEC and the Danish EVA and other governmental bodies which increase the bureaucracy and public expenses. In Norway the establishment of the Directorate of Education is perhaps the best example.

On the micro and meso levels the metanarrative of control can be observed as materialized in the widespread and still increasing use of mapping and tests in primary and secondary education along with the emerging, commercial market for readymade teaching plans and designs announcing that they secure student learning in accordance with the content of those tests. In higher education it occurs in the priorities of learning outcomes as a central feature of the formal curricula along with qualifications frameworks presenting “levels and learning outcomes descriptors” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2012). Such frameworks are implemented in most European countries with reference to the EU qualifications framework of lifelong learning: EQF (ibid.). Further we see traits of the control narrative in the claim of evidence based education and the subsequent priorities of empirical research on the effect of education programs.

The connection between the metanarrative of control and the apparently contradicting Neoliberalist program is established by leaning on ways in which business life itself is organized: Principles of industrial qua-

lity systems like “Kaizen”¹ and the “Deming Circle”² (Stensaker & Maassen, 2005) have been applied to higher education by establishing subject assessments and audits to be carried out by the mentioned quality agencies. Even though the perfectness of those industrial quality systems have been clearly demonstrated by the withdrawal of thousands of cars to adjust constructional adjustments jeopardizing security and obviously failed in connection with the 2010 oil leak in the Mexican gulf, the education sector apparently maintains its belief in securing quality this way, a way which presupposes a measurability optimism that, among its consequences, blurs and reduces not measurable values to second and third rank priorities.

Back to basics

The ‘back to basics’ metanarrative rests in priorities like Hirsch’s (1996) cultural literacy and the *Bildung* theoretical materialism (Klafki, 1983) and is allied with the claims by the “neofundamentalist movement” of the “possession of absolute truths and values” (Woodford, 2005, p. 59).

Paired with the privileging of science and technology subjects in schools and universities to serve the needs of global industrial competitiveness (Smith, 2003), we see a return to basic subjects like reading, writing, mathematics and natural sciences in elementary and secondary school along with the priority of basic skills like being able to express oneself orally and in writing along with reading ability and abilities in doing mathematics and using digital tools (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, n.d.). Along with highlighting the measurable aspects of any other subject, arts education tends to be put aside and made less visible than before.

The narrative of back to basics has become re-vitalized in connection with the apparent priority of establishing a secure educational ground within the fluid (Baumann, 2000), dynamical and ever changing (Luhmann, 1995) society in which personal risks increase (Beck, 1994) and identity has become a question of keeping your own self narrative going (Giddens, 1991). Apparently, curiosity of how society and culture develop has been replaced by anxiousness and the belief among educational politicians that

1 a system that encourage small improvement suggestions to make little changes on a regular basis by setting standards and then continually improving those standards

2 A process based improvement methodology following the stages of plan - do - check - act in a cyclic movement.

simple, easy, understandable educational principles attuned to voters' everyday notions of schooling will win elections and bring political power.

The Obligations and Challenges of Music Teacher Educators

I would suggest that arts education, and music teacher education as one of its branches, constitute areas within which the shortcomings of the neoliberal-control-basics oriented educational regime can be seen most clearly. If we look closer to these metanarratives, we may see that in spite of their mutual inconsistencies, they establish a philosophical ground on which global crises and music education meet. To be specific: It is the same priorities that cause the crises on economy, global warming and whose control systems could not prevent the oil leak in the Mexican gulf, that guide education at large and hence music teacher education at the structural level. This is an insight which renders music teacher educators with challenges in, at least, 3 areas, which I choose to name the *ethical*, *political* and *professional*. Of course they overlap. Still, for the structure of the rest of this text I will depict them separately and in brief.

Ethically music teacher educators are challenged by their responsibilities to the music subject itself, be it as a cultural expression, art form or subject matter for teaching and learning. Furthermore their ethical responsibilities include the student music teachers, the cooperating teachers; and other involved personnel as well as the authorities. In addition the ethical responsibilities towards the student teachers' future students and their parents should be considered. *Political* challenges arise out of the difference between politics and policy. As an integrated part of carrying out music teacher education music teacher educators are policy makers as well as policy enactors and must reflect on the connections between their policy enactment and the overarching educational politics that define the structural frames of those policies (Schmidt, 2009). The most prominent challenge in this respect concerns how to navigate within the frames of Neoliberalism, control and back to basics: How should the increased emphasis on competition, quality control and the increased weight on 'hard' subjects be addressed? *Professional* challenges can be identified by looking at music teacher education as professional education, involving questions about what it entails to belong to a profession along with the meaning of professionalism (Molander & Terum, 2008; Pembroke & Craig,

2002). Being observant of and relating to those questions is a vital part of one's identity as a music teacher educator. Or to paraphrase Giddens (1991): to keep one's own self-narratives going, meaning the narratives we tell ourselves and others about who we are as music teacher educators.

Music Teacher Educators' Dilemmas

Seen together the contemporary condition of late modernity, the meeting of three somewhat contradictory metanarratives about education; and the subsequent ethical, political and professional challenges that they arise cause music teacher educators to face several dilemmas. Here, I will direct the attention towards three of them.

Dilemma 1: The obligation towards the student music teachers: compliance or agency?

On the one hand music teacher educators are required by their professional ethics to keep up with and maintain music teacher education within the existing regime of Neoliberalism, control and back to basics by working hard to realize its potential true to its principles, aiming at increasing the outcomes of education for its student teachers so that they will function well within the frames of that regime.

Simultaneously, on the other hand, they should work to enhance student music teachers' agency, meaning their capacity to act independently and make their own free choices (Barker, 2005). To establish a ground for that kind of agency music teacher educators should commit themselves to training student music teachers to actively and constructively take part in the future development of their field. This kind of competence, however, rests in the knowledge about various different ways of organizing music education, the ability to identify such ways; and to reveal and criticize their shortcomings. Hence, as an aspect of student music teachers' development, the formation of such competence has to include studies focusing the shortcomings of the existing educational regime.

Dilemma 2: The obligations towards the educators' own competence development: stability or change?

On the one hand ethical considerations demands that the music teacher educator cope with, master and strive to excel in running the education of

music teachers according to the principles of the prevailing regime of educational politics. The institutions for music teacher education are parts of the same educational system as the institutions for which their student teachers become qualified. Hence the metanarratives of Neoliberalism, control and back to basics serve as structural frames of music teacher education as well. This highlights music teacher educators as professionals themselves and draws the attention to professions as a stabilizing force in society.

Simultaneously, on the other hand, acting professionally as a music teacher educator includes maintaining and developing one's own knowledge base. That is the knowledge base and competence upon which the position as a music teacher educator actually rest. This includes a notion of professional autonomy entailing critical perspectives and insights about the dynamics of educational politics: changes of regimes will emerge in the future as well as they have in the past and no system of educational politics will last forever, not even the existing. In addition, educators are continuously challenged to develop the sides of their competence that are connected to flexibility and the ability to change (Johansen, 2002). After all, this is what made them able to implement the existing regime in the first place and enables them to face the principles of new regimes in the future. Tightly connected to the notions of flexibility and change competence is the knowledge about various alternative ways of organizing society and its educational system and, in turn, the negative sides of those systems and regimes.

Dilemma 3: The obligations towards society:
silence or alarm?

Based upon the knowledge that all educational regimes have their assets as well as shortcomings it is expected by music teacher educators that they should work actively and seriously – with verve and spirit – to utilize the assets of the prevailing regime along with minimizing its shortcomings, to the benefit of their institutions as well as student music teachers.

On the other hand, and simultaneously, leaders of music education should have an obligation to point to those shortcomings by taking part in the public debate on education. As knowledgeable citizens they are challenged to constructively contributing to the continuous improvement of music teacher education as well as education at large. Furthermore, the nature of music makes music education a very sensitive instrument for identifying and revealing factors in need of constructive criticism with

regard to the ways we organize society and culture. With this follows a particular responsibility for the propagation of those issues within the public debate.

Concluding Remarks

Reflecting on music teacher education by attending to its relations to the surrounding environment would easily reveal how challenges and shortcomings in music teachers' everyday work connect to metanarratives like the ones of Neoliberalism, control and back to basics and thereby demonstrate further relations to large cultural, societal and global challenges. The awareness about such connections could inform music teacher educators as well as the field of music education in general about important relations between politics, ethics, leadership, and professionalism.

These ways, when major crises occur, like those on the world economy, the global climate; or the 2010 oil leak in the Mexican Gulf, it does not only entail global attention and worry, but also encourage analyses of the connections between the macro, meso and micro level of society. When such analyses focus on music teacher education one question becomes pertinent: For how long can higher education and music teacher education as one of its branches continue as being guided by principles which, on sector after sector of society demonstrate their shortcomings, and what consequences should music teacher educators draw from such insights?

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