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Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos, Luc Nijs &
Damien Sagrillo

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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