Performing disability in music teacher education: Moving beyond inclusion through expanded professionalism

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Abstract
Disability is a neglected field of diversity within music education scholarship and practices. The study reported in this article sought alternatives for the hierarchical practice-model and ableist discourses that have thus far pervaded music teacher education, through a reconceptualization of expertise. The focus is on a Finnish university special education course, where musicians with learning disabilities conducted workshops for student music teachers over three consecutive years. Student teachers’ written reflections (n = 23) were reflexively analyzed in order to examine how performing disability may disrupt, expand, and regenerate normative discourses and transform inclusive thinking in music teacher education. Performing disability is here seen to generate critical discursive learning, and create third spaces for pedagogical diversity and the co-construction of professional knowledge. It is thus argued that through teaching with, and by, rather than about, we in music education may move beyond normalizing understandings and practices of inclusion, towards an expanded notion of professionalism.

Keywords
disability, expertise, inclusion, music teacher education, professionalism

Although there are considerable differences between the music teacher education systems of different countries, it is increasingly recognized internationally that music teacher education needs to transform its professional discourses to fully address the issues of inclusion and diversity (see...
Thus far, student music teachers have been guided by a musico-pedagogical practice model aiming towards a high level of music education that embraces musical diversity, through advancing practice-specific authentic musical knowledge, skills, and pedagogies (see e.g., Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Georgii-Hemming, Burnard & Holgersen, 2013). However, this model faces significant challenges in including types of pedagogical diversity that are not directly related to the prescriptive tradition of teaching and learning (Burbules & Bruce, 2001) within musical praxis. This pertains not only to music education, but also to general teacher training programs, that have been criticized for failing to adequately address issues of diversity and social justice through subject matter (Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness & Ronfeldt, 2008; for music teacher education, see Ballantyne & Mills, 2008). One example of such a neglected field of diversity in education is disability (Ellerbrock & Cruz, 2014; Trotman Scott & Ford, 2011). In music education, disability has often been excluded from ‘real’, goal-oriented music education, even though this goes against inclusive policy and practices (Darrow, 2015). Furthermore, the strict disciplinary boundaries of the musico-pedagogical practice model easily coalesce around stereotypes of learners’ abilities, reinforcing a reductionist view of talent as something possessed by the few (Jaap & Patrick, 2015). This ableist discourse (Darrow, 2015; Matthews, 2015) within a “performativity-oriented education” (Kanellopoulos, 2015, p. 323) particularly manifests itself through student selection methods (Jaap & Patrick, 2015) that specify who is entitled to learn and to perform music.

In this way, the musico-pedagogical practice model upholds a narrow construction of musical expertise. While education scholars outside music have repeatedly argued that we need to challenge deep-rooted cultural beliefs regarding expertise as dependent upon an individual’s fixed intellectual powers and inherent talents (e.g., Hakkarainen, 2013; Hulme, Cracknell & Owens, 2009), this is a particularly difficult challenge in contemporary music teacher education programs, where a hierarchical master–apprentice tradition still prevails (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010; Westerlund, 2006). This tradition has been seen to create and maintain expert silos that resist change (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013). In addition, these silos exist in conflict with the inclusive ethos of global educational policy (see Kaplan & Lewis, 2013) that ought to guide music teacher education in the same way as it does other educational fields. Also, in general education, the cultural reproduction of teachers as masters in transmitting knowledge has faced criticism (see e.g., Burbules & Bruce, 2001; Cochran-Smith, et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2006). More specifically, researchers have criticized the transmission model that defines student learning as an “apprenticeship of observation” (Gillette & Schultz, 2008, p. 236) and “reflective imitation” (Sfard, 2015) within the prescriptive tradition of teacher–student dialogue (Burbules & Bruce, 2001). Such a model is seen to hinder the ability of teacher education programs to foster collaborative, non-hierarchical learning communities, and impede student teachers’ abilities in knowledge construction where new discourses emerge and create meta-level learning (Hakkarainen, 2013; Sfard, 2015). It is noteworthy, as Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2015) have stated, that the sociocultural turn has already taken place in many general teacher education programs, foregrounding interaction, negotiation, collaboration with peers, and cooperating teachers. However, in music education, according to the logic of the practice-based model, this turn is subsumed into one of the already existing musico-pedagogical systems; reduced to a subsidiary of informal learning, focusing solely on the introduction of popular musics into the formal music education context rather than a critical expansion of our fundamental views about teaching and learning in general (see Allsup & Olson, 2012).

The scholarly profession of music education is thus in danger of becoming fractured and too focused on intricate details, simultaneously losing the ability to see the wider picture and take into consideration the variability among music teacher preparation institutions (Killian, Liu &
Reid, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to reconsider what kinds of underlying belief- and value-systems guide music teacher education, and an ethical imperative to develop more meaningful and efficient ways of engaging with matters of exclusion and inclusion in music teacher education (Mills & Ballantyne, 2010). Indeed, it has been argued that music teacher education should move beyond inclusiveness, as it is understood in terms of improving teachers’ attitudes and tolerance towards students with special needs (Cassidy & Colwell, 2012), to become more politically engaged and anti-ableist (Dobbs, 2012).

In this study we attend to disability as an “often forgotten, dismissed or overlooked as an important part of what we consider to be diversity” (Darrow, 2015, p. 204). According to many researchers (e.g., Darrow, 2015; Dobbs, 2012; Matthews, 2015), students with disabilities are less likely to be included in music education practices as equal to their peers—let alone considered as future professionals in the field of music (Laes & Schmidt, 2016). In many cases, disability is categorized as its own subfield of special learners, a field of music teacher education research that has been positioned as considerably more specialized—and less important (see Nichols, 2013). Hence, this study calls for broader visions of professionalism in considering how expertise might be reconsidered in music teacher education—visions that emanate not simply from the welcoming of different musics to formal education, but from collaborative, inclusive, and emancipatory action with diverse experts.

By exploring a case where disability is attended to, appreciated, and performed in the context of Finnish music teacher education, we here coin the term performing disability for two purposes. First, we align with disability studies according to which disability is considered as a sociocultural construct rather than individual deficit (Garland-Thomson & Bailey, 2010; Lerner & Strauss, 2006). Within this social model, we agree that “a disability may remain invisible until it is performed” (Lerner & Strauss, 2006, p. 9). Second, we want to dispute the complex tensions around performativity that challenge teacher agency and professionalism within teacher education (Ball, 2003; see also Burnard & White, 2008). As discussed in an earlier study in this research project (Laes & Schmidt, 2016), disability in particular has been seen as a threat to school performativity, which over-emphasizes measuring success and valuing presentable (musical) results. In this article we shift the attention from the narrow performativity-oriented focus to the performative aspect of disability as a transformative means to engage with inclusion and diversity within music teacher education.

**Earlier research on disability within music teacher education**

It has been argued that general teacher education programs should be based on a unifying conceptual framework that orients student teachers towards good teaching—towards thoughtful decisions and wisely chosen pedagogies that take into account diverse learners (Pugach, 2005). In doing this, teacher educators have been advised to lead student teachers in self-reflective dialogue on how they might “feel and respond to visible and/or invisible disabilities as well as how they perceive individuals who are differently abled” (Alvarez McHatton & Vallice, 2014, p. 75). Several studies in general and music teacher education have also shown that direct contact with persons with disabilities, for instance by teaching in inclusive classrooms, is more likely to produce positive attitudes towards inclusion and diversity both among pre-service and in-service teachers (Bartolome, 2013; Cook, 2001; Pugach, 2005; Van Weelden & Whipple, 2007).

On a wider policy level, inclusion is recognized as a primary requirement for the future development of an education free from exclusion and discrimination (e.g., UNESCO, 1999, 2002). However, a global review of music teacher education programs by Figueiredo et al. (2015) found that inclusion is often addressed as a challenge, a problem, and a constraint. Yet, future music teachers are given
few, if any, resources or ideas for how to work in inclusive classrooms (see also Ballantyne & Mills, 2008). As such, music educators do not feel prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classes (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013). One of the factors behind unsuccessful attempts at establishing inclusive practices might be the historical dichotomies of the approaches that already exist—such as those that cast special education in opposition to general education, or the needs of gifted students set against the needs of students with disabilities—perspectives which still persist in many teacher education programs (Spielhagen, Brown & Hughes, 2015; Pugach, 2005). Perhaps as a consequence of this, it has been found that one quarter of tertiary education institutions in the USA do not include special education at all in their music teacher preparation programs (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013). It has also been argued that by using categorizations of difference and situating disability as individual abnormality through the medical/dysfunctional/deficit/therapeutic models, instead of considering disability as a social construct, scholars contribute to the production and maintenance of dichotomies that locate persons with disabilities in “a social space of difference” (Mitchell & Snyder, 1997, p. 4). In Dobbs’ (2012) critical analysis of how music education scholars define disability in research articles, the medical/deficit discourses that establish a normative hegemony were identified as the dominant factors. Hence, despite the benevolent discourse of inclusiveness, and whilst special needs education in general education scholarship have been considered as one kind of diversity (Pugach, 2005), there are considerable concerns that teachers and scholars in music education might be marginalizing certain groups of students by embracing these therapeutic epistemologies (Dobbs, 2012; see also Matthews, 2015). As a corrective response to this common tendency in music education, while also challenging ableism and injustice in music education more broadly, Darrow (2015, pp. 213–214) believes that music educators need to pursue four goals: to (1) develop ability awareness; (2) add disability content to their curriculum; (3) use role models who represent disability within music educational contexts; and, importantly, (4) hire teachers with disabilities. These goals have also been central to the development and implementation of this study.

**Context of the study**

This study approaches performing disability through the written reflections of Finnish student music teachers during a mandatory course titled: “Special Education in the Arts,” offered for undergraduate students in music, theatre, dance, and the visual arts. The course was held at The University of the Arts Helsinki and was part of the Teachers’ Pedagogical Studies program (60 ECTS), which provides formal teacher qualification as part of the higher education required for teachers in the Finnish educational system in general. These studies have the same structure throughout the country, but with subject-, context-, and field-specific adjustments. Student music teachers on this course were studying in a 5–5½-year degree course, leading to bachelor’s and master’s degrees that provide the qualifications to teach art subjects in comprehensive education and upper secondary schools, in particular. Teachers’ Pedagogical Studies are conducted as part of these two degrees, as all students are expected to finish their master’s degree. The course in question exclusively focuses on issues concerning special versus general education within arts education with approximately 60–80 students attending the course every year, about a third of whom are music education majors.

As part of the course, one lecture in each of three consecutive years (2014–2016) focused upon in this study, was conducted by two musicians who may be categorized as having learning disabilities. These two musicians have studied and work at the Special Music Centre Resonaari, an extracurricular music institution that offers music education for children and adults who experience various challenges in learning “the usual way.” Resonaari’s development of the Figurenotes1 notation system among other pedagogical innovations reflects an activist stance on creating
connections between music and the outside world, by supporting and encouraging its students to become active performing musicians (Laes & Schmidt, 2016). In line with this, the lectures and workshops run at the university were recognized as a part of the two musicians’ training, as they are attending a pilot training program aiming to establishing a vocational degree in music. The government subsidizes their part-time work at Resonaari alongside the disability pension that allows them to work for a limited number of hours per month.

The design of the lectures was similar for each year of the course, and comprised a short introduction by the supervising teacher from Resonaari, after which the two musicians led rhythmic exercises based on the Orff-method. The musicians continued the workshop by explaining, constructing, and playing a simple musical piece, combining the rhythm, melody, and harmony components of the interaction with the university students. Each lecture was 2.5 hours in total.

The empirical material for this study consists of the student teachers’ course diaries, for which they were required to write entries after each lecture. The students were instructed to comment, analyze, and criticize the themes and questions presented in the lectures, and to develop them further in order to elaborate and reflect their own learning. The data consists of only the course diaries of those music education students who gave their permission for their use (n = 23), and the analysis focused on the reflections on the lecture given by the Resonaari musicians in particular. Ethics approval was granted by The University of the Arts Helsinki administration. There were also a number of opportunities to engage in member checking together with the student teachers, in particular regarding the portions of their diary reflections that were translated into English by us. The student diaries were anonymized and arranged according to the year when they were collected.

While we focused on the student reflections in our analysis, our overall aim was not to neglect the role of the Resonaari musicians by relegating them to a supporting role in the research context. Rather, we here consider them as experts—in fact, the events in this study were purposefully chosen to be examined because of their expertise. Furthermore, as the first author of this article is not only the responsible teacher for the university course in question, but also a former teacher at Resonaari, and thus has an established relationship with the musicians, it was natural to involve them in a collaborative “process consent” (Knox, Mok & Parmenter, 2000, p. 57) through discussions about the goals, content, and findings of the study during the research process.

Research questions and methodological approach

In this study we asked: could performing disability make a radical change in music teacher education? And, if so, in what ways? The methodological approach followed critical and reflexive interpretation, which employs only some of the broader aspirations of critical discourse analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In other words, we did not conduct a traditional discourse analysis of textual and language representations. Rather, our methodological approach relies upon our own interpretations of the discursive, social, and embodied practices that can be seen as guiding teacher education. More specifically, we adopted the critical emancipation-driven methodological approach that Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) have defined as a way to “give less weight to the empirical material in the form of constructed data” (p. 284). Through this, we aimed to reflectively investigate and make critical observations on the wider context around the empirical material, including teacher education practice and research. The wider context, of which the relevant empirical material is part, was thus seen as central and “cannot be mapped out in a concrete empirical study” (p. 284). As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) point out, in emancipatory research, data-oriented work “constitutes a relatively small part of the total story being produced” (p. 284). Hence, the overall contribution of this study is more in theory reconstruction than analyzing and reporting empirical evidence of a particular phenomenon.
By acknowledging the reciprocality between discourses, practices, and activities within this theoretical–methodological approach, our interpretive process of analysis operates on multiple levels of embodied and situated dialogue (Burbules & Bruce, 2001). First, we attend to the student reflections through an expanded notion of ‘text’ as dialogical interaction within social practices (Burbules & Bruce, 2001), by asking: (1) How do music teacher students reflect upon performing disability within the context of a music teacher education program? Then, we engage with the notion of performing disability on the ideational level where our subjective conceptions, values, beliefs, and ideas as researchers provide the basis for interpretation by examining: (2) How might performing disability disrupt, expand, and regenerate the normative discourses of music teacher education? Finally, we explore the wider discursive level of the structural, attitudinal, and societal contexts of music teacher education, by asking: (3) How might performing disability reconceptualize understandings of expertise in music teacher education?

How do music teacher students reflect upon performing disability?

Aligning with Sfard (2015), we argue that student music teachers’ reflections form the basis for discursive learning as a participatory activity for knowledge building. Indeed, through a reflexive analysis of what the student teachers had written in their course diaries, we identified how the event was constructed within the hegemonic master–apprentice discourse and interpreted through the prescriptive model, wherein the central questions are: Who is learning what? And from whom? This unsettled assumptions of the purpose of the lecture itself: Was the goal of the lecture to teach rhythmics to higher arts education students, or to observe how the Resonaari musicians have learned it themselves? The reflections entailed, on the one hand, a tension between maintaining the hegemonic norms and musical criteria and, on the other, expanding the prevailing teacher discourses. For instance, musical criteria were weighed within a wider ethical framework, in anticipation of a counter narrative: “Although they probably have several years of music studies behind them, there are of course still certain limitations in their playing. This doesn’t mean that their work and their art is less meaningful or less moving, rather the opposite” (Student B/2014). This equality of opportunities was connected to larger questions of structural discrimination within institutional music education: “It is unbelievable and sad that people with developmental disabilities are not granted access to a regular music school” (Student G/16). “It is a pity that they must have their own house and teachers for having music as a hobby” (Student H/16).

In accordance with Resonaari’s emancipatory and anti-segregative goals, it is crucial that professional training allows disabled musicians to establish active (teacher) agency outside of their own music school settings (Laes & Schmidt, 2016). However, important and critical questions regarding the division of roles and collaboration between the musicians and their supervisor from Resonaari, who was present throughout the lecture, were evident in the student reflections, addressing questions such as: Is the supervising teacher’s role prerequisite for this emancipatory action? What was the role of the supervising teacher in relation to the success of the musicians? In some reflections, the supervisor was considered as the teacher whilst the Resonaari musicians’ role as teachers was questioned: “Sometimes I felt like these two Resonaari musicians were ‘samples’ … ‘Look what they can do’ … although they seemed to enjoy themselves” (Student F/2015). This important criticism preoccupied some students with meta-level self-reflection: “In the beginning I felt a bit funny when [the supervising teacher] brought people on stage like in circus. I can’t really identify whether it is my own fear or prejudice […] But somehow it connects with the [musicians’] roles during the lecture, that they did not have full ownership in the lecturing after all” (Student B/2016).

Notwithstanding the different interpretations of the roles of the Resonaari musicians and their supervising teacher, critical reconsiderations of teacherhood in general were emerging in the
student reflections, such as: “I have noticed that often pedagogy is exacerbated as certain practices for particular types of learners and groups … teachers are also often within a certain pedagogical formula according to which they operate. […] How many teachers are ready to teach and break their teaching methods so that a student can learn?” (Student D/2015). Or as another student reflected: “Again, a thought arose that diverse learners are more of an opportunity than a threat to the teacher, as one can reflect upon their teaching as creatively as possible” (Student B/16)

The student teachers’ reflections illustrated what they themselves perceived as different in the Resonaari musicians’ performing, compared to their own experiences as performers. It is commonly known among musicians, especially those within the Western classical tradition where the hierarchical master–apprentice model prevails, that performing situations often involve anxiety, arising from the anticipated shame of a poorly received performance. This same feeling can also arise in teaching situations, and students noted the difference between their own expectations and the Resonaari musicians’ performance: “I admired how smoothly Resonaari’s musicians were on stage in front of us … I believe that it is, still, a bit exciting to come to give a workshop at the Sibelius Academy” (Student I/2014). The Resonaari musicians perhaps offered a new, emancipating example of the performative aspect of musicianship: “It was awesome to see how excited these musicians were about performing even some simple rhythm solos” (Student C/2014). These encounters caused the students to reflect on the difference as uniqueness rather than otherness (see Biesta, 2010).

How might performing disability disrupt normative discourses in society?

Over the course of three consecutive years, the student music teachers’ course diaries also included frequent references to the punk band Pertti Kurikan nimipäivät (PKN), and particularly an event that occurred in parallel with the course in 2015, namely their performance at the Eurovision Song Contest, an annual televised singing contest that attracts hundreds of millions of spectators across all European countries and beyond. This band of four men with autism and learning disabilities had released albums and toured in Finland and Europe, and had already established a lively and growing fan-base prior to the Eurovision event. Chosen to represent Finland in Spring 2015, the band were thrust into the national and international mass media spotlight. This resulted in widespread and controversial debates in social media, not only about PKN’s musical performance but also about inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities in society. The phenomenon as a whole unavoidably and forcefully framed student teachers’ reflections with regards to who decides who is entitled to be a performing musician, and on what premises: “Many people [in social media] have thought that the PKN song is not real music and that one should not let disabled people represent Finland. People’s comments have been horrible. Anyone can be an artist. Thank you PKN” (Student E/2015). Many reflections illustrated how PKN was regarded as a showcase of “making visible being different and special in the society” (Student F/2016). Other reflections pointed out how the media and audiences were taking sides in these rigorous debates: “It has been interesting to follow people’s reactions and how they perhaps unintentionally judge the band by different criteria. At the same time, they reveal their own opinions on music and musicianship, sometimes in surprising ways” (Student H/2015). As for our study, PKN is a legitimate addition to the data set. Although the musicians who conducted the workshops and lectures were not members of PKN, three of the four members of the band are former students of Resonaari. The intersection of the course and PKN’s emerging publicity led the student teachers to reflect on the most fundamental questions of rights to music and culture: “Should everyone play? What if one doesn’t want to? Is music part of humanity? Or maybe it is the question of the possibility to play if one wants to play” (Student E/2015). Furthermore, PKN evoked criticism toward the mainstream music education
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system as a whole: “The dominating music school system in Finland has done harm to the citizens’ musical relationship with its elitist impression […] I believe that the phenomena such as PKN serve as vanguards and gambits towards who has the right to learn and make music” (Student E/2016).

The story of PKN in many ways manifests the potential of how thinking and acting through pedagogical diversity transforms into an act of “world-making” (Juntunen, Karlsen, Kuoppamäki, Laes & Muhonen, 2014, p. 263) within a music teacher education context. Burbules and Bruce (2001) have stated how the prescriptive model assumes “that the performative roles of teacher and student are given, distinct, and relatively stable” (p. 1106). Moreover, these roles are framed and strengthened by the popular media, and “implicit, shared scripts by which these roles ought to be performed” (Burbules & Bruce, 2001, p. 1106) Ruth Wright (2014) has illustrated the social production of pedagogical discourse on musical knowledge where the thinkable, thus socially acceptable, becomes a process of transmitting hegemonic values. By contrast, the unthinkable remains a subcultural phenomenon that may cause occasional fluctuation in the field of discursive power, as the PKN example might be seen. Those moments that divert from the expected routes of pedagogical processes and contexts could also be identified as imaginary spaces (Juntunen et al., 2014), which are often accelerated by certain pedagogical interventions that enable “new discourse to emerge and to offer opportunities for embedded patterns of inequality to be disrupted” (Wright, 2014, p. 18). Such imaginary spaces were identified in the reflections regarding both PKN on the Eurovision stage and Resonaari’s musicians at the university course: “I must admit that this lecture changed my way of thinking about special education as ‘special’ […] It’s also great to see persons with an intellectual disability as pedagogues. This is exactly the direction that we should be aiming for. Such cheerful and motivated teachers I haven’t had for a long time” (Student A/2015). The student reflections illustrate how one singular event may function as an intervention that potentially produces a critical mass tipping the scale towards new institutional recognition (Whitchurch, 2013, p. 36). This can be argued to enable not only pedagogical imaginary spaces, but also institutional (Whitchurch, 2013) and methodological (Seale, Nind, Tilley & Chapman, 2015) positionings beyond the normative discourses, thus democratizing the process of knowledge generation (Nind, 2014).

How might performing disability reconceptualize the understanding of expertise in music teacher education?

In reflecting the dialogical space between the students and the musicians, and searching for ways to expand the hierarchical silo thinking in music teacher education (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013), we attend more closely to the notion of third space, where knowledge is co-constructed in an open, trans-professional community (Hulme et al., 2009; Seale et al., 2015; Whitchurch, 2013). Context is the key here, as it allows for the potential of an expanded professionalism to emerge and make a contribution to the learning community: “I think it was important how they came close to us within the interaction and didn’t seem that different anymore” (Student I/2014). We see this potential in how performing disability within the university course context created a third space where the teacher and student roles blended beyond the “thinkable,” simultaneously losing their inherent significance and challenging the “prescriptive pedagogical communicative relations” between teacher and student (Burbules & Bruce, 2001, p. 1104).

Expanded professionalism, as understood here, stems from a new conceptualization of expertise that abandons singular authoritarian knowledge, allowing space for the non-hierarchical co-construction of knowledge in professional communities (Hakkarainen, Palonen, Paavola & Lehtinen, 2004; Mieg, 2009). In other words, communication within third space does not solely entail the
teacher discourse, nor the student discourse, but rather constitutes “a zone of potential meaning and representation” through which those discourses relate to each other (Burbules & Bruce, 2001, p. 1113). This reciprocal process of interaction between different kinds of experts is unpredictable, irregular, and perpetual, but can, as we argue, be crucial in creating educational democracy. Therefore, both a wider understanding of expertise and also an enhancement of community expertise over individual expertise are prerequisites for the development of music teacher education that can promote the attitudinal and meta-discursive competencies of the teacher candidates to combat ableism, cisgenderism, ethnocentrism, and other threats to an inclusive, diverse society. As one of the students reflected: “I understand that the idea of professional musicians with developmental disabilities may cause mixed feelings in someone. A performing artist lives on a tight budget and even a lifetime of training does not guarantee employment. [...] I started thinking what criteria can be used to measure musicianship and how competitive the field is” (Student I/16). “It was a surprise to me and surely to everyone else who were present, that [...] despite their disabilities these men can work fulltime in music. I was really happy that it seems that disability does not prevent one from working as a music teacher. This presumption was surely shared by everyone. Luckily this prejudice has also been broken” (Student J/16).

Rather than modeling observations of how to teach that so often maintain the established dichotomy between teacher and student (see Biesta, 2011), the data of this study suggests how performing disability within a dialogical third space may offer a generative way to resist, or at least question, the traditional knowledge transmission model. Importantly, the notion offered by scholars within participatory and inclusive research that “people with an intellectual disability are experts on their own experiences” (Knox et al., 2000, p. 57–58) has been disregarded altogether in the efforts to engage with inclusion and diversity in music teacher education. A new vision for an expanded professionalism could therefore transform the teacher discourses through learning from the exemplification of diverse professionalism, thus creating inclusive, democratic third spaces (Seale et al., 2015) that allows for pedagogical diversity. For this, music teacher education can indeed benefit from a view of expertise that is not solely defined through (musical) excellence of reliable superior experts (Mieg, 2009), but rather is free from the scripted roles and expectations of conventional musicianship.

Whilst inclusion is claimed to be a core value of educational democracy in Finland, it has also been generally misunderstood as a one-way process of normalization, where the marginalized are included, empowered, and taken into the center which remains more or less stagnated (Biesta, 2009). In challenging the uncomplicated thinking of inclusion as something that can be taught as processes of normalization, the student reflections in this study indicated that performing disability could expand our professional discourses and have impacts other than teaching about disability. In this way, we suggest that music teacher education programs could also test their capability to establish apprenticeship in democracy (Schmidt, 2015) and diversity (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010) through teaching not about but with, and by, people and practices that form a counter-narrative to dominant and normative discourses in music education.

Concluding remarks and practical suggestions

In this study we have argued that today’s music teacher education cannot rely solely on normative teaching methods, both in terms of practice and in the conceptual thinking of expertise and professionalism. Therefore, new educational perspectives looking towards an expanded professionalism are needed. Instead of the musico-pedagogical practice model that has long guided music teacher education, we suggest that we might endeavor to create third spaces that allow for diverse, non-hierarchical expert positionings. In these spaces, those who are traditionally relegated to marginalized positions
can take a leading role. In pursuit of this change, we present three practical suggestions for music teacher programs globally as an invitation for further discussion. First, we acknowledge that whilst the course that we have examined in this study was only a small-scale, albeit powerful intervention within teacher’s pedagogical studies, a wider transformation from the musico-pedagogical practice model towards expanded professionalism requires more than just one significant event. We therefore agree with Ballantyne and Mills (2008) that it is crucial to embrace inclusion and diversity throughout the entire breadth and width of music teacher education programs, rather than as a separate ‘special’ course. This demands careful curriculum planning, new pedagogies, and flexible recruitment policies. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed in the future as part of the development of the music teacher education at our own institution, as well. Second, as both social integration and the integration of music with other subjects bring more and more variation and change to school music teaching practices around the globe (Figueiredo et al., 2015), music teachers need to be prepared to meet diverse learners and be ready for the flexible use of pedagogical tools and methods. Within this sociohistorical context, future teachers can be best supported through pushing forward continuous critical self-reflection of their practices, identity, roles, and learning as an integral part of the training program (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). This important critical work can also be done in enjoyable ways, as the events presented in the student reflections suggest. Third, music teacher education should encourage students to reach beyond their own learning in their self-reflections, to also address the biases, stereotypes, and professional discourses within the field.

Higher education has a responsibility to guide students towards a readiness to change their perspectives and, in this way, to help them engage in the social criticism that underpins activism (Robertson, 2009). This warrants radical and open-minded action, as well as encouragement to look beyond the binary of special and general education that in many ways reinforces processes of marginalization and/or political protectionism. Acknowledging that everyone within a community has something to teach, as well as something to learn (Young, 2000 cited in Biesta, 2009, pp. 105–106), music teacher education must provide its students with opportunities for ‘social learning’ (Wildemeersch, 2009) through participation in deliberative discussions with various groups and communities in order to be attuned to the requirements of social justice (Robertson, 2009). Performing disability may indeed function as a catalyst for a radical shift towards an anti-ableist music education, and in this way engage student music teachers with asking important questions about the performative aspects of the profession.

In this article, we have argued that performing disability in music teacher education may provide us a lens through which we may reflect on how we understand the goals of teaching and learning diversity in a broader sense than the mere toleration of difference. We encourage teacher educators to take advantage of the different strengths, perspectives, and types of expertise as opportunities for cooperation that not only complement inclusive music education, but also help to move beyond inclusion and towards a democratic, diverse society.

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**Notes**

1. See www.figurenotes.com.
2. See www.eurovision.tv.
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