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Economidou Stavrou, Natassa [Hrsg.]; Chrysostomou, Smaragda [Hrsg.]; Triantafyllaki, Angeliki [Hrsg.]; Perakaki, Elissavet [Hrsg.]

Harmony and disruption

Rum / Innsbruck : HELBLING 2026, 281 S. - (European perspectives on music education; 16)

Quellenangabe/ Reference:
Economidou Stavrou, Natassa [Hrsg.]; Chrysostomou, Smaragda [Hrsg.]; Triantafyllaki, Angeliki [Hrsg.]; Perakaki, Elissavet [Hrsg.]: Harmony and disruption. Rum / Innsbruck : HELBLING 2026, 281 S. - (European perspectives on music education; 16) - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-368217 - DOI: 10.25656/01:36821

https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-368217
https://doi.org/10.25656/01:36821

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European Perspectives
on Music Education

16

Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Smaragda Chrysostomou,
Angeliki Triantafyllaki, Elissavet Perakaki (Eds.)

Harmony and Disruption

Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe



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TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC
Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

Co-funded by
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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Harmony and Disruption. Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe
European Perspectives on Music Education 16
edited by Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Smaragda Chrysostomou, Angeliki Triantafyllaki, Elissavet Perakaki
www.eas-music.org
www.teacher-academy-music.org

European Perspectives on Music Education is a peer-reviewed book series.

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Cover design: Marinas Medien- und Werbeagentur GmbH, Innsbruck (basic design);
Georg Toll, tollmedia, Innsbruck (design & layout)
Cover image design: Salomon Kraus
Layout and typesetting: Georg Toll, tollmedia, Innsbruck
Language Check: Kate Buchanan
Style Check: Kate Buchanan
Print: Opolgraf SA, Opole
Helbling Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.H., A-6063 Rum, Kaplanstr. 9, productsafety@helbling.com

1st edition / 1st print run 2026
371131267
ISBN 978-3-7113-1267-9
ISMN 979-0-2071-0814-2

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Harmony and Disruption

Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe

Music Teacher Education in the Contemporary Landscape

For several decades, music teacher education (MTE) has faced mounting pressure to adapt to evolving societal demands, including digital transformation, cultural diversification, and shifting educational priorities. As a field situated at the intersection of artistic practice and pedagogical formation, MTE occupies a distinctive and at times precarious position within higher education – expected simultaneously to preserve and transmit musical traditions, while equipping future teachers to respond to the complexities of contemporary classrooms and communities (Johansen, 2013; Benedict et al., 2015).

A foundational tension that recurs throughout the MTE literature concerns the relationship between performance-centred training and the broader pedagogical competences required for effective music teaching in diverse, real-world settings. Aróstegui (2011) argued that traditional MTE curricula frequently prioritise instrumental or vocal performance skills at the expense of developing inclusive, reflective, and context-responsive teaching practices, thereby limiting graduates' capacity to engage with the full spectrum of learners they will encounter. This critique has gained further traction in subsequent years, as demographic shifts and growing calls for educational equity have placed new demands on teacher preparation programmes across Europe and beyond (Benedict et al., 2015; Hess, 2017; Nompula, 2012). Buschmann and Malmberg (2025) extend this critique by advocating for reflexive practices that integrate global challenges – such as sustainability, social equity, and intercultural understanding – into the core of MTE training modules, rather than treating them as supplementary additions to established curricula.

The structural organisation of initial teacher education pathways further complicates the picture. The Eurydice report on teaching careers in Europe (2018) identifies three

principal training models: concurrent programmes, in which disciplinary and pedagogical preparation occur simultaneously; consecutive programmes, in which subject expertise is developed first before students progress to professional teacher training in a separate successive phase; and alternative pathways, which tend to be more flexible, shorter in duration, and often employed as supplementary routes into the profession. The coexistence of these models across Europe reflects not only institutional diversity but also divergent assumptions about what it means to be a music teacher and how initial teacher education should be structured (Jorgensen, 2008; Burnard, 2013). No single model has emerged as definitively superior; rather, each carries particular affordances and limitations that are shaped by national policy contexts, institutional traditions, and the specific demands placed on music teachers within different educational systems (Johansen, 2013; Georgii-Hemming et al., 2013; Isbell, 2008). These structural differences are not merely organisational; they also reflect deeper epistemological assumptions about the relationship between musical knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, and about whether teaching is understood as an extension of musicianship or as a distinct professional practice in its own right. In this sense, the coexistence of these models can also be understood as part of an ongoing negotiation between continuity and change within MTE systems.

Cross-national analyses have documented systemic tensions within teacher preparation more broadly, and music education is particularly exposed to these pressures. The OECD (2020) report on the teaching profession highlighted persistent teacher shortages, mismatches between initial training and in-service realities, and the urgent need for programmes that foster resilience and adaptability amid rapid policy shifts. These findings are echoed in the domain of MTE, where music educators routinely grapple with reduced curriculum time, the marginalisation of arts subjects under standardised testing regimes, and the challenge of maintaining subject-specific depth within increasingly crowded initial teacher education frameworks (Philpott & Spruce, 2012; Spruce, 2015; Burnard, 2013). The Eurydice report (2021) reinforced these concerns from a European perspective, documenting significant disparities in MTE standards across member states and drawing attention to the insufficient emphasis on intercultural competences in the context of rising migration and growing classroom diversity. CEDEFOP (2022) similarly identified managing rapid change as one of the key professional challenges for teachers and trainers across Europe, stressing the importance of continuous professional development frameworks that go beyond initial training. Although these large-scale policy frameworks offer valuable comparative insights, they often frame teacher education in terms of efficiency, measurable outcomes, and workforce sustainability, potentially overlooking the situated, relational, and artistic dimensions of music teaching. This, in turn, raises important questions about whether such frameworks can adequately capture the significance of music teacher education as both an artistic and pedagogical practice.

The *meNet* Learning Outcomes Report (Hennessy et al., 2009) provided an early and important attempt to map the essential elements of MTE across Europe, identifying common areas of competence while acknowledging the diversity of national approaches. This foundational work has since been revisited and extended through more recent scholarship. De Baets et al. (2025) conducted a Europe-wide exploration of learning outcomes for classroom music teacher education, demonstrating that contemporary descriptor sets foreground an expanding range of competences – including collaboration, inclusion-oriented practice, digital competence, interdisciplinarity, and practitioner research – as key dimensions of the emerging professional profile for music teachers. Their work resonates with earlier comparative analyses by Huib Schippers (2010), who examined the relationship between Conservatoire traditions and their pedagogical assumptions, arguing that different 'world music pedagogies' carry implicit epistemological commitments that shape what counts as knowledge and competence in music teaching. However, the expansion of competency frameworks also raises important questions about prioritisation and coherence, particularly in programmes where time and resources are limited.

Additionally, De Baets et al. (2025) highlight the risk of curricular overload and what might be described as 'tick-box' compliance, as programmes attempt to integrate multiple high-status priorities without sacrificing depth in musicianship, pedagogy, and school-based practice – a tension already identified by Spruce (2015) and Philpott & Spruce (2012) in the UK context. These concerns are further reinforced by quality assurance frameworks such as MusiQuE (2025), which expect programmes to evidence breadth across inclusion, digitalisation, and international perspectives while simultaneously demonstrating coherent progression and rigorous assessment.

Alongside these structural debates, the question of power and representation in transnational curriculum formation has attracted growing scholarly attention. Westerlund and Karlsen (2017) critique what they describe as "ocularcentrism of diversity" (p. 81) discourses in music teacher education – approaches that render diversity visible without fundamentally questioning whose knowledge, traditions, and values are accorded legitimacy – and propose transnational knowledge production as a means of addressing professional blind spots. This argument builds on a broader tradition of postcolonial critique within music education, including the work of Hess (2017), who examined how music teacher education programmes in North America perpetuate Eurocentric norms even when nominally committed to diversity and inclusion, and Nompula (2012), who documented similar dynamics in the South African context. In a related vein, Westerlund et al. (2020) argue for the importance of cultivating 'visions' (p. 1) for intercultural music teacher education under conditions of increasing social complexity, emphasising the need for reflexive contestation of 'entrenched traditions and hierarchies within teacher education' (p. 3). For a Europe-wide review of MTE, these perspectives carry important implications:

they challenge us to ask not only about philosophy and content but also whose knowledge is deemed canonical, and whether reform processes reproduce or disrupt existing hierarchies in music, pedagogy, and culture.

A further strand of recent scholarship has foregrounded the role of complexity and emergence in understanding how professional learning develops within MTE contexts. Bjørnevoll and Christophersen (2025) argue that teacher education settings may be better understood as "complex systems" (p. 3) characterised by emergence, relationality, and unpredictability, rather than as linear pipelines through which predetermined outcomes are delivered. From this perspective, an exclusive focus on measurable competences risks misrepresenting the situated, interactional, and often unpredictable nature of teacher preparation (Biesta, 2015; Korthagen, 2004). The challenge for MTE programmes is not only to articulate outcomes but to design conditions that cultivate professional judgement, responsiveness, and ethical agency under uncertainty – without abandoning structure or expertise (Bjørnevoll & Christophersen, 2025). This framing shifts attention towards coherence mechanisms that support inquiry, reflection, experimentation, and the navigation of uncertainty: dimensions that may not be fully captured by formal alignment frameworks alone.

Reflection has increasingly been identified as a pivotal mechanism for MTE reform, enabling educators and student teachers alike to interrogate assumptions and develop the adaptive capacities required for practice in complex, diverse settings. In higher education more broadly, reflective practice has been framed as dynamic and cyclical, supporting professional growth through technical, situational, sensitising, and problematising lenses (Mohamed et al., 2022). For music teachers specifically, this involves revisiting and critically examining teaching contexts to address ethical concerns – including questions of representation in repertoire, the cultural assumptions embedded in pedagogical approaches, and the relationship between artistic identity and professional role (Georgii-Hemming et al., 2013; Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). Challenges persist, however: studies note institutional resistance to reflective frameworks, varying interpretations of what 'reflection' entails, and difficulties in integrating substantive reflective practice into already crowded initial training programmes (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Burnard & Hennessy, 2006). In this sense, reflective practice can be understood as a key mechanism through which music teachers navigate the tensions between structure and agency, tradition and innovation, and policy and practice. It provides a means of engaging productively with the uncertainties highlighted by complexity-oriented perspectives on teacher education.

Online and hybrid MTE models have introduced additional dimensions to this landscape, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced a rapid and often unplanned transition to digital and remote modes of teaching and learning (Bates, 2015; Crawford et al., 2020). While online delivery has expanded access and introduced new possibilities for collaboration across institutional and national boundaries, it

has also generated distinct challenges, including concerns about student engagement, virtual performance anxiety, and the adequacy of digital environments for developing the relational and embodied competences central to music teaching and learning (Creech et al., 2020; Daubney & Fautley, 2020). Literature in this area underscores a broader shift in the teacher-student relationship towards mentorship and co-construction (Jørgensen, 2000), while also drawing attention to persistent issues around classroom management, inclusivity, and the risk of deepening existing inequalities in access to high-quality music teacher preparation (Daubney & Fautley, 2020). At the same time, these developments further complicate questions of access, equity, and pedagogical quality, highlighting the risk that digital expansion may both enable and constrain participation in different ways. As such, digitalisation can be seen as both a disruptive force and a potential site of new forms of pedagogical harmony.

Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the specific pressures facing MTE within national policy contexts where music and the arts more broadly have been subjected to marginalisation or devaluation. Irish and Northern Irish perspectives, for instance, highlight how policy-driven reductions in the status of music within initial teacher education have contributed to a fracturing of the ecosystems connecting schools, communities, and higher education institutions (Moore et al., 2025). Economidou Stavrou and O'Connell (2022) describe music teachers as operating "at the crossroads" of policy prescriptions, institutional constraints, and personal artistic identities, highlighting the persistent gap between formal curricular intentions and enacted practice. Central to their analysis is the distinction between the "curriculum-as-planned", referring to the official policy document, and the "curriculum-as-lived" (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022, p. 168), the actual educational experience co-constructed with students. This critical pedagogical shift is required as teachers move from being mere "deliverers" (p. 167) of a prescribed curriculum to "curriculum makers" (p. 168) at the microlevel, a transformation that involves embracing student voice and applying culturally responsive teaching methods. At the same time, it highlights the central role of teacher agency in mediating between policy and practice, suggesting that the impact of structural constraints is neither uniform nor deterministic. Instead, it is negotiated in context, shaped by teachers' values, identities, and professional judgement.

As the literature suggests, reforms to MTE require multilevel interventions: curriculum redesign, faculty development, institutional policy advocacy, and the creation of professional networks that support ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange across national and disciplinary boundaries (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014). The challenge for researchers, programme designers, and policymakers is to hold these multiple dimensions in productive tension, neither reducing MTE to a technical exercise in competence delivery nor losing sight of the structural and systemic factors that shape what is possible within any given national context (Jorgensen, 2008; Benedict et al., 2015). Put together, these

strands of research point to a field characterised not by a single dominant trajectory, but by multiple, overlapping tensions that require careful negotiation. It is within this dynamic landscape that the concepts of harmony and disruption offer a useful lens for understanding both continuity and transformation in music teacher education. It is these challenges that the present Volume seeks to address.

The Necessity and Importance of This Volume

The contemporary landscape of MTE in Europe is increasingly shaped by a tension captured within the title of this Volume 'Harmony and Disruption'. On the one hand, MTE is deeply rooted in long-standing traditions that reflect national cultural priorities, established institutional norms, curriculum pathways, and enduring pedagogical values. On the other hand, MTE is called to respond to broader transformations in education and society, evolving expectations of and for music teachers, policy shifts, technological developments, and growing calls for inclusivity, flexibility, and innovation (Georgii-Hemming et al., 2013; Westerlund et al., 2020). Understanding music teacher education today through the lens of harmony and disruption allows us to hold these tensions together rather than resolving them prematurely, recognising that both continuity and change are integral to how the field evolves across Europe (Zamorano-Valenzuela et al., 2024; De Baets et al., 2025).

Despite the richness and diversity of MTE provision across the continent, systematic, comparative, and critically engaged documentation of this diversity has remained limited. While individual country studies and smaller-scale comparative analyses have contributed valuable insights (Johansen, 2013; Georgii-Hemming et al., 2013; Spruce, 2015), and while earlier initiatives such as the *meNet* Report (2009) and the subsequent FUTURED project (Christophersen et al., 2023) have made important contributions to mapping European MTE, there has been no large-scale, Europe-wide attempt to bring together national perspectives within a shared analytical framework that attends simultaneously to structures and to experiences, to policy and to practice, to research and to lived realities. The OECD (2020) and Eurydice (2021) reports have provided important systemic overviews of the teaching profession in Europe, but their scope and methodology do not allow for the kind of sustained, context-sensitive, and critically reflexive analysis that the complexity of MTE demands. This gap in the literature is not merely an academic concern: in a period of rapid and often disorienting changes, the absence of robust comparative knowledge makes it more difficult for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to learn from one another, to identify common challenges and promising responses, and to build the collective capacity needed to strengthen MTE across national contexts (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2014).

This Volume emerges directly from this need. It builds on the large-scale mapping effort conducted across Europe from Summer 2023 to Autumn 2026 as part of Work

Package 7 of the Erasmus+ project TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music. Including contributions and collaborations by the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*) National Coordinators and other national stakeholders from more than twenty-five countries, this mapping initiative documented the diverse realities of MTE across higher education institutions, exploring six key pillars: content, methodology, entry requirements, curriculum design, institutional frameworks, and forward-looking perspectives. The response from participating countries underscored both the breadth of interest in this initiative and the depth of variation in how music teachers are educated, supported, and challenged across the continent.

The present publication translates this mapping effort into a sustained critical dialogue. By bringing together fourteen contributions from across Europe, it creates what we describe as a 'dialogic space' (Bakhtin, 1981), a site where national perspectives can resonate with and challenge one another, where common themes can be identified without papering over important differences, and where the diversity of European MTE can be appreciated in its full complexity. Rather than producing a single narrative or advancing a unified prescription for reform, this Volume embraces plurality, offering a mosaic of experiences that reflect both the sustaining elements of music teacher education and the forces that unsettle and reshape it.

The importance of this kind of comparative, critically engaged scholarly work extends beyond the academic community. As the chapters collected here demonstrate, the challenges facing MTE, such as the marginalisation of arts subjects within policy frameworks, tensions between tradition and innovation, the need to prepare teachers for increasingly diverse and complex classrooms, are not unique to any single national context. They are shared, in different forms and with different intensities across Europe. By placing these perspectives side by side, this Volume seeks to foster dialogue across contexts and to encourage more connected, mutually informed ways of thinking about MTE in Europe. Further, it will serve as a resource not only for researchers and scholars but also for programme designers, educational policymakers, and the music teacher educators who work, day to day, to prepare the next generation of music teachers.

Structure of the Volume

The Volume is organised to allow readers to encounter the diversity of European MTE in a structured yet open-ended way. Each chapter follows a shared yet flexible framework: an overview of MTE in the contributor's country or region, including historical context and institutional structures; a critical engagement with the relevant research and literature; a case study that illuminates a specific challenge, innovation, or transformation; and a forward-looking reflection on emerging trends and future directions. This structure enables

a degree of comparability across chapters while simultaneously creating space for the diverse voices and national specificities that give the Volume its richness.

The fourteen chapters span a wide geographical range, from Northern and Western Europe to Southern and Eastern Europe, offering perspectives from countries with long-standing and well-resourced MTE traditions alongside contributions from contexts in which music teacher education has undergone rapid and sometimes disruptive change. Together, they constitute a genuinely Europe-wide dialogue, one that, we hope, will challenge readers to reflect not only on the MTE systems documented here but on their own national or institutional contexts.

This publication is addressed to multiple audiences who share a commitment to understanding, strengthening, and transforming music teacher education. The comparative European scope which is presented offers researchers a rich empirical resource and a set of conceptual frameworks that invite both national and cross-national analysis. For music teacher educators, it provides a detailed and critically engaged account of how colleagues in different national contexts are responding to shared challenges, providing both practical insights and theoretical resources for reflection and innovation. The publication will also be of value to student music teachers and early-career music educators who are seeking to understand the broader context within which their own professional formation is situated. By offering a panoramic view of MTE across Europe, it invites all readers to situate their own experiences within a larger landscape marked by both diversity and common purpose. We hope that policymakers will also find in these pages useful evidence-based perspectives on the state of MTE across Europe.

The challenges documented in the following chapters, such as the marginalisation of music in schools, the pressures on teacher preparation programmes, the opportunities offered by new technologies and pedagogical approaches, are not confined to universities and higher education institutions. They shape the daily realities of music teachers in classrooms across Europe, and it is ultimately in those classrooms that the significance of music teacher education is most fully realised. In a field constantly balancing continuity and change, the key question is not just how we prepare future music teachers, but also what kind of professionals and educational environments we aim to cultivate. The following chapters do not provide definitive answers; instead, they create a space for dialogue in which diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives can come together, intersect and challenge one another. It is within this tension-filled, potential-rich environment that new insights into music teacher education can begin to emerge.

Declaration of AI usage

Artificial intelligence tools (Claude, ChatGPT, and Grammarly) were utilised in a supportive, non-automated manner for language editing and stylistic improvements, focusing on clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analyses, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Striving for the Best While Dealing with Reality

Music Teacher Education in Austria

Abstract

This chapter outlines music teacher education (MTE) in Austria. Following major reforms in the last 20 years, Austrian teacher education operates within a unified, Bologna-aligned framework that differentiates between generalist primary teacher training and specialist secondary music teacher programmes. Due to teacher shortages, lateral entry pathways have recently gained importance. While reforms have expanded collaboration, quality assurance, and European alignment, they have also generated tensions between institutions and teacher groups with differing qualifications. One pressing issue is receiving particular attention: lateral entry programmes for career changers' education.

Current Austrian MTE research highlights four areas: study motivation and career trajectories, gender and diversity, educational development within higher music education, and policy agendas and teacher lifelong development.

The chapter argues that shortening study programmes, the challenges of recruitment, and the increasing heterogeneity among teacher candidates require coordinated, research-informed strategies. Essential responses to maintain the quality and attractiveness of Austrian MTE include strengthening mentoring, developing inclusive and practice-relevant curricula, and fostering inter-institutional collaboration.

Keywords: music teacher education, career changers, teacher shortage, recruitment strategies

Introduction to Music Teacher Education in Austria

The historical roots of the Austrian educational system reach back as far as the expansion and improvement of the school system under empress Maria Theresa in the eighteenth century (Oebelsberger, 1999, p. 13), and – regarding music education – to the reform processes initiated by Leo Kestenberg from the 1920s onwards (Oberschmidt, 2024). However, current teacher education in Austria is mainly the result of educational reforms in the twenty-first century. A first major step occurred in 2005 with the transformation of the former "Pedagogical Academies" (*Pädagogische Akademien*), which had trained teachers for compulsory schools, into "University Colleges of Teacher Education" (UCTEs) (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*). This reform introduced a new type of higher education institution for teacher training at the primary and lower secondary level (Hochschulgesetz, 2005), thereby complementing the long-standing teacher education programmes at universities for lower and upper secondary level. Building on this structural shift, a second legislative reform entitled "New teacher education" (*PädagogInnenbildung Neu*) was launched in 2014 (Braunsteiner & Spiel, 2019; Schnider et al., 2023). Accompanied by changes in teacher employment law (Dienstrechts-Novelle, 2013), this reform consolidated the framework for teacher education and professional qualifications. The most significant change introduced by this reform was the implementation of a cooperative model for training secondary school teachers, involving both (music) universities and UCTEs. In Austria, four so-called "regional development alliances" (*Entwicklungsverbünde*) were established, each comprising at least two federal states, within which the respective teacher education institutions jointly train secondary-level teachers.

Since the implementation of the 2014 reform, music teacher education (MTE) in Austria has been organised separately for primary and secondary levels. Primary teachers are trained as generalists at UCTEs while secondary-level music teachers are trained as subject specialists at universities of music and at UCTEs, although the programmes do not differentiate between specific types of secondary schools. All teachers complete a four-year Bachelor's programme (three years from fall 2026) and a two-year Master's programme, both of which are fully funded. Beyond structural differentiation, the 2014 reform introduced several quality assurance measures in Austrian teacher education. As Kucher and Rulofs (2018) note, these included the adaptation of programmes to the Bologna structure, a revision of curricular architecture to strengthen educational science and practical pedagogical components, and the implementation of a legally mandated admission procedure for entrance exams to identify suitable candidates. The reform was driven by criticism of the historically evolved dichotomy in secondary teacher education and by the need to align it to a fully tertiary level in accordance with European higher education standards (Kucher & Rulofs, 2018).

Currently, three distinct qualification pathways for music teachers can be identified in Austria:

Primary Education Teachers (Generalists) are trained at one of 14 UCTEs and are qualified to teach all subjects, including music. However, the extent of music-specific training varies (depending on the respective UCTE institution) and is often minimal. Admission to these programmes involves an online self-assessment, a computer-based test, and an interview, but no prior musical skills are required.

Secondary Education Teachers (Subject Specialists) are trained in two school subjects (e. g. music and mathematics) through the above-mentioned joint programmes. Organised into four regional clusters across the federal states, these programmes require comprehensive entrance examinations (e. g. singing, piano, music theory, ear training, group leadership). The Bachelor's degree for both primary and secondary (music) teachers used to span four years (240 ECTS credits[1]) but is reduced to three years (180 EC) from autumn 2026 onwards. The two-year Master's programme (120 EC) includes 35 EC in both music and the second subject, 20 EC in educational science, and 30 EC for the thesis. In order to gain permanent employment students have to complete their Master's programme within eight years.

Lateral Entrants (Career Changers) represent a third and increasingly relevant teacher type within Austrian MTE. In response to nationwide teacher shortages, this state-mandated pathway was introduced to attract candidates with degrees in the arts or related fields. While musical skills are not assessed in entrance exams, candidates must pass a general teaching aptitude test. Furthermore, they must begin teaching immediately, while simultaneously completing a four-semester, part-time pedagogical training programme. These programmes vary in structure and workload (60–120 EC) and may include up to 80 % distance learning, depending on regional curricula. Given current staffing challenges, lateral entry is likely to remain a long-term alternative within the MTE landscape. This pathway is part of a broader set of initiatives aimed at counteracting teacher shortages in Austria. In addition to lateral entry programmes and targeted qualification tracks, the country participates in international efforts such as *Teach for Austria* (n. d.), affiliated with the global *Teach for All* (n. d.) movement. These measures share the goal of attracting new candidates to the teaching profession, often from non-traditional backgrounds.

In terms of employment conditions, teacher applications are submitted through state-specific online platforms, allowing schools to select from a pool of assigned candidates. Initial contracts are generally temporary, and since 2019, newly appointed teachers are no longer granted civil servant status. At the same time, teacher education remains fully funded at all public and private institutions.

[1] For better readability, all ECTS credits will be abbreviated as EC in the following.

As previously outlined, music teachers in Austria are trained at two distinct types of higher education institutions: music universities and UCTEs. Three public and three private music universities are distributed across the country. In addition to offering programmes for music teachers at secondary schools, they provide artistic training for performers and other disciplines, including instrumental and vocal pedagogy for teaching at institutions such as music schools or conservatoires. In recent years, these institutions have also significantly expanded their research activities – particularly in the fields of music pedagogy, musicology, and artistic research – thus contributing to the advancement of scholarly and practice-based knowledge in music education. Austria has nine publicly funded and five privately funded UCTEs, which are tertiary-level institutions responsible for the initial education, professional development, and continuing training of teachers across all school subjects. Primary-level teacher education is conducted exclusively at UCTEs. Their curriculum focuses on educational science, pedagogy, subject didactics, and practical teaching experience, aiming to prepare teachers for diverse and evolving educational settings. Perhaps precisely because universities and UCTEs are formally required to collaborate within the regional development alliances (*Entwicklungsverbünde*), cooperation between these institutional types is not always seamless.

Being a (music) teacher in Austria offers relatively attractive conditions: competitive salaries, secure employment, approximately three months of vacation per year, and a teaching load of 24 hours per week. Nevertheless, the increasing challenges in the professional field of teacher education (e. g. highly heterogeneous student population due to migration, work overload due to teacher shortages and additional administrative tasks, teaching outside the subject specific expertise which teachers were trained for) and a public discourse showing little appreciation for the teaching profession, have contributed to the increasing disinterest of young people to embark on a teaching career.

Mapping the Research Landscape

Music education research in Austria is divided into three main areas (Schulten & Lothwesen, 2017): firstly, research on teaching and learning in music classrooms; secondly, fundamental research on musical preferences, aptitudes and psychological foundations; and thirdly, curriculum and educational research within the broader educational policy context. The history of empirical music education research in Austria is relatively new, as subject didactics in all the school subjects have only emerged as valid areas of research since the 1980s. Only then did music education research start to develop as an autonomous field, separate from musicology. Another particularity in Austrian educational research is the use of teacher action research which has resulted in early studies and ongoing discourse in general teacher education (Altrichter & Posch, 1990; Altrichter et al., 2018) and in practitioner and

design-based research in music education (e. g. Malmberg, 2003; Buchborn & Malmberg, 2013; Aigner, 2014; Aigner & Malmberg, 2022). An additional and impactful research project in MTE has focused on applicants' motivation to study, as well as the different career paths of graduates (Bailer, 2009).

Today, an overview of research conducted in Austria shows that the main focus of interest in MTE can be broadly categorised into four central areas: motivation to study, career choice motivation and career entry; gender and diversity; educational development in higher (music) education; policy agenda in higher MTE and teacher lifespan development.

Motivation to study, career choice motivation and career entry: The most impactful empirical study in this area analysed longitudinal survey data from MTE students entering all Austrian higher education institutions between 2012–2017 (Bailer, 2019). It revealed the factor of study motivation as being more significant than the actual career choices and grouped students into three different categories depending on their future career aspirations: the music teacher, the "pedagogical patchworker", and the "artistic patchworker". Other literature in this area shows a critical sensitivity to the underrepresentation of first-generation students and applicants with specific socio-economic backgrounds in arts study programmes. Here, the focus was set on developing an accessible online information platform to assist interested persons in finding all necessary information and to also connect with others in similar situations (Fasching et al., 2024). A long-term study based on data collected since 2015 recently provided insightful results on the choice of instruments/vocals (classical, jazz/pop and folk music), choice of second teaching subject, duration of study, drop-out rate, start of teaching activity (as a student or after completing a Bachelor's or Master's degree) and selected school type, with music teacher students and graduates being surveyed in the south-eastern region of Austria (Gritsch, 2024).

Gender and diversity: This area of research has intensified considerably over the last decade, with larger and smaller projects most notably proposed by PhD students. One article looks at gender specific data from the large longitudinal study by Bailer (2019) and focuses on the impact of gender on career choice motivation (Peham, 2019). Recently, the development of the concept of "cultural diversity" in MTE students has attracted interest. Here, a qualitative interview study with students from all regions in Austria aspires to understand how discourses of cultural diversity manifest while studying to become a music teacher (Demelmair, 2025a/2025b). Another mixed methods study, comparing the beliefs and attitudes of MTE students (Kleyensteuber, 2024/2025), focuses on how they experience the concept of social justice in their Bachelor's curriculum and what they attain from the intended programme goals (OECD, 2020).

Educational development in higher music education: A broad body of literature can be subsumed under this category, which focuses mainly on the actual teaching and learning happening in higher music institutions. Insights into both the learning and doing of

research was the focus of a project using research-based learning (Wieneke et al., 2023). In this study, Masters' students were supervised in a music education course while conducting interviews with their slightly older peers. They then analysed these data and presented findings both in lectures as well as in a jointly written research article about the experiences of those peers in their career entry phase as music teachers. Another early-stage PhD study focuses on bilingual learning and CLIL (content and language integrated learning) in music lessons. It aims to design a higher music education course to guide students in developing lessons in their early teaching placements (Roska, ongoing). In a cross-national research project, Wolf and Schaumberger (2025) explored the influence of mentors on early-career teachers, focusing on three domains – professional, personal/emotional, and social – that shape mentoring processes. As discussed in more detail in chapter 3, a pressing issue in the current Austrian higher music education landscape is the shortage of fully qualified music teachers, which has led to an increased active recruitment of lateral entrants. This challenge forms the basis of another PhD project that examines the experiences of second-career music teachers during their alternative certification programmes (Steinmetz, ongoing). A further line of research concerns the preparation and qualification of mentors in MTE, with Malmberg's work offering key insights into the specific characteristics of mentoring during internships, including how mentor-mentee interactions unfold and how mentoring roles can be conceptualised (Malmberg, 2020/2021).

Policy agenda in higher music teacher education and teacher lifespan development: This area comprises research and literature with a stronger focus on policy agendas as they shape higher education institutions, curricula and thereby ultimately the future work environment of music teachers. The new curricula introduced in 2016 were examined from different angles in articles from the south-eastern region of Austria (Gritsch et al., 2016; Gritsch 2021a/2021b/2023). One large European research project including Austrian researchers focuses on several areas of music teacher development. The *TEAM* project (Teacher Education Academy for Music, n. d.) engaging 13 institutions in ten European countries aims to adjust future MTE to the current challenges such as digitisation, sustainability, intercultural learning, and social coherence. Ultimately, its goal is to build a sustainable network of higher music education institutions in Europe and beyond (Malmberg et al., 2025; De Baets et al., 2025). The lifelong learning processes of music teachers in times of changing and developing education systems – and the implications for higher education – are the focus of an article comparing the educational systems of the UK and Austria (Wieneke & Spruce, 2020). The authors examine the quality and characteristics of effective professional development for music teachers, thereby emphasising the importance of lifelong learning for in-service music teachers.

The lateral entry study programmes for teachers in secondary schools – a case report

Although the overall situation in Austrian MTE can generally be described as positive, several pressing challenges remain unresolved. One of the most significant challenges is the growing tendency for the subject of music in secondary schools to be taught by non-specialist teachers – a development that has led to tensions between formally trained music teachers, those teaching outside their subject area, and the relatively new group of lateral entrants. These tensions stem partly from concerns about subject-specific and pedagogical expertise and partly from differences in contractual conditions.

In response to the teacher shortage in many subjects, including music, over the past three years which is mainly due to the insufficient number of graduates from teacher training programmes and a wave of retirements among the baby boomer generation, the teaching profession has recently been opened up to career changers who are expected to fill staffing gaps and ensure teaching in the short to medium term (Aigner, 2018/2021/2023; Aigner & Lion, 2019). This educational policy measure enables individuals with a university degree and relevant professional experience – without having completed a regular teacher training programme in two subjects – to enter the teaching profession with certification in one subject. Currently, lateral entry is available for secondary general education and for specialisation in inclusive education, with plans to extend it to primary education following the implementation and evaluation of pilot projects.[2]

To qualify for this programme, applicants need to complete a college or university degree comprising at least 180 EC; a diploma degree with at least 240 EC or a Bachelor's and Master's degree with at least 300 EC. Preliminary studies have an influence on the in-service training: the degree must be related to the intended subject of instruction, and its content must correspond proportionally to the secondary school curriculum, with the certification commission making the final decision. In the case of music education, instrumental or vocal studies that qualify graduates for careers as orchestra or chamber musicians, soloists, or band musicians are considered relevant. Furthermore, at least three years of full-time professional experience is required, allowing graduates to apply the knowledge acquired during their degree programme. These legal provisions are clearly aimed at recruiting qualified individuals from related professions in order to enrich school life with valuable extracurricular skills and practical experience but are not intended as a permanent substitute for traditional teacher training.

[2] The information presented here is based on official sources from the Ministry of Education (n. d. a), Klassejob (n. d.), the Certification Commission (n. d.), and the UCTE Styria (n. d.), last verified in October 2025.

The application process begins with registration on the website "Klassejob" (n. d.). Once the application is submitted, the Certification Commission for Career Changers initiates a three-step process designed to enable quality-assured personnel selection: first, a review of submitted documents for professional suitability; second, an online assessment evaluating personality and attitude-related characteristics; and third, an online hearing in the form of a personal interview with the commission. If successful, candidates receive a certificate valid for an unlimited period, although this does not guarantee employment. Certified candidates must apply for advertised positions and ideally participate in an interview with school administrators. Employment is based on a contract identical to that of teachers who have completed a regular teacher education programme with two teaching subjects.

After successful certification and employment, career changers enter a structured in-service training programme designed to support their integration into the profession. This begins with two introductory weeks at a UCTE, covering essential topics such as lesson planning, classroom management, and diversity. Following this, a 12-month induction phase includes mentoring, work shadowing, and regular reflection sessions. The core of this training programme is the university course for career changers, which comprises 60–90 EC depending on prior qualifications. This course provides foundational knowledge in educational science, subject didactics, and practical pedagogical studies and is designed to be compatible with employment by means of block teaching and e-learning options. Completion of the course is mandatory for continued employment.

A look at the current statistics on new hires in the 2025/2026 school year shows that 12 % of them are career changers (Die Presse, 2025). The lateral entry study programme has thus successfully helped to alleviate the teacher shortage, reduce the use of non-subject-qualified teachers, and create more diverse teaching teams, which can have a positive effect on student motivation. As a result, at the end of 2025, the Ministry of Education has limited the certification for career changers to 500 per year for the years to come (Ministry of Education, n. d. b). Despite the positive effects mentioned above, challenges remain: access to the certification programme is competitive, and the obligation to complete the programme within certain deadlines is sometimes unmanageable for people with care responsibilities, leading to dropouts. Furthermore, employment is not guaranteed, and teaching certification for only one subject may require teachers to commute between several schools.

Forward Looking

Considering the current shortage of teachers and the fact that many music education students – as well as lateral entrants – teach alongside their studies, it is essential to expand measures to support these working students through high-quality in-service training. Several institutions in Austria have already developed programmes to support both student teachers and lateral entrants. As the competences and needs of these working students are highly diverse, support programmes must be adapted accordingly. At the Mozarteum University Innsbruck, for example, Master's students collaborate with Bachelor's students by sharing selected classroom experiences or lesson ideas and engaging in joint reflection and discussion. Another initiative at the Mozarteum University Salzburg is the *"Development Centre"*, a mentoring programme for first-semester students that supports professional reflection and strengthens personal and pedagogical competences. Such programmes aim to help future music educators balance academic, artistic, and teaching responsibilities while developing resilience and reflective capacity.

A further key aspect concerns recruitment strategies for future music teachers. All institutions are facing stagnating numbers of applicants and are therefore developing formats to raise awareness among pupils approaching school graduation. These may include "open days", collaborations in music mediation projects, or targeted events for school groups. Recruitment might also involve revising – or even cancelling – entrance exams, a topic widely discussed in the light of the German MULEM-EX study (Lehmann-Wermser & Witte, 2024). Special preparatory courses for these examinations offer another possible approach. Several initiatives also seek to strengthen the visibility of music education through school-based performance activities. *"Between the lines"* an Innsbruck-based project that brings performances into schools across western Austria and South Tyrol, reaches more than 4,000 pupils annually and also serves as a promotional platform for the study programme (Schoenenberg & Wegscheider, 2024). Another example is the *"Musik-Multis: Next Generation"* programme at the University Mozarteum Salzburg, an innovative recruitment initiative that aims to empower young music education talents in the region (Mozarteum University, 2025). At the mdw-University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, the annual *"Festival week for music education"* showcases the breadth of the discipline through workshops, concerts and opportunities for prospective students to shadow teaching activities, thereby offering insight into study options and application procedures (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna – mdw, 2025).

In the coming years, a central focus for researchers and practitioners in music education in Austria will be the implementation and evaluation of the shortened Bachelor's and Master's study programmes. These significant reforms to teacher education have been met with a certain degree of scepticism within the institutions, whereas political decision-makers consider them a means of increasing the attractiveness of teacher training. In

navigating these developments, it is important to keep in mind that, at secondary level, graduates teach across all school types, as Austria does not provide school-type-specific preparation. Consequently, programmes must equip future teachers with competences that are flexible and transferable across diverse educational contexts.

Whatever direction the field may take, it will be increasingly important for the higher education community to work closely together and to find innovative ways of enhancing the overall quality of MTE. Several promising practices have already been identified: formal and informal collaboration among higher education teachers – across artistic and academic fields, instruments, genres, and institutions – has the potential to enrich student learning and transform knowledge (Wieneke, 2024). Examples include cross-genre collaboration (such as classical and jazz/pop piano teachers exchanging students to broaden their musical perspectives), the creation of joint classes and performance formats, and co-teaching arrangements in selected courses, particularly in music education and music theory. Such collaborations can contribute to more culturally inclusive curricula that integrate regional traditions, global popular music, and post-migrant musical cultures, thereby reflecting the diversity of contemporary society. In times of change, educational institutions must remain flexible and continue to adapt their study programmes to the requirements in the field, carefully navigating the delicate balance between musical artistry and practical relevance for schools.

Declaration of AI usage

AI-based tools (Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, DeepL) were used in a supportive capacity during the preparation of this chapter. Specifically, they assisted with the translation of selected formulations into academic English and with the rephrasing of sentences to improve clarity, coherence, and stylistic consistency.

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Thomas Geudens, Bert Appermont & Thomas De Baets

At a Crossroads

Educating Music Teachers through Flanders' Evolving Educational Landscape

Abstract

This chapter considers the evolving landscape of music teacher education in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium, tracing key developments since the turn of the millennium. Firstly, we delineate the pathways for generalist and specialist music teachers into primary, secondary, and part-time arts education, distinguishing between integrated and consecutive programmes. We then discuss several central themes emerging in music teacher education discourse, including pedagogical content knowledge, competence-oriented learning, musical creativities, interdisciplinarity, teacher identity, practitioner research, and pedagogical improvisation. Our chapter subsequently provides a case report of the introduction of educational master's programmes in music, introducing their origins, analysing their curricula, and describing ongoing challenges. It concludes by identifying future directions for music teacher education in Flanders.

Keywords: educational master's degree, Flanders, higher music education, music teacher education, practitioner research

This chapter provides an overview of music teacher education in Flanders, focusing on developments since the turn of the millennium that have shaped the situation today. Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region and community in northern Belgium, gained full educational autonomy during the second half of the twentieth century and is therefore considered separately in this chapter. Below, we examine the various types of music teacher education for primary, secondary and music schools, and address the dominant themes in the developments within music teacher education. After discussing the establishment of the educational master's programmes in music, we identify potential future directions for music teacher educators.

Music Teacher Education in Flanders

Generalist and Specialist Teachers

In Flemish preschools, generalist classroom teachers use music as a part of daily routines during early childhood education (ages 2 to 6). In primary schools, music is taught within an integrated subject, combined with other arts disciplines (De Baets et al., 2026). Unfortunately, many primary school teachers feel unprepared to teach music due to the limited time and attention devoted to music during their teacher education (Bamford, 2007; Deckers et al., 2021; Van Stappen, 2025). Although this problem is widely recognised (e. g., Hennessy, 2020; Mills, 1989; Nieuwmeijer et al., 2021), there are few signs of improvement, largely due to the already overcrowded curricula.

Conversely, in secondary schools and music schools, music is always taught by subject specialists. While all music teacher education programmes prepare students for a career in secondary schools, there is a higher demand for qualified music teachers in music schools. These Flemish music schools form part of so-called *part-time arts education*, a network of art academies that follow formal requirements that are very similar to secondary schools.

Although specialist music teacher education is now well established across eight institutions in Flanders, this was not the case in former times. The music pedagogical department at the Lemmens Institute, founded in 1950, was the sole provider of music teacher education in Flanders until the 1990s (Geudens & De Baets, 2025). In parallel, graduate performers and composers could also obtain a generic teaching certificate after their studies. The programmes from the Lemmens Institute and the generic qualification took many shapes and names over the decades. Until recently, music teacher education remained clearly divided into two tracks: an *integrated* bachelor's track, where musical and teaching skills were developed simultaneously, and a *consecutive* track for master's graduates who obtained a teaching certificate afterwards. Most consecutive programmes, however, were in reality followed alongside or partially interwoven with the master's degree. In 2019, the introduction of integrated educational master's programmes aimed to formalise this, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Integrated and Consecutive Programmes

In the integrated music teacher programmes at bachelor's level (180 ECTS), students always combine music with another subject. These programmes are offered by four 'universities of applied sciences' (*hogescholen*), which are not affiliated with the Flemish conservatoires. Introduced in the 1990s, these programmes played a transformative role in music teacher education by incorporating international trends, popular music, and a broader educational framework (Geudens & De Baets, 2025). Because of the combination with a second subject, the amount of time allocated to the development of subject-specific competencies is often considered limited (e. g. Crevits, 2016). For art subjects, specifically, the three-year bachelor programmes are not always considered to provide the time and space needed to develop the artistic skills needed for teaching as a discrete subject specialist.

Teacher education at the bachelor's level is designed for teaching in secondary schools and takes a practice-oriented approach, characterised by a substantial number of internships throughout the three years of study. Internships are typically organised by the students themselves in a school of their choice, with some guidance from a tutor, who assesses the student informed by the feedback from the classroom teachers. They often follow a progressive trajectory, evolving from observation to participation and eventually to teaching entire lessons themselves.

Over a period of the last fifteen years, prospective music teachers have been able to choose cross-disciplinary arts as a second subject (Frenssen, 2013). This development responds to changes in secondary education, where music is no longer taught as a separate subject but is integrated into cross-disciplinary *artistic education*. Schools have the autonomy to decide how many and which artistic disciplines are included (De Baets & Vanvolsem, 2021; Geudens & Overmeer, 2022; Geudens, 2023).

From Audition to Qualification

Like all Flemish study programmes, Flemish music teacher education has a tuition fee of € 1,157 in 2025 (AHOVOKS, n. d.), with reductions for low-income households. In the integrated bachelor's programme, music teachers must prove their proficiency in Dutch through an entrance examination (VLHORA, n. d.), but no musical audition is required. Auditions, however, are mandatory for bachelor's and master's programmes in music at the schools of arts.

Once qualified, Flemish music teachers can secure a permanent position within one to five years (Department of Education, n. d. b). Without a teaching qualification, however, music teachers can only be employed temporarily under less attractive conditions (Department of Education, n. d. a). The ongoing teacher shortage is urging teacher education programmes to explore new solutions (Commissie van Wijzen, 2023; De Witte & Iterbeke, 2022; Department of Education, 2025). Many music teachers begin teaching before entering teacher education. In such cases, they complete their internships 'in-service', with limited

guidance from the teacher education institution. Meanwhile, like all beginning teachers, they receive initial guidance by a designated colleague at their school (Department of Education, n. d. c).

Music Teachers and Music Teacher Education

Flemish music teachers can be qualified at bachelor's or master's level, and primarily develop careers in music schools (master's graduates) or secondary schools (master's and bachelor's graduates). While music schools are mostly populated by teachers who obtained a master's in music, bachelor-level teacher education programmes for primary school generalist teachers and secondary school teachers provide limited coverage of musical and music-specific methodological skills. Against a background of reduced lesson time for arts subjects in secondary schools (Geudens, 2023) and persistent economisations in higher education (Vermeylen, 2023), many music teacher educators at the bachelor's level are worried about the long-term viability of their programmes.

A Current State of Music Teacher Education

While we can draw on our own experiences and impressions of the current state of music teacher education, there is a notable lack of data on student enrolment, graduation rates, and subsequent professional pathways. Therefore, in this section, we will focus on dominant themes that have emerged within the discourse surrounding music teacher education. Several of these were identified from the Dutch-language book series *Muziekpedagogiek in beweging* (Music pedagogy in motion) that was published since 2013. We will primarily refer to research conducted by teacher educators regarding the development of their programmes, or to their research interests that have significantly influenced programme contents: pedagogical content knowledge, competence-oriented learning, musical creativities, interdisciplinarity, teacher identity, practitioner research, and pedagogical improvisation.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The interplay between music teachers' artistic and pedagogical competence has strongly influenced the debate in Flanders. Rather than viewing this interplay as a source of tension (for an overview, see De Baets, 2012), it is understood as a dynamic phenomenon, in line with Shulman's (1986, 1987) concept of *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK). Shulman's work was referenced by Ardui et al. (2011, p. 19) in the development of their own model of *vakdidactiek* (subject-specific pedagogy), a central concept in Flemish teacher education. In their model, *vakdidactiek* is defined as the interplay of subject knowledge, general pedagogy, and teaching practice (p. 23). De Baets (2014) also drew on Shulman's work to

conceptualise music teachers' music-pedagogical artistry. The artistic-pedagogical interplay has also been frequently discussed in relation to the educational master's programmes in the arts, which will be addressed in the next section (e.g. De bisschop, 2018; Geudens & De Baets, 2020; Vanmaele & De bisschop, 2024). It reflects the 'integrative ambition' of music teacher education programmes, which aim to offer curricula in which musical and pedagogical development are not treated separately but rather enrich and reinforce each other.

Open and Competence-Oriented Curricula

In both general education and music schools, music curricula have shifted markedly towards open and competence-based frameworks. Music schools in particular have embraced an individually differentiated, competence-oriented approach as part of their educational mission. This direction was first formalised in a position paper authored by Flemish Minister of Education Pascal Smet (2011), and further developed through successive research and development projects (Schrooten & Bosman, 2014; 2016). It led to the development of new, widely adopted music school curricula (e.g. Borms et al., 2025, for the performing arts), the exploration of competence-oriented assessment methods (Schrooten et al., 2023), and a project focused on quality enhancement (Schrooten et al., 2024). In response to these developments, music teacher educators have sought to support prospective teachers in navigating and making decisions within open curricula. Research competencies are frequently cited as essential tools in this process, and innovation and research have been integrated into the Flemish key competencies for teachers (Flemish Government, 2018b).

Musical Creativities

Within a competence-oriented paradigm, musical creativities are increasingly gaining prominence in music education (Burnard, 2012), and this 'creativity turn' is also evident in Flanders (Bremmer & Verneert, 2023). 'Creation and innovation' was adopted as one of six core domains in the student profile of music schools (Department of Education, 2015). Going through a creative process is currently the only active music-making aim in the learning objectives of secondary education (www.onderwijsdoelen.be). The handbook series *Time to Create* (Appermont & Schrooten, 2021; Appermont et al., 2023) provides numerous examples and suggestions for creative assignments in music, both individual and collective. In his doctoral research, Verneert (2024) explored collective free improvisation activities in secondary schools, examining the lived experiences of a large sample of students ($n = 1{,}282$). His research demonstrates the relevance of such activities for classroom music and stimulated music teachers to use similar approaches (see also Verneert & Verbeeck, 2022; Verneert et al., 2026).

Interdisciplinarity

As in many European countries (De Baets & de Vugt, 2016), there is an ongoing debate in Flanders about interdisciplinary subject integration, particularly concerning subject integration within the arts. Various conceptual and curricular developments have compelled teacher education programmes to engage with this issue (Frenssen, 2013; Vanesser, 2014). Hinnekint (2016) used the term 'transdisciplinary learning' to describe a more organic and holistic approach to arts education. Alaerts and colleagues (2012) framed art subjects within a broader educational aim: fostering cultural (self-)awareness across the entire school curriculum (p. 22). In the past twenty years, widespread cross-disciplinary integration across all art subjects has taken place in primary and secondary education (De Baets et al., 2026), along with the implementation of some cross-disciplinary subjects in music schools. Music teacher education today has responded to these changes by integrating compulsory cross-disciplinary projects or *vakdidactiek* (hereafter: teaching methodology) courses in the curriculum. However, specialised music teachers often show resistance to this new reality, reflecting a strong commitment to their own discipline (de Vugt & De Baets, 2022). The debate is further complicated by confusion surrounding the various types of interdisciplinarity and subject integration, as well as the distinction between artistic and broader cultural learning objectives (Geudens & Overmeer, 2023).

Teacher Identity

While attention to learning content and student learning remains, the evolving demands on teachers have increased attention to the profile and 'identity' of music education professionals, as well as their professional development throughout their teaching career. Drawing on the work of Argyris and Schön (1974) and Kelchtermans (2014), Castelein (2015) developed a framework to support self-understanding and self-directed professional development among music teachers. In her doctoral dissertation, she reports on a practitioner research study in which she identified 'constructive frictions' or discrepancies between how she *thinks* and *acts* in practice (Castelein, 2025). Her study underscores the role of the 'personal interpretative framework' (Kelchtermans, 2025) in how music education takes shape. In line with the evolution towards interdisciplinary arts subjects, Frenssen (2013) argued that music teachers' profiles should become more 'interdisciplinary' and oriented towards a 'cross-sectoral reality' that includes both formal and non-formal approaches (p. 71). Vanesser (2014) envisioned a music teacher capable of realising *Music Education 3.0*, characterised by a connective and even activist orientation (p. 47).

Practitioner Research

Since the turn of the century, a stronger research culture has emerged within higher music education institutions throughout Europe. To ensure that prospective music teachers' research remains closely connected to their practice and core expertise as teacher-musicians,

considerable attention has been devoted to the practitioner research paradigm (De Baets et al., 2023). In recent years, this paradigm has gained traction and continues to evolve across continental Europe.

Initial experiences in Flanders led to the publication of the book *Ticket to Ride* (de Vugt et al., 2017), which presented several examples of good practice and early methodological reflections. Continued engagement by students at undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels has enabled further development and refinement of this approach, including the formulation of quality criteria for this type of research (De Baets et al., 2023). Doctoral projects that strongly integrated elements of practitioner research have explored pedagogical improvisation in classroom music (De Baets, 2012), the development of interactive music technology for instrumental learning (Nijs, 2012), challenging and developing the personal interpretative framework (Castelein, 2025; see above), and orchestrating for amateur ensemble musicians (Geudens, 2025). This type of research aligns well with the dominant artistic research paradigm in higher music education (De Baets et al., 2024). Vanmaele and De bisschop (2024) have developed a practice-based and 'nomadic' perspective that resonates with artistic practitioner research, emphasising its conceptual and methodological versatility.

Pedagogical Improvisation

While teacher education often emphasises detailed preparations of lessons and written lesson plans – equipping students with new tools and approaches, and implying that the classroom is a 'controllable' environment – attention has increasingly shifted towards the adventurous and unpredictable nature of teaching (e. g. Capolla, 2024).

In music education specifically, De Baets (2012) examined secondary music teachers' on-the-spot decisions, focusing on their *unprepared, non-routinised musical actions* (De Baets, 2022, p. 371). He also highlighted the 'artistic' nature of these actions. This artistic dimension has since been further explored by a group of teacher-researchers across diverse music education contexts (De Baets et al., 2024), influencing music teacher education by introducing *improvised music instruction* into the curriculum (De Baets, 2014). Students were deliberately 'thrown' into practice with minimal preparation. In doing so, they possibly gained valuable insights into their developing skills and instinctive responses, and became responsive to real-time classroom events. In Moors' ongoing doctoral research (Moors & De Baets, 2023), this *pedagogical improvisation* is further conceptualised and empirically studied within teaching practice, again with a strong connection to artistic and musical competencies.

Challenging Curricula

The addition of interdisciplinary, creative, and research competencies had a transformative impact on music education curricula. It also heightened the 'curricular stress' for music teacher programmes to fit everything in a comprehensive curriculum that is attractive to

both pre-service and a growing number of in-service teachers. Moreover, navigating broad, competence- and creativity-oriented curricula presents a significant challenge for student teachers. For instance, higher music education programmes oriented at classical music performance, in and beyond Flanders, tend to follow a master-apprentice model that does not reflect such curricular approaches, and places little emphasis on creative skills (e. g. Minors et al., 2024). Reconciling students' musical biographies and individual competencies with the diverse demands of modern curricula remains a recurring challenge for teacher educators.

Case Report: Introduction of the Educational Master's in Music (2019)

Context and challenge

In this section, we discuss the introduction of the educational master's programmes in music, which were introduced at the same time at all Flemish universities and schools of arts (Flemish Parliament, 2018). In Flemish music schools, all teachers are expected to have obtained a master's degree in music and a subsequent teaching certificate. This requirement stems from the specific implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Flanders, where the civil effect of art degrees is granted only at the master's level. Prior to 2019, post-master's teacher education had evolved into 60 ECTS packages, which could be followed at the same institutions offering the disciplinary master's degrees. These included subject-specific methodology courses taught by expert educators. However, the same qualification could also be obtained through generic programmes, often involving evening lessons and lacking subject-specific content or teaching staff (Crevits, 2016). This contrast between the disciplinary master's programmes and the generic teaching certificates reinforced a perceived status gap between becoming a subject specialist and becoming a teacher. These issues regarding artistic methodology and societal perception of the profession were particularly tangible in the music domain.

Response

To address these challenges, the generic teaching certificates were abolished and replaced by educational master's programmes for all master's students, both from universities and schools of arts, who wished to become a teacher (Flemish Parliament, 2018). The new, integrated programmes comprised 120 ECTS credits. In the educational master's, students combined discipline-specific and educational coursework.

As such, the educational master's programmes in music were aligned with the seventh, master level of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) (EU, n. d.), elevating the educational learning outcomes to the same level as the music-specific ones (NVAO, 2018). The programmes had to give more attention to societal challenges, including hitherto never formalised concerns such as diversity and the specific complexities or urban

contexts (Flemish Parliament, 2018). They also had to incorporate research competencies, establishing master's-level research with an educational focus within higher music education. Fundamentally, the consecutive learning trajectory would be replaced with an integrated approach, enabling students to develop artistic and educational mastery side-by-side.

Outcomes

What do these educational master's in music look like today? To describe the programmes from Flanders' four conservatories, we performed an analysis of their curricula. Due to the detailed legal framework for educational master's programmes (Flemish Parliament, 2018), they are largely similar. Approximately half of the 120 ECTS credits are allocated to courses with an artistic focus, such as instrument, chamber music, ensemble work, and entrepreneurship. All programmes include an educational research component of 9 to 18 credits, culminating in a master's thesis. In addition to theoretical-educational courses (12 to 18 credits), the remaining 27 to 33 credits are dedicated to teaching methodology and internships. These internships primarily target music education in part-time arts education, while also addressing secondary education and non-formal music participation. The titles of the teaching methodology courses were precisely defined by the Flemish Government (2018a) and, together with a student's instrument or specialisation, form the legal basis for their teaching qualification. All music students follow a general music teaching methodology course, which focuses on teaching music in class group settings (e. g. secondary schools, or solfège in music schools). Additionally, they take ensemble methodology and a specialised methodology course aligned with their profile: performance, composition and creation, or conducting. Furthermore, all art students follow a course in interdisciplinary arts methodology, preparing them to teach cross-disciplinary subjects.

Each teaching methodology course grants a qualification for a cluster of subjects within music and secondary schools, thereby broadening the one-to-one correspondence between methodology courses and subjects that existed in previous programmes. This shift enables a move away from context-specific 'methodolatry' towards a more flexible and reflective methodological approach (Geudens & De Baets, 2020). However, the wide range of musical instruments, the multiple specific teaching methodology courses and the curricular complexity of music schools together have created a complex web. This complexity has resulted in an overly detailed and inconsistent teaching qualification administration, and confronts teacher educators with very diverse demands within a single teaching methodology course (Geudens et al., 2023).

Each teaching methodology course is accompanied by a number of internship hours. In Flemish educational master's programmes, however, the total number of internship hours is typically extremely limited. Despite the broad scope of the resulting music teaching qualification, they contain about 40 internship hours for the total programme.

Reflection

At the time of their introduction, educational master's programmes in music were met with considerable resistance. Classical music performers and composers, in particular, expressed strong concerns about a decline in the musical standards of future music teachers, because master's programmes would sacrifice 60 ECTS of artistic development in favour of educational coursework (Brossé et al., 2017). These critical voices were contradicted by others (De bisschop, 2017). Even today, the integrated educational masters at universities and schools of arts continue to face scepticism from students who fear that their degree will be perceived as second-rate due to the reduced time for discipline-specific development at the master's level (NVAO, 2024). As a result, the majority of students prefer a trajectory in which they first complete a 'regular' master's degree, followed by a shortened educational master's comprising only 60 ECTS pedagogical credits. To accommodate this persistent consecutive route, institutions are required to maintain a 'Berlin wall' between artistic and educational components, which impedes meaningful curricular integration and cross-pollination. Despite the integrative intentions behind the educational master's model, the consecutive trajectory remains the dominant pathway in Flanders today.

Recently, the Dutch-Flemish accreditation body recommended a comprehensive reassessment of all integrated educational master's programmes five years after their implementation (NVAO, 2024). The integrative ambitions of these programmes have, in practice, struggled to overcome two persistent assumptions and perceptions that are well-known in higher (music) education within and beyond Flanders. Firstly, being a music teacher continues to be perceived as having lower status than being a performing musician or composer (see e.g. Regelski, 2007). Moreover, teachers at the master's level root their teaching strongly in their disciplinary expertise, with the assumption that didactic, pedagogical, and professional competencies will naturally follow from artistic mastery given a minimum of practical experience (Bowman, 2007).

A noteworthy counterpoint to these prevailing perceptions and structural limitations is the integrated educational master's in music pedagogy at LUCA School of Arts (www.luca-arts.be). In this programme, students choose music pedagogy as their specialisation from the bachelor's level onwards and follow a broad curriculum in which artistic and educational learning trajectories are interwoven throughout. Nevertheless, the broader ambition to fully integrate artistic and teacher education at the master's level in Flanders is still in the process of being realised.

At a Crossroads: Potential Directions for the Near Future?

Flemish music teacher education currently stands at a crossroads. Ongoing developments and structural changes in music education practice (De Baets et al., 2026), alongside reforms in teacher education, have challenged many established practices and assumptions. In this concluding section, we identify two principal clusters of potential future directions. Firstly, there is a continued and demanding search within music teacher education for approaches that can respond to the rapidly evolving professional landscape. Secondly, and more broadly, there is a need for strengthened collaboration between teacher education and the professional field.

In an optimistic reading, a continuously changing professional landscape underscores the need for reflectiveness and lifelong learning through professional development. Conversely, in a diverse and dynamic professional field, it becomes increasingly difficult to prepare future teachers for specific educational realities. While it is clear that teacher education must become more adaptive, the question remains to what, exactly, it should adapt. In secondary education, for instance, the growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity presents a significant challenge – but is it more than a trend? A recent reform of the primary school curriculum (Flemish Parliament, 2025) suggests that the historical pendulum may be swinging back toward curricula with clearly defined, discipline-specific aims. For teacher education, it is currently not easy to make decisive choices in this regard, as both realities – monodisciplinary and interdisciplinary arts education – now coexist. Meanwhile, the growing inclusion of non-formal learning contexts in music teacher education appears to be more than a passing trend. The wealth of pedagogies outside formal structures is frequently seen as a source of inspiration for formal education (e. g. Verneert & De bisschop, 2025). We also observe that students are increasingly orienting themselves towards the non-formal sector.

The challenges above may also be addressed through a broader evolution towards co-educating future teachers via collaboration between teacher education and the professional field. By viewing teachers' education as a joint effort, several policy texts have proposed a professional development continuum that begins in teacher education, but extends throughout the teaching career. Concrete initiatives include the proposed introduction of an intensive induction year (followed by certification), during which in-service teachers receive paid, on-the-job training based on international models (Commissie van Wijzen, 2023), the extension of internship periods to allow students to gain sufficient practical experience (Flemish Government, 2023), the joint development of training programmes for induction and internship mentors (Flemish Government, 2023), and the formal establishment of learning communities between teacher education institutions and schools (Flemish Government, 2023). Although these are general initiatives, music teacher education programmes will also need to engage with them in the years ahead.

Facing a rapidly evolving professional field, calls for a renewed appreciation for teacher education and the development of a professional development continuum (see e. g. Brinckman & Versluys, 2021) offer hopeful prospects for Flemish music teacher educators, reenvisioning pathways to prepare the music teachers of the future.

Declaration of AI usage

Throughout the writing stage of this chapter, the authors used M365 Copilot to generate suggestions regarding readability and English language use, which were thoroughly reviewed before editing the content. The authors assume full responsibility for the publication's content.

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Music Teacher Education in the Czech Republic

Structures, Challenges, and Emerging Reforms

Abstract

This chapter offers an overview of music teacher education in the Czech Republic, outlining its historical background, institutional structures, and current challenges. It describes the main pathways for preparing music educators, from generalist primary school teachers to specialists trained at conservatoires, universities, and other institutions such as Elementary Art Schools and higher education academies. The chapter examines differences in university curricula shaped by regional traditions and research priorities, and summarises recent findings related to students' musical preferences, the use of multimedia technologies, and the role of folk music in contemporary teaching, which are important in teacher education. It also considers the evolving legislative landscape, including the new Competence Framework for Teacher Graduates and planned reforms to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education. Key challenges include limited digital tool use and the marginalisation of music within arts education. The chapter calls for balanced preparation combining theoretical knowledge, practical skills, digital literacy, and teacher well-being.

Keywords: curriculum reform, Czech Republic, digital technologies, folk song, music teacher education

Foundations and Structure of Music Teacher Education in the Czech Republic

The education and preparation of music teachers in the Czech Republic is deeply rooted in the country's rich musical heritage and structured educational system. The profile of a Czech music teacher is shaped by a combination of formal education, artistic training, pedagogical skills, and professional expertise. The Czech educational system has long recognised the importance of music as a fundamental part of general education, which is reflected in the comprehensive preparation required of future music teachers. The initial stage of music education in the Czech Republic takes place in nursery schools, where musical activities are incorporated into the daily programme rather than taught as a separate subject. Instruction in this setting is provided by graduates of secondary pedagogical schools or by university-trained educators who have completed relevant study programmes in Pre-school Pedagogy at faculties of education. From the earliest years of compulsory schooling, music is present as a regular subject, ensuring that every child is exposed to the basics of musical literacy, appreciation, and creativity. Children begin formal education at the age of six and continue through nine years of compulsory schooling, which is divided into a first stage (grades 1–5; ages 6–11) and a second stage (grades 6–9; ages 12–15) of basic education. In primary schools, music is most often taught by generalist teachers who are responsible for a range of subjects, while in lower and upper secondary schools, music is taught by subject specialists who have received advanced education in music.

A distinctive feature of the Czech system is the network of Elementary Art Schools which provide specialised instruction in music, visual arts, dance, and literary-dramatic arts. These schools operate outside the standard curriculum, typically offering classes in the afternoons, and play a crucial role in nurturing young talent and fostering artistic development from an early age. Children may choose from these disciplines after successfully passing a talent-oriented entrance examination, and they may study several fields simultaneously. Once admitted, attendance is compulsory. Teachers at these institutions are often graduates of conservatoires or music academies, and their work is highly valued for its contribution to the cultural life of local communities. The existence of these schools reflects the Czech Republic's commitment to making high-quality music education accessible to children and youth across the country.

Conservatoires represent another important pathway within the Czech music education system. These institutions offer a combination of general secondary education and professional music, leading to music and drama education in programmes lasting four to six years. Students typically enter conservatoires at the age of fifteen, and upon graduation, are qualified to teach at Elementary Art Schools. Conservatoires provide a rigorous curriculum that balances theoretical study with intensive musical training. For those with advanced musical talent and aspirations for higher education, further study is available

at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (AMU), the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU), and the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Ostrava (FUOU). These institutions offer Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in music performance, composition, and pedagogy, and their graduates often pursue careers as performers, educators, or researchers.

The preparation of music education teachers for primary and secondary schools in the Czech Republic is primarily entrusted to university faculties of education. In the Czech Republic, the preparation of music education teachers is carried out mainly at the faculties of education of nine universities: Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Olomouc, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Liberec and Ústí nad Labem. This plurality ensures regional coverage, but at the same time leads to great variability in the content of study plans and in the emphasis of individual workplaces (Radok-Žádná, 2018).

These faculties design programmes that integrate academic coursework, pedagogical training and practical teaching experience, ensuring that graduates are thoroughly prepared to teach music effectively in schools. The distinction between generalist and specialist teaching is reflected in both the structure and depth of their study programmes as well as in the qualifications required for each teaching position. Generalist teachers, who typically work at the pre-primary and primary school levels, receive a broader educational foundation, while specialist teachers undergo more advanced education to teach music at the lower or upper secondary level.

The curriculum for future music education teachers is carefully balanced to cover four main areas: musical-historical and aesthetic disciplines, pedagogical and psychological subjects, music theory, and practical music skills. Students study topics such as the history of music, musical aesthetics, folklore, and the sociology of music, as well as pedagogy, didactics, and music psychology. Theoretical training includes knowledge from the field of harmony, polyphony, musical forms, and analysis, while practical components focus on skills like intonation, aural analysis, choral singing and conducting, playing musical instruments, and solo singing. In addition to the core curriculum, students can choose from a range of optional courses, such as composition, popular, rock or folk music, organ and harmonium playing, digital technologies in music, and participation in orchestras and choirs. Due to the decentralised and non-standardised nature of the system, the specific content of the curriculum may vary depending on the research focus and traditions of each institution, reflecting the diversity and richness of music teacher education (MTE) across the country. For example, the Department of Music at Charles University in Prague and the University of Hradec Králové offer specialised education in choir conducting, instrumental performance, and solo singing. Masaryk University in Brno is known for its focus on musical semiotics and interart relations, while Palacký University in Olomouc and Charles University place emphasis on music psychology, and the University of Ostrava and University of West Bohemia in Pilsen specialise in the regional historiography of music.

The Czech Republic's higher education system follows the three-cycle Bologna model, allowing students to earn the titles of Bachelor (Bc.), Master (Mgr. or MgA.), and Doctor (Ph. D.). To teach music in primary or secondary schools, a Master's degree in music education is required. This advanced degree includes a comprehensive study of music theory, history, and pedagogy, along with practical teaching experience. Entry into music teacher education programmes is competitive and typically involves a talent-based entrance examination. For example, applicants to the Bachelor's programme in Music Education for Teacher Education at Charles University's Faculty of Education are assessed on their musicality, singing ability, and proficiency in an instrument such as piano or violin (Charles University, n. d.). The entrance exam may include the performance of set pieces on their chosen instrument, the singing of folk songs, and the demonstration of musical creativity. Additional points may be awarded for proficiency in other instruments, such as guitar or recorder. These rigorous entrance requirements ensure that future music teachers possess not only technical skills but also artistic sensitivity and pedagogical potential.

The process of hiring music teachers in the Czech Republic is decentralised, with each school or institution conducting its own selection process. This may include interviews, teaching demonstrations, and evaluation of academic credentials. There is no national certification exam; instead, emphasis is placed on the candidate's qualifications, teaching ability, and artistic competence. Music teachers are expected to possess a solid foundation in music theory, history, and performance, proficiency on primary instruments such as piano or violin, as well as competence on recorder and, optionally, guitar, together with strong vocal skills. Well-prepared music teachers with practical experience play a vital role in fostering creativity, musical expression, and a lifelong appreciation for music among their students.

Research Perspectives and Institutional Diversity in Music Education

The research studies outlined below reflect the current state of music education in the Czech Republic and are closely connected to the evolving profile of music teacher graduates. Their findings serve as an important foundation for shaping teacher education at faculties of education, as they respond directly to the needs of pedagogical practice. Conducted by academic teams with doctoral students, these studies enhance understanding of the dynamics of school music education and support the development of relevant pedagogical measures. Although the research focus varies across university departments, their shared aim is to address societal changes and the resulting challenges for music teacher preparation. New scientific insights are disseminated into school practice through a wide range of professional publications.

A long-standing line of enquiry focuses on learners' musical preferences and listening competences. Research at Masaryk University (Crha et al., 2012) surveyed 1,278 university students aged 19–26 and identified the predominance of a "universal media listener" who engages broadly and tolerantly with diverse genres across art (classical) and popular music but does not prioritise accurate genre identification or classification. While general music education was shown to enhance appreciation of art music, it had a limited impact on preferences for popular genres (Sedláček, 2015). These findings are instructive for teacher education: music teacher education programmes should develop receptive music education and critical listening that bridge pupils' natural attraction to popular repertoires with structured, age-appropriate engagement in art music traditions, including explicit work on genre literacy, stylistic markers, and reflective discussion tasks.

Another major strand examines the integration of multimedia technologies. Early studies (Sedláček, 2010; Sedláček et al., 2011) found that both teachers and pupils had limited knowledge and experience of music software, with applications such as Sibelius, Finale, and Cubase used mainly for lesson preparation rather than direct instruction; despite their potential, interactive whiteboards were underutilised as a pedagogical tool. A 2017 follow-up (Košut et al., 2017) reported notable improvements in technological infrastructure – particularly in primary schools – and greater pupil use of computers for internet-based listening and research, yet composition and notation software remained rarely used. Only a small fraction of teachers reported hands-on experience with such tools, pupils' awareness was alarmingly low, and sustained professional development opportunities were insufficient. For teacher education, this evidence implies a shift from access to integration: student teachers should learn to plan tasks that use digital tools for musical thinking (analysis, composition, improvisation), curate resources ethically, assess learning through multimodal portfolios (audio, video, DAW files), and differentiate activities for diverse learners, which is already being implemented within contemporary teacher education programmes.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the need for adaptability, including online and blended delivery of music learning, maintaining engagement at a distance, and addressing learning gaps that emerged during school closures. Between 2018 and 2020, all faculties of education in the Czech Republic implemented the project "Support for the Development of Digital Literacy" project from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Digitální gramotnost, n. d.), which provided didactic and methodological support, developed syllabi focused on digital literacy and the didactic use of information technologies, and facilitated the integration of digital activities into general education subjects. In music teacher preparation, this translates into explicit training in remote-friendly tasks (e. g., asynchronous listening journals, collaborative cloud-based arranging), sound recording and editing for formative feedback, and clear guidance on copyright, licensing, and digital safety in pupil projects. These developments have already been integrated into the education of future music teachers at universities.

Beyond infrastructure, Czech research highlights the pedagogical design of digital tools. At Charles University, the multiplatform application *MelodicaPlus* (Bělohlávková et al., 2025), developed in collaboration with WERC, Ltd., enables learners to navigate musical space by recognising expressive elements, evaluating their properties, and performing operations with them. This model exemplifies how technology can support aural perception, analytical reasoning, and creative manipulation while advancing digital literacy. In teacher education, trainees should gain hands-on experience with such applications and learn to align them with curricular objectives (e. g., texture, timbre, form, expressive parameters), scaffold learning sequences, and plan inclusive multimodal pathways for pupils with diverse needs.

For more than a century, folk song has served as a fundamental pillar of Czech music pedagogy, shaping pupils' musical skills, emotional experiences, and cultural awareness. Research from Masaryk University presented in the monograph *Folk Song in Music Education at Primary and Secondary Schools in the Czech Republic* (Kučerová et al., 2019) documents the current state of folk repertoire in schools and emphasises the decisive role of teachers' expertise in adapting traditional content to the needs of contemporary learners. Although the study focuses primarily on school-level practice, its implications extend to music teacher education (MTE), calling for programmes that cultivate stronger methodological, culturally responsive, and integrative teaching strategies. Findings regarding pupils' declining engagement with traditional repertoire have encouraged the expansion of folk music-related course offerings within MTE to include multimedia elements, creative approaches, and experiential learning, ensuring that future teachers can connect heritage traditions with pupils' contemporary interests.

The Department of Music at Charles University also conducts research in the field of pre-graduate education of primary school teachers. In her study *Piano as a Didactic Tool in Music Education at Primary Schools* (2024), Jiřina Jiřičková examines the piano as a versatile instrument that supports the development of rhythm, intonation, singing, improvisation, and musical creativity. She highlights its dual role in developing pupils' musical skills and assisting teachers in adapting lessons dynamically. The study also identifies insufficient piano training in generalist teacher education and advocates for its systematic inclusion in curricula to enhance pedagogical effectiveness. In generalist teacher education, piano training is challenged by large numbers of beginners, limited instructional time, and group-based lessons that cannot accommodate highly diverse entry-level skills. A feasible solution, therefore, lies in differentiated instruction, the introduction of remedial "bridging" courses, and the involvement of student tutors to support foundational keyboard skills, while minimum performance standards ensure functional musicality for all students and allow more advanced learners to further develop accompaniment techniques and expressive performance essential for effective primary music teaching.

The field also extends into early childhood. A noteworthy study emerging from the same research environment at Charles University, focused on pre-primary education, is presented in Milena Kmentová's publication *We draw lightly, we sing softly* (2022), which offers a methodological framework for developing psychomotor and graphomotor skills in preschool children through musical activities that integrate singing and movement to support breath control and reduce physical tension during early writing and drawing. For teacher education, this suggests embedding music-movement sequences and fine-motor musical tasks into preschool modules, with clear developmental indicators and observation rubrics, thereby connecting musical activities with broader growth in self-regulation and literacy readiness.

A significant music-educational publication from Palacký University relevant to music teacher education is the monograph *Transformations of Music Pedagogy in Research and Applications* (Kružíková & Luska, 2022). Although it covers a wide range of didactic and methodological principles, its value for teacher preparation lies in the way faculties of education use its research-based models in their courses. The monograph's focus on information technologies, motivation, and musical development directly supports the education of future teachers, who increasingly require digital, analytical, and cross-curricular competences. Its interdisciplinary chapters – linking music with drama, mathematics, popular music, and choral practice – provide practical frameworks that student teachers adapt in micro-teaching, lesson planning, and project-based learning. Because the book spans all levels of music education, universities use it to help students understand continuity across school stages and to design age-appropriate learning sequences.

Similarly, long-term research conducted within the *Hearing Differently* project at Palacký University has strong implications for teacher education. By emphasising creative approaches, extra-musical sounds, and contemporary classical music (Medek, Synek & Zouhar, 2014), the project expands the artistic and methodological repertoire of student teachers. Faculties integrate their findings into seminars focused on inclusive and experimental music-making, encouraging students to work with unconventional sound sources, design accessible creative tasks, and think more broadly about pupils' musical abilities. These publications thus provide essential foundations for developing open, creative, and inclusive pedagogical approaches in Czech music teacher education.

A significant gap in current MTE research in the Czech Republic concerns the limited empirical attention devoted to students' practical musical competences. Existing studies rarely examine the actual level of core interpretative skills – such as vocal intonation accuracy, rhythmic precision, tempo stability, or the extent to which intonation-based pedagogical methods are implemented during university preparation and how such competences are later translated into didactic practice in school settings. Another underexplored area is the degree of students' engagement in ensemble-based activities, including participation in choirs, instrumental groups, or folk ensembles, both within and beyond institutional

structures. Such involvement has long been considered a crucial factor in shaping teachers' artistic identity and practical readiness, yet systematic research on its intensity and long-term impact remains scarce. Finally, there is a notable absence of large-scale studies focused on the self-assessment of graduates – both generalists and specialists – regarding the evolution of their musical knowledge and skills before, during, and after their university studies. Understanding how novice teachers perceive the alignment between their training and the realities of professional practice would provide invaluable feedback for programme development. Collectively, these areas highlight the need for comprehensive research, ideally nationwide, which is capable of offering a more nuanced and evidence-based picture of the current state and future directions of MTE in the Czech Republic.

Transformative Trends in Czech Music Teacher Education: Policy, Curriculum, Practice

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic has launched a comprehensive reform of initial teacher education, within which a new Competence Framework for Teacher Graduates (MŠMT ČR, 2023) was introduced at the beginning of the 2023–2024 academic year, developed in collaboration with university faculties of education (Eurydice, 2024).

Challenge: Implementing a Binding Competence Framework and Its Impact on Music Teacher Education

The new competence framework has introduced a major methodological and conceptual challenge for music teacher education. It expands expectations for prospective teachers in several areas not previously embedded systematically in music-pedagogy programmes: formative assessment, deeper pedagogical reflection, the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment, professional communication and collaboration, work with digital learning environments, and attention to professional identity and mental wellbeing (MŠMT ČR, 2023). In this context, music education faces pressure not only to maintain traditional domain-specific elements – such as vocal and instrumental practice and work with repertoire – but also to transform how these elements are taught and reflected upon.

Response: Curricular and Organisational Adaptations in Music Teacher Preparation

Faculties of education began systematically mapping and transforming existing courses (music didactics, vocal methodology, instrumental training, pedagogy, psychology, reflective practice) onto the framework's competences. New accreditation standards require alignment with at least 80 % of these competences, which led to comprehensive revisions of syllabi and learning outcomes (European Commission, 2024).

A major change has been the expansion of study requirements to include video analysis of lessons, reflective journals, structured peer feedback, and formative assessment of musical activities in students' teaching practice. These tools support the framework's emphasis on evidence-based reflection and feedback processes. The framework also strengthened expectations regarding the ability to work with digital environments, leading to the integration of audio recording tools, digital notation, multimedia creation, and online feedback systems into music didactics modules. Simultaneously, the teaching practice reform strengthened the role of school mentors and introduced long-term, continuous placements aligned with competence indicators, thereby enhancing the consistency and quality of student induction.

A notable innovation in teacher education is the possibility of introducing a "clinical semester" or "clinical year" – an extended period of intensive school-based practice involving at least two school visits per week. This model is designed to strengthen the practical component of pre-graduate teacher education by providing sustained, hands-on experience in real classroom settings (Svobodová, 2024). These changes further consolidate the shift in MTE towards stronger integration of authentic school practice, mentorship, formative evaluation, and reflective inquiry, all of which are essential for preparing teachers capable of motivating pupils.

Given the high demands placed on music teachers – concert organisation, choir leadership, vocal strain, and emotional workload – the framework emphasises the development of professional identity, ethical sensitivity, and teacher wellbeing. Faculties have begun offering seminars on psychological hygiene, workload management, communication with parents, and burnout prevention (MŠMT ČR, 2023).

Change: What Has Actually Changed in Music Teacher Education

The reform has reoriented music teacher education from a knowledge-based model to a competence-based conception of professional preparation, using a field-specific competence framework to establish a shared, programme-wide understanding of what graduates should demonstrably know and be able to do – not only musically, but also pedagogically, psychologically, methodologically, and professionally. Music-practical studies are now more structurally integrated with didactic preparation, and theoretical coursework is more explicitly didactic: students develop vocal and instrumental skills in direct relation to authentic classroom situations, lesson planning, reflective enquiry, pupil assessment, and differentiation.

Teaching practice has been redesigned as a long-term developmental pathway, underpinned by regular feedback, systematic documentation and observation, and structured self-reflection – thereby tightening the connection between theoretical coursework and music-pedagogical practice. Within this competence-based architecture, students' pedagogical decision-making is increasingly evidence-informed, anchored in concrete

indicators of pupil learning, transparent assessment criteria, and shared competence descriptors – deepening a culture of reflective practice that is essential in artistic disciplines.

Crucially, the reform is understood as a continuing process rather than a one-off intervention. Programmes are expected to undergo cyclical review and incremental fine-tuning, drawing on mentor, school, and student feedback, external evaluation, and emerging research, so that curriculum, school-based practice, and assessment arrangements are periodically adjusted to sustain alignment with competence standards and school realities. In a context where music often competes for curricular space, graduates are therefore better equipped to articulate the educational value of music, communicate purposefully with school leadership and parents, and participate proactively in the ongoing design and revision of school curricula.

Continuing professional development (CPD), mandated by Czech legislation (MŠMT ČR, 2025), supports the maintenance of high teaching standards and adapting to new educational trends. In practice, CPD in music teacher education includes specialised courses and workshops at institutions such as the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts and Charles University, focusing on new teaching methodologies, music technology, and innovative pedagogical practices. Programmes at Masaryk University include workshops on modern music didactics and playing boomwhackers and other percussion, and, similar to the University of Ostrava, emphasise hands-on training with digital tools and collaborative learning. The Music Didactics Club, established within universities focused on sharing information about music education, is also functioning very well. Additionally, Czech music educators participate in international conferences and workshops, such as those organised by the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*), to stay updated with global best practices in music education.

Future Directions and Challenges in Music Teacher Education

Most faculties of education in the Czech Republic will soon undergo reaccreditation of their study programmes. This process presents a significant opportunity to address the challenges outlined above by introducing new courses or updating the content of existing ones, thereby enhancing the preparation of future music teachers for the demands of contemporary practice. Reaccreditation also encourages faculties to reflect critically on the coherence, depth, and practical relevance of their curricula. Programmes that cultivate strong subject expertise, deepen the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching, and foster both cultural and technological literacy will play a key role in shaping the future development of music teacher education in the country.

In recent years, the Czech education system has undergone a major revision of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE), which is binding for

schools. In the area of Arts and Culture (NPI ČR, 2025), a new educational field has been introduced that connects Music, Dance and Drama Education (NPI ČR, 2024). International literature reviews on integrated or cross-arts education report notable benefits – creativity, multimodal thinking, and collaboration – while also cautioning against potential dilution of subject-specific depth when integration lacks clear disciplinary anchors (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007). Studies from initial teacher education further indicate that integrated arts approaches can enhance preservice teachers' professional learning and collaborative practices, provided that programmes intentionally safeguard core disciplinary skill-and-knowledge expertise and didactics (Flannery, Nugent, Burgess, & Elliot, 2023). As for music education, proposed changes in FEP have met resistance from university departments, music teacher associations, and practitioners who see risks in the broad generalisation of subject domains and the weakening of specialist training (ČTK, 2024). Music education subjects are already under pressure due to limited hours in the school schedule; in proposals of the revised curriculum, time allocation appears tight. Music teachers in the Czech Republic will likely face the challenge of integrating these three artistic components into a coherent whole without diminishing the quality and depth of music education. For MTE, this shift requires faculties to reconsider how future music teachers are prepared for interdisciplinary artistic work, creative processes and multimodal forms of expression. Promising directions include the development of courses that cultivate cross-arts literacy and performance-based collaboration while maintaining essential musicianship, music didactics and artistic identity. This dual demand – broadening arts-based competences while safeguarding disciplinary rigour – will shape MTE in the coming years.

A key aspect of current developments is that the integrated Arts and Culture model is being piloted this school year in approximately seventy primary schools. This testing phase will provide essential data on the model's pedagogical feasibility and long-term sustainability. Its outcomes will most probably become a crucial foundation for policy-making, determining whether the model can be meaningfully implemented nationwide or whether further adjustments – or even a return to more distinct subject boundaries – will be necessary. For MTE, the results will have direct consequences: they will indicate to what extent future teachers must be prepared for broadly defined cross-arts responsibilities or for a curriculum that retains a stronger single disciplinary focus.

At the same time, a broader strategic debate within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports concerns the future orientation of the national curriculum – whether it should move toward a predominantly competence-based model or a knowledge-competence framework. Each direction carries different implications for teacher preparation. A competence-based model would prioritise transversal skills and interdisciplinary teaching, while a knowledge-competence model would reinforce the importance of strong subject foundations. For MTE, this decision will be decisive: it will shape the expected balance between

specialised musicianship and integrative creative pedagogy, influence accreditation standards and determine what constitutes essential professional readiness for beginning music teachers.

In this changing context, balancing innovation with disciplinary rigour within MTE programmes will be essential to the continued quality and relevance of music education and to graduates' meaningful engagement with the evolving cultural and educational landscape.

Declaration of AI usage

The built-in MS Word tools were used for grammatical, stylistic, and linguistic revisions of the text. The authors assume full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Anu Sepp & Kristi Kiilu

Mapping the Ground of Music Teacher Education in Estonia

Abstract

This article provides a concise historical overview of the development of music education in Estonia, with particular attention to major milestones in the preparation of music teachers. We outline the current profile and organisational structure of music teacher education. A discussion of recent research themes in the field follows this. Finally, we consider emerging trends, challenges, and innovative practices shaping the future of music teacher education in Estonia.

Keywords: music teacher education, Estonia, professional competences

Historical and Current Directions in Estonian Music Teacher Education

Early Traditions and the Formation of the Musically Skilled Schoolteacher

The historical foundations of Estonian music teacher education lie in the long-standing relationship between church, school, and musical practice. From the Middle Ages onward, cathedral and town schools trained singers for church services, with cantors serving as the earliest music teachers, responsible for teaching singing, theory, literacy, and religion (Siitan, 2025; Schaper, Dolgopolova & Pappel, 2025). This created an enduring model in which pedagogical and musical responsibilities were inseparably linked.

A significant transformation took place in the late 17th century with the establishment of Bengt Gottfried Forselius's teacher seminary, which introduced systematic preparation for parish schoolteachers. Musical competence – especially good singing and hymn

reading – became a central professional requirement (Eisen & Laul, 1989). Daily singing and hymn-based instruction were foundational, fostering both musical and reading skills and solidifying the role of music in general education.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries, pietist, Moravian, and Enlightenment influences promoted accessible congregational singing and more child-centred teaching. Parish and rural schools institutionalised these ideas: teachers were expected to teach notation, lead choirs, and accompany pupils (Andresen, 1999; Siitan, 2025). Teacher seminaries gradually professionalised music teacher preparation, drawing inspiration from German and Prussian models and dedicating substantial curricular time to music. Teachers trained as cantors, organists, and choir leaders, becoming central figures in Estonia's emerging choral culture and national awakening (Andresen, 2002).

By the turn of the 20th century, Estonia possessed a wide network of teacher seminaries and pedagogical institutions. Independence in 1918 provided the political conditions for establishing a national education system. In 1919, a ministerial conference defined teacher training curricula along German and Finnish lines, and the 1923 law formalised the rights and instructional principles of seminaries (Kaja, 2025). Institutions such as the Rakvere, Võru, Läänemaa, Tartu, and Tallinn Teacher Seminaries, as well as the Tartu and Tallinn Pedagogiums and Saaremaa's pedagogical branch, admitted students based on examinations in which musicality was an essential criterion (Andresen, 2007). This period consolidated the identity of the professionally qualified music teacher within the new state system.

Soviet Reorganisation and the Preservation of National Musical Pedagogy (1940–1991)

The Soviet period brought major structural and ideological changes to education. Despite the loss of statehood and the imposition of Soviet norms, national education remained highly valued, and music retained an important place in the curriculum. Beginning in 1955, the systematic review of translated textbooks and the development of Estonian-language teaching materials strengthened local ownership. The Estonian Minister of Education gained authority to approve textbooks in culturally central subjects – including music – while materials for other subjects remained under Moscow's jurisdiction (Nagel, 2006).

Estonia's school system was frequently upheld as exemplary within the Soviet context (Uuet, 2019). Reforms such as the five-day school week and the establishment of specialised schools supported a broader differentiation of instruction. Particularly influential were the music-specialist classes founded in 1964 and the establishment of the Tallinn Music Secondary School in 1961, which significantly advanced the development of musical expertise.

Music in the comprehensive school continued to emphasise singing, theory, history, and listening. Musical movement was added to grades 1–2 in 1955, and the relative movable-do system spread widely after 1964. Extracurricular music-making flourished through school choirs and ensembles. Committed specialists such as Professors Riho Päts (1899–1977) and Heino Kaljuste (1925–1989) created original teaching materials and methodologies, helping to maintain a high-quality, locally rooted music education despite ideological constraints (Kaja, 2025).

Re-Independence and Modernisation (1991–2026). Continuity, Reform, and New Expectations

With the restoration of independence on 20 August 1991, Estonia entered a period of rapid cultural and institutional reform. Music education, long intertwined with national identity (Sepp, Läänemets & Kiilu 2019), continued to hold a special place in the school system. Estonia is now one of the few countries where music is compulsory until the end of upper secondary school (Kaja, 2025), and expectations for music teachers remain high: music is taught by subject specialists at all school levels (Sepp, 2014), beginning as early as kindergarten (Kiilu, 2010).

Between 1991 and the mid-2000s, teacher education institutions modernised rapidly. Programmes aligned with European higher education structures, and music teacher education shifted into the bachelor's–master's model. The integration of artistic, pedagogical, and didactic preparation strengthened professional identity and supported the evolving role of teachers in a democratic, culturally diverse society.

By the 2010s, Estonia's music teacher education landscape was marked by close collaboration between higher education institutions, renewed curriculum frameworks, and growing attention to learner-centred pedagogies. Expanded research activity, including the long-term Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) programme (2014–2023), connected school practice with theoretical development and helped refine the aims of music education in light of social and cultural change.

Key post-1991 developments shaping music teacher education include:

- Stabilised curricular status: music affirmed as a compulsory subject across all levels, strengthening demand for well-qualified teachers (Government of the Republic of Estonia 2024).
- Institutional cooperation: collaboration between EAMT, Tallinn University, and the University of Tartu's Viljandi Culture Academy in modern teacher education models.
- Professionalisation through research: growing national research activity supporting evidence-based curriculum and teaching.
- Integration of new pedagogical perspectives: emphasis on meaning-making, creativity, and alignment with students' informal musical practices.

- Digitalisation and contemporary demands: the post-1991 period includes the national shift toward digital learning environments, necessitating new competences for music teachers.

Today, Estonia's music education system balances continuity and innovation: it remains culturally grounded and structurally strong, yet responsive to contemporary developments in pedagogy, institutions, and society.

Organisation of Music Teacher Education in Estonia

Music teacher education in Estonia is organised within the public higher education system, where first-time studies are state-funded, and master's-level teacher education remains free even for holders of a previous master's degree. Estonia has a population of 1.32 million, 475 schools, and approximately 2596 art teachers, of whom an estimated 990 are music teachers (Statistikaamet, 2025; HaridusSilm, n.d.; Education Estonia, 2024). Music studies are provided primarily by EAMT and the University of Tartu's Viljandi Academy of Culture. The three-year bachelor's-level programme focuses on developing strong musical and artistic skills, alongside introductory courses in pedagogy and didactics. Graduates may work in early childhood education, extracurricular schools, private studios, or as choir conductors, and many continue to master's studies.

Professional qualification as a music teacher for general education is obtained at the master's level, typically through collaborative programmes between institutions. The joint Music Teacher curriculum of EAMT and Tallinn University (TU) is a central example, pairing subject-specific music studies with educational sciences. This integrated structure combines artistic competence with pedagogical knowledge, connecting music didactics across educational levels from kindergarten to upper secondary school and includes educational psychology, inclusive education, and subject-specific teaching methodology. Practical music-making – conducting, vocal training, accompaniment, and ensemble leadership – remains central, and the session-based structure enables working teachers to apply theoretical learning directly in school practice. While the curriculum is coherent and professionally supportive, it also has limitations: its relatively fixed structure limits individual specialisation, the volume of compulsory methodological content reduces flexibility, and coordination across two institutions can create administrative complexity for students and staff.

Demographic trends strongly influence the system. Estonia's declining population (Statistikaamet 2025) has led to consolidation in the school network, with efforts to preserve local kindergartens and primary schools and to reorganise secondary education around state secondary schools, situated mainly in regional centres. This has reduced the

number of secondary schools, with implications for teacher education placements and future employment opportunities. Despite this, there remains a shortage of qualified music teachers. Many experienced teachers are retiring, and the approximately 20 graduates entering the field each year are insufficient to cover the need (Education Estonia, 2025). The teaching profession also faces low public esteem, driven by increasing workloads, frequent educational reforms, demanding parental expectations, and relatively low salaries (Eesti inimarengu aruanne, 2026).

Professional Expectations and Employment of Music Teachers

In Estonia, teachers are expected to hold a master's degree, and qualified music teachers complete postgraduate training that integrates musical, pedagogical, and didactic competences. Their work emphasises active music-making: singing, instrumental activities, listening practices, movement, creative composition, and music-related trips. Beyond classroom instruction, music teachers play a significant role in extracurricular activities, directing children's, boys', girls', or mixed choirs, vocal ensembles, rhythm groups, folk ensembles, and other musical groups. Upon completing the master's degree, they receive a level 7 teaching qualification, which allows them to work in primary (grades 1–9) and upper secondary (grades 10–12) schools.

Due to the shortage of qualified music teachers, schools sometimes employ individuals without a master's degree on temporary one-year contracts. In contrast, fully qualified teachers are typically hired into permanent positions. School owners – usually local authorities – conduct recruitment, but sometimes the state or private providers, and include verification of qualifications and an interview with school leadership. In early childhood education, music activities are usually led by qualified music teachers, for whom a bachelor's degree in music is generally required (Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus, 2002).

Mapping the research landscape

Understanding and Renewing the Purposes and Content of School Music

Over the past decade, Estonian music education research has formed a coherent body of work focused on understanding, preserving, and renewing the meaning of school music in a rapidly changing society. A central contribution comes from a long-term research programme initiated in 2014 at EAMT. Led by Professor Kristi Kiilu, the research team – later formalised as a small research lab – examined how music education operates in Estonian comprehensive schools.

Their studies mapped learning content, explored integration with other arts, connected formal instruction with students' informal and non-formal musical lives, and designed age- and context-responsive learning environments (Kiilu, Läänemets, & Kalamees

Ruubel, 2020; Läänemets & Kalamees Ruubel, 2015, 2016; Läänemets, Kalamees Ruubel, Kiilu, & Sepp, 2018; Läänemets, Kalamees Ruubel, Sepp, & Kiilu, 2019).

A major synthesis of this work appears in Kaja, Läänemets, Kiilu, and Kalamees Ruubel (2023). Using essays written by upper secondary students (n = 203) about the personal meaningfulness – or lack of meaningfulness – of learning music in high school, the authors argue that insights from learners themselves should directly inform revisions of music syllabi across the National Curriculum.

The concern for meaningfulness is echoed in Kadi Kaja's historical analyses tracing the evolution of music education aims throughout Estonia's modern history. Her work demonstrates how aims have shifted with political regimes, curricular paradigms, and growing understanding of music's cognitive, emotional, and social functions (Kaja, 2024; 2025). She calls for aims that are philosophically robust, culturally grounded, and realistically implementable today, highlighting the need to articulate purposes that resonate with contemporary learners while honouring Estonia's cultural heritage.

Research at the level of formal regulation complements these developments. The most recent consolidated national framework reaffirms music as a compulsory upper-secondary subject. It outlines the learning outcomes that secure its role in general education (Government of the Republic of Estonia, 2024). Together, these studies present a rich, evolving picture of the aims, content, and meaningfulness of school music.

Values, Identity, and the Cultural Foundations of Music Education

Another strong line of research focuses on the broader developmental and cultural values of music education. A synthesis of essays from students and early-career music teachers (n = 166) identified value creation across social, cultural, cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and personal domains (Läänemets, Kalamees, Ruubel, Kiilu, Kaja, & Sepp, 2021). These findings provide an evidence-based argument for maintaining the breadth and depth of music in the curriculum.

This values-focused work aligns with Kaja's historical analyses, illustrating how school music supports identity formation, social cohesion, cultural continuity, and emotional growth. It also helps explain why music has remained a compulsory subject across levels: its contributions extend far beyond technical skill or artistic performance.

These insights are situated within wider curriculum debates. Erss (2023) shows that Estonia's curriculum sits at the intersection of European competency-based frameworks and the subject-centred Didaktik tradition. This hybrid character helps account for both the durability of school music and the ongoing need to justify its aims in contemporary terms. While competences emphasise creativity, collaboration, and personal development, the Didaktik tradition provides structured content, epistemic grounding, and stability.

In this context, *Muusikaõpetuse didaktika. Valik artikleid* (Kiilu & Sepp, 2014) remains a central didactic reference for teacher education and practice. The collection outlines the music teacher's role, describes key content areas – singing, listening and music history, creative work and improvisation, movement, and elementary instrumental pedagogy – and situates Estonian practice both historically (through Päts and Kaljuste) and internationally (Kodály, Orff, Dalcroze, Suzuki). By providing a coherent didactic framework, it bridges values, aims, and everyday pedagogical decision-making.

Historical-comparative perspectives further illuminate these cultural foundations. In *Bridging the past, present and future in Estonian music education*, Sepp, Läänemets, and Kiilu (2019) show how exchanges through the Nordic Network for Music Education (NNME) have strengthened Estonia's capacity to learn from neighbouring systems while maintaining its own distinctive commitment to universal access, choral participation, and progressively diversified classroom practices. This comparative lens positions Estonia as both regionally connected and culturally unique.

Teacher Education, Professional Schooling, and Evolving Competences

Research on teacher education forms the third major strand of recent scholarship. Studies document how institutions select, prepare, and support future music teachers at bachelor's and master's levels. A comparative study of entrance examinations in Estonia and Finland illustrates how each system operationalises "musical readiness" and pedagogical potential within distinct institutional cultures and educational philosophies (Ruokonen, Kiilu, Sepp, & Ruismäki, 2018).

Estonia's music teacher education has developed through several historical phases – from its 1923 establishment, through Soviet-era reorganisations, to the contemporary post-Bologna structure in which EAMT, Tallinn University, and the University of Tartu's Viljandi Culture Academy collaborate. This collaborative model integrates artistic preparation with pedagogical and contextual studies, reflecting the multifaceted role of today's music teachers.

Current research also highlights the evolving professional capacities required in contemporary classrooms. Scholars call for a stronger emphasis on digital musicianship and on bridging formal learning with students' informal musical worlds (Ruokonen et al., 2018; Kiilu & Sepp, 2014). As learners engage with music through diverse digital platforms, social media, and non-formal communities, music teachers increasingly need to navigate and integrate these experiences into school music.

Taken together, research on teacher education connects historical trajectories, present curricular aims, and future professional demands – showing how institutions adapt to cultural change while sustaining the core values of Estonian school music.

Across all thematic strands – aims and content, values and culture, and teacher education – a clear picture emerges. Estonian research convincingly demonstrates that:

- Music education is culturally anchored and deeply connected to national identity.
- Students experience meaningful personal, social, and cultural benefits from school music.
- Strong didactic traditions and high-quality teacher education provide coherence across the system.
- Estonia's hybrid curricular model enables continuity while supporting competency-based approaches.
- The evolving musical lives of students require teachers who can bridge formal, informal, and digital musical worlds.

Despite this rich and coherent body of work, several gaps remain:

- Empirical classroom studies are relatively scarce, especially those exploring real-time pedagogical choices, multimodal learning processes, or the interaction between teacher intention and student agency.
- Research on assessment practices in music is limited, even though Estonia's curriculum emphasises learning outcomes and competences.
- Longitudinal research connecting teacher education to early-career experiences is minimal; such studies would help illuminate how well preparation aligns with professional realities.
- Digital musicianship and technology-integrated pedagogy require deeper investigation, especially given shifting youth cultures and the influence of AI on creative and learning processes.
- Comparative research within the Baltic and Nordic regions remains valuable but underdeveloped, particularly regarding how Estonia's unique traditions evolve alongside regional trends.

Viewed as a whole, contemporary research on Estonian music education portrays the field as dynamic, reflective, and culturally embedded. The most promising future directions are those that continue to deepen universal access to meaningful music education while renewing content, pedagogy, and assessment practices in ways that honour heritage, engage with contemporary learner identities, and respond to the changing demands of school life.

Challenge: Sustaining Estonia's Music Education Tradition Amid a Shortage of Qualified Music Teachers

A distinctive alignment between cultural heritage, curricular coherence, and specialist-led instruction has long characterised Estonia's music education system. Research demonstrates that Estonian music teacher education (MTE) is strongly rooted in holistic curriculum design and consistent pedagogical practices, forming a culturally embedded model that supports meaningful musical engagement from early childhood through upper basic schooling (Sepp, 2014; Sepp et al., 2019). This historically stable "harmony" is increasingly disrupted by a single, critical challenge: the ageing teaching workforce and the decline in the supply of qualified music teachers.

Defining the Challenge

Demographic evidence signals a growing imbalance between retiring teachers and new entrants to the profession. Nationally, more than half of Estonia's teachers are aged 50 or older (OECD, 2025), and approximately one-quarter are already over 60 (Leijen, 2025). Forecasts from the European Commission (2023) indicate that as many as one-third of the country's teachers may retire within the next decade. While subject-specific data for music teachers are not separately reported, the age distribution within music teaching closely mirrors national trends. At the same time, the annual number of graduates from MTE programmes remains modest, widening the recruitment gap.

The implications of this demographic disruption extend beyond classroom instruction. Music teachers in Estonia traditionally carry substantial extracurricular responsibilities, including leading choirs and ensembles that form the backbone of the Song and Dance Celebration cycle, recognised by UNESCO as part of Estonia's intangible cultural heritage (Visit Estonia, 2025). When schools resort to temporary or non-specialist staff – a trend increasingly reported in rural and semi-urban areas – the cultural continuity embedded in these traditions becomes vulnerable.

Structured Responses and Actions

MTE institutions, policymakers, and cultural organisations have launched several initiatives to address this challenge:

(1) *Strengthening Recruitment and Enhancing Societal Visibility*
Universities and national cultural bodies have intensified their promotion of music teaching as a profession closely tied to Estonia's cultural identity. Initiatives such as the Estonian and International Music Olympiad (EAMT, n. d.; Tartu Ülikool, n. d.)

serve to highlight the knowledge-rich and creative dimensions of music learning, reinforcing the public understanding that specialist music teachers play a critical role in sustaining national traditions.

(2) *Flexible Qualification Pathways*
In response to demographic pressures, MTE programmes increasingly offer session-based master's studies, recognition of prior learning, and individually tailored study routes. These flexible pathways enable working musicians, teachers working in the non-formal sector, and partially qualified educators to complete their professional qualifications without interrupting employment. Flexibility of this kind helps maintain continuity in school music provision while promoting professionalisation.

(3) *Enhanced Early-Career Support and Teacher Wellbeing*
Acknowledging the demanding nature of music teachers' work, institutions have strengthened induction models, mentoring systems, and peer-support networks. Prior research emphasises that collaborative and meaningful music-making fosters teacher resilience and identity (Sepp, 2014; Kaja, 2024). Enhanced early-career support seeks to improve retention, particularly during the vulnerable first years of professional practice.

Although these developments are ongoing, early indicators point to cautious improvement. Some MTE programmes report modest increases in applications from mature students and career-changing musicians. Schools participating in mentoring and university–school partnership models note improved teacher retention and more stable staffing patterns. High-quality learning resources, such as national textbooks and the e-Koolikott digital repository, continue to support coherence between curriculum goals and classroom practice (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022), benefiting both novice and experienced teachers.

Looking to the future, the sustainability of Estonia's culturally grounded music education system will depend on maintaining the ongoing continuity of qualified music teachers while protecting the artistic and pedagogical integrity of the profession. Priorities include further expansion of flexible entry routes, deeper collaboration between universities and cultural organisations, and systematic long-term support for early-career teachers. By aligning strategic workforce planning with Estonia's enduring musical heritage, MTE can continue to balance tradition and innovation, ensuring that the harmony of its educational model remains robust amid demographic disruption.

Declaration of AI usage

AI tools (Copilot, NotebookLM) were used for language editing and stylistic improvements. All substantive content and interpretations are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Stefanie Kreuzwieser & Annette Ziegenmeyer

Reflecting on and Reimagining Music Teacher Education in Germany

Abstract

The German educational system is highly differentiated, as education is governed by the federal states. Similarly diverse is the landscape of music teacher education. Although entrance exams, degree programmes and final exams vary across states, music teacher education nationwide faces common challenges: these include ensuring curricular coherence, strengthening the integration of theoretical and practical components – e. g. the link between academic study and supervised teaching practice and digitalisation. Beyond these programme-inherent issues, all federal states are currently affected by a serious lack of qualified music teachers.

This article provides an overview of the historical development and current framework of music teacher education in Germany. It highlights key milestones, examines strategies for addressing current challenges, e. g. teacher shortages, and offers insights into research on music teacher education through selected examples. The article concludes by outlining future perspectives that emphasise biographical pathways into and within the profession, as well as greater permeability in career transitions.

Keywords: Coherence – Digitalisation – Federal system – German music teacher education – Theory-practice-nexus

Introduction

In the 19th century, and even into the early 20th century, music education in schools consisted mainly of school singing lessons and aimed at the development and strengthening of the vocal and respiratory organs (cf. Cvetko, 2017, p. 67). Leo Kestenberg, music adviser at the Prussian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerium*) who was dissatisfied with this status quo, initiated a broad reform process for music education in the 1920s. This covered changes from kindergarten up to university level. The overarching goal of this reform in schools was to transform and upgrade the previously purely singing-based lessons into a more versatile, comprehensive and interdisciplinary form of music education, encompassing both artistic and academic components. This broader understanding of music in schools was manifested when Kestenberg renamed the school subject "singing" to "music education" in April 1924.

Kestenberg's efforts to structure music teacher education around three equally valued pillars – academic scholarship, pedagogy, and artistic practice – still persist, in a slightly modified form[1], in today's German system of music teacher education (Cvetko, 2017; Buchborn et al., 2019). Part of Kestenberg's reform in 1922 was that the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (university entrance qualification) from now on functioned as a sufficient prerequisite for admission to an artistic teacher-training programme (cf. Cvetko, 2017, p. 70). This policy aimed to establish the Artistic Teaching Degree (*Künstlerisches Lehramt*) as one that would educate teachers as educators, artists, and scholars, positioning music teachers as artists on an equal footing with their academic colleagues (cf. Cvetko, 2017, pp. 72–73).

It is worth mentioning here the evolving role of "singing" in German music education, which has shifted considerably over the past century: prior to the Second World War, it was closely associated with the so-called *Jugendmusik- und Singbewegung* (Youth music and singing movement). Since the 1970s, music education has shifted from a predominantly singing-based approach to multiple musical approaches that Dankmar Venus named and systemised in a model as production, reproduction, reception, transposition, and reflection (Venus 1969, p. 21 f.). To this day, this model continues to shape the structure of many curricula to varying degrees. Moreover, music education has developed numerous theoretical frameworks for teaching. These approaches address different pedagogical dimensions, ranging from models that centre on the musical work itself to those that emphasise practical music-making and students' experimental engagement with music (see therefore e. g. Gruhn, 2003).

[1] The model has since been expanded to include *subject-specific didactics* (*Fachdidaktik*), and the academic pillar now comprises not only musicology but also music pedagogy.

In 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded in the Soviet occupation zone. It existed until 1990 and comprised the territory of what are today the five eastern German federal states. In the GDR, music education also served the ideological aims of socialist education, as reflected, for example, in the selection of songs used in schools. Against this backdrop, the school subject of music was renamed "singing" in 1955 (Fröde, 2010, p. 169). As a result, music education fell far behind the broader conception of music promoted by Leo Kestenberg's reforms. However, as early as 1959, new curricula and educational legislation reintroduced the subject music. Nevertheless, singing continues to play a more prominent role in music education in the eastern federal states than in the western states, with students in the eastern states generally demonstrating a noticeably broader repertoire of songs.

Since education in Germany is the responsibility of the sixteen federal states, the country is known for its heterogenous educational system. Music teacher education reflects this diversity: levels of qualification vary, particularly with regard to artistic and practical requirements, as do the structure of degree programmes and entrance requirements. In common, however, is that all music teachers must decide whether they want to specialise in primary or secondary education (cf. Fig. 1). This rather broad division then differentiates music teacher education with regard to the respective kind of school: teaching music at a primary school (children aged 6–10), lower secondary school (pupils from about 10–16 years) or upper secondary school (pupils from about 10–19 years). Following this ideal path of qualification, music students of all levels pass individualised teacher education programmes (usually with a second teaching subject), complete their studies with a master's degree (or state exam) and finally an in-service training (traineeship of 12–24 months finishing with a final state examination) at school.

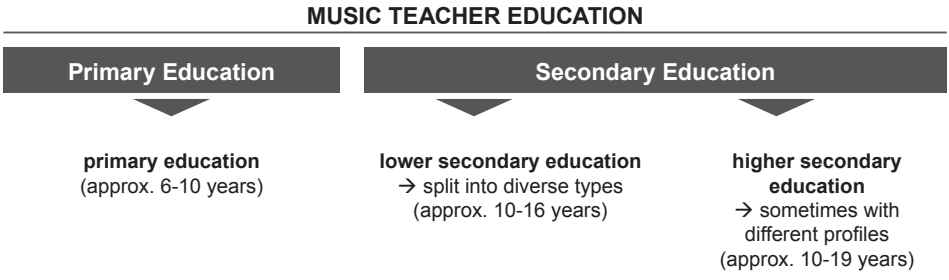


Fig. 1: Profiles of Music Teacher Education in Germany

In Baden-Württemberg, universities of education (so called *Pädagogische Hochschulen*) qualify students to teach music at primary schools and lower secondary schools. This education programme focuses primarily on didactic and practical musical aspects and puts students and their personal development at the core of the studies. In all other federal states, however, music teacher education programmes for primary or lower secondary education are set-up at a general university, more specifically the educational department/school of education at which music is taught along several other subjects (e. g., natural sciences, arts, sports studies, etc.). There are 72 general universities in Germany at which students can qualify as primary, lower or upper secondary teachers. In addition, there are a total of 24 universities of music across Germany, offering students a wide range of degree programmes in artistic performance, music education, and composition, alongside music teacher education programmes, predominantly preparing students for upper secondary schools. Admission requirements for students aiming to teach at upper secondary level are quite demanding but differ substantially between the 24 universities of music in Germany. For further information on the entrance exams as well as on teaching internships, please see the Appendix.

For music teachers at general universities or universities of music, there are music education degree programmes especially tailored to the music teaching profession (undergraduate or as a transfer/cross-entry master's degree for graduates of artistic degree programmes). Thus, students enrol in a specialist, not a generalist programme. Due to the German federal system, music teacher education programmes differ in terms of their degrees: some federal states still offer state exams as final degrees while others changed to the BA / MA system.

In most of the federal states in Germany, students taking part in a teacher education programme (regardless of whether this aims at primary or lower/upper secondary education) need to study at least two subjects. Music teacher education programmes can thereby be combined with almost every other subject with only few exceptions depending on the respective federal state. There are, however, some federal states allowing music teacher students at universities of music to deepen their global music teacher education programme by adding a particular focus on either church music, jazz-pop music, or elementary music pedagogy. The idea behind this "expanded musical subject" is to replace a second subject (studied at general university), to broaden prospective music teachers' competences and to provide a double qualification, facilitating access to further degree programmes such as Instrumental and Vocal Pedagogy or Elementary Music Pedagogy (cf. University of Music, Luebeck).

A Case Report

A serious challenge in the German education system – across all federal states – is the lack of qualified music teachers. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, the number of new students enrolling in music teaching degree programmes at universities and universities of music has declined (Lehmann-Wermser & Witte, 2024, p. 8). The situation is likely to be further exacerbated by an upcoming wave of retirements and a growing student enrolment in schools (ibid).

Statewide analyses on teaching demands in the individual subjects show that these differ along the different types of schools. Demand appears to be best met in secondary schools (*Gymnasien*) and least in primary schools (*Grundschulen*). The situation becomes evident in a simulation commissioned by the state of Schleswig-Holstein on teacher requirements in individual subjects for the period 2021 to 2032 (see therefore Schleswig-Holsteinischer Landtag, 2022). Furthermore, Klaus Klemm, in his study *Teacher Shortage in Music for the Telekom Foundation*, projected that by 2036 only one-third of the anticipated demand for music teachers in North Rhine-Westphalia could be met (Klemm, 2024, pp. 14–15).

This development has far-reaching consequences for music education of young people: on the one hand, declining teaching capacities often lead to cuts or reductions in music lessons or to music lessons being taught outside a teacher's field of expertise. On the other hand, the declining number of applicants for music teaching degrees across Germany means that only around one-third of the required positions can be filled with qualified music teachers in the future. This situation underscores the urgent need for universities, universities of music, education policy, and society to act together in strengthening and modernising the music teaching profession – by increasing its attractiveness, improving working conditions, and removing structural barriers that discourage passionate music educators from entering this field.

In order to identify the causes for the decline of applicants in music teaching programmes and young talent in the music teaching profession, the *AG Schulmusik* (Working Group for Music Teacher Education at Music Universities) initiated a crowd-research project named MULEM:EX (short for: *Musiklehrkräftemangel – eine explorative Studie*).[2] This broad empirical study was carried out over a period of one year (2023–2024) throughout Germany, encompassing 71 projects that ranged from small single-case studies conducted by students to extensive investigations led by experienced researchers (Lehmann-Wermser & Witte, 2024, p. 8). The project involved three primary research groups: one specializing in

[2] See the report on MULEM:EX: https://www.musikrat.de/fileadmin/redaktion/download/Mulem-EX-31-05-2024-Einzelseiten.pdf [27.07.2025].

conducting large-scale surveys, another focusing on group interviews, and a third specialising in individual interviews (Busch, Honnens, Krupp & Niessen, 2024, p. 4).

At the core of the study are people who might have been interested in becoming a music teacher but chose not to. Thus, the study examines the factors discouraging students from pursuing music teacher education and makes visible images, attributions, and expectations that shaped the interviewees' decision. Central findings of the study are as follows: many potential students perceive the artistic requirements of the entrance exams as a major obstacle. Moreover, the study programme is often perceived as leaving little room for their desired musical practices or personal musical habitus (Lehmann-Wermser & Witte, 2024, p. 8). Furthermore, working in schools, and in particular teaching music, is often perceived as an unattractive career path (ibid.). Finally, young people do not feel sufficiently informed about the actual music teacher study programmes, the entrance exam and the job description.

The research findings were transferred into policy recommendations as options for action which relate to problematic aspects repeatedly mentioned in the individual studies. Three main fields of actions were identified: first, the access to studies and entrance exams e. g. with improvements for reform and a better and more varied preparation for and transparent communication about their requirements; second, the orientation and content of the music teaching programme with improvements for stronger orientation towards everyday school life and strengthening the music student teachers' pedagogical profile, as well as well-supervised practical experience throughout the entire study programme and a greater musical diversity and stylistic breadth; and third, the everyday working life as a music teacher by improving the conditions for practical music making in schools and reducing the workload of music teachers, especially during teacher traineeships and the career entry phase (see Bundesfachgruppe Musikpädagogik, 2024, p. 6 f.).

Since the results of MULEM-EX were only published in 2024, the dissemination process can be still regarded as ongoing. Within this process, MULEM:EX primarily serves as a reference framework in political and higher education debates and has significantly increased the visibility of the topic: research findings are widely discussed across numerous academic and scholarly venues, institutional networks, social media channels, and on the political level (e. g., via the German Music Council).

Moreover, MULEM:EX is presented at conferences of the Federal Music Education Group and in various professional associations (including the GMTH[3] and associations of school musicians). Particularly noteworthy developments can be observed in two identified fields of action. All universities of education in the state of Baden-Württemberg have abolished their entrance exams, while others have revised and broadened admission requirements or reduced formal barriers to entry. At the same time, some institutions have

[3] Society for Music Theory (*Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*).

strengthened networking activities and introduced innovative support programmes to promote more inclusive access routes into music teacher education. The study has also stimulated curricular reforms at several higher music education institutions aimed at strengthening curricular coherence. These reforms include closer integration between subject-specific and pedagogical studies, a stronger orientation toward everyday school practice, and the development of a more distinct pedagogical profile for student music teachers. To date, the recommendations of the third field of action have not been sufficiently transferred into school practice, indicating that the findings still need to be communicated more systematically to teachers. Consequently, further measures are still needed to reduce the workload of music teachers in their daily work.

Mapping the Research Landscape

Curricular Coherence

The close integration of art, scholarship and pedagogy was already a central concern of Kestenberg's reforms more than a century ago (Kestenberg 1924; Gruhn, 2013). More than 100 years later, coherence in music teacher education has still not been fully established: in music teacher education, many students and lecturers perceive limited coherence between individual courses (cf. Buchborn et al., 2019, p. 90), as programmes remain primarily focused on the continuous development of artistic and practical competences. Curricula at higher education institutions typically combine *Fachwissenschaft* (subject-specific study), focusing on the academic study of music, with *Fachdidaktik* (subject-specific didactics), alongside an artistic-practical training that includes a principal study and one or two subsidiary studies. This formal curricular structure tends to encourage a fragmented perception of the degree programmes as a collection of separate disciplines. To counteract this, learning opportunities are required that make students aware of the interrelations between these domains.

Buchborn et al. (2019) address this issue by analysing existing study programmes in terms of coherence and further development, drawing on the MTPACK framework (Musical Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge). In 2019, the MTPACK framework was applied to the music department of the University of Education Freiburg to refine study structures with the aim of more closely interrelating learning content and qualification objectives with the professional knowledge of future music teachers. This approach seeks greater coherence not only among the three pillars of the) degree programme (artistic, academic, and pedagogical) but also across the different phases of music teacher education (from entrance examinations to courses and final examinations) (Buchborn et al., 2019, p. 95).

Within this modular structure, artistic and practical study components occupy a particularly prominent place in comparison with scholarly and didactic elements (Krause-Benz, 2018; Schilling-Sandvoß, 2017). Krause-Benz therefore proposes a transdisciplinary understanding of the artistic domain in music teacher education (Krause-Benz, 2018, p. 29). Building on a foundation of 'artistic literacy', students are expected to engage in exchange with other artistic-practical subjects, ultimately leading to an artistic-musical practice that might merge with other pillars of the degree programme (ibid.). Common to all such initiatives is a departure from traditional subject-bound thinking towards the conscious and deliberate creation of coherence.

In Freiburg, coherence is also pursued at an institutional level: the School of Education FACE (Freiburg Advanced Centre of Education) and the KoMuF research project (Cooperative Music Teacher Education Freiburg) exemplify cross-institutional collaborations between the Freiburg University of Music, the University Freiburg, and the University of Education Freiburg. The central idea is to create an inter-curricular continuum from early childhood, primary and secondary education, through to adult learning (Buchborn et al., 2019, p. 97).

Strengthening the Integration of Theory and Practice

Another field of interest discussed in music teacher education among students and instructors alike is the so-called theory–practice nexus: for more than four decades, music teacher education in Germany has been characterised by the persistent tension between school-based orientation and academic foundation (Jank & Schilling-Sandvoß, 2018, p. 152). While Abel-Struth (1975) still argued for a strict separation of scholarly and practical music pedagogy, later authors such as Richter (1978) and Jank & Schilling-Sandvoß (2018) highlight the need for a productive and constructive relationship between the two. Yet in practice, students often experience a lack of systematic guidance in linking theory and practice, and neither curricular structures nor institutional staff typically create such integration. An analysis of the course structure at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts, for example, reveals another dimension of this theory-practice divide: in upper secondary teacher education, credit points are allocated with greater emphasis on artistic-practical training, while scholarly and school-based elements are quantitatively underrepresented (Jank & Schilling-Sandvoß, 2018, p. 155; Jank & Schilling-Sandvoß, 2017). This imbalance demonstrates that the long-discussed theory–practice gap has yet to be adequately addressed. Greater alignment with the professional realities of teaching music, along with a stronger integration of theoretical and practical components, is therefore required to ultimately resolve this persistent issue.

In terms of further development of music teacher education in Germany, the *Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung*[4] (Quality Initiative for Teacher Education) represents the largest programme – with 500 million euros funding – that was launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Running from 2015 to 2023, it sought to enhance the quality of teacher education to open up new pathways in teacher education, and to develop solutions for current challenges in the field. The funding guidelines explicitly predetermined core themes such as coherence, bridging theory and practice, inclusion and digitisation. By 2023, a total of 91 projects had been initiated at German universities, universities of music and the arts, including 20 projects at universities of music across the country. In addition to primary and secondary education (lower and upper), vocational teacher education and special needs education were also included. In terms of content, these projects addressed not only cross-cutting issues such as the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation, but also questions of diversity in music classrooms, and ways of strengthening the integration of theory and practice in future music teacher education (Neuhaus & Puffer, 2023). The aim of this programme was not only to professionalise teacher education but also to mirror these research results in literature. Thus, numerous publications[5] have emerged, including a major reference work on teacher education authored by 174 contributors: *Handbuch Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung* (Handbook of teacher education) (Cramer et al., 2020). Apart from this, online journals such as *Die Materialwerkstatt* (Journal for Concepts and Teaching Materials for Teacher Education) were founded to continue disseminating conceptual frameworks and teaching materials relevant to teacher education and school practice even beyond the period of the official funding.

Digitalisation

While the consumption of music through digital media (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) has been omnipresent in society for many years, music-specific opportunities for digital practices of performance and composition using mobile devices remained rare in higher music education (cf. Ahner, 2018, p. 2) until only a few years ago. Since the COVID-19 pandemic the issue of digitalisation has finally entered higher education teaching and university learning contexts: e-learning platforms have been established, media centres set up across Germany – and depending on location – a variety of app-based seminar formats have been developed. Although the extent and intensity of the digital transformation differ considerably across institutions, it is evident that recent years have witnessed the emergence of new forms of virtual music-making, designing, and composing (cf. Ahner,

[4] https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/lehrerbildung/de/themen/profilierung-der-lehrkraeftebildung-an-den-hochschulen/profilierung-der-lehrkraeftebildung-an-den-hochschulen.html [25.08.2025].

[5] https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/lehrerbildung/de/produkte_und_materialien/publikationen_zeitschriften/publikationen_zeitschriften.html [25.08.2025].

2018). Examples include blended learning in music teacher education (Lutz, 2015), the use of augmented reality apps to enhance listening skills in music classrooms (Voit & Heye, 2022), digital classroom music-making with apps (Verbücheln & Ahlers, 2022), and collaborative creation with soundscapes (Hildebrand & Kranefeld, 2022). Whereas early initiatives were limited to isolated institutional projects[6], more extensive research programmes have recently been launched in the field of music education and digitalisation (Ahlers & Godau, 2019). To illustrate the diversity of current research, see, for example, *KuMuS – ProNeD* (Professional Networks for the Promotion of Adaptive, Action-Oriented, Digital Innovation in Teacher Education in the Arts, Music, and Physical Education)[7], funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, as well as the funding initiative *Digitalisation in Cultural Education*[8] (2017–2022), also supported by the same ministry. The latter initiative supported 13 interdisciplinary collaborative and individual projects across Germany investigating digital phenomena in cultural education (including music, literature, dance, performance, and visual arts) (Jörissen et al., 2019) with projects such as *MuBiTec* (Music Education with Mobile Digital Technologies).

Beyond the issues addressed here, further areas of research and debate deserve attention without claiming to provide a comprehensive account of the respective research context.

Inclusion, Intersectionality and Interculturality

Inclusion and intersectionality remain contested fields. While music is often regarded as inherently inclusive in pedagogical discourse, music teacher education in Germany reflects a different reality: inclusion is not yet systematically implemented in all universities offering music teacher education programmes. This gap between scholarly discourse and academic implementation highlights the ongoing dissent regarding the concrete realisation of inclusion (Tischler, 2020, pp. 8 f.). In her recent dissertation "Inclusion as Ambivalence: Addressing Tensions as a Prerequisite for Inclusion-Sensitive Music Education" (2025), Herzog shows that inclusion and exclusion are closely intertwined and that the contradictions inherent in inclusion processes in music education discourses must be acknowledged and incorporated into pedagogical considerations.

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[6] For example, in 2016, the government of Baden-Württemberg granted the University of Music Trossingen the opportunity to establish the state centre *Music-Design-Performance*, which is intended to serve as a bridge between long-established musical traditions and new, diverse practices of music-making and creative expression in the digital world. Furthermore, since 2014, the University of the Arts Berlin has hosted the *Research Centre for App Music* (*FAM*), whose aim is to connect musical practice with apps on mobile devices (smartphones, tablets) (Ahner, 2018).

[7] https://kumus-proned.de [25.08.2025].

[8] https://www.empirische-bildungsforschung-bmbfsfj.de/de/Digitalisierung-in-der-kulturellen-Bildung-1781.html [25.08.2025].

Similarly underrepresented in the academic discourse of music teacher education is the field of interculturality (cf. Buchborn et al., 2020). In response, Buchborn et al. (2022) have developed a seminar format that encourages students to cultivate both reflexivity and professional knowledge, thereby enabling them to articulate a differentiated stance towards intercultural issues in music education (Buchborn et al., 2022, p. 2). This seminar setting is conceived within the framework of "research-based learning", whereby students themselves become the subject of their own inquiry. They explore their action-guiding bodies of knowledge and relate them to theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks of interculturally oriented music education (Buchborn et al., 2022, p. 31 f.). Apart from this, the edited volume *Interkulturalität – Musik – Pädagogik* (Buchborn et al., 2020) brings together theoretical-conceptual and empirical approaches to interculturality, incorporates perspectives from historical music pedagogy, and highlights the challenges an intercultural orientation poses for research, teacher education, and classroom practice.

Taken together, these debates underscore the need to move beyond traditional paradigms of subject-based teaching and towards a broader, more inclusive and intercultural concept of music pedagogy.

Forward Looking

Current discourses on music education in Germany reveal considerable movement regarding trends and approaches to shaping music teacher education that meet school's evolving needs. In addition to cross-cutting themes such as inclusion, education for sustainable development, democracy education, and intercultural, gender, and intersectional diversity, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought digitalisation to the forefront, making it a key focus of programmes designed to professionalise teachers' use of digital media (e. g., *lernen:digital*[9]). At the same time, a key challenge facing general education is the implementation of full-time provision, especially in primary schools. Starting from the school year in 2026/27, primary school parents will have a legal right to extended-day provision for their children. Schools should then be open five days a week for eight hours and remain closed for a maximum of four weeks a year. Full-time schools offer pupils not only lessons but also care and support services, providing children and young people with more comprehensive educational and developmental opportunities. Successfully integrating music education into extended-day provision requires not just a cohesive concept for equal and sustainable cooperation between schools and extracurricular music providers at a structural level, but

[9] The *lernen:digital* competence network facilitates dialogue between academia and practitioners on the digital transformation of schools and teacher education. Four competence centres in the fields of STEM, languages/society/economics, music/arts/sports, and school development pool expertise from around 200 nationwide research and development projects. https://lernen.digital [28.07.2025].

also the development of key competences such as collaboration, project-orientation and multi-professionalism.

To gain an overview of the current situation of German music teacher education, it is useful to examine the responsible committees: First, there are university-based groups such as the *Konferenz Musikpädagogik an Wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen* (*KmPWH*) (Working Group for Music Education at Universities) and the *AG Schulmusik* (Working Group for Music Teacher Education at Music Universities), which represent music teaching programmes at universities and universities of music. Second, the broader *Bundesfachgruppe Musikpädagogik* (*BfG*) (Federal Specialist Group for Music Education) not only includes university representatives but also in-service teachers. The conferences organised by these committees provide valuable insights into recent developments in the field. For instance, the joint conference of *BfG, KmPWH,* and *AG Schulmusik* at the University of Osnabrück in March 2026, titled "Music Education in Social Transformation: Raising Awareness, Options for Action, Solutions", has addressed these very issues.

In the contemporary German education system, the (music) teaching profession is no longer viewed as a one-way path following a fixed trajectory – from academic studies in music education directly into a lifelong teaching career. Instead, the increasing number of master's programmes designed as side or lateral entrants (*Quereinstiege*) allow musicians, for instance, to enter the teaching profession at a later stage, often after gaining experience in performance or other musical fields. To genuinely attract potential candidates, however, the teaching profession should be considered through a biographical lens, emphasizing openness and permeability. This could enable flexible transitions between artistic and pedagogical domains, as well as opportunities for part-time engagement, for example in schools and music schools. This requires openness and permeability at three crucial interfaces:

(1) access to higher education,
(2) permeability within university study programmes and
(3) access/transition to the profession via more flexible in-service training.

To ensure equitable and flexible access to higher education, the system must accommodate diverse personal and professional backgrounds – facilitating lateral entry, recognising prior professional experience, and valuing different qualifications as equivalent. Second, consistent programme structures across all degree paths should secure a broad range of course offerings, even at smaller universities, while fostering interdisciplinary exchange among students. Third, multiple qualification pathways – both lateral and vertical – are required to ensure permeability, professional flexibility, and sustained relevance beyond the confines of the teaching profession.

Appendix

Further information on entrance exams:
Entrance exams are generally split into two parts: a written exam and a practical and oral presentation. While the written part includes intermediate ear training skills as well as knowledge about music theory, the practical part requires students to perform on their main instrument, additionally piano, sometimes also practical piano playing for school, singing, music theory, ear training, music history, recital of a poem or text and finally a reflective discussion on the aptitude as future music teachers. Similarly restricted is the admission to music teacher education programmes for primary and lower secondary school which all general universities[10] in Germany require an entrance exam for.

Further information on teaching internships:
Apart from this, teaching internships in music teacher education vary similarly: there is no uniform regulation of duration (from 3–12 months), scope, and number of compulsory teaching internships whose settings highly depend on the federal state and the institution itself. The only agreement is with regard to the fact that one or two teaching internships are embedded in the Bachelor's and/or Master's degree programme.

Declaration of AI usage
AI was used in the preparation of this chapter to improve clarity, writing style, and grammatical accuracy.

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Recent Developments in Music Teacher Education in Greek Public Schools

Abstract

Music Teacher Education (MTE) in Greece has grown significantly since the establishment of university music departments in the mid-1980s. Today, five public universities offering music studies programmes provide MTE courses that combine music education theory and practice. Research over the past twenty years has revealed persistent gaps in graduates' preparation, especially in their practical teaching experience. Shortcomings stem primarily from the historically limited role of music pedagogy in higher education, resulting in graduates with rich musical knowledge but insufficient preparation for practical music teaching. Meanwhile, reforms in school curricula that emphasise creativity, experiential learning, and student-centred methods have highlighted the need for teaching practices and updates to MTE programmes. Recently, a pedagogical competence qualification was introduced for all teachers, which includes a structured course, an extended practical experience, and reflective practices. As a result of these changes, Greece's MTE is evolving to prepare music teachers who are knowledgeable, adaptable, reflective, and socially responsive.

Keywords: higher education, music teacher education, music teacher identity, pedagogical competence, professional development

Introduction to Music Teacher Education in Greece

Music has historically occupied a central position in Greek society, closely associated with education, philosophy, and social life since antiquity (Stamou, 2002). Throughout the historical development of music as a subject in general education, the initial responsibility for music instruction in primary education was assigned to generalist teachers, and in secondary schools, it was taught by graduates from conservatories (with no specialisation in music education). Since 1985, the school curriculum has integrated music into the structure and operation of primary and secondary education (Law1566/1985). This situation remained in effect until the establishment of the music departments at universities (Stavrou, 2009). The increasing number of their graduates and the recognition that generalist teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the growing demands of music education in primary schools has gradually led to the expansion of specialised music teachers across all levels of education (Kougkas, 2022).

Since 1985, music university curricula have evolved, and more recently, they aim to offer a comprehensive education to pre-service music teachers that combines disciplinary knowledge – such as musicology, music theory, history of music, ethnomusicology, music technology, and music education – with artistic and performance training, as well as a structured school-based practice. This integrated approach ensures that graduates develop both theoretical understanding and practical classroom competence.

However, before 2013, music teachers held academic degrees in music studies, with music education courses included in their curriculum. Higher music institutions did not adopt a specific concurrent model that integrated disciplinary music studies, pedagogical and didactic coursework, and supervised teaching practice into the main programme. Since 2013, the acquisition of *Παιδαγωγική Επάρκεια* (Pedagogical Competence) has become an essential, formally structured part of music teacher education. It certifies graduates' eligibility to teach at all educational levels. This optional programme aims to provide a comprehensive education that combines theoretical knowledge with practical teaching experience, aligning with students' general music studies.

Currently, all public universities offer the Pedagogical Competence programme in music education. Specifically, at four universities – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Ionian University, and University of Ioannina – music studies are characterised by a typical duration of ten semesters, including an integrated master's programme. Conversely, the music studies at the University of Macedonia are shorter, spanning eight semesters. This discrepancy in length is often indicative of divergent academic structures and curricular approaches. However, in both cases, students combine their music studies with the Pedagogical Competence programme and prepare for careers in both primary and secondary education, as well as in music schools. We will briefly outline each university's general framework to explore its curriculum and identity

more thoroughly, highlighting the key musical qualifications that students/future music teachers acquire:

- Department of Music Studies at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (est. 1984): it is distinguished as being the first to establish an academic music department. The institution offers courses with a particular emphasis on musicology, music pedagogy, and composition. The Department places a particular specialism in classical, historical, theoretical, and systematic studies[1].
- Department of Music Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (est. 1991): the institution's main focus is on scientific research in music and the study of musicology in all its contemporary forms. The curriculum emphasises Historical Musicology (including music performance on orchestral instruments, voice, piano and guitar), Ethnomusicology (including music performance on traditional instruments), Byzantine Musicology (including chanting), and Music Technology (including jazz performance), providing specialisation options in these fields[2]. An official update issued in mid-December 2025 announced the establishment of a fifth specialisation, "Music Pedagogy" (Ministerial Decision, 2025), within the undergraduate curriculum, starting from the 2026–2027 academic year. It also offers a Master's degree in music pedagogy and research methodology, focusing on integrating theory, practice and research in music instruction.
- Department of Music Studies at the Ionian University (est. 1992): it provides a curriculum in performance and research across three specific areas of Music Theory and Practice: Music Composition (including instrumental, vocal, and electroacoustic works), Music Performance (such as piano, violin, flute, trumpet, percussion, clarinet, guitar, and organ), and Music Science (covering systematic musicology, Byzantine music, music education, psychology of music, music technology, music production, and music interpretation). It also offers postgraduate programmes in music pedagogy in schools and the community[3].
- Department of Music Science and Art at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki (est. 1998): it aims to provide students with comprehensive musical, artistic, and theoretical training that supports their professional integration into society. The specialisation areas include Western art music (including music performance), Byzantine music, Greek traditional music (including music performance), and contemporary music (including composition, orchestral and choir conducting, and

[1] Retrieved February 5, 2026, from https://mus.auth.gr/en/
[2] Retrieved February 5, 2026, from https://en.music.uoa.gr/
[3] Retrieved February 5, 2026, from https://music.ionio.gr/en/

accordion)[4]. The Master's degree specialises in music education, community music, and music therapy.

- Department of Music Studies at the University of Ioannina (est. 2018): The curriculum is predicated on an instrument-centred approach to music performance with a particular emphasis on traditional music and oral music traditions[5].

Despite these variations, all programmes share a common feature: they are flexible and offer students considerable autonomy in shaping their own academic and professional pathways. Students must attend in person, and distance learning degrees are not currently available in Greece, neither for music studies nor for Pedagogical Competence programmes.

A fundamental aspect of studying music at Greek public universities is that final-year secondary school students who pass their national exams and gain admission are eligible for state funded education. This provides a major advantage, enabling them to study without the financial burden of tuition fees and promoting broad, equitable access. Students enrolling for music courses in higher education must take part in national-level exams. Students with higher scores in subjects such as Greek language and literature (for all), History, Computing, Physics, or Mathematics (one of them), as well as music subjects such as music performance, music theory and ear training, are given priority.

In summary, the pathway to becoming a music teacher begins with students first enrolling in a university music department and completing either an 8-semester undergraduate degree or, at some institutions, a 10-semester integrated master's degree. During these studies, students must obtain the *Παιδαγωγική Επάρκεια* (Pedagogical Competence Programme), a formal certification necessary for teaching in schools. This includes coursework in educational theory, subject-specific pedagogy, and supervised teaching practice, forming the essential professional qualification for entering the teaching profession. After graduation, music teachers are eligible to work in primary and secondary education (general and music schools), and some may choose to pursue optional postgraduate studies (Master's level) in music education or related fields for further professional development, specialisation, or research engagement. As a result, becoming a music teacher in Greece involves not only completing a degree in music but also acquiring a parallel professional qualification in music pedagogy.

This section offers a critical review of music teacher education in Greece since 2013, highlighting key developments, reforms, and emerging challenges. It pays special attention to pedagogical competence through a focused case study, illustrating how gaps are addressed and what occurs in practice. Future perspectives on the preparation and

[4] Retrieved February 5, 2026, from https://www.uom.gr/en/msa
[5] Retrieved February 5, 2026, from https://music.uoi.gr/en/

professional identity of music teachers are explored, leading to a broader discussion on the future of music teacher education in Greece.

Mapping the Research Landscape of Music Teacher Education

The establishment of university music departments, in conjunction with the various reforms that were implemented in educational policy, laid the foundations for the development of systematic research in the field of Music Teacher Education (MTE) in Greece and opened the way for empirical studies that critically examined the experiences, needs, and professional realities of Greek music educators. Additionally, specialised academic training programmes for pre-service and in-service music educators were developed (e. g. Stamou et al., 2006).

Early studies on MTE issues revealed that the Greek music teachers' needs were not adequately addressed during their initial education (Chrysostomou, 1997; Dogani, 2005; Papapanagiotou, 2005). As Chrysostomou (1997) pointed out in her doctoral research, music educators in Greece at the time reported that the knowledge they had acquired prior to entering the teaching profession was insufficient to teach music effectively in general education. The majority were graduates of music conservatories (*Ωδεία*), and although highly skilled musicians, they lacked fundamental knowledge of general pedagogy and practical teaching skills, including a basic understanding of music pedagogy and didactics.

The year 2010 marked a significant milestone for Greek MTE research, as several studies were published in English-language scientific journals (e. g., Androutsos & Humphreys, 2010; Chrysostomou, 2010; Dionyssiou, Kokkidou & Androutsos, 2010; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

Androutsos and Humphreys (2010) conducted research to investigate how experience and training influence pre-service music teachers' ability to observe, reflect on and discuss a music lesson. Participants in the study included 62 pre-service music teachers, divided into two groups. One group consisted of beginner music education students (juniors), and the other comprised more experienced students (seniors). Both groups observed two recorded general music education lessons, one from primary and one from secondary education, and provided comments on them. The results indicated that systematic observation training, combined with progressive experience throughout a music teacher education programme, substantially enhances pre-service teachers' ability to observe and analyse classroom instruction comprehensively. The substantial differences between junior and senior observers suggest that training undertaken between the beginning of the third year and the second half of the fourth year significantly enhances pre-service teachers' observational skills.

In the same year, Chrysostomou (2010) published a study focusing on the impact of a university-based seminar on music education students' preparation for classroom teaching. The seminar consisted of three components: (1) university lectures on music pedagogy, including topics such as integration, interdisciplinarity, and cooperative teaching and learning in music lessons; (2) short teaching practice, comprising six weeks of school observations and the delivery of 1–2 lessons; and (3) reflection, facilitated through research tools and careful guidance from the instructor. The seminar's impact was evaluated using qualitative research methods within a cyclical framework of preconceptions, experiences, and reflections.

Additionally, Chrysostomou (2010) aimed to track changes in students' perceptions of teaching and their capacity for critical thinking. To gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of students' teaching, and to explore the opportunities and challenges presented by the seminar, she employed the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework, adapted from research on developmental projects. Her findings indicated that the seminar effectively transformed students' perceptions by helping them recognise their own professional development needs, understand the importance of knowledge and preparation for effective teaching, and engage in active learning through practical experience. According to Chrysostomou (2010), this shift of students from external attribution (blaming school pupils' behaviour) to internal attribution (acknowledging their own knowledge gaps) represents a significant developmental milestone, fostering motivation for future professional growth and lifelong learning.

In another study, Dionyssiou, Kokkidou, and Androutsos (2010) compared difficulties that pre-service music teachers and general classroom teachers faced when they immersed themselves in the music classroom. Sixty-seven students from three university departments, two of which offered degrees in music and one in primary education, participated in the research. Data were collected during students' music teaching practice and a range of materials, such as students' daily lesson plans, self-evaluation diaries, notes taken by the academic instructor during students' microteaching, and during the teaching practice period, and finally, from a self-reported questionnaire that students completed after their teaching practice.

Building on this data, the authors continued their research, delving further into the concerns, problems, and visions of pre-service music teachers following their music placement (Kokkidou, Dionyssiou & Androutsos, 2014). They provided useful insights into the differences that characterise and distinguish pre-service music teachers from pre-service general teachers who teach music, and how prior training and disciplinary focus shape pre-service teachers' perceptions and professional development needs. According to Kokkidou and Androutsos (2014), pre-service general teachers were surprised by the extent of pupils' musical knowledge, highlighting the need to adapt their expectations and teaching approaches in music-related contexts. In contrast, pre-service music teachers

realised the importance of placing greater emphasis on general pedagogical and teaching skills during their training, recognising that strong subject knowledge alone is insufficient for effective classroom management and instruction.

Furthermore, Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) examined how improvisation, as an informal music learning practice, could benefit pre-service music teachers in developing critical perspectives on music education and fostering qualities essential for implementing innovative pedagogical approaches in their future teaching careers. The study involved 91 pre-service teachers from two Greek universities who participated in a free improvisation course. Students were required to produce reflective accounts and diaries that recorded their thoughts, questions, impressions, and feelings related to their improvisation experiences. Qualitative analysis of students' thoughts revealed three main categories:

(1) Autonomy and Critical Consciousness. Students experienced improvisation as a process that fostered critical thinking and autonomy, moving beyond judging music as simply right or wrong. This development contributed to what the researchers termed the beginning of critical consciousness in student teachers.
(2) Developing the Self. Improvisation offered freedom from fear and competitive pressures, enabling presence and self-expression. This process enabled them to develop confidence in their own musicality and reestablish intimate relationships with their instruments.
(3) Developing an open attitude towards children and music. Students recognised the limitations of traditional training and developed respect for children as musicians, learning to facilitate musical exploration and relationships without imposing rigid rules. The study concluded that improvisation promotes empathy, mutual respect, risk-taking, and openness – qualities essential for music teachers adopting innovative and transformative pedagogical practices.

Two years later, in 2012, Triantafyllaki and Chrysostomou presented findings from a comprehensive study on music students' beliefs about their university preparation for becoming music teachers. The study drew on semi-structured interviews with 18 recent graduates and final-year undergraduates, as well as a 15-item questionnaire completed by 139 undergraduate students from the four university music departments at the time. The researchers aimed to explore the types of knowledge and skills students develop during their undergraduate studies, as well as perceived gaps in their preparation for the teaching profession, with particular emphasis on school practice. Findings indicated that students' perceptions of the benefits of this practice fell into two main categories: (1) knowledge of music pedagogy, including lesson planning, setting educational goals, and preparing teaching materials; and (2) development of soft skills, such as communication, classroom management, responsibility, and patience. Students also reported significant gaps in their

training, including limited instruction in educational psychology, insufficient focus on music pedagogy and didactics, restricted teaching hours, inadequate observation opportunities, and lack of instructional supervision. When asked which aspects of their training they wished had been improved, responses again highlighted pedagogical knowledge and soft skills, with additional concerns regarding musical content knowledge and understanding the developmental needs of different age groups. The study also revealed a significant tension between students' high likelihood of engaging with teaching upon graduation and the low completion rate of teaching placements. The results called for better quality teacher preparation, including allowing students to complete teaching placements earlier in their studies, extending placements to include more hours of actual teaching, and organising placements to provide systematic and informed mentoring. The lack of a specialised teacher training course in Greek higher music education was identified as a major hindrance, with existing subjects and placements remaining too integrated into the general undergraduate syllabus to create effective specialisation for preparing student-teachers.

This study by Triantafyllaki and Chrysostomou (2012) underscored key considerations for the design of future music teacher education programmes in Greece, including the role of music both within and beyond the classroom, the evolving responsibilities of music educators, and the importance of strong partnerships between universities and schools.

From 2014 onwards, and for several subsequent years, we could not find any research on MTE in Greece. This absence is most likely due to numerous curriculum reforms and the implementation of Pedagogical Competence during that period, with academic educators primarily examining how educational institutions and music instructors integrated and interpreted the new curricula. In the meantime, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the focus of research to the impact of social restrictions and abrupt digitalisation at all levels of music education in Greece (Akoyunoglou & Koniari, 2023).

Regarding MTE changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chrysostomou and Triantafyllaki (2020) conducted a study examining how pre-service music educators perceived, developed, and utilised new digital classroom materials during their online teaching placements, and how these online experiences challenged pre-existing beliefs about the role and function of technology in the music classroom. They found that the online transition did not negatively affect pre-service teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, or technological knowledge; instead, it highlighted the need to strengthen their technological content and technological pedagogical content knowledge. Additionally, they underscored the importance of mentoring relationships during online placements. Overall, their findings emphasise that integrating technology effectively into teacher education requires both robust digital training and strong mentoring support to ensure pre-service teachers can confidently and creatively apply digital tools in real classroom settings.

Finally, in recent years, the growth of exchange projects between universities has created opportunities for researchers to examine pre-service music teacher education within an intercultural framework. In this context, Kivi et al. (2024) reported findings from a longitudinal exchange project involving pre-service music teachers from Germany, Greece, Spain, and Türkiye. Participants took part in a number of seven-day exchange visits to engage with colleagues from other countries. The exchanges aimed to provide a space where students and their educators could interact meaningfully with different cultural groups, not only at a theoretical level but through lived, embodied experiences. These experiences were guided by a five-dimensional model of intercultural encounters between pre-service music teachers, developed by Prof. Kivi. Analysis of student questionnaires and teacher reflections revealed that the model supported not only technical and disciplinary training in intercultural music education but also participants' personal growth, critical reflection, and social transformation, both individually and collectively.

In conclusion, studies on music teacher education in Greece over the past three decades have revealed very important insights into the development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional identities. Early studies highlighted significant gaps in pedagogical training, with conservatory-trained graduates often lacking classroom management skills, knowledge of music pedagogy, and practical teaching experience. Subsequent research demonstrated that structured observation training, reflective seminars, and practice-based experiences enhance pre-service teachers' ability to plan, observe, and critically assess classroom instruction. Studies on improvisation showed that experiential learning fosters autonomy, self-confidence, and openness towards children and music, supporting innovative and transformative teaching practices.

Comparative research further indicated that prior disciplinary focus shapes pre-service teachers' perceptions, with generalist teachers surprised by pupils' musical abilities and music-specialist teachers recognising the need to strengthen general pedagogical skills. Recent studies during online placements and intercultural exchange programmes emphasised the development of reflective and intercultural competences. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of experiential, reflective, and culturally informed approaches in preparing effective music educators, highlighting the need for pre-service teachers to engage in hands-on teaching experiences, critically reflect on their practice, and develop sensitivity to diverse cultural and musical contexts.

Looking ahead, future research in MTE should continue to examine how to prepare music teachers for the evolving demands of contemporary classrooms. While experiential, reflective, and culturally informed approaches have proven effective, ongoing studies are needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice and also examine the long-term impact of pre-service music teacher preparation on their classroom effectiveness and professional growth. Additionally, MTE research should explore the growing role of technology and AI tools in children's lives and how music teacher education can effectively

integrate these tools into pre-service teacher preparation. Such research should examine its pedagogical outcomes and ethical implications, and identify the factors that contribute to developing music educators who are adaptable, reflective, and technologically proficient in addressing future challenges.

Case Report: Bridging the Academic and Pedagogical Worlds in Greek Music Teacher Education

The development of music teacher education in Greece has been shaped by a persistent structural tension between academic musical training and pedagogical preparation for school teaching. While university music departments have traditionally prioritised disciplinary knowledge and artistic development, the pedagogical dimension of music teacher preparation has historically been less systematically developed. This imbalance has often resulted in graduates who are highly trained musicians but not always adequately prepared for the practical and pedagogical demands of the classroom. This gap constitutes the central challenge examined in the case presented below, shaping both the evolution of music teacher education programmes and the professional experiences of graduates.

Historically, Greek university departments of Music Studies were designed primarily as disciplinary academic programmes, focusing on musicology, theory, analysis, ethnomusicology, and Byzantine music (Dontas, 2003). In the early years, music pedagogy held only a marginal place in the academic structure, often represented by a small number of elective courses with little emphasis on school-oriented practice (Dontas, 2003). This created a structural misalignment between academic training and the professional demands of school music education, particularly for those students who wish to teach in schools and other educational contexts. Consequently, many music graduates joined the education system as music teachers, possessing extensive academic knowledge and music expertise but lacking or having limited experience in classroom preparation.

The challenge became especially acute when Greece introduced the *Διαθεματικό Ενιαίο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών* (Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework) for Primary and Lower Secondary Education in 2003 (Ministerial Decision, 2003). This curriculum marked a significant pedagogical shift, emphasising experiential and creative music-making, interdisciplinary teaching, and active student engagement rather than predominantly theoretical instruction. For example, the curriculum placed less emphasis on traditional tasks, such as ear training or music appreciation of classical works, and promoted singing, improvisation, movement, group performance, and composition (Perakaki, 2001, 2008). Music graduates, trained in disciplinary knowledge, were now expected to create participatory, interdisciplinary learning environments.

The challenge, therefore, was twofold. On the one hand, there was a clear lack of structured pedagogical preparation within university music programmes, and on the other, it became necessary to reconceptualise music degrees that had implicitly led to teaching careers into programmes that explicitly integrated professional teacher education.

A decisive turning point in addressing this gap occurred with the formal introduction of *Παιδαγωγική Επάρκεια* (Pedagogical Competence) (Ministerial Decision, 2013) in Greek universities, which requires any teacher wishing to teach in schools or other contexts to meet these requirements in a concurrent pathway. This case does not involve isolated initiatives within a single university; instead, it examines a coordinated response to a nationally identified need within a centralised education system. Therefore, universities thoughtfully incorporated structured pedagogical training in their music programmes, making the learning experience more comprehensive and engaging for students. For the implementation of the legislation, they should include courses in their curricula under topics such as: 1) educational issues, 2) learning and teaching, and 3) subject-specific pedagogy and teaching practice. The programmes range from 30 to 50 ECTS credits and aim to provide future music teachers with both theoretical and practical knowledge relevant to school teaching. Included courses commonly address areas such as:

- Approaches and Philosophy of Music Pedagogy, where theoretical foundations of music teaching, pedagogical models, teaching philosophies and instructional methods are explored,
- Music Technology, where digital tools and updated software in music teaching (including programmes for music composition, notation and performance) are introduced to students,
- Ensemble Conducting, where practical training in leading musical ensembles as an essential part of school choirs, bands, or orchestras is provided,
- Ear Training, aiming to develop a keen sense of pitch, rhythm and harmony in students, as fundamental elements in effective music teaching and finally,
- Inclusive Education and Classroom Management are increasingly present in curricula, equipping future teachers with tools relevant to today's schools.

Some of these courses have a more practical focus, emphasising the development of students' skills and informal learning – such as teaching without notation, working with limited resources, and adapting repertoire for different age groups – and equipping students with tools for creating inclusive, engaging, and imaginative lessons. This demonstrates a significant institutional effort to integrate academic training with practical classroom experience.

Universities have redesigned practice-based courses to include extended, supervised teaching experiences in local schools. Students engage in lesson planning, teaching, and post-lesson reflection under the guidance of both university tutors and experienced

school mentors. Students must undertake this practical placement in all types of schools (including primary, junior secondary schools, and music schools), allowing them to apply their theoretical knowledge in a real classroom environment, teaching pupils and handling a range of music education scenarios. Some programmes emphasise reflective teaching through teaching diaries, microteaching sessions, and group debriefings. This approach fosters self-awareness and links theory to practice, aligning with constructivist models of teacher education. Additionally, pilot projects have emerged that connect universities with regional school districts, enabling co-teaching models and reciprocal exchange visits. These partnerships provide a shared space for innovation and reflection.

The Open Music Curriculum in Schools and Music Teacher Identity

As school music curricula are open and flexible, music teachers can generally create their own content based on pupils' preferences. However, this raises the question: are students adequately prepared to follow the openness and flexibility of the curricula? If not, how do music departments support them in developing the knowledge, skills and confidence required? As it is challenging to provide concrete answers to these critical questions, it is important to highlight the opportunities available to students studying in music departments who wish to pursue a career in music education.

Alongside music students' core studies and the completion of obligatory courses and formal requirements for Pedagogical Competence, they can select from a range of electives to personalise their academic trajectory and explore their interests. These electives play a central role in shaping each student's evolving professional and pedagogical identity, allowing them to go beyond standardised training and delve into areas of personal and artistic interest. For example, students can deepen their understanding of specific musical traditions (e.g., Greek folk music, Byzantine chant, jazz, or contemporary popular genres), specialise in specific areas (e.g. choral conducting, early childhood music education, music technology, improvisation, or interdisciplinary teaching), or focus on inclusion, creativity, and community-based practices. This flexibility allows each student to align studies with their artistic values, teaching philosophy, and intended professional role. As Kougkas (2022) points out, electives 1) offer a vital counterbalance to the standardised framework of Pedagogical Competence, 2) develop reflective practitioners who are not only competent in delivering curriculum content, but are also innovative, adaptable and authentically engaged with their students and communities that they serve, and 3) cultivate a deep sense of ownership and self-direction, supporting educators in becoming pedagogically competent and authentically aligned with their own values and needs of their future learners. As highlighted in Greek research (Chatzilamprou, 2005; Kougkas, 2022), this process is essential in bridging the gap between standard qualifications and meaningful, context-sensitive, flexible practice in school classrooms.

Within this open framework, the music studies in Higher Education become more than an academic choice; they are a mechanism for creating a professional identity, enabling innovation and engagement with music education as a long-term, living, evolving practice.

Impact of Pedagogical Competence on Music Teacher Education

The integration of Pedagogical Competence into undergraduate music programmes marks a significant step towards aligning academic training with the professional requirements of school teaching. While music departments continue to uphold solid disciplinary foundations, pedagogical preparation has gradually become a more structured element of music studies. These reforms have contributed to a broader understanding of the music teacher's role, extending beyond musical expertise to include pedagogical awareness, reflective practice, and responsiveness to diverse classroom contexts. By integrating coursework, practice-based experiences, and reflective activities, contemporary MTE programmes in Greece increasingly aim to prepare graduates who are capable of designing participatory, inclusive, and creative learning environments.

Even though challenges remain, especially in ensuring reforms are implemented smoothly across different institutions, the efforts described above demonstrate a united national approach to closing the long-standing gap between academic music studies and teacher training. This example demonstrates how policy changes, institutional updates, and innovative teaching methods can work together to transform music teacher education within a centralised education system.

Expanding the Role of Music Pedagogy at Postgraduate Studies

For those students who want to deepen their knowledge in music education complementary to the Pedagogical Competence they already hold from their undergraduate studies, they can pursue postgraduate studies in this field (Master's degree). These studies are optional, and their main aim is to enrich the Pedagogical Competence courses with various courses regarding music education. The programmes are typically three to four semesters in length and aim to support music educators in both professional practice and pedagogical research. Most of these programmes feature interdisciplinary courses that integrate music education with community involvement, inclusive approaches, and sociocultural engagement. Additionally, the curricula frequently include modules such as:

- Music Education and Social Inclusion/Community Music,
- Contemporary Approaches to Music Pedagogy,
- Digital Tools in Music Teaching,
- Intercultural Music Education and Policy,
- Research Methodology.

These offerings reflect a pedagogical shift towards critical, reflexive, and community-oriented music education, aligning with global trends and national priorities for equity and cultural diversity in education. They also emphasise evidence-based teaching and require students to undertake small-scale research projects and write a dissertation that contributes to the field of music pedagogy. The postgraduate focus enhances the profile of the music educator not only as a practitioner but also as a researcher, innovator, and advocate for music. Notably, these programmes are frequently pursued by in-service music teachers seeking to advance and deepen their professional practice.

Anticipating the Future of Music Teacher Education

The developments described throughout this chapter demonstrate that music teacher education (MTE) in Greece has gradually shifted from a mainly disciplinary focus towards a more balanced approach that combines musicianship, pedagogy, and reflective practice. However, the literature reviewed above indicates that this shift remains an ongoing process rather than a finished reform. Studies over the past thirty years have consistently emphasised the need for stronger links between theoretical training and the realities of school teaching (Chrysostomou, 1997, 2010; Triantafyllaki & Chrysostomou, 2012). Although the institutionalisation of Pedagogical Competence and the redesign of practical experiences mark significant progress, future developments in MTE will likely depend on further reinforcing these links and broadening the scope of teacher preparation to meet emerging educational challenges.

One important focus involves the earlier and more seamless integration of school-based experiences into undergraduate education programmes. As the case presented in this chapter illustrates, delayed or fragmented practical experiences were a central factor contributing to graduates' limited classroom readiness. Introducing supervised school engagement and early teaching experiences from the first years of study allows pre-service teachers to connect theory with authentic teaching situations, gradually assume responsibility, and develop confidence through supported experimentation. Such continuity reframes teaching practice, not as a final requirement, but as an ongoing developmental process. These changes in ideas, perceptions, and abilities are expected to contribute to a transformation of professional identity and help future music teachers build their self-confidence (Chrysostomou, 2010, 2024; Triantafyllaki, 2010). Consequently, early school experience should be conceived not merely as technical training, but as a space where future music educators shape their professional selves.

Additionally, MTE programmes should further strengthen reflective and research-informed practice. Beyond mastering musical and pedagogical techniques, future teachers need the capacity to interpret the complexity of the classroom, adapt creatively,

and critically evaluate their own actions. Reflective tools such as teaching journals, peer observation, and action research can help bridge the long-standing gap between theory and practice that have been identified in Greek MTE research, fostering professionals who are thoughtful decision-makers rather than method followers.

Another emerging aspect is the increasing influence of technology and digital learning environments in music education, which requires MTE programmes to equip future teachers with digital pedagogical skills and critical awareness of technological tools. Recent studies during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that pre-service music teachers can effectively incorporate digital tools into their teaching when they receive proper support and mentoring (Chrysostomou & Triantafyllaki, 2020). The challenge for future MTE programmes is not only to familiarise students with technological tools but also to foster their ability to critically assess how to use them pedagogically. As digital creativity, online collaboration, and artificial intelligence play a growing role in musical practices, teacher education must address both the pedagogical opportunities and the ethical considerations these advancements bring.

Finally, the future of students who choose to become music teachers will benefit from enhanced collaboration among universities, schools, and international partners. Sustained partnerships, co-teaching models, and shared professional development initiatives can create reciprocal channels through which academic knowledge informs school practice and classroom realities inform university curricula. At the same time, situating Greek MTE within broader European developments, where competency-based training, inclusion, digital literacy, and lifelong learning are increasingly prioritised, can enhance innovation and international dialogue. Such alignment supports the preparation of educators who are adaptable and responsive to contemporary cultural and technological changes (Welch, 2020).

Overall, anticipating the future of MTE in Greece entails consolidating recent reforms into an integrated model that balances musicianship, pedagogy, and reflective professionalism. In an area constantly challenged by major socio-economic changes and transformed by digitalisation, MTE has to prepare future music educators capable of teaching music in schools and ready to become critical thinkers and reflective teachers (Avgitidou et al., 2024). Pre-service music educators need to learn how to listen to their pupils' needs and provide the best possible educational environment for them in order to foster intimacy, respect for the Other, and sensitivity to vulnerability (Lapidaki, 2016, 2019, 2020). By strengthening the above dimensions, music teacher education in Greece can continue to evolve toward programmes that prepare educators capable of responding creatively and responsibly to the changing musical, social, and educational landscapes of contemporary schools.

Declaration of AI usage

Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT and Gemini) were used solely for language editing and stylistic refinement to enhance clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analytical decisions, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Music Teacher Education in Hungary

Abstract

Music teacher education (MTE) in Hungary focuses on improving teacher education programmes through practical application, with research areas including new pedagogical methods and the integration of theory and practice. This chapter reports on music teacher education (MTE) in Hungary, the structure of the Music Specialist Teacher Training Programme, and maps the research landscape, challenges and/or barriers in MTE. In addition to researching teacher training, the opinions of teachers and music teachers currently working in the profession were examined regarding their teaching competencies and professional development. Due to the severe shortage of teachers, frequent changes and amendments to the regulations governing teaching, including classroom music teacher education, and the increasing centralisation of this training are causing difficulties for teacher training institutions.

Keywords: challenges in MTE, Hungary, music programmes, music specialist teacher, music teacher education

Introduction to MTE in Hungary

The challenges of the 21st century competency-based training highlight that the close link between competencies and learning outcomes is becoming increasingly prominent in the objectives of teacher education, and a practice-oriented approach emphasizing measurable outcomes is gaining ground worldwide including in Hungary. Teacher training is

governed by centrally established Training and Outcome Requirements (*Képzési és Kimeneti Követelmények, KKK*). The programme focuses on the methodology of music education and related subject knowledge which is closely linked to the National Core Curriculum (NCC) (*Nemzeti Alaptanterv, NAT*) and its resources. Students select and evaluate curriculum content and assess textbooks within the NCC (*NAT*) framework; thus, a central element of teacher training is content alignment and curriculum development in accordance with the NCC (*NAT*).

In Hungary, teacher training – and music specialist teacher education (*ének-zene tanárképzés*) in particular – underwent a major overhaul when the two-cycle programme (BA and MA) was converted into a single-cycle programme. Beginning in 2018, it also gave music teachers holding a college degree, as well as generalist teachers, the opportunity to earn a master's degree as a music specialist teacher (*ének-zene tanár*) through a part-time correspondence programme over 2–4 semesters. In 2022 another major change occurred when the duration of the integrated teacher training programme was uniformly reduced from 12 semesters to 10 semesters, curricula were modified, the duration of school teaching practice increased significantly, and a programme was introduced allowing teachers with degrees in other disciplines, as well as those holding a BA in Music Culture or a BA in Music Performance, to earn a music specialist teacher (*ének-zene tanár*) degree in 2–3–4 semesters through part-time correspondence study while working. The changes were introduced in Hungary due to the growing shortage of teachers.

In Hungary, the training of music specialist teachers in schools takes place in different faculties and departments than the training of instrumental/vocal teachers. The teacher training faculties of six universities have music specialist teacher education programmes. The Liszt Academy of Music and the Music Performing Arts Faculties of the five universities offer training for instrumentalists, vocalists, and instrumental/vocal teachers. The training of music specialist teachers in schools is based on the upper secondary school-leaving examination certificate and is offered at universities in 10-semester courses. Students can participate in the classroom music teacher training programme by choosing another general studies teacher training programme (e. g., history teacher, mathematics teacher) in addition to the classroom music teacher training programme. The music specialist teacher training programme prepares students to teach the subject of Music (*ének-zene*) in the education and training phase of school education from grades 1–12.

In the lower primary school (ages 6–10, grades 1–4), generalist teachers (with a BA degree) or generalist teachers with a specialisation in Music (with a BA degree) or music specialist teachers (with an MA degree) teach music. Generalist teachers can teach Music in grades 1–4; generalist teachers with a specialisation in music can teach music in grades 1–6 (ages 6–12). Music specialist teachers with a Master's degree in classroom music teaching may teach music in all grades (grades 1–12, ages 6–18).

Generalist teachers must have a Bachelor's degree, while music specialist teachers must have an integrated Master's degree in classroom music teaching. After obtaining a general teacher degree, a music specialist teacher degree can be obtained in four semesters of part-time study. Candidates for primary school (generalist) teacher training do not have a practical entrance exam, only an aptitude test. Candidates must pass a practical entrance examination to be admitted to the music specialist teacher training programme. The practical examination includes basic knowledge of solfège and music theory, singing songs, and playing an instrument. The eight-semester primary teacher (generalist) training programme has only one two-semester music course: Fundamentals of Music and Subject Pedagogy I-II (3+2 ECTS[1]).

Music specialist teachers are trained at universities in a 10-semester full-time integrated two-subject teacher training master's programme (300 ECTS). The integrated Master's degree course is divided into three parts: a 105 credit music module, a 105 credit second subject module, and a 90 credit pedagogical-psychological and teaching practice module. The music module includes: Music History, Solfège, Music Theory, Improvisation, Piano, Singing-vocal training, Choral Conducting, Choir, Folk Music, Music Technology, Children's Vocal Training, Chamber Music, Chamber Singing. The Teacher Training module includes: Pedagogical – Psychological Courses, Career Development, Music teaching methodology, Second subject methodology, Teaching Practice (subject 1 – Music), Teaching Practice (subject 2), Individual School Practice.

The balance between theoretical and practical training is established in the public education modules and the subject-specific methodology courses. During training, four types of school practice must be completed during the period specified in the curriculum; these are: Career awareness and career development; Teaching practice; Subject-specific, so-called group teaching practice; Individual school practices. Universities organise school practice in their own basic and secondary schools and partner institutions.

At the end of the training, teacher candidates need to pass a final examination before an examination committee of at least three members. Criteria to qualify for the examination are a thesis accepted and assessed in writing, and the presentation of a portfolio of the experience gained during the teaching practice to be defended at the final examination. The successful completion of the teacher training programme is certified with a diploma. The diploma received after teacher training authorises the holder to take a teacher's job in the corresponding field.

[1] ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

Mapping the Research Landscape

In Hungary, the pedagogy and teacher training of music education in public schools are closely linked to traditions rooted in the Kodály Concept, the examination of the alignment between the National Core Curriculum (*Nemzeti Alaptanterv*), which also determines the focus and the measurability of music education (Lukács et al., 2024), the Framework Curricula (*Kerettantervek*), and the impact of content reforms in teacher training (Dévai, 2021; Kecskés & Gáncs, 2021; Pintér-Keresztes, 2018).

The ideological and practical legacy of the Kodály method in Hungary provides a long-term institutional foundation for music education and this tradition is also reflected in teacher training. Several authors emphasise that a focus on folk music foundations and singing is key to developing musical understanding in Hungarian schools, as Kodály pedagogical practice lays the foundation for aural skills and knowledge of music notation (Buzás & Sagrillo, 2019; Lukács et al., 2024; Nite et al., 2015).

Hungarian research highlights the challenges inherent in teacher training: the interaction between teachers' own musical practice and their pedagogical practice strongly influences classroom outcomes, and teacher training institutions need programmes that simultaneously develop musicality and pedagogical competencies (Asztalos, 2022; Fekete et al., 2022; Nite et al., 2015). Furthermore, the literature highlights the influential role of teachers' beliefs in the implementation of music education and the difficulties in changing these beliefs during programme development (Asztalos, 2022).

European research on music teacher education addresses the development of creativity and creative learning competencies as a central issue and often highlights the importance of linguistic, cultural, and infrastructural factors (Zhang et al., 2020). Modern European examples and initiatives show that creativity is increasingly coming to the fore as a fundamental competency in the fields of music education and arts education in general; teacher training programmes must integrate this competency into their curricula and into the assessment of students' knowledge and skills (Halász & Michel, 2011; Lasauskienė & Yang, 2018). International comparisons of talent development and creativity also highlight that while in some countries (e. g., Hungary) the development of talent and creativity requires an organised system, other countries already have decades-long traditions and an infrastructure in place that are worth "adapting" to Hungary (e. g., formal talent development programmes, professional development, in-service training) (Sheridan, 2018; VanTassel-Baska, 2013). Overall, research findings indicate that the development of creativity is at the heart of European initiatives, which support efforts to improve Hungary's training systems, particularly by integrating context- and tool-based, experience-centred approaches into teacher training (Lasauskienė & Yang, 2018; Váradi, 2020).

Strengths of Hungarian research are: 1) A focus on tradition and ongoing reference to the Kodály method: a cornerstone of music education in Hungary is that musical literacy

(solfège, hand signs, rhythmic awareness) is built in a way that is accessible and inclusive for students, forming the foundation for long-term musical identity and skill development (Nite et al., 2015; Sheridan, 2018); 2) Institutional and curricular alignment: Teacher training frameworks aligned with the National Core Curriculum and central subject requirements are consistently reflected in the research, which supports the feasibility and measurability of everyday teaching (Lukács et al., 2024; Ujvárosi, 2021; Váradi et al., 2024).

Weaknesses of Hungarian research and challenges are: 1) The relationship between beliefs and practical implementation: teachers' beliefs about the importance of musical development and its implementation in a given context have a significant impact on pedagogical practices; changing these beliefs is a complex and time-consuming process, which highlights the need for teacher training and ongoing professional development (Asztalos, 2022); 2) Lack of or partial integration of diverse competencies: teacher training programmes often focus heavily on pedagogical methods, while maintaining and further developing teachers' musical expertise receive less attention; this may indicate a general problem in the modern application of the Kodály concept (Nite et al., 2015; Fekete et al., 2022); 3) Empirical diversity and sampling limitations: many Hungarian studies have small sample sizes and are context-specific, limiting their generalizability; furthermore, online survey approaches rely on self-reporting and may be subject to bias across cultural or educational contexts (Asztalos, 2022; Fekete et al., 2022).

While the international influence and adaptations of the Kodály method are undoubtedly cornerstones of music teacher training in Hungary, comparative analyses between the national and European contexts show that music education practices in other countries place different emphases (e.g., emphasis on creative practices or digital music competencies in addition to musical skills), which requires fine-tuning of the Hungarian model (Lukács et al., 2024; Sheridan, 2018; Váradi et al., 2024). The issues of online learning and digitization have become particularly important in the wake of the pandemic; according to studies, the effectiveness of digital tools and the needs of teacher training have changed, but the suppression of local context and in-person practice may have a significant impact on the maintenance of skills (Váradi et al., 2024).

In many European countries, there has been a growing demand for music teacher training to integrate pedagogical and cognitive skills alongside musical skills, with a particular focus on the ongoing development of musical literacy and on teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Sheridan (US adaptations of the Kodály concept) highlights how the concept is taking shape abroad and how the application of the Kodály legacy has evolved in the American context (Sheridan, 2018). Similarly, Goopy (identity work in singing-based classes) demonstrates how daily singing-based practice affects children's sense of identity, which is also relevant to the discourse on music teacher training in European primary schools, as identity building is a key area of teacher training for the sake of students' long-term motivation and participation (Goopy, 2022). Digital transition and online learning: online

music teaching and the development of digital skills are gaining momentum in Europe as well; the COVID-19 period revealed gaps in teacher training and the need for digital infrastructure, which are also confirmed by Hungarian research (Váradi et al., 2024). In terms of cultural and linguistic heritage and local adaptations even within the European context, it is evident that teaching methods based on local musical traditions and folk music motifs (such as the Kodály approach) are being adapted in several countries. This diversity requires flexibility in teacher training programmes and supports the development of cultural competencies (Buzás & Sagrillo, 2019; Nite et al., 2015; Sheridan, 2018). In relation to discourses and beliefs in teacher education European research also emphasises the connection between teachers' beliefs and their practices, and teacher education programmes must be able to analyse, critique, and transform these beliefs to promote effective teaching (Asztalos, 2022). This is consistent with findings from Hungary, which indicate that beliefs and practices are interrelated (Asztalos, 2022).

The development priorities for music specialist teacher education in Hungary are as follows: 1) Development of integrated competencies: Hungarian teacher training programmes should strengthen pedagogical and technological skills in addition to musical competencies; particular attention should be paid to the continuing education of music teachers, which combines the specific characteristics of music education with modern assessment methods, diagnostics, and digital tools (Fekete et al., 2022; Nite et al., 2015; Váradi et al., 2024); 2) A close connection is needed between the theoretical concepts of music teacher education in Hungary and practical techniques for fostering creativity. Some domestic research highlights the potential of digital education, but the development of musical skills also requires in-person interaction and experiential, activity-based learning; therefore, training programmes must rely on more practical modules and better-structured elements (Váradi et al., 2024); 3) In music teacher training in Hungary, the development of creativity must be a top priority at both the theoretical and practical levels; however, current domestic practices remain underdeveloped in terms of practical implementation and infrastructure. European research and programmes highlight that the development of creativity requires interdisciplinary, project-based, and experience-centred approaches, and integrating these into Hungarian training structures can contribute to the comprehensive development of students' creative competencies and musical skills. The proposed directions aim to strengthen domestic talent development programmes, integrate digital competencies, and incorporate international best practices.

Changing beliefs and attitudes: develop teacher training modules that foster critical pedagogical reflection in both pre-service and in-service teachers; multi-source and longitudinal studies are needed to explore how teachers' beliefs evolve and how this influences teaching practice (Asztalos, 2022). Frameworks for European comparison: comparisons with the European literature (e.g., Sheridan, Goopy) should be highlighted so that Hungarian-speaking professionals can understand the international context and

the differences and similarities between teacher education models (Goopy, 2022; Sheridan, 2018). Risks and ethical considerations: we highlight the limitations of online data collection and potential sampling biases in our research; samples from Hungary are generally small or contextually limited, so conclusions regarding transfer effects should be interpreted with caution (Asztalos, 2022; Fekete et al., 2022).

A Case Report

Music teacher training in Hungary has traditionally been based on the Kodály method and related Hungarian music education traditions. The integration of student-centred learning (SCL) and creativity is particularly important here, as the aim of the programme is to ensure that future teachers are capable of SCL. The development of creativity is particularly important here, as the goal of the training is to ensure that future teachers are able to develop both subject knowledge and practical creativity and problem-solving skills in a way that is tailored to students' individual needs (Mattingly, 2024; Nite et al., 2015; Weatherly & Weatherly, 2023). Creativity is a particularly emphasised as a developmental goal; fundamental evidence for this can be found in contemporary international research examining the integration of movement and music education, as well as the impact of creative approaches (Dockan et al., 2025; Dsupin, 2024; Lukács et al., 2018; Péter, 2019).

New models in music education published in the international literature (integration of movement, active music learning methods) have had some impact on the Hungarian context as well: their aim is the comprehensive development of students' cognitive and motor skills (Dockan et al., 2025; Lukács et al., 2018; Péter, 2019). Student-centred learning (SCL) in teacher education requires conditions that enable students' active participation, critical thinking, and reflective learning. Examples from abroad – such as the analysis of the quality of demonstration lessons, and approaches based on teacher-student interaction – all highlight how effective student-centred, experiential, and reflective pedagogy can be in teacher education programmes for the development of skills, creativity, and self-reflection (Fuelberth & Woody, 2023; Weatherly & Weatherly, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). These approaches are well-suited to the Hungarian context, where the creative development of music education is becoming an increasingly important element of teacher training.

National and international research clearly supports the notion that integrating 'movement and music' in music education can strengthen cognitive, linguistic, and motor skills and typically fosters creativity. Lukács and colleagues, for example, examine active music-learning methods and models that integrate movement, aiming to develop cognitive and neural processes while tracking long-term effects (Lukács et al., 2018). It is particularly relevant that these models offer children and students practical experiences that can be easily adapted into teacher training within learner-centred frameworks, for

example, through movement-supported singing and auditory development and the direct practice of musical skills (Dockan et al., 2025; Lukács et al., 2018; Péter, 2019). Creativity can be fostered within a student-centred framework in several ways: 1) integrating creative audio materials and musical expressions into practical sessions (e. g., free improvisation, movement-based approaches, personal music projects); 2) introducing reflective portfolios and peer-feedback systems; 3) a combination of formal and informal assessment tools that measure both creative thinking and problem-solving skills (Deng, 2021; Dockan et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Lukács et al., 2018).

The objective is to integrate creative competencies that are understandable and measurable for students while preserving the Kodály tradition; to redefine the priorities of music education to emphasise creative practice and the integrated development of musical listening and movement (Fuelberth & Woody, 2023; Nite et al., 2015; Péteri, 2021). Important tasks include: 1) Introduction of structured modules in music teacher training that focus on fostering creativity and student initiative (e. g., creative improvisation exercises, music projects, collaborative creative work); 2) Practical training should include a higher proportion of project-based tasks and peer-coaching mechanisms (Fuelberth & Woody, 2023; Weatherly & Weatherly, 2023); 3) The integration of digital technologies and virtual tools into practical classes, such as the use of music interfaces and tasks that can support students' independent learning and creative expression (Huang, 2022; Liu et al., 2025); 4) Regular professional development and continuing education opportunities for certified music specialist teachers to support the integrated application of arts education (integration of music, movement, and literary works) (Lukács et al., 2024).

In the following, I will present methods for fostering creativity that several Hungarian universities have begun to implement in their music specialist teacher training programmes. One example is Klara Kokas's music education concept where creative solfège lessons and creative music-making are introduced. Creative solfège lessons and creative music-making based on Klára Kokas's music education concept. The teaching methods formulated and developed by Klára Kokas focus on creative singing, active music listening, and improvisational, free movement (dance). Although music remains the focus throughout the complex activities, the Kodály-based Kokas pedagogy goes far beyond music education and the development of musical abilities. Free movement improvisations, spontaneous dramatic play, nonverbal dramatization of musical-movement actions and events, and visual arts techniques (drawing, painting, modelling, puppetry) take centre stage. The method typically relies on means of communication beyond words. Nevertheless, verbal communication does appear in the sessions in the form of storytelling and picture narration related to free movement (Deszpot & Vass, 2015).

The choice of music plays a key role as it forms the basis for movement and dance creations that are inspired by the structure, mood, and soundscape of the musical pieces, where reception and creation are inseparable. The musical content of the Kokas programme draws equally from folk art, high art, and the sounds of everyday life. Popular music and dance genres, as well as commercial music, are strictly excluded from the repertoire. The musical repertoire consists of short pieces lasting 2–6 minutes, which are a carefully considered selection of folk music from many countries around the world (e. g., Egyptian, Nigerian, Peruvian, Greek, Turkish, Romanian, Hungarian); on the other hand, there are written compositions from the early Renaissance to contemporary music, such as works by J. S. Bach, G. F. Händel, A. Vivaldi, W. A. Mozart, L. van Beethoven, J. Haydn, F. Schubert, F. Chopin, Z. Kodály, and B. Bartók. Listening to valuable musical works leads to emotional enrichment because it enables people to recognise the emotions and passions that they can convey, thereby presenting various aesthetic and moral messages (Deszpot & Vass, 2015).

The programme's focus on experience stems from the joy that comes from being together and the balance between shared experiences and individual freedom, which is essentially nothing more than the group experience of nonverbal communication through direct experience with the help of music and movement. The sessions provide an aesthetic experience because they are very intense and enjoyable, and the content and formal elements form a unified whole. The artistic experience is provided by the effortless enjoyment of creation without criticism. The processes of reception and creation alternate imperceptibly, which in practice is inspired and sustained by playing the same music to the imagination repeatedly, up to five or six times in a row (Deszpot & Vass, 2015).

Creative solfège lessons and creative music-making based on László Sáry's music education concept. Creative music practice serves to awaken and activate participants' musical creativity, develop their skills, and foster not only a receptive but also a creative attitude. Creative music exercises are tasks that develop musical skills using or combining vocals, instruments, rhythm, noise sounds, and lyrics, which stimulate participant activity and engage people's musical skills and imagination in a playful way. Some tasks set boundaries, leaving the solution to the creativity of the user; others emphasise individual, pair, or group expression, but develop musical skills indirectly; still others, promoting the principle of repetition, focus on collective practice. Most exercises are based on the musical creativity of the participants, while others serve to update the leader's musical methodology tools, and in some cases, the creativity of both parties is necessary for successful implementation. Creative music exercises usually differ from the teacher-led approach, thus requiring two-way communication and a cooperative attitude from both the players and the leader. (Fekete, 2023)

Types of creative music exercises (Fekete et al, 2020):

- Vocal creative music exercises (based solely on singing voice).
- Rhythmic and/or body-rhythmic creative music exercises (based solely on rhythm).
- Noisy creative music exercises (based on noises and sounds, as well as speech-like effect sounds).
- Creative musical exercises using text (based on the rhythm of the text or some combination of text and rhythm).
- Creative musical exercises with instruments (based on instrumental improvisation or replacing vocal exercises with instruments).
- Combined creative music exercises (simultaneous application of the above).

Creativity, musical creativity, the emergence and use of creative musical practices encourage future music specialist teachers to innovate, actively solve problems, be thorough, and be effective, all of which engage and motivate the methodological imagination of future music teachers.

Forward Looking

In the future, the quality and practicality of music teacher education could be improved by striking a more effective balance between the development of musical and pedagogical skills during studies, which would require closer professional cooperation between the departments/institutes responsible for the two fields.

Student-centred, practice-orientated teaching that focusses on active music making and experiential learning is fully implemented in the music courses and the programme of the classroom music teacher training programme at the Department of Music Education at the University of Szeged. At the same time, in the future, emphasis should be placed on increasing student numbers and making the teaching profession, including music teacher education, more attractive, so that more talented young people apply to become teachers, which may also result in changes to the entry requirements and raising them to a higher level.

Hungarian universities, including teacher training institutions, have established a scholarship programme to support students' research activities, first as the New National Excellence Programme and then, from 2024, the University Research Scholarship Programme, through which the university supports the research of successful applicants from the state budget, thereby contributing to the development of students' research skills.

Since 2019, five students in the Department of Music Education University of Szeged have received this research scholarship for several years, conducting research on the following topics: 1) Possible applications of gamification in classroom music lessons,

2) The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in classroom music lessons, 3) Folk music, folk culture, and folk singing in classroom music lessons, 4) The use of experiential teaching methods in primary school classroom music lessons, 5) The reception of Hungarian folk music and folk singing through 21st-century Hungarian pop music in classroom music lessons, 6) Possibilities for applying alternative music listening strategies in classroom music lessons. The supervisor of all five students' research projects is Dr. Andrea Asztalos, associate professor. One of the students won first place and two others won second place in a scientific competition for university students, run by the National Student Conference, with their research papers and presentations. These research projects in music education not only greatly develop students' research skills, but also their creativity, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking, while expanding their knowledge of teaching methodology and research methodology.

In Hungary, the new training and output requirements regulating classroom music teacher education, which will be introduced in September 2026, will provide opportunities for the inclusion of additional areas of musical knowledge (e.g., popular music, digitalisation in music, the development of a complex artistic vision, concert pedagogy, and applied musical repertoire knowledge) into classroom music teacher training, but at the same time, the very detailed regulations and strict alignment with the National Core Curriculum give teacher training institutions very little room for manoeuvre and also restrict the autonomy of teachers. At the same time, the acquisition of digital equipment to teach new areas of knowledge will cause further difficulties for teacher training institutions.

In conclusion, it can be said that in Hungary, due to the severe shortage of teachers, the frequent changes and amendments to the regulations governing teacher training, including classroom music teacher education, and the increasing centralisation of this training are causing difficulties for teacher training institutions.

Declaration of AI usage

We confirm we have not used AI in writing our chapter.

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Lorraine O'Connell

Bridging Policy and Practice

Navigating Reform in Music Teacher Education in Ireland

Abstract

This chapter provides a critical overview of music teacher education (MTE) in Ireland, situating contemporary provision within its historical, policy, and curricular contexts. It describes the pathways into primary and secondary teaching and discusses the impact of the Teaching Council reforms of the past two decades.

Drawing on policy documents and on an expanding, but still limited, research base, the chapter identifies key tensions shaping MTE: the marginalisation of music in schools and in teacher education, an epistemic gap between school and higher education, and challenges regarding entry requirements and school placement. At the same time, it foregrounds the role of music teacher educators in responding to challenges through innovative practices and sustained professional commitment. A co-teaching case study illustrates how school-university partnerships can help bridge the divide between policy and practice.

The chapter concludes by identifying key priorities for future MTE development, emphasising the need for greater dialogue among all stakeholders, expanded research, and greater coherence across the teacher education continuum.

Keywords: continuum of teacher education; co-teaching; curriculum and policy; music teacher education; pedagogical competence

Introduction

Music has been included in the curriculum of both primary and secondary education since the foundation of the state in 1922.[1] However, historically, the subject's teaching and learning have developed along two distinct pathways, a division that remains evident today. Primary education is underpinned by a holistic child-centred philosophy that emphasises experiential and integrated learning. Music is compulsory and is typically taught by the generalist teacher. In contrast, secondary education is subject-centred, and while the music curriculum has expanded, it remains closely aligned with the practices of Western art music. Music is optional at this level and is taught by a subject specialist.

This bifurcation is also reflected in music teacher education (MTE). The majority of primary teachers complete a four-year concurrent Bachelor of Education (B Ed). Music constitutes one component within a broad programme for generalist teaching. Most secondary music teachers follow a consecutive pathway; on completion of an undergraduate degree in Music (BA with Music or B Mus), they undertake a two-year Professional Master's in Education (PME). However, a small number of primary teachers (who already hold a bachelor's degree) also pursue this consecutive route, while two concurrent programmes offer initial teacher education in Music for secondary teachers.

Teacher Education in Ireland

Initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland has a relatively long history. The preparation of primary teachers can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century, with the establishment of several colleges of education. A Higher Diploma in Education for secondary teachers was introduced in 1912, and became mandatory for registration in 1918 (Coolahan, 2007). Although the structure and content of ITE have evolved over time, the most significant changes have occurred over the past 20 years, following the establishment of the Teaching Council (TC).

Established on a statutory basis in 2006, the TC sets professional standards across the education sector, including ITE. Its remit includes specifying minimum entry requirements, content, learning outcomes and school placement requirements for all ITE programmes. It is also responsible for reviewing and accrediting these courses. Registration with the TC is mandatory for all primary and secondary school teachers.

[1] Until then, the entire island of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. In 1921, the island was politically split into two jurisdictions: Northern Ireland (six counties) and the Irish Free State (26 counties). In 1922 the government of the Irish Free State was formed. While a new constitution was adopted in 1937, whereby the state became known as "Ireland", it was not until 1949 that the country was declared a Republic.

Following a major systemic review of ITE provision, the TC has instigated substantial reforms since 2011. Key changes include:

- the embedding of the four primary teacher education colleges into university settings, with the consequent modularisation of programmes;[2]
- the extension of concurrent ITE programmes from three to four years, and postgraduate programmes from one to two years;
- increased school placement requirements;
- formal accreditation of ITE programmes by the TC.

Accreditation has introduced new programme structures and prescribed credit allocation. Programmes must include: Foundation Studies (curriculum studies, history and policy of education, philosophy of education, educational psychology and sociology of education), Professional Studies, and School Placement (The Teaching Council, 2017a, 2020).

These reforms are framed within the context of the TC's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* (2011), which positions ITE as but the first step of a three-stage career-long process. Following initial qualification, novice teachers are required to complete a one-year induction programme (The Teaching Council, 2017b). Recognising teachers as autonomous professionals, the TC also promotes lifelong learning and reflection. The framework for this third stage is still in development, with implementation expected by 2027 (The Teaching Council, n. d.).[3]

Music in Primary Teacher Education

The preparation of primary teachers has become progressively more professionalised over time. The original two-year diploma was expanded in the 1970s to a three-year, university-accredited B Ed degree, and within the past 15 years, to a four-year programme. Music pedagogy – known as Curriculum Music – has been included in primary ITE from an early stage. While there is evidence that music had also been taught as an academic subject (music theory, harmony, history, etc.) in some colleges (Flynn & O'Flynn, 2019), the introduction of the three-year B Ed allowed students to study an arts or humanities subject, including music, as an elective specialism, to degree level. Initially, Curriculum Music allocation also increased in the expanded course – a welcome development given the ambitious nature of the 1971 primary curriculum, which demanded substantial musical skills and knowledge from teachers (Walsh, 2016). However, competing requirements within

[2] Prior to this, and from the mid-1970s, the B Ed degree in all four colleges had been accredited by one of the universities. However, each college was governed as an independent institution.

[3] The TC gives journey-related Irish-language titles to the frameworks for these stages: *Céim* (step), *Droichead* (bridge) and *Cosán* (path).

the programme could not sustain this expansion, and allocation for Curriculum Music decreased, precisely when it was most needed (Flynn & O'Flynn, 2019). Nonetheless, most colleges included Curriculum Music in at least two of the programme's three years.

As noted above, the B Ed is now a four-year programme (240 ECTS). Ironically, due to the additional TC requirements, music provision has diminished in two respects. First, students no longer have the opportunity to study an arts/humanities subject to degree level. Second, and more worryingly, timetable allocation for Curriculum Music has been further reduced (Flynn & O'Flynn, 2019). Typically, Curriculum Music is now taught within a single semester. Furthermore, in two of the programmes, it is taught within the context of Arts Education (reflecting recent curriculum changes within the primary curriculum). There remains, however, some scope to expand allocation for Music. "Discretionary Time" (up to 48 ECTS) is available within ITE programmes to provide additional elective modules. Two of the larger institutions use this opportunity to offer electives in music and/or music education (O'Flynn et al., 2022). Moreover, most institutions support a vibrant extra-curricular music-making culture (e.g., choirs, orchestras, Irish traditional and other ensembles), offering students meaningful and practical opportunities to participate in music.

All four primary ITE providers also offer a two-year in-person PME programme for graduates who already hold a bachelor's degree (in any subject) and wish to qualify as a primary teacher. One independent provider also offers a blended PME programme. All PME programmes are also subject to the TC requirements.

Music in Secondary Teacher Education

There are two available routes to qualify as a secondary Music teacher in Ireland. The majority of students follow a consecutive pathway. This involves completing i) a three- or four-year honours bachelor's degree (minimum 180 ECTS), of which at least 60 ECTS must be in Music, followed by ii) a two-year Professional Master's in Education (PME: 120 ECTS). Alongside their traditional range of subjects, all seven Irish universities provide undergraduate music degrees (BA with Music and/or a B Mus) and PME programmes. Undergraduate music degrees also offered through Ireland's three conservatoires, two of which are schools within technological universities,[4] as well as by a further technological university and one institute of technology.[5]

[4] The Royal Irish Academy of Music is the only higher education institute to offer degrees in music only. TU Dublin Conservatoire and the Cork School of Music are embedded within technological universities (i.e. Technological University Dublin and Munster Technological University respectively).

[5] Beginning in 2019, five technological universities have been established through the merging of several "institutes of technology". While Dundalk Institute of Technology – which offers Music degrees – has not yet received university status, negotiations are under way to embed this college within Queen's University, Belfast. This will mark the first Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland formal partnership.

All PME programmes teach the required Foundation Subjects, Professional Studies and School Placement, but do not include additional discipline-specific content beyond teaching methods. Therefore, the TC prescribes the subject requirements for undergraduate degrees acceptable for entry to PME programmes. For Music, this includes music performance, harmony and counterpoint, composition, aural, keyboard and music technology skills, Western art music and Irish traditional music.

Two undergraduate degrees provide a concurrent route to qualification. The Bachelor of Music Education (B Mus Ed), established in 1985, is offered by Trinity College Dublin in conjunction with the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Technological University Dublin. The Bachelor of Religious Education at Dublin City University prepares students to teach Religious Education with another subject (Music, English or History). These programmes combine specialist studies in music (adhering to the TC criteria) with the required Foundation and Professional Studies and School Placement.

The TC reforms, together with government policy and curricular developments, present efforts to harmonise and improve teacher education across all programmes. However, these have also given rise to a range of challenges that have disrupted this space. In mapping the literature, the following section highlights where these tensions are most visible.

Research on Initial Teacher Education in Ireland

Since the 1990s, music education research across a range of subdisciplines has blossomed in Ireland (McCarthy, 2023). Yet, research addressing music teacher education (MTE) remains comparatively limited (Moore et al., 2019; O'Flynn et al., 2022). Apart from one relatively extensive study conducted by Moore et al. (2019), other published research comprises small-scale practitioner studies by music teacher educators within their own contexts. Additionally, some doctoral research studies, while not explicitly focused on MTE, generate findings pertinent to the field.

Taken together, these studies uncover several recurring issues and challenges that shape and, at times, disrupt MTE in Ireland. These include: the marginal position of music within primary ITE programmes, with consequent implications for generalist teachers' confidence in teaching music; an epistemic gap between secondary school and higher education music that impacts access to and experiences of music at the undergraduate level; and issues around school placement.

As noted above, the most comprehensive research on MTE to date is a comparative cross-border study conducted by Moore et al. (2019, 2025) and O'Flynn et al. (2022).[6] Drawing on documentary analysis and focus group interviews with music teacher educators, the project examined historical and contemporary policies and provisions for music in ITE at the primary and secondary levels. It documented teacher educators' perspectives and experiences of this provision, including their observations of students' attitudes towards music and of the value that students and institutions placed on it. Importantly, the project sought to foster collaboration by bringing ITE providers together to share practice.

A central finding of this research concerns the marginal position of music within primary ITE programmes, with limited contact time, low credit weighting (as a result of TC changes), and inadequate staffing levels posing challenges for all providers. Further dilution occurs in those programmes where music is subsumed into a broader Arts Education module (co-taught with art and drama). This structural marginalisation likely contributes to preservice teachers' low confidence in teaching music – an issue widely reported both internationally and in Irish studies (e. g. Heneghan, 2002; INTO, 2009; Kerin, 2019; Gubbins, 2021; Mulvey et al., 2025). Moore et al.'s study reinforces these findings, particularly in relation to implications for the work of music teacher educators, who reported assuming expanded professional roles that extended beyond developing preservice teachers' musical knowledge and musical content knowledge. This included devoting considerable effort to creating innovative practices to unlock students' innate musicality, advocating for music's intrinsic value in the curriculum, and challenging preservice teachers' negative perceptions of their own musical abilities. A further contributing factor to students' low self-efficacy is their experience of music during school placement. In principle, students are required to teach the full primary curriculum; however, in practice, it was highlighted that it is possible for a student to neither observe a good quality music lesson nor teach music during their school placement.

This study is among the first to amplify the voices of Irish music teacher educators. In doing so, it offers critical insights into how policy changes around ITE and education shape institutional arrangements and pedagogical practices. It highlights the challenges in bridging the gap between education policy and the practice within ITE. While Music is a core subject within compulsory Arts Education in the primary curriculum, the limited space and value afforded to music in ITE raises questions about how effectively preservice teachers can be prepared to teach the subject.

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[6] This study took place within *SCoTENS* (Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South). Established in the wake of the Belfast Peace agreement, this is a network of colleges of education, university departments and other education stakeholders, to promote cross-border collaboration in teacher education and research on the island of Ireland. "North" refers to Northern Ireland (UK), the "South" refers to the Republic of Ireland.

One practitioner-led study which aimed to bridge this gap was Kenny's (2017) work with first-year primary preservice teachers in Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick). This study provides some insight into how students' negative attitudes toward music in school form and how these might be challenged within ITE. Students from varied musical backgrounds (and none) participated in a 12-week music module within a broader Creative Arts course, which included active and creative music-making in a collaborative environment. Through reflective coursework and focus-group discussions, the study explored how students' musical identities and attitudes towards teaching music evolved throughout the module.

The findings indicate that students' perceptions of music's value and their musical identities were significantly shaped by their prior school and personal musical experiences. Limited exposure to music often contributed to low self-efficacy around developing the musical knowledge and skills required to teach the curriculum. At the same time, the study contributes to MTE by highlighting the potential of collaborative music-making, paired with reflection, to challenge students' preconceptions about teaching music, foster confidence and self-efficacy, and enhance pedagogical understanding, thereby ultimately having implications for curriculum design in ITE programmes.

Acquiring the requisite musical knowledge and skills for teaching may also be a concern for preservice secondary school teachers. The disciplinary knowledge stipulated by the TC for entry into MTE programmes (outlined above) is primarily grounded in a Western classical aesthetic. Although not explicitly focused on teacher education, Moore's (2013) doctoral research identifies a significant epistemic misalignment between musical learning developed through secondary school music and the knowledge and skills required and valued in undergraduate programmes. Through a national survey, Moore found that undergraduate students with greater cultural, social and economic capital have access to private instrumental and theoretical tuition and are more likely to meet the demands of undergraduate music programmes. By contrast, undergraduate students whose music learning occurs mainly through secondary school education frequently encounter difficulties with the theoretical and analytical demands of higher education. While many higher education institutes provide foundation courses in music theory, Moore argues that these supports require further enhancement to bridge the gap (Moore, 2013; 2015). These findings have significant implications for postgraduate MTE programmes, especially given the growing call for socio-economic diversification within the teaching profession (Higher Education Authority, 2022). Music graduates who lack confidence in their literacy and analytical skills are less likely to pursue a teaching career, thus perpetuating a homogeneous music teaching profession rooted in a Western classical aesthetic.

Bowe's (2014) doctoral investigation, while also not directly focused on teacher education, extends the discussion beyond higher education into the school setting, with implications for MTE. Drawing on her own experience of encountering preservice music

teachers reluctant to sing or engage in active music-making, and a nationwide survey of secondary school principals, she highlights the tension between the high expectations placed on music teachers in schools and the extent to which required competences are developed within undergraduate music degrees and ITE programmes. Principals expect music teachers to be versatile musicians who demonstrate a wide range of musicianship skills both within the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Bowe therefore calls for more rigorous recruitment procedures, including an interview and an assessment of musical competence, to ensure that "prospective music teachers exhibit the requisite competencies *prior* to admission on ITE programmes" (2014, p. 230). Bowe further recommends reform of consecutive MTE programmes to strengthen the development of music-specific pedagogical content knowledge and other competences required of secondary teachers. Linked with this is the need to provide adequate staffing resources for music within ITE. Such consecutive courses often employ music methods tutors on an *ad hoc* basis – an issue also highlighted by Moore et al. (2019; 2023; O'Flynn et al., 2022).

Research on school placement in Ireland has received much attention in recent years; however, school placement specifically addressing MTE remains under-researched. While one study by Kerin and O'Connell (2021) focused on school placement for secondary school preservice music teachers, it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional classroom visits for assessment became off-limits to higher education tutors, necessitating the development of an alternative approach. While classroom visits have now resumed, the study nonetheless provides valuable insights into broader issues around school placement. These include the importance of facilitating structured tutor and peer support during placement, and the inclusion of the student voice when revising assessment strategies. More broadly, the study's implications point to the need for research on the quality and consistency of mentoring by school-based cooperating teachers, the relationship among the student, mentor, and higher education tutor, and how university-based learning links with classroom practice.

In summary, the research landscape specifically around MTE in Ireland is limited. While existing studies offer valuable insights into the challenges and how some of these are being addressed, there is a need for more critical investigations targeting specific areas of research. For example, building on Moore et al.'s initiative, comparative research across institutions could provide greater insight into how programme structures influence the quality of teacher education. Longitudinal studies following graduates as they transition into their early teaching careers would help illuminate how effectively ITE programmes for music teachers prepare them for school contexts. Harmonising disruption and building the policy/practice divide will require not only pedagogical innovation, but also greater policy coherence across the music education continuum. Expanding the research base on MTE will help inform such future developments.

A Case Report: The Development of a Mutually Beneficial Co-teaching Project with Primary Teachers and Preservice Music Teachers

This case report examines the development of a co-teaching project initiated by Dr Marita Kerin (course director for the Bachelor of Music Education degree at Trinity College Dublin). Originally conceived as a doctoral-research study, the project has continued and evolved, and is now fully embedded in the B Mus Ed curriculum as a core component of School Placement requirements.

The project emerged as a response to the intersection of the challenges of teaching Music within the primary school curriculum and school placement reforms. As already noted, the teaching of Music in primary schools is disrupted by teachers' perceived confidence deficits. Policy and school curricular changes have further impacted these issues. These include an increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy development (DES, 2011), the integration of Music within a broader Arts Education framework (DEY, 2025), and, more recently, the introduction of additional subjects within STEM and the teaching of a European language (DOE, 2023) – all of which have reduced the time available for Music in schools. While the primary curriculum specifies time allocation for Arts Education, it does not prescribe dedicated time for the individual disciplines (i.e. Music, Visual art, Drama). Consequently, classroom teachers who already lack confidence may devote less time to teaching music.

The second catalyst for this project relates to the Teaching Council's requirement to extend and enhance school placement, and to establish meaningful partnerships between schools and higher education institutes (Teaching Council, 2020, 2017a; Hall et al., 2018). While these reforms represent structural harmony at the policy level, their implementation has generated practical challenges. Firstly, prior to these reforms, B Mus Ed students completed placements in secondary schools during three years of the four-year programme. Extending this necessitated an additional placement period in their first year of study, further exacerbating the already challenging task of securing student placements in secondary schools. One pragmatic solution was to situate an introductory placement period in a primary school. A positive outcome in doing so was the establishment of a school-university partnership, aligning with the second TC requirement noted above. However, drawing on previous research, Kerin (2019) highlights the challenges associated with the TC partnership aspiration, noting how school personnel have perceived it as adding to teachers' workload, and have called for greater clarity around roles and responsibilities, together with enhanced support for schools. It was hoped that the co-teaching model would help provide that support.

The co-teaching model in action

The co-teaching project was designed in collaboration with a local primary school. A co-teaching model is described as one which "involves two or more teachers learning from each other while sharing the responsibility for teaching the students" (Murphy & Scantlebury, 2010, p. 1). The school chosen was (and is) an inner-city girls' primary school, situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Music education students (usually in pairs) are assigned to a class teacher and co-teach one music lesson per week over six weeks. While preservice teachers (PSTs) present as novice teachers, they are competent performers with strong musical knowledge and skills (content knowledge). However, most lack teaching experience. The primary classroom teacher, on the other hand, possesses extensive pedagogical knowledge and teaching expertise, but many claim confidence deficits in teaching Music. Prior to placement, university-led preparation seminars introduce PSTs to pedagogical repertoire, classroom methods, reflective practice, and the theoretical principles underpinning co-teaching. Further induction involves observation, whereby the PSTs observe, reflect on and co-discuss other subjects taught by the class teacher. Through this, they learn from the teacher's pedagogical knowledge, their understanding of the pupils they teach, a variety of teaching and assessment strategies, and approaches to classroom management. As Kerin notes, PSTs relied on the class teacher "to ensure that the children were accommodated, that the music lesson was relevant to the age-group and that the children were engaged with the expertise which the musician offered" (Kerin, 2019, p. 146).

Regarding the music lessons, the PST and the classroom teacher co-plan, co-teach, and co-reflect on them, embracing the three strands of the curriculum: *Listening and responding*, *Performing*, and *Composing*. Unlike traditional school placement, co-teaching promotes equality and assumes "a shared and equal responsibility for pupil learning amongst co-teachers" (Kerin, 2019, p. 6).

The project yielded several important outcomes at the individual and institutional levels. In addition to resolving the logistical issue of finding sites for additional school placement for PSTs, this approach provided a supported entry into classroom practice, enabling them to connect their musical knowledge and university learning with practical application. Working alongside experienced teachers facilitated a greater understanding of classroom dynamics.

For classroom teachers, the collaboration created opportunities for professional learning. However, while they reported improvements in their musical knowledge and skills in teaching music, as well as a clearer understanding of the music curriculum and a deeper appreciation of music's intrinsic value, they continued to perceive themselves least confident in teaching the subject.

Another significant outcome of the project was in relation to a transformed school culture, shifting from one that endorsed solo teaching to one that embraced collaboration and the sharing of expertise through professional conversations and reflection.

While this project illustrates how efforts to create localised pedagogical harmony within ITE, it also highlights several limitations and wider systemic disruptions, for example, the relatively short placement duration constrains the depth and sustainability of the impact on both PSTs and teachers. Neither does it resolve deeper structural constraints which directly contribute to teachers' confidence deficits in teaching music, such as the limited curriculum time for music, and its marginal position within both school and ITE. Nevertheless, positioning school placement in a collaborative, reciprocal learning environment offers a mutually beneficial approach to school placement that seeks to bridge the gap between policy, practice, and professional learning.

Enduring Challenges and Promising Practices: Progressing Music Teacher Education

Initial teacher education and music in ITE has a long history in Ireland. While it has evolved in response to curricular and policy changes, the most impactful reforms have occurred in the past two decades. These reforms have strengthened the professionalism of teacher education; however, partly as a result of these changes, tensions which disrupt progress in MTE have emerged. The harmonisation of these disruptions will depend on how MTE programmes aim to resolve these tensions.

Part of the TC's remit is to review all individual ITE programmes, typically every five years. While the purpose of this review is to ensure programmes meet the required professional standards, it is also an opportunity for each provider to review their programme(s) in light of the challenges they experience, the needs of their student cohort, curricular development in schools, and other policy changes.

A key priority for music in primary ITE lies in addressing the issue of limited contact time. Future programme design could therefore explore innovative pedagogical approaches to unlock students' innate musicality (and therefore confidence). In addition, programmes could consider how to strategically use available "discretionary" credits to expand curricular offerings in music and music pedagogy effectively. This is already occurring in some MTE programmes, and so building a stronger collaborative network of music teacher educators – as outlined earlier in the comparative study by Moore et al. (2019) – would provide opportunities to share practice and serve to enhance MTE across all programmes.

Bridging the epistemic gap between secondary school music and the knowledge, skills, and competences valued at higher levels and prescribed by the TC is important to ensure equal access for all students wishing to pursue a teaching career. Future development will require critical and sustained dialogue between music educators across all sectors, curriculum developers, the TC, and policymakers, to consider the nature and diversity of

musical knowledge. The argument is not to diminish the value of the Western classical aesthetic and its contribution to music education, but, in light of broadening school curricula, there is a need to expand the musical practices represented, so that MTE prepares teachers who are more stylistically diverse, inclusive, and adaptable.

A further critical area for development is the strengthening of the continuum of teacher education. While the TC's policy frameworks promote teacher learning as a career-long process, the provision of continuous professional development (CPD) for music, especially at the primary level, remains uneven. Expanding access to high-quality, subject-specific CPD and ensuring strong alignment between ITE and in-service provision will be vital. This will be of particular importance in the coming years with changes in both the primary and upper secondary school music curricula about to come on stream. Initiatives such as *Oide* (2026)[7], alongside the Post-Primary Teachers' Association[8] and other professional networks[9], make valuable contributions to CPD, but there is scope for more systematic, sustained and equitable provision.

The co-teaching case presented earlier illustrated the potential for deepening school-university partnerships. This model offers a means to bridge the divide between policy and practice by supporting both preservice and in-service teachers through collaborative, context-responsive learning. It also helps bridge the divide between primary and secondary music education, as these secondary PSTs gain a deeper understanding of primary education. There is scope to develop the co-teaching model and to embed it more systematically within ITE, for example, by also offering structured mentorship training for cooperating teachers. Not only would this further enhance school-university partnerships and provide CPD for classroom teachers (primary and secondary), but it would also adhere to TC recommendations in this regard (The Teaching Council, 2017).

Finally, while existing research provides valuable insights into areas of harmony and disruption in MTE in Ireland, progress in the field will depend on the development of a more robust research base. There is a need for larger-scale, longitudinal, and comparative research that can inform policy and practice more directly. In particular, research that foregrounds issues of access and diversity is crucial in shaping a more responsive and relevant MTE structure.

Taken together, these priorities suggest that "harmony" in MTE lies neither in resolving nor disrupting tensions but in learning from the experience of enduring these challenges, engaging with them, and responding creatively through innovative, promising

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7 *Oide* (meaning "tutor" or "teacher") was established in 2023 by the Department of Education and Youth as a professional learning and support service. It provies subject-specific resources, organises CPD events and updates teachers on curriculum and policy developments.

8 See http://ppmta.ie

9 For example; Society for Music Education in Ireland (https://www.smei.ie); Kodály Ireland (https://www.kodaly.ie); Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland

practices. As Christophersen et al. observe, "approaching issues of change within teacher education is a complex matter" and should be regarded as a "process rather than an event" (2023, p. 17). For MTE, this process of bridging policy and practice, and navigating ongoing reform, requires more focused research in MTE, a deeper commitment to equity, diversity, and societal change, and, above all, critical dialogue with all stakeholders. In this sense, harmony is not a final resolution, but an ongoing practice of critical, collaborative engagement.

Declaration of AI usage

AI was used to a limited extent in the preparation of this chapter two ways. First, it was used to assist in identifying additional peer-reviewed articles and research around music teacher education in Ireland. Second, it was used to suggest some edits to the text where the word count had been exceeded.

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Michele Biasutti & Eleonora Concina

Music Teacher Education in Italy

Pedagogical Foundations, Research Insights, and Innovative Practices

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of music teacher education in Italy, examining its pedagogical foundations, historical development, current challenges, and future perspectives. Music education in Italy is characterised by a strong distinction between primary and secondary levels, reflected in the differing roles and training pathways of generalist and specialist teachers. While primary education adopts an interdisciplinary approach in which music supports child development, secondary education emphasises disciplinary competence, particularly in music and instrumental instruction. Contemporary research highlights persistent challenges: discontinuity of music education across school levels, insufficient practical preparation, limited in-service opportunities, and disparities related to regional socio-cultural factors. The integration of digital technologies represents both an emerging opportunity and a critical area of inequality, revealing the necessity of strengthening teachers' digital competence and ethical awareness. Overall, preparing music educators to respond to contemporary challenges is essential for enhancing students' engagement and fully recognising the cultural and educational value of music within the Italian school system.

Keywords: generalist and specialist teachers, music education, pedagogical approaches, primary and secondary schools, teacher training

Introduction

Music education in Italian schools is currently experiencing a period of profound transformation. A model that for a long time was largely oriented toward the transmission of musical content – focused on notion, terminology, and the reproduction of predefined repertoire – is increasingly giving way to a more student-centred approach. In this emerging perspective, learning is not limited to receiving information about music; rather, it is constructed through active participation, exploration, and meaningful engagement with sound, voice, and instruments. Informal learning processes, collaborative activities, and hands-on experiences have therefore gained a central role, reflecting broader educational priorities that emphasise creativity, inclusion, and the development of transversal competences.

This shift is closely connected to the growing expectation that schools should cultivate not only musical knowledge, but also wider skills such as communication, critical listening, teamwork, and emotional expression. Practical music-making – especially singing and collective performance – becomes a powerful means to foster motivation, strengthen social interaction, and support students' sense of belonging. In this context, music can function as a bridge between disciplines, linking artistic practice with language, history, technology, and citizenship education, while offering students diverse opportunities to express identity and experience learning in embodied and relational ways.

At the same time, these changes highlight the need to strengthen music teachers' professional competences so they can respond effectively to new educational demands. Teachers are increasingly required to design flexible learning environments, facilitate inclusive group work, integrate digital tools, and assess learning outcomes that are not always easily captured by traditional methods. Supporting educators in this transition – through initial preparation, continuing professional development, and access to updated pedagogical resources – becomes essential if the potential of contemporary music education is to be fully realised.

This chapter outlines and critically discusses the profile of the music teacher within the Italian school system. It examines the pedagogical foundations that underpin current practices, traces the historical evolution of music education in Italy, and considers the main challenges teachers face today, including structural constraints, curricular expectations, and shifting student needs. Finally, it explores future perspectives, highlighting possible directions for teacher training and for the development of teaching approaches capable of combining musical rigour with creativity, participation, and educational relevance.

Mapping music education in the Italian school system

Before examining the education and professional profile of music teachers in Italy, it is necessary to clarify how music education is organised within the Italian school system. Music does not occupy the same position at all educational levels: it is integrated into broader areas of experience in kindergarten, taught as part of the general curriculum in primary school, and becomes more specialised in lower secondary education. In upper secondary education, however, music is present mainly in specific school pathways, such as music and dance high schools. This uneven curricular presence has important implications for the preparation, role, and professional identity of music teachers.

The profile of music teachers in Italy differs according to the grade level and educational context in which they teach. A key distinction lies in teachers' pre-service education, which differs between primary education, including kindergarten, and secondary education. Clarifying how music education is positioned within the curriculum at each school level is therefore essential.

According to the New National Indications of the Italian Ministry of Education (*Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito*, MIM, 2025), the kindergarten curriculum (for children 3–5 year-old) is organised into fields of experience. They are defined as transversal areas of a child's direct experience: "Each field of experience offers a set of objects, situations, images, and languages, referring to the symbolic systems of our culture, capable of evoking, stimulating, and accompanying progressively more secure learning" (MIUR, 2012, p. 18). The publication identifies five fields of experience for the Italian kindergarten: the Self and the others; Body and movement; Images, sound, and colours; Speeches and words; Knowledge of the world. Music and sound education are included in the field Images, sounds, and colours, which promote sensorial knowledge, aesthetic appreciation, and self-expression.

In primary school (children 6–10 year-old) music education is a specific subject of the school curriculum, and is mainly based on listening, movement, and sound production learning activities, in an interdisciplinary approach (MIM, 2025). Music is regarded as a discipline of basic education closely interconnected with other subjects. Conversely, at the secondary level, music assumes a more specialised character. In middle school (which is the first level of secondary education in Italy, from 11 to 13 years old), students receive two hours of music education per week, whereas in most high schools (the second level of secondary school in Italy, from 14 to 18 years old) music is not included in the curriculum, except in musical and dance high schools. Such pathways are specifically designed to prepare students for higher education in conservatories.

From a broader European perspective, the Italian case highlights a set of tensions that are central to contemporary debates on music teacher education: the balance between generalist preparation in primary school and specialist professional identity in secondary school; the relationship between a strong conservatoire tradition and school-based

pedagogical training; and persistent discontinuities in curricular provisions, particularly in upper secondary education. These tensions intersect with wider European priorities such as competence-based curricula, inclusion and equity, and the development of digital and ethical competences for teaching (EU, 2021). Italy provides a useful lens through which to examine how national traditions and institutional structures shape the professional preparation of music teachers.

The education of music teachers in Italian schools is greatly affected by the specific roles in the different school levels, as well as the historical pathway that has characterised music education and the development of teachers' professional profile in Italy. These features will be discussed further in this chapter. The section "Mapping music education in the Italian school system" outlines the main pre-service pathways and professional profiles for music teachers across school levels. The Sections "Mapping the research landscape: Challenges in music teacher education within the Italian school system" and "A case report: Music teacher education and technology: challenges and opportunities" then connect historical developments and current research evidence to contemporary challenges in music teacher education, including equity issues and the implications of digitalisation.

Italian music teachers' pre-service education and profiles

The contrast between the two approaches in music education- interdisciplinary in primary education versus more single subject focus in secondary education- reflects the different profiles of the music teacher in the two school levels. While in infant and primary education there is a generalist teacher who teaches all the subjects included in the school curriculum, in secondary education there is a staff of specialist teachers, each specifically prepared to teach one or two disciplines within the same area of knowledge (for example, there is one specialist teacher for Italian literature, History and Geography, and one teacher for both Mathematics and the Sciences). The distinction applies to music teachers' roles, resulting in different pre-service training paths for professional development.

This difference implies the need to establish two distinct pre-service training pathways for music teachers. Kindergarten and primary school teachers are generalist teachers, responsible for teaching most or all subjects included in the curriculum, including music. Their pre-service education takes place within the five-year single-cycle Master's degree in Primary Education Sciences (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) (MIUR, 2010).

This qualification should not be understood as a Bachelor's degree followed by a separate Master's degree. Rather, it is an integrated university programme lasting five years, with no intermediate distinction between Bachelor's and Master's levels. Students enter the programme after completing upper secondary education and, upon successful completion, obtain a Master's-level degree that qualifies them to teach in kindergarten and primary school.

This structure was introduced to strengthen the professional preparation of generalist teachers and to align Italian teacher education with broader European expectations regarding the quality and level of teacher training. The programme combines theoretical, pedagogical, methodological, and practical components. It includes courses in education, psychology, subject didactics, assessment, school legislation, inclusion, and technologies for teaching, as well as compulsory school placements. Within this broad curriculum, music education is included as one of the areas in which future generalist teachers are expected to develop basic pedagogical and didactic competences. This pathway is relevant because it shows that primary and kindergarten teachers in Italy are not trained as music specialists. Instead, they receive music education as part of a broader preparation for teaching across the curriculum. This has important implications for music education in primary schools: while it supports interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of music with other areas of learning, it may also limit the depth of musical training received by future teachers, especially when compared with the specialist preparation required for secondary school music teachers.

During the Master's degree the students are provided with contents and competences necessary for teaching different subjects, including music education. The theoretical and pedagogical foundations of music education (including educational objectives, didactic approaches, teaching methodologies and theories about music learning) are presented and critically discussed in a specific course, combined with more practical musical activities and workshops.

Secondary school teachers generally have a more specialised professional profile than primary school teachers, and their training pathway is more closely focused on specific subject disciplines, including music. Before entering the teaching profession, prospective music teachers must complete a Master's degree in a music-related discipline. This qualification may be obtained at a university, particularly for more theoretical fields such as Musicology, or at a conservatoire, which generally offers more practice-based programmes, including Bachelor's and Master's degrees in instrumental performance or instrumental instruction. Following the completion of the Master's degree, prospective music teachers, like other secondary school teachers, must complete a specialised postgraduate university programme in teacher education. This programme lasts one academic year and requires the completion of 60 ECTS credits. Its curriculum includes theoretical modules (specific and differentiated according to the main subjects which will be taught by the teacher), practical workshops, and a school internship. Admission to this programme is highly selective, and successful completion is a compulsory requirement for entry to the national competition that grants access to permanent teaching positions (MIUR, 2010).

Historical development of music education and of the role of music teachers in Italian primary and secondary schools

To fully understand the distinct training pathways for music teachers, it is crucial to provide a brief overview of the history of music education in Italian schools. In the Italian school system, music education was first officially recognised in the early 20th century with Gentile's Reform (REGIO DECRETO, 1923), named after the Minister who promoted it. The reform introduced music from the very beginning of elementary schooling, in the preparatory stage corresponding to today's kindergarten (Badolato & Scalfaro, 2014). In its early implementation, with the aim of extending literacy to all Italian children, even those belonging to the most deprived socio-cultural classes, particular emphasis was placed on singing, choral activities, and exercises in basic rhythmic perception and production. This orientation strongly influenced the work of leading Italian music pedagogists, including Agazzi (1908), Bassi (1971), and Goitre (1980). In today's primary schools, the impact of these approaches stems from the largely interdisciplinary nature of music education. Vocal practice, in particular, remains one of the most flexible tools for connecting music with other subjects, while also encouraging self-expression and positive social interaction. Within this framework, teachers were generalist educators trained across the full range of primary school subjects, including music.

The formal introduction of music education in the secondary school was established by Italian Law No. 1859/1962 in 1962. With this document, the Italian Parliament proposed a reform of middle school (secondary school of the first level), including music education as a discipline of the curriculum. This subject was compulsory for the first year, while it became optional for the second and the third year. These indications were modified in 1977 with the Law No. 348/1977, which made music education compulsory for all three years of the first level of secondary school, and defined it as one of the subjects involved in the final exam at the end of the third year. The reform highlighted the need to hire teachers expert in the field of music instruction: for this reason, music teachers should have a degree from a conservatoire. For secondary school subject, specific training was of primary importance compared to didactic and pedagogical knowledge.

Over the years, increasing importance has been attributed to the role of the arts in students' personal, social, and cultural development. This shift became particularly explicit with Law No. 60/2017, which strengthened the place of artistic and musical education within the Italian school system (MIM, 2022). One of the most significant developments was the consolidation of a specific musical track in lower secondary schools, giving students the opportunity to study a musical instrument within the framework of general compulsory education. This represents an interesting and innovative feature of the Italian system. In these schools, instrumental learning is not conceived as a separate private activity or as training reserved only for students attending specialist institutions. Rather, it becomes part of the educational offer of ordinary middle schools. Students can therefore

receive instrumental instruction while continuing to follow the same general curriculum as their peers. This model broadens access to musical practice and may support greater educational equity, since it offers structured instrumental learning also to students who might not otherwise have access to private music tuition or conservatoire preparation.

As a consequence, two distinct teaching profiles exist in lower secondary schools: the music education teacher and the instrumental teacher. The music education teacher works with the whole class and focuses on broader musical knowledge and competences, including music history, music theory, listening skills, basic performance activities, creativity, and collaborative music-making. This role is connected to the general educational function of music as a school subject and is addressed to all students. The instrumental teacher, by contrast, works with students who follow the musical track and provides specialised tuition in a specific instrument. Instrumental lessons are generally organised in smaller groups or individual settings and are scheduled in the afternoon, after ordinary curricular lessons. This organisation creates a hybrid model: the school remains a general lower secondary school, but it also offers a more specialised musical pathway within the public education system. The musical track has important implications for the professional identity of music teachers. Instrumental teachers are not expected to be only performers or technical instructors; they must also possess strong pedagogical and didactic competences. They work with adolescents in a school context, contribute to students' broader educational development, and often participate in ensemble activities, concerts, interdisciplinary projects, and inclusive school initiatives. Their work therefore requires the ability to connect instrumental technique with motivation, collaboration, creativity, and students' personal growth.

This development has also influenced teacher education. The modernisation of music teacher preparation reflects the recognition that musical expertise alone is not sufficient for teaching in general schools. Future music teachers need pedagogical preparation, knowledge of adolescent development, inclusive teaching strategies, classroom management skills, and the ability to design meaningful learning experiences. The Italian musical-track model therefore provides an example of how general education can incorporate more specialised artistic learning while maintaining a broader educational mission.

This historical development set the stage for contemporary debates on the role and value of music education in Italian schools. It raises important questions about access, inclusion, teacher preparation, curriculum organisation, and the relationship between artistic excellence and general education. At the same time, it highlights the potential of music education to contribute not only to musical learning, but also to students' social participation, cultural development, and personal expression.

Mapping the research landscape: Challenges in music teacher education within the Italian school system

Several studies in the field of music education have examined the work of teachers in Italian primary and secondary schools (Biasutti, 2010, 2012; Biasutti et al., 2015). Much of this research has focused on pressing challenges within the Italian pedagogical landscape, highlighting their impact on the implementation of educational practices in music classrooms. Among them, there can be found discontinuity in music education across school levels, insufficient practical preparation, limited in-service opportunities, and disparities related to regional socio-cultural factors. All these issues focus on urgent themes in contemporary educational contexts. This also required music teachers to be prepared to face and solve complex conditions in their professional practice, consequently reflecting on pre-service music teachers' training.

A first challenge concerns the limited continuity of music education across school levels. While music is treated as a core discipline in the early years of schooling, it is almost entirely absent at the high school level, except in Music High Schools (*Licei Musicali*), which provide specialised musical training. Such an arrangement reinforces the perception of music as a secondary subject in a society that tends to prioritise disciplines more directly linked to scientific, social, and economic development (Badolato & Scalfaro, 2014). This issue is also reinforced by the different initial training of music teachers: while secondary teachers are specialists, and so are fully aware of the value and the role that music has in human life, primary teachers are generalist teachers who often feel that they should prioritise linguistic and scientific subjects over artistic ones in their classroom work. Given the richness of Italian musical traditions, the marginalisation of music education risks eroding a heritage that has long shaped the nation's culture. To counter this risk, innovative approaches emphasise inclusivity, encouraging teachers and educators to engage not only students but also families and local associations. One example is the 'community music' model (Van Der Sandt & Coppi, 2021), which promotes active and transformative learning across formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings. Community music views musical practice as a participatory and inclusive process, rather than only as the transmission of technical skills or established repertoires. Through group activities such as singing, ensemble performance, improvisation, and collaborative composition, it can support inclusion, social cohesion, and students' sense of belonging. This approach is especially significant for music teacher education because it expands the role of the teacher from subject specialist to facilitator of participation and collective creativity. Future teachers therefore need to be prepared to work with diverse groups, value students' musical backgrounds, adapt activities to different needs, and connect school music with wider community practices. For this reason, collaboration among teachers, educators, musicians, schools, and local cultural organisations should be actively encouraged.

Other challenges in the Italian educational landscape include insufficient practical training and limited classroom readiness among music teachers, compounded by restricted career pathways. Opportunities for in-service professional development in music education are also scarce. Pre-service training therefore represents a crucial stage for preparing future teachers to adopt effective strategies, student-centred approaches, and inclusive methods. Research by Marzano et al. (2012) highlights a discrepancy between ministerial guidelines and actual classroom practice: primary teachers often design activities based on their own musical competences rather than the official national curriculum (National Indications, *Indicazioni Nazionali*, MIM 2012; New National Indications, *Nuove Indicazioni Nazionali*, MIM 2025). Areas most frequently neglected include digital sound, musical notation, Orff instruments, musical forms, and instrument classification. Another critical concern is assessment. Evaluating music learning is particularly complex (De Cicco, 2019), as it is often influenced by subjective factors such as cultural background, aesthetic taste, and personal habits. Effective assessment should address both process and outcome (Lucisano et al., 2012). In primary schools, teachers are encouraged to focus on two overarching objectives: fostering musical vocal and instrumental production and promoting the conscious use of musical language in personal and social expression, both of which support a broader vision of music as a cultural product for self-expression and communication. This underlines the need to plan more specific experiences in pre-service music teachers' training to prepare them to face the complexity of assessing musical achievements.

Music teacher training is a complex, lifelong process. It has to value both pre-service and in-service professional development. More specifically, training should be adapted to the distinct educational contexts of primary and secondary schools in Italy. Due to the difference in pre-service training, Biasutti (2012) has found that Italian primary generalist school teachers are more inclined to adopt an innovative teaching approach in music education, mainly student-centred, than their secondary specialist colleagues. The generalist role of primary teachers influences their adoption of general pedagogical approaches and models in music education and encourages teamwork and professional exchange. Secondary music teachers, who have a more specialised academic career, often adopt a more teacher-centred approach in their educational activity. This seems consistent with the perspective of music education in Italian secondary school, more focused on single discipline content, as described above.

In planning pre-service educational specific aspects should be taken into account to develop a student-centred approach. Pre-service teachers' beliefs about music ability, music teaching and learning should be specifically examined and discussed, since they may affect the attitude and engagement in future training in music education. In a study in Italian educational contexts, Biasutti (2010) found that primary teachers view musical ability as more fixed than their secondary school counterparts. Many teachers believe that formal skills – such as performance and expressive abilities – depend primarily on innate

talent, thereby underestimating the role of teaching and learning processes. This perspective is linked to the importance they attribute to cognitive aspects of music learning. Such findings highlight the need to help prospective teachers articulate and critically examine these beliefs, providing accurate information and fostering reflection on effective pedagogical approaches. Strengthening academic pathways with opportunities to enhance musical competences would also support teachers' self-efficacy as music educators.

Intensive academic programmes based on a student-centred and creative approaches in an international context (Biasutti et al., 2015) may have a relevant impact on the confidence of students in their musical competences and ability to teach music education in primary school. Initial training has a crucial role, but it is not sufficient to face current educational challenges and to promote innovative practices in music education. The educational landscape is constantly evolving, and new educational challenges are still emerging in music education as well. With the aim of encouraging a lifelong learning professional attitude, Italian universities such as Padova University have developed specific training opportunities for professional development, which may enhance the role of cognitive and metacognitive aspects in music teaching and support teamwork (Biasutti et al., 2019).

Initial teacher education plays a crucial role in preparing future music teachers, since it provides the first structured opportunity to develop disciplinary, pedagogical, and didactic competences. However, initial training alone is not sufficient to respond to the complexity of contemporary educational contexts or to promote sustained innovation in music education. Today, music teachers are expected to work in increasingly diverse classrooms, where students may differ in terms of cultural and linguistic background, socioeconomic conditions, learning needs, musical experiences, and access to digital resources. They are also expected to respond to broader educational priorities, such as inclusion, intercultural dialogue, digital transformation, creativity, well-being, and participation. These challenges require competences that cannot be fully developed during a limited period of initial preparation, especially when teacher education programmes remain strongly focused on disciplinary content and formal teaching requirements. For this reason, initial training should be understood as the beginning of a longer professional development pathway rather than as a complete preparation for the profession. It can provide future teachers with essential foundations, including subject knowledge, basic pedagogical tools, reflective attitudes, and awareness of inclusive principles. Nevertheless, many of the most important professional competences are developed progressively through school experience, mentoring, collaboration with colleagues, and continuing professional development. This is particularly relevant in music education. Innovative music teaching often requires teachers to experiment with collaborative learning, creative practices, digital technologies, intercultural repertoires, informal learning approaches, and flexible forms of assessment. These practices are difficult to acquire only through theoretical coursework. They need to

be supported by practical experience, reflection, and opportunities to connect research, artistic practice, and classroom realities. Therefore, while initial training is indispensable, it should be complemented by systematic in-service training, professional learning communities, school-university partnerships, and continuous opportunities for teachers to update their competences. A stronger connection between initial teacher education and continuing professional development would help music teachers respond more effectively to diversity, reduce the gap between policy expectations and classroom practice, and promote more inclusive and innovative forms of music education.

Another critical issue concerns disparities in resources across Italian regions, which includes the different availability of ICT resources, impacting both teachers' training and activity in music classes, asking music teachers to become also problem-solver professionals.

Italian MTE programmes offer some preparation for inclusive teaching, particularly through general courses on pedagogy, didactics, psychology, and special education. These components can help future music teachers develop awareness of learner diversity and of the need to adapt teaching strategies to different classroom contexts. In principle, such training supports the development of inclusive attitudes and provides teachers with basic tools for responding to students with disabilities, SEN, or different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, this preparation remains uneven and is not always sufficiently connected to the specific challenges of music education. Several factors contribute to regional disparities in student outcomes, including the high concentration of migrant students in certain areas, limited resources to support inclusive practices for students with disabilities or SEN, socio-cultural disadvantages within families, restricted access to technology and multimedia tools, and uneven preparation among in-service teachers (MIM, 2015, 2024). These factors have a direct impact on the daily work of music teachers, who must often adapt their teaching to highly diverse classroom situations.

For this reason, novice music teachers are expected to have already developed flexibility, resilience, and the ability to respond to complex educational needs. Music teaching can offer valuable opportunities for inclusion, since musical activities may support participation, collaboration, non-verbal communication, and intercultural exchange. These are important strengths of the discipline and can be especially relevant for migrant students or for learners who experience difficulties in more text-based subjects. These competences are not always explicitly or systematically developed during initial teacher education. In many cases, MTE programmes place stronger emphasis on disciplinary knowledge, musical skills, and subject-specific content than on inclusive pedagogy, intercultural education, classroom differentiation, or strategies for working with SEN students. As a result, future teachers may enter the profession with strong musical expertise but limited practical preparation for managing diversity in real classroom contexts. Overall, Italian MTE programmes provide a useful general basis for inclusion, but they would benefit from

a stronger and more explicit focus on inclusive music pedagogy, intercultural approaches, SEN-specific strategies, differentiated assessment, and practical training in diverse school environments. This would help future music teachers move beyond general awareness and develop concrete professional competences for supporting all learners.

Combined with uneven teacher preparation for using technology in the classroom, these differences often limit the integration of music technology into teaching practices. National surveys of standardised test focused on Italian, mathematics, and English results reveal significant variations in the overall preparation of primary and secondary school students, which closely reflect the geographical context (INVALSI, 2024). These disparities largely reflect the uneven conditions of individual schools, including demographic, socio-economic, and technological factors, which are reflected in music classes. If comparable large-scale indicators existed for music learning, similar geographical patterns of opportunity and attainment would likely emerge, given the documented unevenness of resources and teacher preparation. Such conditions affect the quality of music education, where teachers may lack the time or resources to implement innovative and high-quality approaches. One of the most pressing concerns is the integration of technology into music education, which remains challenging due to both resource inequalities and differences in teachers' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competences. The urgency of addressing these issues was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which intensified debate on the role of digital tools and the necessity of integrating ICT into music education – a topic explored further in the following section.

A case report: Music teacher education and technology: challenges and opportunities

The integration of technology into education has become one of the most debated topics in recent years not only because digital tools are increasingly present in everyday life, but also because they reshape what it means to teach and learn. Advances in science and technology, together with the widespread availability of smartphones, tablets, and online platforms, have compelled educators to reflect critically on both the potential and the risks of technology in the classroom. In Italy, this discussion gained particular urgency during the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools were suddenly required to replace face-to-face lessons with distance learning. Institutions, teachers, and administrators were largely unprepared for such a rapid shift, and the impact of this emergency response – both positive and negative – continues to be examined in educational research. For music education, in particular, the pandemic acted as a "stress test" that exposed longstanding structural issues (resources, training, status of the subject) while also accelerating experimentation and innovation in teaching practices.

In music education, the adoption of remote teaching strategies created challenges across all school levels, but it also revealed how digital tools can be used to expand learning opportunities. At secondary and higher education levels, distance learning highlighted difficulties in adapting music teaching to virtual environments (Schiavio et al., 2021). Although one-to-one tuition could often be maintained through videoconferencing, the quality of teaching and learning was frequently affected by unstable connections, audio compression, latency, limited non-verbal communication, and the inability to capture the full acoustic richness of performances. These constraints reduced the immediacy and precision of feedback, particularly for aspects such as tone, dynamics, articulation, posture, and ensemble coordination. However, the same limitations encouraged teachers and students to experiment with alternative strategies. One widely adopted solution was the use of video and audio recordings to support performance evaluation (Schiavio et al., 2021), allowing students to document their practice, review their own progress, and receive more detailed teacher comments asynchronously.

From the perspective of teacher education, this period required a rapid reconsideration of traditional pedagogical strategies. Music teacher education had to adapt quickly to check, revise, and sometimes redesign established methods, in order to promote a more flexible learning environment, including virtual educational contexts. This did not simply mean "learning how to use platforms", but rather rethinking the relationship between aims, content, activities, and assessment. For example, teachers needed to decide which learning objectives could realistically be pursued online and which required in-person interaction. They also had to explore new forms of task design that could support student autonomy and maintain motivation outside the classroom. The contrasting effects of remote learning highlighted the need for integrative approaches, in which in-person activities are accompanied by resources and tasks to be carried out virtually, creating a blended model that takes advantage of the strengths of both environments.

The experience of remote learning has stimulated innovation and experimentation. One project in Italian secondary schools delivered guitar instruction to middle school students through an educational app based on gamification principles (Peretti et al., 2025). This approach not only increased students' motivation and interest in musical study but also supported individual practice at home. By providing asynchronous access to lesson materials and teacher-assigned tasks, the app allowed students to learn at their own pace while maintaining guidance from their teachers.

At the primary level, distance learning posed several challenges. Many music activities for younger students – such as Orff-based pedagogy or choral work – are synchronous and collaborative, making them difficult to adapt to virtual settings. Research by Biasutti et al. (2022) found that teachers often had to reduce synchronous group activities, shifting toward individual tasks. However, a positive side effect was the greater involvement of parents and relatives in children's musical activities at home, which could

serve as a foundation for more inclusive, community-oriented practices (Van Der Sandt & Coppi, 2021). In primary school, music education may also benefit from the use of mobile apps, to convey theoretical content and concepts. A project proposed by Degli Innocenti et al. (2019) in an Italian primary school used a smartphone app to support learning the main characteristics of different musical genres. The interactive virtual environment, stimulated both students' visual-spatial and auditory exploration and supported motivation, encouraged improvements in both the learning of basic concepts and the development of listening and categorisation skills for different musical genres in primary school children.

It is significant that many of the projects described above have been implemented in Italian schools as extra-curricular activities. In Italy, schools may engage external experts in several disciplines to offer students specialised educational experiences. While this flexibility can enrich school life and enable innovation, it can also produce a fragmentation between "ordinary curriculum" and "special projects". These experiences highlight the creativity and commitment of music teachers and educators in developing new ways to enhance teaching strategies, and they show that technological devices can be effective mediators for stimulating students' interest in learning music. However, too often such initiatives remain confined to isolated "best practices", informally shared among teachers, without significantly influencing institutional guidelines or achieving broader dissemination. This gap points to a structural challenge: innovation depends on individual motivation rather than being systematically supported through policy, resources, and coherent teacher education pathways.

In initial teacher education, technology has increasingly been introduced as support for several practical activities (Biasutti, 2025). Nonetheless, there remains a lack of specific institutional guidance for promoting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates music, technology, and other subjects in a coherent way. This is particularly relevant in primary education, where interdisciplinary work is both common and pedagogically valuable. Without clear frameworks, teachers may either avoid technology due to uncertainty or adopt tools in a superficial way (for example, using apps only for entertainment). A stronger institutional vision would encourage technology use that serves musical and educational aims, rather than technology becoming an end in itself. It would support a shared professional language for discussing digital pedagogy in music, including appropriate criteria for selecting tools, designing tasks, ensuring accessibility, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Overall, integrating technology into music education presents both challenges and opportunities (Addessi, 2020). Although the studies examined have highlighted several benefits of the introduction of technological tools in music education, teachers and educators need to be fully aware of the ethical issues associated with the exposure of children to technology. Misuse of technology may have risky consequences. The introduction of technology in the classroom implies the responsible use of the Internet and technological tools, to reduce potential risks and misuse and effectively realise the benefits. Difficulties

include barriers, communication problems, and the need for teachers to revise traditional pedagogical strategies. For students, successful learning requires stronger self-regulation and sustained attention. At the same time, technology can enhance engagement, help overcome the perception of music as a secondary subject, and provide scaffolding for learning through asynchronous access to materials and teacher support. To realise these benefits, teachers must be trained in digital pedagogy, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development in this area. It should also be underlined that acquiring content and skills in using new technologies in class are as important as developing self-efficacy in including them in teachers' daily activities (Menabò et al., 2021). For this reason, training opportunities for teachers should promote a self-confident attitude towards the use of technologies in class and in music education lessons.

Looking forward in Music Teacher Education: Future research development and educational implications

A shift is underway in how music education is understood in primary and secondary schooling, and this change in perspective requires updating the training offered to both future and in-service music teachers within a lifelong learning framework. Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged and promoted, integrating music within an inclusive education perspective. In Italy, teachers should be supported in developing flexibility and creativity to experiment with new approaches to music education across school levels. This is crucial for reducing the gap between formal and informal learning: children are immersed daily in a dense soundscape of musical stimuli and experiences, yet they often perceive school music – especially in secondary education – as still tied to "traditional" models. Connecting students' informal musical lives with classroom practices, therefore, becomes essential for sustaining motivation and participation. Music teachers should be trained to frame music education as a field where informal and formal learning coexist and carry equal educational value.

The integration of technological resources into music lessons can further reduce the distance between informal and formal learning in an increasingly digitalised world. In particular, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools can support differentiated instruction, feedback, and creative exploration (e.g., composition, improvisation, and listening analysis), provided that teachers are prepared to use them critically and transparently. Future research should therefore examine how AI reshapes music teachers' agency, assessment practices, and inclusion, as well as the ethical implications of data use, authorship, and bias in school settings. Teachers should be prepared to reflect on multiple perspectives in music education, considering music as a means of human expression in its varied forms while also guiding students to understand how digital and AI systems mediate musical production and reception.

Overall, strengthening music teacher education in Italy requires aligning institutional pathways with the realities of school practice across levels. For primary generalist teachers, this means expanding sustained musical and pedagogical preparation, including supervised practice and confidence-building experiences. For secondary specialist teachers, it implies reinforcing the integration of subject expertise with didactics, assessment literacy, and inclusive strategies. Across both profiles, teacher education should systematically address digital pedagogy – including AI literacy – and ethical awareness, so that technology becomes a lever for participation and quality rather than a factor that amplifies regional and socio-economic disparities.

Declaration of AI usage

We confirm we have not used AI in writing our chapter.

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Rūta Girdzijauskienė

Between Tradition and Change

Music Teacher Education in Lithuania

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of music teacher education in Lithuania, tracing its development from a centralised Soviet system to a more diverse and autonomous higher education landscape. It outlines key national and European policy frameworks and reviews the limited yet informative body of Lithuanian research on music teacher education. The chapter identifies five major challenges shaping current practice, with particular attention to the formation of music teacher identity as a unifying and increasingly critical concern. It argues that professional identity plays a key role in integrating musical, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions of teaching and concludes with directions for strengthening the future development of music teacher education.

Keywords: music teacher education, cultural and social context, professional identity, higher education reform, Lithuanian music education

Introduction

Music teacher education in Lithuania has developed alongside the country's broader system of teacher education and reflects the social and political changes that reshaped Lithuanian education over the past thirty years. The structure that exists today is the result of a longer process: from a single, centrally controlled programme during the Soviet period to a more diverse landscape after independence in 1990. The following sections outline how this transformation unfolded and how music teacher education gradually took its present form.

From a Centralised System to a Pluralistic Higher Education Landscape

During the Soviet period (until 1990), the education of teachers was strictly centralised and state-controlled. The music education study programme, as in all other subject-specific teacher education programmes, was implemented in only one higher education institution, with little flexibility or institutional autonomy. This model ensured uniformity but limited innovation and regional diversity. Within this structure, music teacher education was concentrated in Klaipėda, Lithuania's third-largest city on the Baltic coast. For decades, Klaipėda served as the national centre for music education. It also became home to the Lithuanian Music Teachers' Association, which played a coordinating role in connecting researchers, practitioners and educators across the country.

The situation changed after Lithuania regained its independence in 1990. With the restoration of national sovereignty came major reforms in higher education. The centralised Soviet system was dismantled, and universities gained autonomy to design and implement their own study programmes. This marked the beginning of a new and dynamic period for music teacher education. In the early 2000s, music pedagogy study programmes were established in several cities across Lithuania; there were eight music teacher education programmes operating nationwide. This expansion answered the growing demand for qualified teachers and showed how eager the new institutions were to create their own profiles. On the other hand, such rapid diversification led to uneven quality. Some programmes lacked sufficient academic foundations and the necessary study infrastructure. External evaluations conducted in the mid-2000s by the national quality assurance agency concluded that several of these programmes had limited prospects for sustainable development. As a result, over the following decade, a process of consolidation began. Programmes were gradually merged, reorganised, or discontinued, with the aim of concentrating resources and ensuring higher academic and professional standards.

The last ten years have brought greater stability and focus. Today, three music education programmes are implemented in different regions of Lithuania. This geographical distribution ensures that teacher education remains accessible across the country and can respond sensitively to regional educational and cultural needs. Music teacher education is currently carried out at three institutions – Vilnius University (Šiauliai Academy), Vytautas Magnus University (Vilnius Academy) and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Each institution offers both bachelor's and master's degree programmes in music education, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The evolution of music teacher education in Lithuania mirrors the country's broader educational and political transformation from a centralised and uniform model toward an autonomous, and quality-oriented higher education system. Each stage (concentration, expansion, and consolidation) has shaped the identity of Lithuanian music teacher education as it exists today: regionally distributed, academically grounded, and increasingly responsive to cultural change and the realities of school life.

Policy and Regulatory Framework of Music Teacher Education in Lithuania

Music teacher education in Lithuania is part of the broader national system of teacher education and follows the same international and national frameworks that guide all teacher education programmes. At the European level, several documents shape this system. The *European Qualifications Framework* defines learning outcomes and qualification levels, ensuring compatibility with other countries. The *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* influence how study programmes are planned and evaluated, while the *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences* emphasise reflection, cooperation, and the ability to work with diverse groups of learners.

Alongside this international dimension, Lithuania also relies on national agreements, the most important being the *Teacher Education Regulation* (2024). According to this regulation, teachers can qualify through three main routes: integrated four-year bachelor's studies that combine subject-specific and pedagogical preparation; a sequential model, in which students complete a subject bachelor's degree followed by one year of pedagogical studies (the so-called 4+1 model); and alternative pathways designed for individuals who already hold higher education degrees and enter teaching through shorter, intensive programmes, often while working in schools. Together, these three ways ensure that teacher education in Lithuania remains accessible to people with different backgrounds, needs, and stages of life. The Teacher Education Regulation also defines the core structure and content of study programmes: no less than 30 ECTS must be allocated to educational theory and didactics, and at least 30 ECTS to pedagogical practice. This ensures that all graduates, regardless of the pathway they choose, receive substantial education in both theoretical and practical aspects of teaching.

At the same time, universities still have room to shape their own study profiles and offer subject-specific courses that reflect local strengths or particular needs. Although the system is clearly regulated, it leaves some flexibility for institutions to enrich their programmes in meaningful ways. For example, the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre places comparatively greater emphasis on the development of advanced musical competences, while Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy is distinguished by a stronger pedagogical focus, with music teacher education placing greater emphasis on inclusive education compared to other higher education institutions in Lithuania. Overall, the current system of teacher education in Lithuania, including the education of music teachers, is aligned with major European higher education expectations and provides a coordinated framework within which universities can prepare teachers for the realities of contemporary schools.

Mapping the Research Landscape

Although music teacher education has been an important area of professional practice in Lithuania, it has not been extensively explored as an independent field of scientific inquiry. For the preparation of this chapter, more than sixty publications by Lithuanian researchers published over the past fifteen years were reviewed. Only seven of them addressed music teacher education directly. However, many studies dealing with various aspects of music education also include valuable insights into teachers' competences, professional development, and the preparation of future music educators. In total, twenty publications were selected for analysis, providing a picture of the main ideas, directions, and tendencies shaping the current landscape of music teacher education in Lithuania.

Research on music teacher competences remains the most established area in the Lithuanian context. Scholars have explored how teachers' professional, general, and subject-specific competences can be understood, developed, and supported throughout their professional formation. A series of studies by Lasauskienė (2008, 2011, 2013, 2018) has provided the conceptual foundations for this field. She examined the structure of music teacher competences within the European Qualifications Framework and proposed strategies for strengthening general competences and assessing learning outcomes through authentic forms, such as the bachelor project. Zuzevičiūtė and Bukantaitė (2012a, 2012b) also offer critical perspectives on the realities and challenges of music teacher education in higher education. Their analysis of institutional and systemic factors shows that there is often a gap between formal programme structures and the real needs of students and teachers in the field. They suggest stronger connections between educational research, university training, and school practice – an idea that remains relevant to today's national teacher education. These studies outline not only how competences are conceptualised but also what kind of pedagogical thinking is needed to sustain professional growth. They contribute to a vision of teacher education that integrates artistry with pedagogy and professionalism.

Questions of professional identity – how teachers perceive and balance their roles as artists, musicians, and educators – are important to understanding music teacher education in Lithuania. Although these studies do not examine teacher education programmes directly, they offer some reflections on how identity formation should be supported within them. Girdzijauskienė (2013) explored the tension between artistic and pedagogical identities, suggesting that teachers develop most fully when these two dimensions are treated as complementary rather than conflicting. Later, Girdzijauskienė and Vitartaitė (2018) expanded this discussion by analysing musical identity as a key source of meaning and creativity in teaching. They observed that teachers' identities are continuously reshaped through teaching experiences, relationships with students, and participation in musical

communities. Researchers argue that teacher education programmes should create conditions for artistic reflection, self-awareness, and connection to community practice – dimensions that sustain motivation and professional resilience.

Several Lithuanian studies explore the inner and ethical dimensions of teaching – the values, attitudes, and sense of vocation that guide teachers' professional behaviour. While these works often focus on practicing teachers, they contain important implications for how teacher education can nurture value-based professionalism. Martišauskienė and Tavoras (2012) examined teachers' value orientations as factors shaping their artistic individuality, arguing that values influence how educators understand art, students, and their own moral responsibility. Gabnytė and Daugėlienė (2013) investigated the professional attitudes of music school teachers, presenting them as a projection of future-oriented music education. They showed that openness to change and creative thinking are closely connected with the quality of educational outcomes. Similarly, Rauduvaitė and Ramanauskienė (2010) studied the career choices of pre-service music teachers, identifying self-expression and the wish to contribute to society as key motivational factors. These studies suggest that teacher education should pay more attention to developing teachers' reflective capacity, ethical sensitivity, and intrinsic motivation. Although many of these studies were conducted more than a decade ago, their insights remain highly relevant in the current context of music teacher education.

In recent years, research on inclusion and diversity has gained new importance in Lithuanian music education. Girdzijauskienė and Sakadolskienė (2018) examined how music teachers are educated for inclusive education and found that while teacher training programmes promote general awareness of inclusion, they often lack practical tools and focused modules addressing diverse learners' needs. They called for integrating inclusive competences (empathy, adaptability, and cooperation) into the core of teacher education curricula. Strakšienė (2020) analysed teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices in general schools and found strong support for inclusive principles but uncertainty about implementation. Her findings underscore the need for continuous professional learning and collaborative reflection in school settings. Implications for teacher education are evident: inclusive teaching must be treated not as an optional specialization but as a central professional competence. Institutions educating teachers should therefore foster environments where inclusion is experienced as part of everyday musical and pedagogical practice.

There are some studies where Lithuanian research deals with innovation, curriculum renewal, and the relevance of music education to modern cultural and technological contexts. These studies offer insights into how teacher education can respond to cultural change. Rauduvaitė (2015, 2018) explored the integration of popular music into the school curriculum and its influence on student engagement. The implications for teacher education are clear: teachers need not only musical versatility but also cultural openness and the

ability to mediate between classical and popular traditions. Budinavičienė (2024) brings this discussion to early-childhood education by examining musical STEAM activities in pre-primary contexts. She demonstrates how music can foster experimentation, curiosity, and early scientific thinking. Other scholars' (Urniežius, 2020; Girdzijauskienė, 2021) reflections suggest that teacher education should equip future educators with creative digital skills, critical thinking, and the confidence to use contemporary technologies in musically meaningful ways.

To sum up, the diversity of topics addressed by Lithuanian researchers shows that teacher education is viewed broadly and from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, research on music teacher education as a distinct academic field remains fragmented, lacking a clear and sustained focus. The studies often emerge as responses to individual researchers' interests or to current educational reforms rather than as part of a continuous, coordinated research tradition. This makes the field dynamic, yet also uneven and still in search of a coherent framework.

Challenges and Professional Identity in Lithuanian Music Teacher Education

In Lithuania, music teacher education has been influenced by many reforms, yet recent research that would clearly describe the current situation is still limited. This raised a practical question: on what basis can we discuss today's challenges and the ways teacher educators respond to them? To explore this, we brought together four experienced music teacher educators and programme leaders from different higher education institutions. In a focused discussion, they shared their views on the present landscape of music teacher education, identifying more than ten challenges of varying scale – some arising from institutional or regional contexts, others shaped by broader national conditions. After comparing these perspectives, we agreed that the Lithuanian case is best represented through five recurring concerns and the concrete efforts made to address them. The analysis therefore begins with a concise overview of these five concerns and subsequently turns to a broader, integrative dimension that emerges across them – the formation of music teacher professional identity.

Highly regulated study structures limit programme distinctiveness and responsiveness to contemporary needs.

Music teacher education programmes in Lithuania are designed within strict national and institutional frameworks that leave limited room for individual initiative. The total volume of studies is 204 ECTS, with fixed allocations for music-related subjects, pedagogical studies, and general courses. As a result, programmes across institutions tend to be similar

in structure and content. While this uniformity ensures a shared standard, it constrains adaptation to new ideas, regional needs, or emerging school practices. Institutions therefore seek flexibility through elective modules, collaboration with cultural organisations, and project-based activities that extend learning beyond the regulated framework.

Admission procedures do not always align well with the specific demands of music teacher education.
A centralised admission system combines national examination results, school grades, and an entrance examination, in which musical ability represents only part of the total score. Consequently, applicants with strong musical backgrounds may be disadvantaged by weaker academic results. At the same time, student cohorts display wide variation in musical preparation. Institutions respond by devoting substantial study time to foundational musical training and by offering differentiated learning pathways, small-group tutorials, and additional consultations to balance diverse student needs.

Singing remains the dominant musical activity in Lithuanian schools and strongly shapes teacher education.
Vocal training and choir conducting occupy a remarkable place in programmes, reflecting singing's accessibility and community-building potential. However, this emphasis can limit attention to instrumental performance, music technology, composition, improvisation, and other creative practices. While students with vocal backgrounds benefit from this focus, those with different musical profiles may find fewer opportunities to develop their strengths. Institutions attempt to address this through elective modules and student-led creative projects.

Music education in schools continues to prioritise visible outcomes such as concerts and performances.
Although motivating, this orientation may overshadow exploratory, student-centred, and participatory learning processes. Universities seek to expand methodological approaches through international webinars, guest lecturers, and engagement with professional development initiatives. While such efforts do not fully resolve existing limitations, they gradually broaden the pedagogical repertoire of future music teachers.

Finally, ***music teacher education follows a broad qualification model rather than age- or field-specific specialisation.***
This supports flexibility across educational contexts but limits deeper focus on areas such as early childhood music education or musical ensemble leadership. Practice placements and individually planned teaching experiences partially compensate for this, enabling students to develop practical competence and shape their professional identity.

While these five concerns primarily describe structural and organisational conditions of music teacher education, they also create the context within which professional identity is formed and negotiated. For this reason, the following discussion does not introduce an additional challenge, but rather examines how identity develops in response to the conditions outlined above.

Music teacher identity refers to how teachers understand and position themselves within their profession – as musicians, educators, and cultural actors – and how these roles are integrated in everyday educational practice (Girdzijauskienė & Vitartaitė, 2018). In contemporary music teacher education, this identity becomes especially important in response to highly-regulated study structures, diverse student backgrounds, limited methodological resources, and increasingly broad professional expectations. A well-developed professional identity supports future music teachers in making sense of these demands, helping them to balance institutional requirements with pedagogical intentions and personal values. From this perspective, music teacher identity is not an additional or peripheral element of teacher education, but a unifying framework that connects musical expertise, pedagogical responsibility, and engagement with cultural and social life (Girdzijauskienė, 2013).

However, the formation of music teacher identity has long been complicated by a persistent division between musical and pedagogical orientations within teacher education. For many years, a separation existed between higher education lecturers responsible for musical disciplines and those teaching pedagogical subjects. Lecturers of musical disciplines often promoted the view that a music teacher should be, above all, a musician and only secondarily an educator. This position aligned with expectations shaped during the Soviet period and remained influential for several decades after the restoration of independence, when music teachers were primarily expected to lead musical ensembles and publicly demonstrate students' musical achievements (Girdzijauskienė, 2013; Lasauskienė, 2018). In contrast, lecturers of pedagogical disciplines emphasised relationships with learners, the educational process, and only subsequently musical outcomes. These differing perspectives affected not only theoretical discussions but also the structure and everyday atmosphere of music teacher education programmes, shaping curricula, teaching priorities, and students' professional self-understanding.

Over the past decade, this situation has gradually shifted. The previously competing views of the music teacher as either primarily a musician or primarily an educator are no longer positioned in opposition. Instead, they increasingly coexist as complementary perspectives that acknowledge each other's importance. This change has been supported by a more clearly articulated structure of music teacher education programmes, explicitly oriented towards both musical and pedagogical preparation. It has also been reinforced by project-based learning and by students' growing involvement in cultural life, both within higher education institutions and in the wider community. At the same time, the overall academic climate has evolved. Greater openness, diversity of approaches, and tolerance

for differing professional viewpoints have created more favourable conditions for dialogue and integration. As a result, music teacher education today offers a more balanced environment in which artistic expertise and pedagogical responsibility are understood as interconnected dimensions of professional identity rather than as competing priorities.

In recent years, a further challenge has become increasingly visible: the growing individualisation of music teacher education. Unlike many other school subjects, graduates of music education programmes enter a particularly wide and diverse professional field. Music teachers work in early childhood education, general education schools, and specialised music schools; they are also expected to act as leaders of educational projects, founders of private music education studios, or directors of students' musical ensembles. Each of these professional contexts demands a specific configuration of competences, which poses a significant challenge for higher education institutions, as it is neither realistic nor desirable to prepare all students equally for all possible roles. This challenge is intensified by the fact that students often enter higher education with clearly defined musical preferences and expectations, such as jazz singing, classical guitar, violin performance, or choral conducting. Many anticipate that these musical orientations will become the core of their professional identity (Gabnytė & Daugėlienė, 2013). In response, higher education institutions increasingly seek to balance shared professional foundations with opportunities for individual choice through elective music courses, differentiated study pathways, flexible teaching practice placements aligned with students' interests, and final projects reflecting individual professional trajectories.

These developments highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of professional identity in music teacher education, pointing beyond fixed role definitions towards ongoing processes of negotiation and adaptation. A further insight concerns the dynamic nature of music teacher identity itself. Rather than being fixed or stable, professional identity in music education shifts depending on institutional context, situational demands, and the teacher's own understanding of the aims of music education. A music teacher may experience and enact their role differently when preparing a concert, leading a rehearsal, teaching a classroom lesson, or engaging with parents, school leaders, or the wider community. These transitions require not only musical and pedagogical competence, but also reflection, adaptability, and professional judgement. For this reason, music teachers should avoid understanding their professional self-concept as a closed or narrowly defined role. Instead, they need to remain open to change and capable of finding meaningful forms of self-realisation across diverse educational and cultural contexts (Girdzijauskienė, 2021). From this perspective, higher education institutions carry a crucial responsibility: to familiarise students with the realities of professional practice, facilitate encounters with graduates working in different fields, and foster a clear understanding that learning does not end with graduation. The development of professional competence in music education is a lifelong process, and preparing students for this ongoing professional growth is one of the central tasks of contemporary music teacher education.

Shaping the Future of Music Teacher Education

Looking ahead, the future of music teacher education in Lithuania will depend on the ability to sustain long-standing musical traditions while responding to the realities already shaping everyday school life. Collective singing, community events, and culturally embedded music-making have long defined Lithuanian musical education and continue to influence how many teachers understand their professional role. At the same time, contemporary classrooms place new expectations on music teachers: inclusive practice, confident use of digital tools, formative assessment, pupil participation, and an emerging awareness of how AI-supported platforms may influence learning. As these expectations increasingly define school practice, they inevitably reshape how music teacher education is formed during university studies.

Responding to these changes does not necessarily require a complete restructuring of existing programmes. Meaningful development can often take place within already available spaces: elective courses, short modules, workshops, and project-based learning. Areas that tend to remain at the margins – such as early childhood music education, community music, ensemble leadership, and music technology – could be strengthened through consistent, targeted opportunities that allow students to explore different professional roles and identities.

An equally important future direction lies in supporting students' professional identity. Many music teachers in Lithuania work across multiple contexts, combine several roles, or move between formal and non-formal education settings. In such conditions, professional identity does not emerge automatically; it develops through experience, reflection, and dialogue. Mentoring during teaching practice, encounters with graduates working in diverse fields, and opportunities to observe contrasting teaching approaches help students recognise the variety of ways in which one can "be" a music teacher.

Strengthening partnerships between universities and schools remains central to this process. When students engage more deeply with real educational contexts – participating in school projects, collaborating with teachers, or observing practices aligned with contemporary educational values – their studies gain relevance and depth. Such experiences often reveal dimensions of the profession that formal coursework alone cannot capture. By enriching practice-based learning, supporting reflective identity formation, and maintaining openness to change, music teacher education in Lithuania can continue to evolve in ways that respond to present challenges while remaining grounded in the musical traditions that have long sustained it.

Declaration of AI usage

Artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language editing and stylistic refinement, supporting clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analytical decisions, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author.

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Music Teacher Education in Luxembourg

Situated between University, Conservatory, and School Contexts in a Multilingual Setting

Abstract

This chapter examines music teacher education (MTE) in Luxembourg, focusing on how the country's small size, multilingual context, and joint institutional framework involving the University of Luxembourg and the three main state-recognised conservatories have shaped distinctive pathways into the profession. Drawing on national literature and comparative European studies, it traces the historical development of music teacher education, highlighting processes of professionalisation, institutional fragmentation, and the longstanding divide between conservatory-based and school-based approaches. Although empirical research on MTE in Luxembourg remains limited, studies on multilingual education provide important insights into pedagogy and professional development. This chapter situates Luxembourg in relation to neighbouring countries, identifying shared features and specific challenges related to coherence, professional identity, and multilingualism. A case report examines recent initiatives to address the conservatory–school divide by integrating artistic and pedagogical training across institutional contexts, followed by a forward-looking discussion of future directions for MTE in Luxembourg.

Keywords: Luxembourg, multilingualism, music education, teacher education

Introduction to Music Teacher Education in Luxembourg

Luxembourg holds a unique position in the European music education landscape. Although music education in Europe is challenged to continually achieve recognition as a source of personal and cultural development, and is frequently subject to curriculum marginalisation, budget cuts, or even school closures (e. g., Aróstegui, 2016; Eurydice, 2009), music education is a stated priority for the Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children, and Youth (MENJE, 2024b). Recent national priorities have included, for example, the introduction of a bachelor's degree in music education at the University of Luxembourg in 2021, as part of the national focus on improving international demand for high-quality teacher training, as outlined in the Bonn Declaration (European Music Council, 2011). These initiatives also cover the provision of free public music and dance education within the performing arts since 2022 (MENJE, 2022). However, despite these developments, significant challenges remain in organising music education and in the education of future music teachers, especially given Luxembourg's multicultural and multilingual status.

In this context, this chapter analyses how historical, institutional, and linguistic backgrounds have shaped the current framework of MTE in Luxembourg, particularly the nature of the relationship between conservatory-based and school-based music teacher-training pathways. The following sections address historical context, institutional structures, qualification pathways, and research developments relevant to the Luxembourgish MTE landscape.

Historical Context

Luxembourg's geopolitical position and the multilingual context of its Luxembourgish, French and German cultural traditions fundamentally inform its approach to music pedagogy. Until the launch of a bachelor's programme in music education at the University of Luxembourg in 2021, no formal higher-level music education training existed nationally. Music studies were historically based in municipal conservatories and music schools established in the nineteenth century, reflecting Belgian, French, and German influences. These institutions tended toward instrumental training, ensemble music-making, and music as a civic and cultural activity.

Early developments reveal structural tensions that continue to shape contemporary music teacher education (MTE). The first music school, founded in 1823 by Henri-Joseph Cornély and municipalised in 1844, offered instruction in *solfège* and instrumental performance, but lacked systematic pedagogical preparation for teachers. Although Cornély himself had pedagogical experience through reciprocal learning in Paris and training at the Model School (*École Modèle*), formal pedagogical frameworks were lacking. This absence contributed to internal conflicts and ultimately to the school's closure in 1882. This early

rupture established a recurring pattern, characterised by strong artistic provision combined with limited professionalisation in pedagogy (Sagrillo, 2025).

Debates surrounding *solfège* throughout the early twentieth century further illustrate this tension. Frequently criticised as overly demanding or disconnected from pupils' musical experience, *solfège* was nonetheless defended and reconfigured as a central pedagogical tool.[1] Attempts to reconcile competing traditions through hybrid approaches and teaching materials reflected a broader search for balance between technical literacy and wider educational aims. Mid-twentieth-century curricular shifts towards listening and vocal practice, alongside criticism of institutional stagnation, underscored persistent uncertainty about the purposes and methods of music education.

These dynamics directly inform current MTE structures. For much of the post-World War II period, conservatory teachers were trained primarily as performers abroad, with *solfège* as a compulsory secondary subject but without formal pedagogical preparation. This training model contributed to high dropout rates and reinforced elitist expectations of instrumentalists. In contrast, secondary school music teachers followed academically oriented pathways supplemented by national pedagogical certification. From the mid-1980s onwards, increasingly diverse training backgrounds, along with the Music School Law of 1998, introduced greater differentiation, while consolidating parallel professional trajectories (Legilux, 1998).

Within this context, Luxembourgish conservatories function as municipal or regional public institutions providing non-tertiary music education for children, adolescents, and adult amateurs. They offer structured programmes in performance, music theory, ensemble practice, and methodological courses, organised through graded cycles of study, but do not award academic degrees. Admission is based on age-appropriate criteria and aptitude assessments. Alongside these institutions, local and regional music schools operate within the same statutory framework, typically emphasising beginner and community-based provision. Ongoing reliance on cross-border training has resulted in two broadly defined postwar trajectories, aligned with Franco-Belgian traditions emphasising musical literacy and Germanic pedagogical traditions (*Schulmusik*) prioritising pedagogical preparation before artistic specialisation (Sagrillo, 2025).

Music education in general schools followed a different trajectory. In primary education, music formed part of the general curriculum but received limited instructional time, whereas in secondary schools specialised streams (F-sections) emphasised theory, music history, and analysis alongside performance and composition (*EAS*, n. d.). Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, school-based music teacher training remained fragmented, with most teachers studying abroad.

[1] In 2026, the Luxembourg government announced a new reform to modernise *solfège* training, which will take effect in the 2026/2027 school year (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2026).

The establishment of the University of Luxembourg in 2003 marked progress towards unified national standards in teacher education. While generalist primary teacher education was centralised, MTE remained divided between conservatory-based instrumental training and academically oriented school-based preparation. This dual configuration continues to reflect Luxembourg's cultural and linguistic diversity. At the same time, it raises ongoing questions about coherence, professional identity, and the relationship between artistic and educational orientations.

This historical overview offers important insights into the contemporary challenges in Luxembourgish MTE. *Solfège's* centrality, conservatories' institutional dominance, and the tradition of cross-border training have resulted in a heterogeneous professional landscape. This diversity serves as an important resource but also complicates the development of coherent national frameworks for qualification pathways, pedagogical standards, and shared professional identity.

Current Music Teacher Training in Luxembourg

In 2021, the University of Luxembourg and the three main state-recognised conservatories (Conservatoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, Conservatoire de musique de la Ville d'Esch, and Conservatoire du Nord) signed a ministerial convention establishing a three-year Bachelor's in Music Education (BME; *Bachelor en enseignement musical*, BEM), as a national response to the needs of the music education sector (University of Luxembourg, 2021). The programme aims to provide high-quality initial training for future music teachers and to support the recruitment of qualified staff across Luxembourg's music education institutions. As a milestone in the professionalisation of music teaching, the BME brings together pedagogical and artistic training through structured collaboration between the university and conservatories. In doing so, it addresses the historically entrenched divide between artistic formation and pedagogical preparation.

The Bachelor's in Music Education comprises three specialisation tracks, which are aligned with students' entry profiles (e.g., an acquired diploma from a Luxembourgish conservatory or equivalent qualifications) and the qualification they are pursuing. The instrumental track emphasises instrumental performance and includes coursework in music theory (*solfège* and analysis), conducting, and piano accompaniment, preparing graduates to teach in municipal or regional music schools and conservatories and to contribute to instrumental and ensemble activities within general schools. The *solfège* track focuses on music theory, aural skills, and sight-singing, and is complemented by courses in piano accompaniment and conducting. It prepares graduates to teach theory-based subjects in music schools and conservatories, as well as subject-based music in general schools. The early childhood music education track centres on artistic development through

percussion, expressive movement, and singing, supported by training in accompaniment (e.g., piano, ukulele, guitar), conducting, and music theory, and is aligned with early years music provision in music schools and pre-primary or primary school contexts.

Each track includes a dedicated methodology course, while all students follow a shared academic curriculum encompassing general music pedagogy, musicology, developmental psychology, inclusive music education, and collaborative and creative music-making. Overall, the BME equips graduates with the knowledge and skills needed for subject-specific music teaching in music schools and general schools. However, an additional degree in educational sciences (Bachelor in Educational Sciences, BScE) or pedagogy (Bachelor's in Pedagogical Training, *Bachelor en formation pédagogique*, BFP) is required for teaching in generalist primary school settings.

Despite the introduction of the BME, the majority of music teachers in Luxembourg's general schools continue to receive their initial subject-specific training abroad, particularly in neighbouring countries. Luxembourg-based programmes, such as the BScE and the BFP, include only limited coursework in music teaching and therefore do not constitute full pathways into specialist music teacher education. As a result, these programmes currently function as emerging and complementary routes into the profession, reflecting both Luxembourg's longstanding reliance on cross-border training and the transitional nature of national provision.

Alongside initial teacher education, the National Institute for the Training of Teachers and Educational Staff (*Institut de formation de l'éducation nationale*, IFEN), a service of the Ministry of National Education, Children, and Youth (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse*), provides in-service professional development. IFEN supports professional integration and continuing professional development through a range of training opportunities, including music education seminars (IFEN, 2026). All newly appointed teachers in music schools and conservatories are required to complete 60 hours of induction training covering the legal and organisational framework of music education in Luxembourg, which includes pedagogical planning, goal-oriented teaching, embodiment in music education, and the use of digital technologies.

In addition, the Bachelor's in Music Education at the University of Luxembourg supports continuing professional development by organising lectures, practice-oriented symposia, and projects, such as the MuTechLab project (University of Luxembourg, n.d.), for in-service teachers, addressing topics such as creativity in music education, technology in music education, and instrumental teaching in early childhood. In addition, staff provide courses at the National Institute for the Training of Teachers and Educational Staff (IFEN). Together, these initial and in-service training structures form an evolving framework for music teacher education in Luxembourg, situated between national coordination and transnational educational traditions.

Research on music (teacher) education in Luxembourg

Research on music education in Luxembourg began in the early 1980s with the work of Martin Straus (1946–2019), a primary school teacher who critically examined the marginal status of music education in primary schools and the lack of methodological and didactic resources available to non-specialist teachers. Commissioned by the Luxembourg Minister of National Education and Culture, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Straus developed what became known as the Parameter Concept. This approach linked six musical parameters to six musical or music-didactic activities (Sagrillo & Brusniak, 2020). The concept was piloted in model classrooms and disseminated through sustained institutional support and collaboration, including work with the military band. Straus's pedagogical significance is further evidenced by Thomas Mück's doctoral dissertation, which examined the applicability of the "Luxembourg Model" for the holistic education of children with special educational needs in primary schools, confirming its effectiveness in implementing principles of differentiation and individualisation in music education (Mück, 2008, as cited in Sagrillo & Brusniak, 2020). Although Straus's work was never widely institutionalised in Luxembourg's education system, it has been recognised internationally, placing him among influential European music educators such as Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Zoltán Kodály, and Carl Orff.

Since the establishment of the University of Luxembourg in 2003, the main body of music (education) research has been conducted under the leadership of Damien Sagrillo, Director of the Institute for Musicology and the Arts. While his research primarily addresses Luxembourg's musical heritage, folksong, and wind music, it also regularly engages with topics in music education, including music education in general schools, non-specialist teachers, *solfège*, and the sociology and history of music education in Luxembourg (e. g., Sagrillo, 2013; 2025).

More recently, the creation of a professorship in early childhood music education in 2022 has led to increased research activity under the leadership of Luc Nijs. Although this research is not explicitly focused on music teacher education, it addresses several themes highly relevant to MTE. A central strand concerns skill acquisition in music performance, particularly through the SAMuSe project (Serra Marin et al., 2026; University of Luxembourg, n. d.). Closely related work examines embodied music pedagogy and the role of movement in instrumental learning (Nijs & Bremmer, 2019, 2026; Bremmer & Nijs, 2024), as well as instrumental learning and teaching in the early years. Further research explores creativity (Nijs et al., 2024; Nijs & Bremmer, 2026) and well-being in music education (Nijs, 2025). In addition, music education technology constitutes an important area of inquiry (Behzadaval et al., 2026; Nijs & Behzadaval, 2024; Nijs & Turchet, 2024).

In parallel, the Bachelor's in Music Education at the University of Luxembourg is research-oriented, providing students with academic training in empirical research, academic writing, and engagement with scientific literature through coursework and the

bachelor's thesis. The Institute for Musicology and the Arts is also involved in the Erasmus+ project CC-ECME, which focuses on inclusive pedagogy, professionalisation, and partnerships between music and art schools and early childhood education institutions (mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, n. d.).

In addition to research conducted in musicology and music education, scholars from the fields of education and the social sciences in Luxembourg have contributed studies with indirect yet significant relevance to music teacher education. This body of work links music education to broader themes, including multilingualism, intercultural competencies, early childhood education, and inclusion. For example, research by Vaiouli and Kirsch (2025) demonstrates how singing in multilingual early childhood education centres supports participation and intercultural understanding. While such studies are not framed explicitly as MTE research, they highlight competencies, such as intercultural sensitivity, translanguaging practices, and inclusive pedagogies, that are increasingly central to the preparation of music teachers across pre-primary, primary, and secondary contexts. Comparative work, such as Miwa Chiba and David Hebert's study of inclusive music education in Japan and Luxembourg (Chiba & Hebert, 2025), further situates these issues within an international perspective.

Challenges for Music Teacher Education

Multilingualism, a defining but challenging feature of education

Against the historical, institutional, and linguistic conditions outlined above, several interrelated challenges continue to shape music teacher education in Luxembourg. Luxembourg's linguistic diversity is substantial. Given its unique language regime, with three official languages (Luxembourgish, French, and German) and an increasing role of English in higher education and professional life (Kirsch & Aleksić, 2018), teacher education programmes need to prepare teachers not only as music specialists but also as culturally and linguistically responsive educators. Schools in Luxembourg follow a structured multilingual model. Luxembourgish is used as the primary language of instruction in early education, thereby supporting social integration and classroom interaction. In primary and secondary education, German and French are the primary languages of literacy instruction and subject instruction, with their use varying by cycle and discipline (MENJE, 2024a). Teachers are legally required to be proficient in Luxembourgish, French, and German. However, those exempt from Luxembourgish are required to complete language courses within their first three years and pass a proficiency test.

Currently, the Bachelor's in Music Education is offered in English, allowing international students to enrol in the programme, either entirely or as part of an Erasmus student mobility programme. Nevertheless, multilingualism is maintained, as some courses

are taught in English and others in French. Depending on the number of students present, a course may be taught in Luxembourgish. Students may submit assignments (including the bachelor's thesis) in any of the three official languages (Luxembourgish, German, and French) or in English. Despite such efforts to embrace multilingualism, language competencies remain a significant challenge. Luxembourg faces a shortage of teachers, but because teachers must be proficient in the three official languages, many foreign musicians find it challenging to become music teachers in Luxembourg's music schools. These linguistic requirements also shape music teacher education. They necessitate multilingual curricula, the accommodation of diverse pedagogical traditions, and the sustainment of Luxembourg's continued, though evolving, reliance on cross-border training pathways.

General teacher training in music

Aesthetic, creative, and cultural awareness is embedded in primary school curricula. Since 2019–2020, collaborative projects between primary schools and municipal music schools, in which a generalist primary teacher invites a specialist music teacher to introduce students to music-making, instruments, or choral singing, have supported this curricular area. Although these partnerships are designed to promote musical engagement from a young age and to provide access to formal music instruction at a later stage of education, they also create a structural obstacle to music teacher education. The reliance on external specialist teachers indicates that generalist primary teachers are not adequately trained or confident in music, raising questions about the scope and depth of music education in primary teacher training. From an MTE perspective, this arrangement underscores the need to clarify professional roles, strengthen musical competencies within general teacher training, and better articulate pathways between generalist and specialist forms of music teaching.

Professionalisation and Teacher Identity

Studies on the professional identity of music teachers in Luxembourg are sparse. In contrast, studies in Germany have explored the identities of music teachers and the tensions between artistic and pedagogical roles in formal and informal educational contexts (Buchborn, 2014; Georgii-Hemming et al., 2016; Jank, 2009). Similar tensions are present in Luxembourg, where music teacher education operates within a hybrid framework comprising the three main state-recognised conservatories and the University of Luxembourg. This hybrid institutional setup presents a challenge for MTE, as future music teachers must negotiate overlapping and sometimes competing professional roles, expectations, and value systems. The establishment of a shared professional identity is complicated by the fact that many teachers obtain their initial qualifications from foreign institutions, which brings with it a spectrum of pedagogical traditions that are integrated into the national system. In this context, the limited availability of structured mentoring, reflective practice and

collaborative learning opportunities represents an additional challenge, as these elements are widely recognised as crucial for supporting professional identity formation within MTE.

Institutional Structures and Policy

A blend of conservatories and state-regulated schools characterises Luxembourg's music teacher education (MTE) landscape. Typically, musicians hold an artistic diploma, often obtained abroad, and may become accredited teachers through national examinations after several years of professional experience. At the primary level, music is generally taught by generalist teachers, many of whom continue to obtain their initial teaching degrees abroad, although enrolment at the University of Luxembourg has increased in recent years. Secondary school music teachers likewise often acquire their instrumental or vocal specialisation and subject knowledge in musicology, performance, or music education outside Luxembourg, even as the introduction of the Bachelor's in Music Education (BME) has begun to offer a national pathway. While this plurality of routes reflects Luxembourg's openness and transnational orientation, it also presents a challenge for MTE. Highly heterogeneous qualification profiles complicate the alignment of pedagogical standards, certification procedures, and professional expectations across sectors. From an MTE perspective, this fragmentation raises questions about coherence, comparability, and the formation of a shared professional identity among music teachers.

Community Music and Cross-Institutional Learning

In Luxembourg, there have been initiatives to link school, conservatory, and university practices, with an emphasis on community-oriented collaboration and cross-institutional initiatives. During the Bachelor's in Music Education programme at the University of Luxembourg, students engage with issues of diversity and inclusion and participate in community-based projects. While approaches such as ensemble learning, cross-institutional collaboration, and community engagement are now widely accepted as integral to pedagogy for contemporary music education, they also present considerable challenges for music teacher education. Preparing future music teachers capable of functioning successfully in diverse formal and non-formal contexts has implications for MTE programmes. Each setting differs pedagogically, in expectations, and across learner profiles, necessitating the development of adaptable professional identities and collaborative competencies.

In-Service Teacher Development

Recent literature on in-service professional development for music teachers in Luxembourg remains underdeveloped. However, research from early childhood education in Luxembourg suggests that professional development can lead to significant changes in pedagogical practices, particularly in multilingual and inclusive teaching approaches (Kirsch, 2021; Kirsch et al., 2020). The lack of training for many generalist teachers continues to

hinder progress at the primary level. While professional development is provided (currently 50 hours over three years), it represents a reduction from the previous 100-hour provision (Dimitrakoulakos & Sagrillo, 2023).

Ultimately, the challenges facing music teacher education in Luxembourg stem from multilingualism, fragmented training pathways, and hybrid institutional structures. Multilingual requirements may cause additional strain, including the need to train teachers to be linguistically and culturally responsive practitioners, as well as constrained recruitment and ongoing reliance on cross-border training routes within MTE programmes. This, in turn, is accompanied by limited musical preparation in generalist primary teacher education, as well as by training models that are both conservatory- and school-based, resulting in blurred professional roles and tensions between artistic and pedagogical orientations. These dynamics are compounded by heterogeneous qualification profiles, limited accessibility to mentoring and in-service professional development, and rising demands for cross-institutional and community engagement. Together, they underscore the need for greater coherence, clearer professional pathways, and more integrated support structures, particularly in light of Luxembourg's evolving MTE landscape.

A Case Report: Bridging Conservatory and University Music Education Training

Institutional Context and Core Challenge

Luxembourg's music education system is characterised by a long-standing institutional division that poses a structural challenge for music teacher education (MTE). On the one hand, conservatories, regional and municipal music schools, under the umbrella of the Luxembourg National Federation of Music Schools and the Association of Music Schools (*Fédération Nationale de musique du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* (UGDA) and the *Association des écoles de musique du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* (AEM)) are primarily oriented towards instrumental and vocal performance and artistic development, supported by instruction in music theory, composition, and ensemble practice. On the other hand, music education in general schools prioritises classroom-based teaching, curricular integration, and broader educational objectives, while students' instrumental and performance-based competencies tend to play a less central role. This division is institutional rather than learner-based and has been documented in national and European overviews of teacher education pathways (European Association for Music in Schools, n. d.). It has tended to reinforce distinct pedagogical cultures and training traditions, limiting the development of coherent MTE pathways that integrate artistic and educational orientations.

The Case: Policy Response and Programme Design

The establishment of the Bachelor's in Music Education (BME) in 2021 is a tangible example of how institutions are responding to this challenge. The programme was developed through formal collaboration between the University of Luxembourg and the three main state-recognised conservatories to create a common training system that integrates academic teacher education with conservatory artistic training. University faculty, conservatory teaching staff, and representatives of the Ministry of National Education, Children, and Youth all contributed to the development of curricula, accreditation processes, and governing structures.

Aspects of this response include courses that are taught jointly, shared responsibility for supervised teaching practice, and practical arrangements that assign student teachers to both school and conservatory settings. Furthermore, new certification routes permit conservatory-trained musicians to obtain pedagogical qualifications, while school-oriented teacher education increasingly integrates instrumental and ensemble-related competencies. These measures reflect wider European responses to structural tensions in music teacher education through collaboration, practice-based education, and institutional networking (Jank, 2009).

Actions, Evidence, and Emerging Outcomes

As a case report, this initiative draws more on programme documentation, curriculum frameworks, and early-implementation experiences than on systematic empirical data. However, preliminary qualitative observations from institutional reports, stakeholder feedback, and the organisation of joint teaching and school practice formats indicate that these measures are fostering closer partnerships among universities, conservatories, and schools, as well as a more holistic view of instrumental learning across different school environments. Further systematic evaluation is planned to assess the longer-term impacts of these initiatives on teacher preparation, professional identity formation, and cross-institutional coherence.

From an MTE perspective, the case highlights how collaborative university- or conservatory-level structures enable music teachers to negotiate artistic and pedagogical roles within a single programme, thereby supporting the construction of their professional identity. In neighbouring contexts, such as Belgium, comparative research shows that integrative models can enhance professional coherence and professionalisation processes (De Baets et al., 2024). While systematic evaluation remains a work in progress, the Luxembourg case illustrates a tangible, policy-led effort to address the institutional divide that has historically structured music teacher education.

Future Directions: Community Engagement, Research, and European Positioning

Luxembourg's small size and dense institutional landscape create favourable conditions for further innovation in cross-institutional and community-based music education. Research on community music in Belgium illustrates the benefits of dialogical approaches and flexible pedagogies that transcend traditional institutional boundaries (Bremmer & Verneert, 2022; Verneert et al., 2024). Luxembourg, in this respect, might be a suitable setting for testing new joint ventures among schools, conservatories, universities, and local communities. Meanwhile, the lack of systematic research on MTE in Luxembourg remains a persistent limitation. Comparative research with neighbouring countries, particularly Germany and Belgium, may offer valuable insights into teacher identity, in-service professional development, and the role of digital pedagogy in multilingual music education settings. Situated in the European Higher Education Area, Luxembourg is well positioned to leverage mobility, cooperation, and shared standards to further develop MTE models that address the specific challenges of small, multilingual states.

Declaration of AI usage

Artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language editing and stylistic refinement, supporting clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analytical decisions, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Music Teacher Education in Norway

Abstract

Norwegian music teacher education (MTE) is recognised by its many pathways into the music teaching profession. In this chapter we present and discuss the various music teacher education programmes and the positions they prepare for, as well as how cooperation between institutions opens up new combined teaching positions. Research on music teacher education in Norway addresses a broad range of topics, and in this chapter, we focus on classroom practices and curriculum content, cross-sector collaboration, institutional and ideological discourses in MTE, teaching practice and professional learning, and diversity, inclusion, and legitimacy in music education. A five-year integrated master's programme in practical and aesthetic subjects was introduced in 2017, and the biggest challenge to the programme is student recruitment. In the case report we discuss the programme, the challenges it faces and how it highlights tensions in the Norwegian educational field.

Keywords: Collaboration, combined music teacher positions, curriculum, music teacher education, student recruitment

Introduction to Music Teacher Education in Norway

Music teacher education (MTE) in Norway has developed within a broader Nordic tradition that emphasises public schooling, cultural democracy, and equal access to the arts. Since the mid-20th century, Norwegian education policy has framed music as a key component of general education, supporting the idea that all pupils should have opportunities for

creative, aesthetic, and cultural learning (Ellefsen et al., 2023). These principles are deeply embedded in national curricula and cultural policy documents, reflecting the view that artistic participation is essential for *Bildung* (formation), democratic citizenship and social inclusion (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

A distinctive element of this Norwegian educational ecosystem is the nationwide network of *kulturskoler* (culture schools), which are municipal schools of music and performing arts (SMPA), established under the 1997 Education Act as a municipal responsibility (Opplæringslova, 2023, § 26). Offering subsidised[1] instruction in music, dance, drama, and related art forms, SMPA play a significant role in fulfilling the national ideal of "arts education for all" (Kulturskolerådet, 2024, p. 7). They function not only as community-based hubs for artistic learning but also as essential workplaces for music educators, many of whom combine positions in SMPA with teaching in compulsory schools or upper-secondary programmes. In recent years, national policy documents such as *Meld. St. 34* (2023–2024) have explicitly encouraged closer collaboration between SMPA and compulsory schools, and several municipalities across the country have now created combined teaching positions across the two sectors. This integration is meant to both strengthen pupils' access to specialist teaching, secure fulltime stable jobs for music teachers, and influence the competency needs and professional identities of music teachers (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2023–2024; Emstad & Angelo, 2017; Aglen, 2018).

Over time, this has shaped both the structure of compulsory schooling and the different professional pathways that prepare teachers to teach music at various levels. Today, MTE in Norway is characterised by a combination of university-based academic study, strong integration of artistic practice, and extensive supervised teaching practice experience – although the landscape continues to evolve in response to national reforms, demographic shifts, and changing musical cultures. This is something we will explore further by using our own workplace as a case study, namely the music teacher education programme at Nord University in the small town of Levanger, located roughly in the middle of Norway.

Historically, Norwegian music teacher education developed from a dual system. Johansen (2023) describes how conservatoires and music academies focused primarily on training performers, while the so-called teacher seminaries (later colleges and universities) were responsible for generalist teacher preparation. This division reflected a long-standing tension between artistic excellence and pedagogical breadth. Institutions such as the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH), founded in 1973, expanded the mandate from performance training to include music education programmes, contributing to the

[1] Tuition fees are determined locally by each municipality. In 2026, annual fees for children and youth typically range from NOK 3,200 to NOK 8,400. Most municipalities offer sibling discounts and reduced fees based on household income to ensure accessibility.

professionalisation of the field. Across the 20th century, music education in schools shifted from a narrow, singing-centred subject (Balsnes et al., 2022) to one encompassing diverse musical practices, ensemble work, creativity, and listening (Ellefsen et al., 2023).

The shift toward broader, competence-oriented curricula over the last 20 years has also influenced how music teachers understand their professional autonomy. With the curricular reform *Kunnskapsløftet* (The Knowledge Promotion) (LK20) in Norwegian compulsory schools, new outcome-based competence aims were introduced across all subjects; in music, the curriculum emphasises performance, creative processes, participation, and reflective musical understanding – a clear departure from earlier, more prescriptive and content-focused curricula (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). This change opened new possibilities for teacher agency, as illustrated by one generalist teacher interviewed in Borgen et al. (2023): "… there is complete freedom. Nothing at all is mentioned about which themes one must cover, and very little is said about methods. As someone with substantial university-level training in music, I experience this as liberating …". Such experiences underline how national reforms have expanded teachers' room for interpretation and professional judgement. At the same time, increased autonomy presupposes a high level of professional competence: teachers must be able to make informed curricular choices, design meaningful learning activities, and navigate a wider range of musical practices than before. These broader aims, therefore, require teachers to possess both artistic depth and pedagogical versatility.

By the 21st century, Norway had consolidated its teacher-education system into publicly funded, research-informed higher-education institutions across the country. The result was a varied MTE landscape that includes universities, university colleges, specialised academies, and a small number of private accredited institutions. Music may be studied either as a specialisation within the general teacher education route or through dedicated music-education programmes across roughly twelve institutions nationwide. These include universities[2], regional university colleges[3], specialist institutions (NMH), and private providers'[4] bachelor's and master's degrees in music performance or pedagogy.

The national model for teacher qualification shapes today's system. Norwegian compulsory schooling (ages 6–16) typically employs both generalist and specialist music teachers. At the primary level (Years 1–7), teachers may teach music without having specialised training, although many take music as a subject within their generalist teacher education. From the lower secondary level (Years 8–10), teachers must have music as part of their formal qualification. At the upper-secondary level (Years 11–13), music is only

[2] Norwegian University of Science and Technology, University of Agder, The Arctic University of Norway, University of Stavanger, University of South-Eastern Norway, University of Inland Norway, Oslo Metropolitan University, and Nord University.

[3] Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

[4] Barratt Due Institute of Music, Høyskolen Kristiania

available in specialised programmes, and it is taught exclusively by specialist teachers, often with advanced degrees in areas such as performance, musicology, composition, or music education. Teachers may acquire these qualifications in several ways: through the five-year general teacher education master's degree with music as one of the teaching subjects, through the five-year integrated master's in practical and aesthetic subjects (Lærerutdanning i praktiske og estetiske fag – LUPE), or through the one-year Practical Pedagogical Education (PPU) programme for those who already hold a bachelor's or master's degree in music.

Admission to these programmes is regulated nationally. All applicants must hold a university entrance certificate, and most institutions require an audition to assess musical skills and suitability for music-education studies. In addition, interviews are increasingly common for evaluating applicants' pedagogical motivation. Public institutions are state funded, reflecting Norway's commitment to accessible higher education, while private conservatoires charge modest tuition fees.

The pathways into the profession reflect the dual need for artistic competence and pedagogical skill. The LUPE integrated master's programme is particularly significant as the most comprehensive route into specialist music teaching. It comprises 300 ECTS credits, including extensive supervised practice (130 days), combining advanced music studies with music didactics, classroom management, research methods, and a master's thesis (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2025). The PPU, by contrast, adds pedagogical training to existing musical expertise and is especially common among upper-secondary teachers with a background in performance or musicology. Bachelor's and master's degrees in music education offered by universities such as Nord University, OsloMet, and NMH further contribute to the diversity of qualification routes.

Despite this well-developed system, contemporary MTE in Norway faces challenges. Statistics Norway data (Arnesen et al., 2022) show that a substantial proportion of teachers in compulsory schools lack formal music qualifications, more than half in Years 1–7 and about one quarter in lower secondary school. This shortage reflects national trends in teacher recruitment, demographic change, and competing pressures within schools, where practical and aesthetic subjects often receive less emphasis than core academic disciplines. Music teachers often work in multiple settings simultaneously, such as compulsory schools, upper-secondary programmes, and municipal schools of music and performing arts, illustrating both the flexibility and fragmentation of the current labour market (NOU 2025:7).

Institutionally, the system remains dynamic. While national frameworks regulate teacher education, individual institutions maintain autonomy in designing curricula. This results in notable regional distinctions, for example, Nord University offers a full portfolio of bachelor's, master's, LUPE, and PPU programmes. In contrast, other institutions focus primarily on generalist teacher education or performance-based degrees. The landscape

is further evolving as some institutions pause or restructure their LUPE programmes due to small student cohorts, highlighting fluctuating recruitment patterns across the country.

Overall, Norwegian music teacher education today is the result of decades of development that brought together artistic training, pedagogical professionalism, and research-informed practice. While the system offers multiple pathways and maintains high standards for specialist teachers, ongoing challenges related to teacher shortages, recruitment, structural reforms, and the need for curricular innovation continue to shape the future direction of MTE in Norway.

Mapping the Research Landscape in Norwegian Music Teacher Education

In recent years, research on music education and music teacher education (MTE) in Norway has become more extensive, visible, and interconnected. This development is linked to curriculum reforms, changing expectations toward schools, and broader debates about the role of music and the arts in the welfare state. It is also tied to structural changes in the higher education sector, with more university-level institutions and a stronger emphasis on research, as well as increased external funding for arts and education research, primarily through national research funding bodies and European research programmes. National and Nordic research networks, such as regional constellations like Musikkutdanning i utvikling (Music education in development) (MiU, n.d.) in Mid-Norway, the national network Norsk forum for musikkpedagogisk forskning (Norwegian forum for research in music education) (FoMuP, n.d.) and Nordic constellations such as Nordic Network for Research in Music Education (NNRME, n.d.), have further contributed by creating arenas for collaboration, shared projects, and joint publications. Across this landscape, several partly overlapping strands of research can be identified: classroom practices and curriculum content, cross-sector collaboration, institutional and ideological discourses in MTE, teaching practice and professional learning, and diversity, inclusion, and legitimacy in music education.

Classroom Practices and Curriculum Content in Norwegian School Music

A substantial amount of recent research examines what pupils and teachers actually do in school music. This work is central to MTE because it illuminates the everyday realities student teachers encounter. One of the most significant contributions is the national survey by Ellefsen et al. (2023), which documents considerable variation in repertoire, teaching approaches, assessment, and resource availability. Such differences reflect both the broad autonomy afforded by the competence-based curriculum and disparities in teachers' musical backgrounds. This variability is further illuminated by the national evaluation of the practical and aesthetic subjects in the school curriculum (LK20) (Borgen et al., 2023; 2025), which shows how curricular intentions are interpreted and enacted unevenly across schools.

Research has also explored the cultural and disciplinary processes shaping teaching content. Ellefsen (2022) introduces the concept of "genring," analysing how genre choices are socially produced and how they shape opportunities for participation. Similarly, Ellefsen and Karlsen (2020) analyse the Norwegian Schools of Music and Performing Arts' curriculum framework and identify a tension between its stated commitment to diversity and inclusion and the way curricular norms and language preserve a Western-classical core, effectively privileging certain musical forms and specialisation.

Pupil experiences contribute further insight into the dynamics of school music. Nørstebø and Øien (2024) highlight the importance of autonomy, relevance, and relational quality in instrumental lessons, while Nørstebø and Knigge (2024) offer empirical tools for assessing pupils' musical competence and investigate musical competence development and influential factors in Norwegian 5th graders (Nørstebø and Knigge, in review). Questions of representation emerge in Skjelstad and Ellefsen's (2024) work on gendered repertoire norms, which shows how teacher choices may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes.

In parallel, studies focusing more broadly on the practical and aesthetic subjects in teacher education, such as Skjelbred et al. (2024), who analysed student teachers' master's theses, found overarching themes and theoretical perspectives across the various subjects. Together, these studies depict school music as an uneven and culturally shaped field. For MTE, they point to the need for broad musical literacy, repertoire awareness, and reflective capacity to navigate varied classroom ecologies.

Collaboration Between SMPA and Compulsory Schools

Collaboration between Schools of Music and Performing Arts and compulsory schools has become a prominent topic in Norwegian research, reflecting policy ambitions that the SMPA should function as a local resource centre, first and foremost supporting local cultural life, including music teaching in schools, but also as a resource for health and welfare services. Emstad and Angelo (2017) discuss the outsourcing of school music teaching to the SMPA teachers and show how such arrangements can strengthen specialist provision while simultaneously challenging the role and professional autonomy of generalist teachers. In a later study, they highlight how value-based leadership is crucial for sustainable partnerships, arguing that shared educational values and mutual recognition matter more than formal structures alone (Emstad & Angelo, 2019).

Document-based and case studies add further nuances. Bandlien (2023) analyses curricula from both institutions and identifies different discursive framings of collaboration, while Fostad (2023) explores how school and SMPA leaders narrate their experiences in the *Kulturdag* (Culture day) project. Heide (2023) and Hauge (2021) both show that collaboration can promote inclusion and richer arts experiences, but also that differences in curriculum logic, expectations concerning roles, and time resources create significant friction. Hauen and Emstad (2021) use a rhizomatic organisational perspective to show

how something as "technical" as timetabling actively shapes possibilities for cooperation and participation. From a more structural angle, Jordhus-Lier (2023) discusses whether the SMPA should be organised as a centralised or decentralised resource centre, pointing to risks of both inclusion and exclusion depending on local capacity and priorities.

For MTE, this body of work underlines that future music teachers must be prepared to work across institutional boundaries, negotiate roles and responsibilities, and understand the different cultures and mandates of schools and SMPAs.

Institutional Discourses and Professional Identity in MTE

A substantial strand of Norwegian and Nordic research examines how music teacher education is framed, justified, and organised. Two closely related focus areas are central here: institutional discourses, meaning how programmes describe their purposes and priorities, and professional identities, meaning what kinds of teacher-musician roles and competences are positioned as desirable outcomes. These are connected because institutional discourses shape what counts as valued knowledge and competence, and thereby the identity positions that are made available to students.

Angelo et al. (2021) analyse documents from four higher education institutions and identify competing discourses of professionalism, artistry, research, and employability that structure how MTE is described and developed. They argue that these discourses do more than label programme aims. They also influence what is treated as core content, how students' competence is evaluated, and which professional identity trajectories are legitimised within and across institutions, for example, students aligning more with a performer-oriented, pedagogy-oriented, or research-oriented professional self-understanding (Angelo et al., 2021).

Questions about artistic identity and subject content are taken up by Eidsvaag and Angelo (2021), who investigate the changing role of the main instrument in MTE programmes, and by Nielsen (2020), who explores processes of "musical gentrification" and gendering in higher music education. Dyndahl et al. (2017) show how the academisation of popular music has both opened and constrained possibilities within higher music education in Norway. Jenssen (2024) adds nuance by showing how vocal tuition can reveal tensions between students' vocal identities and institutional expectations, highlighting subtle identity negotiations even in seemingly technical aspects of MTE. A broad historical backdrop is provided in the edited volume by Varkøy et al. (2023), which traces developments in Norwegian higher music education and situates current tensions in a longer policy and institutional history. Øien and Angelo (2023) argue that philosophical perspectives can serve as productive starting points for rethinking Norwegian MTE, particularly in relation to values, legitimacy, and the purposes of music education.

Recent work from the *FUTURED* (Music Teacher Education for the Future) project develops these perspectives in a more explicitly change-oriented direction. FUTURED was

a research project from 2019 to 2022 with the dual aim of challenging the status quo of Norwegian teacher education and developing innovative and collaborative practices that could foster students' collaborative, critical and democratic capacities. Christophersen (2021) discusses "the crafts of change" and what it means to educate music teachers for the future, while Christophersen et al. (2023) reflect on broader international and Nordic trends in music teacher education. Onsrud et al. (2022) analyse the multiple positionings of preservice music teachers in a participatory action research project, with the intention of creating space for student agency. Knudsen and Onsrud (2023) analyse ideology, selective tradition, and naturalisation in the MTE curriculum, and Onsrud and Kvinge (2023) explore ideological processes and discursive tensions in the Norwegian MTE field. Viig et al. (2023) examine how visions and utopias can function as tools for thinking about the future of MTE. Nysæther, Christophersen and Sætre (2021) provide an important empirical counterpoint by asking who the student teachers actually are in generalist teacher education, documenting relatively homogeneous backgrounds in a context of increasing school diversity. Across these studies, MTE emerges as a contested institutional space where artistic, pedagogical, ideological and political expectations intersect.

Work on voice, embodiment, and disciplinary norms within higher music education adds an important layer to these institutional discussions. Jenssen's studies (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024) and her later work with Martin (2025) investigate how students' vocal identities are shaped, and sometimes constrained, by institutional expectations. Complementing this, von Germeten (2023) examines pluralities of vocal aesthetics in contemporary musical theatre, while Fjeldstad (2023) provides an embodied, diffractive analysis of instrumental pedagogy in violin teaching. These contributions collectively highlight how artistic subjectivities are negotiated within MTE and how institutional norms, often tacit, shape what kinds of teacher-musicians can emerge.

Teaching Practice and Professional Learning

The teaching practice and the relationship between university and school are central themes in recent Norwegian MTE research. The *MoVeM* project has explored digital and multimodal mentoring (Kolaas et al., 2025), while several new studies examine teaching practice under the *FUTURED* umbrella. Bjørnevoll's work is particularly important here: her doctoral thesis (2025) and related articles (2024, 2025a, 2025b) analyse the music teaching practice in generalist teacher education as a site of tension between traditional and innovative understandings of teaching, and between stability and change. She shows how conversations between students and mentors during teaching practice both stabilise and challenge established practice architectures, and how structural and cultural changes in teacher education impact music as a subject in practice schools.

Teaching practice is also examined through participatory and collaborative perspectives. Christophersen et al. (2024) investigate "third space moments" in a university–school partnership, while Fredriksen et al. (2023) discuss student voice and the challenges of genuinely empowering preservice music teachers in participatory processes. Rinholm et al. (2023) focus on critical reflection in MTE, pointing to contradictions between theory, policy, and practice and calling for more systematic work with reflection as a professional competence. Holdhus (2024) addresses agency in generalist MTE, asking how structures and practices can support student teachers' capacity to act in complex school contexts.

Together, these studies highlight teaching practice as a key arena where structural reforms, institutional discourses, and everyday teaching practices meet. They suggest that MTE programmes need to cultivate strong partnerships with schools, robust models for supervision and reflection, and a clear awareness of how teaching practice both reproduces and transforms music teaching.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Legitimation

A final cluster of research engages with diversity, social inequality, and the legitimation of music education. Karlsen and Nielsen (2021) describe Norway as a microcosm of global issues in music teacher professional development, including tensions between aims of inclusion and uneven teacher competence and resources. Nielsen et al. (2023) investigate repertoire selection in schools of music and arts, while their later work (2025) analyses "classed approaches to musical parenting", showing how parental practices and institutional expectations contribute to unequal participation patterns. Jordhus-Lier and Nielsen (2025) examine competing discourses of music as a discipline within the SMPA, while Nielsen's (2020) work on "musical gentrification" points to how processes of refinement and selection can marginalise some musical practices and groups.

Issues of participation, positioning and ideology in MTE are addressed in several *FUTURED*-related studies. Onsrud et al. (2022) show how preservice teachers navigate multiple and sometimes conflicting expectations, and Fredriksen et al. (2023) problematise who actually gets to participate and be heard in "participatory" MTE projects. Jenssen and Martin (2025) explore intercultural education through the performing arts, highlighting both possibilities and tensions, while Kvile et al. (2025) bring feminist posthumanist theories into music education research, challenging established epistemologies. Balsnes et al.'s (2025) work on student teachers' experiences, competences and arguments related to singing, as well as Jenssen's (2022) creative writing-based study of "the voice lessons", further expand understandings of voice, participation and embodiment in MTE.

Across these contributions, legitimacy emerges as a key concern: whose music, whose voices, and whose futures is music teacher education preparing for? For Norwegian MTE, this suggests a need to integrate critical perspectives on power, representation, and social justice as part of professional formation, rather than treating them as add-ons.

Case Report: Navigating National Tensions in Norwegian Music Teacher Education – The LUPE Model in Practice

Identifying the Challenge in Norwegian Music Teacher Education

The introduction of the integrated master's degree *Lærerutdanning i praktiske og estetiske fag* (*LUPE*) in 2017 marked a major structural change in Norwegian music teacher education. Designed as a five-year qualification for teaching across Years 1–13, the LUPE reform aimed to elevate the status of practical and aesthetic subjects, strengthen subject-specific expertise, and ensure that future teachers possessed both artistic competence and research-informed pedagogical knowledge (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020). However, the national implementation of LUPE has encountered significant and persistent challenges. Most notably, the programme has struggled to recruit sufficient applicants, particularly in music, where admissions have fallen across several institutions (Samordna opptak, n. d.). At the same time, the reform has revealed tensions between national ambitions, institutional capacities, labour-market realities, and the diverse motivations of prospective music students.

The central challenge in this case is therefore clear: although LUPE was intended to professionalise and strengthen specialist teacher education in music, the programme has not attracted or retained the expected number of students, and several institutions have been forced to scale down, pause, or extensively reconsider their LUPE provision. This situation raises broader questions about the sustainability of specialist music teacher education in Norway, the structure of the qualification pathways, and the extent to which national reforms align with the realities of school staffing, teaching practice organisation, and regional recruitment.

Context and Conditions shaping the LUPE Model

LUPE emerged against the backdrop of a long-standing dual structure in Norwegian music teacher education. Conservatoires and music academies historically emphasised performance training, while teacher colleges and universities were responsible for generalist teacher preparation. When the five-year integrated master's was introduced, it replaced the earlier three-year *faglærer* (specialist teacher) model and positioned specialist practical-aesthetic teacher education at master's level alongside other five-year teacher-education pathways. The reform aligned with broader Nordic trends, emphasising research-based teacher qualification and stronger professionalism (Caspersen & Smeby, 2023).

However, several contextual factors have shaped the conditions in which LUPE has developed. National policy documents, including *Kunnskapsløftet* (LK20), place increased curricular autonomy and competence orientation in the hands of teachers (Borgen et al, 2023; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). For music, this shift has expanded the pedagogical and artistic demands placed on teachers, who must navigate a broader range of musical

practices, creative processes, and cultural perspectives than in previous curricula. Schools, therefore, require teachers with strong subject expertise, yet the distribution of music teachers across Norway remains uneven. National school statistics from Statistics Norway (Arnesen et al, 2022), show that more than half of those teaching music in primary school (Years 1–7) lack formal subject qualifications in music, and around one quarter of music teachers in lower secondary school (Years 8–10) are similarly unqualified.

Demographic and geographic conditions play a decisive role in shaping the sustainability of LUPE programmes. Norway's dispersed population means that regional access to higher education significantly affects recruitment. In rural areas, applicants often depend on the closest institution, and long travel distances limit mobility. When LUPE programmes are centralised in urban regions or operate with fluctuating capacity, regional shortages of qualified teachers become more pronounced. This challenge is especially visible in parts of Mid-Norway and Northern Norway, where local provision of specialist MTE is crucial for maintaining a stable supply of teachers.

At the same time, LUPE operates within an exceptionally broad competence mandate. The programme must prepare teachers to teach music across Years 1–13 and SMPA, ranging from beginner instruction in primary school to the advanced, often semi-professional musical levels found in upper-secondary education. In addition, graduates are expected to support the voluntary music sector in its full breadth, an integral part of Norwegian musical life, spanning activities from early childhood to community ensembles. This wide-ranging professional scope places high demands on programme design, content, and staffing, and stands in tension with labour-market realities. Although national policy emphasises the importance of subject specialists, the lack of qualified teachers in many subjects, as well as novice teachers' accounts of having to teach subjects they are not qualified for (Antonsen, Jakhelln & Bjørndal, 2020), indicates that many schools, especially at the primary level, continue to rely on generalists and some music positions are too small to constitute full-time employment. Consequently, the Praktisk-pedagogisk utdanning (PPU) pathway remains an attractive alternative for musicians who already hold a bachelor's or master's degree. The coexistence of several qualification routes creates a competitive landscape in which LUPE must continually articulate and defend its distinctiveness, duration, and workload.

Within this broader structural picture, teaching practice organisation emerges as one of the most pressing operational challenges. LUPE requires 130 days of supervised practice across all school levels, yet many schools lack qualified music teachers (Arnesen et al., 2022) who can serve as mentors. Securing suitable school placements is therefore difficult and resource-intensive, creating logistical strain for universities and limiting the consistency and quality of students' practical training. The school practice system is thus both a cornerstone of LUPE and one of the areas where systemic constraints – stemming from teacher shortages, uneven regional distribution, and varying school capacities – are felt most acutely.

Institutional Responses and Attempts to Address the Challenge

Institutions across Norway have responded to these challenges in varied and creative ways. Some have strengthened the artistic identity of LUPE by expanding principal-instrument instruction, ensemble leadership training, popular-music competence, creative digital technologies, and songwriting. Others have developed new forms of collaboration with municipal schools of music and performing arts, enabling students to experience specialist teaching, observe ensemble work, and explore leadership in creative and community contexts. These collaborations also support municipalities' increasing interest in combined positions across school and SMPA sectors, a model highlighted in recent policy documents (Meld. St. 18 (2020–2021); NOU 2025:7).

Flexibility has been an important strategy. Several institutions now allow students to build on bachelor-level qualifications or pursue hybrid pathways between performance and teacher education. This reflects a broader recognition that prospective music teachers bring diverse professional identities, and that rigid pathways may deter rather than attract applicants.

Nord University provides a concrete example of how these national tensions unfold at the institutional level. Located in a region where higher-education access directly influences teacher supply, Nord University has historically played a key role in preparing music teachers for the counties Trøndelag and Nordland. As LUPE was introduced, Nord worked to embed strong artistic components within the programme and to develop robust partnerships with regional schools and SMPAs. However, like many institutions nationally, Nord has experienced fluctuating recruitment to LUPE. Periods of low applicant numbers have forced the university to consider pausing the programme while maintaining other music-education pathways such as bachelor's degrees, master's programmes, and PPU. These discussions mirror national concerns about the sustainability of the LUPE structure in its current form and demonstrate how institutions navigate tensions between educational policy, regional responsibility, and long-term viability.

Emerging Issues and Lessons Learned for MTE in Norway

The LUPE experience has generated important learning for Norwegian music teacher education more broadly. First, the reform has revealed that strong subject identity is crucial. Applicants must see LUPE as a pathway that values and develops their artistic skills – not simply as a teacher-training programme with music added. Institutions with clearer artistic profiles and stronger creative environments have tended to recruit more effectively.

Second, the experience shows that sustainability requires flexibility. A model in which bachelor-level studies, performance programmes, musicology routes, and teacher-education pathways are more closely integrated may be better suited to the diverse motivations of future music teachers. The LUPE reform has, unintentionally, highlighted the need to rethink rigid linear pathways in favour of more flexible structures.

Third, the case demonstrates that school practice capacity must be strengthened if high-quality specialist teacher education is to be maintained. Without sufficient qualified mentors in schools, the demands of the integrated master's model become unsustainable. Strengthening partnerships with SMPAs and municipalities emerges here as an important way forward.

Finally, the LUPE experience underscores the need for alignment between national policy ambitions and regional realities. Policymakers emphasise specialist competence and high-quality arts education, yet recruitment challenges and labour-market structures make it difficult for institutions to sustain the programmes designed to meet these goals. Experiences from LUPE therefore suggest that future reforms must consider the demographic, economic and cultural realities shaping music education across Norway.

As work progresses on a new national framework for teacher education, the lessons learned from LUPE provide valuable insight into how Norway might build models that balance artistic authenticity, pedagogical depth, regional accessibility and long-term sustainability. The case of LUPE thus serves not only as an example of the challenges encountered in implementing a large-scale educational reform, but also as a source of knowledge that can inform the future of music teacher education in Norway.

Looking forward

Norwegian music teacher education stands at a moment of significant transformation. Emerging policy developments, demographic shifts, and evolving musical practices suggest that the future of MTE will be shaped not by a single, unified qualification model, but by the coexistence of multiple pathways into the profession. This diversification echoes the holistic understanding of music articulated in the official Norwegian report *Musikklandet* (The Land of Music) (NOU 2025:7), where music is framed as a cultural, social, educational, and health-related resource that permeates far more than the traditional school subject. Within this broader ecology, music teachers increasingly work across compulsory education, municipal Schools of Music and Performing Arts, upper-secondary music programmes, community arts, health and care services, and a large voluntary cultural sector. Music teacher education must therefore prepare graduates for professional identities that unfold across varied contexts rather than within a single institutional setting.

One important direction for the future is the development of more flexible and permeable qualification routes. Norway already supports a wide range of pathways: LUPE, the general teacher education master's with music, PPU for holders of artistic or academic music degrees, and dedicated bachelor's and master's degrees in music education. Seen together, these pathways form an interconnected ecosystem that attracts students with different musical competences and career intentions. Strengthening articulation between these routes – such as enabling smoother transitions from artistic degrees to pedagogical qualifications or allowing bachelor-level study to build more directly toward an integrated

master's degree – may increase recruitment and accommodate a more diverse population of future teachers. A system that recognises the legitimacy of different forms of musical knowledge, whether grounded in performance, community practice, digital production, or pedagogical expertise, aligns closely with the holistic vision promoted in *Musikklandet* (NOU 2025:7).

A second promising development concerns expanding collaboration between compulsory schools, SMPAs, and community arts organisations. Many municipalities already create shared positions across sectors, and national policy continues to encourage such models. For MTE, this opens possibilities for teaching practice and coursework that reflect the full scope of professional music teaching: leading ensembles, supporting creative work, teaching one-to-one and small groups, developing interdisciplinary projects, and working with diverse learner populations. Preparing future teachers for this diversity requires universities to cultivate strong, long-term partnerships across sectors and to embrace practice models that acknowledge the musical, pedagogical, and organisational complexity of real professional work.

Societal changes are also likely to shape future directions. Rapid technological developments demand teachers who can navigate digital tools, creative technologies, and multimodal forms of expression that increasingly structure young people's musical lives. Growing cultural and linguistic diversity in Norwegian schools calls for MTE programmes that engage meaningfully with intercultural, decolonial, and pluralistic perspectives, moving beyond Eurocentric repertoires toward more inclusive curricular practices (Ellefsen & Karlsen, 2020; Fjeldstad, 2025). Persistent regional disparities in teacher supply make decentralised, hybrid, and flexible programme structures essential for ensuring that rural and northern regions can recruit qualified music teachers.

Across these developments runs a common thread: the future of music teacher education in Norway depends on recognising the multiplicity of roles music teachers perform in contemporary society. They act not only as classroom educators, but as ensemble leaders, cultural workers, collaborators, community facilitators, interdisciplinary partners, and, increasingly, contributors to wellbeing and health initiatives. To meet these demands, MTE must continue to evolve as a field that embraces diverse pathways, nurtures cross-sector collaboration, and prepares graduates for the broad and shifting landscape of musical work in a changing society.

Declaration of AI usage

During the preparation of this chapter, ChatGPT has been used for proofreading and as a discussion partner.

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Training for School Music in Swiss Universities of Teacher Education

Balancing Disciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, and Transversality

Abstract

This chapter examines Music Teacher Education (MTE) in Switzerland, focusing on preparation for school music teaching in compulsory education. Based on a cross-regional case report, it explores how disciplinary musical competences are developed in bachelor programmes for generalist classroom teachers and how interdisciplinary and transversal orientations shape curriculum design across linguistic regions. The case report highlights institutional and pedagogical responses to the challenge of balancing disciplinary integrity with growing expectations for interdisciplinary practices and transversal competences, including module structures, co-teaching formats and arts-based projects. The chapter concludes by outlining future directions for Swiss MTE, emphasising shared definitions of core musical competences, clearer conceptual distinctions and stronger interregional collaboration.

Keywords: curriculum design in teacher education, disciplinary–interdisciplinary balance, early and primary school music, music teacher education, transversal competences.

Music Teacher Education in Switzerland

Across Europe, Music Teacher Education (MTE) is shaped by ongoing educational reforms, evolving conceptions of musical learning and increasing expectations regarding interdisciplinary approaches and transversal competences (De Baets et al., 2025; Education and Skills Policy Programme, 2024; Scharnhorst, 2021). In Switzerland, the plurilingual and federally organised education system creates a differentiated landscape where comparable goals are pursued through diverse institutional arrangements.

Over the past three decades, Swiss teacher education has undergone substantial structural reforms (Giudici et al., 2025; Huber & Zurmühle, 2015). Until the 1990s, primary teachers were trained in cantonal (i. e. state-level) teacher-training colleges (Herzog et al., 2025; Künzli et al., 2012), while specialised music education was largely located in conservatoires (Donath, 2022). In the early 2000s, these pathways were reorganised within Universities of Teacher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences/University Schools of Music (Gaillard, González-Martínez & Chatelain, 2021; Mezzena et al., 2013; Vogt et al., 2010; CH-Diplome/Hochschulen, 2023). The introduction of pedagogical and non-pedagogical study tracks and the implementation of Bologna reforms (Einem et al., 1999) established a two-cycle degree structure (bachelor's and a master's degree) and strengthened national accreditation procedures. Within this broader process of professionalisation, music pedagogy increasingly consolidated its position as a research-informed field (Blanchard et al., 2022; Güsewell et al., 2016; Joliat, 2011).

Today, MTE is organised within a differentiated institutional landscape. Universities of Teacher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences (for example, the Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana/Dipartimento Formazione e Apprendimento in Ticino, the Pädagogische Hochschulen in the German-speaking cantons and in the Canton of Grisons, and the Haute Écoles Pédagogiques in the French-speaking cantons) together with Universities of Applied Sciences for Arts and Music (such as the Hochschulen der Künste or Musikhochschulen, or the Hautes Écoles de Musique), share responsibility for preparing teachers at different levels (Tab. 1).

INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN	TEACHER PROFILE AND QUALIFICATION	TRAINING PROGRAMMES	LEVELS OF EDUCATION ADDRESSED	IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION
Universities of Teacher Education	Bachelor programmes qualifying generalist classroom teachers	All-subjects model: 7 compulsory subjects, including music	Kindergarten and primary education	Ensures basic music teaching competences among all generalist teachers
		Subject-selection model: individual profile (e.g. sport, arts or music)	Primary education	Leads to differentiated qualification profiles, as music may not be included in every generalist teacher's training
Joint programmes (Universities of Teacher Education & Universities of Applied Sciences /University Schools of Music)	Master programmes qualifying specialised teachers for school music	Cooperative programmes combining music specialisation and teacher education	Lower-secondary and upper-secondary school. Possible involvement in primary education (e.g. Italian-speaking region)	Integrates disciplinary musical expertise with pedagogical training for specialist classroom teaching
Universities of Applied Sciences /University Schools of Music	Bachelor and Master programmes qualifying specialised music teachers	Music and movement programmes (in German: *Musik und Bewegung*)	Kindergarten and primary education, music schools, further extracurricular and non-formal education	Develops advanced artistic-pedagogical competences for specialised music teaching
		Instrumental/vocal pedagogy programmes	Music schools, further extracurricular and non-formal education	Develops advanced artistic-pedagogical competences for specialised music teaching

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Tab. 1: Overview of institutional models in Swiss MTE, including generalist and specialist pathways

Together, these programmes reflect the coexistence of generalist and specialist competence expectations in Swiss music education.

Universities of Teacher Education (generalist classroom teacher training)

At Universities of Teacher Education, bachelor's programmes (180 ECTS[1]) prepare generalist classroom teachers for kindergarten and primary education, with music included within a multi-subject professional profile (Criblez & Manz, 2015). As shown in Tab. 1, institutional models vary between all-subjects programmes, in which music is compulsory, and subject-selection models allow students to prioritise specific domains. This variability may influence who assumes responsibility for classroom music teaching at primary level and contributes to differentiated competence expectations among generalist teachers. Musical training typically combines pedagogical preparation with basic musical practice, although course duration and formats vary across institutions. In compulsory education, classroom music is predominantly taught by generalist teachers, sometimes supported by specialist music teachers or external professionals in project-based or complementary learning contexts.

[1] The amount in European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) of compulsory music training varies widely across cantons, institutions and programme models. Since systematic comparative research on ECTS allocations in Swiss Music Teacher Education remains scarce, a more detailed specification lies beyond the scope of this contribution.

Universities of Applied Sciences/University Schools of Music (specialised teacher training)

Universities of Applied Sciences in Music (or University Schools of Music) constitute the institutional domain in which specialised forms of MTE are developed. This includes pathways focusing on artistic-pedagogical profiles, instrumental or vocal pedagogy, and programmes addressing early childhood and primary contexts through music-and-movement approaches (in German: Musik und Bewegung. See Tab. 1). While these qualifications are often associated with music schools and extracurricular learning environments, in some cantonal contexts graduates also contribute to music teaching within compulsory education, as illustrated in Tab. 1.

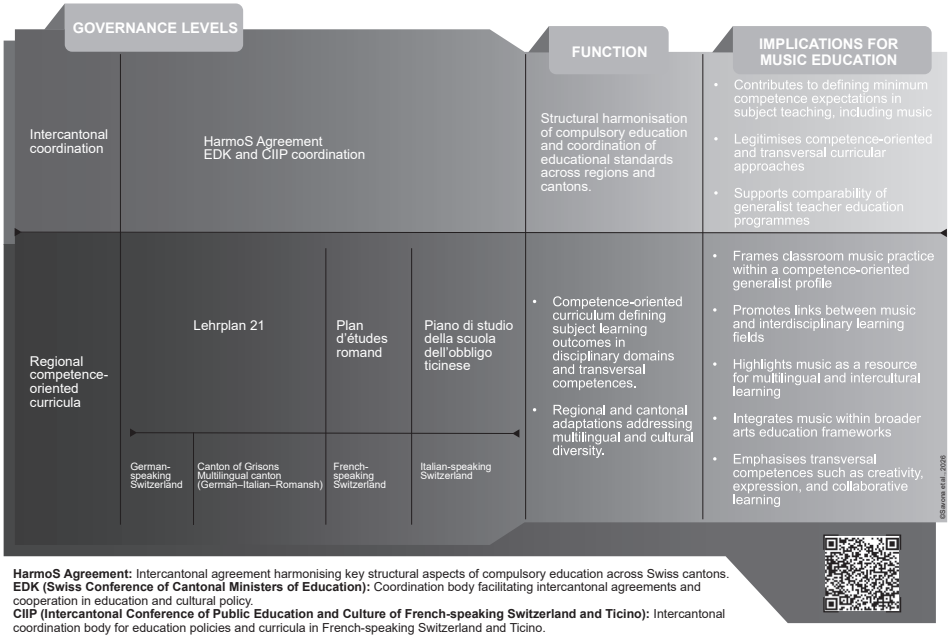
Joint programmes: Universities of Teacher Education & Universities of Applied Sciences/University Schools of Music

Specialised MTE for lower- and upper-secondary school is offered in joint master's programmes by Universities of Teacher Education and University Schools of Music (EDK, 2025). These programmes combine in-depth musical study with pedagogical preparation for school contexts, as well as subject areas with transversal competences and general education (Description des capacités transversales, 2025). Their institutional co-delivery reflects broader efforts to align competence expectations across educational levels. As shown in Tab. 1, such programmes contribute to bridging the wide-ranging preparation of generalist classroom teachers and the specialised artistic-pedagogical training provided by music universities.

Governance and curricular frameworks shaping music education in Swiss compulsory education

This contribution focuses specifically on MTE in relation to compulsory education in kindergarten and primary education[2]. MTE operates within intercantonal coordination and competence-based curricular frameworks, as illustrated in Tab. 2. National agreements by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK, 2011) and the Intercantonal Conference of Public Education of French-speaking Switzerland and Ticino (CIIP, 2026), including the HarmoS Agreement (EDK, 2011), aim primarily to harmonise structural conditions of compulsory education across a decentralised cantonal system. At the same time, regionally developed curricula articulate competence expectations that influence how music is positioned within generalist teacher profiles. These frameworks support the integration of interdisciplinary and transversal competences and contribute to defining minimum expectations for classroom music practice.

[2] For a detailed discussion of music education at lower- and upper-secondary school see Chatelain, S., Frischknecht, R., & Ringli, D. (2026). Harmonising Diversity: School Music Education in Multilingual Switzerland. In R. Girdzijauskienė, L. O'Connell, & K. Stolle (Eds.), Mapping School Music Education in Europe: Country Reports, Trends, and Perspectives (Vol. 15).



Tab. 2: Governance levels and implications for music education in Swiss education

While national and intercantonal recommendations provide orientation, their implementation varies considerably across institutions, resulting in locally adapted programme structures and differing competence profiles. Although institutional diversity reflects rich regional traditions and (implicit) approaches, it also complicates shared understandings and dialogue, making music education a key site for negotiating and creating coherence between these logics. This chapter argues that Swiss MTE is shaped by a subtle tension between strong disciplinary traditions and growing expectations for interdisciplinarity and transversal competences.

The next section maps key research topics that have emerged in Swiss scholarship and practice over the past fifteen years (2010–2025). This mapping also introduces the conceptual vocabulary of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transversality that underpins the case report in the section "A Case Report: Interdisciplinarity and Transversality in School Music Training". In this chapter, interdisciplinarity refers to coordinating subject perspectives around shared goals, while transversality denotes broader competences such as collaboration, creativity or reflexivity (see paragraph "Interdisciplinarity and transversality in Swiss MTE research" below). The last section draws on these insights to discuss how music operates as a site where disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal logics intersect.

Mapping the Swiss Research Landscape

This section maps research in Swiss MTE published between 2010 and 2025. It identifies nationally recurring research topics as well as regionally distinctive profiles shaped by institutional contexts and cultural traditions. The overview highlights how research addresses teacher education structures, professional practices and classroom learning processes within competence-oriented and multilingual educational settings. The paragraph "Interdisciplinarity and transversality in Swiss MTE research" below conceptualises interdisciplinarity and transversality providing a key lens for describing how music is positioned not only as a disciplinary field but also within broader expectations.

Nationally recurrent research topics

Across Switzerland, the first and most widely addressed topic concerns professionalisation (Wittorski, 2012; Joliat, 2011), including the shift from traditional craft-based models of teacher preparation to research-informed (Mommartz & Gregori, 2025; Joliat et al., 2017; Wentzel & Mellouki, 2010), reflective and epistemologically grounded approaches (Mommartz, 2025; Güsewell et al., 2016; Chaliès, 2013). Studies from different regions address questions of professional identity, teacher beliefs, biographical reflection, emotional resilience and the development of pedagogical judgement (Hürlemann & Saner, 2023; Dias-Chiaruttini, 2021; Joliat et al., 2017; Tardif, 2012). A second common topic is the conceptualisation of subject identity and subject specificity of music (Chatelain et al., 2022; Huber et al., 2021), exploring how disciplinary knowledge, practical skills and creative–aesthetic learning are addressed within the competence-based curricula (Giglio, Jolliat, & Schertenleib, 2010). A third nationally recurrent focus concerns the implementation and interpretation of competence-oriented teaching and learning (Oertly et al., 2017). Research engages with the demands of curricular reforms such as the *Lehrplan 21*, *Plan d'études romand* and *Piano di studio della scuola dell'obbligo ticinese* (regional curricula for compulsory education in Switzerland; D-EDK, 2014; Conférence intercantonale de l'instruction publique de la Suisse Romande, 2010; Dipartimento dell'educazione, della cultura e dello sport, 2022). Questions regarding assessment (Huber, 2015), task design (Shuler & Savona, 2025; Hansen et al., 2018), and the conceptualisation of musical competences (Fündeling & Stadler Elmer, 2025) recur throughout the literature.

Additional cross-regional topics include multilingualism and multiculturality (Huber et al., 2021). Some studies examine music as a multimodal resource in multilingual classrooms (Saner, 2023). Research on digital transformation, though unevenly distributed, also emerges across several institutions, reflecting increased attention to digital tools and technologically mediated music learning (Imthurn, 2024; Zgraggen, 2023; Bernhofer et al., 2021).

These shared topics demonstrate a national research landscape concerned with defining the evolving role of music within the Swiss education system, with particular attention to teacher identity, subject-specific competences, competence-oriented and culturally diverse learning environments. Despite this growing body of research, several gaps remain visible. Music-specific research is still limited in certain regions. Comparative studies across linguistic regions remain scarce, for example regarding how generalist teachers develop musical competences in interdisciplinary settings. Moreover, longitudinal research on the development of musical competences among generalist classroom teachers is still underrepresented.

Regions distinctive research topics

Each linguistic region shows distinctive emphases shaped by its institutional histories, cultural contexts, and specific structural and thematic priorities.

In German-speaking Switzerland, the research landscape is institutionally extensive and diversified. Universities of Teacher Education across the German-speaking cantons have produced numerous practice-oriented studies on class singing and vocal pedagogy (Thürig-Hofstetter, n. d.; Hürlimann & Savona, 2022), classroom music-making, musical and pedagogical competences of generalist teachers (Savona et al., 2024; Suter, 2023), and music and multilingual learning processes (Krompák et al., 2024). These research orientations reflect the curricular expectations formulated in the *Lehrplan 21* (Tab. 2).

In French-speaking Switzerland, research displays a particularly strong institutionalisation of disciplinary didactics, reflected in structures such as the *Centre de Compétence Romand de Didactiques Disciplinaire* (2Cr2D) and the Master programme in Didactics of the Arts (Hofstetter, Schneuwly & Borer, 2009). Music is positioned alongside visual arts and design, and technology within an integrated pedagogical framework. A further characteristic is its sustained commitment to the development of didactics of the arts as a distinct scientific domain (Honsberger & Schneuwly, 2022) as reflected in publications in specialised journals such as *Journal of Research in Arts Education* (JRAE). This strong institutionalisation of disciplinary didactics corresponds to the *Plan d'études romand* focus on arts integration and transversal educational aims (Tab. 2).

The trilingual Canton of Grisons (German, Italian and Romansh) presents a more localised profile, shaped by the structural characteristics of its University of Teacher Education and the highly multilingual cultural environment. In this context, there is currently no substantial body of research dedicated specifically to music education. Institutional documents emphasise the need to safeguard music as a school subject, to clarify the competences expected of generalist teachers, and to design interdisciplinary settings that consider the subject within a multilingual curriculum (Mehrsprachigkeit und Sprachliche Minderheiten in einem Globalen Kontext, 2025). Curricular priorities concerning multilingual education shape research orientations reflecting the *Lehrplan 21* (Tab. 2).

In Italian-speaking Switzerland (Canton of Ticino), research is conceptually distinctive. Studies foreground musical narration and creativity (Galassetti & Piricò, 2024), embodied cognition and soundscape exploration (Rocca, 2020). Music is framed through the metaphor of a "bridge" linking symbolic, cognitive and emotional domains (Piricò, 2022). Research–practice integration is strong, and interdisciplinary courses are explicitly part of the University of Teacher Education's curriculum (Galassetti & Piricò, 2024). These approaches align with the *Piano di studio* emphasis on multimodal expression (Tab. 2).

This regional overview reveals different focuses, suggesting that Swiss MTE research is largely shaped by a competence-oriented and professionalisation paradigm, privileging reflective practice and curricular alignment, while less attention is given to critical or sociological perspectives on knowledge and institutional structures. The shared topics position Swiss MTE research within broader European debates on teacher identity, competence-oriented learning, digital transformation, and inclusive education, while also revealing distinctive structural challenges linked to federal governance and generalist teacher education models. The literature reveals a lack of explicit theoretical frameworks to articulate the relationship between disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transversality. These concepts are often used pragmatically but are rarely contextualised in their epistemological implications.

Interdisciplinarity and transversality in Swiss MTE research

To introduce the ground for the case report in the next section, which illustrates and discusses how disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal dimensions are balanced in practice, the following subsections outline the research that relates to them.

Interdisciplinarity is widely defined in educational theory as the coordination or integration of disciplinary perspectives to address shared themes, problems or artefacts, drawing on models ranging from subject links to joint design processes (Caviola et al., 2011; Bertschy et al., 2017). Transversality denotes overarching competences that support the transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes across contexts (Scharnhorst & Kaiser, 2018; Mommartz & Gregori, 2025). Transversal competences enable learners to mobilise cognitive, relational and procedural resources flexibly in new situations (Schneider, 2024). Frameworks developed in connection with the *Lehrplan 21*, the *Plan d'études romand* and the *Piano di studio* conceptualise transversal competences such as creativity, communication, problem-solving and cultural awareness (Baume-Sanglard, 2009; De Baets et al., 2025; Scharnhorst, 2021). In Swiss MTE, interdisciplinarity and transversality appear in different formats, including subject-linked modules (Caviola et al., 2011; Bertschy et al., 2017), cross-arts collaborations (Chatelain et al., 2022; Honsberger & Schneuwly, 2022), and competence-oriented learning settings explicitly targeting interdisciplinary and transversal aims (Künzli David & De Sterke, 2021; Savona & Piricò, 2025; Schneider, 2024; Scharnhorst & Kaiser, 2018).

Researchers in German-speaking Switzerland (e. g., Reusser, Oser, Perini), French-speaking Switzerland (e. g., Schneuwly, Felouzis, De Pietro) and the Canton of Ticino (e. g., De Vincenti, Perret-Clermont) have explored the epistemological, organisational and pedagogical implications of interdisciplinarity. Joliat and Terrien (2021) examined how school music education and MTE can be linked to the 36 transformative skills of the OECD Education 2030 Project (2018). Linked to transversal skills (Schneider, 2024), the affiliative, creative and intercultural competences developed through school music align with these transformative skills, including confidence, empathy, open-mindedness, commitment, equality, integrity, and responsibility. In music education, these transversal aims become tangible through collaborative music-making, creative production and multimodal forms of learning. Four strands are particularly visible: research on music as a multimodal domain linked to language and perception (Greder-Specht et al., 2025; Krompák et al., 2024; Saner, 2024; Piricò, 2020; Pöhl & Zgraggen, 2024), studies on shared epistemologies across the arts (Schertenleib, Joliat & Giglio, 2011), practice-based research on performance and embodied learning (Chatelain et al., 2022; Rocca, 2020), and research foregrounding interdisciplinarity as a lived artistic-pedagogical process rather than a purely conceptual construct.

The next section moves from this national overview to concrete case analyses of how interdisciplinary and transversal approaches are enacted in practice. Taken together, the mapping reveals a research landscape that is conceptually dynamic but structurally fragmented, highlighting both the innovative potential and the systemic challenges of positioning music within interdisciplinary and transversal teacher education frameworks in Switzerland. Overall, Swiss MTE research is characterised by strong engagement with competence-oriented reforms, teacher professionalisation and interdisciplinary learning formats. At the same time, blind spots remain apparent in terms of comparative regional studies and longitudinal investigations of musical competence development among generalist teachers. Persistent tensions concern the balance between safeguarding disciplinary musical knowledge and competences and responding to further curricular expectations. These dynamics shape the context in which current institutional and pedagogical innovations are emerging.

A Case Report: Interdisciplinarity and Transversality in School Music Training

This case report examines how interdisciplinarity and transversality shape the role of music in Swiss teacher education, and conversely how disciplinary musical competences influence these orientations. Across regions, teacher education programmes face common challenges, including limited training time, conceptual ambiguity and fragmented institutional frameworks. In response, locally developed interdisciplinary formats seek to connect

musical learning with broader educational aims and transversal competences. These initiatives produce varied outcomes, ranging from enriched multimodal learning environments to tensions concerning the depth and continuity of disciplinary preparation.

Canton of the Grisons: Interdisciplinarity through thematic and context-sensitive approaches

In the trilingual canton of Grisons (German–Italian–Romansh), interdisciplinary approaches involving music are embedded in institutionalised curriculum modules but develop through decentralised, bottom-up collaboration among lecturers. Interdisciplinary initiatives emerge from thematic collaborations across subjects rather than from overarching programme strategies.

One example is a module within Education for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development, 2025) addressing themes such as migration, human rights and labour, co-taught by lecturers from the subject areas of music and nature–human–society (*Natur, Mensch, Gesellschaft*). Here, music functions as both an expressive and interpretive medium through which student teachers explore socio-historical perspectives and cultural identities. Songs, testimonies and musical traditions linked to migration stories become entry points for discussing cultural identity, political agency and lived experiences.

A second module links music with informatics, inviting students to design learning sequences that combine computational thinking with rhythmic modelling and digital sound exploration. Learners not only create simple algorithmic structures to model rhythmic patterns but also engage with core processes of musical learning: they experiment with how musical material is perceived, encoded, and transformed within digital environments (Repenning et al., 2020).

These formats expand music's educational role by positioning it as a multimodal resource for understanding social issues and technological processes. Despite these innovative practices, interdisciplinarity has not yet crystallised into a larger institutional framework. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for these modules are attributed to the school subject nature–human–society (*Natur, Mensch, Gesellschaft*) or informatics rather than music, and the area is not perceived as a major strategic priority within the music department. At present, these approaches have not yet resulted in structural curricular changes, remaining largely dependent on bottom-up initiatives.

Italian-speaking Switzerland: Multimodal and embodied interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinary practices in Italian-speaking Switzerland are strongly shaped by a coherent curriculum framework the *Piano di studio della scuola dell'obbligo ticinese* (Dipartimento dell'educazione, della cultura e dello sport, 2022) and by the pedagogical culture of the University of Teacher Education in Ticino. Within this context, music is conceptualised as an experiential and communicative language connected to narrative, movement and

embodied cognition (Piricò, 2022). This epistemological framing is reflected in several modules that exemplify tightly integrated interdisciplinary practice.

In the module *Fiaba musicale* (musical fairy tale), student teachers design and stage narrative–musical productions, exploring how musical phrasing, bodily expression and dramaturgical structure interact in the construction of shared meaning (Galassetti & Piricò, 2024). Meaning-making is thus understood as a multimodal process, in which musical decisions (e. g. tempo, dynamics, timbre, melodic contour) contribute directly to narrative coherence and expressive intent. This format strengthens operational musical competences while simultaneously promoting linguistic and transversal competences, including creative and relational skills. Beyond individual modules, these practices can contribute to a more systematic integration of interdisciplinary approaches within the curriculum, influencing course design, assessment formats and the articulation of learning outcomes across programmes.

Another example is the set of music-movement projects, co-designed across disciplines (Galassetti & Piricò, 2024). These projects combine invented dances, soundscapes, improvisation, digital tools and narrative development (Rocca, 2020). Students explore rhythmic, spatial and symbolic dimensions, translating musical concepts into multimodal learning. Musical quality is not diminished: careful attention is given, for example, to phrasing, rhythmic coherence, coordination and vocal–instrumental expression. More specifically, targeted musical competences include the ability to maintain rhythmic stability, shape musical phrases expressively, coordinate voice and movement, and make intentional expressive choices aligned with the narrative or performative context.

These interdisciplinary models are supported by assessment formats such as portfolios, reflective commentaries and project documentation, as well as by research-informed resources (Galassetti & Piricò, 2024). Assessment criteria typically address both disciplinary and transversal dimensions, including musical accuracy and expressiveness, coherence between musical and narrative elements, and the student teachers' capacity to reflect critically on their compositional and pedagogical choices. This suggests a shift from isolated interdisciplinary projects towards a more institutionalised curricular model. Within this integrated educational framework, interdisciplinarity strengthens music's visibility and curricular relevance. However, it also raises a key challenge: ensuring that generalist student teachers maintain sufficient depth of musical competence to engage confidently with complex multimodal tasks.

French-speaking Switzerland: Conceptual ambition and operational overload within arts

In French-speaking Switzerland, interdisciplinarity in music is structurally anchored in the *Plan d'études romand* (Conférence intercantonale de l'instruction publique de la Suisse Romande, 2010), which places music within the arts domain alongside visual arts and

plastic arts (i. e. crafts-based subjects). These arts share four thematic axes – Expression and Representation, Perception, Acquisition of Techniques and Culture – each of which is connected to other domains, transversal competences and general education.

This orientation is operationalised through modules combining musical, visual and performative activities. In *Incidentaux* (incidental music), student teachers compose and record original soundtracks for film excerpts, interpreting visual cues (*Arts visuels*), developing sound design competences (*Éducation numérique*) and performing live music (*Musique*). In *Machine sonore* (sound machine), they construct sound–movement–visual installations that narrate events through multimodal expression, linking music with languages, visual arts and body–movement education. Modules such as *Chemin d'appréciation d'une œuvre* (guided listening pathway) and *Conte de randonnée musicale* (musical cumulative tale) further connect musical learning with narrative and performative dimensions (Chatelain et al., 2022; Weis, 2021).

A distinctive feature of this regional context is the presence of a dedicated development unit in which an interdisciplinary team brings together lecturers from music, visual and plastic arts, drama, language and body–movement education. This team co-plans and co-teaches a large collaborative project in local schools, guiding student teachers through the processes of devising, rehearsing and presenting a public performance (Giglio et al., 2010). Yet challenges persist: The *Plan d'études romand* (Conférence intercantonale de l'instruction publique de la Suisse Romande, 2010) provides strong conceptual interdisciplinary links but no operational guidance, and the region lacks common teaching materials even after decades of implementation. The range of interdisciplinary know-how implied here extends well beyond the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) allocated to music education, creating clear pedagogical and structural challenges. This reveals a gap between strong curricular intentions and their operational translation into sustainable teaching practices and institutional frameworks.

German-speaking Switzerland: Varied structural arrangements and development practices

Interdisciplinary approaches involving music in German-speaking regions are characterised by considerable institutional heterogeneity. The *Lehrplan 21* (D-EDK, 2014) promotes transversal competences and interdisciplinary learning, yet offers limited operational guidance. As a result, Universities of Teacher Education develop locally specific formats rather than system-wide models.

Interdisciplinary practice appears in block weeks combining music with subjects such as language, mathematics, nature–human–society (*Natur, Mensch, Gesellschaft*) or visual and plastic arts. Some programmes link theoretical perspectives on transversal learning with design-oriented modules, emphasising that both disciplinary and transversal competences must be systematically articulated in instructional planning. Some

programmes attempt to articulate clearer design principles by linking transversal learning to complex guiding questions. For instance, interdisciplinary units may be structured around themes such as environmental change or social transformation, inviting student teachers to explore how music can interpret such phenomena in dialogue with other subjects. Such approaches reflect models of transversal teaching that emphasise the systematic integration of disiciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal competences in the design of learning activities (Valsangiacomo & Künzli, 2025). However, pre-service teachers often report difficulties in translating large-scale project models into feasible classroom units, particularly in kindergarten where subject boundaries remain fluid.

Practice-based observations further suggest that interdisciplinary work is rarely addressed explicitly in internship assessment. Observation tools tend to remain discipline-specific, thereby potentially limiting for pre-service music teachers to consolidate interdisciplinary competences. Consequently, the quality of student-designed interdisciplinary units varies substantially: more coherent designs establish conceptual links between disciplinary perspectives, whereas less effective ones rely on superficial interconnections, for instance using songs mainly as motivational support for another subject.

Despite these constraints, promising initiatives such as co-teaching formats, multimodal creative tasks and interdisciplinary project modules foster professional dialogue and pedagogical experimentation. Yet their sustainability often depends on institutional priorities, individual expertise and available resources. A key structural challenge therefore lies in developing shared analytical criteria and organisational frameworks that support interdisciplinary innovation while maintaining disciplinary clarity in music education.

Cross-regional synthesis: Interdisciplinarity and transversality across Swiss MTE contexts

Across the four linguistic regions, interdisciplinary practices in Swiss MTE reveal uneven levels of institutionalisation, in terms of how institutions take up and structure these practices, and different ways of linking disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal dimensions. In Italian-speaking Switzerland, interdisciplinary approaches, often combining music with other artistic forms and subjects, are increasingly being integrated into curriculum structures and assessment practices alongside a focus on transversal competences, indicating a shift towards systemic integration. In German-speaking regions and in the canton of Grisons, too, there are links between music and other subjects; however, these tend to be limited to specific institutions, are context-dependent, and are integrated to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual or team involved. In French-speaking Switzerland, interdisciplinarity and transversal competences are strongly articulated, particularly through integrated arts education, though with limited operational consolidation. Overall, both interdisciplinarity and transversal competences are widely promoted but unevenly implemented, highlighting persistent tensions between pedagogical innovation, institutional support and disciplinary coherence.

Designing Integrated Curricula: Towards Sustainable Models of Swiss MTE

This final section outlines prospective developments in Swiss Music Teacher Education (MTE), focusing on practices and structural conditions that may support a more sustainable alignment between disciplinary integrity, interdisciplinary approaches and the promotion of transversal competences.

Across Switzerland, there is broad agreement that music should neither be subsumed nor diluted within interdisciplinary formats. Strengthening its position, therefore, requires shared definitions of core professional competences alongside clear criteria for evaluating interdisciplinary quality. In the Swiss context, such core professional competences typically include vocal leadership, basic instrumental accompaniment, aural skills, creative task design (including improvisation and composition), and culturally informed musical understanding, including contextualised listening, repertoire selection, and inclusive pedagogical approaches to diverse musical traditions.

Viewed in a comparative European context, the Swiss model for school music at kindergarten and primary level is characterised by a strong presence of generalist classroom teachers responsible for multiple subjects, including music. Against this background, a recurring concern emerges regarding how to ensure adequate disciplinary preparation for teachers while simultaneously responding to increasing expectations for interdisciplinary and transversal forms of learning. International interdisciplinary research further shows that music teaching structures are often shaped through culturally negotiated curriculum design and collaborative approaches between subject specialists and generalist teachers, particularly in intercultural educational settings (Burnard et al., 2017). Similarly, international research also suggests that disciplinary expertise, interdisciplinary design and the development of transversal competences are most effective when addressed in an integrated manner rather than sequentially (Burnard, 2012; Fautley & Savage, 2010).

In the context of Swiss Music Teacher Education, this implies the need to align discipline-specific music training with structured interdisciplinary learning opportunities that explicitly support transversal aims such as collaboration, reflection and adaptive professional judgement. Advancing such approaches requires further empirical research and shared evaluative frameworks. Taken together, these considerations point to the need for more systematically coordinated approaches within Swiss Music Teacher Education.

At the same time, the Swiss federal landscape reveals that research networks often remain discipline-specific and intercantonal collaboration is uneven. Strengthening partnerships across institutions and linguistic regions could therefore contribute to a more coherent national knowledge base for interdisciplinary and transversal music-teaching practices. International professional networks and initiatives, including those promoted by the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*) and the International Society for Music Education (*ISME*), offer important reference points for situating Swiss developments within

broader European debates on MTE. Future research and policy development in Swiss MTE may therefore benefit from closer attention to the following interconnected dimensions. Addressing these challenges will require sustained institutional commitment and strategic coordination across teacher education programmes:

- the balance between disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal learning goals;
- the coherence and quality of multimodal integration (e. g. between musical, bodily, linguistic and visual elements);
- the sustainability of collaborative structures within and across teacher education institutions;
- and the development of reflective and adaptive professional judgement among student teachers.

Addressing these dimensions has implications for both curricular design and institutional organisation. This includes clarifying the relationships between disciplinary, interdisciplinary (Braßler, 2020; Widorski et al., 2014) and transversal learning goals (Künzli David & De Sterke, 2021; Scharnhorst, 2021), and creating dedicated curricular spaces for interdisciplinary design. From a strategic perspective, future developments in Swiss MTE will depend on how effectively institutions can translate these interconnected dimensions into sustainable curricular and organisational practices. Institutionalised co-teaching and co-design teams, embedded within institutional structures, involving music educators, general classroom teachers, researchers and subject specialists may provide sustainable support for linking training, research and school practice.

In a federal system combining harmonised curricula with diverse traditions, preparing future teachers will increasingly involve not only developing subject and pedagogical expertise but also cultivating the capacity to navigate complex institutional environments and to understand how music contributes to wider educational transformations. Ultimately, these reflections illustrate how national specificities can inform ongoing European discussions on policy and practice in Music Teacher Education (MTE), and how they can highlight the dynamic interplay between disciplinary integrity, interdisciplinary collaboration and transversal aims.

Declaration of AI usage

AI tools were used to support minor linguistic revisions (e. g., shortening and rephrasing of individual sentences). No AI tools were used for content generation or data analysis. All content and interpretations remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Rebecca Berkley & Mark Aitchison

An Introduction to Music Teacher Education in the United Kingdom

Abstract

This chapter explores the challenging contexts for music teacher education in the UK four nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It opens with a discussion of how the devolution of education policy, responsibility for school management, curriculum and teacher education to regional governments has resulted in four distinct policy environments that shape the organisation, aims and implementation of teacher training and the music curriculum in schools in the UK. A critique the impact of recent political thinking on government education policy directives between 2010–2025 on the enacted music curriculum in schools tracks the decline in curriculum time for music and music teacher education. Three examples of recent scholarship in music teacher education in the UK are presented to illustrate how professional education for music teachers is dynamically shaped throughout their career spans. The chapter concludes with cautious optimism for the new UK National Curriculum expected in 2027.

Keywords: Enacted curriculum, teacher training policy, government policy impact

Music Teacher Education in the UK

There is much need for music teachers in the four UK Nations: England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK National Plan for Music Education recognises that 'a strong music education relies on the dedication of brilliant music teachers up and down the country' facilitating children and young people learning music, much of which is delivered in the

classroom music curriculum (Department for Education, 2022, p. 8). Music is taught as part of an integrated expressive and creative arts provision in Wales to pupils aged 3–16 years old, in Scotland to pupils aged 3–18, and in Northern Ireland to pupils aged 4–14 years old (Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, 2007a, 2007b; Education Scotland, 2009; Welsh Government, 2022). In England, Music is a compulsory foundation subject required to be taught to pupils aged 5–14 (Department for Education, 2013). In all nations, Music is an optional subject for pupils taking qualifications at age 14–16, and at age 18 for entrance to university. All these pupils need music teachers.

This chapter discusses the challenging contexts for music teacher education in the UK. The chapter opens by examining the complexities of gaining the accreditation of Qualified Teacher Status in the four UK nations. We report how researchers and professional music associations have worked together to appraise the often negative impact of government education policy directives between 2010–2025 on the enacted curriculum in schools, especially tracking the decline in curriculum time for music and music teacher education; and how this research has been successful in advocating for change. We present an autoethnographic account of training general primary music teachers in classroom musicianship. We conclude with cautious optimism for the new National Curriculum expected in 2027.

A music teacher in a UK school is generally required to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), a set of professional teaching competences across all subjects and age phases for practical teaching by an accredited training provider accountable to the professional body in that nation (Department for Education, 2023; Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2012; General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2021; Welsh Government, 2020). There are significant differences in the teacher education systems in the UK four nations. Teacher education in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland leads to an academic qualification, with universities working in partnership with schools to provide professional placements. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes offered as an undergraduate subject degree with integrated QTS, or a one-year postgraduate degree in Education with QTS called a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma in Education (PGCE or PGDE). There are a small number of employment-based ITE programmes in these nations, which typically lead to a university-administered PGCE.

It is very different in England. The English government emphasises employment-based Initial Teacher Training (ITT) over university-based teacher education. The Initial Teacher Training Market Review in 2021 required all English QTS providers to re-apply through a competitive tender process to be able to offer ITT programmes from 2024–25. The review significantly benefitted school-led training models over university teacher education (Department for Education, 2021a; Mutton & Burn, 2024) and currently, the majority of ITE providers (106/166) are School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) consortia offering school-based training to QTS for Primary (pupils aged 5–11) and Secondary (pupils

aged 11–18) for student teachers already holding undergraduate degrees. SCITTs do not have to offer an academic qualification as part of their ITT programmes, although some partner with universities to offer a PGCE. Training places are offered on the basis of subject vacancies available in schools, and some are available as salaried positions, although not in music, requiring aspiring music teachers to fund their own training (Turner, 2026). As SCITTs can determine the market need for subject teachers, i. e. to meet vacancies in their schools, they are not required to train across all subjects and music teacher training is uncommon in SCITTs.

Routes into music teaching in England are complex as Fig. 1 demonstrates (Fautley, 2020).

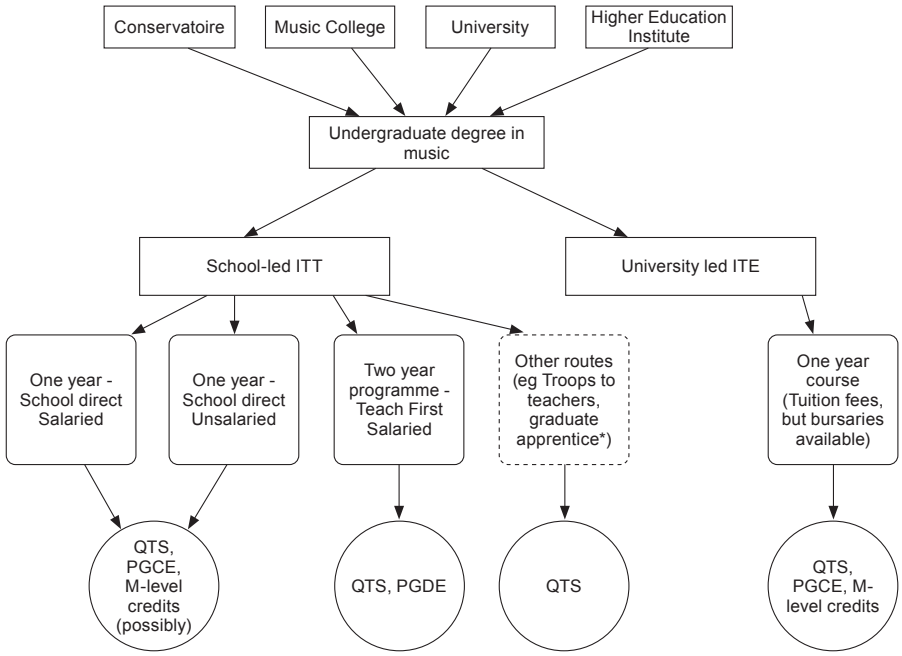


Fig. 1: Routes into teaching in England (from Fautley, 2020)

Access to specialist primary music education courses integrating pedagogy, music subject knowledge and practical training in classroom methodology is sadly limited at UK Universities. For primary music teachers, Northern Ireland leads the field with 2/5 universities offering specialist music undergraduate programmes with QTS; in comparison to 2/19 universities in Scotland and none in Wales. In England, only our institution, the University of Reading, offers a BA in Primary Education (QTS) with Music Specialism (1/106 universities). One UK university offers a Primary PGCE with specialism in the arts. Aspiring secondary school music teachers can study a BA in Music with QTS at 2/106 Universities in England, 2/8 universities

in Wales and 1/19 universities in Scotland. Secondary Music PGCE programmes are available at a range of universities across the four nations, although falling student recruitment has resulted in the closure of 10 university Music PGCE programmes over the last decade reducing the availability of teacher education programmes across the country (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education et al., 2019). We have to question whether this long-term decline in music teacher recruitment and retention can be overturned in order to give pupils opportunities to access the kind of high-quality music education envisioned by the Music National Plan (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2024; UK Parliament, 2025).

Mapping the Research Landscape of Music Teacher Education in the UK

Music education across the United Kingdom has undergone significant transformation over the past decade. Since the devolution of education policy, responsibility for school management, curriculum and teacher education is held by each UK nation's government, resulting in four distinct policy environments that shape the organisation, aims and implementation of the music curriculum in schools. Professional education in teaching is inherently practice-oriented: teachers learn their profession through engagement with the realities of classroom practice throughout their career. Consequently, the curriculum structures, policy priorities and institutional expectations that drive how music is taught in schools directly influences the knowledge, skills and professional identities that music teachers develop. The rapid pace of change to the context and conditions of teacher education in the UK means that the professional role for which music teachers were originally educated may differ significantly from the contexts in which they currently work.

Across all four nations, governments emphasise the cultural, educational and social value of music education, focusing on the importance of fair access to musical learning for all pupils with participation in performance and opportunities for creative expression to promote cultural participation, creativity and wellbeing. In England, national strategies call for regular classroom music teaching, instrumental learning opportunities and enriching the curriculum through partnerships between schools and local music organisations (Department for Education, 2021b, 2022). However, there is a gap between the intended curriculum articulated in national policy and the enacted curriculum experienced by teachers and pupils in schools (Bath et al., 2020; Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills, 2023). We present three examples of scholarship investigating how professional education for music teachers is dynamically shaped throughout their career spans by their interactions with these contexts of policy and practice: general primary teachers' confidence to teach music; subject knowledge implications for music teachers working in an integrated arts curriculum; and the impact of school accountability frameworks on how music is valued as a school subject.

Primary Teachers' Confidence to Teach Music

One of the most widely documented issues concerns the downward spiral of primary teachers' confidence to teach music and how this is reducing the enacted curriculum for pupils. Across the UK, music at primary level is typically taught by generalist classroom teachers. Many feel underprepared and ill-equipped to teach music when qualified, owing to limited subject-specific training during ITT programmes. Student primary teachers are likely to receive a very small number of hours (5–10 hours) of music-specific instruction across the duration of their training. Opportunities to be trained by specialist music teachers are increasingly rare on professional school placements, as music may be taught irregularly through minimal or inconsistent timetable provision (Henley, 2017; Moscardini et al., 2021; Savage, 2021). It is no surprise that when primary teachers feel uncertain about their musical expertise, they choose classroom activities which focus on basic or highly structured tasks rather than creative and practical musical learning, with a consequent negative impact on pupils' readiness for progression to more advanced musical study during secondary education (Office for Standards in Education, 2023). The case study presented below explores practical solutions to the challenge of training student primary teachers to teach music.

Subject Knowledge Implications for Teaching Music in an Integrated Arts Curriculum

The shift to teaching music as part of an integrated arts curriculum is impacting music teacher education. In Wales and Northern Ireland, music is taught in a broader creative and expressive arts curriculum framework, rather than existing as a discrete subject. Teachers are encouraged to explore interdisciplinary approaches to musical learning in a creative integration across artistic disciplines and multiple art forms (Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Welsh Government, 2022). While interdisciplinary approaches can encourage creativity and collaboration, when music is embedded within a broader arts framework, the depth and sequencing of musical knowledge and technical skill required for progression to formal music qualifications for pupils aged 16 and 18 are weakened. Subject specific learning becomes diluted within a more generalised creative outcome (Kneen et al., 2020). This kind of curriculum restructuring often requires music teachers to develop subject knowledge in order to teach across creative arts, beyond their original music teacher education (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education et al., 2019; Breeze et al., 2023). This has been Mark's (second author) lived experience as a secondary school music teacher. Changes to staffing and curriculum structure created an urgent obligation to develop his pedagogical methodology and subject knowledge for teaching drama to pupils aged 11–16 at the same time as delivering music teaching. His music teacher education did not include drama teacher education, and it was challenging to develop this interdisciplinary expertise whilst also managing the demands of a busy music teaching schedule.

Perceived Value of Music in Accountability Driven School Assessment

Accountability and assessment structures in the school curriculum represent another key factor influencing the perceived value of music within school curricula. Throughout the UK, pupil testing in literacy and numeracy dominate the final years of primary schooling. Curriculum time is allocated to these subjects in preparation for assessment, with a consequent reduction for music lesson time (Henley & Barton, 2022; O'Flynn et al., 2022). The English Baccalaureate or E-Bacc (2010–2025) assessed schools on the grades pupils achieved in English, Maths, Science, a Language and History or Geography General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) taken at age 16, comparing these to national averages to make schools accountable for the quality of education they provided. The exclusion of music and other arts subjects from the E-Bacc has significantly reduced the amount of curriculum time given to music for secondary pupils aged 11–16, limiting continuity in musical learning for pupils, and reducing professional teacher education opportunities for music teachers as schools prioritised EBacc subjects within limited timetable space. Some schools have shifted from weekly provision to fortnightly lessons or rotational "carousel" models in which pupils study music for only part of the academic year (Fautley, 2023). Across the UK, there has been a documented decline in entries for Music GCSE (pupils aged 16) and A-level (pupils aged 18) as a direct result of the E-Bacc. In England, a significant proportion of schools no longer enter pupils for GCSE Music, as it is not an E-Bacc subject. In 2025, 30,115 pupils took GCSE Music, compared to 48,184 pupils in 2023, a decline of 37 %. A-level Music entries have also fallen, with fewer than 5,000 pupils taking the qualification in 2025, compared to 10,000 students in 2010, a decline of just under 50 % (Whittaker, 2021; Whittaker & Fautley, 2021). Without pupils or timetabled time to teach, employment opportunities for music teachers have also dwindled. Another exacerbating factor is the fluctuations in ITT bursaries for music teachers, as bursaries previously offered in music were cut in 2020, reinstated in 2023 – although at a much lower rate than for teachers training in E-Bacc subjects – but then removed again for teachers training in 2026/27 as part of the government's focus on redirecting funding for ITT to higher priority core subjects, like Maths and Science.

Sustained research and advocacy from academic researchers working together with professional organisations have highlighted the detrimental impact of this accountability policy on music education provision in schools and on music teacher education (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education et al., 2019; Cultural Learning Alliance, 2024). Employing mixed-methods methodologies, combining population censuses, analysis of music qualification enrolments through government figures, interviews and focus groups, researchers have painstakingly mapped the impact of government policy on the enacted music curriculum and music teachers' lived experiences of their professional education. These organisations have lobbied government to accept that recent policy has created significant problems for music teacher education with the sustained reduction and

diminishment of the enacted curriculum in music. These factors – limited opportunities for sustained musical learning in primary schools for pupils aged 5–11, and in the first years of secondary school (pupils aged 11–14); reduced curriculum time for music teaching in secondary schools for pupils aged 11–16 and the reduction of schools offering Music GCSE and A level – have contributed to declining pupil participation in music qualifications, falling recruitment to music teacher training and increasing numbers of music teacher vacancies that remain unfilled in secondary schools. There are intolerable pressures on specialist music staffing in schools and limited opportunities for sustained subject-specific continuing professional development once music teachers enter the profession (House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2019; UK Parliament, 2025). Recently, the Curriculum and Assessment Review has recognised this decline and has proposed the removal or reform of the E-Bacc as part of wider curriculum change which promotes arts education for pupils and teacher education (Department for Education, 2025). At the time of writing, these changes have not yet been enacted in statutory policy.

Everyone Can Teach Music: A Case Report in Music Teacher Education at the University of Reading

This case study refers to the work of Rebecca Berkley (first author) and reports on research and scholarship undertaken to evaluate ways of teaching musicianship to general student primary teachers at the Institute of Education (IoE), University of Reading. The case study is presented as an autoethnographic account of my critical reflection on my practice as a teacher trainer.

Challenges in training general primary teachers to teach music

Generalist primary music teachers cite lack of musical literacy and low confidence for leading practical music-making as a key reason for feeling ill-equipped for teaching classroom music. A significant body of research indicates that effective training in music teaching for general primary teachers combines learning classroom musicianship skills developed through practical music pedagogy supported by mentoring from an experienced music teacher (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Biasutti et al., 2019; Biasutti et al., 2015; Henley, 2017; Hennessy, 2017; Ibbotson & See, 2021; Poulter & Cook, 2022; Sirek & Sefton, 2023). The ideal point to deliver such training is with student teachers as they enter the profession. However, reviewing evidence from module feedback and students' professional teacher portfolios across several years of delivery, I noted that although students training as general primary teachers at the IoE enjoyed university music sessions, few felt confident to teach music once they qualified. Our training was not meeting their needs. In response to this challenge, I devised a classroom musicianship teacher training curriculum to support these

new teachers' journey as 'a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skill and discourse are part of a developing identity' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 122). I sought to establish a community of practice built on situated learning in classroom musicianship among student teachers which decentred concepts of mastery and pedagogy and promoted positive identities for novice teachers as musicians in their classrooms.

My COVID lockdown project was to take the Certificate of Professional Practice (Primary level) with the British Kodàly Academy. I consolidated my learning by undertaking a pilot study to teach classroom musicianship to general primary students on the BA Primary Education QTS programme at the University of Reading in 2021–22. I had already taught Kodàly pedagogy to music specialist student teachers but had never tried teaching general primary student teachers. The first cohort of students responded very positively, and I carried out an opportunistic intervention study with a focus group from this cohort to appraise the impact of this pedagogy and methodology training on their professional placement. This research revealed that novice music teachers need a critical mass of music Subject Matter Knowing (SMKg) from which to create Pedagogical Content Knowing (PCKg) for teaching music, and the quality of their pedagogical reasoning when teaching is dependent on achieving that critical mass. Both SMKg and PCKg are non-verbal, embodied musical behaviours expressed through classroom musicianship – the practical skills teachers use for directing music making with the pupils e.g. singing, movement, playing instruments, improvising and extemporising – mediated by aural analysis of that music making in the moment of its creation in the classroom (Berkley, 2024a; Bremmer, 2021a, 2021b).

The results of this impact study changed the ITE music curriculum at the IOE, University of Reading. Reflecting on the impact of this training, I revised the classroom musicianship teaching of all student primary school teachers at the IoE and rolled this out on the BA Primary Education QTS programme (from 2023–24) and the Primary PGCE programme (from 2024–25). Working with Mark Aitichson, my co-author, we have created a curriculum of incremental skills training in solfa musicianship and musical leadership delivered as a suite of classroom activities which students then teach on professional placement in schools (Berkley, 2024b). We encourage students to learn as children do through sensory-motor musical play. Critical reflection on that playful exploration facilitates students to learn the classroom leadership skills needed to direct practical music making including leading singing, ensemble performance on classroom instruments, improvising and composing. University based training is tailored for professional placement to facilitate students in applying these newly learned skills straight away. We start with small, easy to achieve targets such as teaching a chant or a warm-up game in 5 minutes, building incrementally over time to bigger targets such as students devising their own lesson material from their own choice of repertoire. We integrate teaching for SMKg and PCKg in our own teaching using the prepare – present – practice learning sequence (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015, p. 41 ff.),

which we also advocate to students as an effective mechanism for building pupils' musical knowledge through practical music making. We encourage students to pay close attention to what both they and the pupils do in shared classroom music making and review this classroom evidence of musical thinking through dynamic professional discussions around their emerging theories of professional knowing (Fink-Jenson, 2012). Through supportive, critical examination of their own teaching, we facilitate students to explore the impact of their own pedagogical reasoning in music on the pupils they teach, both in the room whilst directing music making and remotely after and before music teaching (Bowman, 2004; Garnett, 2013; Schön, 1987).

I have measured the initial impact of these changes to our musicianship curriculum in a number of ways. Our external examiners have described our work as trailblazing: 'A continuing strength of this programme is that it supports students without a music specialism to access modules and develop their music education knowledge, confidence, and skills […] and understand that music is for all, not just a special or talented few.' To develop a healthy culture of critical self-examination, we foreground student voice in the appraisal of our approach to music teacher education in a feedback – feedforward cycle. This has suggested further research and scholarship activity for me. I am currently leading a co-created research project with student teachers who self-identity as having special educational needs to develop pedagogies for sensory learning in musicianship in choral education to support pupils with special educational needs characteristics. Researching my own practice through these open professional discussions with student teachers has encouraged me to consider the impact of my actions on their emerging PCKg in music, and deepened my own understanding of the teacher education work I do.

The future of music teacher education in the UK

It is a truism that we need a more robust pipeline for music teacher education in the UK to facilitate research-led professional teacher education for music teachers throughout their careers. As music teacher training is accredited by government in the UK, policy decision making and political thinking impacts teacher education very profoundly. The devolution of education policy has produced distinct national systems of curriculum and teacher education, shaping differing professional experiences for music teachers across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England particularly, market-driven, standards-focused and centrally controlled education policy enacted between 2010–2025 in teacher training has resulted in an uneven and fragmented landscape of music teacher education providers and a steady decline in the number of teachers qualifying as music teachers. Aspiring music teachers have fewer opportunities for specialist teacher education among a community of practice of music specialists in schools and universities. The baseless diminishing of music as a less valuable

creative arts subject compared to more valuable academic subjects enshrined in the E-Bacc during the same period has reduced music classroom teaching time by music specialists for pupils aged 4 to 18 in schools which has reduced the number of students leaving school with qualifications that can enable them to take music degrees, and thus move onto teaching; at the same time as reducing professional education time and funding for music teacher education. We have outlined how the urgency of this crisis for university schools of education has created research partnerships between academics and professional music associations critically examining the impact of policy decision making on music teacher education and lobbying government for the survival of music as a subject in schools.

There is evidence for cautious hope. We await the revised English National Curriculum: expected publication in 2027 for teaching from 2028 (Department for Education, 2025). Proposed revisions re-affirm a core entitlement for pupils to access arts and cultural experiences and strengthen the status of arts subjects in the curriculum, giving music the same status as it enjoys in the school curricula of the other nations of the UK. An updated curriculum will clarify learning progression in technical, constructive and expressive musical skills for compulsory music teaching for pupils aged 5–14, and Music GCSE. The current government plans to create a National Centre for Arts and Music Education, which will support teacher training and provide teaching resources, working in partnership with regional music education organisations and cultural institutions. Many non-profit professional music organisations already offer grass roots training among music teacher communities of practice. We are members of the Music Teachers Association and contribute to the webinars, in-person training and professional mentoring offered to school colleagues[1] (Music Teachers Association). Rebecca has also consulted for the National Schools Singing Programme to develop music teacher education resources for their comprehensive singing curriculum in state schools[2]. These positive developments offer opportunities for renewed collaboration between government, schools and universities to develop research-informed and critically evaluated approaches to music teacher education. We hope these approaches will promote inclusive and culturally responsive practice, recognising the diversity of musical identities represented by teachers and pupils. Sustained public investment is essential to ensure equitable access to music education across the four UK nations. Evidence from Scotland shows that removing parental charges for instrumental tuition can increase participation among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (Seith, 2025). Similar commitment is needed for music teacher education: without targeted funding and training incentives, rebuilding the 'skilled and dynamic workforce' required to sustain music education in schools will remain a significant challenge (Department for Education, 2022 p. 8).

[1] Music Teachers Association https://www.musicteachers.org/
[2] National Schools Singing Programme https://www.nssp.org.uk/

Declaration of AI usage

AI was used in the initial stages of information finding for this chapter, particularly for searching UK government legislation documentation and school assessment data relating to music. AI was not used in the writing of the chapter content.

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Harmony and Disruption Revisited

A Cross-European Synthesis of Music Teacher Education

Introduction

In the introduction to this Volume, we described its ambition as the creation of a 'dialogic space', a site where national perspectives on music teacher education (MTE) could resonate with and challenge one another, where common themes could be identified without missing important differences, and where the diversity of European MTE could be appreciated in its full complexity. We framed this diversity through the concepts of harmony and disruption: the sustaining continuities of national musical and pedagogical traditions on one side, and the forces of transformation, demographic, technological, political, and cultural, that unsettle and reshape those traditions on the other. We insisted, from the outset, that the challenge for MTE is not to resolve this tension prematurely but to hold it productively, recognising that both continuity and change are integral to the field's evolution.

This concluding chapter returns to that framing, now enriched by the evidence of fourteen national contributions and attempts to read them comparatively and synthetically across three interconnected dimensions: the national research landscapes that each chapter maps; the case studies that illuminate specific challenges and innovations; and the forward-looking reflections that articulate shared directions for the field. These three dimensions are not independent: the research traditions of a field shape which challenges become visible; the challenges that become visible shape which innovations are attempted; and the innovations that are attempted, along with the understanding that accumulates around them, shape what futures seem possible. Reading these dimensions together produces a picture of European MTE that is richer and more generative than any single national perspective could offer on its own.

Two framing ideas from the introduction are worth bringing forward explicitly, because they give this synthesis its orientation. The first is Bjørnevoll and Christophersen's (2025) understanding of MTE as a complex system, one characterised by emergence, relationality, and unpredictability rather than by linear pipelines that deliver predetermined outcomes. The second is Economidou Stavrou and O'Connell's (2022) distinction between the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived: the recognition that what is officially prescribed and what is actually experienced are always in productive friction, and that music teachers are not merely deliverers of curricula but curriculum makers at the microlevel. These two ideas run through all three sections that follow.

European MTE Research Across Fourteen Countries

The introduction identified a significant gap in the literature: despite the richness of MTE provision across Europe, there has been no prior large-scale, critically reflexive, Europe-wide attempt to map national research landscapes together within a shared analytical framework. The research landscape sections of the fourteen national chapters begin to fill that gap. What they reveal, read comparatively, is a field that is intellectually active, nationally varied, and, despite working in different languages, within different institutional traditions, and against very different policy backdrops, engaged with a surprisingly consistent set of fundamental questions. Those questions operate across interconnected layers: the professional identity development of individual teachers, the pedagogical design of programmes, and the structural conditions, institutional, policy-driven, and cultural, within which they unfold. The themes identified below move across all three layers, often simultaneously.

Coherence and the Theory–Practice Relationship

The most persistent preoccupation across the reviewed research is the relationship between theoretical preparation and practical classroom experience. Researchers across multiple national contexts describe this relationship as a common gap or divide, a fragmentation of programmes into separate artistic, theoretical, and pedagogical components that student teachers experience as insufficiently connected to the realities of school teaching. This is precisely the concern that De Baets et.al. (2025) identify at the European level: as programmes attempt to integrate an expanding range of competencies, inclusion-oriented practice, digital competence, practitioner research, and interdisciplinarity, there is a genuine risk of what they term 'tick-box' compliance, adding content without achieving the deeper coherence that meaningful professional formation requires.

The teaching practice or school placement emerges across the research as the site where this discord is most acutely felt and, when conditions allow, most productively worked through. Studies consistently document insufficient placement hours, limited

access to qualified mentor teachers, and a lack of systematic structures for reflection during placements. Alongside these formal research findings, case-based accounts across the Volume illuminate the variability of placement experiences, showing how local school conditions, mentor availability, and institutional partnerships shape outcomes in ways that population-level studies do not always capture.

However, the research also documents promising alternatives: co-teaching models, reciprocal university–school partnerships, and extended placements are reported across multiple national contexts as capable of transforming the teaching practice from a one-directional delivery of student teachers into a genuine community of professional learning. These innovations align closely with what Bjørnevoll and Christophersen (2025) describe as the conditions that complex systems need to flourish: spaces for inquiry, relationality, and the productive navigation of uncertainty.

Identity, Beliefs, and the Musician–Educator Axis

A second major thread concerns professional identity, understood here as a core dimension of teacher professional formation that interacts closely with both curricular structures and teaching practice experiences. The introduction drew attention to Westerlund and Karlsen's (2017) critique of 'ocularcentrism of diversity' (p. 81) discourses that render difference visible without questioning whose knowledge is accorded legitimacy. The research documented in the national chapters confirms and extends this critique: institutional norms, often tacit, consistently determine which kinds of teacher-musicians are valued and which professional trajectories are legitimised. The musician-educator dilemma that runs through so many research landscapes is not simply a structural problem to be solved through better curriculum design. It reflects deeper assumptions about what music is, what teaching is, and whether the two can coherently inhabit a single professional identity.

Research on teachers' beliefs is particularly instructive here. Studies across multiple national contexts find that beliefs about musical ability, pedagogical purpose, and the appropriate relationship between artistic and educational aims are deeply held, resistant to change, and significantly influential on how teaching is enacted in classrooms, shaping the curriculum-as-lived in ways that no programme design can fully anticipate or control. What these findings consistently point to is the need for teacher education to attend to the core of professional identity, who teachers understand themselves to be, rather than only the competences they are expected to demonstrate. Several national research landscapes across the 14 chapters document this further, identifying the cultivation of structured reflexive practices such as biographical reflection, critical examination of assumptions, and self-awareness as the means through which teacher education can create genuine conditions for student teachers to ask how their own values shape what happens in the classroom.

Inclusion, Equity, and Whose Knowledge Counts

A third thread concerns inclusion, cultural diversity, and social justice, an area that the introduction identified as carrying particularly important implications for any Europe-wide review of MTE. Research across multiple national contexts documents a gap between the discourse of inclusion in music education and its systematic implementation in teacher education programmes. More critically, studies on gendered repertoire norms, the privileging of Western classical musical forms, and processes of musical 'gentrification' confirm Westerlund and Karlsen's (2017) concern that diversity can be made visible without the underlying question, whose knowledge is deemed canonical?, being meaningfully addressed.

Digitalisation

The comparison of the research output reported within this Volume indicates that the term "digital technology", as it appears across the national landscapes, encompasses a wide and heterogeneous range of practices and tools, such as digital notation and composition software, digital learning environments, and, most recently, AI-powered tools. Furthermore, research on digital pedagogy and technology has gained particular urgency in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing that music teacher education has been slow to respond to the digital transformation of musical life, and that innovations in this area tend to remain isolated rather than being systematically embedded in MTE programmes. Research consistently indicates that the challenge is not merely infrastructural but epistemological, a limited transfer between the technical skills programmes introduced and the pedagogically purposeful, critically informed uses of technology that effective music teaching demands. The risk identified by De Baets et. al. (2025) that the pressure to integrate digital competence alongside other expanding priorities results in overload rather than transformation is clearly expressed here. Research calls for more substantive engagement: developing critical, ethically aware relationships with technology that reflect how digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) are genuinely reshaping musical creation, participation, and learning.

Structural Conditions: Policy, Shortage, and Legitimacy

A fifth and encompassing theme concerns the structural conditions within which MTE operates. Teacher shortage, documented across more than half of the national research landscapes, is not merely a staffing challenge but a symptom of deeper dynamics: the perceived attractiveness of the profession, the marginalisation of music within accountability-driven educational policy, and the working conditions that deter entry and accelerate attrition. Research that examines the purposes and legitimacy of music education in school curricula directly addresses the conditions under which MTE is possible at all, arguing, from historical, philosophical, and empirical perspectives, for a robust and well-articulated rationale for music's place in general education that can withstand policy pressures.

These are not peripheral concerns: as the introduction emphasised, MTE operates 'at the crossroads' of policy prescriptions, institutional constraints, and personal artistic identities (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022), and the research reviewed here confirms that the distance between planned and enacted curriculum is, in significant part, a product of those structural conditions.

Taken together, the national research landscapes reveal a field that is critically self-aware, genuinely engaged with the complexity of its task, and asking questions that resonate across national differences. They also reveal gaps that this Volume itself makes visible by bringing national perspectives into dialogue: longitudinal research following graduates into early professional life remains underdeveloped; large-scale empirical studies of actual classroom practice, examining what happens when the curriculum is lived rather than planned, are less common than studies of pre-service preparation; and genuinely comparative cross-national research, as distinct from parallel national description, is called for in a number of the research landscapes reviewed. It is precisely this kind of transnational knowledge production that this Volume, in part, seeks to model.

Challenges in Practice: The Case Studies

Each of the fourteen chapters presented a case study report on one or more current challenges in MTE, specifically in their country or region. Detailed accounts of the context and the circumstances within which the challenge appeared were reported, as well as particular ways in which the challenge was addressed and possible implications to MTE in their particular context. As evidenced within the chapters included in this Volume, MTE in Europe is shaped by national histories, institutional traditions, and cultural values that vary considerably from one country to the next. This section attempts to compare case studies, allowing common themes to emerge while taking care not to diminish differences. Cross-national mapping of this kind has proven productive in the broader field of teacher education. Symeonidis (2020), for instance, used comparative case studies from Austria, Greece, and Hungary to trace how European-level policy influences are translated into national teacher education systems, revealing both convergences and national distinctiveness. A recent comparative mapping of teacher education policies at national and institutional levels across multiple European countries identified patterns of coherence and incoherence across five countries, demonstrating that systematic comparison is essential for revealing broader dynamics of the field of teacher education (including MTE) (Symeonidis et al., 2024).

Notwithstanding the richness of individual case study reports that the interested reader may focus on within the chapters included in this Volume, when examined side-by-side, the case studies surface recurring patterns. This section aims to identify the themes

that comprise the conditions, challenges, and exemplary actions that European countries have recently faced, addressed, and/or developed in the MTE field, as well as the particular ways forward arising from the case study reports.

The Shortage of Qualified Music Teachers

A shared concern, evident across several reports, is a continuing shortage of qualified music teachers. Demographic pressures, including an ageing workforce, retirement waves, and declining enrolment in music teacher education programmes, are reported to threaten both the quality and the continuity of school music provision. In several countries, reported numbers suggest that demand will far outstrip teacher supply within the coming decade. In one case, projections indicate that only one-third of required positions could be filled with qualified graduates by the mid-2030s. At the same time, in another, more than half of the entire teaching workforce is aged 50 or older. However, how this shortage is manifested and the responses it has provoked differ considerably. Some systems have introduced regulated lateral-entry pathways that allow professional musicians to obtain teaching qualifications through structured in-service programmes that combine certification, mentoring, and university coursework. In contrast, others have focused on strengthening recruitment through large-scale empirical research into why potential candidates choose not to enter the profession, leading to reforms in admission procedures and curricular design. Elsewhere, responses have centred on flexible qualification routes, including session-based master's studies and recognition of prior learning, that enable working musicians and partially qualified educators to complete their professional qualifications without interrupting employment. This shortage is at times framed not merely as a staffing problem but as a threat to national cultural heritage, given the central role music teachers play in sustaining choral and ensemble traditions of deep societal significance. In another recent legislative change, specialist music teachers can now teach in the early primary years, a level of education previously reserved for generalists. However, the practical implementation of this reform remains uncertain. Perhaps what distinguishes the cases from one another, then, is not the existence of the shortage itself but the extent to which it is understood as an educational, cultural, or labour-market problem and, consequently, the type of policy response it has elicited.

Specialists / Generalists Teachers

A theme that arises from the case study comparison and is closely related to teacher shortage is the question of who should teach music in schools: specialists or generalists. This tension is most evident in primary education, where, more often than not, generalist primary teachers with minimal musical training are responsible for teaching music. In one case, for example, national statistics reveal that more than half of those teaching music at the primary level lack formal subject qualifications. Strategies for addressing this are evidenced: one

case, for example, describes how a Kodály-informed classroom musicianship curriculum was developed to build embodied subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge among generalist student teachers through playful, internship-based training. Another discusses the school internship as an opportunity for co-teaching, in which musically skilled preservice teachers and experienced classroom generalists collaborate as equals, each contributing complementary expertise. The specialist–generalist debate raises fundamental questions about the nature and depth of both musical and music pedagogical competences required for effective classroom teaching.

Artistic and Pedagogical Preparation

A third thread drawn from this case study comparison concerns the enduring friction between artistic and pedagogical preparation. Nearly every case study addresses, in some form, the question of how music teacher education programmes balance the cultivation of high-level musical competence with the development of pedagogical knowledge and classroom readiness. When these dimensions have been largely separated, as in countries where artistic training is housed in conservatoires or specialist departments and pedagogical preparation is treated as supplementary, graduates are often viewed as entering the profession with adequate musical expertise but limited pedagogical preparation for the demands of classroom teaching. Several cases describe reforms that seek to integrate these dimensions more fully, whether through new programme development wherein artistic and educational learning outcomes hold equal value; the elevation of pedagogical coursework through nationally mandated pedagogical competence requirements; or collaborative arrangements between universities and conservatoires within a jointly designed degree programme. Within such negotiations, a comparative reading of the case study reports reveals an important distinction: in some cases, teaching qualifications are indicated as carrying lower status than performance or composition degrees, with students (and staff) preferring a consecutive route that preserves a full artistic master's before adding pedagogical credits, while in others, the musician – educator dilemma has consistently been considered through project-based learning, evolving academic cultures, and a more explicit articulation of professional identity as encompassing both artistic and pedagogical dimensions. However, the move toward integration is not without friction. Several case studies document resistance from within the field: students who fear that integrating pedagogical training into artistic programmes reduces the time and space needed to develop high-level musical competence; practitioners and institutions who worry that broadening the curriculum risks weakening the specialist musical preparation that effective music teaching requires.

Professional Identity in a Diverse and Changing Professional Field

The question of professional identity constitutes a fourth area for further discussion. Several case studies examine how music teachers understand and position themselves as musicians, educators, and cultural practitioners, and how these self-conceptions are formed, negotiated, and sometimes constrained by the structures of MTE. In one case, professional identity serves as the central analytic lens through which all other challenges are interpreted, tracing the historical shift from competing conceptions of the music teacher as either primarily a musician or primarily an educator toward more holistic conceptions. In others, identity concerns are less directly framed, yet seem to manifest as a persistent status gap between artistic and teaching qualifications that continues to shape students' programme choices, or as recognition that postgraduate qualifications, such as integrated master's programmes, must project a strong artistic identity.

The Design and Quality of School-Based Placement Experiences

The design and quality of school-based placement experiences constitute a fifth area for discussion. There is a broad consensus across the case studies that supervised teaching practice as part of initial teacher education is essential for developing professional competence. These range from the introduction of extended placements involving at least two school visits per week over a sustained period and co-teaching models that pair preservice music educators with primary classroom teachers to the strengthening of reflective tools used during the internship, such as video analysis (e.g., stimulated recall techniques), reflective journals, and structured peer feedback, often aligned with a national competence framework. A distinctive innovation in one case reconceives placement not as a one-directional placement of student teachers but as a reciprocal professional learning arrangement in which preservice and in-service teachers collaborate as equals, co-planning, co-teaching, and co-reflecting on lessons. However, at least two case studies report that the shortage of qualified music teachers in schools limits the availability of suitable mentors, who remain the key stakeholders in successful internship experiences (Hennessy, 2017).

Technology and Digital Pedagogy

Technology and digital pedagogy appear somewhat irregularly within this cross-case comparison as an area of both promise and dissonance. The pandemic seemed to serve as a catalyst for experimentation, accelerating the adoption of blended and asynchronous models and prompting a critical reconsideration of which learning objectives can be pursued online and which require embodied, in-person interaction. One case study report refers to the explicit embedding of digital environments within a binding national competence framework for teacher graduates. In others, such initiatives tend to remain isolated rather than being more firmly embedded in MTE curricula. Across the cases that foreground digitalisation as a challenge/innovative theme, a growing recognition seems evident that

technical skill acquisition alone is insufficient without the pedagogical understanding and professional self-efficacy to deploy technology in educationally meaningful ways. Moreover, because of the broad dimensions that the generic discourse of 'digitalisation' encompasses, distinct pedagogical and policy questions can too easily be obscured.

Professional Attractiveness and the Value of Music Teaching

As a final observation, the attractiveness and societal recognition of the music teaching profession underpin many of the challenges described in this section. In some cases, the profession's diminished standing is attributed to working conditions that challenge teacher retention, even where salaries have recently improved. In others, the deterrents relate to: entrance examinations perceived as opaque, curricula that accommodate too narrow a range of musical identities, and a prevailing sense that school teaching is irreconcilable with artistic development.

Forward Directions in Music Teacher Education

The most fundamental shift emerging across the national contributions is a reconceptualisation of music teacher education as a career-long continuum rather than a bounded preparatory stage. Within the fourteen chapters, the forward-looking sections propose something closer to a professional ecosystem: one in which early school-based experience, school placements, induction, mentoring, and in-service development are understood as connected stages rather than separate elements in the MTE field. This reframing has practical consequences that are important for MTE in Europe: earlier and more sustained engagement with schools, stronger mentoring structures, more permeable routes into the profession for musicians entering from diverse artistic backgrounds, to name but a few. However, this reframing may be considered conceptually significant. It encourages MTE not only to prepare teachers for entry into the profession, but also to develop professionals: someone equipped with the judgement, relational capacity, and adaptive disposition to keep learning across the lifespan. Flexible entry pathways are central to this vision, though the contributions within this Volume make it clear that flexibility must be conceptualised within non-negotiable core competences that future music teachers should hold.

Running through these structural ambitions is a shared insistence that inclusion and cultural responsiveness must be embedded throughout the architecture of teacher education, not appended to it. The concern here goes beyond repertoire diversity or the addition of specialist modules. It is a question of whether MTE programmes can themselves model the reflexive, critically informed environments they are preparing teachers to create. For example, whether the interrogation of canonical hierarchies is actually evidenced in curriculum design, in pedagogical practice, in placement structures, and in assessment

frameworks (Kallio et al., 2021), rather than remaining an aspiration confined to elective content. The same critical orientation is demanded of the field's engagement with digital pedagogies and AI. The fourteen chapters consistently resist viewing digitalisation and technologies in MTE as a technical challenge to be resolved through skills acquisition. Instead, they call for teachers who can make informed pedagogical choices about when and how digital tools genuinely serve musical learning and how to engage students with the ethical and cultural dimensions of an AI-mediated musical world whose full consequences are not yet evident (Buchborn & Treß, 2023).

What unites these directions and distinguishes them from previous rounds of reform discourse is the scale at which professional agency is now being claimed. The chapters are not simply calling for better-designed programmes; they are calling for music teacher educators to position themselves as active shapers of the policy and institutional conditions under which their work takes place. This means forging more equitable and sustained partnerships with schools, conservatoires, community organisations, and cultural institutions; generating evidence that challenges broader policy assumptions; and articulating music education's contribution to public and civic life as a collective professional responsibility. To work at this level as curriculum makers not only in the classroom but also in the wider landscape of educational policy and institutional culture (Priestley et al., 2015) is to assert a form of agency that the field has not always exercised consistently. The forward-looking sections of this Volume suggest that European MTE should be increasingly prepared to do so.

Towards a Shared Horizon: Concluding Reflections

The introductory chapter closed with the observation that new insights into music teacher education can begin to emerge within the tension-filled, potential-rich environment of dialogue among diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives. This concluding chapter has sought to create and sustain that dialogic friction across three registers, research, practice, and future orientation, drawing the threads of fourteen national contributions into a comparative synthesis that is more than the sum of its parts.

Three observations emerge from this synthesis that deserve emphasis as closing reflections. The first is the consistency of the underlying strains that MTE faces across European contexts. The limited transfer between preparation and enactment, the musician–educator identity question, the challenge of balancing disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth, the structural pressures of teacher shortage and policy marginalisation: these are not problems awaiting resolution but structural conditions through which music teacher education takes shape across very different national contexts. Precisely because they are structural, they will not be resolved by any single reform or programme innovation. They

call instead for sustained, reflexive, and collectively enacted professional engagement, as the introduction's framing and this Volume's aspiration model call for.

The second observation is that the diversity of responses to these shared dissonances documented across the chapters is itself a major finding and a major resource. MTE in Europe is not converging on a single model, and this Volume makes no case for it. What it does argue, by creating the conditions for systematic comparison, is that much can be gained from systematically exploring this diversity: from recognising that the co-teaching model developed in one context, the flexible qualification ecosystem designed in another, and the competence framework that embeds digital pedagogy in a third are not merely local solutions but potential contributions to a shared European repertoire of MTE knowledge. This is precisely the kind of transnational knowledge production that the dialogic space of this Volume seeks to enact.

The third observation concerns what the introduction described as the risk of 'tick-box' compliance (De Baets et al., 2025), the danger that programmes respond to the expanding demands placed on MTE by adding competence domains rather than achieving the deeper coherence that genuine professional preparation requires. On this reading, the forward-looking sections of the national chapters are arguments for a different kind of relationship between planning and implementation, between what is prescribed and what is enacted. They are arguments for MTE as a complex system that cultivates judgement, reflexivity, and ethical agency rather than delivering predetermined outcomes and for music teacher educators as curriculum makers at every level of the educational enterprise, from the individual classroom to the policy arena (Economidou-Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022).

In a field constantly balancing harmony and disruption, the question the introduction posed, 'What kinds of professionals and educational environments are we aiming to cultivate?' has no firm answer. What this book provides is something more valuable: a richly evidenced, comparatively informed, and critically engaged account of how colleagues across Europe are exploring that question, in all its difficulty and all its importance. What it offers is not convergence on a single model but a space in which difference becomes analytically productive and through which the ongoing work of music teacher education in Europe can continue to find both its grounding and its direction.

Looking ahead, the task for music teacher education in Europe will be to sustain this dialogic space not as a one-time achievement but as an ongoing professional practice. To do so, it will be essential to strengthen connections across national contexts, research traditions, and institutional settings in order to develop more responsive and resilient forms of MTE in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

Declaration of AI usage

Artificial intelligence tools (Claude, ChatGPT, and Grammarly) were utilised in a supportive, non-automated manner for language editing and stylistic improvements, focusing on clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analyses, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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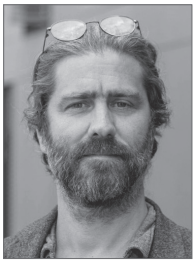
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Annamaria Savona is Professor of Music and Subject-Specific Education at the Schwyz University of Teacher Education (Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz). Her research focuses on the relationship between disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transversal competences in music education, with particular attention to curriculum design and teacher professionalisation. She leads and collaborates on nationally funded research projects investigating classroom practices in school music, including song teaching as well as the design of creative learning environments and children's collaborative musical invention. A central strand of her work examines how children generate, share and negotiate musical ideas in group settings, highlighting the social and dialogic dimensions of musical creativity. Her research is characterised by a strong participatory orientation, bringing together researchers and practitioners and actively involving multiple stakeholders in the co-construction of music education practices.



Helmut Schaumberger

Mozarteum University Salzburg – Austria

Helmut Schaumberger is Vice-Rector at the Mozarteum University Salzburg and previously served as Professor of Music Education at the Gustav Mahler Private University of Music. He holds a PhD in Music Education and a Master's degree in Music Education and German Language from the Mozarteum University Salzburg, the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, and the University Vienna. He previously taught at grammar schools, leading the music department and conducting choirs and bands. As guest lecturer and clinician, he has delivered courses across Europe and the United States. His research interests include interdisciplinarity, singing, teacher education, philosophy of music education, and mentoring.



Marek Sedláček

Masaryk University – Czech Republic

Marek Sedláček is an Associate Professor and head of the Department of Music at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, focusing primarily on musical aesthetics, semiotics, relationships between arts, popular music, and also on piano and keyboard playing. He lectured on philosophy of art at Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno and on music software at the University of Ostrava. Within education, he integrates digital technologies into music and explores contemporary music with an emphasis on semantic interpretation and receptive approaches. He currently holds the position of *EAS* National Coordinator for the Czech Republic.



Anu Sepp

University of Eastern Finland – Finland,
Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre – Estonia

Anu Sepp (PhD) is a university lecturer of music education at the University of Eastern Finland, holding also the title of docent in education science, especially in music education. She also works part-time at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Her research interests include teacher education and music education didactics, creativity in arts education; she is the author of numerous articles and music books.



Daniela Taylor

Masaryk University – Czech Republic

Daniela Taylor is an assistant professor in the Music Department at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University. She is in charge of Music Didactics in the context of teaching in kindergartens and primary schools. She collaborates on creative projects supporting the activity-based concept of Music and on the creation of teaching materials for Music, including the textbook series *Playful Music Education* for primary school (TAKTIK publishing house). In 2024 she was presented with the medal of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, for significant pedagogical and educational activities and outstanding work in the field of Education.



Julia Wieneke

Mozarteum University Salzburg (Innsbruck) – Austria

Julia Wieneke works as professor in Music Education for general music classrooms at the University Mozarteum Salzburg/Innsbruck since 2021. Her research interests span from diversity and social justice in the music classroom, teacher collaboration and professional development to innovations in school and university classrooms. She has presented and published internationally since 2018 and has successfully applied for funding from Austria's research agency FWF. In her dissertation she investigated contemporary music projects in collaboration with composers, musicians and teachers in schools. Before her academic career she worked as a classroom (music) teacher, violin teacher and in various music education projects.



Annette Ziegenmeyer

University of Music Luebeck – Germany

Annette Ziegenmeyer is a Professor of Music Education at the University of Music Luebeck, Germany where she also serves as Head of the Centre for Teacher Education (Zentrum für Lehrkräftebildung). Her main areas of work and research include community music/music and social work, music in prisons and composition pedagogy (international perspectives). Beyond her active participation in music teacher education networks (for example Allianz für Lehrkräftebildung, Schleswig-Holstein; Bundesverband Musikunterricht e. V., Schleswig-Holstein) she has set up further training in music and social work/community music and co-edits the journal *Diskussion Musikpädagogik*.

European Perspectives on Music Education 16

Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Smaragda Chrysostomou,
Angeliki Triantafyllaki, Elissavet Perakaki (Eds.)

Harmony and Disruption

Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe

Harmony and Disruption: Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe brings together contributions from 14 countries and regions to explore how music teachers are educated across various European contexts. The volume offers a comparative perspective through structured chapters that include overviews of national systems, critical analysis of national research in music teacher education, and case reports highlighting major challenges and their solutions. By analysing policy, practice, and research, the book aims to foster reflection and inform future developments in music teacher education across Europe.

TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC
Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

Co-funded by the European Union

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ISBN 978-3-7113-1267-9

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ISMN 979-0-2071-0814-2