

# Music Teacher Education for the Future: Reflections on Change

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## Abstract

This article conceptualizes and discusses change in music teacher education. Results from the FUTURED research project provide the starting point for the article. The project explored various dimensions of change within the music education programs in Norwegian generalist teacher education. In this project, change was regarded as having a transformative capacity closely related to co-construction and complexity. Telling new stories about education, and thereby imagining different educational realities, may be seen as a possible trigger for change. In this article, therefore, the authors contrast the current situation against an imagined reality to create a heuristic framework for a critical discussion of change. Based on a meta-analysis of research findings, the authors propose a vision for a future music teacher education, which they then use to highlight and discuss several intersecting dimensions of educational change: values and traditions, demographics, educational practices, curricula, and society.

## Keywords

Change, music teacher education, social justice, visions, future

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The world is constantly changing, and current times of complexity and uncertainty may exacerbate the sense of change experienced by people and in institutions. National curricula and teacher training programs are no exceptions to such change. Too frequently, however, change is used as a neoliberal policy buzzword (Ellis, Souto-Manning, and Turvey 2019), justifying educational reforms based on the need for professional specialization and adaptation to a changing labor market. Consequently, the result is an instrumentalization of knowledge instead of anchoring the need for change within the educational programs themselves. This article addresses change in relation to music teacher education programs, which have been described by scholars as conservative, prescriptive, and change resistant (Benedict 2015; Westerlund and Gaunt 2021), highlighting that change and improvement in music teacher education are necessary and pertinent.

While the purpose of education is commonly seen as to prepare citizens for a life well lived in a world worth living in (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014, 27), education is also a powerful gatekeeper for opportunity and distribution of life chances (Hargreaves 2005, 2). On a fundamental level, then, one might agree that education is important and that striving for educational improvement is essential, but specifying what change might entail is more challenging. Effecting change should not be about change for its own sake: rather, “what is fundamental,” according to Burner (2018), “is the normative and political questions about the quality of change” (123). Change, then, is connected to beliefs, values, and discursive positionings. What counts as change and how change should be brought about will therefore inevitably be understood and defined differently, depending on the situation and perspective taken (Christophersen 2021). Changes could be small or big, linear or complex, bottom-up or top-down, happen through gradual transformation or in revolution-like manner, to mention some possible dimensions of change. The rationale for change, that is, why change is necessary, may also be questioned. Further, the power dimensions implied inevitably raise ethical concerns as to who decides what change is and what or who needs to change and how (Viig et al. 2023).

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to critically conceptualize and discuss change in a music teacher education context. The starting point is the research project *Music Teacher Education for the Future* (FUTURED 2019–2022), in

which change was regarded as having a transformative capacity closely related to co-construction and complexity. Telling new stories about education, thereby imagining different educational realities, can be seen as a possible trigger for change (Kertz-Welzel 2022; Moss 2014). In this article, therefore, the authors contrast the current situation against an imagined reality to create a heuristic framework for a critical discussion of change. Based on a meta-analysis of FUTURED findings, the authors propose a vision for a future music teacher education, which we then use to highlight and discuss several intersecting dimensions of educational change: values and traditions, demographics, educational practices, curricula, and society.

## Music Teacher Education: Setting the Scene

When approaching the issue of change in music teacher education, it is necessary to consider research both in the field of music education as well as in teacher education more generally. Nordic research on music teacher education shows significant influence from the conservatory tradition. Sætre (2014), for example, found that Norwegian generalist teacher education music programs are characterized by fragmentary course structures with performance-oriented and musicological disciplines as well as a traditional pedagogical discourse; the programs therefore resemble miniaturized music conservatories to which educational and research perspectives are added. A Swedish study found that master-apprentice traditions and associated belief systems and notions of expertise determine the outcome of admission tests to music teacher education. Not only do these culturally reproductive practices result in maintaining traditions and preventing change within the programs, but they also have real consequences for the lives and careers of the applicants (Sandberg-Jurström and Lindgren 2022).

Other studies suggest that music teacher education programs are firmly rooted in traditional notions of teaching and education (Zamorano-Valenzuela and Serrano 2022), characterized by a “hyper-focus on musical content and discipline-specific skill development” (Bylica and Schmidt 2021, 1). Ferm-Thorgersen, Johansen, and Juntunen (2016), for example, found that established teaching traditions governed teaching practices in Nordic music teacher education programs and that these traditions hampered the educators’ abilities to envision change. The relationship between educational policy reforms and music teacher education programs seems non-existent (Aróstegui 2011). Moreover, music teacher education

programs appear to be designed with a focus on musical content and the transmission of such content (Aróstegui and Cisneros-Cohernour 2010; Laes and Westerlund 2018; Sætre 2014), thus implying a “sustenance of the past and preservation of traditions” (Westerlund and Karlsen 2017, 18). Scholars have also pointed to inequality within music teacher education programs, as studies show that certain demographics, values, beliefs, and practices are sustained and reproduced among faculty and pre-service music teachers internationally (Elpus 2015; Hewitt and Thompson 2006; Knudsen and Onsrud 2023; Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021).

This inherent conservatism may not be exclusive to the subject of music. Teacher education is often seen as “resistant to change and slow to innovate” (Ellis, Souto-Manning, and Turvey 2019, 3). Content orientation can also be found in teacher education in general. For example, Goodwin et al. (2014) found that content specialization and discipline knowledge were considered more important than pedagogy when teacher educators are hired.<sup>1</sup> Rowan et al. (2021) questioned teacher educators’ epistemic reflexivity and claimed that teacher education programs and courses are designed on systematic and research-based knowledge only to a limited extent, asserting that “efforts to interrupt patterns of educational success and failure have been patchy at best and ineffectual at worst” (150). Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) observed that there seems to have been too much focus on purely academic research in teacher education; they pointed to a need for a particular teacher education knowledge base, a pedagogy where teacher educators can explore their own assumptions and prejudice, and provide opportunities for teacher educators to do research that integrates theory and practice.

For music education, the theory-practice divide implies a tension between music (practical and performative) and pedagogy (theoretical), and possibly a fragmentation of curriculum (Sætre 2014). Teaching and learning music may therefore be perceived as indifferent to theoretical knowledge and conceived in the likeness of traditions that precede pedagogical knowledge, thereby resulting in reproduction of existing practices and hindering change (Zamorano-Valenzuela, Aróstegui, and González 2022).

## The FUTURED Project: Researching Change

As implied above, the hybrid nature of music teacher education connects the discipline to two equally conservative and stabilizing scholarly fields: music education and teacher education. The FUTURED project was designed to challenge inherent conservatism and the reproduction of values within these fields.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the project was to critically discuss the current educational situation in generalist teacher education music programs in Norway, develop new teaching approaches, and propose new directions for music teacher education, thereby warranting change. The project was designed to avoid mere descriptive and diagnostic research. Instead, the researchers chose a prescriptive approach so they could explore alternatives in addition to describing and criticizing existing practices.

The project was founded on a series of normative claims:

- Education is political, and teaching is never neutral.
- Music teacher education is contextual, political, and linked to issues of equity and justice.
- Music teacher education must relate to societal needs and challenges.
- Music teacher education must cater to versatile musicianship and learning styles, student participation, critical reflection, and agency.

The overarching methodological design for the project was action-research inspired (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014; Noffke and Somekh 2009; Putman and Rock 2018), thus mirroring the project's normative orientation of critically contributing to change. Action research is a cyclical and explorative way to "take action in ... personal and social situations with a view to improving them" (McNiff 2017, 9). The FUTURED project aimed to challenge the status quo of music teacher education and improve teacher education practice by taking stock of existing practices, exploring new educational approaches, and proposing new directions for music teacher education. In this respect, the project and its sub-studies united the professional, personal, and political dimensions of action research (Noffke 1997) and aimed to enhance professional knowledge, contribute to a deeper understanding of personal practices, and improve educational programs.

Empirical studies were carried out in connection to music programs in primary and lower secondary (PLS) teacher education in Norway. PLS is a five-year generalist teacher education program with an integrated master's degree in either

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pedagogy or in a school subject such as music.<sup>3</sup> The pre-service teachers must specialize in 3–4 school subjects—one of them at the masters level and involving a masters thesis—as well as specializing in teaching either grades 1–7 or grades 5–10. In total, six empirical studies took place<sup>4</sup> (see Table 1):

Table 1. Empirical Studies Within the FUTURED Project

Study	Topic of study	Methodology
1	Pre-service music teachers' backgrounds, values, and ambitions	Mixed methods study
2	Ideologies and values in steering documents, institutional curricula, and job announcements	Document studies
3	Preservice music teachers' critical agency and reflection on campus	Participatory action research
4	Pre-service music teachers' field experiences and professional agency	Qualitative case study
5	Collaborative and interprofessional music teaching in school	Collaborative action research
6	Music technology and spaces for musical autonomy, voice and engagement in schools and teacher education	Collaborative action research

Despite methodological variations, a common denominator existed between the sub-studies: a critical exploration and questioning of existing discourses and practices within music teacher education. Some sub-studies included pedagogical experimentation and development, such as working with utopian thinking and dream scenarios with pre-service teachers (Study 3), putting together a multi-professional team to explore collaborative teaching with music technology (Study 5), and exploring the intersection between the physical and the virtual in the music classroom (Study 6).

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Empirical findings from the project indicate pervasive demographic homogeneity as well as a reproduction of cultural (in)equality in music teacher education (Knudsen and Onsrud 2023; Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021; Onsrud and Kvinge 2023). Along with a majority orientation in music education and vertical notions of expertise, our results show that it can be demanding for both pre-service teachers and teacher educators to step outside their comfort zones to challenge existing practices and envision change (Bjørnevoll 2022; Fredriksen et al. 2023; Onsrud et al. 2022; Viig et al. 2023). Our findings also imply that the intersection of physical and virtual educational environments can open hybrid spaces for musical participation that draw on the students' and pupils' diverse competencies, resources, and preferences (Holdhus, Christophersen, and Partti 2022). Collaborative participation in such environments can support the students' musical mastery and experience of agency and participation (Christophersen, Holdhus, and Kenny, in review).

The sub-studies did not aim to conceptualize change per se; nevertheless, they raised important questions about educational change for the project; for example, regarding implications of the current demographics of music teacher education in Norway (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021) and the teacher educator's role and ethical responsibility in research on educational changes (Viig et al. 2023), to mention but a few. The results from the sub-studies therefore provide the foundation for this article,<sup>5</sup> while also envisioning alternatives to the current educational situation, thus proposing new directions for music teacher education.

## Music Teacher Education: A Vision for the Future

The findings mentioned above indicate that there are problematic issues within the investigated programs. Characterizing the current situation in music teacher education in terms of deficiency could inspire visions of more desirable alternatives. According to Jacobsen and Tester (2012, 1), it is essential to question the “everyday inevitability of this world” and aim towards a transformation of the existing “through the lever of what could be.” One way of changing music teacher education is therefore to create new narratives that challenge inevitability (Viig et al. 2023). From this outlook, current music teacher education appears not only as a “dictatorship of no alternatives” (Moss 2014) but as one possible version of how to organize teacher preparation.

In addition to producing descriptions of the existing, the FUTURED research also aimed to propose new directions for music teacher education. The vision below is presented as an alternative to the current situation, as a music teacher education for the future. The normative claims from the FUTURED project provide its foundation, and it has been constructed on the basis of a meta-analysis of findings from the sub-studies. The vision below is therefore to be considered an alternative outcome of the FUTURED project, and it informs the further conceptualizations and discussions of change within this article.

*Recent changes in national policies and guidelines for teacher education have ensured more autonomy for the institutions, thus enabling more diverse and flexible programs. The music teacher education program has taken measures to better reflect the diversity of the population and to include a variation of content, musics, and methods that allows for multiple ways of being and becoming a good music teacher and educator.*

*The irony of much education is that it aims to develop future competence and professional autonomy without allowing upcoming professionals to influence their current educational programs. This future program, however, is characterized by collaboration and democracy, and pre-service music teachers are seen as stakeholders and co-constructors. Therefore, participation goes beyond mere representation in university councils and committees: pre-service music teachers are routinely involved in developing content, methods, and practices with their peers and educators.*

*Consequently, an asset-based approach is at heart, focusing on the pre-service teachers' resources rather than their deficits. Music teacher educators recognize that society, as well as pre-service teachers, change. Instead of trying to fix what could be perceived as knowledge gaps according to past ideals, educators actively let their teaching be informed by larger societal issues as well as interaction with the community. Pre-service music teachers' backgrounds, existing knowledge, and preferences are considered important starting points for the educational practices of this music teacher education program. While pre-service music teachers may be young and inexperienced, the educators still consider their perspectives and input valuable for the development of the educational practices of the institution.*

*The pedagogical practices of this music teacher education program are facilitative and explorative, extending beyond the traditional provision of answers in the form of recipes for classroom work. The educators systematically use action research and other practice-based research forms to examine and develop music teacher education practices as well as critical reflection on their positionality. Continuous work to improve*



*critical epistemic reflexivity within music teacher education programs has been undertaken in close collaboration with pre-service music teachers and the practice field.*

*Within this music teacher education program, educational issues are still worth exploring, reflecting on, and developing. This explorative stance has spurred institutional changes when it comes to formal learning objectives and assessment procedures, which have been opened to allow for development and exploration. Consequently, the institution has decided to critically question its use of administrative procedures and software that may impact educational practices in rigid and reductionist ways, thus allowing for more flexibility, complexity, and unpredictability in the organization as well as within the curricula and educational practices.*

## Changing Music Teacher Education

In what follows, we delve deeper into the morass of change in music teacher education. The normative claims at the heart of the FUTURED project position music teacher education as a value-laden and political endeavor that is always linked to issues of equity and justice, and with an obligation to cater for versatility, diversity, participation, and student agency. The vision outlined in the previous section represents a possible interpretation of these claims in a music teacher education context. The imagined program differs from many existing programs and practices within Norwegian generalist teacher education, and it demonstrates that comprehensive educational changes are complex and multi-faceted. Guided by the vision and the normative educational claims, we highlight and discuss intersecting and interdependent dimensions of change within music teacher education programs.

### *Changing Values and Traditions*

Scholarly literature on educational change has often been carried out within a discourse about what change entails (Smeyers and Depaepe 2016). Within the context of music education internationally, the discourse of change has been frequently connected to social justice and equity, discussed in relation to the values and ideas that music teacher education should be built upon and how these ideas and values are both thought and talked about politically, within institutions, among professionals and the public. For example, Laes and Westerlund (2018) point to the pervasiveness of performative, skills-oriented, and ableist values in music teacher

education. While often promoting diverse curricula, the ramifications of “musicopedagogical” traditions (Laes and Westerlund 2018) are based on prescriptive pedagogies and narrow notions of expertise and fragmentation, thus rendering music education a frozen practice remote from societal issues and indifferent to issues of social justice (Hess 2018).

While few would disagree that education should be based on values of social justice and equity, conceptions of social justice within music teacher education vary significantly. Anglo-American discourses on social justice, for example, have had a substantial impact within the field of music education internationally. To refer mainly to the inequality of “historically and intersectionally minoritized communities across the vectors of race and ethnicity, gender, age, social class, sexuality, religious faith, and (dis)ability” (Ellis, Souto-Manning, and Turvey 2019, 5) makes historical oppression a key justification for a change that teachers and teacher educators are expected to bring about. Teacher education is then linked to a notion of debt (Ladson-Billings 2006), wherein it becomes the responsibility or even the duty of educators to pay this accumulated debt, which also implies “othering” and possibly reinforcing already existing asymmetrical power relations (Benedict and Schmidt 2007; Coppola and Taylor 2022; Kallio 2021). However, this idea of a cultural debt is perhaps not as prominent in Norway and the other Nordic countries, where current justifications of diversity in teacher education seem to be without the accompanying narratives of historical failure and thus appear to be more generally founded on ideas of equity and representation.<sup>6</sup> Diversity and equity in music teacher education are therefore promoted as desirable *because they are just and fair* with reference to creativity, celebration, and community (Knudsen 2021). On the one hand, then, teacher education programs in Norway are free from pervasive ideologies of using educational programs to settle debt and correct historical injustice. On the other hand, there might be a risk of “historylessness” that suggests an ignorance of how past injustices extend into current practices, systems, and structures of music education and music teacher preparation.

As these examples demonstrate, despite the global recognition of social justice as an ideal motivating change in music teacher education, the concept of social justice is contextual and does not necessarily travel well (Lewis and Christophersen 2021). Even locally, within teacher training institutions, one might find diverging opinions of what is just and fair and what should count as diversity in particular

contexts. While according to some scholars, conservatoire traditions imply reproduction and slowness rather than transformation (Sætre 2014; Westerlund and Karlsen 2017), they also provide foundations for teaching practices that have a long history, as do repertoires and teaching methods of other traditional practices, both from majority and minority cultures.

Consequently, approaching issues of change within teacher education is a complex matter. Seeing change as a process instead of an event (Hargreaves et al. 2010) makes change closely connected to individual and collective sensemaking. For change to happen, it must make sense to the people involved, and “their interpretations of it will determine whether they engage in change, resistance, or simply ignore it” (Louis 2010, 18). This points to change as a discursive practice, whereby thoughts, language, and actions are mutually constitutive (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

Within the FUTURED context, the researchers developed a framework for generating questions pertaining to change within music teacher education. Christophersen (2021) suggested that issues of change towards more equitable practices within this field could be addressed through active deliberation on how institutions and professionals relate to macro-, meso-, and micro-level issues. It is thus important to think about how music education practices address, reflect on, and deal with (a) the big issues of this world such as climate change, technological innovation, globalization, and migration; (b) structural and systemic inequalities within the institutions connected to issues such as ethnicity, gender, age, ability, and social class; (c) agentic issues pertaining to, for example voice, participation, and the agency of stakeholders. This raises further questions: How could global issues become integral to music teacher education programs? What kinds of pedagogies would they require? How can music teacher education prepare future music teachers to work in complex and diverse settings? Do current programs allow for a polyphony of voices? What mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion are at work in the institutions? What spaces of agency are available to pre-service teachers and teacher educators? How can educators recognize pre-service teachers’ resources, and how can educators and pre-service teachers collaboratively develop the educational practices of music teacher education?

### *Changing Demographics*

The vision for future music teacher education, as formulated previously, highlights a desire for music teacher education programs to reflect the diversity of the population. FUTURED survey research results (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021) indicate that Norwegian teacher education music programs (and teacher education in general) mainly recruit from a narrow population segment. According to these survey results, pre-service music teachers admitted to the Norwegian programs are predominantly female, white, and lower middle class, and their musical competence is largely “acquired outside of compulsory schooling and in settings that are already characterised by skewed recruitment and a lack of diversity” (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021, 48).

The lack of diversity found in the Norwegian music teacher education programs is mirrored in programs in other countries, for example in Spain (Aróstegui and Fernández-Jiménez 2023) and in the United States (Austin 2021; Elpus 2015). Elpus found that US music teachers are less “racially, culturally and ethnically diverse” (2015, 300) than the rest of the population. These results largely align with the demographics of music teacher education faculties across the US and Canada, which are “overwhelmingly white (94.0%), dominantly male (56.1%), approximately 51.65 years of age, and married (78%)” (Hewitt and Thompson 2006, 47). All in all, this suggests that music education programmes, at least in the global North, seem to reproduce and reinforce patterns of inequality. Comparing FUTURED project results with previous research on Norwegian teacher educators (Sætre 2014), it seems that pre-service music teachers and teacher educators resemble each other in many ways. For example, both groups emphasize performativity and practical activities and are less interested in academic activities, which could be seen as supporting and reinforcing a musico-pedagogical discourse (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021). These results may not be exclusive to Norway, as similar values are also found among pre-service music teachers in Ireland (Kenny 2017). Following from such pervasive discourse is not only the favoring of certain musical practices but also of certain talents and skills that help distinguish between who is considered worthy of becoming a music teacher and who is not (Bowman 2007; Christophersen 2021; Sandberg-Jurström, Lindgren, and Zandén 2021). Such reproductions indicate a silo effect, in which an “institutional system blindly pursues its purpose and social reproduction, favouring some

and excluding others, and in this way reproduces social injustice” (Väkevä, Westerlund, and Ilmola-Sheppard 2017, 132).

The circularity and homogeneity within Norwegian music teacher education, suggested by both research and scholarly literature, is highly concerning. Firstly, it is a matter of fair and just representation in education. If music teacher education is to fulfill its societal mandate of contributing relevant music education to all, the demographics of pre-service music teachers and educators should reflect the diversity of the population that music teacher education programs are situated within and are intended to serve. In this respect, the music teacher programs in Norway have a long way to go: while 20 percent of the population in Norway are of minority background (Statistics Norway 2023a), only 8 percent of pre-service teachers in the new five-year teacher education have such background (Statistics Norway 2023b), and approximately 6 percent of the pre-service music teachers identify as a minority (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021). Pupils and students need to see “music teachers who not only look like them but also represent successful professionals in the field” (DeLorenzo and Silverman 2016, 2). The lack of diversity found both within the Norwegian music teacher education programs and internationally, begs the question of how music teacher education programs can prepare future music teachers for the diversity and complexity they will most likely meet later in their careers (see also Bylica and Schmidt 2021; Culp and Salvador 2021; Holdhus, Christophersen, and Partti 2022; Kenny 2018; Onsrud et al. 2022; Rinde and Kenny 2021; Rusinek and Aróstegui 2015; Stavrou and O'Connell 2022). Secondly, a more diverse demography within music teacher education programs could be considered essential to contribute a diversity of thought and, by extension, productive friction for counteracting stasis. Diversity can also be perceived as a source of increased epistemic reflexivity (Rowan et al. 2021) within music teacher education programs and thus also as a trigger for change.

Both these justifications for a more diverse demographic in music teacher education are, in the end, related to a bigger question of who is to be considered the “we” (Bowman 2007) of music teacher education programs. A recent study of job announcements for recruiting music teacher educators in Norway state that these announcements are “key cultural artefacts, not only for the recruitment process but in conveying what it means to be a teacher educator” (Onsrud and Kvinge 2023), making teacher educators part of the “club,” as Bowman (2007) calls it. The

need for a critical stance towards these cycles of injustice extends to the authors of this chapter: we are all music teacher educators and must therefore acknowledge our active role in this social reproduction that takes place in music teacher education in our countries, and therefore also recognize the particularity of our insights into this matter.

Arguably, social (in)justice in education is a complex issue, perhaps even a wicked problem of education: i.e., a problem that is unsolvable due to its complexity, lack of clear definition, and interconnectedness to other wicked problems (Rittel and Weber 1973). Such problems require “multi-agency initiatives across sectoral and hierarchical boundaries, and the mobilisation of the whole society with its organisations and neighbourhoods” (Sannino 2022, 10). Moreover, the issue of diversity will require extensive political and structural measures that far exceed discursive work in the forms of conversations within faculties, as Niknafs (2017) described. Still, making the spaces of music teacher education more open and attractive to different kinds of people is an important task for all current stakeholders within music teacher education, and it must also be reflected in the changing practices and curricula of music teacher education.

### *Changing Educational Practices*

The educational practices within music teacher education concern the relation between pre-service music teachers, teacher educators, and curricula and how these dimensions hang together and form an educational space that promotes certain pedagogies, certain kinds of knowledge(s), and certain values. In revisiting the FUTURED project vision, it is obvious that the envisioned changes draw on several theoretical perspectives with implications for the educational practices of music teacher education. Firstly, there is the influence of progressive education through the student-oriented focus that highlights student participation and democracy. Secondly, the vision draws on critical pedagogy, emphasizing “actor agency at grassroot level, seeking to undermine oppressive constraints on learners, teachers, and society” (Sugrue et al. 2022, 5). Considering the theoretical appeal and the correspondence with normative foundational claims for the FUTURED project, both these perspectives informed results from the project (see, for example, Bjørnevoll 2022; Knudsen and Onsrud 2023; Onsrud et al. 2022). Despite their usefulness, the researchers also found these two perspectives to be inadequate. Although

philosophically attractive, progressivism is somewhat toothless in centering on the liberal freedom of individuals in society. Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, provides ample opportunity to refocus power mechanisms and oppressive structures, but it can become theory-centered, reductionist, and dogmatic. Thirdly, following from the FUTURED empirical studies, our vision encompasses a horizontal, networked, “connectivist” perspective (Downes 2019; Siemens 2005) characterized by emergence, diversity, complexity, and distributed knowledge. Such perspectives were found to be increasingly important during the project (see for example Holdhus, Christophersen, and Partti 2022). Consequently, the vision outlined previously does not just see change as progressive “flourishing” or critical “liberation,” but also as a transformative capacity built on co-construction and collaboration (Rincón-Gallardo 2020)

Enacting such a vision would require music teacher education pedagogies fundamentally different from the master-apprentice approach and its associated hierarchical notions of expertise that position the educator as the gatekeeper of knowledge and skills. The vision points towards educational practices monitored and developed through experimentation and collaboration, such as action research or action learning, not only tolerating but also actively seeking discomfort (Boler 1999; Zembylas and Papamichael 2017). Further, the vision indicates pedagogies that highlight pivotal moments where habitual responses are disturbed, and the uncertainty and stutterings created by those moments facilitate experiences of one’s own learning (Ellsworth 2005; Sojot 2018).

Focusing on pre-service music teachers as co-constructors of education inevitably points towards a dialogue characterized by radical listening; i.e., trying to understand the standpoint of others without trying to change them, thereby opening yourself to change (Moore 2018). Critics may remark that pre-service music teachers’ limited experiences and perspectives may not provide the best vantage points for changing music teacher education. Granted, pre-service teachers are inexperienced and may not always be aware of what they do not know, but that is beside the point. Radical listening displaces hierarchical notions of expertise by emphasizing difference and a desire to gain “new perspectives from the individuals who come from a different locale in the social web of reality” (Kincheloe 2008, viii). However inexperienced or fragmented, pre-service teachers’ reflections could be seen as cases of “naming of the world,” which according to Freire (1972) is a pre-

requisite of existence and an essential component of change. Such naming may also represent an important step in the professional development of pre-service music teachers (Rinholm, Fredriksen, and Onsrud 2023). As found in the FUTURED sub-studies, naming and engaging in a continual dialogue is also important for the professional development of music teacher educators (Onsrud et al. 2022, Viig et al. 2023), and it is considered an essential dimension of changing educational practices.

### *Changing Curricula*

Questioning education inevitably brings about “questions of whose knowledge is considered valuable, whether consciously or unconsciously, [and] the effect this has on curriculum, assessment, and associated pedagogies” (Fautley 2021, 275). An obvious issue pertaining to music teacher education curriculum is repertoire, begging the question of the diversity of musical practices. The repertoires and teaching practices of music teacher curricula in much of the Western world have a historical foundation in classical music, an art form that by and large has been regarded as autonomous and “neutral,” even if it is predominantly practiced by the white middle-class and reproduces its “classed values” (Bull 2019). Although popular music seems to have taken a hegemonic position in some parts of the world as the main repertoire of school music education (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010; Lindgren and Ericsson 2010), it can still be argued that music teacher education curriculum suffers from a historical and cultural lag, failing to stay up-to-date with current musical trends and the musical life of young people (Christophersen and Gullberg 2017, Knudsen 2018).

Ideally, the various cultural groups making up the fabric of society should feel represented in the curriculum, which rightfully raises concerns about representation and cultural belonging in the curricula of schools and teacher education. One way of understanding curricular change, although a contested and simplified understanding, is taking measures to ensure diverse musical repertoires for a just representation within the institutions. Still, curriculum is more than repertoire. The vision articulated above implies an open and flexible curriculum that considers the complex nature of music education. A basic tenet of complexity in an educational context is the emergent nature of education: education is never finished and never fixed, always emerging and developing (Cochran-Smith et al. 2015;



Holdhus, Christophersen, and Partti 2022; Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers 2008). Considering existing knowledge as a beginning instead of an end, as a provocation and invitation to invention rather than as a result (Ellsworth 2005), holds epistemic vulnerability as an ideal. Being open to not knowing implies vulnerability because if one's ideas and perspectives are invulnerable, learning is not needed (Gilson 2013). Curriculum, then, should ideally turn "liquid"<sup>7</sup>; i.e., it should be constructed around "a constellation of uncertainties, such as negotiated assessment, and open and flexible learning intentions" (Steils et al. 2015). As a FUTURED sub-study showed, professional roles and notions of expertise may be put into play, thus creating more liquid spaces within music teacher education. Such efforts, however, will require intentionally disrupting established hierarchies and might also be uncomfortable for the people involved (Christophersen, Holdhus, and Kenny, in review).

Envisioning change in curriculum is perhaps easier than effecting it. Even if curriculum and practices are connected, changes in one do not necessarily bring about changes in another. Courses and curricula should ideally be closely connected; however, as research shows, "principal modes of instruction (lecturing, recitation, demonstration, seat work) continue to dominate despite the increasing range of options that is being constructed" (Klette 2010, 1006). As Louis (2010, 18) purports, educators' interpretations and sensemaking will "determine whether they engage in change, resistance, or simply ignore it" when confronted with new practices.

Changing curriculum, therefore, entails more than a re-writing of steering documents. Not only is curriculum closely connected to educational practices, but curricula and practices are supported and held together by institutional regulations and administrative practices regarding case management, handling exams, curricula, and syllabi. However, based on ideals of fairness and equity, such administrative routines may cement conservative pedagogies by requiring high levels of pre-planning and predictability. The openness and flexibility outlined in the vision described earlier in this article will necessarily be difficult to realize within meticulous systems of documentation and quality control. Such systems are required within an audit culture (Powell 2023), in which assessment is supposed to serve documentation purposes rather than supporting learning. Assessment backwash, then, creates a circularity between teaching and assessment (Fautley 2021, 283),

in which curriculum and practices are determined by what is considered assessable within neoliberal education systems.

### *Changing Society*

One dimension of change that presents a step up from making changes in curricular documents is the potential of music teacher education to contribute to social change. If one thinks of education as preparing people to live well in a good world (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014), the connection between education and social change is obvious. Further, if people (such as the authors of this article) assume that education plays a fundamental role in people's lives and the fabric of communities and civic life, all educational programs will contribute to people's lives and living conditions.

Recent scholarly contributions argue that by working for equity and social justice in music practice, music education has a wider potential for promoting social changes beyond the classroom or the music setting. Music educators can be understood as social and political agents (Hess 2019; Schmidt 2019) who have the potential and power to “put their creativity to work for pressing problems in the real world, including mitigating poverty, disease, racial discrimination, human trafficking, and so forth” (Elliott and Silverman 2019, 80). Jorgensen and Yob (2019) consider educators as “agents of social change by profession” in so far that teaching reading, writing, critical thinking, and music-making, to mention but a few skills, can transform students, which may further impact relationships, power structures, communities as well as future generations “as they build their lives and contribute their new understandings and artifacts and attitudes to those around them” (21–22).

Despite a growing awareness of music education's social and political dimensions, hitherto common justifications for music education are often articulated in terms of music's aesthetic qualities, individuals' aesthetic experiences, emotional growth, or self-improvement (Christophersen 2021, 69). Arguably, such rationales for music education are important, but the field of music education has perhaps too long focused on the aesthetic dimensions of music education, thus, according to some, creating a naïve, disinterested attitude that leads to the ignorance of “world events and the systems that shape our society” (Hess 2018, 19).

Findings from a national survey among Norwegian pre-service music teachers (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021) show that issues like critical reflection, preparing for diversity, and creating awareness for 21st century challenges (migration, globalization, climate change, etc.) are not typically promoted within generalist music teacher programs in Norway. One can, however, hardly read the pre-service teachers' statements about the lack of social awareness within music teacher education programs as a critique, as their statements about their future teaching show a clear preference for school music as a respite and a space for musical appreciation and pupils' wellbeing. Few respondents (11 percent) envisioned their focus as school music teachers as bridging cultural differences; even fewer (5 percent) considered creating spaces for critical reflection and debate an important future task (Nysæther, Christophersen and Sætre 2021, 44).

If one considers the Norwegian pre-service teachers as representatives of their generation, as *centennials*,<sup>8</sup> one could perhaps expect a more obvious social awareness. The most ethnically and diverse generation so far in history, growing up in a world of conflict and economic hardship (Rue 2018), centennials are characterized by a growing concern for inequality and social awareness, as well as a “shared global passion for climate change” (Madden 2019, 44). However, the strong social and global engagement, considered a general trait of this generation (Giray 2022), does not come clearly through in the survey replies of the Norwegian pre-service music teachers. It seems evident that they have been musically and educationally shaped by an already skewed system whose inequalities and discourses are reproduced and reinforced within music teacher education programs (Nysæther, Christophersen, and Sætre 2021). Considering the pervasive aesthetic discourses and traditions of music teacher education, it is perhaps likely that—apart from a general social awareness—this generation of future music teachers do not associate music with social issues and do not see how music education practices within schools or teacher education could serve social purposes. Equally, it may be the case that links between the musical and the social have never been made explicit in their teacher education programs.

## Coda: Critically Questioning the Rationale for Change

Drawing upon the findings from the FUTURED project, in this article we have envisioned and discussed change in music teacher education. While the purpose of

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education is commonly seen as preparing citizens for a life well lived in a world worth living in (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014, 27), education is also a powerful gatekeeper of opportunity and a distributor of life chances (Hargreaves 2005, 2). Acknowledging the importance of the continual improvement of education is perhaps uncontroversial, but specifying what change entails could be more challenging. Previous research on educational change has provided generalizable rules, such as the idea that practice changes before beliefs and that successful change requires pressure and support (Hargreaves 2005). However, these are not universal truths. From a complexity perspective, for example, change can never be an orderly process. Since education is considered emergent, self-organizing, and networked, a structured approach might be futile. Change could be more a matter of “hitting the problem from as many angles, levels and perspectives as possible” (Mason 2008, 45), to try to generate momentum in a new direction.

In this article, several interrelated dimensions, such as values, traditions, demographics, practices, curricula, and even society as a whole, have been highlighted. These dimensions of change are all linked and reliant upon each other. For instance, greater diversity among the people studying music education will undoubtedly influence what is taught, how it is taught, and why it is taught. Thus, it could lead to eventual curricular change and the decentering of music education discourse. Such a process is slow, gradual, and likely dependent on structural and political interventions.

There is a conceptual distinction between revolution and gradual transformation: the former denotes a sudden replacement of one dominant regime with another, and the latter denotes a gradual and trickling process that also includes an idea of stability in which some things have to stay the same for others to be changed (Moss 2014). In reality, however, the distinction may not always be clear when temporal dimensions are included in the equation: many institutions revise their curricula and syllabi annually. Such minor adjustments could easily be understood as tinkering. Over a period of 20 years, however, the totality of such adjustments may well look like a major, even if gradual, change.

The need for change and questions of how significant this change should be may not be evident to all stakeholders. While some may welcome change, others may find it controversial or unnecessary. Considering, for example, cutbacks in resources, teacher education reforms, or teaching during a pandemic, some might

feel that further change is not warranted. Change represents uncertainty and unfamiliarity and “carries with it the possibility of inadvertent disaster” (Kratus 2015, 340). Therefore, advocating for change should also include ethical considerations concerning representation: who is entitled to decide what and who needs to change, and why?

We began this article with a normative claim for change within music teacher education, which was followed by describing a vision of a music teacher education program characterized by agency, co-construction, and collaboration. Such a vision may not appeal to all and could, if realized in this form, suppress the desired diversity and complexity described within the vision itself. Rather than totalizing blueprints, such visions should function as heuristic frameworks, providing narrations of alternative realities and functioning as catalysts for change (Kertz-Welzel 2022; Viig et al. 2023). Educational change is a complex issue, and taking on transformational processes may appear to be a mammoth task. Narrating alternative realities may be a tangible way to start, as telling new stories may challenge the existing world's inevitability, thus opening up new alternatives.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This content-orientation might be changing in some countries. In Finland and Norway, for example, reforms in teacher education have resulted in an increased focus on pedagogical qualifications and teaching experience when recruiting and promoting faculty.
- <sup>2</sup> The term “music teacher education” is equivocal. In Norway, it could mean the qualification of both specialist and generalist music teachers, as well as a year of undergraduate teacher training on top of a music performance degree.
- <sup>3</sup> The integrated master’s degree means that teacher education no longer leads to a bachelor’s degree. The pre-service teachers are master students from the very beginning and for five whole years. The five-year degree is formally divided into a “cycle 1” and a “cycle 2,” where the latter has a stronger focus on research and on the master’s thesis. For a more comprehensive description of Norwegian teacher education, see Advisory Panel for Teacher Education (2020) <https://www.nokut.no/globalassets/nokut/rapporter/ua/2020/transforming-norwegian-teacher-education-2020.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> The project was organized in three work packages, each including two sub-studies. Each work package had dedicated international guest researchers. An international scientific advisory board was also involved across work packages and sub-studies. The participants had different roles during the project: Eight researchers at two Norwegian institutions were actively involved in data generation, five international guest researchers participated actively in data analysis as well as article writing. The four scientific advisory board members took part in discussions of overall findings and implications, as well as of

methodological, conceptual, and theoretical issues. The eight authors of this article come from five different countries and had different roles in the project: as researchers, guest researchers, and scientific advisory board members.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the methodological issues in the project, see our website <https://prosjekt.hvl.no/futured/>. For an elaboration of action research methodology in the project, see Christophersen, Holdhus and Kenny in review; Fredriksen et al. 2023, Holdhus, Christophersen, and Partti 2022, Onsrud et al. 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Nordic governments and educational systems share a history of oppressing Indigenous minorities (e.g., the Sámi people), a history that has also been reflected in music education. One possible explanation for the absence of open confrontation with the past in Nordic music education policy could be that past oppressive politics and practices have aimed to assimilate the cultural perspectives of these minorities.

<sup>7</sup> “Liquid curriculum” (Steils et al. 2015) is a term inspired by Bauman’s (2000) idea of liquid modernity.

<sup>8</sup> Also known as Generation Z, Zoomers, Post-millennials, or the iGeneration, this age group (born 1997–2012) succeeds the Millennials (1981–1996).