

Initiating mobilizing networks: Mapping intercultural competences in two music teacher programmes in Israel and Finland

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Abstract

Societies worldwide are becoming more aware of the educational challenges that come with increased cultural diversity derived from ethnic, linguistic, religious, socioeconomic and educational differences and their intersections. In many countries, teacher education programmes are expected to prepare teachers for this reality and develop their intercultural competences. This instrumental case study is based on a project that aims to initiate mobilizing networks between two music teacher programmes to explore intercultural music teacher education. In this study, we map the intercultural competences that are required of music teacher educators and that are provided in the music education programmes at two higher music education institutions in Israel and Finland. The data consists of 11 focus group interviews with music teacher educators at the Levinsky College of Education in Tel Aviv and the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, conducted by a multinational research team. The data was analysed abductively, using content analysis as a method. While the interviewed teacher educators could articulate many aspects of their own intercultural competences or the lack of them, the findings indicate that in musical diversity and teaching students from different musical backgrounds the teacher educators

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found it difficult to explain what kinds of intercultural competences their respective programmes provided for the students. Based on the findings, there is a need for a more holistic understanding of intercultural competences in music teacher education as well as how our institutions produce power. There is also a need for the teacher educators in the programmes to collaborate and discuss among each other in order to create “knowledge communities” and to move towards addressing intercultural issues.

Keywords

diversity, intercultural competence, music education, network, teacher education

Introduction

There is a growing acceptance and even embracing of cultural diversity, and an increasing awareness that understanding how diversity affects teaching and learning is one of the core issues for student teachers to become aware of during their studies (e.g. Castro, 2010; Gay, 2010, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noel, 2008; Taylor & Sobel, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; in music education, e.g. Abril, 2013; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Robinson, 2006). Diversity is not simply a matter of the world becoming more plural, but is related to wider ethical issues of equality and justice in education (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2015). In music education this awareness was, for decades, influenced by the multicultural education “movement” (Howard, Swanson, & Campbell, 2014), which inspired music educators to attend to and include musical plurality beyond the hegemony of the musical monolingualism of western art music. Despite this general pluralist vision, little is known about how music teacher education programmes around the world have been able to respond to pluralist challenges and opportunities. Some have suggested that the curriculum’s musical content and future teachers’ skills should be diversified by “culture bearers” who are brought to the university in order to provide authentic learning experiences (Campbell, 2004); at the same time, others have designed courses that integrate international perspectives (Addo, 2009) or adopt an “ethnopedagogic approach” to future music teachers’ education (Dunbar-Hall, 2009). In Australia, Marsh (2005) has required students to do course-related fieldwork, interviewing informants from cultural minority communities and recording songs that are meaningful to them. In some programmes in Finland, Norway, Sweden and the USA, student teachers have been offered not simply multicultural classes but possibilities for teaching and learning music in foreign countries or contexts (Broeske-Danielsen, 2013; Burton, Westvall, & Karlsson, 2012; Campbell, 2010; Westerlund, Partti, & Karlsen, 2015), in order to develop their intercultural competences through learning to respond to diversity and insecurity in changing and unknown situations. Mills and Ballantyne (2010) argue, however, that student teachers’ dispositions towards diversity do not necessarily change during single, stand-alone courses, but need to be developed throughout the course of studies, and beyond. This means that there is a “need for issues of social justice and diversity to be central components of the pre-service programme” (p. 454). Hence, there is also a need to develop wider reflexivity on how music teacher programmes in various parts of the world could better equip future teachers with the necessary skills and competences to work within culturally pluralist and global environments (Emmanuel, 2005; Rampal, 2015).

In this article, we will present first-stage results of a case study and long-term developmental-practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) on intercultural competences in two music teacher education institutions in Israel and Finland. The research was conducted by a multinational research team whose members all work within the participating institutions. As today’s music teacher education programmes are required to become more conscious of their

nationally-based ideological underpinnings and negotiate visions of intercultural competences, this study is based on the idea that an effective way to respond to the challenges related to pluralism and cultural diversity is “learning from each other” (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012, p. 169; UNESCO, 2012). University programmes typically function as isolated expert silos, preventing the creation of collaborative practices and collective forms of participatory learning (Davidson & Goldberg, 2010). In the “conservatoire culture” of higher music education, these silos can be traced to master–apprentice relationships that tend to cultivate strong traditions, while at the same time resisting changes suggested by administrators or researchers (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013). Our aim is that the reflexive exchange enabled during the research process will enhance our self-understanding of who we are as music teacher educators, internationally, and of how our understandings of who we are affects how future music teachers teach (Gay, 2014, p. xiii). The two contexts, the Levinsky College of Education in Israel and the Sibelius Academy in Finland, are vastly different, in terms of institutional histories and social-political-religious and educational realities, thus offering a potentially rich source to explore the phenomenon. Hence, learning from each other is intended to be both intra- and cross-institutional, thus aiming at transnational reflexivity.

The study leans on current research that suggests that learning institutions should be considered as mobilizing networks that enable mobility, flexibility and interactivity (Davidson & Goldberg, 2010). As Ball and Tyson (2011) have argued, teacher education should also entail a global turn of thinking towards cultivating “a network of global scholars, researchers and practitioners interested in working within cross-national collaborations on the study of teacher education” (p. 412) and towards “networked expertise” (Hakkarainen, 2013). In other words, this project started from a mutual interest in exchanging ideas and experiences about co-developing the programmes and the profession of music educators. By creating an international network that sets out to explore the development of intercultural competences within music teacher education, and keeping the network together for a longer period of time, we also aim to facilitate the forming of not only networked, but also collective expertise. According to Hakkarainen, Lallimo, Toikka, and White (2011), “collective expertise typical for our times may be considered to be cultivated in innovative knowledge communities”. Furthermore, these communities “rely on social practices, knowledge practices tailored to promoting continuous innovation and change.” (p. 71). Following this perspective, the project conveyed here is based on the idea that collaboration, peer-learning, partnerships and technology-supported networks might create dynamic, border-crossing frameworks able to foster both the co-development of intercultural music teacher education and a knowledge community to support this.¹ As a whole, the study is based on a mutual institutional interest in developing diversity in music teacher education through research.

Understandings of culture, interculturality and intercultural competence are central for developing intercultural music teacher education. In the following we will give brief definitions of these terms, as they are understood here. Most commonly, issues of diversity in music education are categorized as a part of multicultural music education (Volk, 1998). We have chosen to refer to the discourse of interculturality, which focuses more on exchange and cooperation between different cultural groups than on highlighting the differences, and the right to cultural preservation that is characteristic of multiculturalism. According to Abdallah-Preteille (2006), intercultural reasoning emphasizes the processes and interactions between groups in relation to each other, as well as to the subject that acts and therefore interacts. In such an understanding, culture is a means not for determination and modelling, but rather “instrumental functioning” (p. 480) for the individual or the group. In other words, culture should not be seen as a permanent and unchanging entity, but rather as one produced and transformed in human interaction.

Consequently, by *culture*, we do not refer to any “solid forms of social [or] anthropological culture” (Dervin & Machart, 2015, p. 3); rather, we are concerned with the “co-constructions, negotiations, questionings, [...] manipulations and instabilities” (p. 3) involved, at any given time, in deciding what might be understood as the habits, attitudes and behaviours of particular groups of people. Intercultural approaches, then, do not become a matter of defining assumed cultural boundaries. Instead, they allow for exploring the discourses involved in how we imagine and co-construct ourselves and the selves of others, across diverse contexts.

On these terms, some researchers claim that most education is, and should be, intercultural, and, if it so happens that it is not intercultural, “it is probably not education, but rather the inculcation of nationalist or religious fundamentalism” (Coulby, 2006, p. 246). In general, in this way scholarly work on intercultural education aims to offer a more complete reconceptualization of practices in schools and universities, and clarification of their obligation to participate in global discourses and discussions. For such endeavours, teachers and students need to possess intercultural competences. Even though there is no consensus on what such competences imply (e.g. Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; Deardorff, 2006, 2008; MacPherson, 2010; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), we have chosen, as a starting point, to use Deardorff’s (2006) conceptualization based on interviews with intercultural experts who agree that the term intercultural competences generally refers to the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (pp. 247–248).

Research questions and methodology

With this overall practical interest and wider rationale for the study, we asked the following three research questions:

1. How do music teacher educators in Israel and Finland articulate their own intercultural competences; that is, what kinds of “knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006) do they need in their work?
2. How do these teacher educators articulate the competences that their programmes provide for the students?
3. How do these teacher educators perceive the challenges and future needs regarding these competences on an institutional level?

The study is a qualitative, multi-site instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) where intercultural music teacher education is explored at two particular sites in two different countries, employing a strategy of “compatibility that does not require comparability” between the institutions (Strathern, 2004, p. 35). In other words, the aim is not to compare the two sites, but rather to draw on their richness in differences and variations with respect to what they have in common, namely that they wish and intend to educate music teachers for working in a fast-changing world. On an overarching level, the methodological framework of the study is that of developmental-practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), since its main goal is to develop the practices of our own institutions. Furthermore, we aim to go beyond mere critique of the current practices in the two programmes and explore potential contributions to a re-envisioning of the work of music teacher education practitioners and programmes.

The research contexts

The data in this study stems from focus group interviews with music teacher educators teaching at the music education programmes at the Levinsky College of Education and the Sibelius

Academy. While Finland has until recently been described as fairly homogenous with respect to population structure, Israel is characterized by vivid ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, both within and between population groups. Although it would be tempting to base our study on the stereotypical descriptions of these two societies and their population structures, we recognize the complexity of these cultural descriptions and the pitfalls that these generalizations can create.

The Sibelius Academy offers a five-and-a-half-year combined bachelor's and master's degree programme in music education. In Finnish schools, where music is usually taught by classroom teachers in grades 1–6, and where subject teachers continue this work in grades 7–9 and above, music subject teachers are required to have a Master's degree in music education in order to qualify to teach in schools and other learning institutions. At the Sibelius Academy, the students can study either in Finnish or Swedish, which are the two national languages of Finland. The five-and-a-half-year music education programme includes a wide range of musical skills: one-on-one instrument studies, instrument studies in acoustic guitar, band instruments, voice and piano (including free accompaniment, keyboard harmony and improvisation). The studies also include choir and orchestra conducting, arranging, music technology skills, music and movement, folk music, popular music and improvisation. The repertoire consists of various musical genres and styles, and many of the courses are run in small groups where peer-teaching and -learning play a central role. The pedagogical studies include courses in music teaching and learning, several field practice periods in various schools and institutions (kindergarten, primary and secondary schools and adult learning centres), an introduction to theories of learning, the history and philosophy of the arts and music education and basic research skills. The programme currently educates over 200 music education students, and only approximately 30 students out of the 200-plus applicants are accepted into the programme annually.

In Israel, the music teacher education system supports the parallel separatist educational system of the country: state-secular Jewish Hebrew speaking, state-religious Jewish Hebrew speaking, state-Arabic and state-funded independent schools (Jewish ultra-orthodox Hebrew speaking and Arabic-language Muslim and Christian religious) (Volonsky, 2010). The Levinsky College of Education belongs to the state-secular Jewish stream, therefore the official teaching language is Hebrew. At the time of the data collection, the Faculty of Music Education at the Levinsky College of Education offered a variety of undergraduate and graduate programmes. The undergraduate programmes lead to a B.Ed and teaching certificate in music education, and include a four year B.Ed and three different degrees in collaboration with other institutions: the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music; the Ron Shulamit Conservatory for ultra-orthodox Jewish female students; and the Safed College, where most of the students are Israeli Palestinians who intend to teach in Arab-speaking schools. About 90% of applicants are accepted into these programmes, and for some of the students these studies offer them their first opportunity to systematically develop their musicianship. The curriculum is mainly based on western art music and Hebrew singing traditions. The curricula of the undergraduate programmes are divided into the teaching certificate studies, basic studies and music studies. Music studies include basic skills, performing skills, music literature (western art music, world music, popular and traditional music, ethnomusicology, jazz), composition and technology and a chosen field (choir conducting, Dalcroze eurhythmic or special needs).

The two music education programmes at the Levinsky College and the Sibelius Academy share a diverse approach to different musical genres and styles as part of their teaching repertoires. Both programmes offer a variety of courses in musical skills, pedagogy, didactics and field practice. The programmes differ in the ways that they approach different language groups:

the Sibelius Academy offers teaching both in Finnish and Swedish, but the Levinsky College only in Hebrew because of its status as a state-secular Hebrew-speaking institution. However, the Levinsky College reaches out to minority groups by offering special programmes according to the needs and pedagogical requirements of the students, whereas at the Sibelius Academy, there is only one programme with two language options. In the Sibelius Academy programme, ensemble playing and individual studies in band instruments are much emphasized, while at the Levinsky College studies in popular music and folk music are scarce.

Data

Altogether, 11 focus group interviews were conducted, five at the Levinsky College and six at the Sibelius Academy. The total body of resultant data consisted of around 18 hours of recorded material and the number of pages of interview transcriptions amounted to 331. Each of the interview groups included two or three participants and, in all, a total of 29 music teacher educators participated. At the Sibelius Academy, the teacher educators who were invited to take part in the interviews included the full-time staff (10 lecturers and two professors) and also part-time teachers who had more than 30 hours of teaching per semester. In addition, instrument teachers in the classical music department, who taught many of the music education students, were sent an invitation. We wanted to ensure that teachers representing all the main subject areas (instrumental skills, free accompaniment, band instruments, teaching methods, research skills, field practice) would be included while, at the same time, we limited the total number to ensure we did not have more interview participants than we could manage (the programme involves about 70 part-time teachers). At the Levinsky College, we invited music education teachers and field tutors from all the undergraduate and teaching certificate programmes, as well as those involved in teaching subjects such as teaching methods and field practice. We saw that their encounters and experiences coping with a variety of populations in the diverse programmes were full of potential for this research. Our sampling of participants could therefore be described as “stratified purposeful” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28) in the sense that we wanted to interview teachers who belonged to different subgroups among the institutions’ music teacher educators. The aim was not to facilitate comparisons between the subgroups, but rather to elicit and document the variety of experiences and understandings, as well as a variety of opinions. To further strengthen this aspect, the format of focus group interviews was chosen in order to “bring forth different viewpoints” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 150) concerning intercultural competences, and to facilitate collective interaction that might “bring forth more spontaneous expressive and emotional views than in ... individual interviews” (p. 150).

The interview questions were developed jointly by all the research-team members, taking both theoretical perspectives and the members’ personal experiences of the two different research contexts into account. The interviews were mainly conducted in English and by two to four of the research team members, always ensuring that both institutions were represented. In order to facilitate the interaction, a researcher with mastery of the main official language (Hebrew or Finnish) was always present in order to translate into English if necessary.

The interviews were mainly transcribed by professionals who were not members of the research team, taking care that the transcribers were fluent in both English and Finnish. The Hebrew parts of the Levinsky College interviews were transcribed by one of the research team members (Gluschkankof). Accordingly, whenever necessary, translations of the Hebrew parts were added to the final transcriptions, which were then made available to the research team members to read.

Ethical issues

All in all, the process of preparing, conducting and transcribing the interviews was loaded with ethical and linguistic challenges because of the culturally complex composition of the research team and of the research participant groups and contexts. Hence, all stages of the research process were carried out with a great awareness of the “multitude of cultural factors that affect the relationship between interviewer and interviewee” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 144) and an openness towards “disparities in language use, gestures, and cultural norms” (p. 145) that may have affected the interview situation. The interview process also presented a multitude of ethical challenges related to verbal communication and translation, since English—the commonly used language—was not the native tongue of anyone involved, but typically their second or even third language. This situation called for extra caution both when generating, analysing and interpreting the data, and had a strong impact on both the craftsmanship and communicative-validity aspects (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) of the study.

Another ethical challenge in the interview situation was related to the potential ways in which the presence of the researchers employed by the respective institution affected what could be said and how. Typically, the focus group interviews dealt with issues that were commonly experienced, but rarely discussed or shared among the interviewees. Although many of the participants seemed to think of the interviews as “beneficial educational time” (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 145) and described them as useful and interesting, they may still have felt that the presence of a researcher, who was also their colleague, compromised their freedom with respect to what could be addressed and, possibly, critiqued concerning their workplace.

Additionally, as Liamputtong (2010) reminds us, we, as researchers (and co-workers) have a moral obligation towards the people involved in our study not to expose or reveal their identity. In research such as this, individual voices might easily be recognized by colleagues or leadership. In the cases when interviewees did choose to share criticism about their workplace and its practices, we knew that this might compromise their position within the institution. Hence, as researchers, we carry the responsibility for protecting participants’ anonymity and, if necessary, may omit information from interview quotations that can be used to identify individuals. Moreover, it is our task to frame the knowledge in a way so that it is presented as a constructive tool for engaging in processes of institutional change, rather than mere criticism. The appropriately signed ethical approvals were collected from the administrations of the institutions and the individual teacher educators taking part in this study.

Theoretical starting points and data analysis

As a theoretical starting point, we chose to follow the framework for intercultural teaching competences elicited by MacPherson (2010), in order to further operationalize the “intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” mentioned by Deardorff (2006) and reiterated above. Investigating preservice, in-service, and university teachers’ collaborative conversations about culture—a topic very close to the one focused on in this article—MacPherson (2010), in a comprehensive literature review of the scholarship on intercultural teaching, recognized the following five competence aspects:

- 1) *attitudes*—for example, empathy and “the ability to maintain high expectations and standards for all students, including minority learners” (p. 273);

- 2) *cultural responsiveness*—teachers' dispositions and efforts to show interest in including "cultural knowledge and perspectives" (p. 273) from angles other than those found in the majority culture;
- 3) *curriculum and instruction*—the kinds of intercultural aspects that are encouraged and given attention to in each institution's curricula and course portfolio, as well as in the practices and classrooms of individual teachers;
- 4) *communication and language*—the communicative competences of the teachers, including "intercultural instructional conversations ... cross-cultural listening ... and power dynamics" (p. 273); and
- 5) *critical perspectives*—informed and reflective understandings of one's own "power and privilege" (p. 273) and the ways that cultural differences are interconnected with social inequalities and further complicated by individuals' intersectional belongings.

These five areas of competence formed a grid for the analysis of the data, to consider the central competences as well as those that were less central or not discussed.

The process of analysis proceeded in several steps, using *abduction* as the main principle, in other words oscillating between deductive and inductive approaches in order to see "patterns [and] to reveal deep structures" (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 17). Several guiding principles and hypotheses also steered the analysis in order to frame the findings (Peirce, 1958). The process was comprised of the following four stages:

1. The participating researchers read all of the focus group interview transcriptions in order to develop a holistic understanding of what the data contained. Subsequently, preliminary impressions and interpretations were discussed.
2. The entire body of data was then deductively coded according to MacPherson's (2010) intercultural competences in order to address the first research question. Two of the researchers (Miettinen and Gluschankof) performed the actual coding. Coding separately at first, they then sought to reach "intersubjective agreement" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 245) and provide "coder reliability" (p. 205) by discussing their work and achieving consistency regarding the categorizations. The results of these procedures were further cross-checked and strengthened by the remaining two participants (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2015) joining the discussions towards the end of the coding process, with the aim of looking critically at the analysis.
3. Following the deductive analysis, one of the researchers (Miettinen) performed an inductive coding of the entire body of the interview material, following the principles of qualitative content analysis, proceeding from meaning condensation to a detailed "data-driven coding" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 202) developing codes "through readings of the material" (p. 202), and further on to establishing categories. The purpose of this stage of analysis was to bring out possible new aspects of the data and to be able to generate a systematic overview of the material that did not fit into the pre-established and "concept-driven codes" (p. 202) of Stage 2. Furthermore, in this third stage, the researchers formed categories that were important for addressing research questions two and three.
4. In this last stage of analysis the inductive codes and categories developed in Stage 3 were used to extend and refine the findings stemming from the deductive coding of Stage 2. All researchers contributed to the process of examining the interrelations of the various codes and categories, as well as their relations to the theoretical framework. The results of this process are presented under Findings (below), with each research question constituting the point of departure for the three main sections. To illuminate the first

research question, we chose to use the categories of intercultural teaching competences elicited by MacPherson (2010). They form the sub-sections of the first main section. The quotes were chosen accordingly to illustrate either the research questions, categories of intercultural teaching competences or different aspects of these categories.

Throughout the four stages of analysis, the research group employed researcher triangulation as well as method-of-analysis triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) to strengthen the validity of the findings. Similarly, the completed manuscript was sent to the participating interviewees in order to perform a member check or “respondent validation” (p. 181) procedure, and to revise the manuscript accordingly.

Findings

The student populations at the Levinsky College and the Sibelius Academy differ considerably from each other with regard to cultural diversity. In general, the Sibelius Academy’s student population is culturally more homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, and the differences in the students’ backgrounds are more subtle; furthermore, they have all gone through a comprehensive general education, and most of them have studied extensively at music institutes that provide a highly established and systematic musical education that is available to everyone. Moreover, the Sibelius Academy’s music-education entrance examination already selects for students with versatile musical skills; this is demonstrated in that only 13–15 % of applicants are chosen to the programme annually. At the Levinsky College, as in Israeli society as a whole, cultural differences (language, ethnicity, religion and degree of religiosity) are not only acknowledged, but catered to in the various programmes.

In the interviews, the music educators touched upon various aspects of interculturality when they were asked about the intercultural competences in their teaching. The aspects that were mentioned most often in the data included competences in musical diversity and the teaching of students from different musical backgrounds, linguistic competences (teaching in different languages) and diversity due to ethnic and religious differences. The data also included references to the different learning styles of students as an aspect that teacher educators should consider and, to some extent, adapt to when they teach. Aspects that were mentioned to a lesser degree included differences in the ways of thinking and conceptualizing, the socio-economic status of the students and gender issues.

Music teacher educators’ own intercultural competences

Intercultural attitudes, skills and abilities. The attitudes that the teacher educators at the Levinsky College and the Sibelius Academy aspired to in intercultural interaction included openness, tolerance, acceptance, empathy and mutual respect. Other skills or abilities they considered as central in dealing with intercultural situations in class were communication skills, awareness of similarities and differences in cultural backgrounds and learning styles of students and sensitivity to the experiences of others. A listening attitude was identified as an important quality for an educator:

[...] And I think that’s one quality that you may try to develop ... when you enter a group, when trying to listen, not only listen through your ears but [with] the listening sense, [to] what is happening [in] different kinds of situations and maybe countries. You can understand that’s the only way to be able to communicate. Because if you go there and, just do your thing, you probably will not be received at least not as well ... I think it’s a good quality for educators in general. And it’s also, [a] little bit, [a] kind of

philosophical question, that listening attitude ... So I would consider that a basic competence, or intercultural competence. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

This attentiveness, or “listening attitude”, should be used as a teaching tool to create something new:

Everyone brings his own culture, his own reference, his own education. And then, what it takes of me, I have to be very attentive, I have to listen very carefully, I have to dig [for] the things that are special in everyone, not just to follow them but to, make something together that is different, from what they came with. Because we are creating, something new. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

Cultural responsiveness. In both institutions, only a few teacher educators were able to describe how their efforts to include their students’ diverse backgrounds had reconstructed their course. In one instance, a teacher educator described how she understood that she had to change the course structure in order to make it more relevant and accessible to the Arab students:

Well, for example ... one of the subjects is the development of singing ... So, I asked them [to] put the article aside ... And I asked them to ... [video]record babies, and ... to bring the videos in ... Arab songs of course. And we analysed the videos in the classroom. I learned a lot because it’s quite different ... For example – contour. You know, the characteristics of the first song [are] different ... We compared ... a four-month-old baby and a nine[-month-old one] ... and ... we agreed about the difference ... I didn’t know this song, but they sang the song, the group, in the classroom for me and I understood that the baby ... is trying to sing this song. So, this is one example of trying to make the ... course or the subject relevant. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

This account relates to the findings in MacPherson’s study (2010) where the teachers were “making content- and context-oriented choices” in order to include the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students as part of their teaching (p. 276). Since in the Levinsky College the repertoire is strongly based on western art music, it is rare for the students to be introduced to music from their own cultural backgrounds in the institutional context. However, the example above offers us a glimpse of intercultural competences as they are manifest in the classroom. Although we focus on the experiences of the teacher educators, it should be pointed out that interculturality is always a two-way process where both the teacher and the students are taking part in the interaction.

In both contexts, the teacher educators reported religious restrictions on the musical repertoire, practices and communication aspects. In the ultra-orthodox programme, all teacher educators but one were female, and were expected to adhere to the students’ ways of living, following an ultra-orthodox dress code that was not their own: long skirts, sleeves that covered the elbows (or longer) and a closed collar. Regarding the curriculum, teacher educators in both contexts did not feel comfortable accepting restrictions arising from students’ religious background. In the case of the religious restrictions of ultra-orthodox Jews, the non-ultra-orthodox teacher educators also needed to self-censor musical genres and styles, as expressed in the following statement:

If I teach history of music and ... cantatas by Bach. There are problems because a woman [is] singing and you can’t bring all kinds of secular music[s] that are beautiful ... It would enrich their world but every society builds, like ... walls around. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

There were also tacit expectations regarding ways of expression:

You have to totally bend ... [and] reduce your ... personality ... your beliefs, ... [and] professional knowledge, ... because ... they have totally different norms about ... how to learn, how to write, say, academic papers, what a library is, what a class is, what ... starting a class [on] time [is] ... to me it's very very frustrating. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

Although the Levinsky College teacher educators faced religious issues at the programme level, the Sibelius Academy teacher educators only reported individual cases where students had problems with the Finnish folk-music repertoire, ancient pagan practices in music and movement courses and the repertoire in popular music courses. For the most part, these problems were solved in cooperation with the student in question:

We still have students who ... have a [problem] ... playing popular music, for example, who consider that to be against their ... religion... There are certain things that they ... are required to do for the programme, say, they just can't choose [themselves] ... then you can discuss these things and try to find a solution ... And if it's kind of completely "no", then they can't, of course. But I don't know anybody who would have quit ... I know that there are several discussions and it's an issue. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

In this study, we considered cultural responsiveness not only regarding various aspects of the students' cultures, but also in regard to musical genres and available educational tools when teaching a piece of music in any genre:

I think that [what] all the field practice tutors try to do, it's really to look for tools that can be used when you have the knowledge, regardless [of] the musical genre ... how to teach, how to learn, to give tools, that can be used with any single type of genre that you are exposed to, you can use them ... flexibility ... how to approach melody, how to approach the song structure, its development, its characteristics ... harmonic ... key ... they can see what is similar and what is different. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

While recognizing the need for a variety of musical genres, and in this sense accepting a wide musical repertoire that can respond to the specific cultural characteristics of students, the question of culturally responsive pedagogy was not considered as an issue among the teacher educators at large. This can be seen as a challenge of providing intercultural music education in the respective institutions.

Curriculum and instruction. The Levinsky College teacher educators who taught Arab students described how they had to try to find ways to approach the course content from the students' point of view. Coming from a different cultural background, one particular teacher educator had to accept not being an expert in Arab musical culture, and that in turn paved the way for her own learning:

Knowing what my students know, and knowing what I know, and trying to compromise and do something which is a synthesis of both. It was quite difficult to do it. I had to be very inventive, to think how to first of all not deny their own culture, their own music, it's a huge tradition ... a huge corpus of knowledge and this is their own. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

As mentioned earlier, the students' religious restrictions may force the teachers to rethink the ways that they approach the teaching material. If, for instance, the student is not comfortable performing a song with a certain type of lyrics, the teacher may try to find ways to overcome

the challenge. One of the interviewed pop/jazz vocal teachers described her ways of dealing with these kinds of situations:

If we're talking about religious music or gospel music, you can have very religious lyrics. It can be heavy music or rap music or whatever style. So most of the things are connected to lyrics. They need to be religious, and then we try to find suitable songs for them, or change the background of the story a little bit. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

This example also shows how students' reluctance to learn beyond their cultural or religious beliefs can create an obstacle for intercultural learning. This can also be seen as a challenge for a teacher who is adopting an intercultural mindset.

Communication and language. Both Finland and Israel have several official languages. At the Sibelius Academy, teacher educators are expected to teach in the language of their students—either Finnish or Swedish or, in the case of exchange students, English. And, as mentioned earlier, there are separate programmes for the two national languages, with some teacher educators dedicated specifically to the Swedish programme. Some Finnish teacher educators reported that they felt comfortable teaching in the first language of the students, even when it was not their own first language, although sometimes they lacked specific terminology:

Well even though, the language, I feel ... very comfortable actually with all the three languages [Finnish, Swedish and English]. But because you need to have specific functional, terminology ... And sometimes you can spend ages trying to figure out what something is called. And it goes both ways. It can be something that I can't find in Finnish or it can be something that I can't find in Swedish. But you always sort it out. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

At the Levinsky College, all of the classes are taught in Hebrew. Because of this, students whose first language is not Hebrew must accommodate themselves to the language and content of the courses. However, in a class where the majority of the students were Arabs, the teacher educator—who had no command of written, or spoken Arabic—felt the need to find solutions to better understand students whose first language was Arabic. The teacher educator hoped to enable the students to express themselves and provide the opportunity to bring in material in the students' first language: “when I get ... final works [in Arabic] ... I ask them to translate the general topic ... I ask them ... to be honest with me. And bring proper materials to the class” (Teacher educator, Levinsky College).

As shown in this example, the Hebrew-speaking Jewish teacher educator was ready to give away her authority in terms of the repertoire choices in class. Letting the students be the experts and trusting them with the choices they make may create a dialogue between the teacher and the students, which leads to establishing connections and equality between them. This aspect is also seen in some other quotes by the teacher educators who taught Arab students. It resonates with the findings of MacPherson's study (2010, p. 277), where the teachers were “enabling languages and cultures” of the students by stepping down from their expert status and, in that way, showing their willingness to learn from their students. As such, it also exemplifies attempts of “learning from each other” (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012) and of creating working knowledge communities (Hakkarainen et al., 2011) at the local, everyday level of the classroom context.

Critical perspectives. In the data, “[i]nformed and reflective understanding of one's own ‘power and privilege’” (MacPherson, 2010, p. 273) was expressed regarding the hegemonic, western way of teaching that was seen to dominate the practice:

[There are different] ways of teaching ... ways of learning ... And, we haven't spoken about that point. I have also something to say about it but yes, there is a danger that I come as a western ... product. And I dictate western ways of teaching and [a] western type of logic. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

Teacher educators also reported situations that awakened political dilemmas, especially related to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. While these descriptions did not necessarily come with critical perspectives as such, the teacher educators described situations where students brought political critique to the classroom, including situations in which the teacher educators did not know how to act or handle the situation appropriately:

One of the [Arab] students ... started to improvise vocally, and I didn't understand the lyrics. [A] student next to me translated it to me and it was political. It said: we should never give up the land, this is our country, this is our land and we should fight for it. And I was a little bit shocked because, on the one hand I didn't want any politics to interfere with my classes; it had to be pure, clean, music for its own sake and here it came up. On the other hand I said, hurray, the class was so open and so ... accepting, that they dared doing it in front [of] me. Out of astonishment I didn't say a word. So now here comes up also, [a] big dilemma, a big problem. Are we enemies, are we fighting ... against each other? If so, do we have to put it under the carpet and not see it, and say it's not there? This is a music lesson and it's all pure, but here it comes up, and what should I say, what should I do? We are not allowed to make a class go to prison. This is an anecdote, but it must be under the surface all the time. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

Even though some teacher educators had awareness of the political dimensions of music, as shown through the example, many teacher educators thought that ideally music as a subject ought to be politically neutral and that music teaching should be free from political connotations. Thus, allowing diversity in teacher education would also mean giving space for dealing with ideological tensions that may arise in the classroom.

Overall, there was little material in the data that implied a critical stance towards issues related to the teacher educators' own power and privilege, and the comments that were there were implicit, showing more of a "potential for critique".

Competences provided by the programmes

The interviewed teacher educators found it difficult to answer the second research question, regarding what kind of intercultural competences their programmes provided. In many cases, they admitted having little knowledge of the contents of other courses or of other teachers' teaching practices: "you know, but this is only one course so I don't ... know about the whole programme" (Teacher educator, Levinsky College). This is partly because there are many teachers who are part-timers:

In the music education department, we have about 10 full-time teachers, and 70 to 90 part-time teachers. So you can imagine the difficulty. And of course you can't expect the part-time teachers to take part [in] our teacher meetings because they are not paid much for such responsibilities ... So, for example, I don't know all of our department's part-time teachers ... And I should be their boss. So that's really one big problem. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

The large number of part-time teachers and the lack of joint meetings also made it more difficult to try to create and maintain any working knowledge community (Hakkarainen et al., 2011), or sense of togetherness or of "learning from each other" (Darling-Hammond &

Lieberman, 2012) among the staff. On the whole, the teacher educators felt that it was challenging to try to perceive the big picture: how the programme was being constructed with respect to different courses and modules. At the Sibelius Academy, the programme was generally seen as musically diverse, but the interviewees' views on intercultural competences other than those concerning musical aspects were scattered. The versatility of courses offered at the Sibelius Academy was seen as forcing students to step outside of their comfort zones, if only musically. This "stepping out" was perceived as mainly linguistic, particularly at the Levinsky College, as students from minority cultures have to conform to the language requirements of the Hebrew-speaking institution; however, there was also a need to conform musically, since most of the students had to acculturate to western art music.

Challenges, future needs and suggestions for development regarding intercultural competences on an institutional level

To answer the third research question, we asked the teacher educators to describe challenges, future needs and suggestions for developing intercultural competences at their institutions. Despite the evidence that many of the teacher educators have had their own, powerful experiences of encountering cultural differences, they seemed to have few strategies for turning those experiences inside-out so that their experiences could inspire valuable teaching content. Still, one teacher educator shared an incident that awakened political issues inherent to the Palestinian conflict, which she turned into a musical pedagogy learning moment while managing to avoid the political issue:

Well, we had Allahu Akbar in my class, which means Allah, God is big² but ... I don't think it's [proper] in my class but we did talk about it, we did some work about it. How do we work together in different cultures under [this politically] interesting time? And how do we work as a class and have every student in our class be able to take part in the class. Because it's not obvious when you know when we have, like, an [ostinato of Allahu Akbar] ... And it's [an ostinato], it works [laughs]. So after that I asked one of my students if she would go through the words that I'd been given. And just let me know if everything is okay, and then she told me "I can do that, but, it puts me in a hard place". (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

Most of this teacher educator's colleagues felt that they lacked a comprehensive knowledge of the different musical cultures that their students represented. The Jewish teacher educators in particular, who taught mixed classes of Jewish and Arab students, stated that they would need more knowledge of Arabic culture, a wider musical repertoire at hand, and specific educational tools in order to feel competent to teach these classes. In general, the teacher educators at the Levinsky College described the different cultural groups' difficulties in understanding each other's worldviews and varying attitudes towards teaching and learning or divergent cultural habits as challenging.

According to the interviewees, their current music teacher education programmes do not sufficiently acknowledge different types of learners, including disabled music learners. According to teacher educators at the Sibelius Academy, the programme did not provide enough knowledge about students with special needs, or practical skills on how to teach them. However, the teacher educators were aware of the challenge:

You should be able to think reflectively, and think and acknowledge that people are different. And also, different learning styles, we are talking about that also in the course and, immigrant students, they are regarded as special students, on certain policy levels. (Teacher educator, Sibelius Academy)

For the teacher educators this represented quite an acute problem, since, in Finland, students with special needs are integrated into general education classes, including music.

Both Israeli and Finnish teacher educators described the course contents of their respective programmes as containing knowledge about different musical traditions and instrument skills in different musical genres. However, on an institutional level, teacher educators at both institutions called for better interaction and communication among staff members and between departmental faculties. This again speaks to an experienced lack of opportunities to learn from each other (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012) and form knowledge communities (Hakkarainen et al., 2011) at the institutional level, as also mentioned above. Maintaining better contact with the in-service teachers would in turn increase music teacher educators' understanding of the reality in the schools, and the intercultural challenges that the music teachers will meet after graduation. According to the interviewees, the curriculum of the programmes should also be affected by the school's needs, and the course palette should be updated according to those needs. Moreover, some of the interviewed teacher educators felt that intercultural issues should be addressed more in general, as part of the teaching in a variety of courses:

I think that the more we incorporate diversity of musics, diverse musical languages, not as decorative, elective courses but in our core courses, the more we can address musical diversity; then, we'll be reaching more students. Whether it's a specific Arab class or any other class, that's our responsibility as music educators, I think, but it's looking directly in the eye, to the challenge of multiculturalism and saying curriculums have to change, in this integrated way. (Teacher educator, Levinsky College)

In addition, many of the teacher educators felt that the programmes should offer courses that focus specifically on intercultural issues and challenges. One of the teacher educators at the Levinsky College also suggested that student teachers should be systematically exposed to diversity in the classroom during field practice periods, in order to get a proper experience of what it is like to teach under those conditions. Currently, in both programmes, the practice schools are chosen according to criteria that do not systematically include cultural diversity of schools. The interviewees also recognized institutional obstacles, such as lack of funding, for organizing particular courses. Some teacher educators also reported not having the necessary knowledge or skills to feel competent enough to include intercultural aspects in their own courses.

Discussion

According to Castro (2010), the general problem in teacher training towards achieving intercultural competences seems to be the lack of complexity associated with understanding cultural diversity. At the institutional level, our two music-education programmes both have strengths and weaknesses in terms of dealing with cultural diversity. In the Finnish context, some significant institutional changes have already taken place, as there is ample room in the curriculum for student teachers to study various music traditions and instruments with numerous specialized teachers over the five-and-a-half-year study programme. This already-existing musical plurality in the programme seems to differ from, for instance, most North-American programmes (Kruse, 2015; Wang & Humphreys, 2009). However, Finland's long-established musical diversity may hinder creative envisioning of future institutional changes, and suggests an understanding of diversity in music teacher education that relates mainly to content knowledge. This understanding leaves the wider issues of equality, justice and solidarity outside the realm of multiculturalism and intercultural competences of future music teachers, and it does not relate to a broader understanding of what culturally responsive teaching or pedagogy might imply (Abril, 2013; Gay, 2010; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Robinson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In the Israeli context, the programme is based on western art music and some

traditional Hebrew material; however, in contrast to the Finnish context, the interviews revolved strongly around intercultural challenges in the broader society: between different cultures among Jews (and within the different Jewish groups), Arabs and other minority groups and immigrants. In Israel, interviewees generally expressed their views in a politically correct manner without revealing their personal opinion. Thus, whereas the larger cultural political tensions were recognized and reflected broadly throughout the Israeli data, amongst the Finnish teacher educators the political aspect regarding diversity in music education remained largely unmentioned.

What the Finnish and Israeli interviewee groups have in common is that they recognize that intercultural challenges need to be better addressed, albeit visions for future approaches were hard to articulate. When reading the findings compared to the research literature, several problems can be identified. First, there seems to be a need to look at intercultural competences from a more holistic perspective. Phipps (2007), and later Papageorgiou (2010), argue that “intercultural communication is the human struggle to make meaning culturally and dialectically out of relationships between people, places and praxis” (Phipps, 2007, p. 19); and that intercultural education should be employed as a holistic approach instead of simply as one dimension of the curriculum (Gundara, 2000), for instance, only by adding musical plurality to the programme (Banks, 2015). MacPherson (2010) argues that intercultural teaching and learning may in fact be related to social and emotional learning rather than knowledge, methodologies or even attitudes. References to this kind of learning were largely lacking in our data; however, some teacher educators expressed their personal, emotional difficulty while having to restrict their own musical and pedagogical views because of religious restrictions, or when faced with a potentially conflictive political situation. Also, according to our data, it seemed that the teacher educators did not always recognize that music and musical practices could bear ideologically conflicting aspects. At least some of the interviewed music teacher educators still cherished the idea of music as an ideologically “pure” entity, thus making it harder to accept extra-musical issues as part of their teaching. In some cases, while interviewees may have shown some emotion and enthusiasm (notably in Tel Aviv), they did not necessarily express these feelings verbally. During the focus group interviews, it may also have been problematic for some teacher educators to express deep emotional difficulties with their colleagues present. At the programme level, only the vision—to have the students conduct their field practice in schools that differ from the preservice teachers’ own background, or schools with culturally diverse student populations—implied the pedagogical purpose of getting students to step out of their comfort zones. Another study on an intercultural project of the Sibelius Academy in Cambodia (Westerlund et al., 2015) supports the argument that in culturally unfamiliar teaching and learning environments, which demand a high degree of flexibility and thus tolerance for chaos and improvisation competence, social and emotional learning deals mostly with learning about oneself as a person and as a teacher. Thus, it seems that musical content integration (Banks, 2015), and the addition of multicultural content to a music teaching curriculum, may not be enough to effect a turn towards a more holistic approach to intercultural competences.

Second, there is a general tendency to place the emphasis of education on the individual teachers, which results in the teacher educators and preservice teachers failing to see the wider structural and institutional barriers, as well as the political nature of education (Castro, 2010; Papageorgiou, 2010). Papageorgiou argues that “[b]y practising intercultural competencies on an individual level, there is no direct challenge to social structures” (2010, p. 651). If each teacher educator is responsible only for their own course content, and issues of diversity, interculturality, equality and social justice are primarily a matter of a separate “multicultural class”,

institutions do not develop the critical views within their staff that could increase mutual exchange and learning. Moreover, intense interaction and engagement with professionals with divergent views may enhance learning about ethical issues, which rarely occurs in established, familiar conditions (Karlsen, Westerlund, & Miettinen, 2016). An explicitly critical, intercultural understanding of the goals of music teacher education programmes could open up discussions on how power is produced at the institutional level. It may also enhance deeper understandings of how music, music education and music institutions are not only socioculturally and politically framed, but also *produce* political choices and social justice, as equally as they produce social injustice.

Third, like many participating teacher educators, several other researchers have also pointed out that approaches to diversity in teacher preparation and practice need to be integrated throughout the entire content of a programme (Gay, 2014; Gollnick, 2008; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010), instead of being presented “as primarily a domain separate from other aspects of teacher education” (Gay, 2014, p. xi). Such cross-curricular initiatives serve several purposes. However, they require a high level of commitment and competence from the teaching faculty, who need to be willing to reach beyond the silos of their own courses (Cohn & Mullennix, 2007). Thus, it seems that communication, reflection and collaboration are much needed to further develop these two programmes towards the idea of a learning institution that incorporates a network of teachers, researchers and administrators—a mobilizing, border-crossing, collaborative and interculturally aware network, willing to share their expertise and knowledge beyond their own institution. This kind of sharing and “learning from each other” (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012) is needed to develop expert cultures with shared repertoires and innovative knowledge communities (Hakkarainen et al., 2011). Indeed, during the interviews, some teacher educators commented that the focus group interview was their first opportunity ever to discuss diversity and interculturality in music teacher education with their colleagues; they also expressed the need for continuing this discussion in the future, and two of them even continued to work as a research pair. Hence, as a consequence of the group interviews, there is the idea or vision of an emerging knowledge community that may address intercultural issues in music teacher education. In this way, the co-constructive element of culture (Abdallah-Preteille, 2006), which lies at the heart of this project, started to unfold over the course of the interviews in the form of collaboration and co-sharing among the interviewees. According to Jacobowitz and Michelli (2008), in-depth discussions and a focused research agenda are essential for developing a programme with a shared vision, and a shared vision is especially needed in “an area as complex as dealing with diversity in these times” (p. 684). Our study aims to initiate this process between and within our teacher education institutions in Israel and Finland, with the hope that intercultural perspectives will penetrate the entire, global curriculum (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010), and that shared institutional visions can be developed through further cross-institutional discussion and research.

Concluding remarks

The findings of our study exemplify how intercultural competences both can be framed by models, such as the one proposed by MacPherson (2010), and can also go beyond such attempts, due to subtle nuances brought out in and connected to specific localities, individuals, and even subject-related matters. To mention only a few, our study shows, for example, how the execution of teachers’ intercultural competences and skills might be hampered if the students are reluctant to engage in learning that goes beyond their cultural or religious beliefs. It also indicates that, within certain subject-specific traditions, the content—in this case music—is seen as ideologically “pure”

and therefore something that should not be up for intercultural negotiations. These subtle nuances to and challenges of providing intercultural music education, as revealed by the study, can be seen as examples of issues that are at the heart of developing culturally responsive teaching and teacher education (Abril, 2013; Gay, 2010; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Indeed, highlighting such challenges and nuances might be one of the most important contributions of this study. Its limitations, on the other hand, are mainly connected to the fact that only two institutions and a selection of their respective music teacher educators participated. If we believe that intercultural competence is not only a general phenomenon, but also localized, individualized and tied to specific subject-related opinions and practices, more knowledge about a wider range of such competences would most likely be acquired if more sites could be included in the investigation. Still, what our findings show quite strongly, and which we believe points towards a pertinent issue in teacher education more broadly, is that there seems to be a profound lack of opportunities for music teacher educators to learn from each other and to form knowledge communities on the institutional level, in our case around issues of diversity and interculturality. This, specifically, is what our project aims to address and remedy through cross-institutional and cross-national collaboration. Hence, our implications for practice are mainly that more institutions should engage in such endeavours. This again calls for research approaches that include such collaborations, as well as take them as a point of departure.

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2. The more commonly accepted translation of “Allahu akbar” is “God is the greatest”. The use of this expression conveys a significant religious belief, which is probably why both the interviewee and the student felt that it was controversial to use it in an educational setting.

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