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Article

Future-proof learning outcomes for classroom music teacher education: A Europeanwide exploration*

Thomas De Baets [1+2], Ann-Sophie De Praitere [1], Marina Gall [2], Isolde Malmberg [3]

[1] LUCA School of Arts & KU Leuven, Associated Faculty of the Arts, Leuven, Belgium
[2] KU Leuven, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Belgium
[3] University of Bristol, School of Education, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum, Bristol, UK
[4] University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Department of Music Education Research and Practice, Vienna, Austria

Abstract

Equipping school-based music teachers with future-proof competences for meaningful classroom music in primary and secondary education, can be approached in different ways. One way is to facilitate music teacher education by formulating and disseminating future-proof learning outcomes that capture current and future demands of the music teaching profession. As part of the Erasmus+ Teacher Academy, the 'Teacher Education Academy for Music' (TEAM), we are developing a data-based set of descriptors that define the expected learning outcomes for future music teachers in schools. We take two existing (and widely used) sets as a starting point, and are updating them based on data collection and discussion. The purpose of the current study is to determine current and future-oriented trends in existing institutional, regional and national sets of descriptors, throughout Europe, which have been collected from stakeholders in the TEAM project and the EAS network. Through open coding, with guiding inclusion and exclusion criteria, 6 dominant emergent themes have been defined: (1) collaborations, (2) digitisation, (3) diversity & inclusion, (4) global (artistic) citizenship, (5) interdisciplinarity, and (6) practitioner research & professional development. We discuss the findings in relation to the current (international) discourse in music education and look forward to the potential impact of the findings on the concept and formulation of the new set of learning outcomes in Europe.

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Introduction

Music teacher education in Europe currently faces and will also face some important challenges in the near future: in many countries there is a lack of sufficient (Arts Professionals Media Group, 2023) or adequately educated music teachers (Moore et al., 2023; Russell-Bowie, 2009); in some countries there have been and are cuts in teaching hours at schools (as music as

Corresponding Author Thomas De Baets thomas.debaets@luca-arts.be LUCA School of Arts & KU Leuven, Associated Faculty of the Arts & Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Belgium.

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an artistic subject is constantly questioned as to its legitimacy) (Bath et al., 2020; Geudens, 2023; Hagenaars, 2020) and, last but not least, we live in a time of major social and societal upheaval (Buchborn et al., 2022). Increased migration, and health and environmental crises challenge us to educate teachers to enable them to best support young people in finding their way in the world of tomorrow, and to make substantial contributions to the success of our communities. If we consider teachers as important change agents in education (CEDEFOP, 2022), we must make their education future-proof. Therefore, the large TEAM project is working on formulating future-proof learning outcomes that can be used for curricular design and benchmarking across Europe (TEAM, 2025b). TEAM, the *Teacher Education Academy for Music, Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* (TEAM, 2025a) is a pan-European collaborative research and development network, funded by the Erasmus programme. It aims to reshape initial and ongoing music teacher education and classroom music in Europe according to current needs, by, for instance, formulating and disseminating new learning outcomes.

The development of learning outcomeds is the focus of one working group within the project. Our aim is to provide our European colleagues with a reference framework for designing institutional or national curricula for music teacher education. On the one hand, such a reference framework serves as a basis for discussion on which national or institutional decisions can be made more easily. At the same time, such a framework can also help to advocate for the subject of music and its requirements within institutions and countries: If a large European group (in our case, the TEAM consortium) has agreed on certain competency requirements, then countries and institutions cannot easily fall far behind the formulated demands. That way, a Europewide set of learning outcomes also possibly becomes a means of advocacy for classroom music and for high quality and future-proof music teacher education.

The present text presents an important first step in our ongoing development process, showing the results of our analysis of existing sets of learning outcomes in Europe. In order to have a data-driven starting point for the formulation of new learning outcomes, the current study focuses on current, 'emerging' areas, topics or themes in the current institutional, regional national sets of descriptors. For our upcoming formulation, it is important to know what the current 'hot topics' are, as a basis to plan for the future. The main purpose of the present study – its practical application – is therefore to provide a meaningful preliminary study for the development of our new learning outcomes.

In this article we will first introduce the principle of learning outcomes, then explain our methodological approach. The presentation and discussion of the results – that is, an overview of the so-called emergent themes – follows. A discussion of the results with an outlook on the next steps concludes the text.

Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes Principle

Learning outcomes – intended learning results – describe what students should master by the end of a certain learning period. The 2017 EQF (European Quality Framework) recommendation defines learning outcomes as "[…] statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy" (CEDEFOP, n.d.a). At European

and national educational policy level, the learning outcomes perspective is used for a number of different purposes, the most important being: Qualification frameworks and their level descriptors, Qualification standards, Curriculum development, Assessment and validation, Quality assurance, and Teaching and training (CEDEFOP, n.d.b). For all these purposes the learning outcomes approach strengthens the focus on the individual learners and the level of competence they are expected to achieve:

> The learning outcomes principle is – explicitly since 2004 – systematically promoted in the EU policy agenda for education, training and employment. The learning outcomes approach binds together important European tools developed during the last two decades, notably the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) (CEDEFOP, n.d.a).

The EQF, which covers the entire education system from general to vocational education and training, and including higher education, provides a classification of the central aims (knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy) in learning outcomes as follows:

- *Knowledge* is described as theoretical and/or factual.
- *Skills* are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- *Responsibility and autonomy* is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.

The following descriptor, for instance, shows the integration of these central aims:

> At the completion of their studies, beginning [music] teachers … have acquired a broad knowledge of musical styles, genres and traditions; can make informed and imaginative choices in their teaching; and use musical repertoire which reflects both formal curriculum requirements and the larger sphere of musical practices in society. (Hennessy et al., 2013, p. 264).

The EQF distinguishes eight levels. Each of the eight levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any qualifications system. These levels build on each other and represent the learning outcomes as a gradual development from school to bachelor's, master's and finally doctorate level (Europass, n.d.). Assuming that the (music) teaching degree in Europe corresponds to a master's degree, which is obviously not always the case, it is worth taking a look at the master's level that the EQF formulates. Master's is the 7th of the 8 levels and is formulated as follows:

- *Knowledge* (EQF Master level): Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research. Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields.
- *Skills* (EQF Master level): Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields.
- *Responsibility and autonomy* (EQF Master level): Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams (Europass, n.d.).

Additionally, at national level, the learning outcomes form the basis on which national qualifications frameworks are built, and they are increasingly influencing the definition and writing of qualifications and curricula as well as the orientation of assessment of teaching and training.

Constructive Alignment

Learning outcomes should direct the content and methods as well as the examinations of a study programme or a course. Thus, what is formulated as a learning outcome must be taught as well as examined. This connection between teaching and assessing, referred to as 'constructive alignment' (Biggs et al., 2022), should be strong:

> Learning is constructed by what activities the students carry out; learning is about what they do, not about what we teachers do. Likewise, assessment is about how well they achieve the intended outcomes, not about how well they report back to us what we have told them. (Biggs, 2014).

A well-formulated learning outcome makes such alignment possible: to make requirements and results transparent, to use this transparency repeatedly over the course of an event for feedback to and communication with students, and to design a valid and fair examination (Biggs et al., 2022).

Towards Revised Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Education

We now take a closer look at learning outcomes in music teacher education, our subject-specific work which is the goal of work package 6 in the TEAM project (TEAM, 2025b). We, in part, can base our work on earlier sets of descriptors: One set was developed between 2006 and 2009 in the Sokrates/Comenius-funded project *meNet – music education Network*. MeNet defined the so-called 'meNet learning outcomes for specialist [music teacher]s' at the end of three years of cooperation between 26 partner institutions (music teacher education institutions as well as schools) in Europe in 2009 (Hennessy et al., 2009). This was followed in 2013 by the so-called 'EAS learning outcomes for generalist [music teachers]s' (Hennessy et al., 2013), developed by the same working group and published by the *European Association for Music in Schools* (EAS), the main European network uniting music educators at schools and teacher education institutions (EAS, n.d.). The third set are the so-called EQF level descriptors music (Tuning Group, 2014). Following the general level descriptors of the EQF, the Tuning Group defined level descriptors for the EQF levels 4, 6, 7 and 8, around the same time as meNet (ibid.).

Thus, there are already sets of learning outcomes for both generalist and specialist music teachers, which now – 15 to 20 years after meNet/EAS and the work of the Tuning Group – must be questioned for its continued validity and future-proof potential. Our present study on the currently emerging themes in Europe forms an important basis for updating what we will now refer to as the TEAM learning outcomes for music teacher education. To the best of our knowledge, there are no comparable recent studies exploring this particular topic.

Method

In order to explore current trends in the formulation of learning outcomes for music teacher education throughout Europe, a sample of existing sets of descriptors was collected. We encountered a number of challenges: (1) the public availability of descriptors, (2) the language in which descriptors are written, (3) the many levels at which descriptors are formulated and

published (national, regional, local, institutional, etc.), (4) diverging definitions of 'generalist' and 'specialist', and as a result: (5) the factual impossibility of obtaining a truly comprehensive overview. We, therefore, pragmatically decided to request relevant documents from reliable and representative stakeholders within the TEAM project and, by extension, within the EAS network and, consequently, to use the TEAM consortium as the scope of the study. This resulted in a sample of 18 documents from 14 countries, representing a mix of public (KMK, 2008; KVDO, 2018; MEB, 2017; NVAO 2018, 2019a, 2019b; The Teaching Council, 2020; UHR, 2021) and internal, sometimes confidential, formulations, ensuring a strong geographical spread and diversity. The included documents stem from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, The Netherlands and Turkey. In some cases, we collected multiple documents from one country. Some countries had no useable documents available at this time since, in some instances, they were still in development. The sample represents trends within the TEAM network, potentially generalisable to a broader European context.

The collected sets of descriptors were read, analysed and coded in the original language (in Dutch, English or German) or in an English translation (self-translated or using translation software). Open coding was carried out by two researchers (authors 1 & 2) independently, who applied the following inclusion and exclusion criteria. We *excluded* relatively obvious and general descriptors, which we considered were generally and internationally accepted, such as: (1) knowledge of local educational policies and systems, (2) general organisational and administrative skills, (3) general communication skills, (4) general pedagogical knowledge (e.g. learning theory, developmental psychology, designing learning environments), (5) practical pedagogical skills (e.g. formulating learning objectives, selecting learning materials, structuring a lesson, evaluation), and (6) standard musical competences (e.g. solfeggio, ear training, playing from scores, music history, music theory, ensemble playing). We deliberately *included* (1) what we felt were very specific, ambitious or surprising formulations, (2) everything that was not clearly included in the existing meNet and EAS learning outcomes (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013), (3) specific music pedagogical knowledge and skills, and (4) references to 'singing' and 'improvisation', since those received remarkably little attention in the existing meNet and EAS sets. Whilst working on the documents independently, both coders discussed their coding decisions throughout the process, in order to find consensus.

A schematic overview of the coding can be found in Table 1. Clusters of keywords were grouped into conceptual codes by authors 1 and 2 jointly. Some conceptual codes were subsumed under another conceptual code at a later stage (e.g. 'Democracy' under 'Diversity & Inclusion', 'Sustainability' under 'Global (artistic) citizenship'). The wording of the codes was subsequently cross-checked and reformulated in dialogue with authors 3 and 4. The table indicates in which countries we encountered the code. By adding up the number of countries, we determined how dominant a certain trend is in Europe, and whether we could consider it an 'emergent theme'. We classified the theme as being 'emergent' from its occurrence in a minimum of 5 countries.

Apart from the obvious sample limitation, another limitation of our study is that we have analysed documents that might not represent the actual practice in music teacher education. Therefore, the emergent themes do not refer to that practice, but only to the tendencies in the documents studied. Moreover, there are, evidently, other ways to gain insight into relevant

learning outcomes of music teacher education, for instance by studying curricula for music in primary and secondary education throughout Europe, or by qualitative study of classroom music practice. This, however, was not the objective of the present study.

Table 1. Schematic overview of the coding

Codes	Countries														#
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	
Advocacy				✓											**1**
Collaborations	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	**8**
Collaborations: Partnerships		✓					✓			✓	✓				**4**
Creativity	✓					✓						✓			**3**
Creativity: Improvisation				✓											**1**
Digitisation	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		**8**
Diversity & inclusion	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**12**
Diversity & inclusion: Democracy							✓				✓		✓		**3**
Entrepreneurship								✓						✓	**2**
Global (artistic) citizenship	✓	✓						✓				✓		✓	**5**
Global (artistic) citizenship: International awareness		✓										✓		✓	**3**
Global (artistic) citizenship: Sustainability											✓		✓	✓	**3**
Health	✓	✓								✓	✓				**4**
Interdisciplinarity	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	**10**
Leadership										✓		✓	✓		**3**
Musical cultures					✓			✓	✓			✓			**4**
Policy & curriculum				✓		✓					✓				**3**
Practitioner research & professional development	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	**10**
Quality		✓		✓						✓		✓			**4**
Voice	✓			✓						✓		✓			**4**

Findings

The following six dominant themes emerged from our coding process: (1) collaborations, (2) digitisation, (3) diversity & inclusion, (4) global (artistic) citizenship, (5) interdisciplinarity, and (6) practitioner research & professional development. In the next paragraphs, the themes will be explored in alphabetical order, with reference to our dataset. After navigating through the data, by means of quotes, we summarise by formulating a possible definition of the theme and relating it to the current research literature and ongoing developments in the field. It is not our objective to draw a clear or representative picture of the respective countries, regions or institutions within our dataset.

The data is referred to with a unique code for each document, consisting of the number of the country (in a random, non-alphabetical order), the type of teacher it describes (G for generalist; S for specialist), the level to which it refers (N for national, R for regional, I for institutional),

and the indication of a, b, c, etc. in case there are several documents per country, resulting in, for instance, 06GIb. That way, the direct reference remains invisible yet retrievable, also taking into account the confidentiality of some documents that are not (yet) publicly available. All studied documents are quoted in English, this being the original language or a translation.

Collaborations

In the documents, it is often stressed that teachers do not solely function autonomously during their studies or in their future practice. They are always part of a larger educational network and need to be able to 'collaborate' (10SNa), 'cooperate' (01SIa, 12Sia, 11GNa), 'work together' (01SIa), participate in 'teamwork' (12SIb), and have a 'team-oriented attitude' in general (02GRa). This requires a skillset that encompasses 'relationship building' (07GNa), 'communication methods, strategies and techniques' (14SNa) and a broader 'sensitivity for people and social situations' (12SIb). When encountering a problem, teachers are expected to devise solutions collectively (04SIa).

Different third parties or 'stakeholders' (10SNa) are mentioned. First of all, it can be helpful to share and discuss experiences with fellow student teachers (04SIa). Within the school, the teachers work together with their 'pupils' (07GNa), their 'mentors' (04SIa) and 'colleagues' (01SIa, 07GNa), engaging in professional dialogue within their field and with other fields (02SRb). Teachers need to understand how their colleagues of different generations, at different stages of their teaching career, have a responsibility to support each other (07GNa). On the organisational level, there is a collaboration with the 'principal' (07GNa) and 'school management' (07GNa, 10SNa). Outside of school, the teachers interact with 'parents' (01Sia, 02SRb, 07GNa, 11GNa) and families' (11GNa), with the aim of 'exchanging information, stimulating involvement and participation and developing constructive strategies jointly'. (02SRb). The teacher also interacts with other external partners such as 'co-professionals' (07GNa), making the external network and community an integral part of the teaching practice, to 'improve the well-being and learning opportunities' for every student (02SRa).

Future teachers are often expected to take a very active and reflective role in building this internal and external network (02SRa). This is connected to the notion of 'cultural entrepreneurship' (14SNb): the student teacher learns, for instance, how to develop small-scale music productions (14SNa, 10SNa), together with other partners.

In summary, the theme 'collaborations' refers to the active role of the music teacher in a larger internal and external educational network. Cooperation and collaboration with different stakeholders is an integral part of the music teaching profession.

There is a great international awareness of the importance of connecting music education 'inside and outside the school' (e.g. Liimets & Mäesalu, 2011; Oebelsberger et al., 2019). There are numerous examples of music teachers building bridges between their classroom and the outside of school reality. They cooperate with local music schools, individual artists, concert halls and other cultural organisations, choirs and orchestras, community groups, companies, residential care centres, and others. Through our reading of the descriptors, we identify a shift from optional to more formalised collaborations. This means that music teachers' capability to establish such collaborations become crucial in their daily work, and requires strongly developed communication and organisation skills, and the ability to position themselves in co-teaching contexts, in diverse models (Nápoles, 2024). There is, however, also a potential

threat for classroom music when collaborations are seen as possibilities to 'outsource' music education to external partners while diminishing the teaching hours and resources of music in schools and the need for specialist music teachers (e.g. Navarro, 2020).

Digitisation

In our analysis, the emergent theme 'digitisation' generally refers to the use and integration of digital technologies in music teaching and learning environments. It refers, *inter alia*, to digital 'resources' (10SNa), 'environments' (13SIa), 'tools' (13SIa), 'media' (13SIa), and 'ICT' (12SIb); and sometimes also specifically to music-specific media, e.g. 'music technology solutions' (10SNa) and 'current, school-relevant music and media technology' (01SIa). Only very exceptionally a particular specific music technology is mentioned, e.g. 'DAW' software (Digital Audio Workstation), 'sequencer' or 'digital audio' (09SIa). The various descriptors refer to technical as well as to pedagogical competence. In terms of an expected 'level' for future music teachers, the consulted documents remain rather vague, referring, for instance, to an 'advanced level' (10SNa).

The descriptors consulted also describe *why* music teachers are supposed to deal with digital technologies. They should be able to use digital tools in an 'effective' way (12GIa), 'consider[ing] the importance of the[ir] role' in educational activities (13SIa). Digital applications can be of significance for, *inter alia*, (a) the 'expression in aesthetic learning' (10SNa), (b) 'innovation and new thinking in the music profession and in teaching' (10SNa), (c) 'planning, organization and assessment of teaching' (10SNa), and (d) 'differentiation and individual support in the classroom' (05GNa). Generally, music teachers should be able 'to understand the complex interplay between technology and society' (07GNa).

We also found a focus on safety: music teachers should be able to 'safely and critically use' (13SIa) digital technologies. In this regard, the term 'cyber-ethics' (07GNa) refers to 'issues of privacy, information security, copyright and on-line safety' (07GNa). The broad term 'information literacy' (12SIb) is used, generally, to describe the competence of teachers' dealing with digital technologies in and around the music classroom. For the purpose of lifelong learning, music teachers should be prepared to deal with future 'cultural, medial and technical changes in musical life' (05GNa).

In summary, the theme 'digitisation' refers to the technical and pedagogical competence to integrate general and music-specific digital technologies in all aspects of the educational process, with special attention to issues of digital safety.

Digitisation is not a surprising emergent theme in the current music educational discourse (e.g. King et al., 2017); it is even difficult to keep track of all the ongoing developments, including the development of countless apps, explorations with VR (Feneberg, in press) and AI (Cheng, 2025), and numerous other educational projects (Johnson & King, 2025). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic gave an extra push to digital developments, and caused a so-called digital 'turn' (Camlin & Lisboa, 2021). The post-digital perspective (Buchborn & Treß, 2023; Clements, 2018) opens the discussion on the evolved integration of technology in human life, and possibly challenges the need to emphasise 'digitisation' as a separate domain in a teacher education. We can, however, conclude that digitisation still receives a lot of attention in descriptors today, which seems to indicate that focused attention is still required and relevant. Conversely, the post-digital perspective may explain why digitisation is not prominent in all the documents consulted.

Diversity & Inclusion

The current 'diverse and multicultural society' (10SNa) comes with a specific challenge for teachers: they are increasingly confronted with 'heterogeneous groups' (01SIb). Students enter the class with personal differences. Different 'background factors' (07GNa) that are mentioned in the documents are: 'age' (01SIb), 'mastery levels' that learners are able to cope with (01SIb), 'developmental abilities and needs' (12SIb, 08SIa), 'learning difficulties' (01SIb), different native and 'foreign languages' (01SIb, 12GIa, 02GRa), 'cultural and ethnical background and heritage' (01SIb, 12SIb), 'religion' (01SIb), 'identity' (13SIa, 12SIb), 'gender' and 'sexuality' (13SIa). Music teachers are expected to support a 'holistic development' (07GNa) of the students. They should be 'sensitive and aware of the environment' students live in (12SIb) and be able to 'communicate and reflect on related issues' (13SIa).

There are calls for an 'inclusive music education' (02GRa, 05GNa, 09SIa) and 'democratic' (11GNa), 'empowering learning environments' (14SNa) with a focus on 'personalisation' (08SIa) in the classroom. Teachers should be able to take into account different 'communicative situations and learning contexts' (01SIb), to possess skills and techniques to 'enhance opportunities to participate in the learning process' (08SIa), to ensure 'effective, healthy and safe learning for all students' (11GNa), and to facilitate 'engaged music experiences for all' (09SIa). Teachers should adopt an approach that promotes 'equality' (01SIb, 02GRa, 14SNa, 13SIa), 'equity' (09SIa,13SIa) and integration (01SIb). When facing 'concerns about the developmental progress of the student' (02GRa), teachers should 'collaborate with' (05GNa, 07GNa) and 'refer' students to qualified special education staff to provide better and appropriate support (07GNa). In summary, the theme 'diversity and inclusion' refers to addressing diverse student needs by creating inclusive learning environments that promote differentiation, personalisation, holistic support, equality and collaboration for meaningful music education for all.

Already, very early in the data analysis, 'diversity and inclusion' emerged as a very visible and present theme. The title of the edited volume 'Every Learner Counts' (Stakelum & Economidou Stavrou, 2015), on democracy and inclusion in music education, captures what this theme is about: including all learners in the music classroom. It is axiomatic that every classroom contains a diversity of learners with specific characteristics and backgrounds. For many years, in schools, there has been a focus on special needs/disabilities (Winzer, 2007). However, inclusion also refers to "all children achieving and participating despite challenges stemming from poverty, class, race, religion, linguistic and cultural heritage or gender" (Burnard et al., 2008, p. 110). This topic does not only apply to music education, but the music classroom requires a specific approach, defining not only which range of musics, creativities and musical skills should be covered but also requiring the development of attitudes, as well as classroom approaches to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in music making and to achieve their musical potential.

Global (Artistic) Citizenship

Although music teachers (inter)act situationally in their classrooms and professional contexts, they also operate in, and relate to, a larger societal reality. In the consulted sets of descriptors, the place and role of the music teacher in society is described and highlighted frequently. This wider societal context includes the following current challenges: 'sustainability' (14SNa) or

'sustainable development' (13SIa), 'democratic participation, respect for all people, nature and the environment' (10SNa), 'public health and vitality' (10SNa) and 'rights of the child according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child' (13SIa). The attention given to these societal challenges, connects the music teaching profession with the notion of 'citizenship', a term which is used in the dataset, even described as 'critical' citizenship (14SN1). The descriptors do not only refer to specific local (regional, national) societal contexts and related challenges, but to an international and global context: the documents mention an international 'perspective' (02GRa), the 'environment' (12GIa) and 'professional practice' (14SNb). However, although the descriptors show the relevance of global evolutions, we also encounter a clear and specific focus on local (music) traditions and local educational policies regarding classroom music (e.g. 04SIa, 09SIa).

Future music teachers should be able to 'know the discourse' (14SNa), 'take a critical look' (01SIb), or 'take part in the public debate' (02SRb). In the consulted descriptors, the possible integration of these topics into music lessons is not mentioned very explicitly. Yet, we found one interesting reference to advocacy for classroom music education: music teachers should be able to develop an own vision about 'the position and function of art and art education in society' (14SNb). In summary, this theme relates to music teachers' competence to act professionally with a strong and engaged awareness of the surrounding (international) societal context, taking into account current societal challenges, and relating (the relevance of) classroom music education to that context. It refers to a multitude of changing phenomena in a transforming world.

In recent years, one notices an increased interest in the concept of 'citizenship' in the context of education. The international dimension is clearly present in the term 'global citizenship', as put forward by UNESCO (2024) in global citizenship education (GCED): "UNESCO promotes global citizenship education to help learners understand the world around them and work together to fix the big problems that affect everyone, no matter where they're from". If global citizenship education applies to learners, it definitely also applies to teachers as role models and lifelong learners. Furthermore, the connection between the arts and citizenship is highlighted in the term 'artistic citizenship' (e.g. Elliott et al., 2016a), referring to the idea that "artistry involves civic-social-humanistic-emancipatory responsibilities" (Elliott et al., 2016b, p. 7). The consulted sets do not yet always represent the active engagement that the international 'citizenship' discourse seems to expect from future (music) teachers. Studying this theme, we have also noticed a significant varying gradation in attention between the different sets of descriptors across different countries. Local political and cultural discourses obviously influence the potential awareness in music teacher education.

Interdisciplinarity

The category 'interdisciplinarity' in our analysis shows how the 'ability to integrate knowledge from different fields and applications' (12SIa) is considered important in music teaching. It is also referred to as 'cross-curricular' learning, integrating 'links and themes' from other subjects (07GNa). Most documents do not indicatewhich other disciplines music teachers are expected to link with or integrate into music classes, but some are very specific. Subject areas that are being mentioned amostly refer to other arts disciplines, such as 'film' (09Sia, 14SNa), 'visual arts' (14SNa) 'theatre' (09Sia, 14SNa) or 'drama' (10SNa), 'circus' (09SIa), 'dance' (10SNa, 14SNa), and 'literature' (10SNa). Furthermore, one specific document suggests the benefits for early childhood education if teachers 'integrate music with other pre-

primary school subjects' (04SIa). Music teachers' interdisciplinary work can also 'motivate and facilitate creative work and in-depth learning in music' (10SNa), as well as support the 'performance and practice of music' (10SNa) and it helps to relate music education to 'current themes and social developments' (14SNb). In summary, the theme 'interdisciplinarity' refers to music teachers integrating learning content from various other fields within their music classes: from other artistic disciplines, other school subjects, or other fields of learning. It suggests the fostering of creativity, the deepening musical learning, and connecting music education to the current society in which we live.

The interaction between music and the other (arts) disciplines has been explored over time with differences between nations, and often even between primary and secondary education within one country. Generally speaking, interdisciplinarity is widely discussed in education (e.g. Jones, 2009) and other professional fields, across disciplines and school subjects. In 2009, the Eurydice (2009) report mapped which countries in Europe offered *integrated* or *separate* arts subjects in their school curricula. This study was carried out on the basis of official documents and structures only and, therefore, does not always reflect reality. Integrating music into a larger interdisciplinary construction is, however, often considered as a threat to the survival of the school subject music (and, unfortunately, reality has already confirmed that fear in several countries, e.g. Geudens & Overmeer, 2023). Interdisciplinary education, evidently, is very present, and suggests that music teachers should be equipped to educate in interdisciplinary settings, with other arts as well as other school subjects. The exploration of this theme makes strong links visible with two other emerging themes, which we have already discussed: 'collaborations' and 'global (artistic) citizenship'.

Practitioner Research & Professional Development

According to the documents consulted, future music teachers should be able to bridge the gap between research and practice in their field. It seems to be generally accepted that they should be capable of consulting results from scientific research and developing their teaching practice in the light of important findings. Although this is clearly the main idea, the wording, naturally, varies within the different sets of descriptors. Teachers should, for example, be able to 'relate scientific literature to the practice of teaching' (09SIa), 'analyse and critically evaluate the problematic field of music education based on research results' (08SIa), in order to refer to 'evidence-based arguments' (09SIa) in the reasoning about their professional practice. In some of the sets of descriptors, scientific research is, between brackets, narrowed down to '(practice-oriented) scientific research' (02SRa) or '(practical) research' (14SNb).

Being able to consult and integrate research results – having basic research skills – is one thing, and becoming involved in research themselves is another. This too seems to be widely accepted. The descriptors mention familiarity with e.g. 'research methods, procedures and processes' (12GIa), in order to contribute to studies 'in their own practice, their field of expertise and the broader pedagogical context' (01SIa). The connection to research is expressed with verbs such as 'familiarise', 'integrate' and even 'develop' (10SNa). In a large number of sets, the basic idea of 'practitioner research' is promoted, generally defined as (practice-oriented) research conducted by practitioners 'in [their] own context' (02SRa). In one set, this

is even narrowed down to 'action research' (12SIb), a specific form of practitioner research, with a focus on developing and adjusting 'didactic materials' and 'musical repertoire' (12SIb).

The descriptors also suggest why (practitioner) research is relevant for future music teachers. Research seems to be closely connected to teachers' professional development in a lifelong learning perspective. They should be able 'to systematically develop their professional competences and flexibly plan their professional career' (08SIa) and use 'practical experiences and (practical) research for sustainable development of [their] professional vision and professionalism' (14SNb). The concepts of (practitioner) research and professional development are also linked with processes of educational innovation, 'as a starting point' (10SNa) for innovation in the school subject. Moreover, this is not work music teachers do on their own. It is also collaborative in nature: they can adjust their practice 'in consultation with the school team' (02SRa) and should 'exchange new insights and experiences' (02GRa). Although this dimension seems obvious, it is not extensively mentioned in the consulted descriptors. In summary, this theme refers to teachers' self-regulative competence of taking professional development into their own hands, positioning their teaching practice in relation to research, and involving themselves in research projects, in collaboration with their peers. The possible result is in innovations in teachers' own teaching practices or in a wider educational context.

Quoting the influential work of Schön on the 'reflective practitioner', we can argue that the main idea of professional development through research is definitely not new: "When a practitioner becomes a researcher into his own practice, he engages in a continuing process of self-education" (1983, p. 299). Obviously, we cannot determine whether the current emergence of the theme in our study possibly indicates a trend of increased focus within teacher education in recent years. In music education, specifically, the concept of practitioner research has definitely received increased (academic) attention over the last two decades, with the work of Cain (e.g. 2008, 2014, describing diverse approaches) as important references. Throughout Europe, regionally oriented publications have also confirmed interest (e.g. Buchborn & Malmberg, 2013; de Vugt et al., 2017), and have shown its deliberate integration in music teacher education (e.g. Heberle et al., 2019). The relatively 'new' development of artistic research (by music practitioners) in higher music education (e.g. Impett, 2017), may, possibly, also have directly impacted upon the research culture in music teacher education.

Conclusion and Implications

The presented themes that emerged from our data are, unexpectedly, very general in nature, and can, therefore, be understood as *cross-cutting* topics which reflect current societal and educational trends. We perceive these topics as being potentially relevant to other curriculum subjects as well as to music, and would expect them to be currently considered by all teacher education programmes. They could also lead to changes in policy requirements within countries or regions. The presented themes also interconnect and possibly overlap: we see strong connections between 'collaborations' and 'interdisciplinarity' – since some collaborations might have an interdisciplinary nature – and between 'diversity & inclusion' and 'global (artistic) citizenship', through, for instance, the notion of 'democracy' which did not feature strongly in the current study.

It is also important to note that some cross-cutting topics appear to contradict each other in some parts. For example, the discussion about the extent to which we have to digitalize our

society whilst simultaneously addressing sustainability responsibly is currently underway at global, European, and national levels. For example, if one compares the EU discussion papers on the digitisation of our education systems, *DigComp* and *DigComp 2.2* (European Commission, 2022a), with the corresponding *GreenComp* paper on sustainability (European Commission, 2022b), one finds contradictory recommendations, but also a lack of reference to each other which might, at least, reveal these contradictions. In our new set of learning outcomes, these contradictions will be disclosed and discussed in a commentary.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned emergent themes should be viewed in the light of changes over the last 20 years. During the development of the already existing learning outcomes (2006-2009), other themes were defined as particularly relevant and 'contemporary'. According to the booklet *meNet Learning Outcomes in Music Teacher Training* (Hennessy et al., 2009) two important paradigm shifts were: "from teaching to learning" and "from input-orientation to output-orientation" (p. 12). It is interesting that, at that time, more formal or process-related rather than content-related points were referred to as 'shifts'; it was about changing the attitude towards teaching and learning, and about further securing the competence orientation. Now, twenty years later, it is mainly content-related points that are coming to the fore. We can also find some of the presented emergent themes (e.g. Diversity & inclusion) in the original learning outcomes (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013), but they were named rather briefly, less ambitiously formulated, or were less differentiated than the results of our analysis show today. However, this does not mean that the emergent themes were not relevant or present in music teaching practice at the time, rather it shows an evolution of issues that have started receiving increased attention in the educational discourse over the past two decades (and are now, accordingly, reflected in the documents studied).

It is useful to remember Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (1987): the special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is distinct from a consideration of content and pedagogy separately. This is significant in relation to our work. It is not sufficient for music teachers to have raised awareness of the topics that have been revealed: simultaneously, teachers must have knowledge of, and skills in, effective pedagogical approaches that suit each of these. Moreover, whilst the identified topics are important, and whilst they are very general in nature, subject-related learning (music) must always be foregrounded. Consequently, the presented emergent themes serve to support musical learning, or, in the best scenarios, there is a concurrent development of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to the topics, and essential music skills and knowledge.

What does it mean to take into account emergent themes in the music teacher curriculum, in light of Shulman's (1987) PCK paradigm? Music teacher education must continue to keep the specialist, music-specific concepts at its core. In music sessions, this could, for instance, include (in a random order): singing, digital music making, moving to music, playing in ensembles, improvising, playing an instrument, composing, arranging, performing, transferring music to other art forms, understanding music through listening, expressing one's perceptions and exchanging them with others, finding out about the cultural contexts of musical products and being able to place them in historical, geographical and functional contexts.

Designing and realizing a curriculum in music teacher education is, therefore, about understanding the emergent themes – i.e. the topics that address current developments – and integrating them into the learning of future music teachers, specifically in relation to the usual

expected skills requirements within the subject of music. These themes are not to be understood as a threat for subject-specific learning in music: Music teachers should, be cognizant of these in their profession development, and, consequently, in their work in music classrooms.

What sounds simple here does not always appear easy for future music teachers: In a study at a summer school on the 'future topics' of sustainability and inclusion, with student music teachers from four European countries, research findings suggested that although they were interested, students felt very insecure when it came to these topics (Malmberg & Gall, 2025). Another finding was that, although they had many pedagogical ideas, they were barely aware that their teaching approaches already contained some elements of sustainability and inclusion (ibid.). The general emergent themes should, therefore, not merely be considered as new (and maybe stressful) 'demands' for music teachers, but rather as an invitation to become aware of dimensions already present in their teaching practice, which might be emphasized in a more conscious way, or modified.

In the TEAM project (TEAM, 2025a), we will now take the next step and start formulating the envisaged future-proof learning outcomes for music teacher education, informed and guided by the emergent themes, attempting to make them as specific as possible for classroom music. That way, we hope to help shape current and future music teacher education.

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Orcid ID

Thomas De Baets https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8455-3061

Ann-Sophie De Praitere https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5100-4466

Marina Gall https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1647-3382

Isolde Malmberg https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8378-0726

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