

The Transformative Politics of Music Education

EDITED BY **TUULIKKI LAES, GERT BIESTA AND HEIDI WESTERLUND**



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The Transformative Politics of Music Education

This book introduces a unique approach to the interconnections between music education and politics. By taking a broader, more diverse, and explicitly ethico-political philosophical and theoretical stance, the book challenges institutional and structural conditions that may be resistant to change and expands the understanding of the professional responsibility of music educators in the 21st century to meet a variety of societal and ecological challenges.

Emerging from a collaboration between international music education scholars and prominent contemporary educational theorist Gert Biesta, this book connects contemporary educational theories with music education to unlock its transformational capacity. In eight chapters, the contributors show how music education can move towards ways of being and doing that are attuned to social justice and to the broader social and ecological responsibility of music professionals. Strengthening the interdisciplinary connections between music education and education, philosophy, sociology, policy, systems thinking, and more, the volume offers a renewed vision of the scope and boundaries of both music teacher education and professional work in music more widely.

Connecting the decades-long work of internationally established music educator scholars and ideas from large-scale research projects with a shared interest in transformative theorisation, this book fills a knowledge gap and reframes the philosophy of music education as a vibrantly multidisciplinary, theory-generating field. Relevant to researchers and students across music teacher education and performance studies, this book speaks to both conservatoires and university contexts across Europe and North America, helping us unlock the transformative capacity of music education.

Tuulikki Laes is University Researcher at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, and an Academy Research Fellow appointed by the Research Council of Finland (2023–2027).

Gert Biesta is Professor of Educational Theory and Pedagogy in the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, UK; Professor of Public Education in the Centre for Public Education and Pedagogy, Maynooth University, Ireland, and Visiting Professor at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

Heidi Westerlund is Professor of Music Education at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, and Adjunct Professor at Monash University, Australia.

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and Heidi Westerlund**

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Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements or credits list</i>	x
Why music education needs transformative politics: introduction	1
GERT BIESTA, TUULIKKI LAES, AND HEIDI WESTERLUND	
1 Reclaiming the education question for music education: groundwork for a transformative politics	11
GERT BIESTA	
2 Expanding mental models in music education: transformational praxis beyond the expert gaze	26
HEIDI WESTERLUND AND ALBI ODENDAAL	
3 Music educators as imaginative “designers”: emerging transformative ecopolitics in higher education	43
HEIDI WESTERLUND, DANIELLE TREACY, KATJA THOMSON, AND ALBI ODENDAAL	
4 The paradox of social innovations within music schools: taking critical responsibility in transformative practice	63
HANNA BACKER JOHNSEN, GEIR JOHANSEN, AND TUULIKKI LAES	
5 Policy entrepreneurship: towards a new music education professionalism in a risk society	81
PATRICK SCHMIDT AND TUULIKKI LAES	

6	The <i>pædeia</i> cycle of music education: recuperating creativity as democratic education	99
	PANAGIOTIS A. KANELLOPOULOS	
7	The transformative politics of music education research: navigating public scholarship through transepistemic synthesis	119
	TUULIKKI LAES AND HEIDI WESTERLUND	
8	A manifesto for transformative politics in music education	134
	GERT BIESTA, TUULIKKI LAES, AND HEIDI WESTERLUND	
	<i>Index</i>	<i>137</i>

Contributors

Gert Biesta is Professor of Educational Theory and Pedagogy in the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, UK; Professor of Public Education in the Centre for Public Education and Pedagogy, Maynooth University Ireland; and Visiting Professor at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. His research focuses on the theory of education and the theory and philosophy of educational research. He has a particular interest in teaching, teacher education, curriculum, arts education, citizenship education, and religious education, and in the complex relationships between education and democracy.

Geir Johansen is Professor Emeritus of Music Education and Music Didactics at the Norwegian Academy of Music. His research interests include all sides of the sociology of music education, theoretical as well as empirical, including curriculum implementation, educational quality, music teacher identity, professions and professionalism, talent education, hidden curricula, and conservatories in society.

Hanna Backer Johnsen is a doctoral researcher at the Doctoral School of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on social justice in music education examined through the *Floora* project in Finland, a social innovation that aims at inclusion of children and young people with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos serves as an associate professor of Music Education at the Department of Music Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Active as a researcher and a music maker, he is particularly interested in politico-philosophical, socio-historical, and field-based explorations of creative music-making.

Tuulikki Laes serves as a university researcher and a casual lecturer at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. She was appointed as the Academy

Research Fellow by the Research Council of Finland (2023–2027). Her research interests include educational democracy, inclusion, policy, and systems thinking within music education. She has led the research projects *The Transformative Politics of Music Education in an Ageing Society* (Research Council of Finland 2019–2022), *Artists for a Sustainable Future* (Wihuri Foundation 2022–2023), and *Performing the Political: Public Pedagogy in Higher Music Education* (Research Council of Finland 2023–2027).

Albi Odendaal is a researcher affiliated with the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki in Finland as a docent, and with the North-West University in South Africa as an extraordinary researcher. His research interests include teacher professionalism and development, intercultural music education, and neuromyths and memory in music education. He has held various positions of leadership in the research niche area Musical Arts in South Africa: Resources and Applications at the NWU and has also served on faculty and senate committees for research. He is currently involved in the research project *Music Education, Professionalism, and Eco-Politics* (2021–2025).

Patrick Schmidt is Professor of Music and Music Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, USA. Schmidt led consulting and evaluative projects for the National YoungArts Foundation and the New World Symphony. He co-edited the *Oxford Handbook of Music Education and Social Justice* (2015), the two-volume *Leadership in Higher Music Education* (2020), and the *Routledge Handbook for the Sociology of Music Education* (2021). His books *Policy and the Political Life of Music Education* and *Policy as Practice: A Guide for Music Educators* were released by Oxford in 2017 and 2020.

Katja Thomson is a lecturer in music education and a researcher in the project *Music Education, Professionalism, and Eco-Politics* (2021–2025) at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Her spatially oriented research focuses on intercultural music practices as part of social engagement in higher music education institutions. She has developed and implemented education programmes promoting creative, participatory music practices in Finland, Great Britain, Brazil, and the Philippines.

Danielle Treacy is a university researcher and lecturer at the Doctoral School and Research Unit of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music and at the Global Music Department at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. She holds a doctoral degree in music education, and her interdisciplinary research focuses on music teacher education and higher arts education. She is a researcher in the projects *Music Education, Professionalism, and Eco-Politics* (2021–2025) and *Transition Pathways Towards Gender Inclusion in the Changing Musical Landscapes of Nepal* (2023–2026).

Heidi Westerlund is Professor of Music Education at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, and an adjunct professor at Monash University, Australia. She has conducted research on music professionalism and collaboration, cultural diversity, democracy, and social responsibility in music education. Since 2015, Westerlund has led four large-scale research projects, including *Music Education, Professionalism, and Eco-Politics* (2021–2025) and *Transition Pathways Towards Gender Inclusion in the Changing Musical Landscapes of Nepal* (2023–2026). Her publications include numerous journal articles and eight internationally published books. She has supervised over 30 doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers.

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Why music education needs transformative politics

Introduction

Gert Biesta, Tuulikki Laes, and Heidi Westerlund

The chapters brought together in this book collectively seek to make the case that music education today needs transformative politics. Transformative politics is used to describe work done “in order to introduce politics and policies that may enhance people’s chances of improving democracy as well as their capacity to make better use of it to foster their aims” (Stokke and Törnquist, 2013, p. 6). Transformative politics requires systemwide change that is not simply adding cultural change to existing practices but rather is about new social organisation and institutional reconfiguration, experimentation, and reconstructed understandings and rationales. Putting forward this claim, including arguing why there is such a need in contemporary music education, is one of the main ambitions of this book.

To argue for an intrinsic relationship between music, education, and politics is not obvious. Some people would say that music is just music, that education is just education, and that there is nothing further to say. They would probably acknowledge that people have different tastes and preferences but would not see this as a political matter. They would simply assert that some people like some kinds of music and other people like other kinds of music, just as some people prefer one kind of school or educational approach and other people have other preferences. If there is anything political to this, it would at most be the claim that in a democratic society everyone should have the freedom to pursue their own preferences.

The premise of this book, however, is that the differences that matter in music, education, and music education – and that *make* a difference – are not about individual tastes or preferences. A key reason for this lies in the fact that views about what counts as music, as good music, as real music, just as views about what counts as education, as good education, and as real education, not only enable but also constrain what people are able to do or are “allowed” to do. While the preferences that people and institutions hold may not “feel” political, when acted upon, they have real consequences for what is possible and what is not possible. They have real consequences for what is included and what is excluded and, more importantly, for who is included and who is excluded. And, in precisely this sense, preferences become political.

2 *The Transformative Politics of Music Education*

If we think, for example, that real music is composed music, performed by highly skilled musicians on a stage, then everything else that is done is always compared to this “standard”. This means that a lot of music-making becomes seen as “lower” in quality and status, or not even as music-making at all, just as it would exclude those who do not live up to such a “standard” from the domain of music. Or if we think that the purpose of schools is to produce high exam scores in language, science, and mathematics, then all other things that happen or may happen in schools, and all other dimensions of education, become seen as less important and perhaps as not even relevant for education at all, and it would also quickly identify those who are not successful in terms of these measures as “failures”. These kinds of mental models have consequences not only for school practices but also for the professional education of musicians and teachers.

The reason why we do not talk about this in terms of values – in terms of what people value about music, education, and music education – is that what is valued by some (e.g. by politicians, institution leaders, teachers) has consequences for what is possible and not possible for others. This reveals that it is a matter of power, beginning with the power of definition, that is, the power to define what music, education, and music education are supposed to be.¹ If the case for the *politics* of music education, that is, for understanding music education politically, is about making such power dynamics visible, the case for a *transformative* politics of music education has to do with the ongoing task to examine and challenge the status quo, first and foremost in light of the question of who is included in and who is excluded from what is going on.

This is not to suggest that inclusion is simply “good” and exclusion is simply “bad” and that the overarching ambition of a transformative politics of music education would be to include everything and everyone.² Transformative politics rather raises the questions of which limits and limitations are important and which limits and limitations are arbitrary. It asks, in other ways, how inclusions and exclusions “work”; what they do for whom; how power is distributed; on what grounds they are being justified; and how “justified” such justifications themselves are. It is along these lines that the transformative politics of music education is intimately connected to the idea and ideal of democracy.³ Yet, rather than seeing democracy as a matter of freedom for everyone, democracy tries to engage with the difficult tension between freedom and equality, that is, trying to ensure again and again that the freedom that democracy seeks to provide is equally available for everyone and not just for a “happy few”.

This means that freedom and equality are under an ongoing paradoxical tension in which the increase of freedom always runs the risk of putting pressure on equality, just as an increase in equality can put pressure on freedom (on this “democratic paradox”; see Mouffe, 2000). It also means that democracy implies the exclusion of those who would only want to use their “own” freedom for reducing the freedom of others. That is why democracy cannot be captured in

moral values such as “respect”, because those who seek to undermine the democratic principles of freedom and equality are precisely *not* deserving of any respect.

The understanding of the transformative politics of music education that informs this book is twofold. Firstly, we highlight that music education is deeply connected with the social world and thus with all the complex societal, political, and ecological problems that concern our global world today. Secondly, we argue that it is necessary to make clear how music education is always political, which requires that we (re)consider the contexts for and conditions of democratic music education. Both of these arguments require that close attention is paid to power relations and the educators’ and researchers’ capacity to pursue, promote, and enact democracy. Democracy, after all

cannot be crafted by just building the supposedly appropriate institutions [because] it is also necessary to consider what relations of power need to be changed, what actors have the potential to achieve this, and how such processes can be supported.

(Stokke and Törnquist, 2013, p. 5)

Democracy thus also needs individual and collective action from music education professionals.

The call for democratising music education through the struggle of transformative politics, however, stands in opposition to the myth of sociopolitical neutrality, which has become a key tenet of music classrooms and teacher education programmes; in these contexts, it is assumed that teachers are free from the responsibility of democratic struggle and instead should keep the focus only on music “rather than on all of the societal issues that will always surround music education” (Reimer, 2009, p. 131). The existence of such a depoliticised view can be partly explained by the influence of the past discourse of artistic autonomy⁴ with its distinction between intra- and extra-musical meanings (see, e.g. Reimer, 1989, 2009) and the increase of technical rationality of professional work and education after the Second World War (see Clark and Phelan, 2017; Cribb and Gewirtz, 2015; in music education, see Westerlund and Gaunt, 2021), and also, more recently, by the neoliberal desire for epistemic certainty, ahistorical predictability, and centralised control.⁵ Consequently, political neutrality has even become a professional virtue within music education (Laes, Treacy and Westerlund, 2024).

In light of this, it is important to make a distinction between *political* music education and *politicised* music education so as not to raise the impression that the transformative politics of music education would be a matter of enforcing a particular political agenda “through” music education. Henry Giroux (1999) helpfully characterises politicised education as the situation in which the political aims of educational practices are hidden behind the expert or scientific discourse

4 *The Transformative Politics of Music Education*

of objectivity, whereas political education always seeks to foreground the ways that educational practices are connected to economic, social, and cultural issues in which power is articulated, expressed, and distributed.

While today's music education acknowledges that global and local *policies* shape the practice of the field, there is not always a full awareness of how policies also politicise the field. On the one hand, policy may turn music education with neoliberal policies towards economically driven futures, and on the other hand, it may drive the field towards institutional transformation as well as professional participation and proactiveness (Schmidt, 2020). Hence, this book considers how policy provides a potential window for transformational politics rather than a set of stagnant rules used for uncritical self-advocacy and for demanding more of the same even when the discourses change. This form of politics aims to reach beyond empty rhetoric and "narration sickness" (Freire, 2005⁶) by not only pointing out problems but also highlighting where different practices of music education are emerging and how they are making a difference – musically, educationally, socially, and politically.

While the news value of music education research may be in innovations, quick fixes, and self-promoting discourses, Biesta (2012) reminds us that teaching and education should also provide resistance, and not just maintain the status quo (see also Meirieu, 2007). Similarly, institutional music education practice and research are often summoned merely to follow policy, but they also need to speak back to policy where needed in order to change policy itself. Biesta (2022) also reminds us how the world, especially today, needs educators and teachers who understand that at the heart of their work lies the ongoing challenge to give the new generation a fair chance at their existence as subjects of their own life and not as objects of the infantile desires of authoritarian politicians or global capitalism (see also Biesta, 2021). The world needs educators and teachers who understand that, in the ecological and democratic crisis in which we find ourselves, we cannot continue as before. Rather than only focusing on what we may want from the world, there is the urgent question of what the natural and social world may be asking of us (see Biesta, 2022).

The chapters in the book acknowledge that the political dimensions of music education and thus the possibilities for a transformative politics of music education manifest themselves differently in different geographical, geopolitical, and social contexts. Hence, they conceptualise the need for change and transformation against the existing power relations in diverse professional landscapes of music education. These landscapes include musicians' performance practices, higher music education, music schools as specialised institutions for instrumental tuition, as well as the changing music education research environments in contemporary societies. The chapters ask: What kind of professionalism has the potential for achieving transformation, and how can such transformative processes be supported from the top-down and bottom-up as thoroughly educational and highlighting the professional responsibility of music educators? We suggest

that asking these questions is not a matter of choice but rather follows from taking the educational responsibility and political complexities of music education seriously.

Notably, this book's political re-justification of music education seeks to respond to the ongoing instrumentalisation of music education, particularly highlighted in the popular yet reductionist "health and wellbeing discourse" and the neoliberal "teaching and learning" discourse that emphasises hyper-individualistic educational outcomes – often couched in the language of measurable learning outcomes and competencies – and has penetrated all institutional levels from school music education to higher music education. Such discourses, as the chapters in the book show, contribute to the degeneration of the fundamental educational task in music education (see Biesta, 2019a) and put music educators in a difficult position while the alleged biomedical effects of "music" and the emphasis on measurement of learning outcomes begin to overpower educational goals, ambitions, and possibilities. These expectations, stemming from the present ethos of competence and efficiency, become particularly visible in music compared to other school subjects because music education either tends to be based on normative standards of musical excellence, traditions, and genres or becomes entirely instrumentalised for other purposes. Hence, the chapters in this book invite music educators and researchers of the field to develop wider ethico-political, transformative professional responsibilities for engaging with the world around them without neglecting "the educational and political" within music education (see Laes, Treacy and Westerlund, 2024).

To make new connections between music education and contemporary educational theory, this book reflects and expands upon the recent work of educational theorist Gert Biesta (2017, 2019b, 2022), one of its editors. His observation is that over the past two decades, the language and "logic" of education have increasingly been replaced by a language and logic of learning. The "learnification" of education (Biesta, 2009, 2011; see also Biesta, 2022, pp. 60–63) has led to an obsession with measurable learning outcomes, which has significantly narrowed ideas about what it means to educate and be educated. "Learnification" has also affected ideas about teaching and the teacher, increasingly positioning teachers as "facilitators of learning" (Biesta, 2017), thus making invisible that education is not only about what students may want to take from it but also about what they may be given – both the welcome gifts and the less convenient ones (Biesta, 2013).

In music education, the impact of the language and logic of learning is visible in the tendency to lean heavily on cognitive and developmental psychology (how to learn effectively), to insist on the authenticity of musical genres and repertoires (what to learn), and to rely increasingly on neuropsychological interest (why to learn). Consequently, all the complexities of education that highlight its fundamental existential, ethical, and political orientation – that education is always concerned with the question of how human beings can exist in and with

6 *The Transformative Politics of Music Education*

the world (Biesta, 2022) – disappear from the radar and are replaced by technical and instrumental questions. The suggestion that education needs to regain and reclaim a world-centred orientation rather than getting stuck in student-, knowledge-, or skills-centred approaches and discourses (Biesta, 2022) is the other key idea from Biesta’s work that has provided inspiration for the contributions in this book.

As music is intertwined with multiple social aspects and dynamics (both positively and negatively), it is therefore adamant for music educators to work with a heightened ethico-political awareness and orientation in order to be able to navigate complex worlds; negotiate between contradictory policies, values, and norms; and become reflexive “response-able” professionals. With this “world-centred” (Biesta, 2022) starting point towards transformation in music education, the eight chapters of this book expand the dominant theoretical focus to new theoretical discourses, persistently emerging from the tensions in an increasingly complex, risky, and uncertain society. In doing so, the chapters seek to highlight both new responsibilities and new possibilities for music educators and music education researchers. Overall, this book calls for music education to reposition itself in relation to sedimented “truths” and practices, become aware of alternative knowledges, mental models, and shifting attitudes, and reconsider what is perpetuated in contemporary music education. It attempts to illustrate and articulate what it takes to advance the transformative politics of music education in radically polarising societies, under conditions of economic austerity, and on a suffering planet.

The book has grown from the collaboration between Gert Biesta during his time as a visiting professor at the University of the Arts Helsinki (Uniarts) and the Uniarts Helsinki’s music education research community and its international network. The authors come from Finland, Greece, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The collaboration started at the crossroads of three major funded research projects at Uniarts Helsinki (ArtsEqual, 2015–2021; *The Transformative Politics of Music Education in an Aging Society*, 2019–2022; *Music Education, Professionalism, and Ecopolitics*, 2021–2025). These research projects have aimed to reveal the long-hidden social consequences of the field’s instituted practices and forced researchers to take up the challenge to engage with difficult issues, discomfort, paradoxes, and ethical problems that cannot be solved by merely improving the technical quality of music practices and teaching. They have accelerated the researchers to become responsible and ecologically and politically aware in recognising not only the celebrated positive outcomes of music education but also the possible negative consequences of practices that we hold dear. The overlapping projects have shown that a new era is beginning in the global field of music education, requiring new theorisation.

In Chapter 1, Biesta sets the stage for asking the educational question in music education. Pushing back against the ongoing “learnification” of education, he highlights the importance of asking how self and world can show up in music and music education. Chapter 2 invites the reader to rethink how research

and theories construct the expert gaze in music education that can both limit and support transformational opportunities for music education. The authors suggest a “horizontal” critical reflexivity and systems thinking to open new possibilities for transformational acts that can lead towards democracy, equal access, and social justice. Chapters 3 and 4 explore theoretically the boundary-crossing professional work that aims at “inclusion” and discuss the ethics involved in that work by suggesting how both basic-level music school institutions and higher music education could develop transformative practices, systems awareness, and imaginative design thinking to engage responsibly in times of rapidly evolving social-ecological challenges. The idea of social innovations and linked social ecological systems with design thinking is suggested for established music education institutions to “craft” new interactions and enhance co-constructed educational and artistic spaces. Chapter 4 addresses the critical responsibility of music teachers and institutions by showcasing how social innovations in music may not only increase accessibility but also bring up new challenges of educational responsibility and social change.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 move the perspective towards the relationship between music education policy and the changing politics of research. Chapter 5 aims to challenge the prevailing understandings of how music education professionals can address policy in their research and practice through the concept and idea of policy entrepreneurship, facilitating change in times of uncertainty and unpredictability. By acknowledging the politicised nature of music education, Chapter 6 evokes the ancient Greek concept of *pædeia* in contemporary democratic music education, in which creativity, improvisation, and composing can be used to resist authoritarian neoliberalism in crypto-colonial societies. Chapter 7 reflects upon the experiences of music education scholars in one large-scale research project on the shifting politics of music education manifested in changing research environments in which impact and collaboration have an unprecedented significant role. The authors suggest transepistemic synthesis as a conceptual frame for bridging the different interests of practitioners, decision-makers, and researchers.

We conclude the book with a modest “manifesto” in which we highlight the main lessons that, collectively, we wish to draw from the contributions in this book. These lessons are not so much meant to be an agenda for action as that they serve as a reminder for what should not slip from the attention of anyone who wishes to take the relationship between music, education, and politics seriously in music education practice and music education research. Throughout the chapters, we seek to make clear that taking music education seriously in this way is not so much an option as something urgently needed in music education today.

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Notes

- 1 Väkevä and Westerlund (2007) have stated that the heated debates between classical musicians and music educators in their higher music education context in 1990s and 2000s were “as much a question of legitimation as a question of resources”, about “the power to decide what (and whose) music is taught in comprehensive schools, and on whose terms” (p. 97).
- 2 The ambiguity of inclusion in music education has been problematised, for example, in relation to exceptionality and performativity (Laes, 2017), and musical value and social censorship (Kallio, 2015).
- 3 Democracy as an ideal in music education has been considered from a Deweyan perspective in which democracy is not a form but “a way of life” that “touches everyone’s lives, individually and communally (Väkevä and Westerlund, 2007, p. 102; see also Westerlund, 2002). According to Väkevä and Westerlund (2007), there is no model for democratic practice, rather, democratic processes involve “conflict-resolution that is situation-specific, seeking for contextual, not universal, solutions” (p. 102). This further requires that “our conception of democracy has to be constantly discovered, and re-discovered, re-made and re-organized” (p. 102). Westerlund, Väkevä and Laes (2019) have further argued that the arts can simultaneously “provide a way of finding aesthetic meaning in public space and of making public space one’s own” (n.p.), in this way enabling political agency in arts education. See also Woodford (2005) on democracy as an ideal in music education.
- 4 For instance, Bull and Sharff (2021) have shown how the depoliticised view (“autonomy from social concerns”) still operates among classical musicians, and is “used to judge other genres of music as less valuable” (p. 676).
- 5 On the critique of neoliberalism in music education, see for example, Woodford (2015), Bates (2021), and Powell (2023).
- 6 Freire (2005) describes how education is suffering from narration sickness: “The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to ‘fill’ the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance” (p. 71).

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1 Reclaiming the education question for music education

Groundwork for a transformative politics

Gert Biesta

Introduction

One could argue that it is rather odd to devote a chapter to the education question in music education. And one could even argue that it is rather presumptuous to assume that this question needs to be reclaimed. After all, what else have music educators been doing for centuries other than engaging in education? And what else are music educators around the world doing day in and day out other than engaging in education and, through this, engaging with the education question? If it were indeed as simple as that, then this chapter would be superfluous. The premise upon which this chapter is based, however, is that the education question in music education has in recent decades been displaced, most explicitly not only by turning the education question into the question of learning (on this, see also Pio, 2017) but also by turning the focus of music education to what engaging in music is supposed to be *for* rather than taking music seriously in its own right.

This “double displacement” (see Biesta, 2017), as I will argue later, is not the result of developments in educational research or advances in musicology, but is at its heart a *political* intervention (see Biesta, 2013, 2018; and on the wider politics of music education, see Laes, 2017; Laes and Schmidt, 2016; Laes *et al.*, 2021). This means that any transformative politics of music education needs to start from reclaiming the education question in music education, both for the sake of education and for the sake of music, which also means that this is a reclaiming of the education question *for* music education. In this chapter, I seek to lay some of the groundwork for such a reclaiming. I do so as an educator and educationalist, which means that I come to music and music education from the “outside” rather than as one who is entirely “at home” in these fields, although my own experiences as a musician and as a student of music are definitely in the background of what I seek to put forward in this chapter.

The learnification of education

My starting point for this chapter lies in a phenomenon that, in previous work, I have referred to as the “learnification” of education (see, e.g. Biesta, 2010). Simply put, “learnification” refers to those developments that depict all educational matters in terms of learning. It partly refers to shifts in the *discourse* of education and partly to transformations of educational *practice*. At a discursive level, “learnification” is manifest in the rise of a “new language of learning” (for this phrase, see Biesta, 2006a), in which pupils, students, and adults are increasingly being referred to as “learners”, where teaching has been redefined as the “facilitation of learning”, where schools have been redesignated as “places for learning”, “learning communities,” or “learning environments”, and where the complex and highly political field of adult education has been transformed into that of “lifelong learning”.

“Learnification” is, however, not merely a change in how we talk about education; it also refers to transformations at the level of educational practice itself. The assumption that education is “all about learning” has led, for example, to the rise of what Jochen Krautz (2019) has aptly referred to as a “cybernetic” conception of teaching – the logic of the thermostat – which has reduced the work of the teacher to the formulation of “learning outcomes” and the implementation of effective interventions towards the production of such outcomes. “Learnification” is therefore also manifest in the rise of the global education measurement industry (Biesta, 2015a; D’Agnese, 2017) and the call for teaching to become “evidence-based” (Biesta, 2010). And “learnification” is visible in altered self-interpretations of teachers, who have become reluctant to teach but rather want their students to become “self-directed” learners (see, e.g. Guglielmino, 2013; and for a critique, Servant-Miklos and Noordegraaf-Eelens, 2021), an identity that is also adopted (with more or less enthusiasm) by students, who are being told that they should take “ownership” of their learning.

The learnification of educational discourse and practice is the result of several different dynamics and developments. The turn away from teachers and their teaching towards learners and their learning is partly a response to authoritarian forms of education in which teaching is enacted as a form of control in which the only possible “position” for students is to comply with such control and subject themselves to it. Such enactments, known in Paulo Freire’s work as “banking education” (Freire, 1993), are profoundly uneducational, and it is understandable that one way to “escape” from this is to shift the focus from teachers and their teaching towards “learners” and their “learning”.

The focus on learners and their learning is also the result of the influence of constructivist theories, which highlight that knowledge and skills are not simply given but are actively constructed by students, an insight that has particularly discredited so-called transmissive views of teaching. “Learnification” also has to do with the rise of neo-liberal forms of governing in which the state offloads

collective responsibilities onto individuals, something that is particularly visible around the politics of lifelong learning (Biesta, 2006b, 2018). And “learnification” may also have something to do with certain notions of freedom, particularly the idea of freedom as the absence of any constraints or limitations. After all, on such an understanding of freedom, teaching can only appear as a limitation of freedom, whereas learning comes into view as the ultimate exercise of one’s freedom, particularly as the “freedom to learn” (Rogers, 1969).

Problems with “learning”

While some, or perhaps even many, see the turn towards learning as a positive move, particularly because they see the shift towards learners and their learning as an emancipatory response to top-down constructions of teaching-as-control, I tend to think and have expressed this in a number of publications (see, e.g. Biesta, 2013, 2015b), that the learnification of education is less liberating than is often assumed.

One consequence of the rise of the language of learning in education is that it has directed attention away from the more important and more difficult questions concerning the point and purpose of education. To say that education is “all about learning”, to argue that the work of teachers is to support or promote students’ learning, and to conceive education entirely in terms of the effective production of learning outcomes tends to forget asking what the learning is supposed to be *about* and what it is supposed to be *for* – the questions of content and purpose. It also tends to forget that education, unlike learning, is always about particular relationships between teachers and students. This is not to suggest, of course, that in the “age of learning”, nothing is happening at all. It is rather the case that the learnification of education allows for very particular answers to these questions to become hegemonic, without much scope for raising any critical questions about what is going on. In this regard, “learning” becomes an ideology, as it both expresses such a hegemonic view and hides the construction of it.

When education turns into learning, when learning turns into learning outcomes, and when learning outcomes turn into measurable learning outcomes, the result has often been a significant narrowing of what matters in education, focusing on measurable performance in a small number of curricular subjects – often referred to as “the basics” – rather than ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum. The impact of global measurement systems such as PISA and the panic they manage to create (see, e.g. Crome, 2022) is an important part of how questions of the point and purpose of education have been marginalised in favour of a technocratic approach that is mainly interested in increasing the effectiveness of the educational operation, rather than asking whether any of this may or may not be meaningful for the lives of children and young people. The hegemony of the qualification function of education that is the outcome of these developments thus has marginalised the possibility for education to act on the side of

emancipation, that is, not just providing students with the “useful knowledge” they need to comply, but with the “really useful knowledge” (Johnson, 1988) that would allow them to question whose interests are being served by the useful knowledge that is on offer.

This begins to show that the language of learners and their learning is not a neutral language but one that comes with particular agendas serving particular interests, such as the alleged interest of governments to position their country in the top of league tables that apparently “matter”, which, of course, is a bizarre reversal of what ought to have priority in education (on the impact of these dynamics of teaching and teacher education, see Biesta, 2023). This begins to reveal that the learnification of education is a highly political phenomenon – one could also argue a highly political *intervention* – not only because of the ways that the language of learning is redefining what the point and purpose of education are but also because of the impact it has on the redistribution of responsibilities.

Perhaps the most visible instance of this has occurred in the transformation – others might say rebranding – of the field of adult education into that of “lifelong learning”. Whereas the idea of adult education positions education as a *right* that is not just there for children and young people but also for adults throughout their life and often connected to an interest in democracy and critical citizenship, the turn towards lifelong learning turns this right into a *duty* imposed upon individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, particularly in order to remain employable in fast-shifting labour markets. From learning as a “treasure within” (Delors *et al.*, 1996), it thus turns learning into a “pressure within”, that is, a pressure that individuals are supposed to exert upon themselves in order to keep up with economic developments rather than having a say about the direction in which such developments are supposed to go.

In addition to concerns about the language of learning and the politics of learning – a manoeuvre in which political problems are turned into learning tasks for individuals to resolve – the learnification of education also has to do with what I suggest referring to as the “ontology” of learning, that is, the question of how learning positions learners – or, as I would prefer, human beings – in (relation to) the world. The “logic” of learning is one that puts the learner in the centre – as the one who wants or is supposed to learn – and positions the world outside the learner as an object for such learning. One could say that the “task” of the learner is to learn about the world, to come to knowledge and understanding of the world, and to become skilful in acting “on” the world, so to speak. The “gesture” of learning thus goes from the learner to the world and, from there, back to the learner, who ends up with more knowledge, more understanding, more skills, and so on. The world, here, is not just the natural or physical world but also the world of culture and history, the social and societal world.

While this gesture is real – as human beings we can indeed engage with the world around us as something we want to gain knowledge of and understanding about – the point I wish to make is that learning is only *one* way in which human

beings can engage with the world around them (and actually also with themselves), and it is neither the only nor the most important way in which human beings can be “in” and “with” the world. Learning is, in other words, only one “existential possibility” (for this term, see Biesta, 2015b), and neither automatically the most important nor the most “natural” one. To equate education with learning, to equate the educational question with the learning question is, for this reason, a significant narrowing of the existential possibilities that are on offer in education. We could also say that it amounts to a significant limitation of the ways that human beings can relate to and exist in and with the natural and social world. One particular “gesture” that runs the risk of obliteration if learning becomes hegemonic is the gesture that goes from the world to me, so to speak; the gesture that is not about how I can try to make sense and gain knowledge of the world, but where the world is actually “after” me, is asking something of me or, in more familiar educational language, where the world is trying to teach me.

I wish to suggest that it is in this latter “gesture” that we actually find the educational question, and I also wish to suggest that it is in this latter “gesture” that we find an educational question that is highly relevant for music education. Before I provide support for this suggestion, I want to take a brief look at what, in the introduction to this chapter, I have referred to as a “double displacement”. I will discuss this in terms of the displacement of both art and education from more general discussions about the arts and education because I think that this “double displacement” is not just a problem for music education (although, as I will try to make clear, it is a problem for music education as well, and it may well pose very particular problems for music education).

The displacement of art and education

While it could be argued that the arts are definitely not absent from education – there is actually quite a lot of educational attention for the arts – the key question is *how* the arts are present in education and what kind of attention they are enjoying. One dominant theme in contemporary discussions and practices is that the arts are important because of their alleged *usefulness*. We hear, and research apparently confirms this, that playing music is useful, for example, because it increases students’ cognitive performance – and the evidence provided for such claims often goes “via” the brain (for a critical discussion, see, e.g. Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2019). We hear that drama is useful because it increases empathy and pro-social behaviour and enhances moral thinking and action. We hear that the fine arts are useful because they stimulate creativity and imagination. And so on.

While it may seem as if there is a genuine interest in the arts in education, it is a problem that in these arguments the arts themselves are not the focus of interest. The focus is rather on what the arts are able to bring about or, more precisely, what the arts are able to *produce*. The problem with such instrumental

justifications for the arts is that as soon as other ways – which in most cases mean more effective, efficient, and cheaper ways – of increasing cognitive performance, creativity, empathy, imagination, pro-social behaviour, and so on – can be found, the arts may be on their way out again (if, in these ways of thinking, they ever were “in” in the first place, of course). Instrumental justifications for the arts in education also clearly reveal curricular and societal hierarchies, because while much seems to be invested in showing that music makes children better at mathematics, research that tries to find out whether doing mathematics will make you a better musician, or doing physics will make you a better dancer, is remarkably absent.

One might be drawn to conclude that the best way to resist such instrumental justifications for the arts in education is by putting forward the non-instrumental justification for the arts, that is, the idea of art for art’s sake. Pushing this argument a little, one may find oneself arguing, in response to instrumental justifications for the art, that art is fundamentally *useless*. But doing so in a sense accepts that the only way we can talk about education and the curriculum is in terms of what education is supposed to *produce* – what its (learning) outcomes are supposed to be – and which curricular areas can contribute to such productive expectations.

Yet here, I wish to suggest, we encounter what philosophers tend to refer to as a category mistake, that is, that we are applying a category of thinking to education that actually misses the point of education and thus misrepresents what education is and ought to be about. After all, someone who has received education is not a “thing” that is produced and definitely not a sack full of learning outcomes; rather, it is someone who has gained a different outlook and who, as the educational philosopher Richard Peters has put it, “travel(s) with a different point of view” as a result (see Peters, 1963). Therefore, rather than asking what education *produces* and what the arts have to contribute to such productive efforts, the question is what education *means* for those who engage in it and what the arts can contribute to such meaning. And rather than asking what education *makes* and what the arts have to contribute to such making, the better question to ask is what education *makes possible* and what specific possibilities are opened up by the arts in education. (I return to these questions later.)

It is here, however, that a second problem comes into view, because in addition to instrumental justifications for the arts in education – which amount to a displacement of the arts from education – the ongoing pressure to focus education narrowly on the production of a small set of measurable learning outcomes has led to another reason why the arts should have a place in education. This, so it is argued, is because of the unique opportunities the arts offer for children and young people to express their own voice, construct their own meanings, be creative, develop their talents, and reveal their unique identity. Such an “expressivist” response to one-sided, top-down curriculum-centred education makes sense, and there is no doubt that the arts can make a significant contribution here.

But there is one question that appears to be often overlooked in such expressivist arguments for the arts in education. This is the question: “What if?” What if the voice that is expressed is racist? What if the creativity that emerges is destructive? What if the identity that is revealed is entirely egocentric?

The educational question

It is precisely here, so I wish to argue, that we find the educational question, because the point of education is neither to suppress what children and young people seek to express nor to simply accept anything that they wish to express. Rather, it is to bring what they seek to express in dialogue with the world around them in order to raise the question whether their initiatives – to use a more general term – are going to help or hinder in living their life “in” and “with” the world and in living their life *well*. We might put this as a question: What are the “right” voice, the “right” creativity, and the “right” identity? In a sense, this is exactly the question that needs to be asked. But we have to bear in mind that the first task of education is to *raise* this question, to bring it “into play”, so to speak. The first task of education is *not* to provide the new generation with an answer to these questions – that would immediately turn education back on an authoritarian path (which is, of course, what education past and present has done and often continues to do). The first task of education, to put it differently, is to focus the attention of children and young people on this question and provide them with the time and resources to “work through” this question so that it can become their *own* question and their *own* concern and that, out of this, they can come to their *own* judgement.

A helpful way to grasp why and how this is an educational question – and I actually wish to suggest that this is *the* educational question – can be found in the work of the German educational scholar Dietrich Benner. In his book *Allgemeine Pädagogik* (Benner, 2015), Benner asks whether education matters, that is, whether the educational work of teachers and parents makes a difference. He raises this question in the context of what is known as the “nature-nurture” debate. We cannot deny, so Benner argues, that as human beings we are natural beings, so “nature” is definitely a component of how we become who we are. We also cannot deny that we are influenced by the environments in which we live, so “nurture” is also a component of how we become who we are. And this then raises the question of education, that is, of how much education contributes or makes a difference in relation to the contributions from nature and nurture.

It is an interesting thought experiment to put percentages on all three. In the literature on this, there are times when there is a strong emphasis on “nurture”, that is, on the influence of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which children and young people grow up. Nowadays, we find quite vocal arguments for the importance of “nature”, for example, through arguments that a significant degree of how we become is actually genetically pre-programmed. Also, there

are educational optimists, who tend to think that education makes a significant difference, and educational pessimists, who tend to think that the contribution education makes is minimal or marginal. Benner's own answer to his question is, however, quite remarkable, because he argues that we can disagree about the percentages, but that nature and nurture together always amount to 100% (see Benner, 2015, p. 73).

At first sight, it may indeed seem remarkable that an eminent professor of education seems to see no role for and no contribution from education at all. After all, if nature and nurture together always account for 100% of who we are as individuals, there seems to be nothing left for education. The point Benner makes, however, is that as educators we are not interested in the question of how individuals become who they are as a result of the combination of natural and environmental factors – an interplay that will always work out slightly differently for each individual. As educators, so Benner argues, we are interested in a *different* question, which, in everyday language, we can formulate as the question of what an individual will *do* with how and who they have become. As educators, in other words, we are interested in how an “I” can step forward (or from the perspective of the educator: how an “I” can be called forward) from a particular “mix” of nature and nurture. The educational question, therefore, is an *existential* question. It is not about how individuals develop as a result of their interaction with particular socio-cultural environments. It is not about what individuals may or may not learn as a result of such interaction. The educational question is about how human beings, as individuals, *exist*, that is, how they try to lead their own lives, make choices, suffer consequences, say “yes” to some opportunities and “no” to others, get out of bed in the morning or have a lie in, engage with ageing and illness, with love and hate, with joy and guilt, and so on.

The educational question is therefore not about *who we are* and how we become who we are. This is the question of *identity*, and while this question is important, identity can never be the last word. If the educational question is about how we exist, how we try to lead our lives and live our lives, then we could say that the educational question is about *how we are*, which includes the question of what we will do with our identity, so to speak. The educational question is therefore about how we try to exist as *subjects* of our own lives and not as objects of forces “external” to us. And this in turn means that the educational “work” is that of trying to focus the attention of the new generation on their possibility to exist as subjects of their own life, particularly in those situations where other forces try to undermine this possibility and draw their attention in different directions.¹ Benner has a very appropriate phrase for describing what the work of educators entails. In German, he refers to this as “Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit” (see Benner, 2015). While this can be translated as a “summoning to self-action”, we have to bear in mind that this is neither the call to be *yourself* (which is the matter of identity) nor the call to be(come) *active*. It rather is the call to be *a self*, to exist as self, which is also the call not to forget yourself.

Staying in the middle ground

When we ask *where* we exist, *where* our lives occur and take place, the obvious answer can only be that our existence takes place in the world – the natural world and the social world. It is important to see, however, that the world is not simply a backdrop for our existence, not simply a context within which we exist. The relationship between self, existence, and world is rather more intricate and, in a sense, more difficult than that.

When we look at this from the angle of our initiatives, that is, from what we wish to bring into the world, including the desire to bring ourselves into the world, we do know that the world, natural and social, often is able to accommodate our initiatives, which literally means that the world is able to give our initiatives a home. But there will come a point, sooner or later, where this is not the case, that is, where the world, natural or social, resists our initiatives and the things we want to express and the actions we want to initiate. Experiencing resistance is crucially important for our existence because it reveals that the world is not a construction or phantasy but is real and exists independently from us, with its own integrity – and this holds for both the physical world and the social world. Other people are indeed other people, not marionettes, and the physical world is not simply “willing material” for our actions and initiatives.

The encounter with resistance is a frustrating experience because it interrupts and potentially blocks our intended course of action. One way to handle this frustration is to push harder, to put more energy and effort behind our initiatives. Sometimes this is indeed what is needed in order for our initiatives and for us to “arrive” in the world and exist “in” and “with” the world. But there is always the danger that if we push too hard, if we persist too long, with too much energy and effort, that we destroy the very “place” where we seek our initiatives to arrive – and again, this holds for both the physical world and the social world. There is always the risk, in other words, of *world-destruction*.

But the opposite is conceivable as well. In response to the frustration of meeting resistance, we withdraw from the situation, step back, and give up. Again, sometimes this is really important, not only in order to acknowledge the resistance we encounter but also in order for other initiatives – which are both the initiatives of others and others-as-initiative – to enter the scene. But if we go too far, if we withdraw too much, if we step back completely, there is the danger that we destroy our very existence in the world. There is the risk, in other words, of *self-destruction*.

Looking at it in this way, we can see that to exist, to exist in and with the world, is not a matter of simply stepping into a context but rather has to do with the challenge of trying to stay in the “middle ground” between the risk of world-destruction and the risk of self-destruction. Existing in the middle ground, or trying to exist in this middle ground, can be understood as dialogue, as long as we do not think of dialogue as conversation but as an existential “form”, a way of

trying to stay with what and who is other than you are. Dialogue, unlike a competition, has no winners and also has no end. It is an ongoing and truly lifelong challenge, and thus a truly existential challenge.

The middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction – which in some of my publications I have referred to as a “difficult” middle ground (see, e.g. Biesta, 2021) – is not just a “worldly” place but is at the very same time a thoroughly educational place, first and foremost because this place teaches us something, namely, that we are not alone, that we do not exist in our thoughts and fantasies, but in and with a world that is *real*. The fact that the world is real, and not simply how we would like it to be – which is not to suggest that change is not possible and never desirable – reveals that the world, natural and social, puts limits on what we would like it to be and how we can exist in and with it. The world is neither a playground nor a shop, but has its own integrity, meaning that if we go “beyond” this integrity – which, to make the point once more, doesn’t mean to simply accept everything as it is, but always to be aware that not everything we want with and from the world is possible – we will destroy the very place, the only place, in which our existence can take place. The ecological crisis shows us what happens if we do not respect the integrity of the physical world; the democratic crisis shows us what happens if we do not respect the integrity of the social world and are only interested in our own agendas and desires.

It is here, then, that the importance of the other “gesture” comes into view. This is not the gesture of learning, the gesture that goes from me to the world. Rather, it is the gesture that goes from the world to me that, in light of what I have put forward in this chapter, can perhaps best be characterised as the gesture of *teaching* or, even more precisely, as the gesture of *being taught*. The question we encounter here is what the world – the physical world, the social world – *is asking of me*, irrespective of what I would like the world to be. This question, so I wish to suggest, is the truly educational question because it is a question that is “after” *me*, so to speak. It is a question that calls for me, that calls for my existence, and, in this way, calls *me* into existence.

Music education otherwise

When we begin to look at education along these lines and, more specifically, when we begin to look at music education along these lines, it will be obvious that our first concern will not be about learning and definitely not about formulating the learning outcomes that students should achieve. If we take the educational question seriously in our educational endeavours, then we could say that the first concern in education is to provide our students with existential possibilities, that is, ways of being “in” and “with” the world. Learning, as mentioned, is one of those possibilities, but it is not just a very specific one but, in a sense, also a rather superficial one – one that only marginally touches upon the challenges of what it asks to try to exist in and with the world. The question

for the arts in education is what unique existential possibilities the arts offer to our students – what unique possibilities for encountering the world, what unique possibilities for encountering themselves in relation to the world, and what unique possibilities for “working through” such encounters.

For music and music education, this raises the important question about the unique opportunities that music provides in relation to this (for an interesting exploration of these questions, see Varkøy and Rinholm, 2020). What does it mean to “dwell” in and with music? How does the world show itself in music? How does the self show up in its encounter with music? As one of the “temporal arts”, that is, arts that need their own time, music is a being-in-and-with the world that requires time and, more importantly, requires its *own* time. There is no point in playing a piece of music twice as fast in order to get it done more quickly, because doing so will at some point destroy the integrity of the music itself. Music thus invites us – or, to use a stronger word, commands us – to stay with its own time.

Something similar can be said about the existential possibility of sound, that is, existing in and with the world as it sounds. What is particularly significant here is that in the domain of hearing, unlike the domain of seeing, there is no permanence. As soon as we open our eyes, there is a permanent world on view, so to speak. But with sound, we are completely dependent on whether or not there “is” sound. We can open our ears, as the saying goes, but hearing is a “passion” not an “action”. It does put us very differently in the world than through our eyes, through our seeing, and thus puts and pulls the self very differently in the world than as a seeing self (or, for that matter, as a learning self).

Looking at music and the arts more generally along these lines also speaks to the role and position of the teacher in an existential “account” of education. The basic insight here is that education is fundamentally a *triadic* relationship between teacher, student, and what, with a rather broad gesture, we could call “the world”, or what, in more concrete and modest terms, we can refer to as the curriculum, the subject matter, or that which we put “on the table” for our students. (And music is indeed one of the “things” we can put “on the table”.) Educational relationships are never dyadic relationships between teacher and student because education is always about *something*, and it is this “something” that matters.

At a basic level, the work of the teacher is therefore not only nothing more – but also nothing less – than trying to focus the attention of the student on this “something” (e.g. music). The basic “gesture” of teaching, as the German education-alist Klaus Prange has argued in much detail (see, for a discussion of Prange’s work, Biesta, 2022), is therefore that of *pointing* (in German: *Zeigen*; see Prange, 2012). Pointing is a “double” gesture because it does not just communicate to the student a “look there”, but at the very same time it also communicates a “*you*, look there”. It calls the student to attend to the world, and in this regard, it is indeed an “*Aufförderung*”. It is not an “*Aufförderung*” to look at the teacher, but

rather an “Aufforderung” to look elsewhere, to look at, engage with, step into the world, to step into music and meet the world through music, and encounter oneself in this encounter. Encountering oneself in the encounter with music means that one tries to ask what one is encountering is asking of me. It is not just about what existential possibilities it is bringing into view, but it is also about what the “call” of these possibilities is. While the possibilities one may encounter in music are manifold, they are not infinite – not anything is possible – and coming to terms with this is an important educational “moment”, so to speak.

I am emphasising these points also because they speak to the question of authority in education. Authority is often seen as a problem in education (see, for a discussion of the problem of authority in music education, Schmidt, 2016). One could say that authority appears as a problem in education as long as we think of education in a dyadic way, that is, just in terms of teachers and students. In such a set-up, the teacher is the one who occupies the place of authority, in which case the teacher’s authority can only appear as power and, more specifically, as a power that limits the freedom of the student (see also Kanellopoulos, 2016). When we understand, however, that educational relationships are always triadic, all this begins to change. In a triadic situation, the gesture of the teacher is not one of “obey me”, “listen to me”, and so on. The gesture of the teacher is an invitation to the student to attend to the world, to attend to the music.

Where the whole logic of learning and learning outcomes tries to control what students should do and should achieve when they attend to what they are invited to focus their attention on, a truly educational gesture leaves the students free to come to their own attention, so to speak, which also means that in attending to the world they meet their own freedom (which is not necessarily or automatically an easy meeting, of course). In such a triadic set-up, there is still authority, but it is not the authority of the teacher, but the authority of the thing – the world, the subject matter, the music – because what the students encounter there is not an object for their learning but a reality that is asking something of them. The authority of the world has to do with coming into dialogue, staying in the middle ground, just as the authority of music is about coming into the middle ground of existing in and with music, rather than to overpower the music or be overpowered by it.

There is, of course, much more to say about this, but I hope that these observations give a first indication of what it might mean to reclaim the educational question for music education, that is, to engage with music education in an educational way rather than (only) through the logic of learning.

Conclusions: Groundwork for a transformative politics

In this chapter, I have tried to make a case for the importance of the education question, in both education and music education. I have tried to bring into view what the education question is about, which I have done against the background

of the ongoing learnification of educational discourse and practice, and also in light of the marginalisation of the education question in arts education. In the title of this chapter, I have characterised what I have been trying to do here as “groundwork” for transformative politics. It is groundwork, because the lines of thought I have presented in this chapter are just a first step that calls for further work.

The reason why this is groundwork for a transformative politics is that the marginalisation of the education question is not a neutral matter but a highly political “move”, closely connected to what, in the chapter, I have referred to as the politics of learning that continuously tries to turn political issues into learning tasks for individuals to resolve. To reclaim the education question for music education is therefore not just a matter of intellectual work, although such work is crucial as well (see Westerlund and Väkevä, 2011), but also calls for political work (see Westerlund *et al.*, 2021), and thus for a transformative politics that will be able to restore the education question to its proper place. In this chapter, I have tried to indicate why this is important for music education, what is at stake, what it requires, and what obstacles we may find on our way.

Note

1 In my book *World-Centred Education* (Biesta, 2022) I argue how capitalist economies, because they have an ongoing interest in their own growth, are constantly trying to tell us that we should desire *more* so that we will buy more, and thus are constantly trying to seduce us to simply pursue our desires rather than raising the question whether what emerges in us as a desire is what we should be desiring. Such an ‘impulse society’ (Roberts, 2014) thus constantly threatens the possibility for human beings to exist as subjects of their own life.

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2 Expanding mental models in music education

Transformational praxis beyond the expert gaze

Heidi Westerlund and Albi Odendaal

Introduction

Despite continued criticism, the European conservatory tradition continues to define music education in most places in the world. In the past, this tradition of musical expertise was best demonstrated when, for example, “royalty and nobility invited outstanding musicians to perform in their salons” (Lehmann, Gruber and Kopiez, 2018, p. 535), or when “the general public crowds the concert halls when certain celebrities perform (while other concerts are scarcely attended)” (p. 535). Over time, concert hall practice with its expectations of musicians and audiences has shaped the dominant *mental model* (Denzau and North, 1994; Meadows, 2009; Senge, 2006) of the music education field, in this way hiding from view the possibilities for alternative ways of practice. In this chapter, we argue that the historic concert hall practice creates a hierarchical *expert gaze* that not only holds explanatory power for how Western music and music education have been working in society over the past centuries but also effectively limits the transformative potential of professional practice in contemporary societies that aims towards democracy, wider participation, and justice.

In music education, the expert gaze produces and sustains a vertical and hierarchical “linear model” of musical training (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017) that justifies the *raison d’être* of the entire field and explains why we do what we do – and why we do *not* do other things. It is an embodiment of “the career-oriented study path” (p. 137) towards musical excellence, which can be clearly seen at the highest levels of professional training. However, the same model can influence approaches and values in elementary levels of music education by providing an understanding of what music education is for, in other words, how individuals are expected to advance from novice to expert during their studies. The linear model frames the professional landscape through positioning the production of new professional musicians with the highest possible technical skills as the ultimate purpose of the system. While some music educators globally advocate the values of music education for *all* individuals and groups independent of their backgrounds, we can ask whether a

transformation of the magnitude suggested by such advocacy is possible at all if the vertical and hierarchical linear mental model dominates, and if alternative, emerging ideas (e.g. interpersonal, intercultural, interartistic, and new social engagements) remain marginal in instituted contexts.

In this chapter, we demonstrate how the narrow expert gaze can generate the core rationale for the music education system, shape research, and in turn is shaped by this research. By using Foucault's metaphor of Panopticon (1995) to analyse two research trends, we aim to demonstrate how scientific research can systematically (and to its detriment) strengthen the expert gaze within music education. We illustrate how the expert musician on the concert stage is set at the centre, or even "on a pedestal" in the linear model of music education, hence functioning as a paradigmatic example for what matters most and is most valuable institutionally and knowledge-wise (Small, 1998). As a remedy for the exclusionary expert gaze, we will engage with the idea of "expanding professionalism" (Westerlund and Gaunt, 2021) and "hiking the horizontal" (Lerman, 2011) as attempts to overcome the value hierarchies that limit present professional practice. We further posit that research and theories are "important 'thinking tools' for the profession – 'a modus operandi' which guide and structure practices" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 161). As such, research trends and paradigms not only constitute certain kinds of specialisation and expertise by forcing a further process of narrowing but also sustain structures that prevent alternative perspectives from becoming a focus of interest (Popkewitz, 1997; Westerlund, 2019). The chapter thus also contributes to the re-theorisation of praxis in music education as a *critical* practice that is transformative in the sense that it "involves taking a moral stand in educational work, and working towards positive change" (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 17). We further suggest that higher music educators have a responsibility to become aware, evaluate, and reconsider how dominant mental models shape contemporary practices and, in the name of "tradition", can reinforce unnecessary hierarchies that belong to the past. Systems reflexivity (Westerlund *et al.*, 2021) is offered as one possible way to enhance such transformative professional practice that can draw from history and, at the same time, act critically towards a better future.

A systems view of expanding professional praxis

Instituted music education is a complex social system (Meadows, 2009) that contributes not only to culture but also has various kinds of social (both positive and negative) consequences (Luhmann, 2012). Social systems are understood as autopoietic in the sense that they self-reproduce while creating boundaries when identifying themselves in relation to the environment and other systems (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Luhmann and Knodt, 1996). While boundedness is a defining feature of any system (Ulrich and Reynolds, 2020), selective understandings

of boundedness also limit the possibilities of transformation. Practising *boundary critique* by laying bare the fundamental assumptions or mental models can pave the way for critical transformation (Ulrich and Reynolds, 2020).

Within the autopoietic processes that sustain the music education system, research and theories can provide interventions as “a way of orienting ourselves when problematising the social conditions in which contemporary social life is constructed” (Westerlund, 2019, p. 504). Research and theories do not simply “push thought and ideas” in new directions, but can “create ‘actors’ in the everyday world” (Popkewitz, 2014, p. 13). Theorisation thus involves a promise for the acknowledgement of the discredited and neglected ideas, practices, repertoires, and actors in the continuities that have structured the past and, to follow the French philosopher Michel Foucault, create ruptures that make “transition from one episteme to another possible” (Tovar-Restrepo, 2014, p. 100). Research and theory can break the traditional, inward-looking boundaries of a professional system that in music education tends to focus on repertoire-based techniques and skills without challenging the unintended or negative consequences of the practice (Gaunt and Westerlund, 2021; Westerlund, 2019). This historically limited, inward-looking kind of understanding of professional practice has become problematic not just in music but also in all professional fields (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2015; Solbrekke and Sugrue, 2011).

An expanding professional horizon that involves transformative actions and boundary crossing has in education and studies in professionalism been conceptualised through the concept of *praxis* (e.g. Kemmis, 2010; Sugrue and Solbrekke, 2011; Westerlund and Partti, 2018; Mahon *et al.*, 2020). Praxis is then considered “potentially useful for *interrogating* and *rethinking* education and educational work and signals *alternative possibilities* for education” (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 17, italics added). Praxis is understood here as

a form of action informed by critical insights and shaped by a critical disposition. It is action that involves critique, and, where necessary, transformation of the taken-for-granted discourses/ideologies, practices, structures, and relationships that shape and characterise educational practices, and which impede people’s capacity for self-determination, self-development, and self-expression.

(Mahon *et al.*, 2020, pp. 24–25)

Praxis is thus not simply about making music but “what people do when they take into account all the circumstances and exigencies that confront them in the particular moment” (Kemmis and Smith, 2008, p. 4). In other words, praxis has a moral imperative involving “taking the broadest view they can of what is best to do” and then acting (p. 4). It is a “special-kind-of-practice” (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 16) in distinction of “a usual way to act, habitual social action which follows given patterns, or customs and routines” (p. 18).

More often than not, however, professional practice in music is considered through the existing practice, and as we argue through the expert gaze, in which musical criteria, and only those, set the boundaries of the system. This technicist rationale results in what Bauman and Donskis (2013) have called “adiaphora” in professional thinking – the placing of action outside of the universe of moral obligations and evaluations that take place elsewhere in society. A bounded, “neutral”, and morally indifferent view of music education professionalism considers specialised expert knowledge as the final end; it lacks an awareness of the wider system within which experts operate, as well as the changes expected to take place within the system in relation to the changing societal environment, including changing artistic and societal values. Within the assumed neutrality of musical expertise and performance practice, the wider responsibilities may be articulated as a “floating responsibility” (Bauman, 2017, p. 27) – a politically correct rhetoric of responsibility that does not require change or establish responsibility from the professionals themselves.

In contrast, a transformative professional practice, a praxis, takes technical expertise (*techne*) seriously but not as an ultimate final end. In a morally, socially, and politically informed praxis, *techne* can be seen as the mediating means in service of human good that needs to be guided by moral wisdom (*phronesis*) (Carr, 2014; Gaunt and Westerlund, 2021). In music education, moral wisdom has been understood as being already embedded in musical practices and traditions (Elliott, 1995), following also a notion in which the norms, standards, and values of existing musical practices are taken to provide the main goals and standards for the practice of music education. Musical practices by themselves are in this way considered as having only good consequences, both individually and socially. Furthermore, the musical tradition, the musical style, its assumed authenticity, and performance practice are perceived as “noble” and therefore having the power to bestow nobility on practitioners (Cheng, 2019). As Cheng (2019) argues, music can thus be anthromorphized and ascribed rights that override even the rights of music practitioners. When musical practices sustain not just the tradition but also the unintended and unwanted negative consequences of the practice, such as elitism, exclusion, and hierarchies (Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021; Westerlund, 2002; Westerlund and Partti, 2018), this may be accepted as normal and not questioned or challenged. The tradition may thus not necessarily provide morally and politically sound models for music education. Professional praxis, therefore, requires working “towards positive change” while re-focusing educational debate “on matters of moral, social, and political importance for contemporary society” (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 17). Although professional practices can always be seen to include a degree of reflexivity that, as Kemmis (2010) writes, “always invites historical self-consciousness of oneself as a practitioner in relation to other practitioners previously encountered” (p. 157), it is perhaps more important than ever in music education to actively search for systems reflexivity that leads to transformation.

Expert gaze as Panopticon: controlling complexity

Foucault's metaphor of the Panopticon prison (Foucault, 1995) can be used to demonstrate how current society has been systemically shaped by historical practices and how disciplinary knowledge production takes place through concrete sites, places, and spaces. The idea of Panopticon originates from the circular prison architecture and design where a guard tower at the centre of the building allows the guards to observe prisoners without the prisoners knowing whether they are being observed in this way "sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it" (pp. 200–201). Foucault (1995) uses the Panopticon to describe the societal system that emerged in 18th- and 19th-century Western societies, in which the disciplinary system was constructed through the techniques that assure the ordering of human complexities, with the ultimate aim of docility and utility in the system. The power mechanisms inherent to the Panopticon create complex spaces that "provide fixed positions", "carve out individual segments", "mark places and indicate values", and "guarantee the obedience of individuals" (p. 148) – the order of social life. Foucault analyses how the Panoptic schema came to govern modern societies, including pedagogical practice. The Panoptical spaces are "real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies" (p. 148). In this metaphor, the techniques of knowledge form an ocularcentric mechanism that automates and disindividualises power, ending up in one-sided, expert-practiced surveillance that affects social relationships, institutions, and individuals. As Foucault (1995) writes, since the discipline

uses procedures of partitioning and verticality, that they introduce, between the different elements at the same level, as solid separations as possible, that they define compact hierarchical networks, in short, that they oppose to the intrinsic, adverse force of multiplicity the technique of the continuous, individualizing pyramid.

(p. 220)

Panopticon as a metaphor has not often been used in music education, but for instance, John Owens (2014) has argued that the seating arrangement of the school band or orchestra in the United States functions as a Panopticon, allowing the conductor-educator to exercise surveillance, control, hierarchy, and discipline. These are further extended to the students and their families as the system of the Panopticon enforces self-discipline on those who are part of it, each one internalising the mechanisms of power as a natural part of the system. Similarly, Kofi Agawu (2016) links the call and response form of some African musics to a "strong hierarchic social arrangement" (p. 56) between chief and subjects. The musical structure is not random but mimics and reproduces the social structure.

Like a Panopticon, the discursive formation of the narrow expert gaze – the “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1995) – takes its justification not only from the artistic outcomes but also from the places of performance, such as concert halls that define a range of conceptual possibilities within the system and that further determine the boundaries of professional thought and what is considered worthwhile. Lydia Goehr’s (1992) seminal work describes how concert halls started shaping Western musical practices in the 18th and 19th centuries and how these purpose-built buildings started constructing the attitudes towards music listening by limiting the earlier more participatory nature of audience behaviour as “audiences began to learn how to listen not just to music but to each musical work for its own sake” (p. 237):

Audiences were asked to be literally and metaphorically silent, so that the truth or beauty of the work could be heard in itself. But such attention was possible only if music was performed in the appropriate physical setting. For how could one listen attentively and in silence if there were distracting elements all around? Performances had not only to become foreground affairs, but they also had to be cut off completely from all extra-musical activities. It was with these sorts of ideas in mind that concert halls started to be erected as monuments and establishments devoted to the performance of musical works.
(p. 237)

If the concert hall defines the expert gaze, musicality tests can function as an institutionally legitimised technique with which institutions can solve the problem of too many people wanting to learn to play an instrument and help professionals decide to what degree and for whom to invest their resources (Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021). When such techniques and Panoptic operations stay untouched and continue producing the hierarchical pyramid and expert gaze, the practice fixes the professional interests in this vertical professional production. The ocularcentric expert gaze keeps the profession on the already existing professional path; not only does it create the needed control and diminish heterogeneity, but it also prevents the professionals from seeing beyond what is traditionally thought to be worth seeing and of most value. The Panoptic expert gaze, to use John Dewey’s (1978) words, “fixes the end of thought”, while “the end controls the process of thinking” (p. 190), thus sustaining the once constructed relationship with the world. Because this system is “naturalised” and in this way taken for granted, a concert hall is still taken as the legitimate space for exposing musical expertise and the centre of the social epistemology of not just higher music education but also many other music education systems (Figure 1a and 1b).

In music education research, Panoptic knowledge production takes the existing, often highly institutionalised and established historical forms of musical practices and of “getting things right” for granted as an epistemological starting point (Westerlund and Väkevä, 2011, p. 43). Although “the substance of

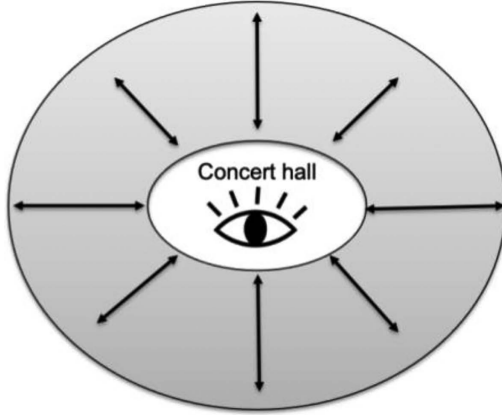


Figure 2.1a.1b The concert hall is a Panoptic disciplinary establishment. Photo: Helsinki Music Centre Foundation/photographer Arno de la Chapelle.

Note: Kingsbury (1988) argued that “concert hall is a conscious symbol of the conservatory” (p. 35). Here, we understand it as the centre of the Panoptic system that produces the expert gaze represented schematically (Fig. 1a). The concert hall is physically designed for ease of viewing (Fig. 1b: The main concert hall of the Helsinki Music Center), but is also an ordering mechanism that reflects an hierarchical social ideal that also defines what is counted as expert musical practice and of most value. Through “a constantly repeated ritual of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 186), the concert hall generates and institutes “the relations of discipline” (p. 208). For Foucault, discipline is “a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets” (p. 215) for assuring “the ordering of human multiplicities” (p. 218). The ritualised power of the Panoptic machinery largely fixes the goals of higher music education and the ideal relationships between performers and the audience, as well as defining who can participate in the ritual and in what ways.

educational praxis cannot be separated from aspects of social space that pertain in the sites where educational praxis is enacted” (Kemmis and Smith, 2008, p. 8), the expert gaze (informed by the Panopticon) assumes the prevailing dominant professional ethos to be the best and promotes professional homogeneity, consensus, and institutional status quo. It prevents the critical questions from stepping to the front or becoming material for wider professional reflexivity. In research and theorising, such a Panopticon thus “falls into the danger of promoting ideologically loaded discursive practices with which educators then justify their work hiding from the sight the structures of coercion that frame our commonly held assumptions” (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 43). For music education researchers and theorists, it then becomes more important to strengthen the Panopticon, or as Westerlund and Väkevä (2011) write, “to fill in the cracks of the theory, the exceptions that disturb the consensus, than to search for new emerging ideas in the margins of the prevalent discourse, or elevating consciousness of diversity” (p. 43).

The production of expert gaze in music education

Thus far, we have identified the dominant linear and hierarchical model within the professional practices of music education – a model supported by and naturalised through the techniques of the Panoptic expert gaze. In this model, the resources of music education continue supporting the historically defined institutional systems. We have argued the need for expanding professional mental models due to the rapid changes in the environment of music education. In the last century, for example, there have been major shifts in policies in various parts of the globe (e.g. the abolishment of capital punishment, universal suffrage, supporting girls’ education) and in politics (e.g. the abolishment of Apartheid in South Africa with its many consequences on music culture and education and other racist political forms). While the former official policies and politics were naturalised at the specific historical time as “simply the way things are”, they would now be considered unacceptable to large portions of the population. By drawing on two studies we have previously conducted (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2019, 2020), we next illustrate the ways that research paradigms can resonate and silently reinforce these excluding mental models in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop, thus indirectly inhibiting transformative change.

Research supporting pre-existing mental models and practices

Neuroscientific research is often appropriated into the narrative of music education and music education advocacy in order to prove the worth of music education practice. However, this is done without expecting any professional self-reflexivity and change from the system itself. By design, neuroscientific research can only be used to justify existing practices by measuring brain activity

resulting from already existing practices and individual activities. It is therefore also unable to comment on any unwanted consequences of the system, such as systemic exclusion through elitist pedagogy, experiences of elitist spaces, or the workings of enrolment and recruitment criteria. Employing neuroscientific research to support current models of music education thus exemplifies adiabatic practice, where the moral implications of the music education practices are assumed to be fundamentally and always good. Neuroscientific research supports the all-encompassing benefits of music education, excluding any possible negative aspects of the practice.

Two related assumptions underlie the ways that neuroscience is used in music education (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2019). The first assumption is that research conducted using a single musical stimulus can inform all musical experience, with authors claiming that the effects observed can be generalised to music and music education broadly speaking. In contrast, the wide range of musics, musical practices, music educational practices, and experiences with music should limit what can be said about the results of specific studies. Moreover, the specificity of the research situation itself cannot address the full range of options related to music. The second underlying assumption is, as already mentioned, that the basic experience of music is without exception positive or always good. It is imperative to consider not only the stimulus and its applicability but also the experience of participants in the research situation. Moreover, it may be that a participant has a positive experience in the research situation, but this cannot be assumed for all situations and musical experiences, especially when considering that music education always involves interaction and social action with different people and personalities who have diverse interests towards the educational situation. These assumptions together point towards an underlying mental model according to which current music education practices are the way they should be, and that little needs to be done to improve or change them, and all that is needed is hard evidence for their effectivity.

Furthermore, there is a tendency in this narrative of music education and music education advocacy to distort legitimate research findings beyond their claimed impact by simplifying the message, which supports the status quo of the field (see, Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2019). When neuroscientific research is translated into music education advocacy, two related tendencies occur. First, there is a tendency to greater application, where limited and bounded research studies are taken to represent all music education practices and used in support of all possible practices. Second, researchers tend to take less care with reporting research results. Instead of carefully delimiting the materials, experiences, and research approaches of the studies on which they report, music education advocacy tends to jump straight to specific results, claiming them to be representative of all music education practices. This causes a distortion of the research conducted and is likely informed by a desire to support music education but without critically reflecting on the impacts of practices and approaches on

individuals. Just because a neuroscientific study found some evidence of brain activity correlated with an aspect of music education does not mean that the child in your classroom is having a positive experience.

It can therefore be suggested that rather than being a neutral perspective on the effect of music on the brain (and an individual subject), neuroscience (and likely other kinds of research) is often co-opted to reinforce the expert gaze within music education. This most likely happens when the research is translated into music education advocacy texts and public media, but may also be a result of neuroscientific researchers themselves holding unexamined mental models about music and music education (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2019).

Research drawing on pre-existing mental models

As a second example (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2020), we demonstrate the ways that music education research “controls the process of thinking” (Dewey, 1978, p. 190) in music education and “conceptualises the phenomenon” (Biesta, Allan, and Edwards, 2013, p. 6) of musical memory through an almost exclusive focus on expert memory and almost entirely in the context of Western classical music (see Lehmann, Gruber and Kopiez, 2018, p. 536, for a similar claim). The expert memory of musicians, in particular, is of great interest to psychologists and music educators because of the dedicated focus and long-term specialisation that have brought the expert to their expertise. This makes musicians “prime candidate[s]” (p. 545) for studies in complex skills, such as their remarkable memory and recall feats or their skills in tonal manipulation (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2020). However, while musicians may be interesting subjects of research in this regard, the narrow selection of researched topics acts as a theoretical conception that limits the construction of the research object (Biesta, Allan and Edwards, 2013, p. 6).

Thus, the almost exclusive focus on expert memory – the Panoptic focus on the highest levels of experts – limits the choices and, in this way, restricts the kinds of questions that can be asked within memory research in music, also minimising the generalisability of the results that stem from such studies. Contemporary views of memory work, such as the notion of social memory (Odendaal and Westerlund, 2022) and the positive function of forgetting in memory work (Odendaal, Levänen and Westerlund, 2020), do not fall within the realm of musical memory studies. Instead, they predominantly reproduce the expert gaze, and their ocularcentrism limits whose memory and what kind of memory work is considered most valuable, not only from a research perspective but also in educational practice. In a wider societal perspective, such an exclusive expert gaze in musical memory research draws on the meritocratic and “ableist” tendencies in the profession (see also Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021; Laes and Westerlund, 2018) as only those with the highest potential ability appear worth investigating. A hierarchical and linear understanding of the purpose of music teaching and

learning prioritises the selection and resourcing of the most gifted and the top talent in the pyramid of professional ladders (Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021).

The self-reinforcing feedback loops of the Panopticon

The two examples discussed earlier demonstrate that research that predominantly focuses its gaze on the top of the hierarchical linear system simultaneously glorifies those individuals who are considered exceptionally gifted beyond “normalcy”. This silently lays the ground for a Panoptic professional self-understanding and the purpose of the work of music educators, especially in higher music education. This is achieved through subtle feedback loops in which mental models delimit what kinds of research questions are worth asking and which published and popularised research aligns with and further reproduces such mental models.

By highlighting some, but certainly not all, possible aspects, Figure 2.2 draws on the argument we have presented in this chapter. It illustrates schematically the formation of the expert gaze as two interconnected subsystems. On the left is the self-reinforcing loop that defines what is interesting to research (e.g. exceptionally skilled musicians as the focus of research), while on the right are several overlapping loops that concern how education should be conducted. The concepts of expertise, merit, and ability are closely linked to the concert hall as defining concepts. These self-reinforcing loops also reinforce each other and ultimately define what music education is for. This gaze is disindividualised, in the sense that it is not propagated by any single individual but rather the general narrative of research and understanding of professional boundaries in the discipline of music. As a result of the rootedness of the gaze and the status quo related to the workings of the Panopticon, it may be difficult to point at specific aspects that needed to be shifted, balanced, and changed within instituted music education despite the repeated calls from within the profession for transformation and fresh thinking, renewal of audience relationships, and opening up higher music education to alternative practices. Such hidden forces that produce the dynamics within the music education system are a feature of emergent complex systems since they defy simple explanation and also defy control. However, becoming aware of the historical situatedness of what the profession is doing (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 27) can be the first step towards transformational praxis. Higher music education, in particular, should therefore take the next step to “consciously ‘confront past practices’ that they have come to see as having unintended or negative consequences” and seek for deliberate changes in practices “to bring about alternative futures” (p. 27).

Expanding the expert gaze through “hiking the horizontal”

In this chapter, we have envisioned music education not just in the light of the criteria of “good practice” in relation to traditions – the past doings – but

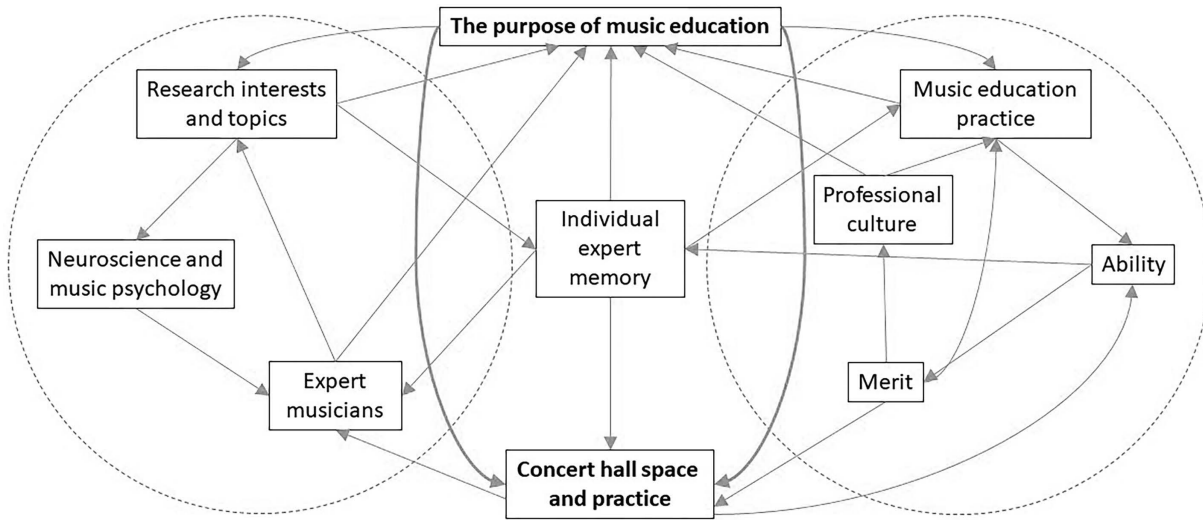


Figure 2.2 Systems view of the production of expert gaze in music education professionalism

Note: By embodying its dominant ideational relationship with the high-prestige concert hall practice, research and educational practice alike are subsumed by conceptions of expertise, merit, and ability. New teachers and researchers are trained with the assumptions of the mental models embedded in the used materials and discourses that are engaged with in professional education communication. Together, these processes produce what we call the expert gaze. As a dominant discourse, the expert gaze restricts the use of imagination for any other alternatives from emerging.

rather as a practice where these doings are constantly reflected in relation to the environment so that disciplinary knowledge and skills are combined with moral wisdom in relation to the future. However, breaking out of self-reinforcing feedback loops, or what Foucault considered disciplinary-discursive prisons, requires specific effort and strategies, for both individuals and institutions. The dancer and choreographer Liz Lerman (2011) described her desire to live in such a non-hierarchical world and work within a reflexive and imaginative “laboratory of doing” (p. xviii) that provides “a kind of mnemonic device to dismantle hierarchies that are so embedded in our cultures that we cannot imagine anything else” (p. 292). For Lerman, this process of fighting against the disciplinary prison started concretely with a physical gesture, imagining a vertical line that represents conceptions of what counts and what does not, and using her hands to turn it horizontal and circular. This action concretised for her how vertical hierarchical thinking restricts and how “hiking the horizontal” instead involves respectfully moving along a spectrum towards the possible and the potential. This physical gesture and its further implications for the music field (e.g. music *is* for everyone) require a reconstructed understanding of the music education system, including the production of research, music education institutions, and music pedagogies.

While it may be impossible to develop a full picture of the entire music education system, the tools of systems inquiry allow us to ask different kinds of questions. Lerman (2011) suggests that asking questions should become “a way of life” (p. 3). Following her, music educators should constantly ask questions such as: Who gets to make music? What is the music-making about, and where is it happening? Why does this musical performance or practice matter? These questions relate to sources of motivation, control, knowledge, and legitimacy that are at the root of the music education system (Ulrich and Reynolds, 2020) and cannot be answered simply by referring to tradition and the past as if the past would represent the ideal model for the future. When instituted music education tends to focus on supporting the status quo and identity, epistemological battle may be experienced as a negative state of affairs that should be controlled and diminished in order for the foundational justifications of activities to remain clear and in control. Drawing on Donald Schön (1995), we see this as typical in higher music education, which has to “hold conceptions of what counts as legitimate knowledge and how you know what you claim to know” (p. 27). Being insecure, not knowing while being out of a comfort zone, or experimenting without clear end products in view are therefore not necessarily welcome in the territories of the expert gaze.

If Lerman makes an attempt to encourage individual artists to question their discursive and epistemic prisons, systems thinkers try to grasp on a wider level the “relational architectures” and emphasise the connectedness between the various practice architectures that impact educators’ “daily lives” (Mahon *et al.*, 2020, p. 27). In music teacher education, such recognition of relationality needed

to be developed experientially in praxis by “creating conditions conducive to praxis”, supporting “opportunities for people to experience and reflect on the consequences of their own actions”, developing “awareness of traditions and history and how these shape us as human beings”, developing “moral reasoning”, and acting “in socially responsible and just ways” (p. 30). Such a systems awareness and reflexivity must recognise, for instance that, complex and changing real-world problems are built on two characteristics: People within the system are working from divergent worldviews (or mental models), and people within the system are purposefully acting on the basis of those worldviews (Checkland and Poulter, 2007). For Lerman (2011), being a dancer and dance teacher means adapting “a spectrum of multiple perspectives” (p. xvi), finding meaning precisely within ambiguity, and navigating through the “common purpose amid individual vision and action” (p. xvvi). This relates to the development of activity models within systems methodology – thinking tools that describe the activities stemming from certain worldviews in order to explore the possible outcomes and prospects of such models (Checkland and Poulter, 2007, p. xvii; Senge, 2006). In order to break the linear and vertical model of action, Lerman (2011) advises musicians and music educators to instead consider paradoxes, seek opposites, and reject dichotomies that prevent many ideas from coexisting; to look instead for a synthesis and foster learning communities that embrace multiple forms of knowledge and discovery (p. xvi); to understand that not all distinctions need to be “about right and wrong” and rather make “the walls permeable between these distinctions” (p. xvii). Such expanding professionalism means actively finding ways to respect that which is out of our comfort zones, recognising that focusing on something in the work does not need to be an exercise in reductionism, which would only create a new Panopticon.

Conclusion

Foucault’s main message is that hierarchies in human instituted life do their work unnoticed since they have been there for decades, if not centuries, reinforcing and being reinforced. The power of hierarchies is in this sense dispersed throughout the social system. The exercise of power is not necessarily “violent” nor is it “by consent”, but rather a “total structure of actions that incited, induced, and seduced” (Tovar-Restrepo, 2014, p. 102). Such power has invested institutions and individuals “with possibilities for action” and is “already present in a matrix of forces which itself created lines of division, relationships of exclusion, codes of discipline, and sites of subjection” (p. 103). Such hierarchical power structures have shaped us (the authors, and probably the readers as well) and our thinking, as argued here, by placing the concert hall and the highest level of expertise at the hierarchical centre of our professional mental models. Moving away from hierarchical structure means, as Sandra Stauffer (2017) argues, “we are willing to live and learn in places of discomfort, often, repeatedly” (p. 5).

In Stauffer's words, to "hike the horizontal" in music education means "a shift in perspective, in direction of travel, in language, in structure, in positionality" (p. 5). At the heart of such a shift lies the question of what the primary aim and responsibility of music education should be in this specific time and in contemporary societies considering that music education as praxis asks new questions and also reconstructs and transforms action, people, and contexts. In music education, where democracy, wider participation, and justice are claimed to be central aims, we ask whether it is possible to achieve them if the fundamental mental models do not change first. This implies, according to our argument here, a process of change not only in talk or practices but also in spaces and places and the ways in which these spaces and places are used by music professionals. A game-changing music education deliberately sets out to transform the practice from what is towards what could be. There *is* therefore a transformative way out of the Panoptic prison of music education, although it may not come easily or speedily. This transformation requires reflexivity not only towards the technical aspects of teaching but also towards the system as a whole, the mental models that produce it, and the effects of this system on society.

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3 Music educators as imaginative “designers”

Emerging transformative
ecopolitics in higher education

Heidi Westerlund, Danielle Treacy, Katja Thomson, and Albi Odendaal

Introduction

The arts are increasingly seen as having the potential to not only adapt *to* change but also be forerunners *of* transformative change in and for society. Leadership researcher Sandra Waddock (2021) contends that “artists can help us all ‘see’ into the future that is needed now, particularly where system transformation is needed” (p. 3). However, it remains unclear how musicians and music educators might enhance societal transformation by responding to “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber, 1973), such as global migration and geopolitical and climate change, and the consequential social-ecological challenges of increasing inequalities, different kinds of exclusion, and power asymmetries in diversifying societies. Although the turn towards broader societal and moral responsibility is now emerging in other professional fields (see, e.g. Cribb and Gewirtz, 2015), it has been argued that teachers, in general, are still mainly educated into the mastery of disciplinary knowledge (Karseth, 2011, pp. 161–162). Moreover, while those working in the educational sector are often “blamed for failing to respond to changed circumstances in appropriate ways” (Bates and Townsend, 2007, p. 727), in higher music education and the western conservatory tradition, the long-established discourse of artistic autonomy as the basis for professionalism has disconnected these large societal problems from disciplinary practices (see, e.g., Reimer, 1989, 2009; Varkøy, 2013). Music educators trained within these contexts may therefore not be accustomed to engaging with wider societal challenges, even when there is a strong will or demand to do so.

Social scientists who have analysed the current situation, particularly from the perspective of global migration, argue that societies are now facing “an increasingly unpredictable and uncontrollable life”, which threatens to undermine political democracy (Castells, 2010, p. 27). It has become clear that increased diversity does not necessarily result in the enrichment of cultures, as the multicultural music education discourse promotes. Rather, societal narratives are increasingly referring to “us” and “them”, fuelling rising fundamentalism, radicalisation, and polarisation (Castells, 2010; Bauman, 2011, 2016). Instead of

witnessing increasing solidarity in diversifying societies, there is a rise in moral indifference and blindness, as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2011) argues. According to him, the lack of “skills in daily coexistence with ways of life other than our own” has led to “‘the art of living with difference’ [becoming] an everyday problem” (Bauman, 2010, p. 151). Bauman (2016) writes,

[T]he policy of mutual separation and keeping one’s distance, building walls instead of bridges, and settling for sound-insulated “echo-chambers” instead of hot lines for undistorted communication (and, all in all, washing one’s hands and manifesting one’s indifference in the disguise of tolerance) lead nowhere but onto the wasteland of mutual mistrust, estrangement and aggravation.

(p. 18)

This ongoing polycrisis situation (Vision Europe Summit, 2016) thus asks much from everyone in society, including music education professionals.

In the field of music, moral blindness can be related to the deeply rooted myth of neutrality (Westerlund, 2019), according to which the social, ethical, moral, and political dimensions of human life can remain outside of artistic practice and interest, and the terrains of music professionals’ responsibility. Current conceptions of music professionalism are primarily about *musical quality*. Even when diversity is discussed in music education, this discussion tends to be about diverse *musical* principles, instead of fundamentally changing the social formations of the practices and concretely connecting and interacting with people with different sets of values and ways of life. As countries are called to move towards integration “in which a constantly changing ‘we’ creates ever more robust and resilient communities” (Vision Europe Summit, 2016, p. 65), it is clear that simply advocating for music education, as it has always been, and desiring “more of the same”, is not sufficient for engaging with the question of “what the world is asking *from me*” (Biesta, 2022, p. 91, emphasis in original). Rather, seeking transformative change, and a renaissance of morality and responsibility (Westerlund, 2019), requires music education professionals to ask new questions and “rethink the trends of the past” (Bauman and Donskis, 2013, p. 211) against the current societal situation – an active moving out from inward-looking *egocentrism* towards world-conscious *ecocentrism* (Gray, Whyte and Curry, 2018).

Argument

In this chapter, we explore the case of the World in Motion ensemble to theorise higher music education as a responsible social system that engages with the world without being the centre of it (Biesta, 2017, 2022). The ensemble was created in 2015 in response to music university students’ and teachers’ concern for the solidarity of their professional field with refugees who encountered public

hostility when arriving in Finland. Over an 18-month period, the ensemble enabled collaborative music-making and interaction for over 20 musicians, including refugees from the Middle East and people with other immigrant backgrounds, and eight higher music education students of different nationalities studying in three departments (Global Music, Folk Music, and Music Education) of the Sibelius Academy.¹ World in Motion was a quickly formed joint effort between two existing organisations – the Sibelius Academy and the City of Helsinki’s Cultural Centre Caisa. During the first months, it gained new participants from outside the university nearly every week, partly through word of mouth. The ensemble’s emergent, musically and culturally hybrid collective activities drew from the participants’ musical knowledge, sensibilities, and suggestions and pushed them all to imagine and envision new intercultural approaches to co-composing and co-arranging music.

Through the case of World in Motion, we aim to encourage higher music education professionals to ask what their profession *does* in society, what it does *not* do, and what it *could* do if the profession recognises itself to be lacking solidarity with individuals of different backgrounds. We encourage music education professionals to consider the unfortunate possibility that higher music education could be part of the problem of *sustaining unsustainability* (Blühdorn, 2017) and inequalities in society, and the transformative potential that could result if higher music education professionals engaged in constant dialogue with responsible future perspectives. We argue that radically reimagining the taken-for-granted social formations of higher music education, its established places and locations for learning, its knowledge boundaries, and how it distinguishes its position as a generator or beholder of new relations in the surrounding society opens the possibility of systems change – and thereby *the transformative ecopolitics of higher music education*. We suggest that a radical re-imagining (Greene, 1995; Tannock, 2021) can empower higher music educators to become *designers*, *re-designers*, and *co-designers* of a more sustainable and ecologically aware profession and society.

In our systems theorisation, we illustrate how higher music education could (re)direct the attention of students to the world, make time and space for students to meet the world and meet themselves in relation to the world (Biesta, 2022), and how linked social-ecological systems (SES) thinking can aid educational institutions in expanding their currently taken-for-granted mental models and address social issues by considering the structures, interconnections, and relationality embedded in the issues and in society. We recognise higher music education as a social system that produces not only positive social consequences (e.g. inclusion, equity, and social justice) but also possibly negative consequences, as highlighted by the sociology of music and music education. These negative consequences include inequalities (e.g. Wright, 2010; Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021; Westerlund, 2023), gender exclusion (Scharff, 2018), racism (Hess, 2019), and stigmatisation (Treacy, Thapa and Neupane, 2021). Taking such a

vantage point opens a two-sided critical space where it becomes possible to explore not only intended but also unintended systems consequences. Drawing on design-thinking (Manzini, 2015; Costanza-Chock, 2020) and the theorisation of linked SES (Biggs *et al.*, 2021; Folke *et al.*, 2002), we exemplify how transformation in higher music education can be enhanced by rethinking and rewiring the structures, processes, and ways its various parts are connected to one another and society across multiple scales. While linked SES researchers typically focus on how the social and natural environment intertwine, we recognise the interconnectedness of the social in music with the spatial environments (e.g. the concrete places and social spaces) and the involved individuals in these environments, with which higher music education interacts. We use this lens heuristically to rethink the established institutional and social formations of higher music education by identifying their socio-political consequences.

Emerging linked social-ecological systems in higher music education

Sustainability and systems thinking

Music studies advocating ecological views typically limit their questions to the sustainability of endangered musical heritage (e.g. Grant, 2017) – for example, considering the challenges and dynamics of the sustainability of marginalised musics in the contemporary global environment (Schippers and Grant, 2016) – or consider all musical practices as already fundamentally ecological in their strong leaning on tradition and intangible values (Bennett, Reid and Petocz, 2014). The literature tends to see sustainability most often in relation to *something* being sustained, conserved, and kept *as it is*, be it a musical tradition, music learning, or music programmes (e.g. Bates, 2011; Chen and O’Neill, 2020; Clennon and Boehm, 2014; Koza, 2006; Matsunobu, 2013; Millar *et al.*, 2020; McFerran, Crooke and Hattie, 2018; Pitts and Robinson, 2016).

Critique towards this mainstream sustainability discourse, however, has begun to emerge with scholars highlighting the tension between continuation and conservation on the one hand and change, transformation, or evolution on the other (Barrett and Westerlund, 2024; Bates, 2011; Jorritsma, 2022; McFerran, Crooke and Hattie, 2018; Westerlund, 2023), thus reflecting the two-sided critical space that also aims to acknowledge the wider unintended social consequences of institutional music education practices. For instance, Charlene Morton (2012) has pointed out that “environmental and social crises are the results, in significant part, of decisions and actions by otherwise well-educated academics and professionals who fail to appreciate the interdependence of all ecological systems – human or otherwise” (p. 7). Although the music field with its persistent conservatory culture tends to be path-dependent and tradition-oriented rather than self-transforming and future-oriented, both systems thinking and

systems transformation have recently been highlighted as a core principle of sustainability and interdependence in arts education (see, e.g. Barrett and Westerlund, 2024; Broome *et al.*, 2017; Hunter *et al.*, 2018; Westerlund, 2021, 2023).

In higher education, systems thinking has been recognised as a particular way of addressing issues that require holistic understanding (Astaiza-Martínez, Mazorco-Salas and Castillo-Bohórquez, 2020; Barnett, 2018; Gutierrez, Fox and Alexander, 2019). Universities in contemporary societies cannot continue existing unchanged in the ways they have for centuries; rather, an “epistemology for living amid uncertainty” is needed (Barnett, 2000, p. 420). Educational theorist Ronald Barnett (2011) calls for an “ecological university”, one in which “the world’s interconnectedness and the university’s interconnectedness with the world” are recognised and acted upon (p. 451). As a tool for recognising interconnectedness and supporting the understanding of phenomena in context, systems thinking facilitates the formation of the ecological university by avoiding conceiving reality from a “fragmented and simplistic viewpoint” (Astaiza-Martínez, Mazorco-Salas and Castillo-Bohórquez, 2020, p. 191).

In general, systems thinking allows for the functional analysis of aspects of social systems, recognising that it is not possible, or necessary, to change everything. It is, however, important to understand and address, for instance, how the mental models of the given professional field may be intertwined with current problems. As systems are delimited by spatial and functional boundaries based on an understanding of the purpose of the system (Jackson, 2019), strongly delimited understandings of the systems purpose can constrain possibilities for action within or by the system and its interaction with other systems. For instance, if higher music education defines its purpose too narrowly through musical excellence and the attainment of the highest musical quality, this mental model, while seemingly innocent, can support the exclusion of wider moral and ethical responsibilities. Rigid mental models can also position individual professionals as servants to the professional system rather than the system existing for individuals and the changing society. In such cases, a higher music education institution’s self-understanding may fail to realise its own adaptive capacity in contemporary society, the “entanglement of knowledge and life” in the present time, and therefore, the institution’s “responsibilities to life” (Barnett and Bengtson, 2020, p. 157). Moreover, while some people will feel that maintaining the status quo is important for tradition and heritage, if an institution lacks adaptive capacity towards resilience and related reconfigurations, it may even endanger its own existence. Hence, rather than perceiving the ideal higher music education as a silo and closed system, systems thinking allows it to be seen both as encompassing a specific purpose and also functioning relationally and horizontally as an open and dynamic, resilient system. Systems thinking further supports seeing higher music education as interacting with other SES (e.g. Ackoff, 1994). A systems view thus broadens the focus beyond merely considering *who* studies, teaches, or does research in higher music education towards developing critical

awareness of what the consequences – social, educational, and artistic – might be of an overly inward-looking, inflexible, and self-interested professional and educational system.

Linked social-ecological systems

The idea of *linked* SES (Biggs *et al.*, 2021) recognises that established institutions and organisations need to constantly recreate and redesign the relationships that define interactions with the natural environment and the changing landscape of social systems, including local and regional actors, national institutional systems, and global networks. According to Biggs *et al.* (2021), SES are complex, context-dependent, and adaptive resilient systems that “comprise many interdependent parts that interact in ways that give rise to emergent, system-wide patterns that cannot be predicted from the properties of the individual system components” (p. 5). Understanding higher music education as a linked social-ecological system therefore reveals hitherto untapped possibilities for transforming the conservatory culture, typically cultivated in one-to-one settings behind closed doors and culminating in concert hall exams. Introducing new locations – physical and social spaces – for students in professional education to learn to interact musically, as in *World in Motion*, however, can be perceived as unimportant and even risky in the conservatory culture because it can be seen to take time away from practising established repertoires. Yet, as we suggest through the case of *World in Motion*, a simple change of place and social space, even once, may open entirely new professional understandings and future horizons not only for the students but also for higher music education teachers. The idea of linked SES aids in identifying such potential and encourages new connections between higher music education and other societal actors.

In our analysis, we use systems thinking as a heuristic tool to identify the social-ecological interactions relevant in *World in Motion*; the point is not to “capture all possible social-ecological relations and interactions present in a system but to focus on those that are considered important for generating the phenomenon of interest” (Schlüter *et al.*, 2019, n.p.). SES recognises that systems are not freestanding but exist within and overlap with other systems, creating layers of nested systems. As illustrated in the linked SES framework (see Figure 3.1), Caisa and the Sibelius Academy were interacting within the influence of other nested systems, including local ecosystems of refugees (e.g. reception centres and the Finnish Immigration Service), the Sibelius Academy’s music education doctoral programme, and the larger national multidisciplinary research project *ArtsEqual* to which the *World in Motion* teacher’s research contributed. Figure 3.1 also shows the direct interconnections and practical micro-level collaborations between Caisa and the Sibelius Academy. This collaboration was initiated by the *World in Motion* teacher, who was responsible for the partnership

between the university and Caisa and for inviting bachelor’s and master’s students to participate in this new, credited university course. A producer from Caisa was responsible for distributing invitation letters in reception centres in Arabic, Farsi, Finnish, and English. Together with the participants of World in Motion, these interconnections made possible the co-designing of a space for intercultural musical action and reciprocal learning that led to a new educational design and “a place for experiments” (Manzini, 2015, p. 161).

The World in Motion ensemble can thus be seen as “a bridging organisation” (Biggs *et al.*, 2021, p. 5), as it linked discrete organisations and fostered their interconnections on a practical level. As a bridging organisation, World in Motion allowed “the emergence of adaptive governance, where individuals interact and collaborate in response to a crisis, connecting and creating social networks around shared visions and narratives” (p. 5). In this way the design impetus that came from the teacher was taken up by all ensemble members at some point. The ensemble’s collaboration coincided with a more fundamental shift in the strategy of the university and policies of its nested networks (e.g. the Association for European Conservatories) towards fostering societal interactions and considering how its teachers and researchers could take action and connect professional education in music to complex societal issues. Through the ensemble, the students were able to interact with musicians living in reception centres, and the refugee musicians were able to make connections with the music university and local networks of musicians and arts institutions. Rather than being merely a one-off project initiated by one teacher during the most intense public reactions to the influx of refugees, we illustrate below how the ensemble work strengthened wider systems transformation in the higher music education context through its interconnections.

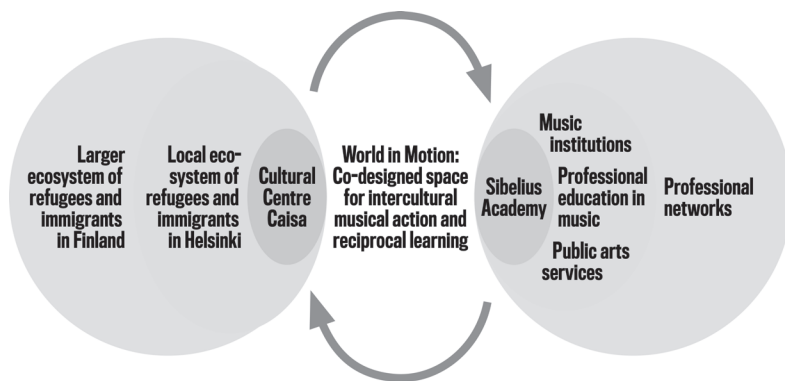


Figure 3.1 Linked social-ecological systems (SES) framework illustrating World in Motion as a bridging organisation (adapted from Biggs *et al.*, 2021)

Social-ecological action situations

The emergence of transformative ecopolitics

Transformative ecopolitics in higher music education can be seen as emerging from social-ecological interactions beyond the established routines of the university. By emergence, we refer to “the generation of novel properties or functionalities that cannot be explained by their constituting elements alone” (Schlüter *et al.*, 2019, n.p.). We use the social-ecological action situations framework (Figure 3.2, adapted from Schlüter *et al.*, 2019) to illustrate World in Motion’s co-existing multiple relations and interactions within the greater context and how these relations cannot be reduced to individual participants or groups of people, musical

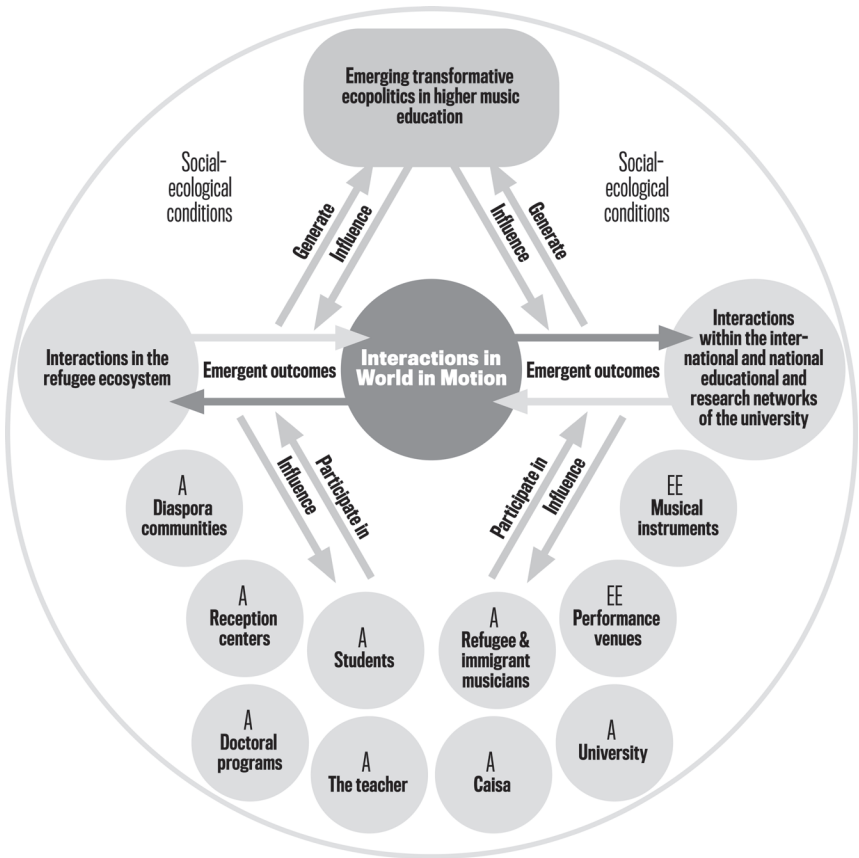


Figure 3.2 The social-ecological action situation framework (inspired by Schlüter *et al.*, 2019)

traditions and repertoires, or the kinds of artistic co-constructions that take place between the participants. We understand an action situation to be a situation in which individuals participate in a *strategic* interaction that “incorporate[s] relations . . . across multiple levels” (n.p.). In *World in Motion*, we conceive these relations as conditioning and constituting educational situations, with education being understood as “a form of intentional action, that is, something educators do *deliberately*”, including “intentional *non-action*” (Biesta, 2022, p. 4, emphasis in original). For instance, the *World in Motion* teacher acted deliberately in the spirit of collaborative learning in higher music education to allow for the co-designing of the ensemble, make time for individual aspirations to emerge, and avoid rigid (artistic) processes.

The action situations related to *World in Motion* were highly context-dependent and, as in any social-ecological action situation, the emergent phenomenon – transformative ecopolitics in higher music education – was generated under specific social-ecological conditions. According to Schlüter *et al.* (2019), the surrounding conditions are particular features of the social-political, cultural, material, and spatial contexts that influence the emergent phenomenon “but that do not change within the spatial or temporal scales at which the phenomenon takes place” (n.p.). In *World in Motion*, these conditions included services (un)available for refugees, societal impact goals stated in university policy, and the introduction of new courses in the higher music education curriculum. They also included the Finnish educational culture (e.g. autonomy and trust in individual teachers and researchers) and the European Union policies that at that time promoted a “whole-of-society” approach to immigration, reciprocity, and dialogue (Vision Europe Summit, 2016), all of which have been found to be lacking in many established integration policies in Finland and internationally (Kurki, 2018; Saukkonen, 2020; Xanthaki, 2016).

According to Schlüter *et al.* (2019), action situations are characterised not only by the participating actors but also by, for instance, the rules, networks, and spaces that structure their interactions. In order to clarify the complex action situations of *World in Motion*, however, it was necessary to first identify the individual actors together with the most relevant collective actors and ecological entities that contributed to the emergence of transformative ecopolitics in this situation. The individual actors (A) that were participating in *World in Motion* (lowest level of Figure 3.2) included the higher music education teacher, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral students, and the refugee and immigrant musicians. Collective actors (A) included the university and its doctoral programmes, Caisa, the reception centres, and the diaspora communities. We identified the ecological entities (EE) – physical places or objects that “influence their effect on human actors and actions” (n.p.) – as the various performance venues in the greater Helsinki area and the musical instruments that were used in the ensemble, affecting the possibilities of its artistic expressions.

We further identified three central action situations involving these actors and entities. These action situations mutually influenced each other by shaping their rules and principles, beginning to change the mental models of the participants, and, as we suggest, starting to generate transformative ecopolitics in higher music education in this context (middle level of Figure 3.2). These three action situations include the interactions in the refugee ecosystem, such as the interactions taking place between the receiving Finnish society and newly arrived migrants (left circle); the specific interactions in World in Motion between Sibelius Academy's actors and refugee and immigrant musicians (middle); and the interactions within the international and national educational and research networks of the university (right). In what follows, we focus attention primarily on the middle action situation, the interactions within World in Motion.

Action situations as multi-layered educational situations

The interactions in World in Motion (middle action situation in Figure 3.2) resemble other intercultural exchanges in higher music education contexts. These interactions involved each actor being encouraged to contribute to the ensemble's artistic content and processes and to take responsibility for the well-being of each other in the multi-layered musical, embodied, and verbal modes of communication. Many participants shared their knowledge by introducing or teaching each other instrumental repertoire, folk songs in various languages, and specific instrumental and vocal techniques, which were often accompanied by the spontaneous sharing of the wider contextual meanings and histories of the music.

Intentional musical hybridity towards co-creating a new musical “we” – and thus letting go of musical authenticity as a quality criterion – was a feature of World in Motion. The shared knowledge was used for musical starting points to co-create new compositions and arrangements. One composition, for example, began by learning two traditional Middle Eastern rhythm patterns from a percussionist in the ensemble. Through the jamming together and composing in smaller groups that followed, the ensemble co-developed a piece that included vocalists improvising a dialogue with lyrics based on Greek and Finnish mythology about the creation of the world. Gradually, shared musical and social meanings, and consequently a sense of togetherness, emerged, producing “a lived space” (Soja, 1996, p. 74) where the musicians negotiated what they already knew and held close and explored what might become possible through collaboration with others. The interactions in World in Motion led not only to new musical arrangements, gigs, and completed study credits but also to the emergence of new social and artistic relations, collegiality and friendships, and concrete consequences for study contents in courses at the Sibelius Academy (Thomson, 2021a).

In representing World in Motion in the social-ecological action situation framework (Figure 3.2), we are not claiming that the interactions in and consequences of the action situations represent the experiences of and held meanings

for the participants. Rather, the structures represented in the framework provided the possibility for new meanings to arise for the participants. Action situations and their structural conditions can in general, therefore, be cues for understanding relational meanings made possible in bridging organisations. Importantly, the mutual influence of the three identified action situations related to World in Motion supported the musicians with a refugee and immigrant background as well as the higher music education students and teacher’s agency in the wider sense of citizenship beyond musical skills and repertoire.

For the musicians with a refugee and immigrant background, the ensemble provided an opportunity to use their musical skills and work towards their aspirations in the Finnish music university and field of arts in Finland. The participants explained, for instance, how the interactions and learning supported them in positioning themselves in the new society:

I would like to convey to Finnish people that I’m a musical person, I’m a pacifist, not a terrorist [laughs]. I’d like to introduce them to our Arabic music and the instrument that I play, and at the same time I’d like to play them a Finnish piece of music, so that I let them know that I’m one of them and that we are all together.

(Nuur)²

Dealing with a different society, you learn how everyone thinks, how he feels, how he acts in a certain situation, what he could say in a certain situation.

(Brodaloho)

They also expressed how the interactions and learning extended to their diaspora community and thus the interactions in the refugee ecosystem (left action situation in Figure 3.2):

There is a difference between listening to strange and new music, and, what is better, participating in that music. . . . On a personal level [World in Motion] has broadened what music is. . . . What I learned in World in Motion I tried to translate to my band, to my friends, to transfer some of the thoughts, and even the way of teaching. Not the ideas exactly, but the way of interacting. Most of the time I tell them about what happened [in World in Motion] and about how we create music in this band, so I give them examples.

(Mustafa)

For the higher music education students, the action situation in World in Motion was not simply about learning (Arabic) music but was also about expanding their professional horizons towards socially engaged musicianship, which acknowledges the political dimensions involved in all music-making. Participation in the ensemble led students to envision future artistic projects that engage with

societal challenges and do not necessarily take place in established cultural institutions, such as concert halls. The students' visions included, for instance, new local and global intercultural spaces, musically oriented youth work, and opening sites usually only accessible to high-profile stage performers to wider artistic participation. In this way, the students developed critical systems reflexivity (Westerlund *et al.*, 2021) regarding their own actions, and they expanded their perceptions of traditional professional boundaries while interacting not only with music but with real people and their life situations. As the students explained:

I learned to deal with whatever comes up. It's kind of the first improvisational skill: you plan something, you had something in mind, and then you go there and a lot of things have changed already. . . . I learned to observe what's happening in a group and how to react to an open playground where everybody is contributing to make something out of it. . . . The thing that is hard in this context, is that since you don't know what can come up, sometimes it can take a bit longer to get somewhere, or sometimes, not everybody can agree on the idea of a specific person.

(Giovanni)

I wouldn't say I'm the most sensitive person when it comes to environmental issues and even humanity issues. But I believe that music is here to serve some purpose. You have to use it. Not only creating it for yourself or creating albums and for your personal development. It's about sharing it with the society that you coexist with. . . . What do you do with [the skills]? I don't mean that university should be there to answer all the questions but raise [them].

(Sofia)

Building walls and saying we are now here with our friends is not sustainable. . . . These days it seems totally acceptable to [build walls]. It feels like we here in Finland don't go against that, stand up and do something. I'm almost there, I participate in demonstrations and such, I enjoy the music projects. . . . But maybe at some point there will be a time when I could take responsibility, when I feel really frustrated about this, and I could do something more for these things . . . well, I do something already.

(Olli)

For the higher music education teacher, the students' encounters in the ensemble became a catalyst for understanding the foundations, strengths, and limitations of her own musical practice. In her researcher journal, she reflects:³

The university students and I are bewildered by the political dimension of a planned performance event and the students want to know if they are part of political activity without realising it. We realise that our visiting artist is

in exile due to political activism, which divides the refugees. We discuss the tensions and possible solutions, taking a stance, the impossibility of being neutral, supporting the members of a community torn apart by war, political groups and terrorism, the anguish of the silenced. I’m worried about the emotional toll on all the people involved in the music project. We have entered a new zone beyond our seemingly non-political musicianship.

(Teacher’s researcher journal)

The micro-level interactions that informed the university teacher’s professional practice in World in Motion were also influenced by her interactions within the international and national educational and research networks of the university (right action situation in Figure 3.2), for instance, through her involvement in the music university’s curriculum development and in drafting policy recommendations for the international network of higher music education institutions. Although both the interactions within the ensemble and those within the educational and research networks *alone* can contribute to stronger social relationships, it is the consequences emerging *between* these two action situations that can lead to reciprocal integration beyond individual encounters or institutional strategy. Similarly, the consequences emerging between the interactions within the ensemble and those in the refugee ecosystem (left action situation in Figure 3.2) – as seen in the musicians seeking synchrony between different musical traditions and understandings – are significant, even if only temporarily, for both those who will stay in the country permanently and those in transit. Thus, the consequences that emerged between the three identified action situations both generated and influenced the emergence of transformative ecopolitics in higher music education.

Responsibility, radical imagination, and design thinking

We have so far illustrated, through the example of World in Motion, how linked SES thinking can aid higher music education in rethinking its societal relations, established social formations, locations, and knowledge boundaries, as well as recognising the socio-political consequences of its (non)interactions. With the case of World in Motion, we have aimed to show how higher music education can make time and space for its students and academic community to expand their interactions in relation to the world and not “walk away” (Biesta, 2020) from wicked problems but attempt to act responsibly, and thus expand their professionalism (Westerlund and Gaunt, 2021). Aligning with systems thinkers, we have wished to communicate the importance of even small efforts towards recognising professional responsibilities beyond taken-for-granted practices. Indeed, small changes can contribute to the needed leverage points that result in wider transformation (Senge, 2006), or in the words of Biggs *et al.* (2021), “small changes can lead to large and surprising effects, or vice versa” (p. 6).

Our analysis of World in Motion demonstrates, first, how music educators *can* become “designers” who, each in their own way, become part of social change. Designers use “a way of thinking, learning, and engaging with the world” (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 15) that at the same time envisions transformation. Designing, as we understand it, is simply an everyday capacity to “deliberate, plan and scheme in ways which prefigure our actions and makings . . . while our world acts back on us and designs us” (Willis, 2006, p. 80). Important is the connection to the wider world, which enables music educators to *be* forerunners in addressing complex societal issues. In World in Motion, co-designing meant accepting the complexity and messiness of the process. But also, co-designs in general allow new ways of co-constructing a collaboration that can be continuously envisioned. Because of the unpredictably and organically evolving nature of co-designs, both intended and unintended, positive and negative consequences will be produced. These consequences are not immediately obvious, and thus the process poses a risk for the participants. This very same risk, however, opens up the possibility for education to emerge (Biesta, 2013). Since designers are “*literally* designing the future” (Morton, 2018, p. 62), educators still have the responsibility to consider the possible negative consequences as they contribute to world-making with plural alternatives through their designs.

Second, although designing is an everyday capacity, our analysis aims to show how designing in higher music education both requires and opens an *imaginative relationality* that can expand thinking far beyond present everyday realities, such as lesson plans and musical repertoires. Greene (1995) argued that social imagination allows us to interrupt the supposedly fixed and taken-for-granted social reality, consider alternative realities, and “invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society” (p. 5). Such imagination cannot be reduced to disciplinary creativity, expressed in composing, improvising, or performing. Rather, imagination enables decentering ourselves and breaking out of “the confinements of privatism into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, ‘Here we are’” (p. 35). While Greene, similarly to Waddock (2021), believed that “of all human creations, the arts have the greatest potential for stimulating or releasing imagination” (Greene, 2007, p. 2), we acknowledge that this imaginative power is by no means self-evidently present in higher music education, but requires reimagining its social formations and institutional boundaries. In World in Motion the reimagining was initially based on and resulted in a reconfiguring of physical space: for the students, stepping outside of the formal institutional space, and refugees stepping into the higher music education space. A past-looking and tradition-oriented conservatory system might therefore need a *radical* imagination, one that is, for example, combined with “comprehensive, critical analysis of the current ‘situation of oppression’” (Tannock, 2021, p. 105, drawing on Freire, 1994). We have used SES thinking to demonstrate one way

that such critical analysis supports the emergence of transformative ecopolitics in higher music education.

We have shown ways that World in Motion created complex interactions that challenged the classroom-based, teacher-led, and product-oriented musical activities of the dominant higher education system and blurred the typical master-apprentice epistemological hierarchy to the extent that it was not possible to identify who was the learner or teacher in the ensemble. This happened while the participants’ focus was on the musical exchange, on the quality of the collaborative processes (inclusiveness and feelings of one’s existing skills being relevant and appreciated), and on performing the co-composed pieces to audiences. However, the activities of the ensemble involved expanding the purposes of music-making in such a way that the musical and educational became integrated with the challenges of Finnish society to welcome refugees and immigrants into established institutional contexts. Thus, while the purpose of the ensemble was artistically and musically grounded, it was simultaneously an expression of an underlying stance to the refugees’ right to space in Finnish society and for all participants a space for experimenting and practising “the art of living with difference” (Bauman, 2010, p. 151).

Concluding remarks

With this chapter, we have shown ways in which moving from *egocentric* to *ecocentric* thinking in higher music education requires considering a myriad of social-ecological relations that are either consciously generated by interactions between actors or emerge from these interactions. In this way, we see issues of sustainability as fundamental contributors to transforming higher music educators’ self-understanding, as these issues require the reimagining of the profession. The World in Motion teacher’s response to the refugee situation is by no means unique, as many individual musicians and music educators around Europe have similarly (re)designed collaborations and projects that cross institutional boundaries (e.g. Gande and Kruse-Weber, 2017; Kenny, 2018; de Quadros and Vu, 2017; Schiavio *et al.*, 2019; Thomson, 2021a). However, we have aimed to show how one single design attempt can generate novel structures and opportunities for transformative interaction between vastly different societal systems. Higher music education often tends to resist professional uncertainty and crossing disciplinary and institutional boundaries rather than including these intentionally in its practices. While such resistance may arise due to feelings of powerlessness in the face of massive challenges, SES thinking encourages individuals and collectives in higher music education to invest in even small efforts and at the fringes of systems boundaries. We have demonstrated that doing so might enable the formation of new socio-ecological relations and interactions, which can intensify the emergence of transformative ecopolitics in higher music education.

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Notes

- 1 The Sibelius Academy is one of the three academies of the University of the Arts Helsinki.
- 2 The data used in this chapter's analysis is from Thomson (2021a). Pseudonyms are used in the citations from participants.
- 3 For more detail, see Thomson (2021b).

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4 The paradox of social innovations within music schools

Taking critical responsibility in transformative practice

Hanna Backer Johnsen, Geir Johansen, and Tuulikki Laes

Introduction

Benevolence and equity have historically been among the founding values of the European music school system. The earliest forms of music schools (*Conservatorio*) in 16th-century Italy offered orphan children shelter, food, and music tuition while conserving the musical components of the church and sacred education (Kuha, 2017). Today, most European music schools are under governmental subsidy and regulation and organise music instrument tuition for those who apply as a supplement for basic music tuition given in comprehensive schools. The established position allows for advocacy and continuity of wide, cross-nation music school networks that state their mission objective as strengthening opportunities for qualified music training,¹ which, to some extent, seems to overshadow broader equity values. For example, in the Nordic countries where equality and access are general values of all education, music schools have been identified as elitist (Jordhus-Lier, Graabræk Nielsen and Karlsen, 2021; Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017; Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2022) as they concentrate primarily on Western classical music and serve mainly white, middle-class children, thus reproducing inequalities (e.g. Galmiche *et al.*, 2024; Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021; Westerlund *et al.*, 2021). This criticism relates to unequal educational opportunities recognised on the governmental level (e.g. EU Youth Strategy, 2018), creating pressure also for music schools to improve and update their practices, access strategies and policies. Consequently, Nordic music school research has recently focused on diversity and inclusion policies (e.g. Rønningen *et al.*, 2019, 2023) and expanding discussions from producing adequate musicians for the professional fields (e.g. Kuha, 2017) to reflecting on the social responsibilities of music schools (Laes *et al.*, 2021; Westerlund, Väkevä and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2019).

In Finland, the elitist appearance of music schools has been countered by a music programme called Floora, initiated in 2013 by a group of individual music school teachers, to strengthen the inclusion of underprivileged children

and young people into the music school system (Laes *et al.*, 2021). The collaboration was established with social and immigrant services and local schools to contact families and offer children the possibility to join free musical instrument lessons. Therefore, those children get the same access as other students to high-quality music tuition and regular group or individual instrument lessons, music performances, and parent meetings. In ten years, the programme has reached approximately 600 children nationwide. *Floora* has been conceptualised as a *social innovation* within the Finnish music school system (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017). Social innovations refer to the design of “initiatives in a particular part of society – an organisation, a practice, or an area of activity that signal a promising path of wider social change” (Mangabeira Unger, 2015, p. 233, in Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017). Characterised by structural flexibility through the co-engagement of different sectors, social innovations aim at sustainable systems change in society (Portales, 2019).

In this chapter, we argue that simply increasing diversity of students through access strategies is not enough in order to create sustainable systems change within music schools. Instead, through showcasing *Floora*, we engage with new dimensions of responsibility of music education professionals and institutions that emerge in the co-engagement of music school systems and interprofessional collaboration. Furthermore, by reflecting on the paradoxical nature of social innovations, we agree that social innovations are central to creating transformative music education practice; yet, they reveal key complexities of institutional and professional responsibilities that often remain hidden in conventional music school practices. We will discuss these paradoxes by drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of social reproduction in education, culture, and society. Employing a Bourdieusian lens enables us to explore the unwritten rules of the music school field and the participants’ motivations for being involved in such social innovation. Second, we analyse the challenges of responsibility that emerge in *Floora* and trouble the idea of choice and awareness of students, teachers, and institution leaders through Bourdieu’s (1977, 1986, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) thinking tools. We conclude by reflecting on the balance between responsibility and reproduction in music school teachers’ professionalism. Finally, we address the possibilities for creating transformative practice in and through responsible social innovations on the micro, meso-, and macro levels of music education.

Floora as a critical case of social innovation in music schools

Social innovations in music can be seen as dynamic efforts to enhance social engagement and inclusion as they provide access to music activities, particularly for people in disadvantaged positions. Internationally, we can identify social action that often takes place in privately operated, informal, and community music practices (Baker, 2021). In Europe, these are often based on co-engagement

between schools and social sectors, for example, *Jedem Kind Instrumente, Tanzen, Singen* in Germany (Krupp-Schleußner and Lehmann-Wermser, 2018), *Fargespill* in Norway (Kvaal, 2023; Solomon, 2016), *El Sistema* in Sweden (Sæther, 2018, 2020), and the case of this chapter, Floora in Finland (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017).

Unlike most social innovations in music, Floora is situated within the institutional music school field. Finnish music schools are governmentally funded and regulated within the *Basic Education in the Arts* system (BEA). BEA consists of a national network of music and art schools where approximately 15% of under-18-year-olds in Finland study, for example, music, dance, theatre, and visual arts (Suominen, 2019). Despite the formal accounts of equity and accessibility in their curricula, most music schools still use various means of selection, such as musical aptitude tests, in the school entrance processes (Elmgren, 2019; Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2022). Studies show that the student's gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and the educational and economic background of the parents increasingly influence not only the academic paths (Finnish Government, 2022) but also the likeliness to participate in BEA (Kanerva *et al.*, 2023; Lähteenmaa, 2021; Vismanen, Räisänen and Sariola, 2016).

As social innovations usually co-engage with different sectors (Portales, 2019), Floora has also created an interprofessional collaboration between music schools, social workers, and other services with an aim to improve the music schools' inclusion and access strategies. It has been argued that interprofessional collaborative social innovations such as Floora can support large-scale political priorities by strengthening equal participation on the institutional level while developing more inclusive pedagogies on the student-teacher level (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017). However, even the most well-intended social music practices may pertain to outdated, unequal forms of teaching and learning along with unreflected choices of educational content (Baker, 2014), such as a narrow focus on Western classical music that can “create value for some and destroy it for others” (Nicholls, Simon and Gabriel, 2015, p. 5). In other words, social innovations may have “a dark side” (p. 5) that challenges simplistic assumptions of the benevolent social music programmes: mere participation is often neither enough nor necessarily ethical for advancing inclusion and diversity.

Floora makes an interesting case as it brings out the possibilities and paradoxical nature of social innovations. Rather than only focusing on welcoming new student groups into the existing order, social innovations such as Floora can potentially revise the overall organisational structures and practices, including challenging music education professionals to engage with social innovations ethically and critically. Hence, in this chapter, we delve deeper into conceptualising the dispositions and responsibilities of different actors in Floora and identify the paradoxes of social innovations, which generate challenges for creating a genuinely transformative practice in music education beyond benevolent aims.

Encountering the pitfalls of professional responsibility in Floora

Taking critical responsibility for the professional intentions behind social innovations, whether set by the funder, the institution, or the teachers, concerns everyone involved in such innovations, from institution leaders to individual teachers. While everyone may agree upon the idea of enhancing equity and making music education a significant part of societal change through social innovations, the intentions and interests may vary between the practitioners, government funders, and institutional leaders, raising different paradoxical dimensions of social innovations in music. For example, Baker (2021) has addressed a paradox in the Venezuelan El Sistema, which simultaneously idealises the collective (the orchestra) and the individualised conception of success (young talents), hence reproducing the highly competitive value system of classical music rather than enhancing social or community activism (pp. 127–129). Similarly in Norway, Thomas Solomon (2016) makes a critical remark about *Fargespill*, a series of music and dance performances arranged since 2004 in which children and young people from minority and immigrant groups, many of them refugees, perform together with “ethnic Norwegian” children and youth (p. 187). *Fargespill* was an attempt to show the public “a face of diversity” through “planned pluralism” (Solomon, 2016). At the same time, “behind the scenes, the performances are actually conceptualised, scripted, and extensively stage-managed primarily by majority (white) Norwegian adult arts professionals” (p. 187). According to Solomon, *Fargespill* delivered a “smoke screen that provides the Norwegian state (which gives significant funding to *Fargespill*) with legitimacy while distracting from the state’s troubling treatment of child refugees and asylum seekers” (p. 188). In this way, social innovations may simultaneously hide and make visible societal challenges within the music school field by both strengthening and questioning the hidden structures and unwritten rules of the field. Indeed, while there is variety among the Floora teachers and their pedagogical approaches, Floora can be criticised for its idealisation of Western classical music, a common approach in Finnish music schools, and for exercising – through interprofessional collaboration – planned pluralism in its student requirements. The various dynamics of responsibility emerge when one examines how the actors involved in Floora respond to and negotiate the relationships between the students and the teachers’ everyday practices, institutional boundaries, and interprofessional collaboration. Hence, as we will argue in this chapter, the teachers involved in social innovations might consider their responsibility narrowly, only limited to the instrumental pedagogy and repertoire selection, thus ignoring the critical reflection of the traditions and conventions of the institution.

Thinking of critical responsibilities in Floora through a Bourdieusian lens

Turning to Bourdieu enables us to examine the pitfalls of professional responsibility within the everyday student-teacher relationships, teaching

practices, institutional boundaries, and interprofessional collaboration as being played out within a *field* (Bourdieu, 1977). In the context of Floora and its surrounding institutional systems, the *field* refers to a system of diverse social power relations between teachers, students, institution leaders, and other actors. These actors take part in the *game* of the field (Bourdieu, 1998), a dynamic dimension including the exchange of different economic, educational, and socio-cultural resources that Bourdieu (1986) terms as *capital*. This *capital* exchange is closely interdependent with the actors' being and acting in the field, guided by their practical sense for what is to be done in any given situation, termed *habitus*. The *field-capital-habitus* dynamics affect the individuals' positioning in the game (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2), reflecting the taken-for-granted rules, values, and norms of the game, termed *doxa*. In addition, the actors' being and acting are influenced by their belief in the game and motivation for taking part in it, termed *illusio* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For example, among the unwritten rules of the music school contexts where Floora is situated, the individuals – students, teachers, funders – may have different intentions of participating in Floora. Hence, the dynamics between *doxa* and *illusio* may reveal the paradoxical nature of social innovations. This helps us look more closely at the tensions and contradictions that can occur as people encounter new environments or are challenged by different contexts, for example, when Floora students enter the music school environment for the first time and are confronted by the field's unwritten rules, values, and norms.

Hence, the *doxa* appears not only in the institutional structures but also within the student-teacher interaction and relationships through the existence of the individuals' *habitus* and *capital*. As a thinking tool, *habitus* may clarify the complexity of Floora in accommodating “inclusion and diversity” within music school contexts, since *habitus* is not stagnant or immutable but “contain[s] many matrices [demarcating] the extent of choices available to any one individual” (Reay, 2004a, p. 435). In this way, *habitus* illuminates that Floora actors can, to some extent, facilitate their being and acting by the choices they make, as part of their agency in terms of the capacity of individuals to see their “room for action” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 110) and the extent to which they can freely decide their ways of being and acting within music schools and the larger mechanisms of society.

The teachers' responsibilities may expand as they search for new ways to teach and interact with the Floora students and their families, who often come from various backgrounds and cultures. However, the teachers might experience tension between an internalised professional duty to follow the educational traditions (*doxa*) of the music school field and attending to a new kind of duty in “shifting the terrain” (Biesta, 2019, p. 97), which would mean moving from conventional musical instrument teaching to socially driven and culturally sensitive pedagogy. Institutional leaders may feel that their main responsibility is to maintain institutional structures and status quo (Bourdieu, 1977; Jeppsson,

2020), creating a bias where they must choose between seeing Floora as “good” or “bad” for the institution based on their *illusio* of the field. While the interprofessional team of helping professionals, social workers, and schoolteachers take responsibility for the jointly created access strategy, they do this without necessarily being aware of the value-based discrepancy between continuity and change within the music school institution – the *field*. To support the music school teachers in their search for balance between old and new practices demands that music schools identify themselves not only within cultural and educational fields but also within socially embedded ones, revealing their potentially ambiguous relation to the political priorities and societal relevance of Floora.

This conflicting micro-level dynamics of professional responsibilities reveal the field mechanisms of *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977), which often remain invisible until challenged when, for example, somebody entering the field acts differently (e.g. by their behaviour, outlook, knowledge, or music repertoire). Here, *doxa*, as the hidden structure that includes the tacit, taken-for-granted rules of the game, unfolds dimensions of traditions and norms perceived as inherently true and necessary in the field (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002). *Illusio*, on the other hand, points to intentional and motivational dimensions of *why* it is worth taking part in the game and following the *doxa* of the field. These intentions and motivations can vary from one individual to another, even within the same field. Taking note of the different intentions and interests of the Floora actors reveals the paradoxes and deepens understanding of the field as not simply a “dead structure” but “a space of play” that might exist only if the actors who enter it actually “believe in and actively pursue the prize it offers” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 19). The prize Floora offers may be the transformative potential of rethinking the social value of the system by configuring new possibilities for its boundaries and practices (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017). On the other hand, Floora may remain only as a temporary fix if the critical transformation of practices, structures, and leadership as a prerequisite for systems change is not addressed. While Floora may have succeeded in accommodating some students’ long-term participation in the music school system, there is a need to deliberately consider the responsibility of further shifting the terrain if the actors justify Floora as an integral and permanent part of the publicly funded music school system (Westerlund, Väkevä and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2019).

Although Floora may resist the dead structures of the field, students nevertheless encounter the *capital(s)* and *habitus(es)* of the teachers and other students that signal the *doxa*, certain traditions and norms of the institution, or a set of core values and discourses that tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002). In this setting, *habitus* can be interpreted as expressions of a “typical” (white middle-class) music school student who possesses social and cultural *capital* in the form of assets, knowledge, skills, and communicative capacity deriving from their family and educational backgrounds. Furthermore, students who enter the music school through Floora

may face a tension between their image of (classical) music tradition and their personal aspirations regarding music-making. This tension creates a struggle to adjust the intensity of their engagement in music studies. The affective side of their engagement, motivation, and emotions towards the music school constitutes the *illusio* that entails the students' understanding of why the game of Flora they agree to play is worth playing and what makes them willing to invest in and believe in its significance. In other words, *illusio* deepens the understanding of why students may feel included or excluded in the music school system and why they may or may not continue music studies in Flora.

Conceptually examining the students' opportunities and levels of inclusion in and through Flora via *illusio* calls attention to the critical responsibilities of the other professionals who contribute to Flora's existence. What is it, in particular, that makes the collaborators (e.g., social workers, immigration officers, and music school teachers and leaders) see their participation in Flora as worthwhile? To answer these questions, our following analysis considers not only *who* enters the game of the music school field through Flora but also on what premises, and how the motivations and expectations may collide among the actors involved in the programme.

Flora students entering the game of the music school field

Considering music schools as a Bourdieusian *field* depicts the schools not as "neutral" physical spaces for learning and teaching music but as socially structured spaces that are regulated by specific values and principles and where certain forms of power relations are present (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Within the field, individuals act within and through these values and principles by entering the game according to their own strengths and motivations. Through this conceptual illustration, the participation of students and teachers in Flora is not simply neutral or pedagogically informative but exposes a *struggle* as they must navigate the different external and individual expectations. Indeed, the struggle of individuals, depending on their position in that space, is "either to change or to preserve the boundaries and form" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 17) of the field. For example, Flora students are not just passive receivers of benevolently served music tuition, but they *enter the game of the field* by navigating its legitimacy, rules, and possibilities. The game makes them active contributors and resourceful individuals who bring with them new knowledge, tastes, attitudes, and skills anchored in their earlier educational biography – or, in other words, *capital*, constituting the various forms of assets available to them as actors in the field (Butler, 2019). These *capitals* are embodied and acted out more or less unconsciously in the students' *habitus*, which comprises a reservoir of "immanent dispositions" (Threadgold, 2018, p. 40), constantly changing as a function of new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000). In other words, as *capitals* are accumulated through musical instrument lessons

as well as other encounters and events in the music school and its surroundings, “the capacity to be affected” (Threadgold, 2017, p. 65) may arise. These affective moments can be crucial in shaping the student’s habitus and future dispositions.

As Floora students enter the game of music schools, however, there are hidden expectations (*doxa*) that may collide with the students’ previously gained specialised knowledge (*capital*) of a different field and their practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation (*habitus*). While the “feel for the game” appears through the acquisition of *capital*, Floora students who do not possess the capital valued in the music schools may struggle to sense that they are a part of the field. Possessing social and cultural capital is not only about gaining access but also about internalising a sense of belonging in the music school context.

Entering the music school field is not only an existential question for the students but also poses an educational question for music school teachers. According to Biesta (2013a, 2022), the *educational task* is a threefold combination of academic “qualifications”, “socialisation” into a community, and “subjectification” to become responsible “grown-ups”. In other words, the music school teachers’ educational task does not happen merely at the intersection of attaining musical skills and socialising in the environment but also requires experience, reflection, and experimenting with power and risk-taking in the educational relationships with the students to support them in their task of trying to exist in and with the world (Biesta, 2022). We can identify similarities in Bourdieu’s (1998) articulations by addressing that “having” social, cultural, or musical capital simply is not enough, but those entering a field must also “take the game seriously” and be interested rather than disinterested in the participation in the field to make it individually meaningful. In other words, when music lessons *matter* (as something that should not be taken for granted) to a Floora student, meaning is created and transformed by the student’s disposition in Floora, leading to the acquisition of social/cultural/musical capital that also might further the students’ sense of belonging in the field. Furthermore, when students get opportunities to build their social networks in and through Floora, through peer interactions, institutional connections, and social recognition, their overall capacity to enact change in their *habitus* and social *capital* inside and outside the music school field may improve. In addition, the student might struggle between the capitals valued as important in the music school and the capitals seen as important in the home environment, thus further complicating the idea of Floora as the enabler of students’ acquisition of capital.

Facing the various manifestations of illuio

The notion of interest and meaning-making as prerequisites for gaining new social capital for a Floora student in the music school field leads us to the complexity of inclusion that can be studied through the concept of *illuio*. Inclusion does not

merely mean that some people include others and others are included (Biesta, 2019; see also Laes, 2017). As we have explained earlier, *illusio* – the different beliefs in the game – exemplifies the mechanism of the affective engagement of the actors (students, music school teachers, collaborators) in the game (Floora and the music school institution), entailing the individual notions of why the game they agree to play is worth playing. In the music school field, we see *illusio* connected with the intentions, aims, or visions of social innovations reciprocally reflected within and between the levels of the individual student – teacher dyad, the institution, and broader society. When a Floora student, as a newcomer in the music school, is viewed as “one that accumulates being” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 39), in other words, one who gathers experiences and makes relations in a continuous struggle for meaning and recognition in the field, then the concept of *illusio* provides a tool for understanding *how* the student creates, maintains, and transforms musical meaning as part of the conception of their future in that context and beyond. At the same time, however, the *illusio* of the student’s parents towards Floora may be different and can be motivated, for example, by social mobility (Hofvander Trulsson, 2010). Attending to how the students and their families might position themselves within the social space and highlighting their accumulated histories, including what capitals are at stake, unfolds the different and complex motivations and relationships with Floora.

We may also consider the hidden factors of *illusio* according to the interests of the institution leaders and the teachers who are engaged in the Floora project. Suppose they consider that the most significant cultural capital is the intrinsic value and quality of artworks and their capacity to recognise gifted individuals (Butler, 2019), regardless of the students’ and parents’ interests. In that case, there is a call for more critical responsibility to consider the plurality of present-day conceptualisations of cultural capital (Reay, 2004b) that extend beyond the Western classical music tradition and the expansion of the quality of music education from the aesthetic paradigm to the ethico-political, and social paradigms (Laes *et al.*, 2021). To actively engage in the ethical educational professionalism, in other words, to “take responsibility for our responsibility” (Biesta, 2013a, p. 22), the institution leaders and teachers must deliberately address the paradox between either preserving doxa or opposing it by engaging in transformative institutional practice. In other words, identifying the music school teachers’ and the institutional leaders’ *illusio* within Floora clarifies responsibility for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about who has the right to study music and on what premises. It can initiate a reflective process among institutional leaders and teachers towards questioning the “principles of belief [. . .] which may jeopardize the very *illusio* of their own field” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 42).

We should not disregard that *illusio* is also present in situations “where one’s trajectory meets moments of desire that do not match expectations or even possibilities” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 40). This entails that the students’ *habitus* is in constant change as a function of new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000). Moreover, it

is also possible that the teachers' *habitus* changes through their engagement with the Flora students, and potentially increases their criticality towards the conventions (*doxa*) of their professional practices. Considering the different manifestations of *illusio* among the actors in Flora therefore reminds us that despite the pre-scripted goals, social innovations do not necessarily produce "wanted outcomes" for the institution, the teachers, the students, or the parents. Instead, recognising the changing *habitus* of students and teachers enables a link "between individuals' inner emotional worlds and external social and structural processes" (Reay, 2015, p. 22), thus affording a "holistic understanding of the lived, embodied, affective experiences of inequalities in contemporary society" (Reay, 2015, p. 10). In other words, the *illusio* of one group of actors can be different from the *illusio* of another group, pointing towards the various manifestations of *illusio*. This requires teachers and institutional leaders to be aware and take responsibility for elaborating these differences in their work, including their own subjectivities, expectations, motivations, and professional identities.

The complexity of the students' choice

Examining *illusio* reveals the complexity of Flora's inclusive aims as it helps to notice that the expected goals for promoting equal access and inclusive participation are not always realised on the level of students' lived experience and that the students may have different expectations regarding the activity than what was initially imagined by the founders and teachers of Flora. The responsibility of attending to Flora students' struggles in making choices between their own expectations and the expectations of others calls us to question what is meant by "choice" in the inclusive aspirations within the music school context. Also, Threadgold (2017) underlines that choices, as negotiated in everyday life, are not about "free will", but "[imply] strategies as one deals with what is realistically possible" (p. 35). The construction of social reality, consisting of struggles in making choices, repeatedly forces us to ask ourselves, "If I make this choice or perform this action, what does it say, about me and the wider world"? (Threadgold, 2017, p. 35). The complexity of the struggles in Flora manifests in how students and teachers try to simultaneously advance themselves and adapt to circumstances to accumulate their being in the field. Consequently, the individual struggles within Flora can be devastating and uncertain, stimulating and empowering, but they can also manifest as simply routine and boring. Depending on how the professionals (teachers, institutional leaders, collaborators) support, manage, control, and maintain the field, Flora students can experience more – or less – agency for making choices. This, in turn, has implications for how the students participate in the field or across different fields such as school, family and friends, and society. Simply put, with less agency students and teachers conform to maintaining the *doxa* of the field and the institutional status quo.

More agency helps the teachers engage in a transformative practice, and the students build independent educational trajectories (Threadgold, 2017).

Following the argumentation about the complexities in relation to *illusio* and choice in social innovations, we must also consider the “levels of awareness that play a role in how people strategize and network towards achieving their goals” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 42). Threadgold (2018) asserts how “considering *illusio* through intensities and awareness brings forth affective and temporal elements of aspirations, where one may perceive and understand the *illusio* of the field but lack realistic strategies and time to be able to pursue the rewards” (p. 43). For the actors in Floora, this would mean that the more power an individual has over the surrounding world and social conditions due to their access to different forms of capital, the more the aspirations are adjusted to their chances of them being realised (Bourdieu, 2000). In contrast, individuals with less possession of valued capital in the given context, whose aspirations would “feel a little off”, end up in a dispositional sense of “lack of a future” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 43). Being sensible of the different actors’ (e.g. students, parents, social workers) levels of awareness in or about Floora might help music school teachers assess how much time, effort, and emotion a student is willing to devote to pursue their aspirations in the field: whether one is inclined to “furiously” accumulate capital or to “take it easy” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 42). It is the responsibility of the teachers and institutional leaders to be aware of what capitals other than those related to musical skills and agency Floora can bring for the benefit of students – if at all. Since *habitus* entails a “strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72), it is important not only to look at how the students reflect on their *habitus* within the field but also to pay attention to their use of earlier possessed *capital*.

The way actors use their *capital* might reveal something about their habitual sense of awareness. Indeed, there are at least two levels of awareness in the sense of *habitus* that need to be recognised: the comfortable ease of *habitus* in familiar fields where the actors are like “fish in water” (Reay, 2015, p. 13), and the *habitus* that is “floundering, rather than swimming; of being weighted down rather than weightless” (p. 13). The latter is not due to a lack of action but rather due to a lack of focus on pre-reflective dimensions of the struggle of trying to make the world a different place (Reay, 2015). Hence, the awareness of one’s possibilities is a responsibility not only of the students themselves but also for the whole field of music schools.

Consequently, the intensity of the awareness of the different *illusio* against the multiplicity of choices and their consequences and the unwritten rules of *doxa* against one’s *habitus* and *capital* may help us to recognise the paradoxical nature of the generally benevolent social innovations in music. These paradoxes that we have aimed to illustrate with Bourdieu’s thinking tools include the tensions between the beliefs and motivations of different actors in Floora

and the complexities of choice and awareness of one's own possibilities and those of others. Hence, they help to make sense of the complexities of Flora that manifest new critical responsibilities within music schools, on the level of the everyday teacher-student relationship as well as in the institutional and societal relationships, in other words, the micro, meso, and macro levels of society (Schmidt, 2005). The Bourdieusian analysis of Flora reminds us to consider: “[W]hat is the role of conflict, inquiry, and dialogue in the development of these new paradigms, and who is allowed to participate in the dialogue at both macro and micro levels” (p. 10). In sum, Flora as a structure, including its inherent *doxa* – the unwritten rules of the wider music school system – constitutes the practical and conceptual frame for the Flora students’ social and cultural capital acquisition. At the same time, *illusio* – the motivation and will to invest in music practices by believing in the “good” that it produces back to the individuals themselves – points at the possibility of political agency within the cracks in the structure (*doxa*).

Towards responsible social innovations in music

On the teacher-student micro level, the students encounter the principles and priorities of the traditions of the field, both in dialogue with the teachers and directed by the rules and structures. Awareness of the struggle that this may cause for students who enter the field “as outsiders” calls for responsibility from the teachers to reassess these principles and priorities of the traditional teaching culture of the music school system that has been criticised for its democratically troublesome aspects (Baker, 2014, 2021). Even if “it is important to bear in mind that [educators] and [students] occupy different roles and carry different responsibilities” (Biesta, 2017, p. 326), what may appear as needed is the establishment of a new dialogue. In this dialogue, teachers and students can equally bring in their experience and expertise and acknowledge that contributions from all are needed for any authoritarian relationship to transform into a democratic one (Biesta, 2017), thereby turning the transformative practice into a democratic experiment.

Another issue on the teacher-student level concerns the formation of beliefs about musical ability and aesthetic quality. In her study on inequities in English school music education, Alison Butler (2019) posits that students, due to a lack of economic and relevant cultural capital, assume that they do not have the natural gifts required for success. This assumption “[may . . .] increase the likelihood of being labelled unmusical or uncharismatic by others” (pp. 62–63). This labelling describes the potential *symbolic violence* in music education contexts, meaning specific social codes and norms in a group with greater social power, and works in an excluding way for those in a subordinated position (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The labelling also creates a habitual state that is heavily path-dependent (Renner, 2018); in other words, a situation where past conditions, events and

decisions influence and constrain future events. The power of path dependency has also been identified as affecting the Floora students' participation in the field (Väkevä, Westerlund and Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017). From this notion, the responsibility of the institutional leaders is to consider whether entering the field through an access strategy for "minority groups" may hold back or negatively influence the Floora students' ongoing processes of conceiving the world by creating a conflict between their own, the teachers, and institutions' *illusio*, thereby hampering potential development of the students' musical and political agency. Therefore, within a social innovation such as Floora, one of the core responsibilities of the teachers and institutional leaders is to be open to the possibility that their own, as well as their students' habitual states, might change by countering the powers that draw students and teachers towards path dependency. This possibility of students and teachers questioning or breaking out of the institutional silos, therefore, reveals Floora's potential to transform music education according to its inherent, political nature.

Meso-level responsibilities emerge in the intersections of educational policy and institutional structures. Educational institutions and their leaders have been criticised for a neoliberal educational discourse that promotes learning over education (Biesta, 2013a). In this learning discourse, students should be equipped with the "skills to adapt quickly and effectively to ever-changing circumstances" (Biesta, 2022, p. 11) of the future. Music education scholars have criticised the neoliberal discourse by promoting the intrinsic value of the musical experience (Varkøy, 2015) and non-measurable, slow processes (Johansen, 2021a), thereby opposing the "discourse of panic about educational quality" (Biesta, 2022, p. 14), as well as distinguishing between institutional (passive) *responsiveness* and (active) *responsibility* (Biesta, 2013b). Here, the institutional responsibility points to a more critical position towards the demands of society, resting on the assumption that education should always be understood as more than just a function of existing social and societal orders because it comes with a "duty to resist" (Biesta, 2019, p. 2). When considered at the institutional level, social innovations such as Floora should not function only as (temporary) educational interventions or political instruments. Both political decisions and interprofessional collaborations are needed. However, considerations about the educational as well as individual and social forms of responsibility create the basis for transformative practice in and through social innovations.

On the macro level, the complexity of responsibilities clarifies the social and political aspects of systematically helping underprivileged students to claim their cultural rights (Westerlund *et al.*, 2021). In Floora, this points to the political responsibility to recognise and acknowledge the potential of processes that may lead to social change, taking into consideration that "the ways in which music education and society relate to each other also substantiates a notion that music education contributes in the continuous, dynamic processes of shaping and reshaping society" (Johansen, 2021b, pp. 167–168). These societally relevant

inclusive elements in Floora also imply that those “on the inside” are setting the terms for inclusion, requiring those “on the outside” to meet the set requirements to be included. Hence, “the ‘state of democracy’ in which others are being included, is taken for granted” (Biesta, 2019, p. 109). Indeed, instead of pursuing consensual activities comfortably sitting with the *doxa* of music schools and along with the unproblematised principle of *music for all*, the paradox of social innovations manifests in a question of whether Floora and other social innovations may fuel fruitful friction between political decision-makers, funders, and sectoral professional boundaries by highlighting the critical tensions in the field between *doxa* and *illusio*. This critical stance can foster new and revolutionary insights about the responsibilities and democratic implications of social innovations in music education.

Concluding remarks

Using Bourdieu’s thinking tools to illustrate the diverse dimensions of responsibility emerging in the complexity of social innovations within the music school field, we have argued that critical professional responsibility is crucial for creating transformative practice in music school institutions. This does not mean, however, that socially engaged music educators must compromise the intrinsic value of teaching musical skills and knowledge. Instead, critical responsibility can be weaved into the professional ethos by *reconnecting* high-quality music school practices with the commitment to democratise society (Laes *et al.*, 2021). This entails supporting students in gaining political agency in music schools instead of only being the targets of inclusive aims and planned pluralism.

In addition to being a social and educational challenge, professional responsibility is also an institutional challenge. While social innovations can help institutions meet their responsibilities, they can also reveal unwanted hegemonies and unequal practices and structures by constituting a paradoxical tension field for teachers and institution leaders who may consider keeping institutional structures and practices intact as their *primary* responsibility. Hence, they must deliberately reflect on what premises social innovations in music are worthy of being invested in as part of the field’s “game”. These reflections should clarify *who* is included in the game, *how* the inclusion attempts may change the field altogether, and *why* social innovations make the game worth playing.

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Note

1 European Music School Union: www.musicschoolunion.eu/

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5 Policy entrepreneurship

Towards a new music education professionalism in a risk society

Patrick Schmidt and Tuulikki Laes

Introduction

Looking back at the 2020s, there is no doubt that we live in a VUCA world (the acronym VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity). First coined by the US Army, the acronym is now widely applied to society, describing how the world is constantly changing, becoming more unstable every day – albeit at different paces and volumes in different parts of the world. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis alone has demonstrated the vulnerability of our global structures and the surprising interconnectedness between different economic, social, and educational systems. The pandemic’s unexpected threat led to the overload of health systems worldwide, the turmoil of economic and governmental structures, and the overwhelming mental burden, fear, and misery of individuals in all parts of the world. This will not be the last sudden crisis in the global world, with climate change, demographic transitions, and economic overload being just a few arenas of concern. While human life and education cannot focus simply on how to survive and adapt to such circumstances (Biesta, 2022, p. 11), today’s essential task for individuals and politically responsible governance is to consider not only how to manage risks by adjusting regulations but also how to respond to change more broadly and structurally and through collective action. Moreover, as anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2020) reminds us, the university itself is in crisis in a world that is in crisis. Consequently, in order to transform its conceptualisations and processes, higher education must deal with complexity in society while providing a sense of agency for its actors.

Earlier studies on crisis management in higher education contexts have addressed the lack of strategies and therefore the crucial role of the teachers’ and stakeholders’ individual agency (Oleksiyenko, Shchepetylnykova and Furiv, 2023) in enacting or hindering organisational transformation and collective learning (Hökkä and Vähäsantanen, 2013), particularly in the times of sudden crises. This task concerns our own disciplinary environ and is a central aspect of our focus in this chapter, and in this volume – transformative music education professionalism.

As we write this, Putin's war against Ukraine continues in full power, causing the largest exodus in Europe since the Second World War with nearly five million people fleeing their country, and the tragic conflict between Palestine and Israel has been reignited. At the same time, the latest international reports on climate change show that the window of opportunity to adapt and enact change is closing faster than expected. For us, the authors, however, working on both sides of the Atlantic Global North, there appears to be little evidence that music educators make sustained, critical, and systemic connections between their profession and geopolitical-ecological events. Multiple reasons and conjunctions can be used to rationalise such a reality, not least that such stances suffer in light of the "growing de-politicization of society, in which crises are mostly seen through the lenses of professional problem solvers (e.g. therapists, policy-makers, crisis managers, and the like)" rather than through shared interprofessional spaces and responsibilities (Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017, pp. 517–518). While more significant and renewed participatory action seems needed and is manifested in and through grassroots activism, such as School Strike for Climate in Sweden (Skolstrejk för klimatet), Extinction Rebellion in Finland (Elokapina), Black Lives Matter in the United States, and the Shack Dwellers Movement in South Africa (Abahlali baseMjondolo), professional fields of education often fail to represent or model the "capacity of democratic politics to address problems that concern society as a whole" (Habermas, 1997, pp. 351–352).

Globally, educational systems are claimed and depoliticised by casting them as "a private good bought and sold in the market and technically administered, rather than as a public good and a service charged with promoting socially desirable ends, such as social inclusion, cohesion, and citizenship" (Balarin, 2014, pp. 1458–1459). Arguably, the professionalisation of discriminate problem-solving has had a limited impact in facilitating the means for citizens to challenge established constellations of political power, reverse the usual circuits of communication in the public sphere, and explore the possibilities of concrete transformations of the conditions that create systemic crises and produce social suffering (Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017, pp. 517–518). Such developments have contributed to the separation of social justice movements from educational structures and contexts and a general decline in educational activism.

In higher education, entrepreneurship education seems to bridge the gap between rigid expert professionalism and civic attention to contemporary societal issues. For example, in Finland, the context of the second author, the Ministry of Education has released a roadmap for Research, Development, and Innovation to increase cooperation and new partnerships between universities and corporations. Entrepreneurship, in general, is a loaded term often associated with business language and commonly interpreted as a threat to education, for example by attempting to "marketize" a democratic system (Hess and McShane, 2021, p. 305). Critical academics often "regard an entrepreneur with suspicion" (Arthur, 2017, p. 41), creating connotations for thriving success, profit,

and capitalist ideals. Entrepreneurial identity in higher education, however, is often placed within political and social responsibility issues (Hess and McShane, 2021), situating “entrepreneurs as everyday rhetoricians to demonstrate opportunities to teach students fruitful ways to foster socially attuned communicative practices, thereby contributing to the development of the students’ own professional identities” (Bay and Ruiz, 2020, p. 1). One consequence is that the infusion of entrepreneurial thinking into school education is based on a belief that it can potentially provide “disruptive change” to the educational system (Hess and McShane, 2021, p. 305). However, evidence of such change in systemic and sustained ways remains elusive.

The field of music education serves as an example of the stated challenges, as professionalism in our discipline still operates under long-standing myths of neutrality, with de-political practice as the norm (Woodford, 2019). Said differently, we may consider how fragile intersections between polity, policy, and politics remain vastly unaddressed and curricularly absent both discursively and in terms of professional practice. Further, to our knowledge, no articulation of the interconnectedness between activism and entrepreneurship in music is currently available (see, however, Sadler, 2021). Activism as part of the music education profession and as a manifestation of professional organising is not only underarticulated but also often seen as unrelated to professionalism, emerging rarely and largely functioning under passive, non-strategic, or individualistic terms (e.g. Abramo, 2020; Bernard and Rotjan, 2021).

In our earlier work (e.g. Laes and Schmidt, 2016; Schmidt, 2020; Laes and Schmidt, 2021), we have suggested that to create reflexive transformative professionalism and educational change within music education, *policy* must be first understood as *practice*, a capacity for understanding and mobilising, instead of sets of stagnant rules and imperatives. We still hold that *policy language* offers us “a conceptual and metaphoric space for change in music education” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 52) and a “doorway-in” to “how to speak with others and frame questions” (Schmidt, 2020, p. 31). We see *policy practice participation* as placing music educators at the core of conscient activist teacher professionalism, as Sachs (2003) has suggested, and enabling educators to

amplify our capacity to “hear” others; strengthen our dispositions towards collaborative work and participative action; and foster a sense of autonomy that allows us to expand out the ability to enact our speech and see that speech rendered credible by others.

(Schmidt, 2020, p. 106)

With interest in the broader theorisation of policy and politics in and for music education in a risk society, this chapter aims to challenge the prevailing understandings of how music education addresses policy in research and practice. We begin with the premise that policy-in-action is the result of the flow of three

“streams”: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream (Kingdon, 2003), and that when such streams couple, policy windows may open, facilitating change. In the literature, actors promoting and organising on behalf of specific solutions are labelled *policy entrepreneurs* (e.g. Guldbrandsson and Fossum, 2009). The multidisciplinary research in this area has shown that such role playing, actions, and organising become crucial contributors to a sustainable polity – a stable political order that increasingly needs discursive negotiations in a changing society (Hajer, 2003).

Thus, in this chapter, we argue for the need and potential impact of framing music education professionals as policy entrepreneurs. We start with aiming to clarify the blurred meaning of activism within professionalism and advance a communal, sustainable, and flexible conceptualisation of policy entrepreneurship in terms of mobilising and organising. Central here is the need to revisit or recapture the idea of policy entrepreneurship as a basis for a new music education professionalism in a world in which nominal forms of activism are clearly insufficient. In what follows, we articulate three professional dispositions as critical understandings of music education professionals (practitioners, institutional leaders, researchers) as policy entrepreneurs: 1. *Solidarity Leadership*, 2. *Sustainable Action*, and 3. *Professional Organising*. By illustrating these professional dispositions, we hope to envision tangible action strategies to break the de-politicised path dependency, nurture radical social imagination, and foster a renewed ethico-political reflexivity in the field.

Rethinking professional practice in times of risk and crises

As in several other areas of social life today, music education seems to struggle to capture the distinctions between “system-objective crisis” and “social-lived crisis” (Benhabib, 1986, pp. 224–253), where “the challenge is to translate the objective manifestations of crisis at the systemic level into the experiences of those groups and individuals who suffer the effects of functional problems and channel them through their needs, demands, and dissatisfactions” (Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017, p. 516). The disconnect between the two, be it in cultural-ideological, policy, or curricular terms, could account for how music education’s persistent dependency on Western, exclusionary, whiteness, ableist, or ageist practices is understood and even rationalised as non-systemic – and therefore not treated as a crisis.

Furthermore, since the emergence of the modern *risk society* (Beck, 1992), multiple attempts to calculate and respond to unexpected and unpredictable risks have led to “the crisis of neoliberalism whereby governmental and institutional agencies have been forced to acknowledge their inability to control risk” (Lupton, 2013, p. 138). As a result, individuals, institutions, different art forms, and mass media are encouraged to imagine future events by using visualisation, narratives, and other simulations that depict for us catastrophes and worst-case

scenarios. Risk society is in no way a neutral concept but contains the modern idea of control and presumed decision-making (Beck, 2002). It depicts a colonial, patriarchal future and extended power control. Consequently, many neoliberalist modes of governance, such as free trade-market and individual autonomy, have been called into question by actual, globally encountered challenges (Lupton, 2013, pp. 138–139). Hence, governmentally defined crises are those of “a particular mode of existence and world-making” (Escobar, 2022, p. 183), serving as a reminder that “crises are not only theoretically relevant as a means to explore the conflicts immanent in processes of social reproduction but are also normatively demanding as a means to come to terms with destructive tendencies” (Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017, p. 515).

For the disciplinary environ of music education, recognising potential risks, such as diminishing resources, societal attitudes and values that do not support keeping the arts and music subjects in the school curriculum, lack of research funding, and insufficient professional development and teacher education derive from external neoliberal parameters and the New Public Management (NPM) of educational institutions. However, they are often carried and endured as a matter of subjectivity, which points out the complexity of how to address risk and crises in one’s practice. Therefore, we argue that current – and likely ongoing – conditions of risk require an urgent re-engagement with the overtly political character of professionalism and professional practice. We suggest that if we accept those robust intersections between policy, polity, and politics as dependent on reflexive, participatory, and agency-oriented work, then considerations for action require a proactive framing, which we believe could be coalesced under the banner of *organising*.

In rethinking the professional practice that aims at making music education in and for risk society, we start by suggesting a mirroring relation between activism, solidarity, and entrepreneurship to those functioning between politics, polity, and policy – now repositioned at the grassroots level. Then, we would like to propose that professionalism that is to be sustainable, responsible, and engaged – which seem to us as necessities in times of high risk and crisis – should be developed (as capacity and disposition) under intersecting and co-dependent notions of activism, solidarity, and policy entrepreneurship. While activism and solidarity are sometimes considered in tandem, they are not often linked to policy entrepreneurship. While they have been considered separately, we also see them as critical conditions for the development of *organising*, which we define and expand later. All this creates a gap in current professional practice (teaching), development (continuing education), and formation (teacher education).

In what follows, we consider in greater detail the conceptual starting points for policy entrepreneurship and its meaning in and for music education professionalism. We further suggest that grassroots or ground-level policy entrepreneurship could mediate between different perspectives and realities that aim to develop “reflexive awareness and creating new forms of relating to the self and

others, including experts and institutions” (Lupton, 2013, p. 143). Furthermore, educators who “consciously and reflectively” choose to be part of renewal are being asked to justify and defend their practices (Greene and Macrine, 2020, p. 83), which is why we start by opening and conceptualising the term policy entrepreneurship and how it may support the construction of a sustainable political economy framework.

Policy entrepreneurship as a political economy construct

Dey and Steyaert (2010) have criticised the celebratory language around the notion of the *hero-entrepreneur*, as well as the modelling of *best practices*, particularly the way in which they invite reproduction rather than imagination through a “conservatism which neutralizes the concept’s radically transformative possibilities” (p. 91). However, the first ideas of entrepreneurship (Fr.: *entreprendre*, Eng.: to undertake) centred on rethinking status quo positions and challenging assumptions about what works and what is possible (Hess and McShane, 2021, p. 305). Entrepreneurial thinking and action then, at its best and when enacted in a participatory manner, invites restructuring and adaptation, potentially fostering disruption and innovation. In education, an entrepreneurial stance is aligned with a commitment to address the unmet needs of students, providing new tools and services as well as more flexible bureaucratic alternatives for schools (Hess and McShane, 2021, p. 306).

Accepting risk as a condition of educational policy renewal or entrepreneurship, which includes a better understanding of crisis situations, can become useful not only to expose the “stress limits” of social and political institutions but also to find potentials for change in the systemic conditions that are revealed by the crisis in the first place (Habermas, 1997, p. 143, in Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017). Hence, taking risk and uncertainty as starting points for socially aware entrepreneurship (instead of profit and certainty), flips the individualistic and econometric view of education as a measurable industry that makes us “value what can be measured” (Biesta, 2009), even in music. Instead, embracing uncertainty guides us towards the renewal of professional practice as supported and even dependent upon alliance, coalition, and collaboration with other actors within one’s professional space. Here then, we highlight the division made between “capitalist entrepreneurship”, regarded as an essentially amoral practice, and “academic” policy entrepreneurship, often driven by an explicit “moral good” (Arthur, 2017, p. 42). This political economy construct for policy entrepreneurship is the basis for our vision of the type of music education professionalism closely connected to the *activist* approach we have discussed elsewhere (Laes and Schmidt, 2016) and to recent calls for expanding music professionalism by reconfiguring its societal relevance (Westerlund and Gaunt, 2021).

One place to start with a more nuanced and socially meaningful consideration of policy entrepreneurship in education is the literature on *new institutionalism*

and its “deep interest in the interplay between structure and the agency of actors operating within them” (Mintrom and Norman, 2009, p. 656). The key here is the emergence of the individual as critically aware of discursive realities of their contexts (schools, for instance), having a situated knowledge of relevant practice and procedures, but just as significantly, also understanding what it means to be ‘in the true’ as Ball (2012) has articulated using Foucault; that is, to have insight into parameters of legitimacy and limits of norms, knowing when to act within them and when to push boundaries. In the same vein, Lavee and Cohen (2019) argue for more significant and careful considerations of what they name “street-level policy entrepreneurship”, enacted by individuals such as nurses, social workers, and teachers. Such professionals often work in challenging conditions due to high workloads and low support systems, but nevertheless play significant roles in not simply *implementing* policy but also, and importantly, *formulating* policy, helping to frame, form coalitions, influence, assess, and redirect policy practice at the ground level. The policy literature often focuses on *tactical* aspects of policy action – for example, forming coalitions; working with teams; networking within policy circles and at different stages of the policy cycle (Mintrom and Norman, 2009) – as merely instrumental, forgoing what Pizmony-Levy, Pallas and Green Saraisky (2018) name *edu-activism*, and the political commitment and interest in local organising activism expressed by many educators. We propose that critically informed and educationally oriented use of policy entrepreneurship as a professional capacity and practice may have significant consequences in the preparation and professional development of music educators, as well as in their *empowerment* towards a critical zone of educational transformation, as articulated by Ira Shor (1992).

Considering the above, we place systems as significant as individuals in the political economy construct of policy entrepreneurship, which implies the need for critical professional formation and a reconsideration of the larger systemic conditions, cycles, and their unintended consequences within higher education. However, the interplay with the local community becomes essential – and not just local communities surrounding schools, but essentially the local community of practitioners, in our case music educators, within a school or community setting as well as academies and other educational institutions. Such a view also pushes teacher education to consider how to “develop a view in which entrepreneurial action is deeply embedded and feeds back into culture” and where “localized understanding of the ‘social’ in social enterprise is negotiated mainly in inter-subjective and inter-organizational realms at the community level” (Mauksch and Rowe, 2016, p. 176). In other words, can future music educators not simply be qualified to exert their craft, but are they supported in their teacher education in developing policy-organising skills that will enable them to be integrated into the critical professional formation? To consider policy entrepreneurship as intersecting and informing activism and solidarity, policy entrepreneurship must be grounded in contextual and social concerns where teaching

and learning environs are seen as a “social enterprise” that “collectively [can] engage in narratives of change and entrepreneurial activity” (p. 177).

It is also worth noting that many labourers – teachers at the forefront – have been re-considering career pathways and employment conditions in the post-pandemic environment. The suggestion of Frisch-Aviran, Beerli and Cohen (2021) that there is an increased need to respond to labourers’ alienation, including what emerges as consequent “from the policies they are expected to implement” (p. 716), highlights the ways that this sense of being psychologically disconnected from one’s work responsibilities has a range of negative consequences for both organizations and employees” (p. 717). If, as Gofen (2014) has argued, lack of self-efficacy and agency are crucial elements in professional disenfranchisement and have a significant impact not only on quitting but also on markers of decreased well-being such as stress and burnout, the manner in which agency and local level policy entrepreneurship is supported become formative to professional dispositions (connected particularly to music teacher education in our case) and foment a re-engagement with knowhow (Schmidt, 2020) may be consequential. At the field level, this may be even more significant as music education is challenged to re-think, decolonise, and re-direct its conceptions of leadership, curriculum and pedagogy, and artistic practice.

From our perspective, it is evident that complex challenges, such as music education, coloniality, limited access, poor equity track record, lack of cultural hybridity, and resistance to diversification (to name a few), do require a greater understanding of and better engagement with the individual action leading to wider systems change rather than seeing the two as opposing viewpoints. As a political economy construct, policy entrepreneurship may be helpful if understood in ethico-political terms and aligned with the co-acting factors of solidarity leadership, sustainable action, and professional organising, as we expand below.

Solidarity leadership

Solidarity is closely linked to empathy, including the ability to imagine oneself in another individual’s position. Such reflexive empathy manifests in *moral agency* (Franklin, 2020) as a conscious practice in social situations and policy environments of neoliberal governmental and institutional agencies that do not directly encourage us to show empathy and address solidarity in human and environmental relationships. Reflexive empathy guides our moral behaviour, balancing our desires and the needs of the environment. Solidarity is, therefore, more than just empathy. It is more because it forms the basis of our morals and social order. One of the central challenges of solidarity, as Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) proposes, is how to re-centre “difference through a focus on the particularities of human interdependency rather than the generalities of human universality” (p. 45) and how to bring such conceptions and practices within organisational governance and curricular commitments. Hence, it is worth considering how

solidarity manifests in all educational relationships – between students and teachers on different educational levels or between researchers, practitioners, and educational policymakers.

Biesta (2013) argues that perhaps *the* educational question “is about what it is that we want to give authority to”, in other words, “deciding what it is that we want to have authority in our lives” (p. 55). Entertaining seriously what is of value to us, professionally, will then include why/when we “give authority to the teaching we receive”. Coming to understand how/when/why to make such decisions is a form of cultivation, Biesta (2013) argues, which has at its centre the process of subjectification. Contrary to qualification and socialisation (both critical to teacher preparation and reaching beyond content and pedagogical know-how), subjectification is not about how individuals become part of existing orders but how they can be “independent, some would say autonomous, subjects of action and responsibility” (p. 64). This is critical because the kind of policy engagement we are interested in demonstrates the ways that we can be subjects in the lives of schools or communities. In those terms, educating future educators towards policy practice is to express a joint commitment towards their subjectification and a kind of school citizenry, where.

“Solidarity” is now comprehended as a mutual attachment between individuals, encompassing two levels: a *factual* level of actual common ground between the individuals and a *normative* level of mutual obligations to aid each other, as and when should be necessary.

(Bayertz, 1999, p. 2, italics in original)

In Gaztambide-Fernández’s (2012) interpretation of Bayertz’ view, he argues that the “two aims of the concept are intimately related, as those who use the concept of solidarity in a descriptive mode do so in search of patterns that might yield prescriptive norms to address social or political problems” (p. 47). This goes to the centre of the relational principle guiding policy practice enacted by school community members organising around local needs and grassroots agendas (Schmidt, 2018, 2020) and how it exemplifies the struggle between recognition, adaptation, and implementation as cyclical tensions embedded in work that aims towards ethics, equity, and inclusion. Greene and Macrine (2020) articulate teachers’ solidarity as the Arendtian *common world*, which “may be thought of as a fabric of interpretations of many texts, many images, and many sounds” (p. 91).

This common world is in the making in classrooms and communities, particularly in the presence of marginalised groups and silenced voices. It is here where solidarity intertwined in entrepreneurial policy practice can become a precept to organising, merging the expert authority of professional craft with the moral agency to “live and lead with integrity, courage, and imagination as they serve the common good while inviting others to join them” (Franklin, 2020, p. xxvii).

Critics have rightly raised the question of whether constant pressure to engage in activism might be a burden and/or limitation on music education programmes, as stated by Geoffrey Baker (2021). He asks if activism per se is “the answer” or whether, by simply “promoting reflection, creation, and participation, music education might give young people tools to engage in action or activism in other areas of their lives or when they are older, if they so choose” (p. 172). We believe that bringing solidarity and policy entrepreneurship in relation is one way to create the conditions for and the modelling of professional organising – in professional formation (higher education) and professional development (lifelong learning). This challenges Baker’s dualism (responsible as it is), placing activism not simply as a curricular, pedagogical or identity matter but embedded in a larger field-level professional paradigm. In other words, if solidarity is a necessary condition of labour today and if professional formation is premised by entrepreneurial qualities that understand solidarity as constitutional to ethical educational work, then activism is not only integral to professionalism but also necessary for professional growth.

One way to approach the shift in educational leadership is to see it as a form of pedagogy rather than management. Leadership as a form of pedagogy always “takes place in an encounter between subjects, who are also made – and therefore transformed – in and through the encounter as subjects” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, p. 51). According to Alvesson, Blom and Sveningsson (2017), pedagogical or transformative leadership is always relational (concern for people) and involves “moral commitment and inspirational organizational objectives” (p. 39). This is another way to explain the realignment between the individual and the collaborative/communal, as discussed in the policy entrepreneurship section. Professionalism that centres organising as a condition of professional autonomy and authority, framed by solidary policy entrepreneurship, emerges as the kind of deliberative, coalition-oriented, distributive leadership we advocate should be at the centre of any music teacher education programme.

While activism often involves community spirit, it does not necessarily include the ethos of leadership. One of the consequences here is atomism, where the direction and implementation of activities tend to be short-term, thus foregoing or de-emphasising sustainability. Leadership is replete with challenges, from dissensus to power plays to indeed violence. Consequently, we do not take what we advocate for here lightly. As stated from the beginning of this chapter, however, the convergence of events and the fast transformation of our environs – let alone growing demands for inclusive, equity-oriented, and even transformational practice – require us to consider what kind of leadership (not entry-level skills) can and does teacher education programmes actually produce. If professional practice is to be different, professional formation must find ways to address and embed in their framing the disruptive kinds of ethics we suggest here. The “difficult inheritance” that is embedded in decolonial work and a reckoning with the fact that changing how we do our business “is bound up with the ethical problem

of learning how to account for the forms of life it leaves in ruins” (Tarc, 2011, p. 16) are serious and complex issues that can only be addressed by structural repositioning.

A distributed perspective on deliberative leadership suggests a changed role for the music educator to become a policy entrepreneur. At the very basic level, it implies relinquishing some authority and power – which is always challenging for a teacher – and repositioning their role from exclusive leadership to being more concerned with facilitating and supporting others in leading transformation and change. More significantly, it also requires a different conception of educator/teacher/principal/researcher as a professional, one that is educated to find new priority balance from the individualistic to the collaborative, from advocating to organising, from application of expertise to policy entrepreneurship, all accompanied by the development of new skills and a new repertoire of approaches that support new roles and their needed capacities.

Sustainable action

In our analysis, an important dimension of responsibility for policy entrepreneurs in globalised risk societies is initiating sustainable action, acknowledged by the United Nations as a strategy “to start looking at the social aspects of sustainability in more detail, since these have so far proved more difficult to operationalise than the ecological and economic aspects” (United Nations, 2013, p. 7). Acknowledging the slipperiness of the term sustainability/sustainable development (e.g. Priestley *et al.*, 2010), our focus here is on *social sustainability*, which resigns from “development” education and its neoliberal connotations. Social sustainability refers to our capacity to develop an understanding of the systems components, their connections, and consequences. Significant here is *organized collectivity* and how the field of music education as a whole can present both a vision of sustainability that also serves as a starting point for programmes and educational and cultural policy. This kind of praxis “deploy[s] action that re-creates the agent even as the agent is creating the action – in an ongoing, chiasmic loop of transformation” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 157). Social sustainability then becomes a requirement for social justice and the link between social justice and education (Ketschau, 2015).

Ketschau articulates that education is an essential determinant of sustainable enactment of social justice, not only regarding formally qualifying graduations in the early phases of life but also regarding individual, political, and economic needs for lifelong education. The concept of lifelong learning is indivisibly related to this with respect to the need for and the right to education in every phase of an individual’s life, hence increasingly relevant also for music education policy and practice (see Laes and Schmidt, 2021). The focus must be on compensating for the tendencies of social injustice caused by the formal education system and the societal dynamics regarding the educational rights of all,

including those outside the workforce. Then, lifelong learning may be the central concept in addressing social justice with educational measures and, therefore, the most relevant concept for sustainable social development (Ketschau, 2015).

The inclusion of social sustainability to reshape education and rethink educational institutions' role requires deliberate practice from education professionals in all levels and contexts with ethics of possibility at the core. Education does not necessarily automatically lead to a more sustainable world. It may even reinforce social injustice through its systemic errors and ignorance towards inequalities based on gender, age, disability, or ethnicity. Hence, a socially sustainable educational system – as well as a society – is just, equal, and free from exclusion (Wolff and Ehrström, 2020). Socially sustainable education includes all students; however, it also requires conscious planning and setting the stage for complex interaction and methods for balancing between collective and individual interests. Wolff and Ehrström (2020) identify three requirements for enacting the social dimensions of sustainability in education: an interdisciplinary approach, an interconnectedness between theory and practice, and a participatory approach where the distributed leadership role of the teacher plays an important role (n.p.). Sustainable action, then, requires that teachers as policy entrepreneurs assume a key role in reflecting together with their colleagues, students, and larger communities a broad interpretation of sustainability and how it affects individuals here and now, as well as later both within and outside the academic community.

Professional organising

Professional organising as *policy-in-action* takes place in the intersection of the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream (Kingdon, 2003). It counts on professionals as visionary, communicative, and proactive *entrepreneurs* who use opportunities to influence policy outcomes to further a positive change without having the necessary resources to achieve this alone but work “with persuasive arguments made to decision-makers” (Arthur, 2017, p. 39). In education, however, the growing hierarchical disparity between management, decision-makers, and educators demands a repositioning of such an individualised perspective and a reclaiming of grassroots, collaborative enterprise historically present in labour organising.

One pathway towards a new music education professionalism required in our risk societies is the rescuing of professional organising as a principle of sustainable policy entrepreneurship. An essential purpose behind an articulation of music educators as policy entrepreneurs in schools and communities is the potential to amplify agency and to situate and localise organising “wide awake” (Bernard and Rotjan, 2021, p. 64). As articulated here, activism has experienced inflation in education, accompanied by bounded discussions but often without actual action points for transformation. We have used professional formation and professional organising here as a dispositional conversion, a goal for professional

formation efforts, and an ethical target for programme development. The ethics of professional organising is framed by the emergence of leadership capacity committed to the intersection between solidarity and entrepreneurship. This, we argue, is an important condition for sustainable practice.

Of course, engaging with transformative music education professionalism is not an easy task. Fears, contradictory feelings, limited models and other examples, formative experiences, and even cultural aesthetics are all notions that pose obstacles and limit music educators as they attempt to promote change within their organisational environments. Not to mention the universal sense of helplessness under major catastrophes from war migration movements to climate change – something that also music teachers concretely face in their everyday practices around the world. Such barriers deserve further theorisation, research exploration, and consideration related to professional formation within the field, in other words, deeper and more engaged collaboration between researchers, teachers, and institution leaders in our field. We believe these embedded agents can (and do) become policy entrepreneurs by fostering knowhow and engaging with “enabling conditions” within their environments through collaborative action. Galanti (2018) is helpful here, stating that “enabling conditions for institutional entrepreneurship relate, first, to organizational field characteristics and, second, to actors’ social position” (p. 44). There is a *co-dependence* at play here, whereby aspects of the first, such as crises, jolts, social change, technological opportunities, and so forth, can open spaces for policy entrepreneurship as long as a dispositional readiness and political engagement experience of sorts (again the relation between politics, polity, and policy) facilitates actors’ engagement.

This leads us to consider further existing notions of professional organising as an arena of more serious consideration with teacher education, where research and practice meet in a most dynamic way. Part of how we engage in the process of professional organising is not only by providing and fomenting representation of innovative initiatives but also by theorising on the “abstract dynamics that are part of society’s systemic operations” and by empirically (through research and practice development) fostering a “thematization of the concrete experiences of actors dealing with the excesses and destructive effects of such dynamics” (Cordero, Mascareno and Chernilo, 2017, p. 525), effectively creating fodder for policy intervention and argumentation.

Towards a new policy entrepreneurship professionalism in music education

As we see it, music educational practice as and through policy entrepreneurship can be considered as a pathway to renew the vision that guided much of the work of critical theorists in the last 50 years. As Katherine Sadler (2021) puts it, integrating entrepreneurship education in higher arts education holds great potential to connect the education programmes with the actual lives of the students and

empower them to “advocate and agitate for social and economic change” (n.p.). This educational pairing, as Sadler posits, should “borrow from areas of social justice education and economic activism in terms of supporting the idea that individuals of all descriptions should be granted respect and autonomy within an economically collective environment” (n.p.).

This *neo-activist* stance on policy entrepreneurship is ideologically and epistemologically aligned with Appadurai’s (2012) distinction between *the ethics of probability* and *the ethics of possibility*, which he identifies as the central struggle and tension in our society. Economically oriented *ethics of probability* focuses on agency as individualistic, indeed as business-produced caricatures of entrepreneurship that have become near normative. Appadurai further explicates that many practitioners and analysts studying contemporary capitalism have almost entirely forgotten the idea of uncertainty while overwhelmingly focusing on “risk”. Hence, their most significant technical focus is probabilistic thinking: cost/benefit and systematic rationality (Appadurai, 2012, p. 8). On the contrary, an ethics of possibility marks hope and aspiration that are central foundations for our well-being and sense of agency. Ontologically, it functions under the assumption that individuals and collectives see and foster possibility by working together. Organising – the collective, shared interest established by grassroots communities working around similar principles, aims, political necessity, and professional challenges – becomes a significant vehicle for such ethical work and professional positionality.

In this chapter, however, we have wanted to consider policy entrepreneurship not only as a matter of subjectivity but also from a systems theory framework, simply explained as the understanding of the whole as greater than the sum of its parts, that is, policy entrepreneurship as an ethico-political stance. The view of “systems entrepreneurship” (Westerlund *et al.*, 2021) reminds us that it is “not just the practice but the system’s boundaries to change and, hence, the need for professionals to reconstruct their relationship to society” (pp. 3–4). Systems thinker Luhmann (1997) argues that systems establish mechanisms to avoid “both unreflectingly repeating the past and orienting itself to the future ‘as a constant deviation from its own state’” (p. 364). From the systems view, we can consider tangible action strategies that would break path dependency and foster a renewed ethico-political reflexivity in the field. For example, re-centring curriculum development from the standpoint of excluded or marginalised voices becomes not a form of reparation or “alternative” practice but a re-orientation of the whole system; not an effort to “diversify” or manage risks but a systemic attempt to reorganise structural reality. Entrepreneurship is certainly not the only strategy but seems an essential manner, indispensable perhaps, to re-orient the relations between what sits at the centre, border, and outside current systems of practice. We want to follow Cordero, Mascareno, and Chernilo (2017) proposing that at the centre of our conception of policy entrepreneurship is reflexivity, specifically in the way “it speaks to the need to combine a de-centred

observation of the conflicting imperatives that both enable and block society's self-reproduction" and "non-reflexive social processes that trigger situations of crisis" (p. 525).

In sum, our attempt in this chapter has been to draw a picture of the type of *policy-savvy* community activism within music education that considers the revolutionary potential of "new" or emerging policy entrepreneurship professionalism outside the neoliberal commodification ideals while acknowledging that "activism" might mean different things, roles, and risks in different parts of the world (see Baker, 2021, pp. 171–172). As Peter Mayo (2015, p. 155) reminds us, being a critical educator entails a risk of becoming overzealous in our "quest for an ostensibly 'emancipatory' education", the effect of which can be disempowering to our students rather than "enabling them to develop as self and collectively disciplined subjects, equipped with the broad knowledge, intellectual rigor, critical acumen, social conscience and dialogical/participatory attitude necessary to assume the role of social actors". This, in turn, is in sharp contrast to the two-dimensional subjects manufactured by neoliberal policies, such as consumers/producers or laymen/experts. Therefore, as we have suggested in this chapter, (re-)claiming policy entrepreneurship to educators themselves may help construct a political economy of more socially sustainable, responsible, and transformative music education professionalism.

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6 The *pædeia* cycle of music education

Recuperating creativity as democratic education

Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos

Jumping straight in: creative music education as democracy in action

Five people around a grand piano. Playing inside it as well as on the keyboard: an electric toothbrush, together with beaters and pieces of paper; a mandolin; an untuned fretless cumbus played with a free-floating broken string; a glockenspiel; a melodica. Discussing, imagining, and weighting possibilities about how to perform a series of free improvisations based on verbs borrowed from Georges Perec's *Penser/Classer* (1985): thinking about taxonomy as both a constraint and an opening. Considering the basic parameters of what is to be done. Then, delving into free play: moments of care, effortless effort, deep concentration, moments of testing, moments of clarity and control, and moments of letting go; moments of failing; moments of sharing; moments of slow pursuit of subtle independent pathways, seemingly disconnected. Is this music? Maybe.

This was *Monday's drop(s)*, a free improvisation collective. Its members, four female students at the Department of Early Childhood Education in the University of Thessaly, and myself as their teacher met every Monday between 2012 and 2018 at the university music studio to improvise and record (Kanellopoulos, 2015, 2016, 2021; Kanellopoulos *et al.*, 2016). For me, this has been a formative experience that made it possible to see the possible entanglements between teaching, playing, and creating in a thoroughly new light. We experimented with ways to create music that creatively addressed (im)precision, (im)balance, unity, being together, being together by being apart, creating a mass of indistinctive elements vs. playing on the verge of the audible. In *Monday's drop(s)* improvisations there is no leading voice and no soloist, although there are often distinctive levels of sound articulation and a sense of foreground/background. There is a strong desire to go off in unexpected directions, but at the same time there are moments in our playing when a feeling to just 'be there with' the sound prevails.

Monday's drop(s) shared and listened to music (from Ligeti to Yo-Yo Ma playing Bach and from Jim O'Rourke to AMM) via email and in their gatherings. The group also occasionally performed in public and collaborated with people of

different musical backgrounds and experience levels (from professional improvisers to young children and from novice instrumental learners to a choreographer) on the basis of a notion of difference aptly described by Elizabeth Gould (2008):

[D]ifference is not less or opposed to what has preceded it, but rather, difference is just that: different, something new, something previously unthought, untried, even untenable. It does not threaten what came before, but extends and experiments with it, transforming it without prejudice.

(p. 8)

Monday's drop(s) seem to simply want to be able to pursue an autonomous musical practice – autonomous not in the sense of a closed, isolated approach to art making but in the sense of pursuing a mode of musical practice through which they search for their “sound” and decide the “rules” that underpin their work. Yet, it must also be noted that the line between self-determination and a sense of self-sufficiency that might lead one to make circles over oneself is difficult to draw. One should always be alert to this danger of self-circumscribing, as it may lead to impoverishment of imagination. We often discussed this danger but had no answer for how to avoid it.

Stepping back: resisting authoritarian neoliberalism – a wider context

This chapter stems from the need to find new ways for understanding the link between democracy and creative music education, at a moment when creativity is being thoroughly instrumentalised by neoliberal logics and policies (Kanellopoulos and Barahanou, 2020). It seeks to politicise music education (Biesta, Laes, and Westerlund, this volume), proposing what can be referred to as “the *pædeia* cycle of music education” and suggesting that this can be a means to envision and practice transformative politics.

This essay has a long history. When I first began working on advancing an approach to the Greek notion of *pædeia* that might help us envision a democratic creative music education today (Kanellopoulos, 2012), Greece was in a perilous economic and political situation with devastating consequences, yet one more bleak chapter in the country’s long history of crypto-colonialism¹ (Herzfeld, 2002, 2016a, 2016b; also Panageotou, 2017). The multi-level educational consequences of that crisis (Kanellopoulos and Pechtelidis, 2020) are still deeply felt; prominent among those is the pervasive domination of instrumentalisation and economisation of education that places the arts in a particularly disadvantaged position. Especially following 2019, when a right-wing government came to power, art and humanity subjects have been almost under siege. In June 2020, the subjects of music and art were removed from upper secondary general education; sociology and democratic citizenship education became thoroughly

marginalised; education in history took a clear nationalist pathway, now aiming solely at “shaping a national conscience”;² refugee children, when not brutally pushed back, are often deprived of their right to education and regular schooling.³

Greece’s story is not particularly exceptional. Adopting a broader perspective, this situation can be seen as the result of a local version of reactionary-populist neoliberalism (see González-Ruibal, González and Criado-Boado, 2018), part of a larger current around the globe that stems from an entanglement between reactionary populism and authoritarian neoliberalism (Ryan, 2019; Robbins, Bishop and Tarman, 2019; Sotiris, 2017; Williams, 2021; Gallo, 2022). It is important not to lose sight of the fact that “[n]eoliberalism and authoritarianism enjoy strong theoretical links” (Gallo, 2022, p. 16). As Andreas Kalyvas (2019) has argued, “in the current phase of neoliberal globalization” significant transformations are in the way, “including the movement towards an ethnonationalist, authoritarian mutation of the oligarchic structures of the neoliberal post-democratic state” (p. 384).

A most pervasive outcome of the erosion of education by neoliberalism is the imposition of a very narrow view of value. Value is accorded primarily on the basis of what might be useful in a world where the “rule of the market” regulates every and all aspects of human life. The insistence to monitor every aspect of the process of education – to measure its ‘value’ – stifles that very process by marginalising what is actually educational in it, removing “the necessity for judgment” (Locke, 2007, p. 3). And it does so by forcing all agents to conform with what is measured (and measurable) (Apple, 2001). Gert Biesta (2010) has poignantly asked “whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure” (p. 13). Biesta’s question alerts us to the danger of uniformity that works against the cultivation of a critical apprehension of the ends served by education. Not only adopting a more moderate position but also insisting on the need to adopt a critical stance, Unterhalter (2017) calls for “a reflective approach to measuring the unmeasurable in education”, emphasising that we need to carefully “consider whose interests are advanced, and whose neglected in discussions of measuring the unmeasurable” (p. 13). I feel that a major challenge in (music) education today is the increased gap between what is measured – and thus upheld as valuable – and what is valuable but cannot be measured, thus becoming silenced and/or marginalised.

In the face of commodification of education, art and music education face serious challenges. Jeff Adams (2013) argues that “[c]reative practices in education are ‘neoliberalized’ in two ways principally: either they are assimilated into a market ethos, or they are driven out of the curriculum altogether” (p. 242). Music education has been forced to adopt discursive tropes and practices that conform to the neoliberal ethos, promoting instrumentalised approaches to the value of musical engagement (Bates, 2021; Powell, 2021). This changes the way we understand what it means to “be creative”: Creativity is now becoming

an individualistic survival tactic that enables music “creatives” to become efficient producers of market-friendly innovations. “Being creative” means nothing more than doing what you want to do – this “want”, it must be said, is already imperceptively conditioned by the need to achieve marketable results. Creativity is recast as “a mode of biopolitical governmentality” (Mylonas, 2020, p. 96) that contributes to the production of the neoliberal subject: strong, resilient, able to fake confidence, flexible, ready to exploit risk, competitive, chance-grabbing, and yet ready to form collaborations (Kanellopoulos, 2015, 2022; Kanellopoulos and Barahanou, 2020; Darras, 2011; Mould, 2018). As such, the neoliberalisation of creativity becomes heavily political, and at the same time it is de-politicised, as it deliberately obscures the political agendas it seeks to promote.

Re-thinking *Pædeia*: the sophists’ twist

In light of the above, a need emerges for theoretical perspectives that can help music educators develop transformative music pedagogies that challenge the neoliberal orthodoxy, creating contexts that may “plant at the centre of culture and society a radical openness” (Säfström, 2019, p. 609). Radical openness regarding how music education addresses students, musics, and musical practices; radical openness that connects music education practice with the pursuit of critical thought. To this end, this section re-visits a blunt statement regarding the notion of “*pædeia*” made by Socrates in Plato’s dialogue *Protagoras* (Plato, 1924) and attempts to inquire into its possible relevance for music education today. Our entry-point to this re-conceptualisation is provided by a rather heretical reading of the legacy of the sophists, a group of philosophers in ancient Greece whose practice bears complex relationships with the birth of democracy both in ancient Athens and beyond (Robinson, 2007). This re-thinking of the notion of *pædeia* provides us with a framework to approach creative music education as setting in motion what may be referred to as the *pædeia* cycle, which links creativity with democracy in a specific sense. “The *pædeia* cycle of music education”, it will be argued, breaks away from the neoliberal misappropriation of creativity as a profitable disposition and the larger instrumentalisation process of education of which this misappropriation is a part.

In *Protagoras*, Socrates tells us that education is not meant to induce students into a *tékhnē* (a term that should be translated as “craft” or “trade”) but is performed for the sake of “*pædeia*”: “for you did not learn a trade, becoming a craftsman, you learned for *pædeia*, as is fit for the independent citizen and the free person” (Plato, 1924, p. 102).⁴ Socrates, in this moment, asserts that acquiring *pædeia* was the aim of his discussant, a young man by the name of Hippocrates, and adds that *pædeia* is most suitable for those who live within the condition of freedom, “for the independent citizen and the free person”. This phrase may be taken to mean that *pædeia* is something that people who have

been accorded the status of the citizen, that is, free people, deserve – later on in this chapter, a different reading will be suggested.

The root of *pædeia* is *país* [παῖς], the Greek word for “child”. Jaeger (1946) tells us that in its earlier uses the term *pædeia* indicates the process of child-rearing (p. 5). Werner Jaeger (1946) holds that in the later part of 5th century BCE the term began to encompass a complex entanglement of meanings that emphasised “the unification of ‘culture’, ‘civilization’, ‘tradition’, ‘literature’ and ‘education’” (Straume, 2014, p. 143). The work of Jaeger epitomises a long Hellenocentric tradition that is still dominant in Greek scholarly and everyday discourse, where the notion of *pædeia* is often a rhetorical device that refers to the process through which an individual develops a “cultured personality”, becoming a bearer of “higher” cultural values.⁵ There is, however, a different history of *pædeia*, dating back to the sophists, that has led to more “political” readings of the term (Castoriadis, 1991a, 1991b; Straume, 2014; Säfström, 2019, 2022).

What is most interesting about the sophists is that they worked on the assumption that *anyone* can be taught, not just those who have particular talents, and that therefore *anyone* can benefit from education. That is why their approach can be characterised as democratic instead of aristocratic, as they did not work on the assumption that some people are “by nature” better or more talented than others. For the sophists, everyone *deserves* education; everyone has *a right to education*. The sophistic tradition casts teaching as a means that may lead *anyone* to learn how to question, how to unpack arguments and logics, and how to develop unorthodox lines of argumentation (Guthrie, 1998). The sophists may be seen primarily as philosophers and educators who, by pursuing complex forms of reasoning, created the ground on which participation in democratic life rests, contributing to the development of democratic knowledge (Ober, 2010). Through such teaching, Säfström argues, “everyone, regardless of class, abilities or ‘nature’, could embody areté, the insight of politics and ethics in order to live a full life in the polis” (2019, p. 611).

Plato condemned the Sophists as teachers of the art of deception and as “the negative alter ego of the philosopher” (Cassin, 2000, p. 105). Against this view, this chapter adopts a different approach, one that sees sophists as philosophers that provided an education in how to think and talk in ways that contributed to the democratic culture of the polis. Ford (2001) has argued that “their recondite, often paradoxical performances had the effect of enabling their students to speak on equal terms with the master and with each another well before, and for some instead of, addressing an assembly” (p. 88). The sophists were “democratic in their willingness to challenge hierarchy and tradition in the name of the individual and the ‘here and now’” (Ford, 2001, p. 86), emphasising the value of developing one’s own voice within a context of critical inquiry over received ideas as a preparation for participation in the democratic public sphere.

Central to this process is what Barbara Cassin (2000) refers to as “the sophistic consensus”, which does not require “a uniform unity” and does not require

that “everyone think[s] the same thing (homonoia) but only that everyone speaks (homologia)” (p. 109) with others and listens to people speaking together. Basakos (1981) emphasises that, for the sophist, the inexperience of the student – that they approach language from a certain “distance” [Gk.: *πορρώθεν*] leads to ambiguity. But ambiguity may not just be a moment of fault that has to be corrected; rather, it can be constitutive of an open process of forming ideas on the basis of this minimalist “sophistical consensus”; thus, Basakos argues that ambiguity can be a source of openness and dialogue.

This perspective allows us to understand the Socratic reference to sophist Protagoras’ approach to *pædeia* as a process of shaping *a voice*, presupposing and at the same time contributing to the existence of a public space of the democratic polis (Robinson, 2007; Castoriadis, 1991a). Vernant (1982) has argued that creating and exchanging arguments is intimately linked to the imperative of equality that emerged in the democratic polis. Central to the function of the democratic polis is the creation of a public space whose members freely hold multiple perspectives that should be declared and debated. As Ober (2005) succinctly puts it,

Athenian democracy was intimately associated with “public voice” – with the capacity and the willingness of citizens to speak up about public concerns and to do so in public. . . . Deliberating meant listening as well as speaking; accepting good arguments as well as making them.

(p. 130)

Seen this way, *pædeia* may be understood not as inducing a “holistic” education or as induction to “higher” forms of culture, but as a process of enabling people to participate in a democratic world, in a world where thought turns towards interrogating the terms for how we decide to live together.

It can be argued that the distinction between an education “for a craft” and an education “for *pædeia*” is a distinction between education as induction into institutionalised practices and education in a search for freedom. *Pædeia* can be seen as the very process of going *beyond* learning and applying knowledge, as a process that enables one to pursue autonomous thinking. Autonomous thinking should be understood here in a Castoriadian sense (Castoriadis, 1991b), that is, as a mode of thinking that aims to question itself, searching for knowledge in full awareness that the decisions taken are not the result of the “laws” of nature, of “rules” of development, or of historical “necessity”. Seen this way, the Socratic assertion that *pædeia* is most suitable, most “fit for the independent citizen and the free person”, may be read in a different way: *Pædeia* is not merely what is most suitable for people who have been accorded the status of the citizen; it is *not* what free people *deserve*, but it is what *enables* people to live in a condition of freedom.

The pædeia cycle: towards a conception of democratic music education

The sophist's suggestion that anyone can become virtuous as a result of education, not only those with special "talents", is actually a very dangerous idea for those who like inequality, for those who like a society in which some people have more power, more influence than others, more resources, and more financial, social, and cultural capital than others. After all, if everyone can benefit from education, it could well lead to the end of existing hierarchies, privileges, and power differences. But for those who believe in democracy, who believe in the right for all human beings to live their lives well, who believe in the right for all human beings to have a voice and have their voice heard, and for those who believe that education can make a difference with regard to democratic ideals rather than only reinforcing the unequal status quo, the sophists, one might say, are actually the educational and political "heroes".

The chapter began with a glimpse at a music pedagogy experiment in practicing democracy in music education. *Monday's drop(s)* music practice actively worked against the assumption that to create music one needs having a special talent for it. It also created a context where one could shape one's musical and critical voice and make it heard on equal terms. An integral part of this process has been a kaleidoscopic dialogue with aspects of historical improvisation practice and an attempt to bypass the technical aspects of music performance by cultivating an experimental approach to sound creation that sees the "how to" aspect of playing music inseparably from creating new music in a collective context of sharing and exchange.

Refusing to be labelled as musicians or non-musicians, refusing to be pigeonholed because of expectations based on gender, background, or student identity, *Monday's drop(s)* created experiments that courageously posed the following questions: "What makes someone able to create music?" and "Who belongs to the community of creators?" It may be argued that the practice of this group could best be understood as an attempt "to reinvent the scandal of democracy" (Tanke, 2011a, p. 61). This, as Joseph J. Tanke explains, "consists of contesting hierarchies where they are to be found, and constructing demonstrations of equality" (Tanke, 2011a, p. 61). Thus, *Monday's drop(s)* experimentations can be seen as instances of *verifying equality* (see Rancière, 1991, 2010a; also Kanellopoulos, 2016, 2021) via the regular pursuit of free improvisation, initiating a process of emancipation. As Rancière would put it, this is

not a matter of making great painters [musicians]; it's a matter of making the emancipated: people capable of saying, "me too, I'm a painter [musician]", a statement that contains nothing in the way of pride, only the reasonable feeling of power that belongs to any reasonable being.

(1991, p. 67)

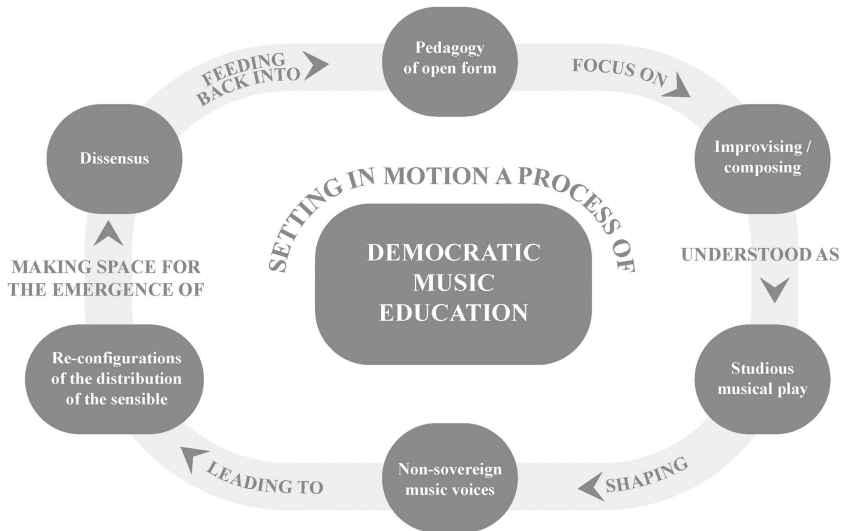


Figure 6.1 *The pædeia cycle sets in motion a process of democratic music education*

The central question of this chapter section is: How can we consider *pædeia* in the context of the Monday’s Drop(s) music education experiment? Further, how might the above-sketched formulation of the Greek notion of *pædeia* speak to the broader view of democratic music education? In what follows, I suggest a re-conceptualisation of democratic music education as *pædeia* in the form of a cycle, delineated by six demarcated, pivotal “stops” (Fig. 6.1).

Pedagogy of open form: focus on creative invention – improvising and composing

Improvisation and composition are music education practices that are particularly pertinent to a possible conceptualisation of “the *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education” and may be seen as the basis of the *pedagogy of open form* (after Allsup, 2013, 2016). In Allsup’s view, tradition does not await to be transmitted; rather, tradition is a *guest*.

A musical pedagogy of open texts is one that places composing at the centre of all activities. It assumes that all students come to an educational encounter equipped with multiple literacies, and that they wish to employ the largest range of modalities available to them to communicate with others and to create self-reflective musical events.

(Allsup, 2013, p. 67)

We thus move away from music educators' role as guardians of received musical cultures, focusing instead on modes of teaching based on composing and improvising, committed to making culture instead of guarding the purity of its received forms. This may be seen as paralleling the sophistic engagement with the "now" of rhetorical performance, treating the philosophical tradition in a, one would dare say, playful manner, focusing more on the joy of creating arguments and entering into debate.

This, of course, does not mean that unequal power relations may be just magically wiped out. But it does mean that received notions of music professionalism and the dominance of the composer-ensemble leader-performer division are both questioned and subverted; it means that we move away from conceptions of teaching as acts of "passing on" techniques, skill-based approaches to learning, and approaches to the musical past that centre on musical works and their teleological narratives. Thus, music *pædeia* becomes not only a learning enterprise rooted in music creativity but also an education that seeks to ask hard questions and to develop a critical stance.

Improvising and composing understood as "studious musical play"

We play with aspects of tradition – with received materials, ideas, and techniques – creating a space where received musical knowledge is being *profaned*. This means that, in principle, there are "no wrong notes"; in principle, there is nothing that prevents one to follow this or that pathway; in principle, musical knowledge becomes "detached from its regular use, no longer sacred or occupied by a specific meaning" (Masschelein and Simons, 2013, p. 38) so as to be made available for free use (Masschelein and Simons, 2011). We thus understand improvising and composing as a form of studious musical play (Kanellopoulos, 2021, based on Lewis, 2013, 2014; Jasinski and Lewis, 2016). To "studiously play" with and in music means to create a playful relationship with sound, with different forms of music knowledge and with music cultures. Studious play enables students and teachers to engage openly and fearlessly with musical cultures in ways that resist not only canonised impositions but also the trappings of self-congratulatory personal expression. To play *studiously* is not to "express" one's "inner self"; it is to play with tradition in unorthodox, open-ended ways, delving into the unknown with a sense of meticulous disrespect for purity. "Studious play" departs from the disciplinarian rituals that impose strict adherence to musical techniques that secure musical mastery, as well as from generally static views of creative music-making as acts of individual expression. Studious play allows those involved to "lose" themselves in acts of playful engagement with music, "losing" time and the sense of scheduled time, resisting mere application of received knowledge.

"Studious musical play" shaping "non-sovereign musical voices"

This anarchic studious musical play (Kanellopoulos, 2021) can be seen as forging an open, experimental space that encourages the development of non-sovereign

musical voices, creative musical voices that speak to each other and to received traditions “on equal terms”, to use an expression that comes from Ford’s description of the sophistic encounter mentioned earlier (Ford, 2001 p. 86). The notion of studious musical play is regarded as central to a vision of creative music engagement according to which neither tradition nor personal expression will take the lead. It should be noted that the notion of personal voice should not be taken as implying the existence of a bounded, unified “self” that “speaks”, nor it should be read as pointing to individualist notions of selfhood. On the contrary, personal voice should be understood as coming from “selves” always incomplete, porous, multiple, and “in” the making (Athanasίου, 2016; Kelz, 2016). Subjects resonate together, “producing” their multifariousness. Different perspectives, musical ideas developed *in situ* as well as ideas that come from received traditions, are acted upon, interpreted and re-interpreted, framed and re-framed, through relational processes. By improvising and composing music, we are composing ourselves.

Here improvising and composing are to be seen as always relational, always incomplete, inducing a non-sovereign view of identity.

If there is something we share, this is a condition of non-owning. We are, if we “are” anything, subjects inevitably assembled in the loss of self, or selves. What we miss, and simultaneously defines us, is the historicity and sociality involved in the formation of “our” self.

(Athanasίου, 2015, p. 120)

Working on the basis of the notion of non-sovereign creative musical voice may be seen as liberating music students and teachers from the anxieties of authorship, as well as from the modernist quest for producing “innovation”. Playing with sounds on the basis of an experimental approach to sound transformation opens new possibilities that are based on a profane approach to extant practices (Masschelein and Simons, 2011, 2013); profanation may be seen as the consequence of regarding tradition as a guest (Allsup, 2013) and not as a resident sacred heritage to which our practices must conform.

“Non-sovereign musical voices” leading to “re-configurations of the distribution of the sensible”

“The *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education” cultivates non-sovereign musical voices on the basis of equality through studious musical play. In this way, it opens up issues such as who is legitimate to create music, what is the proper material of music, what counts as a source of musical ideas, and how music ideas and musical responsibilities are (to be) shared. In this way, “the *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education” permits us to explore ways of working with our students that lead to “re-configuration of the distribution of the sensible”,

creating changes to: The taken-for-granted hierarchical order of different musical practices and to the ways that this order is embodied and felt; to the expected roles to which each student and their teachers are supposed to “fit in”; to how time is used and felt; and to what we are supposed to think, feel, do in and through music and its making. It is an opening of one’s “perceptive universe”, that is, of one’s “way of being, saying and seeing” (Rancière, 2011, p. 7; also Rancière, 2004, p. 12; Rancière, 1999).

“The *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education” induces aesthetic experiences that transform the sensory fabric of “being together” in and through music, making “visible what had no business being seen” and “understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise” (Rancière, 1999, p. 30). Experimenting with sounds is at the same time a means for transforming the given perceptive universe. As a result, “the *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education” sets into motion creative acts that render students visible in ways not possible before, giving students the chance to move towards unforeseen territories via genuine dialogue between their personal endeavours and larger musical traditions.

“Re-configurations of the distribution of the sensible” create “dissensus”

As Rancière suggests, “[a]esthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination that it presupposes disturbs the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations” (Rancière, 2008, p. 11). “The *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education”, through its commitment to developing students’ non-sovereign creative voices on the basis of studious musical play, enables students and teachers to experiment with music in ways that potentially induce such a “loss of destination” that produces local re-configurations of the distribution of the sensible.

Creative music experiences hold the promise to create “folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible” (Rancière, 2009a, p. 72). The persistent cultivation of heterogeneity, which is the basis of the development of personal voice, creates the necessary context for the emergence of *dissensus*. Dissensus is not the result of a conflict between already held views (Biesta, 2013). Dissensus is the staging of a gap in the orderly manner in which we have learnt to think and feel that comes as a result of acts where equality is verified.

Aesthetic dissensus is the result of artistic practices that break up the obviousness of established links between ways of sensing and the meaning that is ascribed to them (Tanke, 2011b). Working with familiar music materials in unfamiliar ways, welcoming the unknown, and playfully studying the possibilities that open themselves up as one works with no specific destination in mind create the possibility for the emergence of aesthetic dissensus. This is the very moment when *aesthetics meet politics*. Creating educational contexts where students actively engage with thinking in and through music is a process

that relates to something more than expressive sound and its configurations: (im)precision – (im)balance – breathing together – leading – supporting – making space – maintaining different listening foci – going off in unexpected directions (am I allowed to?) – expressing desire – allowing oneself to be carried away by another person’s input. What makes someone able to create music? Where do musical ideas come from? What does “controlling” music mean? How and when can this be different from controlling sound? How can one learn to let things go? What does learning music have to do with the larger web of one’s life? What music is understood as valuable? How does music discipline relate to disciplining music? Which are the musical and social values that are considered worth pursuing in particular music education encounters? The moment music education casts these questions (through its very practice) as *open* issues, thus *disrupting* the existing order of things, is the moment of when aesthetic dissensus verges on political dissensus.

Both political and aesthetic dissensus emerge when the axiom of equality is at work: When people’s acts and people’s words lead to questioning hierarchies and given perceptions of what is proper to a situation or to someone’s condition; in these ways, acts and words become acts of verifying equality. Rancière (2011) has noted that “[p]olitical dissensus is not a discussion between speaking people who would confront their interests and values. It is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what must be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument on justice” (p. 2). The moment of dissensus is the moment of appearance of politics (*la politique*). For Rancière, what politics and art share is that each in their own way sets in motion a process of re-configuring the distribution of ways of seeing, acting, and sensing:

Art and politics each define a form of dissensus, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible. If there is such thing as an “aesthetics of politics”, it lies in a re-configuration of the distribution of the common through political processes of subjectivation. Correspondingly, if there is a politics of aesthetics, it lies in the practices and modes of visibility of art that re-configure the fabric of sensory experience.

(Rancière, 2010b, p. 140)

Dissensus feeds back into the “pedagogy of open form” setting in motion a democratic music education

The “stops” of the *pædeia* cycle (Fig. 6.1) can be seen as setting in motion the democratic process of music education through a pedagogy of open form. Returning to this chapter’s beginning, one may say that the dissensual practice of *Monday’s drop(s)* improvisation collective posed the question of who defines what music is, who has the right to define what music is, who has the right to make music, and who has the right to decide on how music is to be made. *Monday’s drop(s)*

practice enables us to re-think how music education may create a space for studious musical play that allows for the emergence of students' musical voices in ways that create cracks in the distribution of the sensible. In precisely that sense, what is happening there is political because it intervenes in a particular societal order in which some define what music really is and others can only follow. It is, therefore, a moment of democracy: Democracy appears at those moments when humans are able to dispute the given by questioning what is taken for granted, by unsettling what is thought of as the core meaning of a situation, and by bringing to the fore a voice and a perspective that up to that moment did not have the "right" to be there (Rancière, 1999; Ross, 2009).

It is by staging a particular politics of aesthetics that the *pædeia* cycle sets in motion democratic music education. Reading Figure 6.1 backwards, we could say that by creating moments of dissensus, politics of aesthetics lead to new configurations of the distribution of the sensible. Dissensus cultivates students' non-sovereign musical voices through studious musical play that results from their engagement with improvising and composing that constitute core practices of a pedagogy of open form. This process has concrete political effects and implications, but its content is specifically musical and educational, preserving the distinctiveness of music-making – the *musicness* of the experience of making music – while negating its autonomy, understood in the modernist sense, whereby artworks constitute novel entities whose meaning inheres in their particular structural features and is revealed via the "purity" of our gaze towards them. "The *pædeia* cycle of democratic music education", then, has political effects in that it unsettles what is permitted to be visible, audible, and sensed; it is constantly upsetting hierarchies, but does not lead to a collapse of music education into politics.

Conclusions: politicising musical creativity

This chapter has proposed a theoretical perspective that allows us to see creative music education as democratic music education. To do so, inspiration was drawn from two very different sources: from the experiment of a free improvisation collective of student teachers in an education department and from the work of ancient Greek sophists, who, far from being enemies of philosophy, can be seen as teachers that set in motion daring and provocative thinking on the basis of speaking and thinking together, creating a common world that resists "thinking the same thing (*homonoia*)" (Cassin, 2000, p. 109), capitalising instead on speaking and thinking together. Returning to Socrates' conceptualisation of Protagoras' educational work as aiming not to teach a craft but to *pædeia*, this chapter argued that the notion of *pædeia* might be employed to shape a view of education as a process of political subjectivation that enables students to shape a personal voice through dialogue on the basis of equality in the context of the democratic polis.

This approach to *pædeia* opens a possible window through which we can articulate a music education vision that links music education with democracy. To this end, this chapter presented a conceptualisation of ‘the *pædeia* cycle of music education’. This was made possible with a little help from Rancière, and particularly from his work on how to rethink democracy and art via a particular notion of the aesthetic (Rancière, 2004, 2009b, 2010b). This led us to a politicised approach to creativity in music education, based on the Rancièrian thesis, as expressed by Tanke (2011a), that:

[a]esthetic acts are interventions that form points for a broader resistance by first opening up worlds where subjects can constitute themselves as political subjects. Art . . . is one means of assuming the subjectivity required for politics.

(p. 104)

Figure 6.1 provides a visualisation of the core argument proposed in this chapter. This is not to be seen as a normative model but as a heuristic device. In sum, the argument could be phrased in the following manner:

[A] pedagogy of open form that focuses on improvising and composing approaches the making of music as studious [musical] play, enabling students to develop non-sovereign personal voices in ways that lead to new configurations of the distribution of the sensible. This process makes space for the emergence of aesthetic dissensus and has direct political implications, setting into motion practices that cultivate a democratic music education culture that feeds back and shapes pedagogies of open form.

It is important to note that this cyclical form suggests that democratic music education is not a state that one strives towards (see Biesta, Laes and Westerlund, this volume) by following a series of “stops”. The “stops” of the model are conceptual, not time-related: here democracy is not to be thought of as something where one arrives; rather, it can be thought of as a core constituent of an educational ethos that induces a way of being with music, being with others through music, a way of being in the world that is characterised by searching, reflecting, questioning, listening, daring, studiously playing with sounds and musical knowledge, producing momentary, unexpected ruptures as a result of creative musical practices based on the assumption of equality. This politicised view of creative music education stands in direct opposition to neoliberal appropriations of creativity as contributing to “smart power” (Darras, 2011) as a necessary disposition that shapes winning strategies in the course of the individualistic struggle for survival and success.

Some might say that this chapter’s re-framing of the notion of creativity and re-thinking of how creativity links to democracy is a superfluous enterprise.

Creativity, one might say, is, today, “naturally” democratic – after all, it can be said, we are all required to “think out of the box”? Against such oversimplifications, this chapter argues that the pervasive misappropriation of creative practices by neoliberalism in education and beyond leads to instrumentalised approaches to creative “capital” that need to be resisted (Raunig, 2013; Mould, 2018; Kanellopoulos, 2015, 2022). “The *pædeia* cycle of music education” may be seen as a way of envisioning a practice that resists the deluge of conformist thinking that erodes educational practice via calls to increase “popularity”, to capitalise on “visible outcomes”, to advertise tangible and measurable “impact”, or to work “teaching to the test” (Bath *et al.*, 2022, p. 447). In this sense, music education might be able to induce a transformative politics that resists both uncritical adoption of neoliberal technocracy and superficial “relativism” – that is actually nothing but a disguise of the unconditional surrender to the appetites of the educational market.

“The *pædeia* cycle of music education” leads to a music education culture that stems from the belief “all students can *already* speak” (Biesta, 2011, p. 39). The axiom of equality does not lead to uncritical acceptance of just anything on the basis of it being a personal utterance. A voice that “speaks” in ways that cancel equality is one that needs to be critically contested. Similarly, the collapse of voice to mere vocality needs to be an issue that should be critically addressed and debated, as is the ease with which expressing a view is equated with personal critical utterance (Schmidt, 2021).

Creativity therefore does not mean that you just do what you want to do, express what you want to express, and say what you want to say. That is a simplistic notion of what a democratic voice might be. Creativity rather means that your voice always tries to be in dialogue with other voices, including the voices from the past, from traditions, and from musical and educational practices that have been developed in the past. Those practices are there for good reasons but should not dictate or hinder what is possible. This chapter argues for the more complex meaning of creativity that underlies the democratic transformation of music education.

Music education is not simply a “passing on” of the past or a learning of skills. Musical traditions are “guests” (Allsup, 2013) that we invite in the room to dialogue with, but not to let them tell us what we should and should not be doing. In music education, this means that we should play with traditions. But this play is serious play – “studious play”. It is not to say that traditions do not matter, but we resist the idea that traditions should simply have control over us and that we would have no voice in carrying on the tradition. It is in this way that music education may be seen as a way of making culture instead of guarding the purity of its received forms (see Westerlund, 2003), initiating actions that create local, momentary ruptures in the dominant narratives of production-based educational logics.

This chapter suggests that we understand music education as aiming at something much deeper and broader than helping students learn a craft or merely

express themselves. The proposed “*pædeia* cycle of music education” enables us to develop a democratic conception of education: education as contributing to the constitution of a political subject, of a subject capable of co-creating forms of socio-musical acts that create cracks in the currently dominant modes of thought that permeate current educational policies. It is in this way that music education may intervene in the wider arena of cultural and educational practices.

Notes

- 1 Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (2002) defines crypto-colonialism “as the curious alchemy whereby certain countries, buffer zones between the colonized lands and those as yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models” (pp. 900–901).
- 2 www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2019/09/06/education-minister-history-textbooks/
- 3 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/back-school-refugee-children-greece-denied-right-education/>
- 4 “οὐκ ἐπὶ τέχνην ἔμαθες, ὡς δημιουργὸς ἐσόμενος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ παιδείᾳ, ὡς τὸν ἰδιώτην καὶ τὸν ἐλεύθερον πρέπει” (Plato, 1924: 102, a: *Prot.* 312b, cf. 312a-b, transl. modified).
- 5 Many contemporary invocations of *pædeia* suffer from similar universalistic approaches to knowledge and render *pædeia* a rhetorical invocation of a glorious but now lost holism (see Gibson and Grant, 2012; Roder and Naughton, 2015). Such approaches, most notably Mortimer Adler’s *Pædeia Project* (1982), or, more recently, Chłodna-Błach’s view of *pædeia* as “the shaping of a perfect man” (2020) through induction to “high culture”, foster a view of education as “the production and maintenance of what is legitimated as a universal set of symbolic values and knowledge forms” (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985, p. 139; also Weltman, 2002). Furthermore, much recent philosophical research on the notion of *pædeia* apprehends it as an a-political journey towards wisdom so as “to adequately prepare young people to take their place in the community” (Ozoliņš, 2015, p. 870). In this line, Magrini (2014) connects *pædeia* to the “philosophical quest” for transcendence akin to the process of *Bildung* (p. 1329).

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7 The transformative politics of music education research

Navigating public scholarship through transepistemic synthesis

Tuulikki Laes and Heidi Westerlund

Introduction

Due to rapid changes in diversifying societies, there is a need to create new transformative practices and policies that support systemic interconnectedness, including institutional music education. This need also transposes what is expected from music education research. Engaging with future-oriented, transformative research that aims towards a larger societal shift takes music education researchers beyond their traditional disciplinary boundaries and comfort zones. Even the wider methodological scholarship suggests that the social impact of research, including qualitative approaches, can only be constructed with a future-altering insight, not simply through illuminating existing societal problems (Gergen, 2015; see also Cairney, 2016). In Finland, which is the context of the authors of this chapter, the weak signals also include the altered status of the public use of scientific knowledge and criteria for competitive research funding, indicating, for example, how governmental funders and policymakers aim to bring research out from the silos and “ivory towers” towards inter-, trans-, and multi-disciplinarity that serves contemporary polycentric societies. At the same time, since contemporary academic work is conducted under a neoliberal political climate, evaluation, public trust, and valuation of research are increasingly affected by economically driven, quantifiable criteria leading to simplified impact measures and requirements towards intensified stakeholder collaboration. The shift thus requires music education researchers to have the capacity to navigate the complexities of political steering of funding systems and educational cultures while expanding their professionalism towards a socially responsible public scholarship.

We will explore the shifting politics of music education research through the case of a government-funded strategic research project, “The Arts as Public Service: Strategic Steps towards Equality” (ArtsEqual), carried out during 2015–2021 by nearly 100 researchers from five universities and research institutes in Finland. As a national initiative funded by the Research Council of Finland’s Strategic Research Council, the case reflects the increasing political

pressure and expectations towards research. ArtsEqual responded to the Committee for the Future of the Parliament of Finland's call to encourage a nationwide rethinking of its public services, including "schools, health centres, and other public organisations" (Tiihonen and Hietanen, 2014), and to invest in culture and social capital to maintain the citizens' resilience and commitment to society, especially in dire economic times. The purpose of ArtsEqual was to identify the mechanisms that produce inequality in the state-funded arts and arts education services and facilitate practice-based research interventions that enhance participation and address a variety of dynamics of inequality (e.g. gender, regional and economic accessibility, disability, age). ArtsEqual aimed to establish institutional collaboration and enhance institutional flexibility (resilience) through experimental activities and interventions (social innovations); therefore, the research was carried out in schools and arts education institutions, prisons, refugee centres, youth work services, hospitals, and care homes in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders. It covered all fields of arts and arts education (music, theatre, dance, visual arts, museums), social sciences, educational sciences, legal studies, and philosophy. The project's design involved a critical and transformational ethos that challenged the status quo of the state-funded arts and arts education services and shook their epistemic systems, including those in music education. Following the funding scheme, the researchers were expected to actively engage in public political discussions by collaborating with non-academic practitioners, policy-makers, and stakeholders and consider how the research results could be translated into policy-relevant information and communicated to various actors, such as institutional leaders, funders, and government decision-makers.

In this chapter, we reflect upon the transformative politics of music education research from three different yet overlapping catalysts for change emerging in ArtsEqual:

1. *Engaging with research impact and systems reflexivity*: Critically examining the tension between the expectations for traditional self-advocacy and the need for increasing music education institutions' societal relevance through critical, ethico-political self-reflexivity;
2. *Rethinking hierarchies of epistemic cultures*: Considering and actualising possibilities beyond the specialised disciplinary knowledge-creation within music education institutions;
3. *Transforming professional boundaries*: Integrating critical social values and horizontally expanding the professional responsibility of the music education community.

We argue that shifting future music education research towards more transformative possibilities requires *transepistemic synthesis* (Stokols, 2017). This term refers to an active and conscious bridging of academic and non-academic knowledge cultures when navigating between advocacy and transition in diverse,

tense, and conflictual knowledge regimes such as publicly funded, politically driven research initiatives in collaboration with institutions and stakeholders. We suggest that transepistemic synthesis requires music educators to become more aware of how the practices of music education function as *social systems* and how the systems of music education, whether in school or elsewhere, reproduce their boundaries concerning the environment and other systems such as legislation, healthcare, and social services (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This boundary work also shapes professional identities and the related reflexive political understanding of professional responsibilities (Gaunt and Westerlund, 2021), including practitioners, institution leaders, and researchers. This way, transepistemic synthesis reaches beyond the mere knowledge construction, including values and emotional dimensions arising from different experiences. Hence, transepistemic synthesis as part of public scholarship involves understanding how agents in the professional field position themselves and their concerns differently despite shared interests.

From self-advocacy towards complex systems reflexivity

As a strategic research project, ArtsEqual was assigned to follow the funder's demands, including impact-driven evaluation methods and research activities. For example, the researchers were expected to enhance institutional and societal change through interprofessional collaboration and collect evidence of the consequential change at any level of interaction (e.g. individual, community, institutional, service system, policy, societal). The funder did not assume objective neutrality from the researchers but encouraged them to become more aware of how research and researchers can make an impact – to become *public professionals* (McCollough, 1991) and knowledge experts within and beyond academia. *Impact narratives* were used as one evaluation method to demonstrate how these actions were taken, which further affected the research focus and methods (Westerlund and Barrett, 2020). Instead of research being simply *about* or *on* institutions, researchers were encouraged to form collective enterprises and horizontal research networks *with* institutional stakeholders to co-construct new realities and expand the impact of their research (see also Rask *et al.*, 2018). While scholars in arts and humanities tend to resist the impact agenda and “see the rise of impact indicators and measurements as a threat to autonomy, emphasizing quantity over quality, and failing to recognize the distinctive features of the arts” (Westerlund and Barrett, 2020, p. 2), many of the ArtsEqual researchers were also practitioners and already had strong institutional relationships that benefited the project's goals. However, some researchers found the demand for impact narratives contradicted their artistic and professional values.

To avoid the rigid opposition between the disciplinary fields of arts and more politically driven research, ArtsEqual utilised systems thinking to identify interconnected mechanisms in arts and arts education systems that produce

non-wanted, negative consequences in the systems' functions, such as the exclusion of students for social, economic, or cultural reasons – questions that have so far remained relatively marginal in institutional music education and teacher education. Researchers were expected to conduct practical research interventions that could strengthen the given institution's systems resilience and further the needed transformation. However, challenges emerged when researchers tried to identify the connection between the established music education practices and the negative impacts on equality, inclusion, and well-being. First, tracing the mechanisms of inequality is rarely done in music education institutions that are used to concentrate only on musical and music pedagogical matters. Connecting institutional systems with contemporary societal changes and tracing the structural inequalities back to the institutional and pedagogical practice requires *systems reflexivity* (Westerlund *et al.*, 2021) that reaches beyond reflection-in-action and teacher-student relationships within the taken-for-granted practice. Rather, systems reflexivity is a type of institutional reflexivity with “the capacity to see, interrogate and reimagine the taken-for-granted structures that sustain current systems” and in which “the macro- and micro-elements of professional work can be seen as being in dialogue when navigating the emergent” (Moore *et al.*, 2018, n.p). For example, a music school instrument teacher who focuses on the musical and pedagogical interaction with the students may not be accustomed to considering the wider functions of the music education system's mechanisms that may cause social and structural exclusion. In other words, practitioners are not accustomed to considering the possible negative impacts of music education. Hence, in ArtsEqual, the research task required a shift away from “institutional parochialism” (Dale, 2005), which narrows the focus on maintaining the existing educational system, towards deliberate system change.

Another challenge was accepting the criticism directed at the music education system. Both researchers and practitioners tend to be more motivated to provide evidence of the positive impacts of music education and existing institutional practices than to criticise the system; it does not support the expectation of research providing justifications for advocacy. In ArtsEqual, these identified negative impacts included social exclusion and discrimination as a consequence of certain established institutional practices and structures, such as entrance exams that select students based on their assumed talent or the student population's skewed and homogeneous socioeconomic background due to the location of the music schools in “better” areas (Vismanen, Räisänen and Sariola, 2016). The public discussions around ArtsEqual often demonstrated a disengagement from such professional responsibility that was related to societal issues and required institutional change. The justifications for *not* being responsible for the negative consequences revealed “the struggle over preserving or upholding the existing distribution of capital and the debates over identities and hierarchies” that, according to Simons, Olssen and Peters (2009, p. 65), can be interpreted as “symbolic violence”. In other words, researchers faced stakeholder resistance

that can be interpreted as the “imposition of systems of meaning that justify existing structures of inequality” instead of engaging in attempts to “contribute to new social imaginaries” (Simons, Olssen and Peters, 2009, p. 65).

Importantly, the stakeholder-researcher collaboration in ArtsEqual revealed the problematic relationship between research and advocacy. Advocating for the benefits of music education has historically been considered the main link between the public and the professionals in music education, and research is seen as the main catalyst for such advocacy. Consequently, the popularised effects of music on children’s learning skills, evidenced particularly in neuroscientific research, are increasingly used to promote music education to impress policy-makers, funders, and the wider public (Odendaal *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, the International Society for Music Education (ISME, 2024) provides its members with various advocacy resources such as “Keep Music Education Strong” brochure published by the National Association of Music Merchants and the National Association of Music Education in the United States (NAMM and MENC, 2016) according to which music in schools “develops skills needed by the 21st century workforce” and “helps students perform well in other academic subjects like math, science, and reading” (n.p.). Music education researchers have criticised such advocacy, showing how it creates and dispels *neuromyths* (Ilari and Cho, 2019; Odendaal *et al.*, 2019), such as the famous Mozart effect already in the 1990s and the present-day popularised studies on music’s power to improve brain efficiency. Such advocacy has shaped the music education profession’s beliefs and mental models, creating a *double discourse* (Seddon, 2009) designed only to attract policymakers even with false or skewed research information. Music education professionals can think that facts do not matter as long as the message works for the public and the government funders of the institutional system. Neuromyths as pervasive narratives are used in lobbying in a neoliberal society where legitimate benefits must relate to the economic prospects (Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021). In ArtsEqual, the focus was on a legislated discourse of the lifelong right for music-making and meaningful musical participation of *all* people, without directly indicating the improvement of the efficiency and performance of “useful learning” (Biesta, 2006, p. 169), as suggested by claims such as “Music makes you smarter”!

Lobbying in music education is not a recent phenomenon, and the debate on the negative consequences of uncritical self-advocacy for music education has been carried out for decades (e.g. Austin and Reinhardt, 1999; McCarthy *et al.*, 2005; Reimer, 2009). In ArtsEqual, however, the tension between the field’s expectations for traditional self-advocacy and the researchers’ task to increase music education institutions’ critical self-reflexivity was often interpreted on a personal level and as ideological attacks. As William Cheng (2020) provocatively writes, “Disputes involving music are rarely just about the music itself, even or especially when arguments flare over whether there’s such a thing as ‘the music itself’” (p. 5). Indeed, the tensions over the yields to date were mostly related

to the economic security of the system to ensure getting more of the same. Yet, evidence for music's positive impact was expected to be found in the research interventions that tested new practices and contexts for music and music education. While the collaboration in ArtsEqual required negotiations about what could be changed in practice, there was not always a shared will towards change among the practitioners and institution leaders.

Engaging with systems reflexivity thus required researchers to connect the previously unidentified assumptions of how music education may impact society. It also forced them to expand their perspective to the broader horizontal issues beyond questions of musical repertoires and pedagogy and, therefore, beyond immediate professional interest to sustain the effective education of future professional musicians. These identified horizontal institutional and organisational issues required new theoretical lenses and further problematising the strict dichotomy between music's autonomous and instrumental values – a dichotomy that is often taken as an established and legitimate discursive weapon to externalise societal questions from professional interests focusing on musical quality. As a result, the task of the ArtsEqual researchers was to solve how the awareness of systems reflexivity and ethico-political responsibility may be induced in the field as well as how the complex relationality of music education and society could be presented clearly without reducing the future vision of institutional music education to economic issues and oversimplifying its purpose to stakeholders and politicians through the neoliberal, instrumentalised agenda.

Transepistemic synthesis towards public engagement regime

The arts education field had considerable expectations towards ArtsEqual as a large-scale national project. While the project was received with curiosity towards transforming the field with new research knowledge, some practitioners assumed that the primary goal of ArtsEqual was to maintain traditional disciplinary boundaries and promote positive public self-advocacy. This assumption created tensions and disturbed the identification of the shared goal between researchers and practitioners. The multi-disciplinary research teams supported the negotiations between the practitioners, institution leaders, and researchers that enabled *transepistemic abduction* (Gibson and Bruza, 2021) – reasoning across epistemic domains. Such transepistemic abduction takes place when two or more researchers from different disciplines (e.g. music education, systems science, and law) explain a phenomenon by using analogies, heuristics, instincts, and creative ideation of their domain knowledge of which the other one is ignorant (Gibson and Bruza, 2021). Indeed, in ArtsEqual, working with researchers from other scientific fields opened up generative dialogues and expanded critical self-reflexivity more efficiently than within disciplinary teams.

However, even though most of the researchers had the same professional education as the practitioners and stakeholders, their research task was not united with the interests of the stakeholder collaborators. From a systems perspective, the researchers can be seen to have operated in a different system and domain altogether. Andrew Gibson and Peter Brusa (2021) emphasise that reasoning across epistemic domains requires *ignorance preservation* and that the joint activity is not simply about learning from each other but about finding “a path to new action while preserving their ignorance” (p. 475). This ignorance preservation appeared difficult in ArtsEqual, where the critical research perspective created new power hierarchies between researchers and stakeholders when discussing the possibility of change.

One way to efficiently engage with transformative research, innovative scholarship, and collaborative design is what ecological systems thinking scholar Daniel Stokols (2017) calls *a transepistemic synthesis*. He argues that transepistemic synthesis is an arena of action that aims to bridge academic and non-academic knowledge cultures, and that is more complex than transdisciplinary integration of merely different academic perspectives. Transepistemic synthesis demands navigating between the sometimes-tense advocacy aims and conflictual knowledge regimes, as described in the previous section. In ArtsEqual, power hierarchies emerged when researchers’ understanding and knowledge of the practice were questioned publicly (Ilmola-Sheppard *et al.*, 2021). These tensions affected the dialogues with stakeholders and significantly delayed the emergence of new knowledge production as part of transepistemic synthesis.

As such, transepistemic knowledge production in the context of scientific research is not a novel topic in the philosophy of science. For instance, Karin Knorr-Cetina (1982), already in the 1980s, criticised the understanding in which knowledge production is claimed to take place in isolated epistemic cultures of scientific speciality communities, which organise the field socially and technically according to their principles. According to Knorr-Cetina (1982), it is a mistake to see the arenas of action within which inquiry proceeds as unrelated from non-researchers. Rather, the relationship is transepistemic, and “the transepistemic connections of research . . . are built into scientific inquiry” (p. 103). Knorr-Cetina argues that even in laboratories, researchers work with “a mix of persons and arguments that do not fall naturally into a category of relationships of ‘science’ or ‘specialty’, and a category of ‘other’ affairs” (p. 117). Therefore, the transepistemic connections of research operate through what Knorr-Cetina (1982) calls *decision translations* negotiated in *transepistemic arenas* of action. Consequently, no scientific knowledge production is, in this sense, unrelated to the non-scientific. This kind of decision translation is typical in music education research; however, it often strengthens the existing structures and mental models rather than transforms them. Furthermore, Pipere and Lorenzi (2021) explain that in transdisciplinary research work, “opening up in dialogue means

choosing to make oneself vulnerable” and that all “efforts could be ruined by a possibility of distanced communication” (n.p.). They continue:

Since professional knowledge and, in the same manner, professional language (both scientific or spoken by other stakeholder groups) usually situate their discourse in hierarchically higher positions than others, this also creates a distance which prevents the fusion of scientific, artistic, indigenous, spiritual or other discourses.

(n.p.)

In ArtsEqual, the knowledge production was not neutral but related to institutional practices and individual pedagogies and, therefore, was intertwined with the emotional and creative interaction as well as identity work of musicians and music educators. The knowledge production became personified as the criticism of the unwanted consequences of music education practices was considered a personal attack instead of a call for collective action.

It is important to note that transepistemic synthesis and decision translation still embrace researchers’ specialised expert knowledge, yet against the norms of the dominant individualistic academic culture. Educational sociologist Sue Saltmarsh (2017) describes this as “a perceptible, disruptive shift in perspective and practice” that “recognizes fundamentally that addressing complex social, political, environmental, health, and educational issues is more effective when solutions are not determined solely by specialized experts” (p. 3). Rather, collaboration within and between disciplines, researchers, and various stakeholders opens up “spheres of collaborative knowledge generation and problem-solving in ways that redefine where knowledge comes from and who has expertise” (p. 3). However, transepistemic requires epistemological agility to deal dynamically with ontological and epistemological differences in negotiation processes between researchers with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, practitioners, communities, and the wider society (Haider *et al.*, 2018).

This increasing integration of different epistemic cultures in expert collaboration was embedded in the ArtsEqual funding through the Strategic Research Council’s idea of supporting only research that involves several disciplines and a strong action plan with various stakeholders for how the research will impact society. Saltmarsh (2017) calls this a shift from *the public good regime* towards *the public engagement regime*, from presenting public problems by specialised experts to the community to a more intense, responsible, and respectful stakeholder collaboration. According to Saltmarsh, the *public good regime* reflects the dominant academic culture in which public problems are predominantly shaped by expertise and applied “externally ‘to’ or ‘on’ the community” (p. 10) rather than *with* the community. In contrast, the *public engagement regime* is “a new regime that does not perpetuate the existing institutional structures and

cultures but refers to a knowledge or learning regime that *necessitates institutional change and transformation*” (p. 10, italics added).

Numerous efforts were made by ArtsEqual researchers to prevent and close the gap between researchers and actors in music education, for instance, by organising network meetings and involving stakeholders actively in the process. In this way, transepistemic synthesis was not only about shared knowledge production but also about interaction and communication. The public engagement processes illuminated the identified aspects of the innovativeness of public engagement: new ways of representation (e.g. “Learning cafes” for practitioners and institutional leaders); methodological and institutional hybridity (consultation, communication, participation, and activist-oriented events); focus on societal challenges (mechanisms of inequality in the art service system); and bearing on political impacts (e.g. policy briefs) (see Rask *et al.*, 2018). However, the epistemic cultures of some institutionalised contexts – the music field, in particular – only allowed for such transepistemic negotiation that required no institutional change. In other words, ignorance preservation was impossible in the negotiations, and the epistemic culture hierarchies excluded critical research altogether.

Transepistemic synthesis was limited not only to the negotiations between researchers’ and practitioners’ epistemic cultures but also to communication with politicians and ministry civil servants who often lacked knowledge or even interest in arts and music education. ArtsEqual researchers were to consider how their research could be made relevant to higher-level politicians by showing its greater societal importance. Growing socio-economic inequality among families and the refugee crisis were at the core of the contemporary societal debate. However, linking these topics to music education required new narratives and evidence of interventions far beyond the ordinary questions of music learning and teaching. Consequently, methodological and disciplinary approaches and concepts new to music education research (e.g. social innovations, third space, systems thinking) started taking a central stance in the project. ArtsEqual researchers also had to face much temporal insecurities and unlearn from the safety of autonomous research while at the same time acknowledging how much advocacy can falsely simplify the message (Cairney, 2016). Following the idea of transepistemic synthesis, the goal of ArtsEqual was not necessarily to create consensus between the researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders but to induce a desire for a shared purpose (Amaladas, 2020) that justifies the need for change from societal, economic, or moral aspects, simultaneously acknowledging the potentially diverse and even conflicting values. In hindsight, finding the shared purpose with music education practitioners was a slow process and started emerging only at the very end of the project. Moreover, for instance, in the funder’s media platforms, the project was often presented as having a considerable impact on the national economy while no evidence of such consequences was provided, hence showing also

how “research impact” is increasingly assumed to be economically justified and measured.

Consequently, ArtsEqual unmasked a series of biases commonly identified in policy studies: status quo bias, optimism bias, and consensus bias (Cairney, 2016). The *status quo bias* was evident from the beginning as the project’s research suggested a change that some partners and their institutional networks saw as questioning the very purpose of the system. In contrast, some other partners with an outspoken interest in minorities did unanimously engage with the idea of change. The project also revealed the *optimism bias*, according to which researchers might have unrealistic expectations about how quickly change can be launched in a system that also needs to carry out its daily actions without interruption. The funders, however, had considered that societal impact takes place at several different levels and agents and may take years. Furthermore, concerning rethinking the epistemic hierarchies, the project clearly showed that the shift in research politics does not mean that all collaborative partners see the need for change from the same perspective and that there may be generational differences in how stakeholders engage with new ideas. Cairney (2016) argues that due to this potential *consensus bias*, it may not be feasible to expect consensus to create change. In the same vein, organisational change is not likely to take place if one expects all to agree. One only needs to have enough critical mass (Senge *et al.*, 2008). Compared to natural or medical sciences, where the continuous renewal of old knowledge is a central part of the nexus of science and even professional practice, music education seems to have a different take on the positioning of research knowledge and researchers.

Crossing boundaries towards expanding professionalism and public scholarship

ArtsEqual initiated a need to cultivate the music education research community towards a more transdisciplinary, hybrid, and network-embedded knowledge generation to engage with the challenges related to the relationships between critical research, policy, and the practices in institutional arts education. More specifically, the project revealed the gap between the traditional scholarship and the impact-driven, policy-relevant research (Westerlund, 2020). Public scholarship requires planning research design by evaluating its timeliness and relevance to policy and how the research will be communicated to various stakeholders. However, what collaborative approaches often forget is that it can be tense and even lead to conflict that needs to be resolved. In the case of ArtsEqual, the researchers were challenged to fulfil the funder’s new demands by creating and maintaining partnerships despite possible conflict and using new impact-driven evaluation methods, such as impact narratives.

Stokols (2017) articulates the idea of negotiations between researchers and community members’ challenging partnerships. In his view, these negotiations

become an issue of an axiological dialogue and valuing all stakeholders' collective learning, interests, expectations, and visions (see also Pipere and Lorenzi, 2021). Typically, researchers are seen as the dominant voice; however, the dynamics can sometimes be reversed so that actors in the field seek to silence researchers whose research represents "the uncomfortable truth". To avoid antagonistic polarisation, researchers need bridging social capital to create cooperative relationships between different professional groups (Stokols, 2017). As Stokols (2017) writes:

A prerequisite for creating bridging capital is that the members of diverse groups understand and appreciate each other's perspectives and are willing to trust and cooperate with others unlike themselves. Social conflict and polarization occur when members of the opposing sides are strongly bonded to others within their own group but are unable to bridge their differences with members of competing groups. Ultimately, community members' ability to promote positive social change depends on whether they can *reconcile their desire to maintain strong interpersonal bonds within groups* and the more difficult challenge of forging cooperative relationships between them.

(p. 209, italics added)

In addition to epistemic understanding, researchers thus need to acquire social capital to create a research design involving both "insiders" and "outsiders" that involves mutual understanding of the shared purpose among diverse professional dispositions and interests. However, in ArtsEqual, while all the music education researchers had a practitioner background and education in music, at the beginning of the process, they were positioned as outsiders by the institutional partners whose expectations of the project did not equate with those of the researchers who had to follow the funded project plan. In contrast, practitioners saw the project and its research as an opportunity to advocate their institutional practices for society and public funders. This positioning was not anticipated and made it difficult to initiate genuine collaboration. Thus, transdisciplinary collaboration may require more extensive dialogue and integration of ideas and is more likely to produce fundamentally new insights of broader scope and impact only if the positioning can be negotiated at the early phase of the collaboration. As Stokols (2017) argues, *translationality* adds complexities to trans-disciplinary and team-based education as translational teams can face the challenges of synthesising multiple disciplinary viewpoints and non-academic perspectives.

Systems reflexivity and relationality entail a concern for preserving the mere existence of institutional music education by strengthening the resilience of the institutions and the professionals working in them. Hence, the reconfiguration of researcher professionalism connects to professional responsibility and systems thinking by challenging the future visions and moral justification of the Finnish music education system, where changes in society can appear to be external

to the arts and irrelevant to the professional responsibility of a music educator (Westerlund, 2021). Different systems theories share the common idea that any system, its task, values, and principles can be examined in the broader social context and against the development of a changing society. A deep transformation of the system requires the active recognition of hegemonic regularities, system structures, and mental models of the professionals. The purpose of the impact narratives was to include the critical angles and even failures. The impact narratives were not simply to “be fashioned to emphasize ‘heroic’ narratives of success” but to identify “also failures and unintentional negative impacts” (Westerlund and Barrett, 2020, p. 107). This kind of critical approach was encouraged by the Strategic Research Council, and, as researchers Westerlund and Barrett (2020) reflect, can be seen as a powerful way for professional learning:

[W]hilst such reflexive processes when imposed by funders can be experienced as a controlling mechanism, and whilst there are certainly variations in what kind of limits for researchers’ self-definition are given by the funder, reflexive processes when writing impact narratives can be consciously taken as a form of professional learning. Moreover, one should not make the mistake to conflate the value of arts education or arts education research to impact assessment, constructing impact narratives. As with any stories of ourselves, they can be seen as a way to find new systems level meanings and directions that help us better identify and articulate for funders and ourselves who we want to be as researchers in our societies and why we do what we do. Indeed, exercises on how to plan impact can even support a more systematic development of an activist, community-oriented and forward-looking professional attitude.

(p. 107)

The need for transepistemic synthesis becomes increasingly critical for music education researchers in the future. Societal conditions and new funding schemes direct researchers to engage with public scholarship by crossing professional boundaries and navigating the complex epistemic landscapes while meeting the expectations of stakeholders, policy-makers, as well as research funders, and the wider public. Researchers must better recognise how public scholarship may require challenging fundamental assumptions and dismantling traditional professional mental models. Hence, as already argued, integrating critical social values in the process of transepistemic synthesis demands more than developing research professionalism at the academic level, as one of the main challenges in ArtsEqual was to find suitable communicative strategies to reconfigure practices while sustaining the commonly identified and accepted values – often related to musical quality. ArtsEqual also revealed the central weakness embedded in the music education professional field: fear of questioning the fundamental basis of mutually agreed “values” and narratives of music education in and for society.

Perhaps one of the lessons learnt in the project was *what questions we are ready to ask* as researchers in a time of wicked problems, even at the risk of reassessing our value base and position in the crossroads of academia, institutional music education, and society.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the shifting politics of music education research, the challenges music education researchers may face in striving towards public scholarship, and research that transforms professional boundaries. We have argued that professional work as a music education practitioner – and equally as a researcher – may be confronted when professionals must “reconcile conflicting expectations” (Vogd, 2017, p. 1) and be prepared to navigate the multiple tensions of varying social forces and hierarchies of epistemic cultures. The shift from advocates of the current system towards public scholars – providers of alternative and more sustainable future scenarios that can transform both the professional field and society – requires a new kind of professional learning, positioning, and expanding professionalism (Westerlund and Gaunt, 2021) beyond one’s immediate work tasks as music education practitioners and scholars. Since research with a political impact necessitates an agreement on a shared goal from all involved parties despite the varying motivations and interests, transformative public scholarship genuinely requires transepistemic synthesis towards forging a desire for collaboration and interpersonal bonds between researchers, stakeholders, and practitioners. Overall, our experiences in ArtsEqual, including transdisciplinary action with politicians and practitioners, have helped us build coping strategies as critical music education scholars, draw a more realistic and sustainable understanding of public scholarship, and identify what is required from research professionalism in our field today.

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8 A manifesto for transformative politics in music education

Gert Biesta, Tuulikki Laes, and Heidi Westerlund

This book has aimed to present the complex questions that are connected and intertwined with music education as a social and political practice; a practice that continues to make some things possible for some, and excludes others and other possibilities at the same time. These questions go beyond ‘best practices’, established methods, and new models that aim to provide solutions for all situations, contexts, countries, and groups of people. Rather, they are questions that have no settled solutions and that require ‘staying with the trouble’. To support the message of the chapters in this book, we invite music educators to recognise, engage, and enact with difficult issues, problems, and paradoxes as part of the continuous effort of democratic experiments by imagining together what would, or could, music education look like if the following statements were the starting point for all thinking and action within the field.

Music education is always social and political

What if we acknowledged that music education is always social *and* political – whether we want it to be or not? Social and political are inseparable and intertwined in all human practices. What counts as music and what counts as education, as well as who has or who should have the power to define it has real consequences for what people can or cannot do. Hence, what counts as music education is a political question in itself. Therefore, in the current ecological, social, and political situation, professional responsibility is not an individual choice but an ethico-political starting point for the field that, in many ways, is public and free for everyone. Music is indeed free as no one owns music, and no one can claim ownership of music. This, as we have attempted to show in this book, is both an educational and a democratic point. The hierarchy between artists and the audience or talents and non-talents is not necessary – nor natural (Small, 1998) – but is created and maintained by institutional structures and professional mental models that can be changed and transformed, just as any other issue in a democratic community and society.

Music education is a social system that sits within other systems

What if we understood music education as a social system that ‘sits within other systems’ (Senge, 2006) – such as legal, economic, ecological, and educational systems? Music education is not isolated from other complex issues and crises in society but is an integral part of other social systems that reach beyond the institutional structures and professional boundaries of what is traditionally considered to be music education. While all systems sustain their specific identity to survive and thrive in a complex, volatile, and constantly changing society, music education professionals must devote themselves to breaking those institutional boundaries – the silo effect (Gaunt and Westerlund, 2013) – that prevent the field from engaging in transformative change. This requires that the music education field recognises its position in the public sphere beyond the individual psyche and uses its public nature critically, ethically, and transformatively.

Music educators can be transformative practitioners – if they want to

What if we trusted that every music educator can be a transformative practitioner or researcher – but only if they decide to do so? Every now and then, music education professionals must ask themselves *why music matters*. The question raised by David Elliott (1995) three decades ago in his practice-based approach has a different echo today. If music is to matter for education in schools and communities now, it must be justified against contemporary societal, political, and ecological conditions, not simply against traditions and customary practices. The spaces and practices of music-making matter in education because they can equally create and dismantle hierarchies. Indeed, it is possible to conform to normalcy or perform difference in and through music (Laes and Westerlund, 2018). Nonetheless, if the meaning of music education is reduced to learning and skills, we lose the horizon where music can have power to enhance social change and transform the public sphere (Biesta, 2017). Notably such transformation is not a matter of waiting for politicians, policymakers – or brain researchers – to tell what, how, and why music educators do what we do, but music educators themselves to start ‘on the ground’. The little differences are as necessary, and sometimes perhaps even more important and significant, as the big initiatives. The most important thing is not giving up: there is always an alternative.

Democracy is always a task ahead

What if we recognised that democracy is always a task ahead rather than a goal to be achieved? Democracy must be considered as a never-ending challenge – it requires work, attention, self-reflexivity, and struggle. Democratisation is not just about including more people into an existing state of affairs, but always

requires reconsidering the status quo of the current music education practices. In other words, inclusion without transformation is empty; transformation without inclusion is blind. Hence, the transformative politics of education should not only focus on who is included and who is excluded but also whether the practices and ways of doing, in which some are included and others excluded, themselves need a wider systems change.

Music education research should not just solve problems but cause them as well

What if we incorporated the idea that music education research not just solve problems but has a task in causing problems as well? If research is only seen in terms of providing answers to questions, or solutions for problems, there is a risk that the questions are taken for granted and the problems simply accepted as status quo. But sometimes there is a need for asking different and better questions and to see problems where no one is seeing them yet. While research as self-promoting advocacy can be harmful, research is necessary for critical reflexivity as well as system change. Research can make grassroots efforts visible and show how ‘good practice’ is not always good practice in the sense of praxis, that is, transformative practice. Music education researchers can engage responsibly in a collective endeavour at exploring the possibilities of a transformative politics in, and for, music education.

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Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* indicate a figure on the corresponding page.

- action situations, social-ecological 50–55;
 - actors and ecological entities 51–52;
 - consequences 53–55; interactions in World in Motion 50, 50–52; as educational situations 52–55; strategic interaction 51; transformative ecopolitics 50–52
- activism: climate change 82; educational 82–83, 87, 92–93, 95; grassroots 82; leadership and 90; solidarity, entrepreneurship, and 85, 87, 90
- adaptive capacity 47–48
- aesthetic: acts 112; dissensus 109–110, 112
- Allgemeine Pädagogik* (Benner, 2015) 17–18
- ArtsEqual project 7–8, 40, 48, 58, 119–120; advocacy resources 123; challenges 122–124, 128; cooperative relationships in 128–131; impact narratives 121, 129; knowledge production 126; negative impacts 122; public engagement regime 126–127; stakeholder resistance 122–123; systems reflexivity 121–122; researchers’ tasks 122, 124; transepistemic abduction 124–125, 129; transepistemic synthesis 125, 127, 130; unmasking biases 128
- authoritarian neoliberalism 100–102;
 - creativity and 101–102; *pædeia* 100; value 101
- authority 22
- autonomous thinking 104
- Basic Education in the Arts system (BEA) 65
- beliefs: about musical ability 74; *illusio* 71–72; sophists’ 103
- Benner, Dietrich 17–18
- boundary critique 28
- Bourdieuian analysis of Floora 64, 66–70
- Caisa (Helsinki’s Cultural Centre) 45, 48–49
- capital*, Bourdieu’s thinking tool 67–70
- capitalist economies 23n1
- co-designing 49, 51, 56
- concert halls 26, 31–32, 32, 36, 37
- consensus bias 128
- COVID-19 pandemic 81
- creativity: improvisation, and composing 7; meaning of 113; and marketable results 101–102; neoliberalisation of 102; politicising musical 111–114
- crises: Covid-19 81; ecological 20, 82; and destructive tendencies 85; management 81; Ukrainian war 82
- critical: practice 27; professional formation 87; questions 13, 33; responsibility 66, 69, 71, 74, 76; systems reflexivity 54; transformation 28, 68
- democracy 2–3, 8n3; Athenian 104; as core of education 112; and creative music education 100–101; in music education 40, 112, 105–111; and *pædeia* cycle 106, 106–111;

- rethinking 112; as task 135–136; and transformative politics 1
 democratisation 135–136
 depoliticised: educational systems 82; society 82
 design thinking 46, 55–57
 dialogue 19–20; between teachers and students 74; creativity as 113
 displacement: of art and education 15–17; double 11, 15
 dissensus 109–111; aesthetic 109–110; and democratic music education 110–111; political 110
 diversity 43–44
doxa, Bourdieu's thinking tool 66–74, 76
- education: arts 15–17, 45–46, 120, 124; authority in 22; commodification of 101; conservatory system of 56–57; curriculum centred 16; educational activism 82; education question 11, 17–18, 22–23; entrepreneurship 93–94; equity in music 63–64; higher music 5, 36, 38, 43, 45–53, 57; institutional music 4, 46, 119, 124, 129; instrumentalisation of 5, 100, 102; “learnification” of 5, 6, 12–14; lobbying in 123; measurable and unmeasurable aspects 101; *pædeia* cycle of democratic music 105–111; in *Protagoras* 102–103; technocratic approach 13–14; transformative politics of music 2–3, 4, 6, 11–20; *political* music 3–4; *politicised* music education 3–4; triadic relationship 21; value 101; world-centred orientation 6
 educational situations 52–55
 educators: as activists 83, 87; creative role of 105–106; as designers 45–46, 51, 56; enhancing societal transformation 43–44, 121; expanding professionalism of 39; importance of 4, 11; purpose of work of 36, 92; responsibility of 27, 56, 67, 72; as transformative practitioners 135; Sophists as 102–103; solidarity of 44–45; task of 70; work of 21–22
 entrepreneurship 82–83; capitalist *vs.* academic 86; entrepreneurial thinking 83, 86
 ethics 94
 European conservatory tradition 26
 European music schools 63
 European Union policies 51
 experts 26; disindividualised 36; expanding 36–39; formation of 36, 37; importance of 27; in music education 33–36; as Panopticon 30–33
 Extinction Rebellion in Finland 82
- Fargespill*, Norway 66
field, Bourdieu's thinking tool 67–74
 Finnish educational culture 51
 Finnish music schools 65, 66
 Floora in Finland 63–64; Bourdieusian analysis of 66–74; complexity of choice 72–74; *doxa* and *illusio* 67–69; *field-capital-habitus* dynamics 67–69; *illusio* as inclusion 70–72; as inclusive programme 63–64; intentions and interests in 68; interprofessional collaboration 65; pitfalls of professional responsibility in 66–69; political responsibility 75–76; as social innovation 64–65; social networks in 70; students 69–74; students' struggles 68–69; teachers' responsibilities 67
 Foucault, Michel 28; metaphor of Panopticon 27, 30–33
 freedom: as absence of constraints 13; and equality 2–3
- Greece: ancient 102; crisis in 100; narrow view of value in 101; neoliberalism in 101
- habitus*, Bourdieu's thinking tool 66–74
 human beings: identity question of 18; as natural beings 17; in the world 14–15
- ignorance preservation 125
illusio 67–69; awareness of 73–74; hidden factors of 71; manifestations of 70–72; students and their families' perceptions 71
 imagination 56–57; radical 56
 immigrants 45, 49, 57
 impact narratives 121; purpose of 130
 improvisation and composition 106–107; as studious musical play 107, 108
 inclusion 2–3, 7, 63–64, 67, 70–71; in Floora 75–76
 International Society for Music Education (ISME, 2024) 123

- leadership: as form of pedagogy 90; and solidarity 84, 88–91
 learnification 5, 6, 12–14
 learning: lifelong 12–13, 14, 91–92; outcomes 13–15, 22
 Lerman, Liz 38; considering paradoxes 39; on dismantling hierarchies 38–39; fostering learning communities 39; necessary questions 38
 linear model 26–27

 manifesto, for music education transformation 134–136
 memory work 35–36
 mental models 26–27, 33–37, 37; changing 52; need for change in 40; rigid 47
 middle ground 19–20
Monday's drop(s) 99–100; and democracy 110–111; dissensual practice of 110–111; experimental approach 105, 106; improvisation collective 99, 110
 moral: blindness 44; values 2–3; wisdom (*phronesis*) 29
 multi-layered educational situations 52–55
 musicality tests 31
 musical memory 35
 music education: advocacy 33, 34–35; changes in environment of 33; and debate on 2, 8n1; democracy in 40; democratising 3; experts on 33–36, 37; instrumentalisation of 5; lobbying in 123; and need for transformative politics 1–8; neoliberalism in 3, 8n5; neuroscience used in 33–35; political neutrality 3; political vs. politicised 3–4; politicising 100; social and political 134; as social system 135; and systems reflexivity 29; transformation 36; vision of sustainability 91
 Music Education, Professionalism, and Ecopolitics project 8, 40, 58, 131
 musical quality 44, 47, 124

 narration sickness 4, 8n6
 negotiations: between researchers and community members 127, 128–129
 neoliberalism: authoritarian 101; crisis of 84; erosion of education 101; in Greece 101; in music education 3
 neuromyths 123

 neuroscience 33–35
 new institutionalism 86–87
 non-sovereign musical voice 107–108
 Nordic countries, elitism of music schools 63

 openness, radical 102
 optimism bias 128

paedeia; cycle of music education 105–111, 106; and autonomous thinking 104; conception of democratic music education 105–111; definition 103, 114n5; as democracy in action 99–100; dissensus 109–110; and non-sovereign musical voices 107–109; political effects 111; re-configuration of the distribution of the sensible 108–109; resisting authoritarian neoliberalism 100–102; sophists' twist 102–104
 Palestine and Israel conflict 82
 Panopticon 27, 30–33; feedback loops of 36
 path dependency 74–75
 pedagogy, open form 106–107
 Plato 101, 103
 policy: action 87; need for change 4; educational 75; entrepreneurs' 84; language 83; as practice 83; and transformational politics 4
 policy entrepreneurship: as ethico-political stance 94; capitalist vs. academic 86; conceptualisation of 84–86; neo-activist stance on 94; new professionalism in music education 93–95; as political economy construct 86–93; as professional capacity 87; and professional organising 92–93; and solidarity leadership 88–91; street-level 87; sustainable action 91–92
 political: aspect of research 119–121; agency, of students and educators 75–76; economy construct, entrepreneurship as 82–84, 86–88, 93–95; performance 53–54; music education 1, 3–6, 11, 14, 23, 109–114, 134
 power: definition 2; exercise of 39–40; of path dependency 74; smart 112; teacher's authority as 22

- praxis, transformative *see* transformative praxis
- professionalism 4; activism and 90; and autonomy 90; conceptions of music 44; entrepreneurship 93–95; expanding 27, 39, 55, 86, 119, 128–131; experts in music education 37; and neutrality 83; new music education 92–93; political character of 85; and public scholarship 128–131; rigid experts 82
- professional organising 92–93; collaborative action 93; engaging in 93; ethics of 93; policy in action 92
- professional practice 84–86
- Protagoras* (Plato, 1924 102; approach to *pædeia* 102–104; educational work 111
- public engagement processes 127
- public engagement regime 124–127
- public good regime 126
- public scholarship 119; and professionalism 128–131
- radical imagination 56–57
- re-configuration: of distribution of sensible 108–109; creating changes 109; of researcher professionalism 129–130; and perceptive universe 109
- refugees: challenges of Finnish society 57; children 101; hostility in Finland 44–45; in Norway 66; local ecosystem of 49, 49; and World in Motion 51–53
- research: and advocacy 123; and gifted individuals 36; Panoptic knowledge production 31–33; pre-existing mental models and practices 33–36; solving and causing problems 136
- Research Council of Finland 7–8, 40, 58, 119–120, 131
- researchers: challenges for 122, 130; and criticism of music education system 122; as dominant voice 129; efforts of ArtsEqual 127, 128; future oriented 119; and neuromyths 123; and power hierarchies 125; optimism bias 128; as public professionals 121–122; and systems reflexivity 124; transepistemic abduction 124–125
- research projects 6
- resistance 19, 57
- responsibility: challenges of, in Floora 64, 66–69; critical 76; of music education 55–57; new dimensions of 64; primary 76; professional 129–130, 134; vs. responsiveness 75; taking 71–72
- responsiveness vs. responsibility 75
- risk 86, 94; of self-destruction 19–20
- risk society 84–86; education professionalism required in 92; idea of control 85; potential risks 85
- schools *see* social innovations
- School Strike for Climate in Sweden 82
- self-advocacy 120, 121–124; harmful 136
- Shack Dwellers Movement in South Africa 82
- Sibelius Academy 45, 48–49, 52, 58n1
- silos effect 135
- social-ecological systems (SES) 45–46; framework in World in Motion 48–49, 49; layers of nested systems 48; linked 48–49, 49, 55
- social innovations 7, 63–64; co-engaging with different sectors 65; critics 66; enhancing inclusion 64; Floora 63–65, 70, 74; paradoxes 64, 65, 66, 67, 73, 76; schools as socially structured spaces 69; towards responsible 74–76
- social sustainability 91–92; free from exclusion 92; link between social justice and education 91; requirements for 92; reshaping education 92
- social systems 27, 47; education as 121; hierarchies in 39–40; music education as 135; practices of music; SES 48–49, 49, 55
- Socrates, *pædeia* and freedom 102–103
- solidarity leadership 84, 88–91; activism 90; and atomism 90; empathy 88; subjectification 89
- sophists 102; democratic approach 103, 105; history of *pædeia* 103; as philosophers and educators 103; right to education 103
- status quo bias 128
- studious play 107–108; creative music engagement 108; development of musical voices 107–108; making culture 113; personal voice 108
- subjectification 89
- sustainability 46–48
- sustainable action 84, 91–92; and lifelong learning 91–92; teachers' key role in 92

- systems reflexivity 27, 29, 122; definition 122; engaging with 120, 124; and relationality 129–130
- systems thinking 46–48; ecological university 47; functional analysis of social systems 47; as a heuristic tool 48
- teachers *see* educators
- Transformative Politics of Music
Education in an Aging Society project 8, 131
- traditions 113
- transepistemic abduction 124
- transepistemic synthesis 7, 120–121; communication with politicians/civil servants 127; and collaboration 131; critical 130; and decision translation 125, 126; epistemological agility 126; interaction and communication 127; as part of public scholarship 121; towards public engagement regime 124–128; *see also* research
- transformative ecopolitics 50–52; action situations 51–52; actors and ecological entities 51–52; World in Motion's interactions 50, 50–52
- transformative politics 1; groundwork for 22–23; and idea of democracy 2, 8n3; of music education research 120–128; self-advocacy towards complex systems reflexivity 121–124; transepistemic synthesis towards public engagement regime 124–128
- transformative praxis: as a form of action 28; and awareness of historical situatedness 36; moral imperative of 28; and new questions 40; re-focusing of 29; relationality 38–39; re-theorisation of 27; and social space 31–33; systems view of 27–29; technical expertise (*techne*) 29
- universities 47; and corporations, partnerships 82; ecological 47
- VUCA world 81
- wars 82
- world 19–20; engaging with 21–22; existence in 19–20; middle ground 19–20
- World in Motion 44–46, 50–57; addressing a bridging organisation 49, 49; co-designing 56; collaborative music-making 45, 51; consequences of interactions 53–55; expanding professional horizons 53–54; intercultural approaches to co-composing 45; reducing inequalities 45; refugee and immigrant musicians' experiences 53; social-ecological interactions/interconnections 48–49, 49; social issues 45–46; teachers' interactions 54–55