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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

It is a great pleasure and honour to present the new issue of the international scientific journal "Problems in Music Pedagogy".

Mauro CARBONI from Music Conservatory of Perugia (Italy) analyzes cognitive functioning in music students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) through a linguistic and lexical framework that engages and connects different areas of the brain, producing both a virtual and objective understanding of the world. The author emphasizes the fact that a) various musical learning difficulties associated with SLD should be viewed as difficulties related to internal organization and processing, and b) music educators encounter interpretive challenges related to the various actions and interactions that make up the complexity of the musical experience. This study examines the theoretical and methodological prerequisites for an embodied and intersubjective music pedagogy, in order to understand actions, intentions, and emotional dynamics as emerging cognition.

Lenita HIETANEN, Anu SEPP, Vesa TUISKU and Heikki RUISMÄKI (Finland) organised a case study on remote piano lessons for primary school teacher training in Finland. The results of the research show that co-teaching encourages music teacher educators to creatively face and overcome the challenges related to voice transmission and through enabling student teachers' more active participation, to trust diverse co-reflection. In co-teaching, they highlighted need for openness, humbleness and recognition of own imperfection to share and receive new ideas.

The aim of the study of Noura ALI and Nigel A. MARSHALL from University of Sussex (United Kingdom) was to establish an understanding of how parents negotiate and justify the legitimacy of music education and music teaching as a professional choice for their children in Kuwait. The analysis of semi-structured interviews with parents show that they perceive music as purposeful, educational, emotionally beneficial, or institutionally regulated, while expressing caution toward forms seen as purely entertainment-oriented or morally questionable. Authors also found that parents performed key identity positions, such as acting as a) the Morally Responsible Gatekeeper who looks out for the overall well-being of their children; b) the Culturally Aligned Guardian and c) the Institutionally Guided Parent who demonstrates alignment with the legal and formal structures of society. The results of the study show that parental involvement in music education is multi-layered and discursively mediated, characterised not by simple acceptance or refusal, but by conditional, socially aligned justification.

On behalf of editor-in-chief of the journal, I express my appreciation to the authors, Editorial Board, Editorial Staff and Council of Science of Daugavpils University for successful teamwork, perseverance and valuable support to the continuation of this periodical.

Editor-in-chief
Jelena DAVIDOVA

EMBODIMENT AND ENACTION IN MUSIC: A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS

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Abstract

Current research perspectives analyze cognitive functioning in music students with SLD through a linguistic and lexical framework in which the ability to encode and decode formalized sound information predominates, considering musical learning difficulties in terms of internal organization and processing. In reality, the objective dimension of musical learning implies a constant bodily activation whose primary purpose is to create meaning from the learning process itself. We are referring to forms of protomusical and protolinguistic behavior, somatic and affective foundations that constitute the neurocognitive sharing implicit in the enactive approach. In this work we address the theoretical and methodological presuppositions for an embodied and intersubjective music pedagogy, to understand actions, intentions and emotional dynamics as emergent cognition. Consequently, the study, teaching, and development of musical skills in students with SLD must be able to look beyond linguistic and lexical dysfunctions and organizational deficits.

Keywords: *embodiment, enaction, music learning, specific learning disorders*

Introduction

When we reflect on the motivational aspects and cognitive opportunities that commonly guide our musical learning and, more generally, on the structuring of a meaningful musical experience, we tend to assume that an intentional action, a desire for personal exploration, underlies this process. What begins as an occasional desire may actually transform into a persistent commitment: a more or less assiduous practice that leads to interaction with different teachers and masters, and consequently with their own guiding passions.

In many other situations, however, musical learning occurs spontaneously, often indiscriminately, across a wide range of informal contexts in everyday life.

Regardless of whether it occurs as a consequence of a social and cultural exchange or as a more or less conscious individual journey, a proactive dimension is involved, from which a personal cognitive or productive process emerges. In reality, these are complementary behavioral patterns, attitudes that gradually tend to attenuate their meaning within each other (Veblen, 2022).

According to this approach, musical experience enables the expression of social bonds both within individuals and within groups and communities, thus serving a synthesis function that simultaneously combines and articulates the motivations underlying various theories. This view of the development of musicality involves co-evolutionary

dynamics through which proto-musical behaviors produced feedback effects on biological evolution precisely because of their impact on social bonding.

An example of this is the social, as well as emotional and neurocognitive, reward effects that emerge from the sharing and participatory recognition of musical situations characterized by the repetition of structures and rhythms, the synchronization of expressive actions and gestures, and the harmonization of vocal and instrumental sounds. This profoundly connects the experiences of musical production and perception in a unifying and identity-building dimension (Savage et. al., 2021).

In this sense, learning through any musical practice involves a bodily activation whose primary purpose is precisely to generate meaning in the learning process itself. In musical practices involving the interaction of multiple parties (musical groups, ensembles, choirs, and orchestras), musicians inevitably experience and share the various musical aspects through their own corporeality, visualizing the changing dynamics of expression and performance. Generally, all of this is related to the tempo and intensity of the music, that is, to a dynamic and spatiotemporal bodily experience, thus offering musicians valuable opportunities for postural, motor, and gestural mirroring.

Theoretical Background

A. Music as Meaning in Action

In children with SLD and specifically those with predominant dyscalculia, musical activation interventions are essential, in particular rhythmic motor activities that introduce and orient the child to the concept of pulsation, also working on the mimicry of hand clapping, on the gestural identification of the duration of sounds and also on the discrimination between long and short sounds through rhymes, tongue twisters, onomatopoeia, and vocal gestures that become physical games (Hande & Hegde, 2021).

This approach to music education produces tangible and effective improvements in spatial awareness and working memory, important components of mathematical ability. It's no coincidence that musicians show greater activation in the left fusiform gyrus and left prefrontal cortex.

This particular acquisition highlights a better use of sound information in terms of form, recognition and processing of visuo-perceptive semantic information and, in general, a greater functionality of semantic working memory (Schmithorst & Holland, 2004; Esteki, 2013; Ribeiro & Santos, 2017, 2019).

In this context, the ability to see and hear colleagues as they act and shape their own personal musical expression helps everyone connect musically with others. Active and shared music-making leads people to participate in a mutual attribution of meaning. What happens is a process of shared and participatory meaning-making. A unique situation that allows the musicians and listeners involved to share the creative act and to jointly understand the music in the physical and temporal moment in which it develops, takes shape, and acquires meaning and structure (Schiavio & De Jaegher, 2017; Bremner & Nijs, 2020, 2022, 2024).

By contrast, the classical cognitive approach places musical experience within a perceptual framework that is organized and structured by representational processes involving varying degrees of symbolic elaboration.

It's therefore not surprising that listening processes involve groupings and segmentations, forms of expectation and prediction, linked to emotional responses and, at the same time, structural hierarchies of a perceptual nature. Musical information is mediated by both innate abilities and learned models. Essentially, the brain develops musical representations consistent with both auditory perception and bodily and emotional experience (Toader et al., 2024).

These processes imply that the experience, once enacted and internalized, takes on sign or symbolic qualities. Accordingly, it can be transformed into an operational or conceptual abstraction and, ultimately, lead to more specifically musical forms of thought.

Regardless of this metaphorical conception of the mind, we can postulate that, although our propositional-representational capacities undoubtedly contribute to the complexity of the neural networks that define our particular way of thinking, they do not constitute the causal foundation of our consciousness, nor are they crucial to cognition. Linguistic capacities emerge in their objectivity from our embodied and enacted being. In other words, language is another way of being embodied (Di Paolo et al., 2018; Van der Schyff et al., 2022).

Essentially, actions, symbols, and representations correspond to specific neural pathways that engage and connect different areas of the brain, producing both a virtual and objective understanding of the world. This is what we call music, as a shared social experience.

Musical practices, whether performance or interpretation, improvisation or composition, produce sensorimotor forms of knowledge that, in the process, determine expressive and functional, symbolic and linguistic awareness. Musical training thus extends its properties beyond the actual acquisition of instrumental skills, engaging the brain areas involved in creative thinking and, more generally, in the generation of original ideas (Reybrouck & Schiavio, 2024; Gneccchi & Antonietti, 2025).

From this perspective, the level of awareness should derive not only from specific information acted out and shared, but also from the interpretative quality of our personal mental processes and states. Through these, the sonic and musical reality in which we are immersed is replicated and reworked internally (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983; Nussbaum, 2007).

If this were the case, the various musical learning difficulties in Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) should be considered primarily in terms of difficulties with internal organization and processing. Second, we would face problems of interpretation, related to the various actions and interactions that make up the complexity of the musical experience.

Within this model of SLD in music, a linguistic and lexical conception predominates. In this conception, cognitive functioning depends on the ability to encode and decode formalized sound information within culturally determined practices and contexts. All this follows the idea of musical cognition based on models of propositional representation (Leman & Schneider, 1997). This conception posits that the experiential, perceptual, and sensory data, for example, a melody as the kinematic continuity of

a sequence of sounds, are encoded, segmented, and organized in terms of relationships between successively arranged tones of relative pitch.

This linguistic and conceptual leap points to an abstract, theoretical, and analytical dimension of musical cognition that has little to do with corporeality, intersubjectivity, or musical agency as a producer of meaning.

B. Meaningfulness and expressiveness of educational scaffolding

When we refer to the body and its expressive and functional capacities as a channel between something, or someone, and something else, then we are necessarily speaking of bodily mediation.

In a general sense, mediation does not occur spontaneously or automatically. Nor does it necessarily require a consensual context. Rather, it represents the result of a process of progressive adaptations aimed at activating a dimension of reciprocity.

In complex educational situations with limited accessibility, as often occurs in learning disorders (SLD), mediation takes the form of instrumental implementation. A series of supports compensates for or integrates difficulties, or, in other cases, actual communication difficulties or strong resistance to proposed interactions.

The contents conveyed through bodily mediation in supporting musical learning difficulties are often understood as temporary transpositions or simplified representative models of originally diverse and complex meanings and intentions. Essentially, nonverbal expression and body language are used when tools for activating higher-level cognitive functions are ineffective. Although these educational tools and practices are qualitatively useful, they are not associated with the activation of higher-level neurocognitive processes. Rather, the involvement of the limbic system and the paleoencephalic areas is recognized.

At other times, body activation techniques and nonverbal stimuli are part of inductive behavioral organization practices or, worse, training approaches based on the reiteration of pre-established sequences and patterns. What remains constant, always and everywhere, is the cultural separation, understood as experiential and linguistic distance, in other words, the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, psyche and soma. In everyday educational and therapeutic support practices, Descartes' error is far from being fully recognized and overcome.

Within the paradigmatic framework just described, we can include, over a period of several decades, most of the approaches, practices, techniques, methodologies and methods, mediated by expressive (or strictly functional) bodily and non-verbal means, obviously including the use of art forms and music.

The *embodied and enactive approach largely bypasses the issue*, often considering it obsolete. However, in practice, it neither directly addresses the problem nor resolves the issues and contradictions that persists in research and in educational and therapeutic interventions.

The evolutionary perspective implicit in the enactive approach has long recognized the presence of a fundamental neurocognitive shared identity. This refers to the somatic,

social, and affective foundations shared by proto-communicative, proto-musical, and proto-linguistic behaviors.

This places the *uniqueness of the human musical experience* at the very beginning of our complex biocultural development. Characterizing it as a neurobiological property from which the construction of embodied meaning and the structuring of intersubjective and affective dynamics proceed (Walsh, 2011; Schiavio et al., 2017; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018).

This does not prevent, however, the persistence of doubts and perplexities about the true consistency of emotions in music, even in recent times, leaving aside the age-old, and for many, annoying, question of musical meaning.

This occurs when, based on empirical and experimental data, we reason about emotions in music with respect to attribution and associative processes rather than autonomous and distinct generativity, ignoring or denying the elicitation of emotional states that emerge as a direct consequence of the musical experience.

Essentially, the ‘musical stimulus’ only apparently evokes and connotes emotions, when in fact it ‘simulates’ emotional responses that cannot be justified with respect to an objective and contextual influence on living conditions. In any case, it is believed that emotional responses can be explained with respect to neurophysiological mechanisms and the recoding of extramusical semantic associations (Krumhansl, 1997; Juslin et al., 2015).

C. The embedded and extended roots of musicality

In common experience, musical action is perceived teleologically and therefore interpreted as something whose meaning or contextual and intersubjective significance must be grasped. Any musical action, including listening, emerges before our attention as an organism endowed with an energetic, communicative, and intentional dimension, with varying degrees and modes of awareness. This highlights the motivational drive and the potential for focusing on specific goals, precisely because *musical sense-making* is also intrinsically emotional and affective.

In an embedded and extended vision, the roots of musicality are recognizable within an emotionally motivated cognitive system that actively participates in the operational, expressive and productive constitution of its own autonomous dimension of signification of sound and musical gestures (Schiavio et al., 2017).

Notably the development of musicality in early childhood has been studied by observing and analyzing the richness and multiplicity of exchanges and interactions. Active experiences of emotional reciprocity and shared acquisition of skills. This is possible precisely to the extent that human engagement with music arises as a dialogue between the subjects involved in the action and the dynamics of the sound-musical environment (Phillips-Silver & Trainor, 2005).

The construction of meaning in music is intersubjectively co-created and should be considered as an emergent property of a relationship that involves the entire sphere of

affectivity, embodied behavior and cognition in the broad sense.

The agent does not decide *musical meaning* solipsistically, because it was *conceived and developed within a network of embodied and enacted musical interactions*. It is an integral part of a communicative and social reality, that is, a musical environment, which as a system provides modalities and structures for accessing recognizable and productive musical expression.

For these reasons, when developing educational support programs in the musical field for various SLD situations, the need to move beyond skill-based teaching models is clearly evident. This means not limiting oneself to approaches based on the analysis of distinct musical discrimination and performance abilities, as is typically the case in studies analysing the progression of musicality during development.

This implies implementing music teaching methods organized around problem solving and skill-building, using methods and practices that consider the continuity and unity of musical gesture. This both involves a linear and summative integration of actions that give sonic form to distinct parametric components (duration, pitch, intensity, timbre, harmony, interval relationship, etc.), and enhances the pursuit of complex expressiveness that seeks to be consistent with the structures of shared and participatory musical interaction.

When musical learning takes place in a potential creative space, in the Winnicottian sense, then the conscious assimilation of various experiences combines the pleasure of executive control of musical materials and structures with the realization of an aesthetic pleasure contextual to the sensation of being part of one's own music-making, recovering the beauty of a creative musical gesture that makes us say I (Carboni, 1996).

We therefore need an aesthetic and personally creative dimension to music teaching and learning to experience the complex specificity of each individual moment in the expressive flow that connects it to the next. Ultimately, it is essential to engage physically and gesturally to bring these dynamics of educational support and integration to life.

D. Predisposition versus specialization

In developmental dyslexia, a deficit in rhythm perception is a constant that persists into adulthood, highlighting problems in rhythmic synchronization with the syllabic patterns of speech.

The fact that there are areas of the brain specialized in processing the flows of sound and musical information that stimulate our perceptive system has led to reasoning in terms of the modularity of cognitive functions and consequently of musical intelligence (Peretz & Coltheart, 2003).

The underlying assumption is based precisely on the involvement of multiple interconnected neural networks, which infer a brain specialization for music. The fact that these neural functions are coherently articulated across a range of cognitive processes defines a condition objectively predisposing to the development of musical intelligence.

The practice of trying to understand the functioning of the brain through its natural or accidental dysfunctions is, as paradoxical as it may seem, one of the foundations of

neurological research and over time has refined its ability to investigate and effectively verify the correlation between damage (actual or transient) and functional deficit.

Understanding SLD in the context of developing and learning musical skills and abilities must, however, look beyond linguistic and lexical dysfunctions and organizational deficits, as these aspects only partially capture and describe the complexity of the problem, and moreover, in a substantially cognitive dimension.

Music pedagogy and special education, some music therapy practices, and extensive neuroscientific research allow us to grasp, within an embodied and enacted approach, a design dimension that recognizes and values the unique strategies and alternative behaviors employed by students with SLD. This variety of adaptive behaviors develops forms of compensation and accommodation as practical solutions to the challenges posed daily by music learning.

The shift to an embodied and, above all, enactive concept of musical cognition implies a radical shift in perspective compared to historical mechanistic and computational paradigms.

The role the brain plays cannot be defined and resolved in terms of neuronal dynamics, mental states, and functions. Whatever way one attempts to explain cognition and understand it in social interaction, it will be necessary to think and act according to a wide range of research approaches. Neuroscience represents one of the many possibilities for analyzing and modeling available data, but above all, for reflecting on the dynamics of socially intelligent and creative interaction (Gallagher et al., 2013).

E. Representational models of neuromotor awareness

According to Maes (Maes et al., 2014), this experiential dimension of learning calls into play internalized representational models of neuromotor awareness. This defines inverse neurocognitive modeling, that is, the ability to transfer sensory states, whether intentional or perceived, into corresponding motor commands. Conversely, we should speak of anticipatory modeling, which aims to predict the sensory outcomes of planned actions.

In this model of analysis, to explain the effects of action on perception, embodied music processing is generally thought to rely on *inverse modeling*.

In any case, music stimulates or is generated by bodily movements that convey or reflect expressive qualities, intentions, internal sensations, etc. Therefore, when musical elements denote or connote expressive communication, they are most likely directly related to physical aspects of movement and space.

Therefore, inverse modeling processes allow us to decode perceived patterns of musical expressiveness into corresponding bodily movements.

Essentially, the process of bodily mirroring is implicated in listeners attribution of intentions and internal sensations.

This process develops internal models that connect the relationship between actions and sound by systematically and repeatedly associating performed actions with heard

sounds. Ultimately, to the extent that music-making incorporates aspects of creativity, intuition, and surprise, when certain actions intentionally, or even unconsciously, produce specific musical sounds or gestures, then some production/attribution of meaning is perceived, as it is mirrored and recognized as such.

All of this, when considering music students with SLD, leads us to reconsider the distinctions Gallagher has made regarding the *minimal*, or core, *self* and the *extended*, narrative *self* (Gallagher, 2000). Specifically, the core self involves the perception of possessing a sense of objective autonomy (Self of Ownership) and, conversely, the Sense of Agency.

The first type corresponds to the sensation of experiencing a specific experience first-hand e.g., the awareness that it is our own body that moves, regardless of whether the movement is intentional, is essentially an intrinsic part of performing the action itself.

It is the sense of belonging we feel toward parts of our body, our feelings, or our thoughts (Braun et al., 2018). The second type corresponds to the feeling of being the point of origin that generates or causes an action. This implies pre-reflective aspects of our experience (Vogeley & Gallagher, 2011).

We believe it is appropriate to consider this dual perspective when assessing performance or interpretation challenges experienced by students with SLD in music and, consequently, when designing educational tools. In some cases, difficulties appear related to ownership, that is, a lack of awareness of the individual body parts involved in the musical action. Other times, nevertheless, the difficulties appear to be a matter of Agency, implying a weak pre-reflective dimension (consciousness/awareness), and thus a sort of estrangement or lack of involvement and participation in the expressive musical action.

In both cases, nevertheless, we are dealing with difficulties that involve the one-to-one correspondence between gestures and the encoding (and decoding) of internal models of musical expressiveness.

These organizational disturbances correspond to forms of cognitive interference both in the exchange between internalized body mirroring and in the production of intentional meaning mediated in sound.

More generally, we can hypothesize a non-congruent integration of the comparison between different levels of information involving pre-existing body maps, postural and structural configurations, and finally sensory and contextual information (Tsakiris, 2010).

Methodological Perspectives

A. Small steps towards enactive musical learning

It is necessary to recognize that music pedagogy, in its various branches, has developed and based its teaching and learning approaches on the most recent theories and models of cognitive psychology.

A range of educational practices that advances with respect to progressive awareness, from the outside in, from gestural and expressive action to symbolic and meaningful

thought. Sensory experiences become operational patterns, and adaptive behaviors, very often induced, evolve into behaviors functional to achieving the identified objective.

Functions and information that are internalized in the form of codified representations, within the context of an educational approach that has performed its task admirably, at least within the terms envisaged by the reference paradigm.

In contrast, *enactive music cognition* believes a different perspective is essential in considering the relationship between cognition and brain function. Being in music is understood as a dynamic and integrative experience, not just as a culturally codified object, but rather as learning situated in an intersubjective reality in which the learner is actively engaged.

B. The S.A.M.E. Model

This experimental teaching approach takes as its starting point the preconceptual levels of musical cognition, not limiting itself to accepting an instrumental use of mental representations, but rather understanding the complexity of linguistic and communicative functions within the musical learning experience (Matyja & Schiavio, 2013).

The authors of the operational and experimental model SAME, Shared Affective Motion Experience, (Molnar-Szakacs et al., 2011), inspired by discoveries regarding the mirror neuron system, moved in this direction to *highlight emotional and embodied responses to music*.

The acronym indicates that during a musical interaction, *the same neural networks* can be activated in both the performer and the observer/listener, establishing dynamics of reciprocity and mirroring. Accordingly, musical sound is perceived both as an auditory signal and as a motor expression, that is, sequences of intentional actions that anticipate communication itself (Molnar-Szakacs et al., 2011).

Similarly, the *Motor Theory of Speech Perception* has been applied to research on language production, studying vocal activation patterns. This theory is based on the assumption that the phonetic elements of language are not sounds but, rather, the articulatory gestures that generate those sounds.

Speech perception, therefore, appears to be contextually interdependent with the production of certain motor gestures involved in syllable production (Lieberman & Whalen, 2000; Galantucci et al., 2006).

The SAME model, based on a functional neuroscientific analysis, develops a similar understanding matrix. Both the performer's action, with the physicality of the movement, and the energetic, visuospatial, and, above all, kinesthetic quality of the sound, contribute to the formation of a profound, internalized recognition of another person's action, whether they are present or not.

C. Embodied mental representations and shared intersubjectivity

The concept of the body as a spatio-temporal mediator between the brain and auditory signals presupposes a dichotomous relationship between the acting subject and the

musical object. This distinction is superfluous if the action is proactive and enacted, and when the actions involved can be elaborated in non-representational ways (Gallagher, 2007).

Therefore, the *construction of meaning*, constitutive of musical practices (conception, performance, and production), develops the expressiveness of bodily mediation (exploration, manipulation, elaboration, creation) in *enacted*, non-representational, contextual, and intersubjective ways. This is because the 'decoding' of the performer's intentional action occurs to the extent that the listener/observer internally processes and simulates experiential information without invoking cognitive analysis processes (Sinigaglia, 2008).

Conversely, the production of meaning can imply *embodied mental representations* when musical conducts are placed and interact with the environment (*situated*), temporally connoted by processes of memory and anticipation and draw on the epistemic heritage of the reference culture (Gallagher, 2023).

Simply put, our predisposition for intersubjective expressive-motor, sensorial, and auditory exchange is evident from the first weeks of life with respect to *amodal qualities and affective attunement* (Stern, 1985). This allows for the development of skills in a prelinguistic and prelogical dimension (certainly not alogical nor non-linguistic).

In primary interactions, the contents of intersubjective communication clarify the *how* (emotional and affective quality, and consequently expressive) and the *why* (intentionality), while the *who* and *what* we will have to wait for the development of the first forms of language.

These functional and communicative aspects persist in an evolutionary sense in musical language. The resulting benefit is invaluable. It translates into the progressive adoption of repertoires of sonic-musical gestures. Subsequently, it leads to the development of communicative styles, lexical elements, and musical patterns, socially and culturally contextualized.

D. The conduction method and sensorimotor repertoires

Designing an *enactive music pedagogy* in SLD likely requires a choice of direction, and a shift in the educational approach. At the very least, a shift from unidirectional interaction to a coevolutionary and transformative exchange (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005).

With respect to setting, it is therefore necessary to define how transformative reciprocity can be implemented in musical learning, that is, which curricular devices and dynamics can most effectively create a facilitating environment in the development of theoretical knowledge and performance skills (Gutierrez, 2019).

An example of this approach is found in the interesting teaching practice of the Conduction method (Gutierrez, 2019), a reworking of a method developed by Butch Morris in jazz as a guided form of collective improvisation.

Conduction presents itself as a vocabulary (repertoire) of ideographic hand gestures, an effective and functional integrated approach for addressing music theory concepts. It offers students the opportunity to develop a *sensorimotor repertoire of gestures*,

symbols, actions, and sounds that allows them to understand and appropriate even complex musical material in theoretical and operational terms.

The concept of sensorimotor repertoire (Thompson, 2007) expresses processes and forms of self-realization of an organism in a given environment. It is an emergent function of our nervous system, where sensory and motor processes, even if not directly related anatomically, are constituted in interconnected and operationally closed networks. The development of a sensorimotor identity is therefore a consequence of «large-scale, coherent activity patterns».

Accordingly, music pedagogy can guide teaching-learning processes toward the implementation of a holistic exploration of intersubjective exchanges. These activities involve an embodied (as well as enacted, extended, and embedded) brain-mind and «enable us to perceive, think, and theorize, experience emotions, and form and pursue musical actions» within an embodied dimension of sound-musical communication (van der Schyff, 2019).

The developments of this approach are extensive. They push us to investigate the underlying meanings of *inherited and emerging repertoires* and the *relationship between musical structures and metaphors*, as well as sensations and bodily experiences. They lead us to understand how the different structural and organizational typologies of sound objects may depend on correlated models of action. Finally, they explain the extent to which the objects of sound-musical experience influence our modes of appropriation (*affordance*) and consequently their linguistic and functional formalization. (van der Schyff, 2019).

E. Mirroring processes in musical interaction

In recent years, research on learning problems in SLD has focused primarily on linguistic functions and structures, particularly verbal ones, in terms of comprehension, organization, and processing. Much less has been done to identify and understand the extent of the nonverbal and bodily dimension, and mirroring processes in general.

In a study investigating difficulties in non-verbal imitation, which did not involve analysis and execution processes inherent to structural aspects of language, significant differences emerged for assignments related to body movement and pretend actions. Conversely, no significant results were found for the execution of instrumental actions (Dohmen et al., 2013).

The poorer imitative performance of the SLD sample was not explained by similar problems in motor or nonverbal cognitive skills. Instead, it emerged that the nature of the task influenced imitative performance in children aged 24 to 42 months. It is plausible that the ability to establish a sense of connection with the demonstrator was at the core of the imitative difficulties of the children in the SLD sample.

The experimental results are consistent with a model of understanding actions, intentions, and emotional dynamics as emergent cognition. This refers to an *intersubjective mediation involving the mirror system and the embodied dimension*. Through this mediation, the motor system can develop an internal simulation independently of the activation of complex processes of cognitive analysis of experience (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008; Sinigaglia, 2008).

Hogg (2011) developed a similar reflection when, referring to Stockhausen's so-called '*intuitive music*', he considers the possibility of giving rise to spontaneous, even intentional, actions, or even of listening, whether focused or diffuse, or in any case of doing something without thinking ahead.

These are *forms of pure intuitive activity*, because *awareness is more something we do* instead than something we possess. It emerges from a combination of socially shared cognitive and experiential factors, the same ones that prelude and anticipate the formation of linguistic structures.

This implies that sonic-musical intertextuality, understood as an inactive phenomenon, cannot be reduced to an interaction between musical products or actions. If anything, it is lived and experienced according to modes of appropriation that are not necessarily conscious and controlled.

This highlights how the *enactive perspective inevitably includes embodiment and cognition as emergent experiences*, complementary to the development of autonomy, but above all of an enaction functionally congruent with the production of meaning (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007).

F. Experiencing music through an ethic of care

In musical practices, as in life, individual subjects emerge as 'persons' with respect to intersubjective relationships. This occurs contextually to the dynamic synthesis of a wide range of embodied processes that deeply engage our learning and expressive potentials (attention, perception, cognition, emotion, memory, etc.). Within and through these processes, the production of meaning occurs, the most evident effect of which is our very personality (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

It's no coincidence that anyone who studies and practices music for an adequate amount of time and at a certain level of intensity comes to perceive their instrument as an extension of their body, their gestures, and their expressive technique. To the point where "it's difficult to tell where the instrument ends and the rest of the body begins. (...) accordingly, musical instruments are embodied entities" (Alperson, 2008, 40).

According to this approach, musical and instrumental teaching that limits its focus to instrumental performance skills certainly doesn't follow an ethic of education.

This is particularly true in the educational paths of students with SLD, where it is extremely important to proceed with the construction, consolidation, and development of the knowledge and metacognition processes that occur in musical expressive action.

Music education, at all levels and in relation to the most diverse issues, must promote the significance of musical learning with respect to creating meaning, 'with a conscious commitment to an ethic of care' (Silverman, 2020).

Among the various theories that have emerged over time, there is an anthropological hypothesis regarding the 'musical' development of vocalizations during interaction between adults and infants.

These vocalizations stabilize emotional bonds and establish a sense of shared well-being, while facilitating caregiving. Ultimately, they increase the child's quality of life and chances of survival (Honing et al., 2015).

Therefore, implementing an *ethic of care* in music education practices in SLD situations means structuring a *developmental framework based on experiences of embodiment* focused on the physical qualities of objects and the spatial and temporal sequences that characterize different events. This allows for a gradual progression from metonymic bases towards metaphorical elaborations, resulting in a *personal rediscovery of linguistic and communicative structures* (Stern, 1985; Gibbs, 1999; Carboni, 2012).

Conclusions

Reflection and research on music learning as intersubjective communication in SLD, in its various and intricate developments, takes the form of a kind of neurocognitive labyrinth. In some cases, it offers us alternative choices, in others, forced paths. Wherever it leads, nevertheless, we always find ourselves welcomed by a reality in which music, understood as an original experience, is embodied, incorporated, enactive, and extended. The opportunity for social connections, participation, and sharing offered by musical practices, whether formal or informal, educational or autonomous, is indeed evident, especially for those with special educational needs or who exhibit SLD.

Music-making, both embodied and enacted, stimulates the decision-making process at every stage and in every situation of the educational journey. It activates problem-solving skills and a focus on primary and secondary objectives. Musical performance, in its intersubjective and even more collective dimension, conveys mutual recognition among all participants. This occurs through shared motor and gestural dynamics, resulting in a sense of accomplishment that strengthens self-esteem and increases the willingness to communicate and interact.

Furthermore, we recognize the beginnings of personal autonomy development precisely in the adoption of creative, assertive, and flexible attitudes, which foster self-esteem and the socialization of learning (Adamek & Darrow, 2012). In fact, the simple opportunity to carry out activities and exercises that combine music and movement in a collectively shared context contributes in itself to a broad stimulation that integrates the multisensory network of cognitive faculties with respect to attention, concentration, memory, imagination and creativity, without forgetting the skills of social interaction and communication (Juntunen, 2020).

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Declaration of interest

The author reports no conflict of interest.

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TEACHER EDUCATORS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH REMOTE COTEACHING IN ONLINE PIANO LESSON

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Abstract

At present, the idea of teachers' as well as teacher educators' professional development is widely recommended to strengthen quality education by adding benefits to students. This case study focused on one remote coteaching piano lesson between two primary school teacher trainings in Finland. The aim of the study was to find out what kind of professional development did the teacher educators notice due to the remote coteaching piano lesson. The lesson was recorded as a video, and the teacher educators' reflections and experiences were collected through an interview. Experiences of student teachers were collected using a questionnaire. The teacher educators noticed the importance of every three coteaching phase, but only coreflection seemed to enable their professional development. In coteaching, they highlighted need for openness, humbleness and recognition of own imperfection to share and receive new ideas. The main benefit the student teachers shared was the enriched content.

Keywords: *Teacher educators, music education, professional development, remote coteaching, primary school teacher education*

Introduction

Teachers play a central role in educational development, and teaching skills in the 21st century require that in-service teachers also engage in professional development beyond the initial teacher education program (Bautista et al., 2017). To develop quality education, the education systems of many countries, including Finland, have recently emphasized the need for professional development of teacher educators (European Commission, 2013; Meeus et al., 2018; Tack et al., 2018; Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). Research on teacher educators' professional development has increased recently (e.g. Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Williams, 2014), but more research is needed on the distinctive features of their professional development (Swennen et al.,

2010; Hadar & Brody, 2016; Ping et al., 2018). Referring to Byman et al. (2021), most often teacher educators develop their professional skills through their own research. However, during the 2010s, in many European countries, professional development of teacher educators and studies on this topic were quite fragmented and very few (Tack et al., 2018). There has been little research on this topic in Finland (Byman et al., 2021; Atas et al., 2023) too, as professional development of teacher educators' in music area is a somewhat new topic.

Referring to Kelchtermans et al. (2018), teacher educators as a whole are a distinct group of professionals with specific mission, experience and competencies (see also Byman et al., 2021; Atas et al., 2023). Teacher education requires specific skills, knowledge and competence: a central aspect in this process is the analysis of one's own teaching practice based on specific criteria (Kelchtermans et al., 2018) as well as the development of reflective experiences to confirm and ensure the quality of education (Ben-Peretz, 2001; Swennen et al., 2010; Loughran, 2014).

In the field of music education, there have been experiments and studies on music teachers' and student teachers' collaboration as coteachers (e.g. Jieun, 2019; Rikandi, 2013) as well as student teachers' peer-learning experiments (e.g. Fitzpatrick, 2014; Westerlund, Partti & Karlsen, 2015). In addition, there have been some studies applying mentor-mentee approach (Moore, 2009; Pellegrino et al., 2014; Sindberg, 2014; Baumgartner, 2019), and collaborative support between in-service vocal and instrumental music teachers (Biasutti et al., 2019). In music, it has been found productive if, after carefully identifying their roles and responsibilities in planning and scheduling their work, both coteachers provide a unique musical expertise to the course (Clauhs & Newell, 2013). Every teacher's expertise is often focused on some areas of music teaching, which offers the possibility for coteachers to observe and notice one another's strengths and weaknesses and share the responsibility (Clauhs & Newell, 2013; Zanner & Stabb, 2013).

Referring to Tack et al. (2018), previous findings indicate the need for participation in professional development activities relating to the teacher educators' own practices (see also Meeus et al., 2018). When asking the question, who are the experts of the pedagogical content to add teacher educators' competence in their work, we easily see another teacher educator. As Hietanen, Koironen and Ruismäki's (2017) discovered, a music teacher's participation in the real music teaching situation is integral to increase their job satisfaction.

All the previous findings led us to rely on coteaching. Thinking about distances between the universities implementing initial teacher education programmes, professional development using face to face coteaching experiments between teacher educators with different expertise seemed inappropriate, almost impossible. Thus, in the present case, remote coteaching setting where two teacher educators were teaching their own students in their own classrooms was chosen to act as the common learning environment (see Hietanen, Sepp & Ruismäki, 2022). Nonetheless, music teacher educators' professional development through remote coteaching while working separately with their own groups of students in their own classrooms has not yet been studied in-depth.

The aim of this study: to find out whether two experienced music teacher educators could develop their professional skills and competence through new approaches identified by remote coteaching.

The present study was carried out in two separate primary school teacher education programmes implemented in two Finnish universities. Despite the Finnish research context, the findings and the shared experiment of remote coteaching can be applied wider in music teacher educators' collaborative professional development activities also in global contexts.

Professional Development and Coteaching

When focusing on the professional development of teachers, coteaching has been noted as an effective way to share previously acquired practical knowledge (Roth et al., 1999; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012; Sirkko et al., 2018). As the main goal of teachers' professional development, the benefit of the students should be at the core (Cook & Friend, 1995). Murphy and Martin (2015) defined coteaching as lecturers learning from each other and sharing the responsibility of meeting students' needs. Further, Murphy and Martin (2015) point out, that in the coteaching process, teachers should consider co-planning, copractice, and coreflection and take care of all these phases in the process. This study follows the Murphy and Martin's (2015) definition of coteaching with its three phases. In addition to the phases in the coteaching process, there are different forms of coteaching depending on the settings of the learning environment, including sharing the group of students and responsibilities between the coteachers. The context in this case mainly follows the idea of parallel teaching, since via video connection, the lecturers taught their own groups, being of about equal sizes, and in their own classrooms, but both the groups received the same information and instructions despite being in different physical classrooms (Thousand et al., 2006; Brawand & King-Sears, 2017). From the perspective of the professional development of coteachers, Wenzlaff et al. (2002) as well as Lester and Evans (2009) defined coteaching as two or more professionals coming together to share work, to achieve something more than they could have achieved alone.

In the present study, the common classroom was organized remotely via video connection between two universities where free accompaniment on the piano, supplemented with pedagogical observations applicable in the future music teaching-learning situations at schools, was to be learned. The use of video connection enabled utilization of one's own, familiar working environment and student group, but caused some technical challenges, particularly in delay and respect of the quality in voice transmission. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Biasutti et al. (2023) studied primary school music in-service teachers' experiences about teaching music remotely and found it essential to ensure that the remote teaching-learning lessons are also technically well organized.

Methods

A. Study Design

As Rytivaara and Kershner (2012) pointed out, coteaching may be one way to share knowledge and practices between the participating teachers. Referring to Guskey (2002), during the coteaching period in the present study, the focus was on the possible

changes in the practices, attitudes and beliefs of very experienced teacher educators. The main research question (RQ1) in this study was formulated as follows:

RQ: 1. What kind of professional development did the teacher educators notice due to the remote coteaching piano lesson?

As Guskey (2002) and Borko (2004) emphasized, alongside the changes in teacher's attitudes and teaching practices, the major goals of professional development should be changes in student learning outcomes. Additionally, Cook and Friend (1995), Bryant et al. (2014), Vangrieken et al. (2015), and Biasutti et al. (2019) pointed out that, in coteaching experiments, the students' benefit shall be the main goal. Thus, a supportive research question (RQ 2) was formulated.

RQ: 2. What added benefit did the student teachers gain from the remote coteaching piano lesson?

This research was designed as qualitative, using the content analysis (Schreier, 2014). The methodological approach was a single case study, where the aim was to describe and deliver the originality and specialty of one teaching-learning case (Simons, 2009). More detailed, in this intrinsic case study, one online piano lesson was examined thoroughly searching for a deeper and wider understanding of this teaching-learning situation in its real-life context (Yin, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011). According Quintão et al. (2020, 266), case studies can be used to understand a phenomenon in depth by gathering the opinion of several people, as well as discovering a new phenomenon from the interaction with the participants.

B. Participants

The participants in the coteaching experiment were two music teacher educators and their groups of primary school student teachers studying piano course as part of their Advanced Music Studies (25 credit points). One of the teacher educators (T1) was a professor at University of Helsinki, who had taught music as a qualified music teacher at various levels and forms of music education in Finland for 40 years, except in basic education. His special expertise in the current teaching-learning situation had been shaped by his extensive experience of teaching free piano accompaniment in universities and informal settings. 13 student teachers in his group wanted to participate in this research. The professor with his students focused on the piano playing in the online situation. Another teacher educator (T2) had taught music as a qualified music teacher for 30 years at various education levels in Finland, including comprehensive schools (basic level of education), upper secondary schools (second level of education), and teacher education (third level of education). In her group at University of Lapland, six student teachers wanted to participate in the research. Neither this lecturer nor her students played the piano in the common online situation.

The participants (researchers and authors) in this study were the two teacher educators who taught at the remote coteaching piano lesson. One researcher was involved to analyse the data and formulate the results. This researcher participated neither in the teacher educators' coteaching process nor when organizing the classrooms settings. In addition, one researcher first organized the technical part of the remote lesson under study at University of Lapland, but later participated in maintaining the rigour of the study and clarity of the report.

C. Context, Data Collection and Analysis

The aim of the studied experiment was mainly to emphasize the phases of coplanning and copracticing (Murphy & Martin, 2015) during the lesson under research. Additionally, there was the common coreflecting situation organised later by the author responsible for the analysis of the data.

The objectives written in the curricula for piano studies in primary school class teachers' courses focused on different aspects. In University of Helsinki, the curriculum goals concentrated more on practical musical issues: versatile piano accompaniment with real chords and the use of different rhythm patterns. Whereas in University of Lapland, the focus was more on pedagogical aspects, such as versatile use of the piano in the interpretation of the basic concepts of music, understanding the role of the piano in musical ensembles, studying different accompaniment patterns in songs (Hietanen et al., 2021, 33). However, we should be reminded about the mission of teacher education in Finland, which points out how to teach different subjects to be the main goal in the whole teacher education programme implemented in the Finnish universities (Government Decree, 2018). Further, talking about the content to be learnt, we refer both to the piano playing and its pedagogical use.

Before the shared lesson, the participating student teachers had attended some piano lessons at their own university, so they were able to assess whether the lesson based on coteaching between their lecturers added them some value compared with these lessons taught by only one teacher. Prior to the beginning of the mutual online lesson, the student teachers were asked to acquaint themselves with the previously shared common material for the joint lesson by training and practicing it in the piano practice rooms. All the piano playing during the joint lesson took place at University of Helsinki, while the students at University of Lapland observed and commented on the lesson. Such arrangement was made in order to reduce the challenges in high-quality voice transmission.

The teacher educator at University of Helsinki (T1) was using a wireless headset, while his students were placed in a semicircle in front of him, and they had one microphone used by choirs. One video camera was set above the keyboard. At University of Lapland, the technical means included one computer in the classroom with a microphone and camera inside, and the tablet to record the lesson.

The teacher educators planned the pedagogical settings together. Their principal aim was to share some different ways of accompanying songs performed mainly by T1, who was planned to act in the leader role. Another goal was to provide some pedagogical examples by T2 about situations in a comprehensive school music lesson, where the presented ways of accompaniment could be useful.

Open questions formulated in the questionnaire for the student teachers helped them to focus their observations on different situations and content of the lesson. As the teacher educators wanted to improve their cooperation on a permanent basis, the student teachers were also asked to propose some ideas on how to develop the online coteaching piano lessons further. This part of the data has not been analysed in detail,

but has been taken into consideration as a supportive opinion when later in this report the authors assess the experiment.

After the analysis of videodata and student teachers' answers to the questionnaire, the researcher, involved later, collected the data by interviewing the teacher educators who had participated in the lesson. She wanted to get a deeper insight about the teacher educators' professional development and allow the teacher educators to thoroughly coreflect on their coplanning and copractising phases (see Murphy & Martin, 2015). The use of three different data refers to data triangulation, which strengthened the reliability of the study (Cohen et al., 2011).

D. Ethical Issues

Considering the ethical issues (Miller et al., 2012; Denzin et al., 2023), during this research the ethical code by Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019) was followed, which prescribes having participants' individual permissions for research, signed by themselves after their own decision. Both the research videodata and written data were collected from the student teachers and teacher educators by asking for their agreement to participate in the research. Besides, the researcher who had not participated in the recorded lesson, but had analyzed the data, examined also the video. Before recording, the student teachers were informed that besides their lecturers, other researchers participating in the current research might see the video. Thus, they were given the opportunity to choose a position, from where they could not be identified.

The written responses given by teacher educators' student teachers were made anonymous before sharing the data with the other two researchers. After seeing the recorded video lesson, and having analysed the lesson as well as the written data provided by the student teachers, the researcher, involved later, interviewed the teacher educators to get an even deeper understanding of the coteaching episode. Finally, the researcher analysed the teacher educators' interview.

Results

The material of the recorded video lesson clearly showed the teacher educators' different roles in coteaching and their diverse approaches to content. T1 concentrated mainly on the accompaniment patterns sharing possibilities to play in various ways, while T2 focused on describing how the presented ways of playing may support pedagogy. Additionally, both teacher educators paid attention also to teaching of basic musical concepts, such as basic beat and time values. Some quotes of the video data and the data-based content analysis are given in Table 1. In addition, the video quotes which are not given in the table belong to the shown sub-themes. In the tables, UH refers to University of Helsinki and UL to University of Lapland.

Table 1. Examples of the content analysis of the videodata (copracticising)

Quotes of the videodata: T1s' instructions and T2s' questions and the student's response by playing (UH) or speaking (UL)	Sub-themes of T1s' and T2s' copracticising	Main themes
Play the accompaniment as easily as possible: the chord in the right hand and the single bass note in the left. The student plays as guided. (T1 and the student UH, 3:04)	Focusing on rhythm: Showing by playing and guiding the student to play basic beat and different time values of notes (T1) Focusing on rhythm: Encouraging the students to analyse different time values of notes by listening and observing (T2)	Teaching basic concepts in music (T1 and T2)
How would you describe the accompaniment, the rhythm? What was essential? (T2, 4:06) Very clear basic beat. (Student UL, 4:10)		
T1 guides one student in UH to follow "Lennon style" on the piano. The student plays as guided. (T1 and the student UH, 5:35)		
What happened now with the right hand, when she played not so easily? Please, describe. (T2, 6:30) (She played basic beat but also some faster tunes at the end of every measure. Student UL, 6:58)		
T1 plays an example of how the right hand moves only a little when using also inverted chords. (T1, 10:52)	Focusing on technical details in playing and possibilities to play same tunes in various ways (T1)	Sharing possibilities to play in various ways (T1)
T1 continues by playing the same song in various ways applying different rhythm patterns and music styles written in the notes and given to the students before the lesson. He explains his applications while playing. (T2, 23:17)		
It is important to use also inverted chords: when you need to move your hands only a bit, you are able to simultaneously observe your pupils – which is your main work. (T2, 12:29)	Focusing on how different ways to play chords are supporting your teaching (T2)	Describing how various ways to play support pedagogy (T2)

The purpose of the joint interview with teacher educators carried out by the involved scholar, was to gain a deeper insight into educators' perceptions of their own professional development as the result of the coteaching lesson. The interview situation also complemented the coteaching process, where coreflection had previously been almost completely neglected. After looking at the video data once again, the teacher educators

were able to somewhat deeper reflect on each phase of the entire coteaching process. Examples of the teacher educators' interview as well as the sub-themes and the main theme as results of the content analysis are shown in Table 2. The teacher educators' answers which are not given in the table belong to these sub-themes too.

Table 2. Examples of the content analysis of the teacher educators' interview

Quotes of the teacher educators' interview	Sub-themes	Main theme
We should have planned a little bit better and more. We planned that we would switch and we also planned the content, that T1 would emphasise the piano playing and free accompaniment while I would concentrate more on the pedagogical issues. Perhaps we should have planned even better what musical material we use and how we enhance the students' participation. (T2)	Coplanning	Professional development
Coteaching, especially coplanning, depends also on the curricula of teacher education programmes. (T1)		
In UH curriculum, you have only a free accompaniment as a goal, but in UL, we have also mentioned pedagogy. However, we were able to greatly enrich each other's teaching. Pedagogy is, after all, part of teacher education programmes. (T2)	Copractising	
I have a certain way to teach and taught in flow, but when T2 interrupted me by adding some pedagogical remark, I noticed that the content could be processed in other ways as well. These were very welcome interruptions – places for learning. (T1)		
After the coreflection part – though it came somewhat later after the coteaching lesson – it is easy to notice that every phase of coteaching is important, but only during this coreflection you learn. (T1, T2)	Coreflecting	
Elements of music (basic beat, rhythm) enriched our teaching, though we had decided to concentrate on the piano playing and pedagogy. (T2)		
Recorded videodata would be remarkable to look at after every coteaching lesson – alone and together. Reflection and analysis would enable to learn about teaching, learning and students. (T1)		
One of the important issues was that another teacher was questioning my typical teaching routines, especially after my long teaching career. (T1)		
You have to be humble and open and recognize your imperfection to be able to share and receive new ideas in coteaching process. (T1, T2).		

Concerning the details the teacher educators had highlighted, the interview addressed the importance of every phase in coteaching process be important and intertwined. As coplanning had been somewhat superficial, it led to a certain degree of ineffectiveness in copractice. This could be attributed to the fact that T2 had needed to interrupt T1s' speech a couple of times. Immediately after the remote lesson, the teacher educators had neither possibility to see the video nor coreflect on the previous coteaching phases.

Nonetheless, when they analysed the video later and were able to reflect on the lesson during the time the researcher interviewed them, both teacher educators admitted that the coreflection situation under study was an essential prerequisite in the process of a professional development. Both teacher educators emphasized, that those previous phases had only enabled learning, which became obvious only in joint reflection.

Previous contacts and communication among these teacher educators allowed them to judge that T1 had really strong expertise in free accompaniment on the piano but had not taught music in a comprehensive school, where student teachers participating in this research were going to teach after qualification. T2, on the other hand, was strong in a pedagogical field, having previously taught in comprehensive and upper secondary schools for 20 years. These were clear content emphases that the student teachers were expected to notice. These were also the additional benefits that the student teachers were expected to gain from the professional development experiment carried out through coteaching by the teacher educators. Therefore, the student teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire focusing on two teacher educators' contribution compared with only their own teacher educator's teaching. The student teachers' answers and the data of content analysis are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of the content analysis of the student teachers' answers

Quotes of the student teachers' data	Sub-themes	Main theme
Coteaching is good for teaching: the teachers can complement each other and bring different perspectives to the table. (UH01, UH11)	Different perspectives on the content	New details and perspectives on the content
The two teachers complemented each other. You get different teaching and different advice when you have two teachers instead of one. (UL04)		
It's good to have another teacher's perspective in a teaching-learning process. (UH03)		
Both teachers gave their own perspectives on the taught subject, as well as own comments. (UH07)		
The two teachers have different teaching styles. So, you can pick up different things for your own skills. It is interesting for a student teacher to observe different teaching styles, especially this kind of remote coteaching itself. (UH06)	Different teaching styles	
I got to learn different styles of accompaniment. (UL01, UL06).	New content	
Through different style of working, I learned new things. (UL04)		

In student teachers' opinion, the comparison of a coteaching lesson with their own teacher educator's contribution testifies to the fact that coteaching has quite a potential of additional benefits for students, as they seemed to have noticed both new details and new perspectives on the content. In addition, they had noticed two different teaching styles applied during one lesson. Thus, the requirement that coteaching should enhance the professional development and students should benefit from it was satisfied.

Discussion

Guided by the first research question, we wanted to find out what kind of professional development the teacher educators noticed due the remote coteaching piano lesson. Based on the curricula of both courses, the teacher educators set the goal for the student teachers to learn different ways of playing the same song on the piano. Another goal was to find examples to illustrate the pedagogical application of different ways of playing at music lessons in schools.

The aim of coteaching was the teacher educators' professional development based on those goals, which focused on their previously achieved different expertise as music teacher educators (Clauhs & Newell, 2013). As both teacher educators pointed out, the professional development occurred only in a coreflection phase, which was carried out during the interview. As it is possible to see from the videodata, the copractising phase focused strongly on piano playing and to some extent also on pedagogical issues. However, while coreflecting, the teacher educators confirmed that coteaching had broadened their understanding about different ways of monitoring the content, including playing and pedagogy. This finding aligned with the previous findings showing that the teacher educators' professional development through coteaching can be enriched by their previously achieved practical knowledge (see Roth et al., 1999; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012; Sirkko et al., 2018). More general, the teacher educators noticed how easily and strongly experienced teachers stick to their old routines, and how useful it is that you have another teacher interrupting your ingrained way of speaking and showing some new perspectives.

Another detail they noticed was that coteaching might be really a prolific way to enhance the professional development, as the participating teachers have different expertise (Clauhs & Newell, 2013; Kelchtermans et al., 2018), however, it is essential to start it with a careful coplanning. As Murphy and Martin (2015) pointed out, teachers should concentrate on each phase of a coteaching process: coplanning, copractising and coreflection. Contrary to Murphy and Martin (2015), with respect to the professional development, teacher educators found the coreflection phase to be more important than the previous two phases. Teacher educators also maintained that to develop one's own professional skills and competence by coteaching, a necessary prerequisite is one's own openness, humbleness and recognition of your own imperfection, as well as understanding that you can both share and learn ideas. Previously, Cook and Friend (1995) pointed out that working together requires flexibility, trust, engagement, effective and ongoing communication, willingness to share in aspects of teaching, question your practices in teaching, and allow your colleagues to notice your possible weaknesses. Clauhs and Newell (2013) and Zanner and Stabb (2013) stated that in those cases when music teachers' expertise was focused on different areas of music teaching, coteachers had the opportunity to see each other's strengths and weaknesses. As a summary, we can state that, to a great teacher educators' satisfaction, knowledge of the content was really extended. They had mainly learned something about their strong routines, which might narrow the scope of their approaches and ways of teaching. However, at the same time they also recognized that despite their long teaching career, it was still possible for them to learn new things and new ways of teaching.

Previous research suggested that to promote teacher educators' professional development and to apply the method of coteaching, students' benefit should be always in focus and of great concern (Cook & Friend, 1995; Biasutti et al., 2019; Guskey, 2002; Borko, 2004; Vangrieken et al., 2015). Thus, another research question was to investigate whether student teachers had identified some additional benefit to enhance their professional development when taught through coteaching. As the teacher educators had planned, the student teachers learned some new details and saw that their teachers had different perspectives as to the content. Additionally, due to the presence of two teacher educators, students were able to observe two different ways of teaching (see Wenzlaff et al., 2002; Lester & Evans, 2009). The student teachers' observations as written response on a questionnaire mainly aligned with the videodata confirming that the teacher educators' professional development had occurred at least to some extent and that the coteaching lesson was a relevant way to achieve it.

As to the theoretical contribution of the studied experiment, it seems that combining the previous findings from different research fields in the theoretical background was a somewhat successful solution. The core concepts *coteaching* and *teacher educators' professional development* are widely used in educational sciences, and as previous research testifies, in music education studies as well. On the whole, this study has confirmed the previous findings from different fields, which would encourage researchers to use these concepts as well as previous findings from different research fields in their studies in future. The main difference between the present study and previous studies was the emphasis the teacher educators laid on the coreflection, recognizing it as the most important phase in a coteaching process when their professional development is concerned. This kind of emphasis cannot be observed in the previous studies (cf. Murphy & Martin, 2015).

The research questions were formulated to find out if a piano lesson taught through a remote coteaching had produced any positive results in respect of both teacher educators' professional development and the student teachers' added benefit. Students present at this piano lesson underlined that some details should be developed, and this must be taken into consideration and could be used in case coteaching lessons should be organized for previously unfamiliar student groups in future. It would be advisable to inform students about the goals set for learning the content at the beginning of the lesson. Both the teacher educators and the student teachers mentioned that coplanning should have been more careful, particularly when it comes to the dialogue between the teacher educators. The student teachers stated also that a short presentation of the participants and a brief discussion on their musical backgrounds could have made it easier for students to participate in the dialogue and to play those examples for everyone on the piano in University of Helsinki. Both the student teachers and teacher educators considered a greater student participation to be desirable in the future. When reminding us that the teacher educators had read the student teachers' comments before their coreflection, it seems obvious that their awareness of the need for better coplanning was partly prompted by the students' comments. Here we see the importance of the students' written or recorded feedback.

The students' wider participation was one of the challenges when combining two music classrooms remotely via videoconnection and playing the piano to be at the core of the

lesson. Biasutti et al. (2019) pointed out that in remote teaching-learning situations, it is essential to ensure that the technology works properly. In the present case, one challenge was the quality and the placement of the microphones around the classroom. The piano sound was transferred via own channel, which required much wider technical competence than teacher educators originally have. Therefore, piano was played online only in another university. One challenge in remote joint music-making still is the delay with voice transformation, which the teacher educators implemented by singing together.

Conclusions

In the present case, the main goal was to enhance quality education in primary school teacher training, particularly in music education. For this purpose, a remote coteaching piano lesson was organized between two Finnish primary school teacher education programmes. Through the experiment, two music teacher educators sought to develop themselves professionally. As the data of this case study were relatively insignificant and were collected about only one lesson, the results cannot be widely generalized. However, the findings may prompt music teacher educators in other generalists' teacher education programmes to use coteaching music lessons, also remotely.

In primary school teacher education, teaching and learning subjects to be taught always mean focusing both on the subject content and pedagogy. It is well known that primary school student teachers have huge differences in their musical backgrounds. When teaching them how to teach music it is essential to simultaneously check on that they have sufficient skills in musical content. Some previous studies, presented in the theoretical background as well as the current study, testify to the fact that the music teacher educators, too, have different backgrounds and expertise. These differences naturally affect their needs for their professional development. In the present study, the two educators had differences mainly in the subject content and pedagogical content to be learnt. Coteaching seemed to be a good model for their professional development. Nonetheless, coteaching could be used also to clarify teaching-learning situations where one educator focuses on pedagogy and the other educator on proving that the student teachers with their different skills in music can understand pedagogical points and use them later.

This study was carried out in ArkTOP project (Arctic Reformative and Exploratory Teaching Profession) funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. One goal in all the projects funded in the same program, was to enhance collaboration between universities in Finland. Another goal was to enhance Finnish teachers' professional development at all levels of education, by sharing different expertise, as an example. We, the participants in this research, see that the present article reveals a case, that provides useful ideas to increase music teacher educators' skills and broaden their competence on the areas where their own skills and competence are not yet so broad. We encourage music teacher educators to creatively face and overcome the challenges with voice transmission and through enabling student teachers' more active participation, to trust on diverse coreflection. Based on the present findings, online coreflection enables professional development, and obviously would support the student teachers' learning as becoming teachers, too. This kind of collaboration can offer one way to increase quality

music education in primary school teacher education programmes and later in primary schools. Despite the fact that universities in Finland and other teacher education institutes abroad have different curricula, accompanying songs and knowledge of basic concepts in music and pedagogical ideas for teaching music are in core similar everywhere, also in global contexts.

Music needs to be taught and learnt by doing. Relying on fast technological development, we hope that remote coteaching by connecting nationally or internationally two or more music classrooms will be utilized more often in the future. Finally, we would like to remind you how Cook and Friend (1995) as experts in coteaching pointed out that working together requires flexibility, trust, engagement, effective and ongoing communication, willingness to share aspects of one's teaching, question one's practices in teaching, and allow a colleague to notice one's possible weaknesses.

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NEGOTIATING THE LEGITIMACY OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN KUWAIT: PARENTAL DISCOURSES, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND MUSIC PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

This study examines how the legitimacy of music education is understood, justified, and negotiated by parents in Kuwait, a context in which music occupies a contested position shaped by religious debate, cultural identity, social reputation, and institutional policy. Although parents play a crucial role in their children's educational pathways, existing research has largely measured levels of parental support or opposition rather than analysing how parents themselves construct and account for their attitudes. Addressing this gap, the study treats parental attitudes not as fixed opinions but as socially situated positions produced through language. It asks how parents explain, justify, and negotiate their views which cultural, religious, and social discourses shape those views and what identity positions parents construct or perform when discussing music education and music teaching as a professional pathway.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with parents, all of whom had children who had made the decision to study music education at the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait, with the intention of becoming music teachers. Data from the interviews were transcribed and analysed using Critical Discursive Psychology. The analysis highlighted how parents do not hold fixed positions of acceptance or rejection. Instead, they negotiate the legitimacy of music conditionally, distinguishing between forms and functions of music and granting support when music can be framed as purposeful, educational, emotionally beneficial, or institutionally regulated, while expressing caution toward forms seen as purely entertainment-oriented or morally questionable. Through their talk, parents constructed three recurring identity positions: the Morally Responsible Gatekeeper, the Culturally Aligned Guardian, and the Institutionally Guided Parent, moving between them to justify support, to signal caution, and manage tensions between religious commitment and parental support, private enjoyment and public image, and cultural heritage and modernity.
Keywords: *Negotiating, music education in Kuwait, parental discourses, cultural identity*

Introduction and Background

Music occupies a complex and often contested position within Kuwaiti society. While it forms part of the nation's cultural heritage and educational system, it is also frequently situated within ongoing religious, moral and political debates. Such debates can occur most significantly when students choose to pursue music as an educational choice at university level and this choice then becomes intertwined with questions of legitimacy,

identity and social respectability. Within this context, parental perspectives play a central role in shaping their children's educational pathways.

Before the discovery of oil in the late 1930s, daily life in Kuwait was relatively simple and more closely tied to religion and the community life. Homes were commonly built from mud and other locally available materials (Alhazim et al., 2013), and education often took place in mosques or traditional *kuttab* schools (a traditional form of elementary education in the Arab and Islamic world, typically conducted in mosques or private homes, where children were taught Qur'anic recitation, basic literacy and religious instruction). These social structures contributed to the emergence of a shared Kuwaiti identity shaped by common values, social organisation, and a sense of collective belonging (Alhajeri, 2022). However, the discovery of oil in 1938, brought about a series of rapid economic and social changes, including the expansion of formal, state-supported education systems. Yet, in spite of these transformations, Islamic values, strong family ties and cultural traditions continue to shape social expectations and influence educational and professional choices in contemporary Kuwaiti society (Al Hassan, 2011). These enduring values mean that educational decisions are rarely made in isolation but are instead shaped by moral, religious and familial frameworks that directly influence how families perceive the legitimacy and appropriateness of particular fields of study, including music education.

Hence, despite the inclusion of music education within Kuwait's higher education system, its social and professional legitimacy remains contested. Previous research has highlighted the ongoing cultural and religious debates surrounding music, yet limited attention has been given to how parents negotiate these tensions when their children pursue music as a field of study and a future profession, and understanding these parental perspectives is particularly important within teacher education programmes. Certainly, in Kuwait, choosing a field of study at Higher Education level can not only be an educational decision, but also a statement of identity, and this is particularly evident for students who choose to study music as their major subject, where educational aspirations intersect with the cultural norms, religious debates and social expectations surrounding professional legitimacy (Al Hassan, 2011).

In the Kuwaiti context, higher education choices are closely tied to family expectations and social values, making parental perspectives especially influential in shaping students' educational pathways. Therefore, this study focussed on the perspectives of parents whose children have decided to study music as a major. Put simply, the study explored how music education in Kuwait is understood, negotiated and legitimised within a socio-cultural context shaped by religion, family values and national identity.

The aim of this study was to establish an understanding of how parents negotiate and justify the legitimacy of music education and music teaching as a professional choice for their children in Kuwait.

Given the culturally and religiously sensitive position of music education in Kuwait and the influential role of parents in shaping educational choices, this study adopts a discursive and interpretive focus to explore how parents make sense of music education and music teaching as a field of study and a future profession and was guided by the following overarching research questions:

RQ1: *How do Kuwaiti parents explain, justify or negotiate their views on music education?*

RQ2: *What identity positions do parents construct or perform (e.g., moral, modern, national or responsible) when talking about music education and music teaching as a professional pathway?*

Historical and Religious Context of Kuwait

To understand how people in Kuwait respond to music education, it is important to first understand something of the country's historical and cultural backgrounds. Kuwait gained independence on 19 June 1961 (Prados, 1991) following the 1899 Agreement with the United Kingdom. The 1990 Iraqi invasion and the subsequent Gulf War represented a profound national trauma that reshaped social discourse and collective identity in Kuwait and the experience of occupation intensified public awareness of national sovereignty, belonging, and cultural preservation. Research examining the psychological impact of the invasion on Kuwaiti children suggests that exposure to conflict also influenced identity formation at an early age. For example, Al-Dughaim (2001) found that children who experienced the invasion displayed stronger emotional responses and attitudes toward perceived enemies and authority figures than those who had not experienced the conflict. These experiences contributed to shaping how children interpreted social relationships and, importantly, how they developed a sense of national identity and national belonging. In the years following liberation, strengthening national identity became an important priority within Kuwaiti society.

Education has increasingly been viewed as a key mechanism for reinforcing shared national values among the younger generations. As a result, the Ministry of Education introduced curriculum reforms that placed greater emphasis on patriotism, Kuwaiti history, and civic responsibility in school textbooks and learning materials. Through these reforms, schools became an important space for transmitting national narratives and cultivating students' sense of belonging to the Kuwaiti nation. Within this context, Music became, and is still seen as an important cultural expression of solidarity and national unity with numerous patriotic songs circulating continually on social media during periods of regional tension.

At the same time, the role of music in Kuwaiti society presents an interesting dilemma because of its relationship with religious interpretations. While patriotic songs are widely accepted as expressions of national unity and collective memory, broader debates about the place of music in society and education continue within religious and cultural dimensions. Islam plays a central role in Kuwaiti society although the country has historically accommodated religious diversity, with numerous Christian communities being present and the state formally recognises and protects the religious practices of other religious communities. The majority of Kuwaiti citizens are Muslim, predominantly Sunni, with a sizable Shi'a minority (Kuwait Government Online, 2026), and religious values influence social norms, family life and public discourse and continue to shape collective understandings of morality and appropriate behaviour. Religious perspectives also form an important part of the social context in which music education operates in Kuwait and whilst music was gradually introduced into the public-school curriculum between 1952 and 1958 (Al Hassan, 2011), religious teachings, particularly those associated with conservative groups, have continued to shape public debate, parental attitudes and institutional decision making. Scholarly disagreement over the status of music within Islamic jurisprudence reflects the broader diversity of interpretive approaches and rather than there being a unified position, scholars have articulated a spectrum of legal opinions shaped by differing readings of religious sources and methodological priorities. These range from permissive views that frame music as a legitimate form of expression, to more restrictive positions that emphasised caution and ethical boundaries. In some cases, music is accepted when aligned with socially and

religiously appropriate contexts, while in others it is rejected on the grounds that it may encourage morally questionable behaviour or undermine religious commitment (Ilias & Ubabuddin, 2025) music is known for its three elements which are called *handasah al-sawt*, *almusiqā*, and *ghina*. Referring to Isma'il and Al-Faruqi's Lois Lam, Abdul Hadi said that music that is in line with Islamic goals is *handasah al-sawt* whose contents are manifestations of Muslim aesthetics originating from Islamic tradition, whose implementation rules are rooted in the aesthetics of the Qur'an. According to an Islamic perspective, music that is required by *syara'* can be used as a tool to educate while entertaining, namely through an Islamic approach. Entertainment that meets entertainment standards in Islam is entertainment that inspires enthusiasm and awareness towards remembering Allah as well as educating people to live up to Islamic teachings. Abdul Ghani An-Nabalisiy, said that music law was initially *halal*. Whatever the form, both the kind of music that is peaceful and that which is hit. It's not only *halal*, it's not even seen as bad in common sense and custom. Its prohibition emerged when the *ulema* began to see the facts of the bad effects of music, for example, making the audience forget Allah and neglect worship. In general, when music leads to disobedience and futility, that's when it starts to be forbidden. So it's important to put it back that music is basically a medium. As a medium, music cannot be judged by anything.”, “container-title”: “Law Review”, “issue”: “2”, “language”: “en”, “source”: “Zotero”, “title”: “Analysis of Music in Islamic Law Perspective”, “volume”: “3”, “author”: [{“family”: “Ilias”, “given”: “Mohd Faez Bin”}], [{“family”: “Ubabuddin”, “given”: “”}], “issued”: {“date-parts”: [[“2025”]]}], “schema”: “https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json”}.

Ultimately, it is these differing views that illustrate how religious understandings are shaped through interpretations of Islamic sources, including the Qur'an and Sunnah. Rather than presenting a single fixed ruling, such debates demonstrate that music in Islam is often evaluated in relation to its effects on individuals and society, particularly whether it promotes moral behaviour or distracts from religious obligations. Otterbeck (2008) has further argued that these discussions have intensified in recent years due to changes in the public sphere, especially the influence of media and consumer culture. As a result, music has become a site of ongoing negotiation, closely linked to broader concerns about morality, religion, and social values. This ongoing negotiation is also reflected in educational contexts, where music is often recognised for its developmental benefits while being carefully adapted to align with religious values and moral expectations (Sinaga et al., 2024).

According to Nasr (2002) Debates surrounding the permissibility of music in Islam are complex and historically varied. Although some perspectives have regarded music as forbidden, Islamic practice itself demonstrates a more nuanced reality. Forms of highly aestheticised sound, such as Qur'anic recitation and the call to prayer, are central to religious life and are performed in melodically structured ways, highlighting the importance of sound and beauty within Islamic expression. Importantly, these forms are not classified as *music* (*mūsīqā*), indicating a conceptual distinction between sacred recitation and other sonic practices. Some types of music in Islamic history, such as those used in weddings or social events, were allowed.

At the same time, music has often been judged based on its effects. Music that encourages negative or worldly behaviour has been discouraged, while music that supports spiritual reflection and closeness to God especially in Sufi traditions has been accepted. In this way, music is seen as something powerful that can either bring a person closer to

God or distract them, depending on how it is used (Nasr, 2002). These debates are especially relevant to instrumental programmes, such as piano education, which may attract greater scrutiny due to the cultural and religious sensitivities surrounding music.

Within Sunni scholarship, music is generally judged by its form and context rather than by a single fixed rule (Morrissey, 2024; Ilias & Ubabuddin, 2025). In the Kuwaiti context, for example, the Sunni scholar Al-Khamees (2015) distinguishes between music with singing and music without singing: music accompanied by singing is generally regarded as impermissible regardless of its lyrics, whereas singing without instrumental accompaniment may be permissible depending on factors such as the singer and the social setting.

Shi'a scholars similarly distinguish between permissible and prohibited forms, and the debate has typically concerned not whether music is allowed but what kind of music is allowed (Morrissey, 2022). Music may be considered permissible when it consists of instrumental melodies without singing and does not resemble music commonly associated with entertainment or amusement gatherings. Music that is typically linked to frivolous parties or entertainment settings is generally regarded as prohibited, even if the melody is separated from its original lyrics and used in a different context, because such music is seen as imitating environments considered morally inappropriate. In Shi'a jurisprudence, musical instruments themselves are not viewed as inherently forbidden; instead, emphasis is placed on the nature of the sound produced and the social meaning attached to it. If a person listens to music without knowing that it resembles entertainment-based gatherings, such listening may be considered permissible (Al-Ali, 2018).

Regarding singing, Shi'a legal perspectives emphasise the importance of context and content rather than applying a blanket prohibition. Singing may be considered impermissible when it involves morally inappropriate themes or when it is performed in a style associated with entertainment and amusement gatherings (Morrissey, 2022; Al-Sistani, 2026). However, where it is unclear whether a particular form of music falls into this category, it is not considered definitively forbidden, although avoidance is recommended as a precaution (Al-Sistani, 2026).

The discussion of music within Islamic thought reveals that there is no single, unified position on its permissibility. Rather, interpretations vary not only between Sunni and Shi'i traditions, but also within each tradition, where scholars have developed differing views based on their understanding of religious texts, context, and social conditions. As discussed above, music has been approached through a range of moral and legal frameworks, in which practices are evaluated according to their purpose, setting, and perceived ethical impact. This diversity of interpretations highlights those debates surrounding music are shaped by broader cultural, religious, and social influences, rather than being determined by a fixed doctrinal rule.

Parental Attitudes toward Music Education

Parents occupy a pivotal role in the Kuwaiti context, acting as primary arbiters who assess and legitimise the value, appropriateness, and moral standing of music learning for their children amid culturally and religiously sensitive considerations. Existing scholarship and public discourse have often portrayed parental attitudes toward music education in dichotomous terms, centred on simple acceptance or rejection, typically framed through religious or moral binaries (Small, 2023). However, this representation risks oversimplifying the diversity of parental perspectives. Iner (2021), for example,

demonstrates that there is no single model of the 'Muslim parent'. Drawing on interviews with Muslim parents in Australia, she showed that decisions can be shaped by a range of factors, including personal experiences, parenting styles, social context, and the perceived needs of the child.

In particular, wider social conditions such as Islamophobia may lead parents to prioritise issues of safety, identity, and belonging when making decisions about their children's education. As a result, parental decision-making varies across families, rather than reflecting a single, uniform perspective. Similarly, Small's (2023) study suggests a more complex picture. In the Emirati context, music is positioned as a contested practice, where disapproval within the wider Muslim community coexists with forms of engagement that are negotiated, selective, and context-dependent. This indicates that attitudes toward music may be shaped less by absolute approval or prohibition than by ongoing moral, cultural, and religious negotiation. This complexity was also reflected in the findings of the present study, where parental attitudes were not expressed as fixed positions, but were instead negotiated through a range of justifications, tensions, and context-specific considerations. While such studies have usefully identified areas of contention, they have afforded limited analytical attention to how parents themselves articulate, rationalise, and discursively manage their stances in situated talk.

In this study therefore, we approached parental attitudes not as fixed beliefs, but as positions constructed and expressed through language. Using a discursive perspective, the analysis focused on parents' talk about music education in semi-structured interviews (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The study aimed to examine how parents explained their views, justified their decisions, and managed tensions. From this perspective, parental accounts were seen to be socially constructed, shaped by wider cultural, religious, and institutional discourses rather than treated as direct reflections of individual preference (Wetherell, 1998).

While existing Kuwaiti research has documented parental attitudes and the moral debates surrounding music education, it has paid insufficient attention to the discursive practices through which these positions are formulated, negotiated, and performed in everyday talk. Given that parents are socially expected to function as morally responsible gatekeepers, this study adopted a discursive and social constructionist approach to examine how these expectations are managed through language. Parents' accounts were therefore analysed as situated responses shaped by cultural, religious, and institutional contexts, allowing the study to explore how accountability, responsibility, and legitimacy are constructed in talk which informs the analytic and methodological orientation outlined in the following section.

The study therefore adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach, underpinned by discursive psychology and social constructionism, as developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). This approach is grounded in the analysis of naturally occurring talk and interview data, where language is treated as a form of social action in which participants construct versions of reality, justify their positions, and manage accountability through language, demonstrating that talk is flexible and context-dependent rather than a reflection of stable attitudes. Furthermore, Wetherell (1998) further showed how talk is used to navigate ideological dilemmas by drawing on competing cultural norms, constructing arguments that are both socially recognisable and situationally appropriate. Therefore, instead of focusing on whether parents supported or opposed music education, our analysis examined how parents used music in their talk to demonstrate moral responsibility, cultural alignment, social respectability, and educational commitment.

Procedure and Participants

The study involved semi-structured interviews with parents of students who had taken the decision to enroll in a music education program at the College of Basic Education (CBE), the leading teacher education institute in Kuwait. Parents were selected as the primary unit of analysis because of their central and authoritative role in shaping children's educational pathways and because of their significant contribution towards the decisions their children make regarding music education. As established in the literature review, parental stances toward music learning in Kuwait whether supportive, hesitant, or resistant are profoundly influenced by intersecting religious, cultural, social, and institutional discourses (Al Hassan, 2011). Parents were therefore considered key informants capable of providing insight into how music education is evaluated, justified, and negotiated within familial and communal contexts.

Participants were recruited through contacts with music staff and student networks, using a convenience sampling approach. In total, 13 parents, including four fathers and nine mothers were interviewed. An interview schedule was developed based on the research questions and themes identified in the literature, and this was refined through a pilot study to ensure clarity, appropriate translations and cultural appropriateness. Interviews lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the participants' language as accurately as possible. Transcripts were subsequently translated from Kuwaiti Arabic into English for analytical and reporting purposes. During the translation process, emphasis was placed on preserving meaning and contextual nuance rather than producing a word-for-word translation (Baker, 2011). Translated data can therefore be understood not as direct equivalents of the original speech, but as reconstructed or 'transmuted' texts that reflect the original meanings while being shaped by linguistic and cultural interpretation (Halai, 2007). However, translation processes may still involve some degree of meaning loss, even when systematic procedures are applied, highlighting the challenges of achieving full equivalence between original and translated data (Squires, 2009; Klotz, Swider & Kwon, 2023). The researcher conducted a summative content analysis framed by discourse analysis techniques of the 40 cross-language studies.

RESULTS: The evaluation showed that only 6 out of 40 studies met all the criteria recommended by the cross-language methods literature for the production of trustworthy results in cross-language qualitative studies. Multiple inconsistencies, reflecting disadvantageous methodological choices by cross-language researchers, appeared in the remaining 33 studies. To name a few, these included rendering the translator or interpreter as an invisible part of the research process, failure to pilot test interview questions in the participant's language, no description of translator or interpreter credentials, failure to acknowledge translation as a limitation of the study, and inappropriate methodological frameworks for cross-language research.

CONCLUSIONS: The finding about researchers making the role of the translator or interpreter invisible during the research process supports studies completed by other authors examining this issue. The analysis demonstrated that the criteria produced by this study may provide useful guidelines for evaluating cross-language research and for novice cross-language researchers designing their first studies. Finally, the study also indicates that researchers attempting cross-language studies need to address the methodological issues surrounding language barriers between researchers and participants more systematically."

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To ensure accuracy and linguistic consistency, a sample of the translated transcripts was reviewed by an experienced academic in Arabic and Comparative Literature at an Institute of Higher Education in UK alongside the original Arabic recordings. This review confirmed that the translations conveyed the intended meaning of the participants' accounts while highlighting the need to refine phrasing to ensure clarity and natural flow in English, given the structural differences between spoken Kuwaiti Arabic and English. Following this feedback, translations were revised to prioritise semantic equivalence and readability while maintaining the integrity of the participants' original expressions. Anonymisation was carried out at the transcription stage by removing identifying information. Throughout the transcription and translation, attention was given to cultural and institutional sensitivities within the Kuwaiti context, particularly when participants discussed personal beliefs and educational practices. These considerations informed decisions regarding data handling and supported participant trust and confidentiality. The analysis of the resulting data followed a discursive psychological approach, focusing on how parents constructed and justified their views in talk. Discursive psychology typically focuses on three core analytical concepts: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positioning, which guide the analysis of how meaning and identity are constructed in talk.

Interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) refer to culturally familiar and commonly shared ways of talking about the world. They consist of patterns of language, terms, metaphors, and narratives that people draw on to construct explanations, justify their views, and make their accounts sound coherent and socially acceptable. These repertoires are often flexible and can be used in different, sometimes contradictory, ways depending on the context.

Ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988) capture the tensions between competing common-sense values, such as pride in national heritage versus fear of Westernisation, or admiration for education versus concern about religious propriety. Tracing these contradictions illuminates the moral negotiations embedded in parental discourse.

Subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990) describe the *identities made possible* through talk, such as "good parent", "faithful Muslim", or "modern citizen". Examining these positions clarifies how participants locate themselves within overlapping discourses of religion, culture, and policy.

Analysis and Findings

Analysis of the interview data identified two dominant interpretative repertoires through which Kuwaiti parents constructed, justified, and accounted for their engagement with music education. Consistent with a discursive psychological approach, these repertoires were treated not as reflections of stable or internally held attitudes, but as patterned ways of talking that parents used to perform social actions and manage accountability in interaction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998).

The first repertoire, *“music is fine — as long as...”*, framed music education as an activity that required careful evaluation and ongoing moral judgement. Within this repertoire, parents regarded music as a potentially sensitive practice that had to be approached with caution, moderation, and a significant level of ethical awareness. Expressions of support for music education were frequently qualified or conditional, allowing parents to demonstrate an openness to music while simultaneously acknowledging its perceived moral and religious risks. Such formulations enabled parents to avoid appearing either morally negligent or uncritically permissive. From a discursive perspective, this repertoire functioned as a resource for managing moral accountability, allowing parents to justify their decisions while aligning themselves with culturally recognisable norms of responsible parenting (Wetherell, 1998).

The second repertoire, *“this is our heritage”*, constructed music learning as a legitimate and socially sanctioned educational practice embedded within cultural heritage, national identity, and formal institutions. Within this repertoire, music was framed less as a moral risk and more as a culturally meaningful and institutionally endorsed activity. Parents drew on shared understandings of Kuwaiti culture and national identity to position music education as compatible with local values, rather than as a foreign or disruptive influence. This repertoire enabled parents to normalise music education by situating it within collective narratives of tradition, belonging, and cultural continuity.

Repertoire 1: *“Music Is Fine - As Long As...”*

Across the interviews, participants rarely positioned themselves as either fully accepting or entirely opposed to music. Support was consistently qualified, shaped by questions of content, setting, audience, and intention. This repertoire presented music as an activity requiring careful moral evaluation, and constructed participants as parents who had thought seriously about that evaluation before settling on a measured, conditional position. Participant 2 opened their account with warmth and genuine enthusiasm, describing music as:

“Something nice and sweet in life. Nice feeling. Songs, joy, a person feels comfortable.”

Yet within the same interview, when asked about their own daily listening, the tone shifted:

“Only musical instruments, no songs. Such as the guitar. I feel good.”

The distance between these two moments matters. Their first statement offers music as a universal good; the second shows that personal practice was quietly restricted to one acceptable musical form. We argue that this gap between broad endorsement and selective personal engagement was not due to inconsistency but allowed the participant to appear both open to music and also morally selective. By endorsing music in general while filtering it in practice, Participant 2 managed competing social expectations at the same time: supporting their child’s enrolment to study music while signaling that

they remained discriminating, culturally aware, and in no way permissive. When asked directly about religion, Participant 2 did not resolve the question so much as redirect it:

"It is not Halal. People say it is forbidden, but it is not prohibited. A little entertaining. When you are sad or fight with someone, play some music and become better without someone's help. It is better than gossiping."

The phrase *"it is not Halal... but it is not prohibited"* was a careful choice of words that avoided placing music firmly on either side of the religious binary. Rather than claiming music is permissible, Participant 2 removed it from strict religious categorisation altogether, replacing the Halal (allowed)/ Haram (not allowed) distinction with a practical, psychological justification: music as emotional regulation, as something healthier than the social alternatives. This did two things at once. It legitimised music on practical and emotional grounds, and it presented its speaker as a thoughtful, pragmatic, emotionally responsible parent. Instead of reaching for religious or cultural frameworks to justify their position, Participant 2 drew on personal emotional experience as the basis for their reasoning, showing how the question of music's acceptability could be moved entirely away from doctrinal territory and into the register of everyday wellbeing and social practicality.

Where Participant 2 shifted the discussion away from formal religious judgement altogether, Participant 1 engaged with it directly and the contrast between the two accounts reveals the range of strategies through which the same conditional endorsement was achieved. Participant 1 offered a sharp religious frame:

"I knew that music, singing, piano, and music are forbidden - Haram... One says the same about cigarettes. How does one smoke it? While it is prohibited. One will harm their health."

The cigarette analogy positioned music as something whose harm is understood, that is - people continue to smoke despite knowing it is harmful. This was not a simple rejection of music, but a more complex moral position: acknowledging the prohibition while choosing not to enforce it. What followed in the same interview made this clearer:

"I like national songs, songs for the country, nasheeds, graduation songs, happy songs, wedding songs, and older songs. But I don't like today's romantic songs."

Despite the general prohibition, Participant 1 immediately produced a list of musical forms they actively endorsed, forms tied to national ceremony, collective celebration, and religious expression. The logic here was one of compartmentalisation: music is forbidden in principle, but certain forms are sheltered from that prohibition by their function. National anthems, graduation songs, and wedding music served collective social and institutional purposes that suspended the general prohibition rather than contradicted it. This was not theological inconsistency. It was a form of moral reasoning that placed the cultural value of specific musical practices beyond the reach of the religious critique applied to music in general.

The implication here for music education was that the curriculum needed to teach precisely these institutional, national, and educational forms, sitting in the same sheltered category, that is permitted alongside what is not, in a separate moral register. Participant 1 also drew an explicit boundary between institutional and social contexts for music with regard to their child:

"She can play music for herself in school to become a teacher but not play for parties outside."

The future role of music teacher, state-employed, institutionally supervised, oriented toward the national curriculum, set up a parallel boundary. The child was not becoming a performer or an entertainer; she was becoming a professional within a government framework. The telling detail is the gap between Participant 1 stated religious position and their practical acceptance of child's enrolment in a music education program was not hidden or denied. It was managed through the distinction between forms of music, which let Participant 1 stay religiously committed in principle while supporting child's education in practice.

In the same interview, the participant noted:

"We can't say no because the ministry supports it. It is a demand from the ministry for graduation performance, for the country, and for country history. They cannot remove it because the College of Basic Education adds it."

The phrase "we can't say no" was not passive resignation. It was a discursive strategy. By attributing the decision around music education to the authority of the Ministry of Education, Participant 1 both protected themselves from religious criticism and avoided the appearance of having personally endorsed music. The state had decided; the parent could not oppose the state. This raises a question worth pressing: was Participant 1 using government authority as cover for a quiet personal acceptance they did not feel able to state directly? The evidence within the same interview suggests the reading is plausible. Participant 1 said elsewhere:

"I told my daughter that if she is comfortable with her study and her teachers are good... I will not take it away from her."

This was not the language of reluctant compliance. It was the language of quiet support, expressed through the institutional frame rather than owned as a personal moral choice. The politics of music education in Kuwait produced exactly this kind of situation: a parent who held genuine religious reservations, genuinely supported their child, and needed a socially safe way of holding both positions at once. The state provided that safety. Institutional endorsement did not change personal conviction of Participant 1; it gave them a legitimate way of deferring to it without having to say so directly.

A filtering criterion that appeared consistently across the interviews was the distinction between instrumental music and music with lyrics. Participant 5 articulated this boundary directly:

"In my point of view, music without words is of course permissible. Because there is nothing wrong with it, there is no amusement - Laho. Music has no lyrics that refer to love or create a different mood for you. So, music with lyrics is Haram, and classical music is permissible."

The term 'Laho', a Quranic concept denoting purposeless or distracting activity, appeared here not as a formal theological citation but as a piece of familiar moral vocabulary drawn into everyday reasoning. Participant 5 did not need a scholarly source to invoke it; they used it as a known cultural reference point. The piano, as an instrument without a voice, was particularly available for legitimation within this framework. Participants such as Participant 2 and Participant 5 endorsed instrumental music precisely because it carried no lyrical content that could be judged morally or religiously problematic. For them, the absence of words was itself the guarantee of safety.

The instrumental/lyrical boundary was not, however, the only way participants filtered music. Alongside it, a related but distinct boundary operated - one drawn not around lyrical content but around cultural direction, and what different forms of music were felt to represent about the trajectory of Kuwaiti society. Participant 7 drew this boundary in terms of emotional and bodily effect:

"Loud music... tarnishes the reputation of music... rock music, and so are all wrong for our children to learn it... Relaxing music that does not move you to dance is permissible... the music we listen to now is not comfortable."

The phrase 'moves you to dance' was not purely aesthetic because it invokes a specific cluster of concerns about bodily movements, mixed-gender social settings, and the loss of self-restraint, concerns at once religious, cultural, and social. This connection was not assumed. Earlier in the same interview Participant 7 had stated explicitly:

"The important thing is that it is not mixed. I am against mixing males and females."

Music that provoked dancing was therefore tied directly to the kind of social setting Participant 7 had already identified as unacceptable. What Participant 7 described as 'not comfortable' was not a personal dislike but a culturally and morally coded response to music perceived as incompatible with values of modesty and social order. The uncomfortable contemporary music Participant 7 meant was not an abstract category; it referred specifically to loud commercial genres, rock music, and popular songs with provocative or romantic lyrics, as distinct from classical instrumental forms or traditional Kuwaiti music.

Read together, these accounts revealed something deeper than personal taste or religious caution about particular genres. When Participant 7 described contemporary music as 'not comfortable' and Participant 8 warned that it changes young people's thinking, they were not simply evaluating music. They were voicing an anxiety about cultural change itself, about what happens to Kuwaiti identity, values, and social norms when globalised popular culture enters the home and the school. Traditional music carried something these participants valued and felt responsible for protecting: a way of life, a set of relationships, a sense of collective belonging rooted in shared history. Contemporary popular music threatened that not because of its sound but because of what it represented, a cultural direction that moved away from those roots. Music became, in these accounts, a site where the struggle to hold on to traditional identities in a fast-changing world became visible. Supporting heritage music while opposing commercial popular genres was not a contradiction. It was a form of cultural protection, a way of holding on to something felt to be slipping away in a society transformed by oil wealth, globalisation, and rapid modernisation.

Alongside these boundaries around content and cultural direction, a further distinction operated across several accounts - one that located and positioned the acceptability of music not in what it sounded like but in where it took place. For a number of participants, the school context itself did the moral filtering that religious reasoning could not conclusively provide. Participant 10 illustrated this clearly.

When asked whether they listened to music personally, their response was direct: they did not. Music was not part of their own daily life. Yet this personal distance did not translate into opposition to music education. If anything, Participant 10 expressed clear and unqualified support for it in schools. Their justification rested on a separation between

music as personal enjoyment and music as an educational tool, and they grounded their position in a specific educational purpose, the discovery and development of natural talent through structured school provision, rather than in religious or cultural reasoning:

"It is not about halal and haram. If it is for school. It isn't prohibited by religion... They are studying. It's not about enjoying the music. This is school."

The repetition of 'this is school' carried genuine argumentative weight. The institutional context was presented as transforming the moral status of the activity: music that might be evaluated as entertainment outside institutional walls became unambiguously acceptable within them because its purpose had changed. Studying music was categorically different from enjoying it not in its sonic content but in its social function. What distinguished position of Participant 10 was the specific educational argument they offered for why music should be in schools. It was not about developing musical skill or cultural appreciation it was about talent discovery:

"Those who have talent should promote this talent through school. How will you discover him if you don't give him the class and see him?"

The argument here was practical and specific: without music in the curriculum, children with natural musical ability would never be identified, and that ability would be wasted. The school music class worked in this account not as a space for learning music but as a mechanism for revealing what is already there. This reframing positioned music education as a service to individual potential rather than the imposition of a contested subject, and in doing so it bypassed the religious and moral questions that dominated other participants' accounts entirely.

This raises a question worth pressing. If the school context resolved the religious and moral anxieties that participants could not settle through doctrinal reasoning alone, what does that tell us about the relationship between state authority and personal conviction here? Participant 10 did not arrive at acceptance of music education through theological reflection or cultural reasoning. They arrived at it because the institution had already decided. The state had drawn the boundary; the parent had accepted it. This was not simply deference. It was something more specific: the institutional framework gave them a socially legitimate way of supporting music education without having to own that support as a personal moral choice. The school became a moral proxy, doing the evaluative work on the parent's behalf. The telling point is not that participants trusted the position of the school. In a social context where expressing unconditional personal support for music carried reputational and religious risk, the institutional frame offered a way out of that risk. Supporting music because the ministry approved it was socially safe in a way that supporting music because you personally believed in it was not.

This uncertainty was not simply a failure of religious knowledge on participants' part. As noted previously, Islamic scholars have debated the permissibility of music across centuries, and Sunni and Shia traditions drawing on different jurisprudential sources leading to different conclusions. Even within each tradition, individual scholars hold varying positions. Where recognised religious authorities hold genuinely different views, individual Muslims necessarily exercise personal judgement about which scholarly position they follow, and this is not hypocrisy or inconsistency but the lived reality of religious practice. People are not simply rule-followers; they are thinking individuals navigating competing scholarly opinions, personal circumstances, and cultural values.

For participants in this study, the existence of multiple and sometimes conflicting scholarly positions created a space in which personal reasoning and institutional authority could both legitimately inform their position. The school context filled that space, not by resolving the scholarly debate but by offering a practical and socially workable answer within it. Indeed, the interview data suggested that for many participants, private engagement with music already existed before their child's enrolment in a music course. What the institutional context appeared to provide was not the desire for music itself, but a socially and morally legitimate framework within which that support could be openly expressed.

Across these accounts, endorsement followed immediately by a moral caveat was the consistent shape that support for music took. Participant 1 said: *"I support concerts. But I am religiously committed."* Participant 7 supported talent development but specified: *"They teach original music, not the music we hear now."* Participant 8 described music as having advantages and disadvantages and warned: *"It could be misused."* Participant 11 acknowledged that music *"gives a little relief to the soul"* but immediately qualified this with concern about *"the ridiculousness that happens."* Participant 5 drew the boundary as a doctrinal line: *"Music without words is of course permissible... music with lyrics is Haram."* Here the qualification was not a vague moral unease but a clearly drawn religious line, the same supportive-but structure expressed through doctrinal precision rather than cultural discomfort. The adversative conjunction, but, not, however, was not incidental across these accounts. It did the work of expressing openness and demonstrating vigilance at once, managing the dual accountability of appearing neither anti-music nor uncritically permissive.

The management of religious permissibility in relation to music was, across these accounts, rarely a matter of doctrinal knowledge or formal theological reasoning. It was a social practice, conducted through deflection, compartmentalisation, community consultation, institutional appeal, and in one case direct dismissal. No participant spoke as a religious authority, and none claimed certainty. What they produced instead were workable positions, enough to justify their child's enrolment on a music education program without placing themselves in obvious conflict with their community's moral expectations. At the centre of this repertoire was an ideological dilemma that could not be resolved, only managed: the tension between religious and moral probity on one hand and parental support for a child's education and development on the other. The repertoire managed this tension not by eliminating it but by performing both values at once, endorsing music while constructing boundaries, supporting the child while demonstrating vigilance.

Repertoire 2: "This Is Our Heritage"

A second repertoire ran through the interviews, separate from the management of moral and religious concerns. In this one, music education was treated as legitimate because of its links to Kuwaiti cultural heritage, a sense of national belonging, and state-backed institutions. The first repertoire reduced risk by showing moral awareness. This second repertoire did something different: it positioned music as having a positive value. Rather than treating music as a dilemma that was contested and in need of justification, participants presented it as already belonging to Kuwaiti life, culturally, nationally, and institutionally.

Participant 8 stated:

"At least our children know about our heritage, history, and songs from before."

For Participant 8, music was not a contested or risky practice but a means of cultural transmission, a way of keeping the next generation connected to Kuwaiti heritage and history. Its value lay not in the skills it developed or the career it enabled but in what it carried forward. Music was the thread linking present generations to a Kuwaiti past worth preserving and passing on. When later asked about religious permissibility, the same participant placed “the national anthem, and traditional things” as being permitted so heritage and national material escaped the moral scrutiny applied to “today’s songs.” Participant 13 came at the repertoire from a generational angle, grounding support for music education in personal experience and cultural history:

“35 years ago, in elementary and middle school, they cared about teaching music. We played melodica, a wind instrument, xylophone, and electronic organ, and later in middle school, we played Tar and Mrwas. Nobody said that music in national anthems, folk music and traditional music are forbidden.”

This statement presents music education as something deeply rooted in Kuwaiti life, a practice that had always been there rather than a new or contested introduction. The detailed inventory of instruments was not simply nostalgic. It established that formal music education in Kuwait had a history, and that the generation now deciding on their children’s enrolment had themselves been shaped by it. The Tar and Mrwas, both traditional percussion instruments tied to Kuwaiti folk and maritime music, appeared here as instruments participants had actually played as children rather than as distant heritage objects. The connection to Kuwaiti musical tradition was therefore embodied and personal rather than abstract. Participant 9 also insisted that the Tar and drums “must be included” in any music education. The word ‘must’ was emphatic: for Participant 9 these instruments were essential markers of what music education in Kuwait should reflect, not optional cultural accessories.

Participant 7, whose account in Repertoire One was marked by sharp boundaries around mixing and ‘today’s’ music, nonetheless drew a clear distinction that placed traditional Kuwaiti forms in a protected category:

“The traditional one, which is Taq al-Tar. Samri songs... The traditional heritage original art is fine. But for example, rock music, and so are all wrong for our children learn it.”

Participant 7 drew a sharp contrast. The same participant who declined to support concerts and objected to “music with no goals” had no difficulty endorsing “the traditional heritage original art.” Heritage music escaped the evaluative filtering applied to other forms; it was simply ‘fine’. Naming Taq al-Tar and Samri songs, both established genres within the Kuwaiti and wider Gulf tradition, did the same grounding work seen elsewhere in this repertoire: it located the participant’s support in recognisable cultural forms rather than in a general and contestable approval of music. What was foreign or new (rock music) required justification; what was inherited did not. Participant 1, who tended to show sharp religious reservations about music, nonetheless described a relationship with music rooted in national and institutional life:

“I used to be a Soldier. We used to have parties yearly; for example, an honour, we had a college course. Musical instruments perform. I perform a march with them... A soldier can follow orders by performing a march with music but doesn’t want to. Deeds are only the intentions behind them.”

In a national and military context, music fell outside the religious and moral framework that dominated the rest of Participant 1's account. Marching with music was a national duty, performed as part of institutional life regardless of personal religious position. The story of the soldier who refused, described as 'extremely stubborn', showed that declining to take part in national music was socially and institutionally unacceptable. The religious principle invoked at the end, that "deeds are only the intentions behind them", worked as a moral resolution: if the intention is to serve one's country, marching with music carries no religious weight against the person. Music tied to national institutions and national duty occupied a different moral register, one in which religious permissibility came second to national obligation.

Participant 6 articulated the same national exemption from a different starting point. Having stated plainly that "religion is in one direction, and music is in a different direction", and that music was something they had "come to know... is not permissible", Participant 6 nonetheless carved out a clear exception:

"From my point of view, national songs... for a kid that listens to and learns popular songs is okay. For example, national anthems... Older pieces. Do re mi and ring the bell. The national anthem, of course."

The phrase "the national anthem, of course" did real work. The casual certainty of "of course" treated the national anthem as self-evidently beyond question, so obviously acceptable that it needed no defence. A participant who held a general religious reservation about music nonetheless reached, without hesitation, for the national anthem as the one form whose legitimacy was simply assumed. As with Participant 1, the national register operated as a domain where the ordinary religious objection to music did not apply. What made music acceptable here was not its sound or content but its attachment to the nation and to the shared institutional experience of school.

Participant 4 voiced the opposite conclusion:

"Our society doesn't need a piano. Who sits playing the piano? I believe our instruments. Such as Tar and so... You can see in Europe every hotel has a piano. You go to malls; there is a piano... But I don't see it in Kuwait. Only in pictures and outside."

Participant 4 drew on the same heritage repertoire as the others but turned it to a different end. Where Participant 2 absorbed the piano into Kuwaiti tradition, Participant 4 used the boundary between what belonged to Kuwait and what belonged to Europe to argue the opposite: that the piano was foreign, something seen "only in pictures and outside", while the Tar and Kuwaiti instruments were what properly belonged in Kuwaiti musical life. The legitimacy of an instrument, in this account, rested on whether it was "ours". Heritage and national belonging were not only invoked to praise music in general; they became the criterion by which particular instruments were judged to belong or not. The same cultural logic that let other participants welcome the piano let Participant 4 refuse it.

Taken together, the two repertoires gave parents a mutually reinforcing set of resources for supporting their child's enrolment at CBE while holding the social positions Kuwaiti norms require. The first worked by showing moral care; the second worked by showing cultural and national belonging. Used together, they let participants present their support for music as both morally careful and culturally rooted.

Conclusions

The two repertoires examined in the study, and the subject positions held by parents did not always sit comfortably together. At several points the same participant drew on contrary ideas in different parts of the interview, holding two positions that pulled against each other. Following Billig et al. (1988), these tensions are understood here as ideological dilemmas. Billig and colleagues argued that everyday common sense is itself contradictory, containing opposing maxims that people draw on as flexible resources rather than as fixed beliefs. Expressed values are therefore “lived ideologies”, used differently as circumstances demand, and it is unsurprising that they sometimes conflict within a single account.

Two features of this concept are important for the analysis that follows. First, a dilemma in this sense arises within one speaker, not between different speakers; the interest lies in how the same parent could hold contrary positions at once (Edley, 2001). Second, this self-contradiction is not treated as a weakness in the data or as evidence that participants were confused or insincere. Critical discursive psychology regards such variation as a normal feature of how people reason and argue, a ‘productive tension’ through which social thinking takes place (Billig et al., 1988). The dilemmas below are therefore read not as failures of logic but as the ordinary moral negotiation involved in supporting a contested practice.

The first dilemma was the tension between religious commitment and parental support. Music was described in unambiguous religious terms as being both forbidden within Islam and yet supported in terms of their child’s enrolment to study music education and to become a teacher of music in the future. When two positions were contradictory e.g., music is forbidden, and music is permitted for one’s own child, neither position was abandoned. Instead, the tension was managed, partly by appealing to intention (“deeds are only the intentions behind them”) and partly by attributing the decision to the ministry (“we can’t say no”) or to the school. The dilemma was not resolved so much as held, the parent remaining both religiously committed and supportive at the same time.

The second dilemma was the tension between private enjoyment and public position. Several participants listened to music themselves while maintaining a cautious or disapproving public stance. Participant 12, having given a carefully moderate answer on religious permissibility, elsewhere acknowledged listening to music daily. Here the contradictory themes were personal practice and public accountability: what the parent did privately sat against the morally careful position they felt obliged to present. The dilemma surfaced in the gap between the two, a gap participants managed by deflection, by appeals to moderation, or in some cases, by confronting it openly.

The third dilemma was the tension between cultural authenticity and modernity. Participants valued music as Kuwaiti heritage while remaining wary of contemporary and Western forms. Participants tended to support the traditional heritage and original art but rejected rock music as being wrong for our children. Heritage songs were welcomed as reminding children to think of their country, yet current trends in music could be dangerous because they could change young people’s thinking. The same parents who embraced music as a thread to the Kuwaiti past feared it as a route to cultural change. This dilemma was managed by drawing boundaries, separating the heritage music that preserved identity from the modern music thought to threaten it, allowing participants to support music education while guarding against what they saw as its risks.

Across all three, the dilemmas were not signs of muddled thinking but the visible work of parents reconciling genuinely competing values, religious duty and parental love, pri-

vate feeling and public reputation, pride in heritage and unease at change. That parents could hold these tensions without resolving them is precisely what Billig et al. (1988) describe as the productive tension of lived ideology. Parents did not state fixed views but engaged in active discursive negotiation. They employed strategies of conditional support, contextual justification, and careful framing, often referencing educational purpose, emotional benefit, or institutional authority, to manage potential accountability for their stance.

With regard to the first research question, we found ample evidence that parental talk was shaped by an interplay of competing socio-cultural discourses: religious permissibility (*halal/haram*), cultural preservation, national identity, institutional legitimacy, and social respectability. Parents selectively mobilized these discourses to legitimize certain musical forms (e.g., classical, national) while marginalizing others (e.g., modern lyrical music).

Regarding to the second research question, we found that parents performed key identity positions, such as acting as a) the Morally Responsible Gatekeeper who looks out for the overall well-being of their children; b) the Culturally Aligned Guardian and c) the Institutionally Guided Parent who demonstrates alignment with the legal and formal structures of society. These positions are not static but are performed to reconcile ideological dilemmas between religious duty and modern education, or between individual child development and collective cultural norms, thus presenting themselves as responsible and conscientious caregivers. The results of the study show parental involvement in music education is multi-layered and discursively mediated, characterised not by simple acceptance or refusal, but by conditional, socially aligned justification.

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