

Learning Communities and Music Education:  
Music Teacher Training as Political Action

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**Background**

Several music educators engaged in music teacher training observe that practical matters cause student teachers feel lack of confidence about “how a lesson actually happens: sitting arrangements, organization and distribution of instruments, controlling noise level and behavior” (Hennessy, 2000, p.194). Others have become alert that the confidence of future music teachers can be enhanced if their training provides authentic musical experiences (e. g., Conway, & Finney, 2003; Lapidaki, in press). At the same time, music teacher educators have been slow to recognize the potential of music training to emerge “through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 1993, p. 53).

**Aims**

This paper aims to examine music teacher training as socially and politically defined action which can boost trainee music teachers’ confidence by providing them with musical experiences that are forms of both their personal and the school children’s “narratives” and participation in an ongoing process to democratise music education’s ‘bare life.’ According to Giorgio Agamben (2005), bare life exists in a polis (the city) where politics is epitomized by the ‘banning’ of the citizen from the polis itself.

**Method**

The paper reports on a project, conceived and directed by the author, concerning initial music teacher training at the music department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki which is based on a “learning community” approach to music creativity. Trainee music teachers—divided in groups of 2-3—‘adopt’ a class of their choice in ‘neglected’ schools, due to geographical, economic, cultural and/or political isolation, throughout Greece and Cyprus with a predominately multicultural student body that do not have access to music education.

**Results**

The project appears to help both trainee music teachers and students prepare themselves to become aware citizens questioning authority, confident self-directed music learners and creative individuals. Trainee music teachers and students at schools go beyond their roles as teachers and students sharing their ‘truths’ through music with each other.

**Conclusions**

The project shows how moving away from a teaching environment that is loaded with ideologies about the nature of music creativity, can help students, on both university and public school levels, immerse themselves in learning experiences that respect their intuitions, search for their individuality, and place emphasis on innovation and creative freedom beyond conventional and/or popular codes and forms of dominating forces or “symbolic power.”

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