TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF DISTANCE MUSIC LEARNING IN GRADES 3 TO 6 IN FINLAND

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of distance learning (from here abbreviated DL) in music (from here abbreviated DLIM) classes with pupils in grades 3 to 6. In March 2020, Finland moved to distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Preparing for distance education started very quickly and distance learning was a whole new way for teachers to implement teaching. DL presented challenges to music teaching, as it relies on common playing and music making, and studying traditionally takes place in contact with other pupils.

Two main questions were addressed in this research: In which ways did teachers implement DLIM? and What experiences did teachers have with DL? The data was collected by interviewing nine classroom teachers and music subject teachers. The interviews followed the principles of the theme interview, and the material was analysed using data-based content analysis.

The results show that teachers felt common playing, music making, and singing were challenging, but other parts of music teaching were conducted in a diverse and functional manner. Teachers intended DLIM to be an uplifting and lightweight subject to help teachers and pupils cope with a challenging teaching situation. Teachers felt that distance education required more work than the typical in-person education, and much more time was spent on the job. Despite the challenges, teachers also felt that DL brought them new perspectives and ideas about music education. The biggest difference between Finland and other European countries seems to be the fact that in Finland much more emphasis is put on making music together, band playing and choir singing. That is seen as talk of the delay caused by ICT in DL.

Keywords: *distance learning in music, COVID-19, Finnish music teaching*

Background

Since spring 2020, everyday life has been extraordinary throughout the world. In December 2019, a new coronavirus, COVID-19, began to spread in Wuhan, China. The viral epidemic quickly spread worldwide, and the World Health Organization declared

COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Anttila, 2021; Pabst-Krueger & Ziegenmeyer, 2021; Casacchia, Cifone, Giusti, Fabiani, Gatto, Lancia, Cinque, Petrucci, Giannoni, Ippoliti, Frattaroli, Macchiarelli & Roncone, 2021). Due to the coronavirus, nations around the world had to adapt to this situation in order to deal with the crisis. Also in Finland, schools, universities, polytechnics, and other education institutions were ordered switching to distance education. On 16 March 2020, the Finnish Government held a briefing on the Contingency Act. Measures and the law entered into force on 18 March 2020. Only early education and pupils in grades 1 to 3 whose parents worked in areas critical to the functioning of society were allowed to attend in-person education (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö & Valtioneuvoston viestintäosasto, 2020). The official announcement of the transition gave schools little time to adjust. In practice, the schools had one day to arrange the transition to distance education, which presented a major challenge to the school staff. The situation required significant acclimation by teachers, pupils, and their parents.

In Finnish school, the art and skill subjects are based on bodily work, singing, playing musical instruments, and using collaborative activities. Transferring these qualities to distance education presented major challenges, and teachers were forced to use all their skills to create the same quality in learning the subjects via internet (distance) teaching (Bauer, 2014; Hankala-Vuorinen, Uksila, Vanhala, Salin & Haapakoski, 2020; Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020). In music, collaborative instrument-playing and singing form an integral part of lessons which are intended to create a strong communality within the group (Opetushallitus, 2014). Via a network, it is impossible to implement band playing, singing and music making in the same way as in a classroom situation, because of the delay between connections (Ruippo, 2009; Dorfman, 2013; Koutsoupidou, 2014; Brown, 2015). Pupils also rarely have home access to instruments used in music lessons, and music teachers were forced to come up with new, non-traditional ways of teaching music.

Distance Education

The term 'distance education' (below DL – distance learning) can describe several instructional situations. It has been around for well over a hundred years. Correspondence courses started in Europe were the first ways of DL staying as the primary means until the middle of 20th century. With advances in technology, letter instruction changed to teaching via radio (Imel, 1996), television (Moore & Lockee, 1998; Teaster & Blieszner, 1999), telephone, and other means of communication, leading to modern teaching by using computer networks (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012; Koehler, Mishra, Kereluik, Shin & Graham, 2014). In relation to the quality and versatility of teaching, distance education can also be organized because experts in a particular subject or field are not available at that institution and teaching can be arranged remotely (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012). Simonson and Schlosser (2006) also define distance education as an institution-based, general education organized by an institution to deviate from self-learning. Teaching can also be asynchronous, meaning that giving and receiving instruction take place at a different time, allowing the student to study at a time that works best for them. Use of interactive telecommunication tools means synchronous or asynchronous contact between teacher and pupils via telephone, television, or telecommunications networks. The teacher is in connection with the pupils and available resources, such as teaching

materials, enabling the teaching (Simonson & Schlosser, 2006; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Simonson, Zvacek & Smaldino, 2019; Lai & Bower, 2019).

Keegan's (1986) definition of distance education strongly includes the pupil's independent status as a learner. Pupils can also be organized in group studying. DL systematicity, teaching material, and methods are structured and do not include individual tasks or methods; very creative or personal tasks cannot be involved (Muntean, 2017a, 2017b; Rumble, 2019).

Implementing Distance Learning

The most common solution in DL is the use of email, video notes and other means of communication. The versatile combination of different media types ensures the highest quality of distance education (Nagrale, 2013; Rieldling, 2020). The most popular applications in distance education are different learning platforms, email, and video conferencing hardware. Classroom teachers emphasize email and learning platforms for task sharing, but also video conferencing to get real-time contact with pupils (Nummenmaa, 2012; Vlasenko & Bozhok, 2014).

The structure of distance education depends on the type of group being taught. Overly interpretive tasks may be challenging for a less self-directed group, but highly defined mission statements and precise schedules may be too rigorous for learners preferring a free learning schedule (Shearer, Aldemir, Hitchcock, Resig, Diver & Kohler, 2020). Distance education for children should be well organized and more structured, the younger the pupils are, the more the teacher needs to worry about the active participation in teaching. Young pupils do not have skills of self-direction abilities and independent initiative; therefore, the teacher should control and direct the activities of pupils as well as in in-person classroom education (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012; Brown, 2017a, 2017b).

The diversity of pupils and the pupils' special needs should be considered in DL. Routines and clear instruction are important. Teaching should include real-time, two-way communication which can be reached using video calling. This allows pupils receiving the support they need to complete tasks (Sergejeff, 2020). Active interaction always produces better learning outcomes. Contact teaching cycles should be arranged increasing interaction between pupils and the teacher (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012). Pupils can also participate through videoconferencing, which allows the connection to the class to be maintained and the pupils to feel as part of the class-community (Hurme & Laamanen, 2014).

The pupil's motivation is important, and it has a direct connection to the activity of studying. Making independent decisions and using one's independent initiative are qualities which predict better learning outcomes (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012). The role of the teacher is important taking special care of pupils who have difficulties in self-referral or managing given tasks. This way they do not feel as if they are left alone with learning challenges (Zilka, Rahimi & Cohen, 2019).

Distance Education in Music

Distance education in music began in the 90s, so the phenomenon is not new. It is a growing field and several universities around the world offer music courses in a distance education format (Brändström, Wiklund & Lundström, 2012; Blake, 2018). Combining different forms of media improves the quality of teaching and helps to solve problems (Ruippo, 2009). Teaching materials can be distributed to pupils through a website, email, or teaching platform. Instruments for online education can be classified on media format. Text-based tools include e-mails, text messaging, chats, and various learning platforms and online communities. However, written communication is one-sided and in addition to the use of video technologies, it is practical to use real-time video conferencing in the instruction of playing or singing. Another method is using video-based tools, which include online recordings, webcasts, online meetings, and video conferencing. Video conferencing is as close to in-person classroom education situation as possible, and various video technologies are natural ways to implement DLIM (Ruippo, 2015; Nart, 2016; Pop, 2017).

A webcast is the transmission of audio, image, and text on data networks, either in real-time or viewed later. Webcasts include streamed videos, podcasts, or lecture recordings (Ruippo, 2009). In DLIM, the webcast can be utilized if pupils record their performance on video for the teacher to a later review (Koutsoupidou, 2014). Video conferencing and its two-way interaction between teachers and pupils have the smallest methodical changes compared to the in-person education. The delay caused by video conferencing makes music playing together in real time almost impossible (Tambouratzis, Perifanos, Voulgari, Askenfelt, Granqvist, Hansen, Orlarey, Fober & Letz, 2008; Ruippo, 2009; Scherer, Siddiq & Tondeur, 2019). Also, Koutsoupidou (2014), as well as King, Prior and Waddington-Jones (2019) mention that the most common challenges of DLIM are related to the lack of online connectivity that prevents simultaneous musical instrument playing.

The music teaching lays emphasis on auditory, functionality, and non-verbal interactions. In DLIM, the pupil's own activity is important, and the tasks should bring best learning experiences and processes (Salavuo, 2009; Blake, 2018). Because of its self-referential nature, DLIM is challenging for young pupils who need a lot of guidance. In music theory teaching, interactions in real time may not be required; as instruction is mostly based on reading educational material shared online (Koutsoupidou, 2014). At its best, online music learning is a student-driven, communal activity where participants learn from each other (Salavuo, 2009).

Distant Education Arrangements in Music in European Countries

In March 2021, the Network of Music Teacher Associations in Europe (MTAs) under the umbrella of the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS) published a joint publication *"Perspectives for music education in schools after the pandemic"*, which presented the solutions to problems of music education from different points of view in several European countries (Germany, Greece, Turkey, Slovakia, Portugal, Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland) during the COVID-19 pandemic distance learning time. The data was collected almost similarly, but the number varies from

20–200 teachers per country (Daubney & Fautley, 2020; ECDC, 2020; Green, 2020; Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma & Alsayed, 2020).

The problems in DLIM were almost similar in every country: How to efficiently organize their music teaching respecting new coronavirus restrictions and following new technological demands? How to sing, how to play musical instruments or how to stimulate pupils' creativity from a distance, or behind a face mask? Or even more, how to teach behind a screen without losing the energy of teaching "live" and to realize, in such a limited context, musical interaction as a human communication? The book also presents answers to the questions: Which were the main challenges and how the teachers reacted to them?

In many European countries, teaching was first stopped totally, but in a couple of days or some weeks it was started again, however in a distant way. The teachers, who didn't contact their pupils for several days or even a week, felt 'irritated and blocked' in a psychological way. For example, some teachers in Germany, Greece and Turkey described feelings of stiffness, helplessness and despair (Kivi, Koniari, Özeke & Çeliktaş, 2021). There were problems in contacting the pupils because of lack of equipment at homes. Some teachers started sending tasks to pupils via email, letters, or telephone. The tasks contained listening to music, searching for information and reading texts sent to the pupils. After a while teachers started using Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Webex, WhatsApp or e-learning platforms in contacting their pupils. The workload experienced was enormous, but the teachers also enjoyed learning new skills in ICT. The pupils made recordings of their own singing and instrument playing, music listening was one of the most common tasks for pupils, and teachers also made recordings of their own singing and music making. Teachers also tried to get the families involved in music lessons.

There were lots of technical troubles in countries like Slovakia (Medňanská & Strenáčiková, 2021) mainly because of the lack of technological background at schools and at home. Less than half of Slovakian teachers could teach online. The hours spent with pupils were between 2–4 a day concerning those teachers who were able to do it. Music was among the subjects, which were left for less attention as it was not seen as an important one. In Portugal the teacher's role was seen more as a facilitator than a supervisor, similarly to other European countries. The use of 'flipped' classroom was also taken into account in Portuguese music education. Face-to face teaching was seen as a fundamental way of teaching music (Encarnação, Vieira & Brunner, 2021), which cannot be replaced with DL only. It is interesting to note, that Portuguese music teachers focused on aural skills, reading, and writing skills, theory, but never mentioned problems with making music together, band playing or anything else of this kind (Encarnação, Vieira & Brunner, 2021).

According to the European Joint Research Center (European Commission, 2020), in 22 European countries more than 20 percent of children during the pandemic missed two vital educational resources of the following list: internet access; absence of a computer or tablet at home; a quiet place to study; reading opportunities; a key source of daily nutrition.

Distance Teaching Opportunities in Finland

Many teachers felt that their distance teaching had developed their digital competencies. Despite the challenges, the distance education also offered lot of positive experiences and some pupils liked distance education. For shy pupils, it opened more freedom and opportunities. Pupils' self-referential development was perceived as a positive effect. The development of computer skills was also cited as a positive influence of distance school (Sainio et al., 2020; Pabst-Krueger & Ziegenmeyer, 2021).

According to the survey by The Finnish Association for Teachers (Opetusalan ammattijärjestö, 2020), the majority (70%) of teachers felt that distance education was going well as a whole. Working mainly took place on an employer-provided computer and a dedicated home online connection. Work phones were available to 44% of teachers. The tools were at least partly new to many, so the transition to DL caused a rapid increase in the digital competences of many teachers. However, the predominantly existing digital and pedagogical competence was perceived to be sufficient for this situation.

All teachers believed that distance education developed their technical and pedagogical skills. They also saw that DL gave variety to work, providing pupils with a more diverse and flexible learning environment, and that it facilitated networking with other institutions and teachers. There were no gender differences, but young teachers were more positive about DL and felt it had a positive impact on their own computer skills, the development of pedagogical skills, and the variability of work (Teo, 2011; Nummenmaa, 2012).

Challenges of Distance Teaching

The biggest challenges in distance education were related to internet connections, lack of infrastructure, class management, and human resources. Internet access was often poor and not everyone had access to fast network connections because of their location (Adedoyn & Soyka, 2020; Sari & Nayir, 2020). In terms of class management, inconveniences occurred including communicating with pupils and monitoring their learning progress. Staff resources were not always sufficient to provide distance education and teachers and pupils did not know how to use distance education systems (Sari & Nayir, 2020).

Class teachers mostly think that distance education is not suitable for primary school and interaction skills should be taught face to face. Two-thirds of the teachers maintained that they had been in touch with all the pupils, although half of them had had trouble with getting some pupils to take an active part in lessons. Matters that made contact difficult included pupils' personal difficulties, home conditions and IT problems (Sainio et al., 2020). Problems were also with the pupils' attitude towards DL. They were not attuned to teaching with the same importance as in-person education and considered DL like a holiday, as school was attended from home (Sari & Nayir, 2020). Student contact was supported by the school's pupil maintenance team and other actors. Connecting with pupils' homes and agreeing on common policies also helped to engage the pupil. Communication with pupils was often perceived as positive. Especially for shy and quiet pupils, it was easier to establish a more personal

connection and the improved connection continued even after distance school. On the other hand, some teachers felt there was a greater lack of communication through remote access and the interaction was one-sided in their view (Sainio et al., 2020).

Multiple similar tasks were often assigned to all pupils, which made especially conscientious pupils or those with learning disabilities experience a heavy study load. Pupils with pre-existing self-referential difficulties had even more difficulties. The disadvantages of using information technology were associated with the lack of equipment and poor or missing equipment in pupils' homes (Sainio et al., 2020). In normal circumstances, pupils take advantage of school hardware and free online access, but these tools may not be available in the home setting. Studying in the home environment was also often interrupted by family members or pets (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

According to The Finnish Association for Teachers (Opetusalan ammattijärjestön, 2020), one of the major adverse effects of exemption arrangements was the teachers' lassitude because of the increased workload (Ahtiainen et al., 2020). The vast majority experienced a large increase in workload during the distance education. It was perceived as a result of enlarged teaching preparatory work, increased communication with homes, the provision of personal feedback to pupils, and the introduction of new tools. In primary education, real-time instruction was only partially given and most of teaching was based on tasks given on a daily or subject basis. Verification and feedback on these tasks were perceived as a heavy workload (Opetusalan ammattijärjestö, 2020). DL was also stressful because the existing plans for in-person classroom teaching had to be changed to suit teaching online. Time and hard work were needed also in learning and deploying devices and applications before teaching could run smoothly (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). The teachers' exhaustion was found compounded by a low appreciation of their work. Music teachers had experiences of low esteem in music, as other subjects were considered more important, and schools invested more resources in the DL of these. Further, teachers did not receive the necessary support to manage well in their jobs (Shaw & Mayo, 2021).

The Content of Music Education in Grades 3 to 6 in Finnish School

The Finnish basic education curriculum defines four content areas for the music in grades 3 to 6. They are:

- S1. How do you work in music? This places emphasis on the student's activities as a member of the music making group. Singing, playing and moving are practiced through common music playing and the focus on teaching is the development of expression skills and imagining ability.
- S2. Where is music formed? This area encompasses learning and perceiving basic concepts of music in the context of music making and playing. As the skills develop, established or one's own symbols are also used from the concepts to describe those phenomena. Also, attention is paid to interpretation and expressive means in music making and playing.

- S3. Content area "Music in your own life, community and society" deals with experiences and observations generated by music in relation to different environments of music. The connection of music is also built with other subjects and its importance in communities and life situations is strengthened.
- S4. This area deals with the program and repertoire of songs used in teaching. It consists of a variety of music with particular attention to the pupils' own cultures and their education. The repertoire also includes music created by the pupils themselves (Opetushallitus, 2014).

Content of the music curriculum compared to the ways of working in distance education causes challenges and opportunities. In the first content area of the curriculum the emphasis is on common music playing. DL gives little scope for the implementation of joint music making and instrument playing (Koutsoupidou, 2014; Ruippo, 2015; King et al., 2018). Instead, the basic concepts of music, music culture or diverse repertoire can be studied well through remote connections. Music can be listened to online and at the same time pupils can be introduced to its structure, history or meanings in one's life. Although theory-oriented content areas of music can be taught by means of DL, they are slightly lacking in the dimension of communal learning.

Learning Environments

The Finnish Basic Education Curriculum on Learning Environments mentions that information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral part of diverse learning environments. In music teaching ICT should be utilized in educational situations. Offerings organized by collaborators like cultural institutions should be incorporated into diverse learning environments (Opetushallitus, 2014). DL itself is an activity in an online environment, where the use of ICT in the context of music education inevitably takes place. Taking advantage of cultural skills in teaching, such as following different musical performances online, can also be a natural way to organize a diverse exploration of music culture during DL.

According to Myllykoski (2009), non-formal learning should also be considered concerning music. A lot of learning takes place in other contexts than appropriate institution-based study of music. Music can be learned in a variety of environments, such as leisure time with friends or through computer networks. Informal learning, too, is often combined with experiential, exploratory, and problem-oriented learning. Versatile studying of music by utilizing different learning environments can therefore occur through informal learning. From a DL perspective, music studies can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the online environment and musical activities with the family as a part of music education. In this way, studying music does not have to take place only in classrooms, but the educational content of music can be absorbed to a great extent in everyday activities.

The mission of learning environments is to provide a diverse set of studies that create opportunities for musical collaboration in which all pupils can participate (Board of Education, 2014). However, in an online environment, to organize musical co-operation is challenging, and in this case the learning environment has been planned to be placed in an in-person educational situation. One obstacle to musical co-

operation is also the fact that the interaction between classmates becomes more difficult when it does not occur in a close contact. For example, Nummenmaa (2012) sees that interaction between pupils has been perceived as one of the most challenging factors during DL.

The Changed Working Basis in Music Teaching

The essential way of working in Finnish music classes is to play and create music together. The emphasis should be on interaction situations, common music playing and other musical collaborations creating a diverse, flexible set of teaching in which the above characteristics would be accessible to all pupils (Opetushallitus, 2014). Also, playing together and forming a community is the most preferable way to study music, and this makes music a very special and eccentric subject (Lindström, 2011). Lindström (2011) sees music lessons mostly as common music playing, through which individual playing, singing, and music performance skills are practiced together. Also, music theory can be studied during the activities of joint music making and playing.

The atmosphere of music lessons should be encouraging creativity and emphasizing the joy of learning. The pupil's musical skills develop through positive musical experiences and related experiences (Opetushallitus, 2014). Teaching should support pupils' enthusiasm and place emphasis on motivating subjects and working patterns. Pupils' motivation is influenced by their sense of self-efficacy, which is why music studies should support activities that the pupils can cope with. When music is studied considering the interests of pupils and supporting their self-efficacy, it predicts better motivation. From a motivation point of view, learning should also focus on active work of pupils carried out in a group, for example, joint playing and music making (Sanz & Orbea, 2014). Feedback from the teacher helps motivate the pupil, if it is honest, supportive and encouraging (Jaatinen, Laitinen, Laurila, Pihlus, Reini & Varis, 2013).

One of the most significant challenges in distance music teaching is the fact that to play music simultaneously through remote connections is difficult (Ruippo, 2009; Koutsoupidou, 2014; King et al., 2019). Important accompanying and joint playing skills remain undeveloped when the teaching is carried out remotely (King et al., 2019). When there is a whole class of pupils to be taught, the challenges of joint playing will significantly increase. If teaching traditionally is based on joint playing, the transition of music instruction in DL deprives it of an important way of working, while eliminating the common learning characteristic of music.

Music playing is also challenging at an individual level in DL. Teacher and pupil also miss out on playing position or technique aspects which are easier to detect in in-person education. Another challenge is the interaction between teacher and pupils. DL in music requires self-referential skills which young pupils may not have developed yet. Pupils do not actively ask for directions or participate in a common conversation, which makes it important to ensure communication between all pupils and create a positive atmosphere (Koutsoupidou, 2014). In DL, the pupil acts alone, and the teacher cannot immediately notice if there are difficulties, and many challenges and problems may be unnoticed unless there is an active contact with the student. Some pupils have also had trouble in committing to distance education. They have been

reported to opt out of remote lessons and teachers have reported 'missing pupils' with whom contact has been particularly challenging. If pupils generally struggle with DL, subjects such as music may receive little attention, especially if they are perceived as less important compared to the core subjects (Shaw & Mayo, 2021).

The Aim and Questions of Research

The purpose of this study is to elucidate teachers' experiences of DLIM in grades 3 to 6. The research was carried out in the spring of 2020 under the conditions of distance education due to the COVID-19 virus situation (Opetusalan ammattijärjestön, 2020). In addition to experiences, we also map the means which teachers implemented in transitioning to distance education in music teaching.

Technological competence is perceived as one of the skills of the future and the use of technologies in different contexts will become more common in the future (Stauffer, 2020). The teachers' experiences discussed in this research may also provide evidence for how ICT would be most inherent in linking music to teaching. On the other hand, one can identify those aspects of music teaching that are good to keep within the realm of in-person education. While DLIM certainly posed challenges to teaching, it is also interesting to see whether DL is helpful in music teaching in some ways, or if the teachers felt that it had offered something new for teaching.

Our research explores two research questions:

- *What kind of experiences do teachers have while teaching music in a distance learning context?*
- *How have teachers carried out distance teaching in music?*

The Research Method

This research has been conducted as a qualitative study and is focused on exploring experiences of DLIM. The study of experiences belongs to the phenomenological research tradition (Huhtinen & Tuominen, 2020). Central to the phenomenological research is to consider human perception, and the study excerpt focuses specifically on the study of the experience, meanings and community of the subject. The human world of living and its structures are the subject of interest in phenomenological research (Miettinen, Pulkkinen & Taipale, 2010; Laine, 2010; Tökkäri, 2018; Huhtinen & Tuominen, 2020). Since the purpose of this research is to uncover experiences DLIM, it makes sense to examine individuals who have extensive experience in the matter. Of course, the experiences of each teacher are unique but the challenging situation they all faced revealed also similarities among teachers.

The Data Collection

The data for this research was collected by interviewing nine (n = 9) classroom teachers or music subject teachers who taught music in grades 3 to 6 of primary school and all had experience in music distance teaching from March to May in spring 2020. The interviewees are from the regions of northern Karelia and northern Savona.

Data collection took place between November and December 2020 through TEAMS video meetings, and the meetings were recorded for the later analysis.

The interviews allow the researchers to see the interviewees' viewpoints and their meanings. The person interviewed in the study is seen as an active player and subject in a familiar situation (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015). Laine (2010) describes the interview as the most pervasive means of approaching the human experience world in phenomenological research. A thematic interview allows the interviewees to reveal their experiences and their meanings around the theme under discussion, and precise questions do not limit their chances of answering them (Eskola & Vastamäki, 2015; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015). In a semi-structured interview, all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order, but the interviewee can answer them in their own words. The interviewer may also change the order or wording of questions (Eskola & Vastamäki, 2015; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015).

We chose two main themes for the interview: through which media the DLIM has been implemented and what kind of experiences the teachers have gained in DLIM. Interview questions were submitted to interviewees before the interview, allowing them to look back in advance on their experiences from the distance learning time.

The first major theme, namely by what means the teacher implemented DLIM, was a more clearly structured part of the interview. The purpose was specifically to map how teachers responded to educational challenges and what experiences they had on the pedagogical side of distance education. The questions were selected carefully so that the interviewee could answer the thematic questions as variously as possible. Moreover, these subject areas particularly interested us from the perspective of the implementation of distance education. In the interview situation, however, the interviewees were allowed to answer questions as widely as they wished and the conversation between the teacher and the interviewee was open, as well as moving across different questions at times.

The second theme, the experiences the teacher gained from DLIM, was more open. This theme delved deeper into the experience of the challenges as well as the impact of distance education on one's teaching. At the end of the interview, each interviewee was offered an opportunity for free word. With this we offered the interviewees an opportunity to share experiences that were not necessarily related to pre-presented interview questions. The interviews were kept conversational, so that additional questions specific to the situation could be added to avoid brief or superficial answers.

The Data Analysis

The interview material was analysed using a data-driven content analysis. The phenomenological examination excerpt involves setting aside the theoretical reference framework for the duration of the analysis of the material so as not to confuse the interpretation of the subjects' own experiences. No theories or models related to earlier research are used as a basis for the analysis of the data. Instead, the theoretical frame of reference is only returned after the analysis, in which case the results are reflected on previously studied knowledge (Laine, 2010).

Before the analysis, the interview material was transcribed, and each interview was named by numbering the interviewee, for example, Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and so on. Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002) describe dataset content analysis as a three-step process: reducing, clustering and abstraction. After these, a classification can be completed (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002; Moilanen & Räihä, 2010).

Results

The first major theme, the implementation of distance education in music, presents pedagogical and substantive solutions for music teaching used by teachers. This chapter first discusses the teaching equipment, the content of teaching and the working methods used and, secondly, we discuss the experiences of motivating, activating, and evaluating pupils during the distance teaching period.

The other main theme, experiences in music distance education, presents the challenges experienced by teachers, their solutions and observations, and the lasting effects of the distance teaching period on their own teaching.

A. Teaching equipment

The teaching media used were mostly computer-based. A wide range of different devices and applications were used, with both communication via video connection and various online platforms where teachers could send tasks to pupils. The Microsoft Teams application was mostly used for video calling, but Google Meet and Zoom were also mentioned as video calling apps.

> *"[…] This communication was, of course, in Google Meet and then Teams to some extent".* (Teacher 1)

> *"Microsoft Teams was very, very weak; it doesn't suit music teaching at all. And Zoom was banned, you didn't get It […] yeah it had some problems with security issues, so its use wasn't allowed".* (Teacher 3)

Several teachers would have preferred using Zoom for video conferences, but the institution had banned its use because of security issues. Despite being widely used, Microsoft Teams was perceived as a weak communication tool from a quality standpoint. Various teaching platforms also appeared in great numbers. For example, assignments were distributed through Wilma (a network connecting the teacher, parents and the pupils together commonly in use in all Finnish schools), allowing the teacher to see if the pupil had visited the assignment link. Many teachers also mentioned using the WhatsApp app as a task recovery platform.

> *"I posted assignments through Wilma […] those links were in Wilma, that way I was able to follow who had visited the links".* (Teacher 2)

> *"[…] I got videos on WhatsApp messages, and then via Qrid".* (Teacher 3)

Teaching tools were mainly IT focused, but some of the teachers mentioned that they also used musical instruments in teaching. Some accompanied pupils on the piano, but there were also mentions of the pupils themselves making instruments for educational use.

"[…] the instruments in your own home in addition to different instruments such as guitar and piano, as well as any other combination of band instruments". (Teacher 1)

"Then there was spoon-playing, bucket-drumming. Further, during Easter vacation, they built their own rhythm eggs, and they were played". (Teacher 5)

Instrument playing took place independently at home and teachers mentioned that either self-built musical instruments were used for playing, or those instruments that happened to be found at home.

B. The content of teaching

Since there were difficulties in organizing joint playing, teachers chose theory-oriented topics such as rhythmics, music theory, music knowledge, and music history as content areas. Rhythmics was one content area commonly used as it made the tasks functional. The issue included various body rhythm exercises and learning drum rhythms, among other things.

"[…] A man on YouTube had made some kind of body-percussion material, then I repeated that; there was an educational video of it […]" (Teacher 2)

"[…] and then maybe rhythmics was more emphasized in more functional tasks". (Teacher 4)

Another common area was music history and music knowledge. For example, a lot of ready-made materials were found about music history and teachers felt this made it easier to organize teaching.

"[…] this was the most difficult thing to do… luckily I found a good package on the history of music, and I built two months of teaching based on it […]" (Teacher 7)

In addition to history, the respondents mentioned exploring the symphony orchestra and film music. In music history and music knowledge, theoretical significance of the content was perceived as an appropriate and easy way to implement DLIM. At studying history and music knowledge, listening was often used. Some teachers felt that listening to music was focused on more than would have been usual during in-person education.

"Then the listening was emphasized more. We clearly listened to music with the pupils more than in in-person education. And, then it was developed so that it is not just listening, but discussion about it, so that I extended the listening […]. Body rhythmic stuff or a little bit of it based on studying music or including instruments to it". (Teacher 6)

Listening to music could be combined with the most of the content, and it was possible to implement it by a remote access. It enabled pupils to explore different periods of music or to familiarize themselves with different musical tastes. Singing and playing time during the distance teaching period was shorter than the pre-distance teaching norm. Lag problems with video connections were perceived, as well as the challenging

availability of musical instruments for the players. The teacher could not be sure whether the pupils sang or played their instrument at home as requested.

> *"[...] they are so stressed in class, just singing and playing. Then the assignments were difficult to implement, so that if you would give someone a singing task, there was no way of knowing what was actually going to be done. And then the pupils didn't have any instruments at home, so everything was pretty impossible to execute in a way that there would be some sense of what was actually accomplished [...]"* (Teacher 4)

Despite the challenges, some teachers brought singing and playing into music lessons in DL as well. Music making and playing together was replaced by alternately singing and recording or videotaping the music playing.

> *"Singing a song solo and then an echo, like I would first sing and then the pupils would repeat that on Teams. It was just a bit problematic when we had little delay problems (laughter) [...] so then there were connection problems anyway, so it was a bit awkward. But pupils were singing karaoke, I mean at home, and then if you can count the beatbox as singing, there was a few beatbox hours included".* (Teacher 6)

Judging by the responses of the teachers, playing had been done most frequently in some ways, but the mentions of singing were fewer. Instrument playing was always carried out on an individual level as there was no chance of joint playing through remote connections.

C. Methods of working in music teaching

Listening was one of the most common ways of working in DLIM. For example, the teacher could provide pupils with links to music tracks and listening was controlled by tasks based on it. Listening to music enabled the teacher to share information with the pupils on various matters related to general music knowledge, theory, and history, so that the student actively acquired knowledge through listening.

Task types were largely written assignments. Teachers distributed tasks electronically and pupils returned them either through an e-learning environment or via a cell phone. Written instructive statements included, among other things, links to musical samples, instructional videos, PowerPoint presentations, or informational texts on the basis of which questions on the subject had been created for pupils. Returning tasks also enabled teachers to assess whether the pupils were familiar with the material. In addition to written texts, it was common for the pupils in some ways to record their outputs and send them to the teacher either as a video, or as an audio file.

> *"I had music notes stuff in there, for example I told the pupil: "Play this song and send it as a video to me". And then they sent me a video, and they liked it very much, so there was a lot of this kind of interaction. Some video clips were especially delightful, and it was wonderful to look, listen, comment and have a conversation with pupils about their work".* (Teacher 3)

Using videotaping, the pupil was encouraged to play music independently at home. Video and audio recordings included both singing and instrument playing, and pupils

could play using self-constructed instruments, body rhythms, or various music applications.

Teachers' experiences showed that by videotaping their playing or singing, pupils were able to express themselves better than they could do it in in-person education. It was easier to show one's competence when the musical sample could be done independently in a relaxed atmosphere at home and only the teacher could hear it. Consequently, many shy pupils were able to show their competencies better. In addition to written assignments and returned tasks, some of the teachers also held so-called 'live lessons' where the teacher and pupils could meet face-to-face via videoconference in real time.

Teaching lessons held via video connection required the teacher's leadership due to internet lag problems, and the activity was often of a type that the teacher demonstrated a model to the pupils, and they acted independently at home. A joint singing was possible in such a way that the teacher would sing and accompany the songs, and the pupils would sing with the microphones turned off. However, most teachers interviewed found the lessons held via video connection challenging and instead of live hours many placed more emphasis on written assignments.

D. Motivating pupils

At the implementation of DLIM, it was also important to keep tasks and studying as motivating as possible. One means of motivation was to give tasks that pupils would automatically get excited about. Knowing pupils well helped in this, and tasks were shaped in terms of the teaching group involved.

> *"[…] I tried to start with things that are already familiar to them, and of course, because having taught them for many years now, I had some idea about what would be of interest to them".* (Teacher 6)

In addition to tasks being inspiring, teachers felt also that these tasks must not be too challenging. If the pupil immediately perceives the task as ambiguous or very difficult to implement, motivation is often lost right at the very beginning.

> *"In many cases, if I had to do it again, I would simplify it, and I would make the instructions simpler and I would split up the tasks over weeks or days. I was somehow surprised by the fact that the pupils can't do the tasks. For example, if the task had five issues, it was too much for some pupils to understand what should be done. This is connected to motivation: if they don't understand what to do, they will immediately stop trying".* (Teacher 1)

Many teachers felt that DL was already challenging and burdensome for pupils, so they tried to keep music as light and fun as possible. In this way, they generated the necessary motivation for studying. Positive feedback and communication with pupils were also perceived important for motivation. Communication with the teacher served solely as a motivating factor when the pupils felt that they and their efforts were noticed.

> *"[…] always remember to give positive feedback, and it doesn't need to be so accurate or structured. The main thing is that you notice everyone's efforts so that the pupils feel their work is relevant. And maybe enough motivation*

is that given tasks always were gone through and they were talked about. After that we went ahead, and it was enough to motivate most of the pupils". (Teacher 7)

Positive feedback and discussion of solutions helped the pupils advance in their assignments. Many teachers also wanted to underline that trying is enough, and studying music is not that serious.

"The biggest danger in distance learning was that someone would totally drop out. Maintaining motivation had to be remembered all the time. To some pupils I said, 'Hey, here you could try a little more because just that particular point did not work well, but so what! This is all just training'. Everything had to be taken care of as positively as possible". (Teacher 3)

However, motivation challenges were sometimes perceived especially among senior pupils. Occasionally, external motivation was also a means to ensure that the pupils do the tasks within an agreed time frame. A certain time limit could be set for submitting works, or the pupils could be told that the time the works were submitted as well as quality of fulfilled assignments would affect the student's grade in music.

E. Maintaining pupils' activity

In addition to motivating pupils to keep the DLIM running smooth, it became necessary to make sure that pupils were also actively involved in teaching. In the classroom, the teacher can clearly see which pupils are present and how they participate in learning. In DL, the pupils' activities take place independently at home, so the teacher must, by various means, see to it that the pupil remains involved in learning. The simplest way to monitor student's activity was to see to it that the tasks were returned.

"I was looking at the outputs and checking whether the pupils are present at the distant connection. The Qrid is good because you can see right away if the child is present or not, and I can see from the assignments they have submitted whether they were done with a thought or how excited and motivated the pupil has been". (Teacher 3)

During the DL period, some teachers kept a list of each pupil's returned tasks. Thus, they were able to observe the activity of pupils. However, the pupils often failed to return assignments on time, and therefore they had to be reminded of the missing assignments and had to do them afterwards.

Other teachers kept a tight grip on every given assignment coming back to the teacher. On the other hand, for some teachers asking for tasks to be returned was impossible in time, and all the tasks could not be checked to be returned. Yet, as well as possible, every teacher strived to ensure that the given tasks were completed. Occasionally, pupils had to be encouraged and stimulated on a personal level and many teachers mentioned contacting the pupil if they seemed to be dropping out of lessons.

"[…] if there was a situation where I had someone who had done the assignments extremely poorly and I saw that the pupil was depressed, being out there alone, then I just picked up a cell phone and called. And we chatted and checked all kinds of matters and issues. I know that young people need a

lot of contact, and the challenge was with those young people who were pretty much alone without an adult for days. I called them in the morning, and I woke them up, said good morning, let's go to breakfast and so on… that's the kind of calls I made". (Teacher 3)

Teachers' responses showed that pupils whose level of activity had been low during in-person education needed also more help in doing their tasks during distance education. For the student not to drop out or fail classes, the pupil had to be in a direct contact with the teacher, since in this way the teacher was able to help the pupil cope with tasks and schoolwork. Teachers also cared about their pupils, and they tried to keep pupils involved in teaching by all possible means. Real-time communication with the entire class was also one way of keeping pupils active. Many teachers held a video meeting at least once a day, when they recalled the issues of the day and offered help with learning tasks.

"At the beginning of the hour, we checked the whole crew, and made sure everybody was present, and the instructions were readable in the morning, meaning that there was immediately an opportunity to ask if anyone had questions". (Teacher 7)

Through live classes, the teacher was able to directly see which of the pupils were present, as well as monitor by a video call how pupils were participating in the lesson.

F. Teaching assessment

In the DL period, evaluation was not perceived as important as during the normal school year. Many teachers lowered the bar, so to speak, and they saw it as good enough if the pupils participated in lessons at all. Teachers also saw that there was enough of evaluation material accumulated over the school year earlier, and thus, it would not be necessary to take the distance teaching period into consideration at making a full-year assessment.

"But let's say that the assessment was at the time we were, at the end of March, so that the assessment was already done. But then there were those, who sort of went up, bounced in a positive way. Yet [this] confirmed [the fact] or caused surprise in a way, but that episode doesn't seem to affect that year's assessment so much any longer, quite frankly". (Teacher 8)

The assessment was taken into account, if pupils showed a better competence than they did during in-person education. As mentioned earlier, some of the pupils succeeded better during the distance teaching period, and the teachers took this into account at evaluating their work. However, the teachers did task-specific assessment during the distance teaching period, and they assessed, among other things, the quality of the returned assignments and the activity during studying.

"[…] then in Qrid while chatting, when evaluating the output, I gave very much different feedback. I said that it really worked nicely while you played that rhythm with the drums… or lovely that you were impressed with Debussy during the classic music period. I wrote a lot of these kinds of messages to pupils. Very positive tones, so that no one would drop out". (Teacher 3)

Returned tasks were commented on and pupils were given feedback about how well they had succeeded in doing the task. Feedback had to be positive in order to maintain their motivation to work. Some teachers also administered the tests remotely, but their grades did not make much impact on the assessment of the entire school year. One of evaluation methods was pupils' self-assessment. Self-assessment was used to map, among other things, what the pupils had learned and experienced.

> *"[…] so we had pupils do self-assessments many times during that spring; the pupils evaluated their own work. I had a Forms form that I always updated a little bit for the next evaluation and provided details there, highlighting more relevant subjects and leaving out topics which had already been included in earlier evaluations".* (Teacher 7)

Some of the teachers mentioned that there was more self-assessment than normally. By using the self-assessment, teachers also obtained an insight about pupils' perspectives on how the distance teaching period in music had passed.

G. Experiences of music distance learning

One of the challenges of DLIM was the use of time. Several teachers said that the DL required more time, and they did not seem to have enough time to do the job. In addition to planning the teaching, much time was spent on preparing and reviewing materials, and helping and supporting pupils with tasks. In in-person education, the teacher can simultaneously teach the entire class and provide feedback to the whole group. In distance education, messages came to each pupil one by one, and the necessary feedback or explanation of instructions could not always happen for everyone at once. In addition, teachers' working time and family life could overlap while working at home. Finding peace to do one's own work was even more challenging.

> *"[…] there was no chance of doing it based on a schedule or timetable. Finding time for work was challenging, not to mention that you would have time to plan it in some way with a long formula, because we did not know when this distance teaching would stop. I also struggled to find time for inspecting student tasks".* (Teacher 1)

A big part of working time went to inspecting returned assignments. Each pupil's outputs were to be inspected and commented on one by one, thus taking a significant amount of time. Compared to teaching in the classroom, checking assignments greatly increased teachers' workloads. Teachers' working hours also were extended significantly. Pupils returned tasks at different times and often completed them late in the evening. Teachers mentioned that their phone beeped from dawn to dusk as pupils returned tasks or asked for advice on how to do them. It was therefore often impossible to limit working to normal working hours.

Another major challenge in DLIM was the lack of a prepared educational material. Teachers spent plenty of time to find and prepare suitable material for teaching. In classroom work, it is easy to ask pupils to play and sing, but in DL each task had to be instructed in writing, and the teacher had to search for the appropriate text, video, audio, or footage.

> *"It took pretty much time for me to browse through the web, trying to look for meaningful tasks. Yes, they can be found reasonably well, but there was quite a lot of time wasted on that browsing and searching too. It would have been great if there would have been a good, already finished package [of tasks] that could be found with a little bit of a search".* (Teacher 4)

Teachers found that a prepared teaching material was challenging, but further challenges had to be faced at developing one's own materials. For example, making instructional videos was a new thing to most teachers, and it required knowledge of the technologies needed. Teaching should also be different at instructing pupils studying in in-person education and pupils studying in a distance education setting, since the task types are not similar.

The sudden switch to a distance education did not leave time for teachers to plan distance education in the long run. Quickly prepared classes and teaching sets caused concern among teachers who questioned the quality of their teaching materials. The challenge was to prepare high-quality tasks that would be motivational for pupils to carry out, while also serving the goals of music teaching. Some teachers also felt pressure concerning whether pupils' parents were satisfied with the quality of teaching.

Creating high-quality educational content was perceived challenging and clear, but motivational tasks required a lot of time and reflection from teachers. There was also pressure to compare their own teaching content with that of other teachers. During DL, a lot of ideas and their implementation were shared on social media to support distance education in music, but some teachers felt pressure at performing their own work. Music teaching is largely built on common music making and playing in the classroom. In DL, playing together was pretty much impossible, so the challenge was to organize playing and singing in remote conditions.

> *"So, the most challenging aspect was actual music making and playing. It's not possible to do this together in any video meeting because of the delay. It had to be done in pairs, for example training the body rhythms and recording it with a camera. It was impossible to create something in the same way as in a classroom situation".* (Teacher 7)

Due to the delay in remote access, common singing or playing so that everyone could hear each other was impossible to arrange. Teachers had to challenge themselves so that they could organize at least some kind of playing and making music during music classes. The pupils, in principle, had no musical instruments at home, which also posed considerable challenges with providing the opportunity of making and playing music together.

The teachers perceived it as challenging to keep contact with all pupils. Based on assignment returns and participation in video meetings, the teacher was able to see which pupils were working hard. However, there were also pupils who fell behind in lessons or did not easily understand assignments or their instructions.

> *"[…] a lot of things didn't work in any way during the period of distance learning, however, and it was very difficult to help everyone personally and individually. If you saw that some pupil did not catch or understand some*

tasks after one or two explanations by the teacher, then it almost had to be abandoned. This kind of personal support at that point was missing". (Teacher 4)

Teachers experienced that the pupils longed for having more of in-person contact, and in in-person education it would have been easier to guide and encourage them. It was challenging to get in touch with an unmotivated pupil, and teachers had to personally call some of the pupils, if they did not participate in the distance lessons.

In addition to the challenges of teaching, teachers explained the challenging working conditions that distance education had posed. One of the challenges was poor internet connections and the delay or stuttering in video meetings. The necessity of computing was also challenging in some cases: not all pupils had their own computer at home, or not all had the necessary applications to follow teaching. The rapid transition to distance education and the change in the whole nature of music as a school subject, moving from playing and making music in close contact to the online education, took much of teachers' time. They had to study how music instruction could be remotely organized at all. Some teachers experienced teaching as fragmented and confusing, posing additional challenges and stress to work. For most teachers, teaching also took place at home, so finding a suitable working space and working time was not straightforward. In the home environment, challenges could be presented by, for example, a family's everyday life and matching it to the workday.

H. Teachers' solutions to music distance learning challenges

The challenges of distance education in music were reported to be related to providing quality and motivational instruction, as well as producing suitable materials. Teachers faced challenges associated with these situations by arranging teaching so that it would be as meaningful as possible for both teachers and pupils. During the remote period, teachers found that reviewing the tasks takes unusually much time and overly large task packages also put a strain on pupils. Many teachers said they reduced the workload of pupils during the distance education period and lowered the bar so that everyone could cope with tasks.

"[…] and in the same way I wished that music would not be an extra pain in addition to every other school subject pushing the learning of as much material as possible". (Teacher 7)

The goal was to make music teaching as cheerful and light as possible, in order to maintain the pupils' motivation and not give pupils an unreasonable workload. Some teachers also felt that although music is an important subject, it is perhaps easier to lower expectations in terms of goals and tasks compared to other core school subjects. Another factor that presented challenges was focusing on issues important to wellbeing. In the beginning, teachers experienced pressure to provide instruction of adequate quality. These pressures were relieved by giving oneself more flexibility and mercy.

"[…] but I had to stop and be merciful to myself so that if something was done a little bit poorly, I wouldn't judge myself too harshly […] And also, in terms of tasks and returned assignments, not too strict a line needed to be drawn". (Teacher 8)

DL was a new and challenging situation for everyone, so it was important to understand that it is enough to do one's best. Pointless critical self-evaluation was just a factor doing harm to work. It was important to be able to limit one's own working hours more tightly. Working days running around the clock exhausted teachers little by little and there was a need to draw boundaries for their own work at some point.

> *"I limited it pretty tightly to the point where I would not start again in the evening answering student questions. We had a WhatsApp group, so I went quiet, at five o'clock, or I made it stop. So, the schoolwork needed to be done before that time".* (Teacher 7)

The limitation of working hours was a significant issue for the distance education period. At the same time, it was a signal to pupils that they should do their schoolwork within a reasonable time, and the teacher does not need to answer pupils' questions at any time of the day. One important factor for wellbeing at work was the support they received from colleagues and the teacher community. In challenging times, teachers were able to ask for help from others, and they together planned how to do teaching better.

> *"You know, while you're still in the distance learning, you have access to a variety of Facebook groups like Elementary treasure troves and other initial teaching groups and the sense of community they form is just mind-boggling. You've got all the tips and the groups freely shared their own materials and it was something quite inconceivable, you know, we, teachers, are a rather impressive group".* (Teacher 2)

Challenges with educational material were often solved by consulting other teachers or looking at social media communities for tips. There was also a fine sense of togetherness among the teachers during DL period, and they shared their ideas with their colleagues with a fair hand.

The problem of establishing contact with pupils was solved by an active use of contact media. Teachers made certain that pupils had done the given jobs and, if there was anything missing, teachers would contact them. The interaction with the pupils was active, and the teachers called up pupils and communicated with them very often. Communication was not restricted to simply giving assignments and receiving feedback, but it was more general and some direct discussion with the pupils was held.

> *"[...] I called on the phone if somebody was not responding to other communications. I called the pupil and asked, "Hey did you do this?"* (Teacher 2)

Instructions and feedback to pupils had to be positive. By encouraging and motivating pupils to try, the teacher was able to activate pupils more effectively throughout a task.

I. Special features of music distance education

In DLIM, some teachers were confronted with the problem of checking pupils' comprehension. In DL, the teacher does not directly see if the pupils have understood the task and whether they can do it independently. Therefore, there had to be a special

level of contact with the pupils to ensure that the task was well understood. In the classroom, the teacher was able to immediately see whether the pupil was actively participating or was experiencing challenges with the task. In DL other means must be used to stimulate pupils' activity and develop their understanding. It was necessary to keep accurate records of returned tasks and output. If assignments were not returned, the teacher contacted the pupil directly and verified whether the pupil had forgotten to fulfil the task or more help was needed to complete it. Teachers' comments showed that following the returned tasks was almost the only way to keep pupils involved in learning. During the distance teaching period, teaching was largely based on sharing educational materials and tasks in an online environment. The teachers' experience showed that a special attention should be paid to the clarity of the guidelines.

> *"[…] it was such that you had to keep giving clear instructions when the kids are by themselves at home. So, it was a shock to understand that the instructions should not be so abundant or long; long explanations should be avoided. It has to be very clear, simple instruction".* (Teacher 3)

The teachers found that the instructions on the fulfilment of the task had to be really clear and succinct. If the instructions had too many steps and too much text, it was challenging for the pupil to keep up with what to do in the task. In order to maintain study motivation, tasks could not be too monotonous. Many teachers mentioned that varied tasks made it easier to motivate pupils. In addition to being mere literary outputs, the tasks had to be functional, and the perceptual material should allow the use of images, videos, audio and other similar media. Teachers also mentioned that tasks need to be differentiated so that pupils at different levels can do it.

In DL, the lessons had to be planned with extra-special care and teachers had to try to develop a clear set of instructions for tasks. The urgent start of the distance teaching period did not leave teachers much time for planning, so the plans progressed day by day in between lessons. However, it was evident that the teaching design was considered to play an important role for the success of teaching. Designing a clear set of teaching is also relevant for individual lessons. The next lesson is easier to plan when the instruction is followed by a clear idea. Learning is also more meaningful if teaching is built on a clear plan and does not include splinter shots from here and there.

DL workloads easily became heavy for both teachers and pupils. Therefore, teachers felt it was important to keep learning the subject of music as light as possible. Music was desired to be an empowering and fun subject which would lighten pupils' workload rather than add to it.

> *"[…] so I reached for it, with the aim of making music fun, light and interesting like a little snack among other, perhaps drier subjects".* (Teacher 4)

Teachers felt that challenging situations in music teaching should be avoided, because cheerful functional tasks would be a good counterweight to assignments on theoretical subjects. Keeping live hours was also seen as a good alternative to designing each music class so that the pupils would prepare some assigned literary task. Pupils would instead be able to attend music class via a video call, and no extra work would need to be returned later.

J. Positive effects of distance learning in music

As a result of the distance teaching period, teachers felt a deep appreciation of their own work. Exceptional conditions emphasized what a class-room teaching really was and what had to be left out when teaching was done through the screen.

> *"I learned to appreciate and understand even more deeply what happens in the classroom. It's so much more than doing a simple task… someone showing competence virtually…In music teaching, interaction is the most important thing".* (Teacher 1)

During distance education, collaborative working and meeting pupils in the same space was impossible, and that was what many missed during the remote period. Especially in art and skill subjects, such as music, doing things together and feeling togetherness play a really big role in teaching. When these were missing, it was challenging to reshape teaching serving the objectives of the subject and make it liked by the pupils.

In addition to in-person education, the teachers could appreciate their contribution to work afterwards. According to teachers, at the beginning one's own work seemed chaotic and illogical, and teachers were afraid that they would not be able to organize quality teaching. In hindsight, it became obvious that many things could be taught during the distance teaching period, and how creatively the problems of teaching could be solved. Many teachers felt that the distance teaching period had developed their teachership. The new and challenging situation made teachers develop different new ways of teaching and learn how to use new devices and applications. Among other things, ICT skills were considered to have developed over the remote period.

> *"I learned about music, especially to use those programs and applications because, I mean, my studies are back in time, I graduated in 2009, and PowerPoint and Word were not in use then (chuckle), so it's good that I was even able to learn to use Sway or Forms and others".* (Teacher 9)

The use of familiar teaching methods also took on new dimensions as they were transferred to DL. For example, listening to music in the future will no longer be just a matter of listening and discussing, but instead will be combined in various ways with other music content. Although DLIM was challenging in many ways, it was also of great benefit to some pupils. Teachers found that, especially what concerns shy pupils or those who need peace and quiet to be able to work well, DL made it easier to study music. Pupils, who had been hitherto unnoticed in the classroom, now, having worked at their own pace, were given opportunity to show their competence.

> *"[…] I think it is a really fine thing that the pupils who in classroom environment may be a little shy and don't dare show their own skills in a big group, could show their skills quite differently when they made a videotape and recorded their performance. Their skills came out in a different way. They dared make those videos and sent them to me. They sang and played or made their own compositions".* (Teacher 3)

Teachers felt that videotaping the performance at pupils' own pace gave pupils more freedom to express themselves. In the classroom, the presence of a teacher and other

pupils may increase performance pressures, so DL discovered latent skills of many pupils.

Distance education also created a favourable impact on activities of full-time education. The bolder appearance of shy pupils through videotaping was one means of instruction which some teachers kept practising also after the distance education period. One teacher said that in the future he would let pupils take singing exams by videotaping a song and then sending it to the teacher afterwards. Applications and teaching platforms used in distance education also partially remained in teachers' practice. Sending and receiving assignments and distributing educational materials to pupils via online learning environments may be continued.

> *"[…] I have been at least using those body rhythms in classes this autumn with every group. It has offered ideas at least for future lessons. The rhythm exercises are really good material when you get to know them. I start every hour with body rhythms at the moment".* (Teacher 7)

Educational materials or task packages that have been proven in distance education will continue to be used in in-person education. The accumulated materials were also perceived as useful in case of a similar situation. Other transitions of schools to distance education may lie ahead in the future, so it is good to learn from previous experience. Teachers say that now they are aware of the challenges posed by DLIM and they know what must be done in a different way in the future. Instead of paper tasks, teachers will try to conduct more lessons via video connection, thus reducing the workload drastically. In the future, the limits of working time should also be defined more specifically in terms of quantity and duration.

> *"Maybe now if I had to do it again, I would use more of those live hours because giving pupils independent tasks that I had to check and give feedback on created huge amount of work for me […]"* (Teacher 1)

The distance teaching period was perceived as a very instructive and valuable experience. While DLIM challenged teachers to act in a completely new way, the challenges also brought new doctrines and ideas to develop their own work.

Discussion

Teachers took advantage of opportunities offered by the online environment in diverse ways. Among the devices and applications used, various educational platforms, videoconferencing, and various websites containing educational materials were mentioned most often. Nummenmaa (2012) and Rieldling (2020) see that it is important to combine different instruments in DL to provide sufficient quality. Salavuo (2009) mentions the importance of the versatile use of possibilities offered by the online environment when teaching music in a DL environment. In this research, teachers used a variety of applications and online environments to organize teaching, and they preferred functional tasks. Although tasks given were mainly in a written form, they included diverse activities, as well as a diverse use of ICT in doing tasks.

Teachers chose mostly theory-focused subjects in music teaching as the contents. Playing and making music together, especially in groups, was perceived as

challenging. It was easier to teach subjects remotely, when instruction and implementation were given in writing and were based on pupils' independent work. During the distance teaching period, the content of the curriculum was also implemented well, although group music playing was almost completely excluded. Instead, some of the teachers said they had been able to highlight that educational content which normally had been given less attention in in-person education. Thus, the distance teaching period opened opportunities to give a greater focus on the content, such as listening to music, theory, and history, which often remain secondary during joint playing and making music.

The curriculum describes learning environments in music as being flexible and pedagogically diverse educational situations where everyone can participate in various musical activities and collaborations (Opetushallitus, 2014). The use of ICT is also mentioned as a part of music learning environments and the online learning environment has largely driven the status of the learning environment during the DL period. The pupils' own homes have also served as learning environments, as well as the equipment provided by the home; the musical instruments which were available there have been used at music lessons. Compared to standard classroom work, the learning environments of the distance teaching period have differed greatly from those which pupils are accustomed to. Cooperative activity has not served for a description of learning environments according to the curriculum, as well as different starting points about the instruments. Learning environments have been unequal in some cases. On the other hand, working independently and having a peaceful learning environment have been beneficial to some pupils. In this research, teachers have revealed that shy students demonstrated new aspects of themselves, because they have been allowed to work in peace at their own homes and have not been obliged to perform in front of the whole class. Sainio and colleagues (2020) also described the distance teaching period as having opened more opportunities for shy pupils. General communication with these pupils has improved during the distance teaching period, as it became more personal.

This research shows that ways of working were very diverse, but joint making and playing music was excluded of lessons almost completely. This experience was shared by almost all the teachers participating in this research, and there were only a few mentions of singing together using videoconferencing. Although the curriculum emphasizes the importance of music making, playing together, and collaboration, music can also be studied in a wide variety of other ways. Playing music has undergone changes from playing together to that of independent music making, and while musical instruments were not available for pupils, teachers tried to eliminate this shortcoming by things like body rhythm tasks, or the construction of their own instruments. The curriculum (Opetushallitus, 2014) emphasizes the importance of creative work which offers positive experiences to students. Teachers, too, wanted to underline the fact that pupils should also experience learning music remotely as a positive and comfortable subject. The biggest difference between teaching music in Finland and teaching music in European countries during DL time seems to be in playing band and joint music making. The Finnish teachers mentioned the problems in common music making very often while the music teachers from other countries did not mention it almost at all. This shows that greater emphasis in Finnish music teaching system is laid on playing band and joint music making than it is in other European countries.

In the context of distance education of young pupils, it should be noted that they are not yet very self-directed. Teaching should also be more structured, and teachers should ensure the progress in their pupils' studies. Active interaction can ensure regularity in studies, and the pupils can receive the support they need (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa, 2012; Zilka et al., 2019). Teachers had to make sure that pupils were actively participating in teaching. The means of stimulating them included contact with pupils, supervising tasks, and conducting lessons through videoconferencing, making it easier to observe teaching participation. Motivating pupils and encouraging them to be active went hand-in-hand, and participation was also encouraged by inspiring and motivational tasks. Teachers maintained that ultimately the best way to motivate pupils for an active participation was to contact them directly and support those pupils who had learning challenges.

One of the most significant challenges in distance music teaching was the increased workload due to the lack of ready teaching materials, providing feedback on pupils' assignments, and nonstructured working hours. Other studies from the Spring 2020 distance education period also emphasize this: many teachers have experienced a higher workload than usual (Opetusalan ammattijärjestö, 2020; Adedoyn & Soykan, 2020). Distance education studies conducted before 2020 do not describe distance education as equally challenging and the problems have mostly been caused by challenges in technology and communication (Ruippo, 2009; Nummenmaa, 2012). If it is possible to plan distance education in advance, the benefits of distance education will be better highlighted. Previous studies have also stressed the importance of advance preparation and planning. In the Spring of 2020, teaching moved to distance education on such a fast schedule that teachers had very little time to get ready for distance education. This was reflected in the huge amount of work needed to prepare, in addition to the usual teaching work, as it took a lot of time to deploy equipment, applications and tools. There was also no time for planning distance education and the teachers explained what a huge amount of extra time and work was needed to find educational material. In addition, music is a subject where teaching takes place functionally, and all the needed materials and exercises are not transferable to students online. Therefore, the distance teaching period in Spring 2020 was certainly perceived as challenging, as it was not possible to prepare as necessary in advance. Experiences of DL could have been quite different if the transition to distance education would have been known in advance and the transition had occurred over a longer period than just a few days.

As other distance education studies have noted, communication with pupils during DL is sometimes challenging. This is especially in case of pupils who face challenges in terms of pre-existing motivation and focus on tasks (Shaw & Mayo, 2021). Teachers said that communication was one of their problems too. Although attempts were made to activate pupils in tasks, some seemed to drop out of teaching easily, or had difficulty in completing the tasks. The instruction had to be clear, so that the learning objectives were sure to be understood. The teacher also became more active in contacting pupils in order to ensure pupils' participation. Therefore, contact was required, and the teachers even called home to wake pupils up in the morning and gave them instructions on how to complete their schoolwork. Lack of reliability is one of the factors that hinder DL. The teachers could work better if they did not have to spend time on making pupils do their work.

Teachers' experiences showed that in the DLIM it was necessary to abandon the traditional classroom workforms, especially concerning music making and singing. Teachers reported that they almost completely omitted joint music making and playing, focusing more on teaching music by other means. This challenge was also reflected in this research and the teachers commented that music teaching had been particularly challenging from that point of view. Especially those teachers whose teaching had been mostly oriented towards playing and singing together, felt DL was challenging and planning the content of lessons required more work. However, some teachers were encouraged, despite the challenges, to try singing with the class remotely, although in these cases the pupils were unable to hear each other, and the teacher could not be entirely sure how actively the pupils were involved in music making at home. As for common music making, DL still needs development and its implementation requires alternating activities, where different parties can hear each other simultaneously. Perhaps in the future, if network connections are made so fast that real-time transmission will be available to both parties without delay, co-music-making will be possible in the form of DL.

Studies have mentioned that varied use of equipment is preferred in distance education. From this point of view, simply sharing tasks is rather one-dimensional DL (Nummenmaa, 2012; Rieldling, 2020). In DLIM, teaching via videoconferencing corresponds most to a teaching situation like that of in-person education (Ruippo, 2009). Many earlier studies have focused on DL of instruments, where it has been easier to arrange remote connections between teachers and pupils. Distance education has also been mostly utilized by older pupils, for example in vocational studies in music, with different motivation and starting points for pupils to study music than those of primary school pupils. Therefore, it cannot be assumed directly that there would be opportunities in primary school teaching for lessons held via video connection. A challenge for real-time teaching is also the lack of concentration among young pupils. Most pupils also do not have the needed musical instruments at home, making it impossible to study playing. Focusing on written music issues is therefore well justified during the distance teaching caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers felt that teaching music had fallen short in quality during DL. The fact that despite the challenging circumstances the teachers were able to organize diverse distance education in music was already a wonderful achievement. Fortunately, the teachers were able to meet these challenges by giving themselves mercy and facilitating teaching both for themselves and for the pupils.

The distance teaching period in Spring 2020 presented not only challenges, but had also provided opportunities to develop the skills of teachers. In previous studies, teachers have felt that distance education has given them new means and ideas for the implementation of teaching. Digital competence has increased with DL, and teachers have added pedagogical versatility in their teaching (Nummenmaa, 2012; Ahstiainen et al., 2020; Sainio et al., 2020). Likewise, according to this study, the teachers have experienced the same, and this experience is evidenced in the improvement and diversification of their digital competencies. Some of the teachers have had low previous ICT skills, but with the introduction of DL, to know how to use them has been compulsory. At the same time, these teachers have noticed what opportunities online education can give to their teaching. The modes and routines used in DL have also remained permanently in use, for example tasks could still be restored in an online

environment or playing and singing samples could be videotaped and sent to the teacher.

The distance teaching period also left behind the idea of how teachers would act upon the arrival of a similar situation again. Teachers saw that it was very important in DL to keep tasks clear and simple enough. There should not be many different points in the instruction, and fewer tasks which must be returned to the teacher should be given to pupils in the future. This would allow the reduction of the amount of work related to grading tasks. Motivational and fun tasks can also minimize pupils' frustration. Teachers also would benefit from teaching more via videoconferencing and avoiding task returns and making the lessons more like an in-person education situation. Video conferencing makes it easy to establish interactions between participants (Ruippo, 2009).

Teachers also noticed the importance of the role of lesson planning. Moving to distance education without a more serious preparation made it very challenging to design lessons in a hurry. Lesson design is also highlighted in many previous publications on distance education (e.g., Brändström, et al., 2012; Mantila et al., 2015; Sergejeff, 2020). In music DL, it is very important to ensure the functionality and quality of the hardware so that sound is transmitted between the parties as genuinely as possible (Ruippo, 2009). Now, that this distance teaching experience has been left behind, teachers already have good experience and a bank of materials for a possible future distance teaching period. Thus, in advance, the planned model for switching to distance education is in place so that a future transition to distance education can be arranged as smoothly as possible.

Ethics and Reliability of the Research

Research ethics involves adhering to good scientific practice. This includes honesty, accuracy and diligence, which applies to the entire research process. The information-acquisition, research and evaluation methods of research must also be ethically sustainable. The work and achievements of other scientists should be respected and referred to appropriately (Research Ethics Advisory Board, 2012). This research has followed good scientific practice carefully, accurately, and honestly. We have reported it in a consistent manner. The theory background of the research has been properly referenced.

The material has been compiled through interviews with music teachers. Requests for interviews were made properly and those interviewed were made clear about the voluntary nature of participation in the study. Prior to the interviews, a confidentiality of personal information form was sent to the teachers being interviewed, clarifying that the material will be handled anonymously throughout the investigation and the interview recordings will be properly disposed of after the investigation is completed.

Conclusions

The distance teaching period of Spring 2020 was a memorable and challenging experience for teachers as they managed to organize teaching in a high-quality and varied manner. Teaching music and other art subjects presents their own additional

challenges due to their pragmatism and functionality, which makes it challenging to transfer them directly to online study. Respondents of this research managed to meet the challenges and learned new ways that they will be able to use in their own teaching future.

This research revealed the challenges and opportunities that teachers experienced in DLIM during mandatory closure of in-person schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the experiences of teachers, it would be interesting to hear the ways pupils experienced studying music remotely. Perhaps the pupils also felt that music was lacking in the essentials, which include playing and making music and studying together with classmates. Or perhaps, the pupils experienced studying different kinds of music as a welcome exception. The experience of teachers and pupils could also be compared with each other, perhaps revealing an even clearer picture of what works in a distance education in music and what needs a further development.

Distance learning and online learning in music at best open additional opportunities for studying music and facilitate the organization of teaching in challenging situations, such as long distances (Ruippo, 2009; Brändström et al., 2012). In addition, DLIM should not consist of independent work; instead, online education in music opens opportunities for diverse communication. Music-related ideas, compositions, and insights can be easily shared with others interested in the subject and discussed, and feedback and commentary can be provided as well (Salavuo, 2009). Thus, DLIM can also be a communal activity if the right framework is provided for it. Although DLIM has its own challenges, perhaps in the future, more high-quality distance education can be arranged by clearly identifying and addressing the challenges. Better preparation and diversified resources for DLIM can create supportive and creative activities in a larger group context.

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