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Music teachers' perceptions of creativity in the context of twenty-first century Chinese education: a qualitative study on the influence of experience and policy on primary school music and piano teachers

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of PhD

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Abstract

This study investigates Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity and the factors that influence their perceptions in the context of music education in China in the twenty-first century. Since the beginning of the 21st century, schools and instrumental music education have been encouraged to pay attention to students' creativity (Pang & Plucker, 2012). In response to the national demand for cultural innovation and creative talents, the *New Curriculum Standards* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2011, 2022) encourage teachers to use innovative methods and materials and to foster students' creativity. The study was conducted using a qualitative, interpretive approach. Data was collected by non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, critical incident charting, and the researcher's diary. Three rounds of non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the perceptions of two teacher groups: three primary school music teachers and three private piano teachers of primary-aged children. Critical incident charting was used to record the teacher's experiences, while the researcher's diary was used to record other details during fieldwork and the researcher's post-fieldwork reflections. The data were analysed using inductive and deductive thematic analysis.

The findings illustrate the perceptions of the teachers in three themes: their two complementary definitions of creativity, their understanding of the seven stages of creativity development in music education, and the challenges that they encountered in teaching. Both the school music teachers and the piano teachers suggested in their comments that creativity among pupils can be developed gradually over an extended period of music learning. Following data analysis an original seven-stage spectrum of musical learning is considered, although the teachers did not specify how long each stage lasted. Further analysis and discussion revealed that both groups of music teachers held similar views on the significance of developing students' aesthetic skills. They also interpreted how they balanced encouraging pupils' creative thinking with developing their aesthetic skills. The findings also consider the influence of two factors on teachers' perceptions: their past and present experiences and examination and curriculum requirements. Both groups of teachers believed that their individual

musical training had shaped and built their perceptions. School music teachers had been attempting to adapt their teaching strategies and classroom activities to the revised curriculum standards and textbooks.

Implications for research, policy, and practice are discussed in the conclusions. These include that Chinese music teacher educators and policymakers consider teachers' challenges in implementing the new policy requirements. In addition, some findings of this study, including the spectrum of teachers' views on the progressive development of creativity in music education, suggest ideas for further research.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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1 Introduction

Overview

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, in Chinese schools and instrumental music education, there has been a focus on fostering students' creativity in response to the national demand for cultural innovation and 'innovative talents' (e.g., Pang & Plucker, 2012). Guided by educational policies – for example, *New Curriculum Standards* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2011, 2022) – school teachers are encouraged to use innovative strategies and materials and to pay attention to students' creativity. However, Yu and Leung (2019) found that currently school teachers might not be fully aware of the changes regarding creativity requirements in these *New Curriculum Standards*. In addition, Ho (2019) found that the teacher-centred model in large music classrooms made it challenging to foster pupils' creativity and implement curriculum reforms. The school teachers' teaching strategies may need to change in response to the increased emphasis on creativity; thus, further research is necessary to explore how teachers can implement the requirements for developing creative skills.

For those teachers teaching in music studios, the change of school music curriculum might not change their teaching routines. Recent research has hinted at some of the issues that may affect the development of students' creativity in the practice of school music (e.g. Ho, 2019) and piano teaching (Yu, 2021) in the Chinese context, although research participants may have had different definitions and understandings of creativity. For example, Yu (2021) found that the teaching approaches of Chinese piano teachers are not likely to stimulate the creative development of their students. However, little is known about opportunities and challenges to foster creativity in China due to a current lack of research into how school and instrumental music teachers understand creativity and their teaching practices. In addition, issues raised in previous research on education in Chinese contexts (Ho, 2019; Yu, 2021; Zhao, 2018), such as the contradiction between competitive examinations and creativity and the different understandings of creativity in traditional Chinese music pedagogy, highlight the importance of studying music teachers' perceptions of creativity.

This study investigates both school and instrumental music teachers' perceptions of creativity, how they may be influenced by current educational policies, and their past and present experiences of music education. In this chapter, a brief introduction to the study is provided in four sections, following this overview. In Section 1.1, the background to this study is introduced - a discussion of China's efforts to foster 'innovative talents' and curriculum reform and the phenomenal interest in learning to play the piano over the past 20 years, as well as Chinese perceptions of creativity and music education - in order to analyse the significance of this study topic. In Section 1.2, recent research provides the rationale - the current challenges in teaching creativity in China and gaps identified in Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity - followed by an explanation of my personal motivation. In Section 1.3, the research aim and questions are outlined. Finally, in Section 1.4, I present the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Research background

In this section, the research background to analyse the significance of this study is provided. I explore recent progress in China of policies emphasising creativity, including a review of recent developments in 'innovative talents' and curriculum reform (Section 1.1.1). Over the past two decades, China has highlighted the need for the development of innovation and the cultivation of 'innovative talents', and creativity and innovation have begun to be the focus in Chinese education. Changes in policy, including national cultural development strategies and educational policies, have made innovation and creativity an important issue in music education. In addition, I explain China's rising interest in private piano lessons (Section 1.1.2). In contrast to the school context, creativity in piano teaching is rarely discussed in research in China. However, given the phenomenal growth of piano education in the country, a discussion of piano education and student creativity is critical when discussing how creativity is fostered in Chinese music education. Finally, I explore the different understandings of creativity in Chinese context, and how creativity in music education is viewed in their traditional educational philosophy (Section 1.1.3). Within this traditional philosophy, the teachers may place less emphasis on innovation and more on the transmission and enhancement of tradition and knowledge.

1.1.1 Creativity in national policy and curriculum reform: efforts to foster 'innovative talents'

Since the late twentieth century, the Chinese government has included 'innovation' in its national development strategy for the 21st century (e.g., Pang & Plucker, 2012). In the national policy (e.g., State Council, 2001), innovation and creativity are described as contributing to economic and cultural development. In line with the educational policies (e.g., Ministry of Education, 2001, 2010), the term 'innovative talents' are defined as those who are pioneering, creative, capable of innovating, and making creative contributions to social development. When I use the term 'innovative talents' in this thesis, I am referring to its use in Chinese policy; however, I will not enclose the term in inverted commas each time it is mentioned. In 2010, the *National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* claimed China lacked innovative, practical and compound talents (refers to a person with comprehensive competence). This *2010 Plan* consequently set the goal of developing "high-quality workers" and "specialised and innovative talents" and cultivating students' "innovative spirit" and "practical ability to solve problems" (pp. 6 &13; my translation). In these policies, students with creative traits are described as having the following personality characteristics, such as intellectual curiosity and desire for knowledge; in addition, the students are supposed to have a solid ability to learn and explore on their own, extensive knowledge and high professional standards, good moral cultivation, the ability to collaborate, a healthy body and healthy mental qualities, and the ability to undertake challenging work (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2010). The *2011 Plan* stated that innovative talent training should focus on the combination of learning and thinking, advocating heuristic inquiry, discussion and participatory teaching to help students to stimulate curiosity, cultivate hobbies and interests, and to create a suitable environment for independent thinking, free exploration and innovation.

At the same time as these national policies were issued, curriculum reform was also initiated. In basic education (known in China as nine-year compulsory education, for primary and secondary schools), the 2001, 2011 and 2022 editions of the *Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards* (referred to as the *New Curriculum Standards*) were released. The *2011 New Curriculum Standards for*

Music included a creativity component for the first time, with 'feeling and appreciation', 'performance' and 'music and related cultures' as the four foci of curriculum content. The *Standards* divide students into three groups – Years 1 and 2 (primary school, ages 6 and 7), Years 3 to 6 (primary school, ages 8-11), and Years 7 to 9 (secondary school, ages 12-14) – and set requirements for each group with the three contexts of "exploring sound and music, improvisation, and composition". For example, in the first group, students are asked to "draw music that they feel with lines or graphics" (MoE, 2011, pp. 21-22), while the second group are asked to "learn notation" and to "create 2-4 bars of rhythm or a melody […] independently or in collaboration with others" (MoE, 2011, p. 22; my translation). The *2011 New Curriculum Standards for Music* remain in use, although the *New Curriculum Standards for Music and Art* were issued at the end of April 2022. The *New Curriculum Standards for Music and Art* are guided by an emphasis on students' 'core competencies' (or core qualities): aesthetic perception; artistic expression; creativity and practice; and cultural understanding.

Moreover, there is an emphasis on experience and practice, underpinned by the educational philosophy of learning by doing and knowing by doing. In the creativity section, the previous three sections of sound, improvisation and composition are retained. However, on this specific measure, teachers may have to place more emphasis on musical practice rather than mere musical and cultural knowledge. This change may be due to a reflection by policymakers on the criticism that teachers focus too much on delivering knowledge and too little on students' practice (Ho, 2023) (see Section 3.1 for the discussion of *New Curriculum Standards*). The present study concluded all fieldwork prior to the introduction of this new policy and therefore did not provide evidence of the implementation of the new standards.

1.1.2 Significant interest in the piano in China

In the twenty-first century, private piano lessons underwent a vast boom in China. The appetite for classical music and the growth of piano lessons in China had developed rapidly since the 1980s (Ho, 2021). Rapid changes occurred in Chinese society and affected parents' appetite for music education for their children and young people. This has sparked interest in Western classical

instruments, particularly the piano, throughout the country. This rapid growth in classical music education provision also stimulated discussion around musical creativity in China. However, at that time, discussions concerning musical creativity were probably limited to composing for the piano or violin and adapting Chinese music for classical instruments and orchestras (Lang, 1992).

The complex and seemingly contradictory motivations for learning the piano – the need for competitiveness and the implied desire for self-fulfilment and creativity – appear to motivate students to learn the piano from an early age. Bai's (2021) recent study on learning piano within a schooling context observed that, in many cases, students are motivated to study piano for utilitarian reasons (e.g., a career in music is a desirable job in China nowadays). For example, children may ask their teacher to prepare them for a piano grade exam held in a piano shop or studio. However, Bai added that if they do not pursue a future career in piano or fail in the professional field, it is still a wise choice; according to Fung (2018) and C. Tan (2015), this may be because learning music is considered as a benefit for their creativity, wellbeing and self-fulfilment. According to Woronov's (2008) research into student personality development in three primary schools in Beijing after the 2001 reforms, parents sent their children to learn musical instruments to improve their competitiveness; they saw it as a complement to schooling in terms of musical literacy and creativity and other possible competencies that schools are less likely to provide. Therefore, increasing numbers of children are taking piano lessons from an early age (more recently, also in violin and other instruments). Instrumental education is seen as complementary to schooling because it is more creative in teaching and learning. In schools, due to high classroom numbers – 40 or more pupils for each class (MoE, 2017), all using the same textbooks and teaching materials – teachers pay less attention to the independent thinking skills and personalities of individual students (C. Leung, 2013; B. Leung, 2014; Leong, 2010, 2016; Ho, 2019). However, private piano lessons, in most cases, are taught on a one-to-one basis, allowing more attention to personal development (Lee & Leung, 2020, 2022). This complexity behind the piano-learning craze and motivation for it is also linked to differing views about creativity and music education, as will be analysed in the following Section 1.1.3 and the literature review (Section 2.3).

1.1.3 Chinese perceptions of creativity and music education

I will discuss some of the issues that previous research has identified and implied in the practice of school music and piano teachers in China that may affect pupils' creativity. However, it is essential to consider that Eastern and Western teachers might have different definitions and understandings of what creativity is, in order to critically discuss these issues, which I will discuss in this section. In this section, a Chinese perspective on the concepts of creativity related to novelty and appropriateness is considered, and their roots in traditional Chinese educational philosophy are traced.

According to studies on Chinese perceptions of creativity (e.g., Niu, 2013; C. Tan, 2019), Chinese understanding of the concepts of creativity emphasises appropriateness, traditions, and knowledge. In examining the philosophical roots of the concept of creativity in China, Niu (2013) argued that the idea of novelty has largely been neglected in creativity in Eastern countries as many in the East believe the new does not come from nothing (Niu & Sternberg, 2006). Niu explains that creativity is often seen as something that can be acquired through life and learning, and teachers would use the phrase ‘practice makes perfect’ to imply that promoting creativity, which they consider equivalent to promoting perfection, which requires a constant process of accumulation (Niu & Kaufman, 2013). C. Tan (2019) adds and argues that, under the influence of Confucianism, there are two main ways through which Chinese people achieve creativity: novelty through an original interpretation of the objective world; and appropriateness through a flexible response to specific circumstances, both synchronous and asynchronous. However, it seems that rather than sticking to the original meaning of novelty as a creative concept, C. Tan emphasises the changing approaches through which newness is introduced; instead, appropriateness assumes centre stage of the creative process, referring to an acquired sense of what best suits the environment and situation. In terms of art education in China, studies by Gardner (1989), C. Leung (2013), and Teh (2002) indicate that, the essential aspect of artistic creativity is not novelty but the inheritance of tradition, including the aesthetic and appreciation of the classics, that reviewing the old knowledge is the foundation of progress and innovation. For example, considering the contemporary Chinese artist Xu Bing, his interpretation of artistic creativity serves as a compelling illustration of how

traditional elements can be innovatively transformed into uniquely personal creative expressions (Fraser & Li, 2020; Xu, 2020). He suggests that his engagement with ancient Chinese seal carving and his practice of calligraphy laid the foundational skills and sensibilities that enabled him to create his contemporary artwork, *The Book from the Sky*, in the United States, in which Chinese tradition and history became important labels for him as an artist (Fraser & Li, 2020). Thus, with the emphasis on inheriting tradition before developing and innovating, novelty seems to have been weakened in China and replaced by a drive to learn techniques and knowledge (e.g., Beckett & Zhao, 2016).

Drawing on studies of implicit Chinese concepts of creativity (Rudowicz, 2004; Yue et al., 2011), the valuing of creativity may have been a part of Chinese educational philosophy, but not as a separate criterion. Rudowicz (2004) discusses how, in Eastern educational philosophy, the evaluation of good behaviour and creative people, or students, are likely placed in general terms as a whole, such as 'cultivation' and 'morality'. In this way, creativity may have been considered a learning objective but not a separate criterion in the general context of these abstract terms. Chinese teachers, therefore, might place more emphasis on supporting students who demonstrate good behaviour and achievement rather than identifying those students who are creative (Guo et al., 2020). The traditional values of creativity and education, derived from the Confucian values of 'tradition', 'self-cultivation', 'morality', and 'knowledge', might influence the Chinese, and even Eastern, people's understanding of creativity. Music is an essential part of Confucian educational tradition, and appreciation of music and self-expression with instruments represents their self-cultivation and morality (e.g., Fung, 2018; C. Tan, 2015). Studies of Confucian culture and Neo-Confucianism also have added that both music education and creativity in China are associated with ethics and morality (e.g., Lai, 2008). In traditional cultures and historical ways of teaching, there is rarely a single precise standard required of students, such as creativity, or reading and writing skills, but rather abstract terms such as 'balance', 'moderation' and 'cultivation' are often used to encourage students to become good and even noble people (from 君子 *junzi*, translation from L. Tan, 2016). A noble person (and not just someone with the knowledge or ability to describe goodness, which

seems to require both knowledge, ethics and all-round ability) values cultivation and morality but their knowledge and talents are neither fettered nor limited and must be musically and instrumentally proficient and creative (e.g., Fung, 2018; C. Tan, 2015).

In summary, the weakening of novelty in Chinese perceptions of creativity allows knowledge and aesthetics more likely to be associated with artistic creativity. However, creativity may be included in their understanding of aesthetics. This will be reviewed in Chapter 2 in relation to the Eastern view of creativity in music education.

1.2 Research focus and rationale

In this section, I explain the focus and rationale of the study. By reviewing research on creativity and music education in China, I analyse the issues and challenges that might arise in developing students' creativity in China (Section 1.2.1) and identify the research gap (Section 1.2.2). My personal motivation is considered in Section 1.2.3.

1.2.1 Educational issues behind pupils' creativity

Over the past 20 years, Chinese education has undergone a series of reforms, leading to an increasing emphasis on creativity. However, starting in the second half of 2020, discussion began to sprout in China about 'involution' or the issue of 'Nei-Quan' (also, Nei Juan) among the younger generation, and this issue developed great potential that could have affected the studying pressure and creative development of young students over the past two years (M. Li, 2021). A debate on the 'involution' or 'lying flat' might indicate the tension between competitive examinations and creativity (Kang & Jin, 2020; C. Li, 2021). Young people currently might lack intrinsic motivation and have an over-reliance or are simply focused on external assessment, which might significantly impact their personal and creative development (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000). It could mean that schools and teachers have not succeeded in stimulating students' intrinsic interest and curiosity but instead increased their stress about taking exams, competing against their peers, and future engagement in society. Young people described themselves as within a huge internal loop – either persisting

with the challenge of endless competitions and exams without ever really being able to overcome their invisible opponents and reach the top, or withdrawing from this limitless competition, “choosing to give up, and lying flat” (Z. Li, 2021, p. 209). This discussion could indicate the tension between competitive examinations and creativity. Similarly, in the last decade, researchers tended to argue that these competitive examinations both generate pressure for students to be “great test takers” (Zhao, 2012, p. 204) and rob their inherent curiosity, interest or passion for creativity, and their love of learning (Zhao, 2018). An education good for producing students with good test scores could be harmful in terms of pupils’ creativity, if excessive discipline and test pressure would suppress students' natural instincts and discourage creativity and critical inquiry in the classroom (Ho, 2017).

In addition, scholars proposed that some Chinese traditional teaching approaches and values could be considered obstacles to children’s creative thinking. For instance, Leung (2013) suggests that Chinese school teachers may not place enough emphasis on students' individuality and ability to think independently during music lessons. Yu (2021) observed that piano education in China still employs a fixed mode of instruction in which the teacher requests pupils to imitate them. On the one hand, they argued that teachers might be required to concentrate on the task of preparing students for exams (in addition to school teachers, piano teachers may also be required to spend time preparing students for grading examinations; see Section 3.2 for more information on piano grade examinations). On the other hand, this may be related to the importance these teachers place on knowledge and aesthetics in music education (e.g., Rudowicz, 2004; Fung, 2018). It has been argued that music education was used to express the image of traditional values and socialist ideology in Mainland China in the twentieth century (Ho, 2011, 2018). Ho (2011, p. 49) claims that, as a result of social change in the twenty-first century, there are three challenges and tensions for Mainland China: “contemporary cultural and social values and traditional Chinese ideologies”; “collectivism and individualism”; and “nationalism and globalism”. In order to adapt to globalisation and to alleviate those tensions in music teaching, Chinese school music education has begun to attach importance to personality development and creative talents (Ho, 2011, 2023).

1.2.2 Gaps in research and investigation of creativity in music education in China

In recent years, there has been limited empirical research on creativity in Chinese music education, especially looking at the opportunities and challenges of teaching creativity from teachers' perspective.

In the school context, it is argued that teachers tend to favour learning knowledge over creativity, and creativity is sometimes seen as a threat to classroom discipline (Ng & Morris, 1999; Vong, 2008; Wong, 2005). Music teachers have also been criticised for ignoring independent thinking and neglecting personality (Leong, 2010; Leung, 2014; Leung, 2013a) due to a large number of students in Chinese primary and secondary school classrooms and the use of the same textbooks and teaching materials. In a recent study of Chinese music teachers' implementation of the *New Curriculum Standards*, investigation into the creativity component was limited (Yu & Leung, 2019). Ho (2023) recently observed that curriculum reform appears to be of limited help to teaching practice, as teachers are implementing teaching based on their own understanding when not given specific guidance.

In a study on the development of creativity in piano performance from the perspective of music educators, Zheng & Leung (2021) discuss the balance between the emphasis on knowledge, technique, and aesthetic ability and the demand for creativity in professional piano teaching in China. According to other studies on Chinese music teachers' understanding of creativity in Asian contexts (e.g., Wiles & Kokotsaki, 2021), teachers' perceptions and experiences of creativity in specific contexts are necessary for studying aspects like students' creative development and the effectiveness of the policy. In Section 1.1.2, I introduced the increasing number of primary school pupils who study piano in studios. However, until recently, there has been little research on the teachers in these private studios. These piano teachers may also struggle with the challenges of fostering creativity: for decades, piano education may have been embedded in a fixed pedagogical paradigm, with tutorial sessions in which the teacher mainly lectures and then the students mechanically imitate (Bai, 2021; Benson & Fung, 2005; He et al., 2023; Yu, 2021). This pedagogical paradigm is likely to result in students needing more creativity and gradually losing their motivation to create. Studies on these different groups of music educators are

needed to provide insight into their perceptions and their teaching practices. Therefore, this study aims to provide insight into these two groups of Chinese music teachers, schoolteachers, and piano teachers, by investigating their different perceptions of creativity and exploring the reasons for these problems.

1.2.3 Personal motivation

My interest in creativity and music teachers stems from personal experience. I started learning piano in 2001 before I started primary school. When I was in primary and secondary school, there was a debated critique among parents about ‘teach to the test’ schooling. It was generally thought that schools placed more emphasis on examinations, and many parents chose to have their children learn a musical instrument outside of school from an early age to develop their creativity (e.g., Ho, 2019).

My research interest in teachers' perceptions and experiences arises from my previous research experiences. During my undergraduate studies, due to a chance encounter, I conducted a qualitative study on the learning experiences of English majors at the university (Chinese article published in China; Ge, 2015). Later, during my postgraduate studies at the University of Edinburgh, I became interested in Chinese students studying in the UK and completed my postgraduate dissertation on the different perceptions of international students from China around the impact of higher education in the UK on their later working life (Ge, 2018). I found that perceptions of higher education were influenced by whether students had work experience before their higher education. These qualitative research experiences regarding perceptions made me aware of the relevance and importance of perception in education, particularly those of practitioners tasked with implementing new curricula (e.g., Odena & Welch, 2009; Yu & Leung, 2019).

1.3 Research aim and questions

Given the absence of relevant research, this study aims to understand school and piano teachers' perceptions of creativity and explain how they relate to current policy, teaching practices, and other related experiences. Rather than looking for a causal relationship, it aims to gather specific evidence and extend

knowledge of teachers' perceptions and understandings of creativity, mainly how their perceptions are built up through experience. I hope to provide suggestions for music education in China (e.g., for music teachers and policy leaders) by understanding how teachers experience and understand creativity. In this thesis, I refer to the two groups of teachers as school music teachers and piano teachers, and in the research questions, I will call both groups teachers.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What are these Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity?

2. In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music, music education and the current policy?

The first question, shown in Figure 1.1 below (right branch), explores Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity through evidence from observing their lessons and teaching practices and exploring their interpretations, understanding and thinking. In addition to observations, I interviewed music and instrumental teachers (my research focused on piano teachers), asking them for their interpretations of teachers' definitions and understandings of creativity. I selected participants teaching in primary schools and teaching primary-aged pupils outside school, considering that Chinese pupils tend to start learning musical instruments from an early age.

Figure 1.1 Research questions and schedule

As Figure 1.1 (left branch) shows, the second question explores the relevant factors and how they, e.g., their experiences of music and music education and the current policy or other guidelines, have shaped teachers' perceptions. Specifically, this question will look at how schoolteachers understand and implement the requirements for creativity alongside the new curriculum standards and other policy documents, what guidelines piano teachers base their understanding of creativity on and how they understand and implement these guidelines, and how these teachers' perceptions are built and supported by their experiences. Critical incident charting (Burnard, 2000; Odena & Welch, 2007), named the Musical Career and Education Path (I will call it Path for brevity) in this study, is used to investigate their experiences. Through the inductive and deductive thematic analysis of their interview texts, the study will draw out different themes in the participants' answers. Table 1.1 below outlines the data-gathering tools and data gathered to address each research question (RQ) - for more detail, see Chapter 4 Methodology.

Table 1.1 Research question table

	Research questions	Data gathering tools	Potential data
RQ 1	What are Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity?	Non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, videotaping, and Researcher's Diary	Observation notes and video record, and audio record of interviews, research diaries
RQ 2	In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music and music education and the current policy?	Semi-structured interviews, Critical incident charting i.e., Musical Career and Education Path and Researcher's Diary	Interview audio record, teachers' drawing of the chart, and Diary notes

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In this section, I provide an overview of the thesis structure, including the particular issues addressed in each chapter. This thesis is presented in seven chapters as follows:

The first chapter has presented my research in China on musical creativity and its impact on education and student creativity in general. It has also analysed the context of my research, including educational research and policy in China and the complexity of defining and understanding creativity in the Chinese context. My research aims and questions follow the research gaps and creativity issues in Chinese teachers' thinking. I analyse and discuss the educational issues behind Chinese students' creativity and the gaps in the study and investigation of creativity in Chinese music education and provide my reflections on my personal motivations. This leads to two research questions, namely 1) What are these Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity? Moreover, 2) In what ways are

their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music and music education and the current policy?

The following two chapters present a review of the literature. In Chapter 2, the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study are considered. I review and analyse creativity concepts such as novelty and discuss two important theories by Csikszentmihalyi and Craft. The research on musical creativity and teachers' perceptions of creativity is then reviewed and discussed. Finally, I discuss Eastern perspectives on creativity and music education, specifically how Chinese teachers' emphasis on knowledge and aesthetics may lead to a different understanding of creativity.

In Chapter 3, the Chinese music education context is considered. I review music education policies related to creativity in the last 20 years, and the possible challenges and issues in Chinese education regarding the development of creativity. I examine and analyse policy changes and opportunities for fostering student creativity. I also discuss the challenges raised by research and studies on fostering creativity in school music education and piano education in China in the twenty-first century, such as the tensions between creativity and examinations, examinations and music education, and classrooms that are teacher-centred versus student-centred.

Chapter 4 introduces the methodology, including my epistemology, research design, and analysis of possible problems, such as ethical issues. I explore the qualitative research methods under interpretivism that is used in this study and consider the ethical issues that may arise in the study and ways to respond to them. I discuss the use of my four data collection instruments, and the use of thematic analysis methods to process the data.

The two findings and discussion chapters present and discuss the findings of my study in relation to the literature. Chapter 5 addresses the first research question – I present the themes that emerged from the data in relation to teachers' perceptions of creativity. I discuss issues on how both school music teachers and piano teachers have two different definitions of creativity and how they implement their teaching for pupils' creativity, in relation to the literature. Chapter 6 addresses the second research question – I present the themes in

relation to factors that influenced teachers' perceptions. In relation to the literature, I discuss a thinking model of how these music teachers' perceptions of music education may have been influenced by their own learning experiences, and how they may have adapted their views and teaching practices in their later teaching. I also consider the impact of curriculum and examination requirements on teachers.

Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of my key findings and the potential implications of this study for future research and music education practice. I discuss the three key findings of this study and use a diagram to illustrate how they are related. I summarise the study's original contribution to knowledge, its implications and recommendations for educational research, policy, and practice in China, as well as the issues it raises that may necessitate additional study. I conclude the thesis by discussing the limitations of the study and my personal development.

2 Literature review: my conceptual and theoretical framework

Overview

This chapter builds my conceptual and theoretical framework from selected literature. I review the literature on the concepts of creativity in Section 2.1, based on a review of the definition of creativity. In addition, I discuss the theoretical framework for this study to investigate teachers' perceptions of creativity in terms of Western theories of creativity and different understandings of creativity in the Eastern context. In Section 2.2, I review relevant theories and studies on creativity, musical creativity and teachers' perceptions of creativity, and in Section 2.3, I consider a Chinese perspective of creativity and music education. In the final section, a summary of this chapter is provided.

Using Glăveanu and Kaufman's (2019) three dichotomies as a starting point, the definitions and descriptions of creativity are discussed, including whether creativity is held by society or by individuals, whether creative artefacts are novel or valuable, and a discussion of creative practice in terms of ideas and actions. The discussion of these concepts will serve as the basis for analysing the differences between Western and Eastern perspectives on creativity. Then, I explore a theoretical framework that underpins the examination of teachers' perceptions of creativity. This involves a detailed analysis and comparison of various influential theories. These include Csikszentmihalyi's (1988, 1996) systems model of creativity and flow theory, Gardner's (1989, 1993) multiple intelligences, Burnard's (2012) musical creativities, and Craft's (2000, 2001) possibility thinking. In examining these theories, I assess their strengths and limitations, particularly in how they support the investigation of teachers' perceptions of creativity. This assessment extends to a comparison of different theoretical perspectives and teachers' implicit beliefs, especially in how they regard and define key concepts of creativity such as novelty and intelligence. Finally, I investigate the Chinese perspective on creativity in music education. It is suggested that the emphasis on aesthetics and knowledge, influenced by the cultural context, is likely to have a profound impact on music education in China. Building on this emphasis, I aim to explore how Chinese music teachers

integrate creativity into their perceptions of music education, considering this cultural context.

2.1 The concepts of creativity

The formal investigation of creativity is usually considered to have begun with Guilford's address to the American Psychological Association in 1950. His lecture (1950) laid the groundwork for how creativity would be viewed, tested, and defined for decades, suggesting the key steps needed to identify and measure it. Although Guilford did not give a clear definition of creativity, as a psychologist, he struggled to find more general characteristics of creative people. He saw creativity as an ability possessed by people who had made outstanding contributions. Following Guilford, it was in the 1980s that the conceptions of creativity as systemic or distributed became prevalent (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Creativity was defined, to give two examples, as 'an idea or product that is original, valued, and implemented' (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000, p. 82) or 'the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)' (Sternberg & Lubart, 1998, p. 3). Among these various factors of creativity that emerge within different definitions, two important and common elements are novelty (originality) and value (an idea or product is valuable, also referred to as quality or impact).

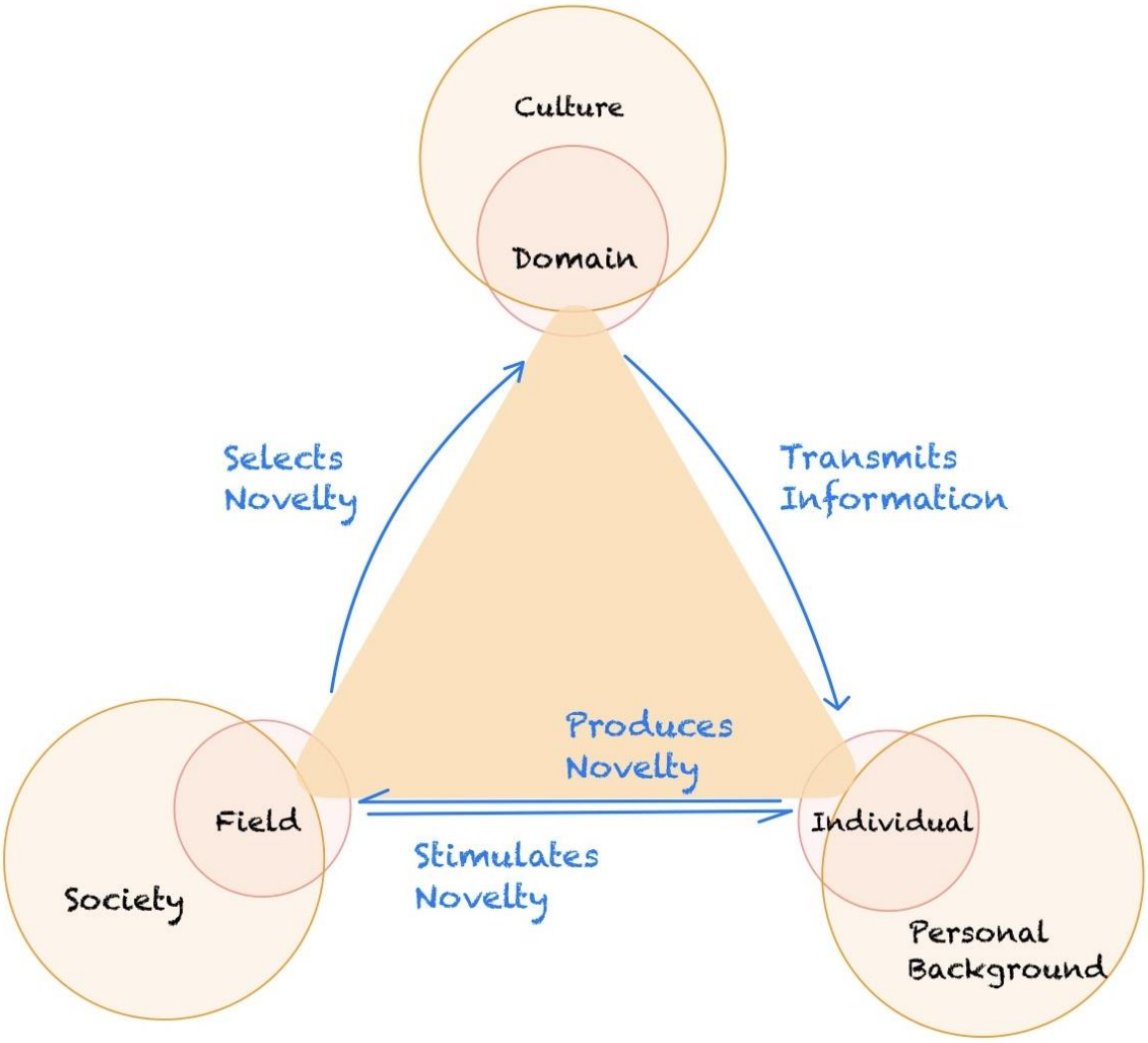
Although creativity is generally considered to be the production of something original and valuable (e.g., Sternberg, 1999, 2020; Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000), confusion and a lack of consensus remains regarding a common definition (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). According to Glăveanu and Kaufman (2019), there are three dichotomies with implications for defining, measuring, and enhancing creativity: individual/society; novelty/value; and idea/action. Each of these three sets of dichotomies has its own history, and, to this day, they still constitute points of tension in the field on a global scale. Debates include whether creativity is personal or outside the individual; the discussion of novelty and imitation; and the debate on prioritising ideas versus embodied action (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). In the following three subsections, I will discuss these three dichotomies and the issues revolving around them. Section 2.1.1 discusses whether creativity is held by society or by individuals; Section 2.1.2

discusses whether creativity artefacts are novel or valuable; and Section 2.2.3 discusses the debate on the practice of creativity in terms of both ideas and action. A discussion of these concepts will provide the underpinnings for a subsequent discussion of the differences between Western and Chinese understandings of creativity.

2.1.1 Creativity: Individual and/or Social

The history of thinking about creativity can be seen to a large extent as the history of progressive personalisation (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). Historically, the discussion of individual and/or social creativity has its origins in the debate around whether it is possible to create new things. The earliest conceptions of creativity, at least in the West, saw it as coming entirely from outside man, in the realm of God; in ancient and medieval times, God (or the gods) was the true source of new things. This belief was transformed during the Renaissance (14th-17th centuries) and Romanticism (1800 to 1850) (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). The ethos of the 1950s introduced a broader concept of creativity as a broad process, a personal trait that could and should be educated. Guilford's (1950) lecture emphasised the identity and significance of the creator. After this period, the scientific study of the creative process has assumed that creativity comes from within the human being: more specifically, from the dynamic interaction between cognition, emotion, and motivation. This dynamic is shaped by the environment, particularly social relations, and mainly from the outside (Gruber, 1988). The concept of creativity begins to be regarded as systemic or distributed (Glăveanu, 2014). For instance, in Csikszentmihalyi's (1998) systems model of creativity (see Section 2.2.1 The systems model of creativity and the domain–field–individual interaction, for details), creativity is a process whereby individuals interact with their domain and field. His model indicates the interrelationship between individuals' personalities, and the environment - culture and society (as shown in Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 The systems model of creativity: Domain, Field and Individual (adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1998, p. 315)



As shown in the figure above, Csikszentmihalyi (1998) argues that creativity operates on the condition that society motivates individuals to produce novelty. Here he calls society the Field, with the power to select and add any novelty to a culture, as a gatekeeper to cultural transmission. Therefore, culture is considered to be a system that changes over time, with culture transmitting information to individuals. The individual is not the centre but part of a system of interactions and information.

In contemporary research, how individuals can enhance their creativity from their society and how creativity can contribute to positive social change, rather than whether individuals can enhance their creativity, has become a more frequently discussed topic (e.g., Sternberg, 2019). The context of the connected world offers a new opportunity to address this dichotomy through 'socialised' creative practices and theories; in other words, the context in which the creative outcomes of groups are discussed in real life, as well as the interaction and communication processes that occur between collaborators or within teams (Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2019). The requirements of interaction of individuals and society call for a more systematic, distributed, and participatory model of creativity (Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2019; Glăveanu, 2017). Such a requirement goes beyond the need for a basic definition of creativity; it becomes more complex. Creativity can be understood as involving many different systems, perhaps echoing Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences or more recent theories such as the componential model of creativity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1989, 1993) further illuminates the intricacies of individual thinking and intelligence. Gardner argues that intelligence is not a single, general ability, but a set of distinct intelligences. He identifies eight types: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence. This theory highlights the diversity of individual strengths and weaknesses across these intelligences, posing a challenge to conventional assessments of intelligence. Gardner's contributions have influenced educational practices, promoting varied learning methods and teaching strategies.

According to the multiple intelligences theory, creativity is not solely an individual endeavour but can also be influenced by social factors, such as feedback from an audience. Drawing from Gardner's perspective, individuals can develop into performers as they transition from sensory awareness to imitation (performance) and eventually to critical evaluation during childhood, particularly when they begin to consider the comments and thoughts of their audience. The integration of terms like 'intelligence' and 'imagination' with creativity is prevalent in discussions concerning children and students (Runco, 2014; Gardner, 1993), underscoring the multifaceted nature of cognitive development and creative expression.

2.1.2 Creative artifacts: novelty and/or value?

The key to this dichotomy is what creativity needs to inherit and develop together with what will be created (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). If creativity comes from the realm of God, then human creation can only be seen as an imitation, and nothing can be new (Weiner, 2000).

However, after 1950, creativity began to be defined in terms of novelty/originality and value/appropriateness, and both dimensions were considered equally important (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The current trend in the study of creativity is that novelty is the subject of more research. According to twenty-first-century study, novelty is domain specific: the arts – which are based on disagreement and self-expression – are highly likely to produce novelty, and can be chaotic and unpredictable, while science tends more towards convergence and effective problem solving, practical results, functionality, orderliness and predictability (Kaufman & Baer, 2002).

The increased focus on value/appropriateness is just one of many shifting perspectives on creative artifacts throughout history. A more contemporary connection to creative value moves us towards a capitalist focus on production and consumption (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). Given its indirect connection to more tangible products, most companies are much less interested in the whimsical or process-oriented nature of little-creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Creativity that leads to innovative breakthroughs is at a much more advanced level. Highly original creative contributions are likely to be ahead of their time and appreciated only in retrospect, whereas small-scale incremental advances may be more profitable in the short term (Sternberg et al., 2001, 2003).

2.1.3 Creative action: ideas and/or action?

If the discussion of novelty and value concerns what creativity will produce, the debate over prioritising ideas versus embodied action is closer to a concern with what creativity is.

> Creativity begins in one's mind in the form of insight. To reach creative achievement, this insight needs additional components, such as the knowledge and experience to nurture the idea and the actions required to implement and produce the idea. These other components are essential to the creative process. (Glăveanu & Kaufman, 2019, p. 19)

The close linking of creativity with insight and motivation to innovate became apparent in the early studies of the psychology of imagination that preceded creativity research. Subsequent research has gradually refined the components needed to achieve this creative motivation and to discover this creative insight in the real world (e.g., Glăveanu, 2017).

This debate between prioritising ideas and concrete action can be traced back through centuries of discussions about art and craft – e.g., during the Renaissance, the great artists of the time were seen as beings who transcended the artisan and separated artistic creativity from mere technique (Glăveanu & Kaufman, 2019). Craft activities are often considered to be less creative (or not). This distinction is deliberately blurred today, with artisans craving recognition for their art and artists abandoning their status to transcend 'intentional' and 'conceptual' art with the help of craft techniques (Becker, 2008). However, with the resurgence of craft in popular culture – reflected, for example, in the do-it-yourself (DIY) movement – one can expect more interest in the craft dimension of creativity in the future (Glăveanu, 2017).

2.2 A theoretical framework: studying teachers' perceptions of creativity

In this section, the works and theories that provide the theoretical framework for this study are provided: I introduce and discuss Csikszentmihalyi's creativity systems model in Section 2.2.1 and Craft's framework on possibility thinking and little-c creativity in Section 2.2.2, followed by a review of types of creativity and musical creativity in Section 2.2.3. Section 2.2.4 comprises an extensive review of the literature concerning teachers' implicit theories of creativity. I examine key issues in the study of teachers' perceptions of creativity and compare these implicit theories with established models of creativity, exploring their implications for my research. In Section 2.2.5, I provide a critical

examination and comparison of these theories to analyse their strengths and limitations in exploring teachers' perceptions of creativity.

2.2.1 Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity

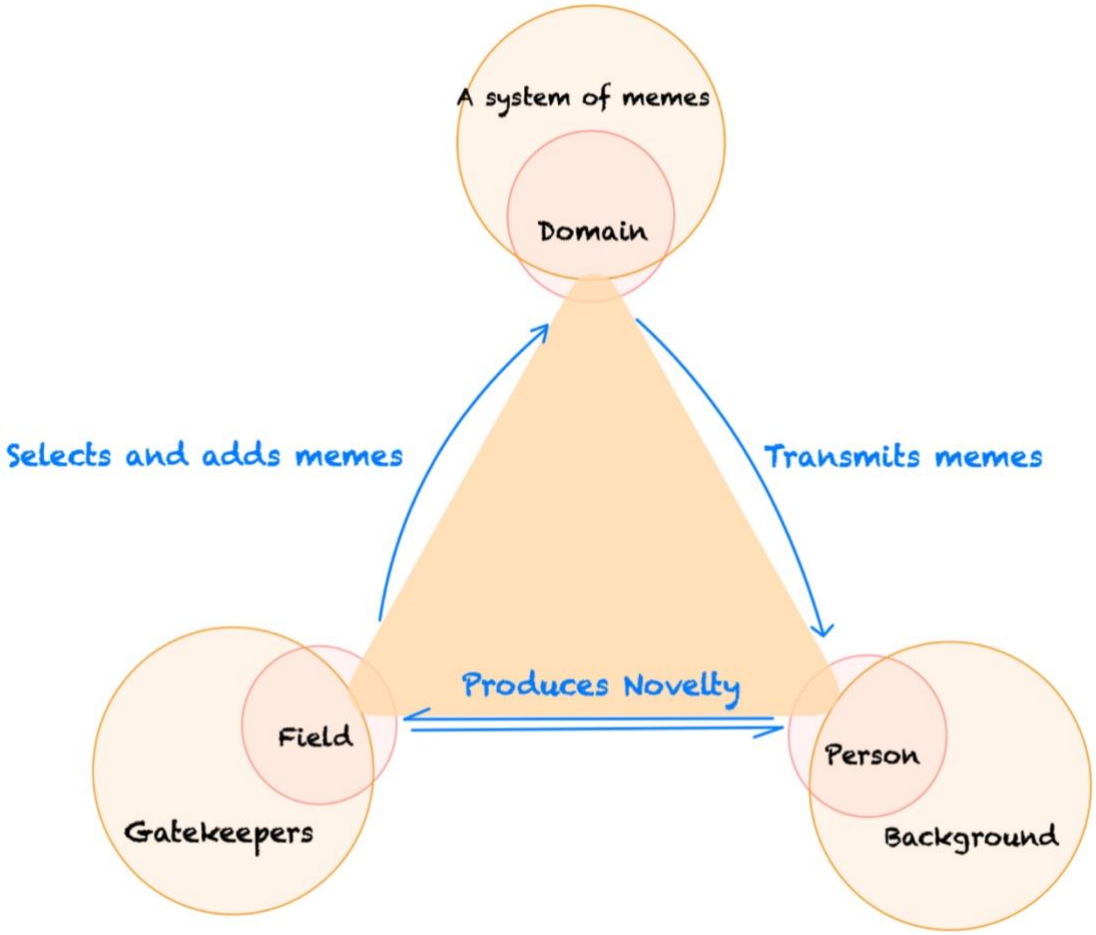
Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p. 331) proposes discovering where creativity lies rather than what it is. He discusses the systemic view of creativity, including the individual, culture and society. The interrelationship of these three systems determines the occurrence of creative ideas, objects or actions.

> The individual takes some information provided by the culture and transforms it, and if the change is deemed valuable by society, it will be included in the domain, thus providing a new starting point for the next generation of persons. The actions of all three systems are necessary for creativity to occur.

Creativity is not attributable to any single factor; instead, it occurs when several factors converge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1998).

In Csikszentmihalyi's theory of creativity, '[t]he creativity of a work of art emerges against the background of previous art, which constitutes the *domain* of art' (2014, p. 21, italics added by the original author to emphasise the concept). The elite in the domain is what he calls the field. The individual is not the centre, but part of a system of interactions and information. At the domain level, Csikszentmihalyi cites the term 'meme', coined by Dawkins (1976), referring to the 'unit of imitation' passed on from generation to generation. A meme can be 'any structured information that could be remembered that was worth passing on through time' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 8). A domain is a system of related 'memes' that change over time, and changing them is a creative process, and the gatekeepers who have the power to select and add memes to a domain are known as the field. The field selects which novelties are included within a domain while, at the same time, stimulating individuals to produce novelty. This systems view of creativity suggests that creativity is not attributable to any single factor; instead, it occurs when a number of factors converge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1999).

Figure 2.2 The systems model of creativity (with memes) (adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, pp. 333-334)



In his book (1996, p. 490), *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*, Csikszentmihalyi relates creativity to his psychological theory of flow.

> Creative persons differ from one another in a variety of ways, but in one respect they are unanimous: They all love what they do. It is not the hope of achieving fame or making money that drives them; rather, it is the opportunity to do the work that they enjoy doing.

According to his theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005), people report the most positive experiences and the greatest intrinsic motivation when they work in situations where there are many opportunities for action (challenges) and a high capacity for action (skills). Moreover, the experiences of flow play a key role in the development of complex patterns of thinking and behaviour and the

successful development of talent. Csikszentmihalyi (1996, p. 505) argues that creative people are motivated by this high quality experience:

> [M]any of the respondents described the feeling when things were going well as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness.

This allows creativity to have an educational meaning on an individual level. From there, the systems model is applied to education at the personal level, considering which personal characteristics promote changes in thought and behaviour (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000).

2.2.2 Defining creativity in education: Possibility thinking and little-c creativity

Craft proposed 'possibility thinking' (2000) and 'little-c' creativity (2001) to identify and explore creativity in everyday life, which she believed could be nurtured in education. She argues that the heart of this 'little-c' creativity is the possibility of thinking or asking, 'what if?' in various ways. Possibility thinking is also referred to by many educators as the creative muscle or the questioning muscle and is a skill that includes both teachers and students (Craft, 2001). In other words, possibility thinking could be viewed as the engine of little-c creativity. Early empirical research developed the original concept of Craft and created a framework for identifying possibility thinking in a seminal study conducted by Burnard et al. in 2006. In this study, the key characteristics of possibility thinking are posing questions, play, immersion, innovation, risk-taking, imagination, and self-determination (Burnard et al., 2006).

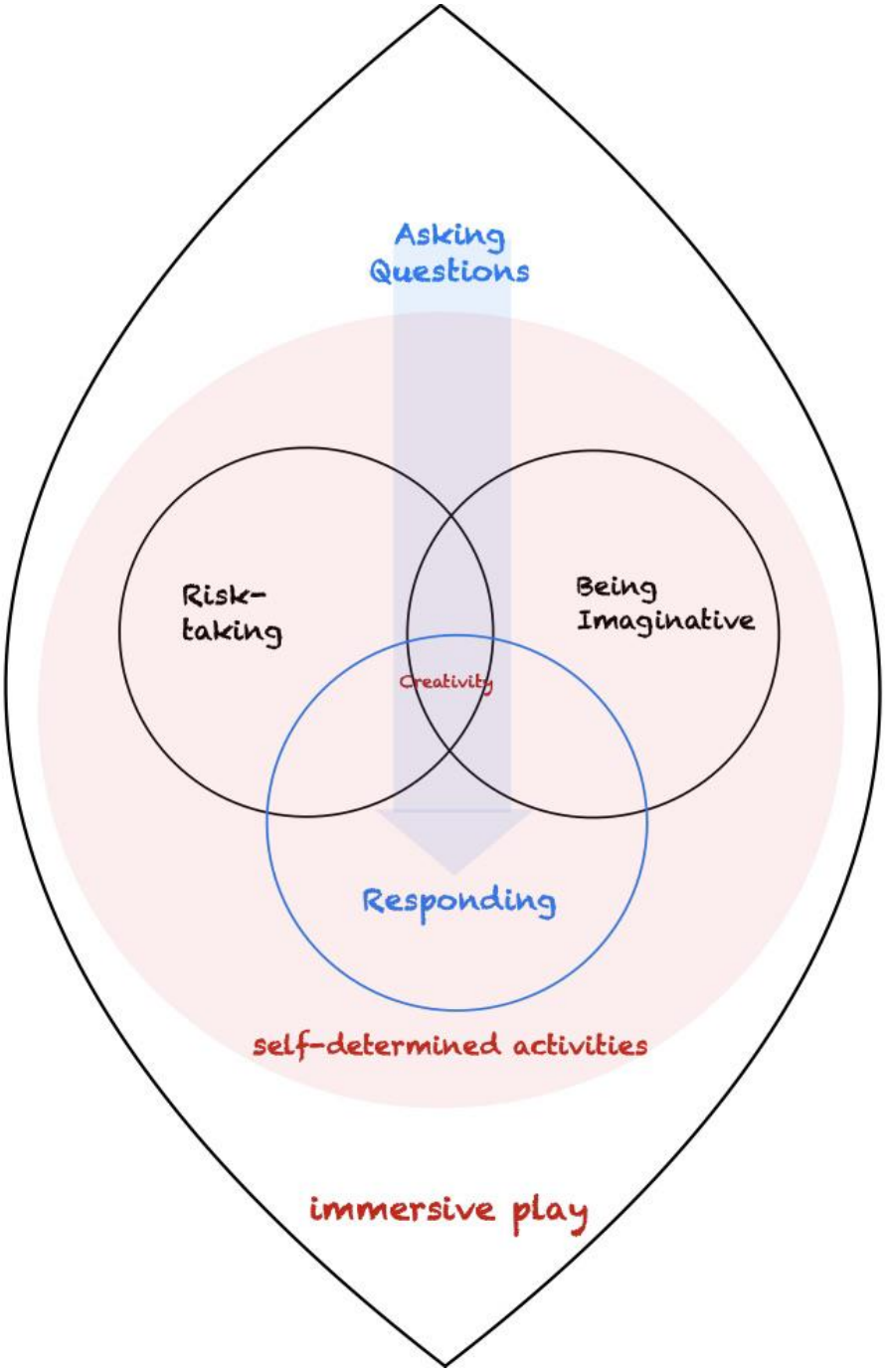
> At the core of adaptability and flexibility, which the start of the twenty-first century is demanding of people both young and old, is, I have suggested, the notion of ‘possibility’. This little c creativity involves at its heart the notion of possibility thinking, or asking in a various ways, ‘What if?’ (Craft, 2001, p. 54).

Craft et al. (2008, 2013) delineate ‘possibility thinking’ as encompassing seven principal features: questioning, engaging in play, immersion, innovating, taking risks, being imaginative, and exercising self-determination. They propose that

through playful thinking and extended exploration, children are able to identify and formulate their own problems. The concept of immersion, as highlighted by their studies, pertains to providing children with an environment that simultaneously offers substantial emotional support and cognitive challenge. For children to establish robust, playful links between ideas and to foster innovation, they suggest that adults can support children and provide carefully selected inspiration. Such support serves as an external environmental factor designed to encourage children to bravely venture into unexplored and innovative realms, construct their imaginative worlds, and demonstrate independence in their decision-making and actions. In this way, Craft's approach is considered to enable children to generate and pursue their own ideas.

The interaction of these elements was further explained in Craft’s subsequent studies (e.g., in Chappell et al., 2008): In brief, they focused on children at the primary school level, through immersive play environments, and on children's self-determined activities that led them to use imagination and risk-taking in order to generate and respond to their questions through innovative ideas and actions. As shown in the following Figure 2.3, pupils produce creative ideas and actions as they progress from asking questions to responding to them. There is an external environment and an intrinsic motivation for this process as well, similar to the analysis of the intrinsic factors and external environment of individuals in Section 2.1.1, i.e., the immersive play and self-determined activities that allow them to use their imagination and learn to take risks.

Figure 2.3 Creativity and the Process of Possibility Thinking (adapted from Chappell et al., 2008, pp. 269-282)



2.2.3 Types of creativity and musical creativity

Although there are many different views of creativity, two main concepts have emerged in the last few decades: one that gives creativity a mystical dimension; and the opposite, which is the idea that creativity is available on an everyday basis. For example, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) identifies creativity with those individuals who are judged to have made significant creative and perhaps cultural/society-changing contributions. However, Craft (2001) has focused on creativity in the general population, particularly concerning education, and she makes a similar distinction between 'high' and 'little c" creativity.

The contrast between the terms 'Big C' and 'little c' has been widely used, but other, similar terms exist: H-creativity (historical) and p-creativity (psychological) (Boden, 1990); Big-C and little-c (Craft, 2001; Gardner, 1993); Big-C, little-c, mini-c and pro-c (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009); Traditional and new (Odena, 2012; Elliott, 1971); and Eminent and everyday creativity (Richards, 1993; Runco, 2014). Big-C or H-creativity is often found in highly regarded people, such as famous historical figures, famous composers, or successful entrepreneurs. Many theories have focused on the concepts of Big-C or H-creativity, such as Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems model of creativity, although there are nuances in how they define Big-C or H-creativity. For example, according to Boden (1990), there are two widespread views – the inspirational and the romantic. She claims that the inspirationists believe that creativity is sacred, that there is no 'law of creation' and that there is no way to obtain inspiration. At the same time, the Romantics can accept that creative people have a unique, natural gift that others do not possess. Compared to the Big-C, the little-c has a broader scope, accepting all ordinary people, including young children and students. Creativity is often defined in educational theory as little-c creativity: for example, Craft's (2005) book *Creativity in Schools: Tensions and Dilemmas* discusses the construction of creativity in learning and in creativity pedagogy, where creativity is usually divided into three dimensions: creative learning, teaching creatively, and teaching for creativity.

In terms of musical creativity, Burnard (2012, 2016; Burnard & Murphy, 2013) proposes the multiple musical creativities based on Csikszentmihalyi's systems model and a revisit of different musical practices. Burnard emphasises the

impact of cultural, social, and historical contexts on contemporary musical practices (e.g., 2012, 2016). She argues that musical creativity transcends mere individual excellence. Her work challenges traditional views of creativity in music, which often portray composers as individual geniuses like Mozart, whose existence is considered incidental or a result of cultural contingency. Throughout various phases of their careers, musicians may engage in collaborative endeavours, experience communal learning, and be shaped by an amalgamation of influences. Additionally, each musical genre, style, and emerging technology could introduce distinct challenges and opportunities. Burnard (2012) therefore proposes a rethinking and redefinition of these different practices to identify these different kinds of musical creativity.

2.2.4 Teachers' perceptions of creativity and their experience

This section presents an analysis of various aspects of teachers' perceptions of creativity, coupled with a review of the empirical literature on their implicit theories. Important facets of teachers' implicit beliefs are discussed, such as their definitions of creativity, the impact of these beliefs on teaching practices, and how teachers' perceptions are shaped by both contextual factors, including culture and curriculum, and personal factors, such as experience and expertise. I have reviewed theories such as those by Csikszentmihalyi (1988), Craft (2000), and Gardner (1993). In this section, I continue to examine their congruence with contemporary research on teachers' implicit theories of creativity. It is suggested that, in comparison with existing theoretical models, teachers place more emphasis on students' cognitive processes and intelligence rather than on originality and novelty.

Empirical studies on teachers' implicit theories of creativity shed light on how teachers conceptualise creativity within educational settings. For instance, the systematic review by Andiliou & Murphy (2010) focuses on the discrepancies between researchers' and teachers' conceptions of creativity. They discovered that while teachers often see creativity as domain-specific, researchers possess a broader interpretation. Additionally, teachers tend to describe creative products incompletely. This aligns with Mullet et al. (2016), who found that teachers frequently assess student creativity in terms of intelligence or divergent thinking, and behaviours often regarded as creative by scholars are

sometimes perceived as misbehaviours by teachers. The research suggests that a variety of interpretations of creativity develop within educational settings, influenced by how teachers define, evaluate, and foster creativity, all of which can affect their pedagogical practices. Bereczki & Kárpáti's (2018) study delves into teachers' beliefs about creativity and its implementation in education, revealing that teachers' conceptions of creativity, including their definitions and evaluations of student creativity, critically influence the promotion of creativity-fostering practices in schools.

It is important to note that discrepancies exist between teachers' perceptions of creativity and their actual teaching practices, as observed by Bereczki & Kárpáti (2018). However, most existing research on teachers' beliefs about creativity has relied on self-reported practices with few classroom observations (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010; Schiavio et al., 2023). Sole reliance on teachers' self-reflections to understand the impact of their beliefs on teaching can be limiting. Studies of music teachers' perceptions of creativity found that it was important to link the investigation of teachers' perceptions to the observation of their teaching practices; in other words, to connect the observation of teachers' teaching practices with listening to the teachers' own interpretations (e.g., Schiavio et al., 2023, and Ho, 2023). In the European context, Schiavio et al. (2023) studied music teachers' self-reported views of creativity based on their teaching practices. At the same time, research has demonstrated the importance of investigating music teachers' definitions and understandings of creativity in how they implement their teaching, such as Kladder & Lee's (2019) study in the United States on music teachers in diverse teaching contexts.

Research suggests that personal and environmental factors, such as age, experience, level of expertise, cultural background, and educational settings, affect teachers' perceptions of creativity (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010; Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018; Mullet et al., 2016; Huang & Yang, 2021). It is thus essential to delve into teachers' experiences with curricula, school dynamics, classroom interactions, and professional development to gain a deeper understanding of how these factors shape their views on creativity. Studies have explored the diverse and complex relationship between teachers' experiences and their perceptions, which encourage the researcher to comment on and reflect on their life histories, i.e., recalling and critiquing the critical incidents in their life

histories. For instance, Denicolo and Pope (1990), in their study on the influence of teachers' lived experiences on practice, developed a biographical approach and proposed the use of interview and 'critical incident charting' techniques used to explore teachers' experiences and professional development. Their study analysed the charts to look for recurring themes and similar critical incidents; likewise, Burnard's (2000) (phenomenological) approach to investigating children's understanding of their own experiences employed this technique. The interview approach and 'critical incident charting' techniques help clarify the teachers' perspectives, with descriptions and analyses focusing on those experiences that the research participants considered critical in their lived experiences and self-interpretations. It seems to be looking for some commonality behind the different interpretations; for instance, both research processes expect the recurrence of incidents. Recent research, like Chua and Welch's (2021) quantitative study, suggest studying the experiences that influence music teacher development, including musical and non-musical experiences, such as working with students, being mentored by other teachers, and experiencing music learning as a student.

In the analysis of teachers' beliefs about creativity, it has been noted that they often give precedence to the thinking process and student intelligence over aspects like originality and novelty, as indicated in studies by Andiliou & Murphy (2010) and Mullet et al. (2016). Consequently, Craft's (2000, 2001) theory of 'little-c' creativity and her model of possibility thinking could be instrumental for my study in examining how teachers perceive and foster creative thinking in their students. Additionally, theories such as Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory offer a theoretical basis for understanding how teachers perceive the interplay between creativity and intelligence. Conversely, Csikszentmihalyi's (1998) systems model of creativity, which underscores the interconnectedness of the domain, field, and individual, provides significant insights for analysing how teachers view creativity within various contextual factors such as culture, social values, expectations, and diverse teaching practices. In the next section 2.2.5, these theories will be critically examined in the context of how teachers perceive and nurture creativity in their pupils. Therefore, this study argues that understanding and categorising the teacher's perception of creativity might be based on the context within which these

teachers are placed together with their self-explanations and personal experiences. As Odena (2012) suggested, in his study on teachers' perceptions of creativity, music teachers tend to interpret creativity from their personal perspective and using personal terms. He proposed a generative model of teachers' thinking about creativity in music education and, on this basis, discussed the relationship between teachers' experiences, perceptions and classroom teaching (Odena & Welch, 2007). In Chapter 6 of this thesis, I will discuss the application of my own generative model in light of the data collected.

2.2.5 Exploring the concepts of novelty and intelligence: Theoretical perspectives and teachers' beliefs

In my review of various theoretical frameworks of creativity, such as those proposed by Csikszentmihalyi, Craft, Gardner, and Burnard, I have presented a synopsis of relevant research on teachers' implicit theories of creativity. This review led to the suggestion that when comparing teachers' beliefs with established theoretical models, there is a tendency for teachers to prioritise students' thinking processes and intelligence over traditional concepts of originality and novelty.

In this section, I will delve into these theories, analysing their strengths and limitations. The discussion will involve a comparative analysis of these theories and a reflection on their relevance to my study. This approach aims to align the theoretical underpinnings with practical insights into teachers' perceptions of creativity, particularly concerning novelty and intelligence. Table 2.1 below summarises and visualises these comparative analyses of theories, this includes a discussion of their strengths, limitations, how they view novelty and intelligence, and relevance to my research. I develop these discussions in this and the next sections.

Table 2.1 Comparative analysis of creativity theories

Theories	Strengths	Limitations	How they consider novelty & intelligence	Relevance to my study
Csikszentmihalyi's (1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000) Systemic Model of Creativity	Underlines the influence of social and cultural factors on creativity.	May not fully capture individual variances and external influences on creativity.	Discusses the role of novelty in the creative process, using metaphors of individual production, social selection, and cultural transformation.	Relevant for considering the teacher's role in the domain and the impact of culture on pupils and teachers.
Csikszentmihalyi's (1996; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005) Flow Theory	Emphasises the psychological state conducive to creativity.	May not emphasise patterns of thinking or individual intelligence and imagination.		Facilitates understanding of optimal creative conditions and the creative process. It helps in interpreting Csikszentmihalyi's Systemic Model of Creativity from the individual's perspective.
Burnard's (2012) Multiple Musical Creativities	Integrates socio-cultural factors into the understanding of creativity. Highlights the impact of cultural, social, and historical contexts on contemporary musical practices.	Potentially oversimplifies individual cognitive processes and might overlook universal aspects.	Stresses the definition of novelty in the process of creativity; indicates the importance of defining novelty in musical creativities.	Addresses the impact of social and cultural factors on creativity, particularly in music.
Craft's (2000, 2012) Model of Possibility Thinking	Provides a framework for comprehending and promoting creativity in educational settings.	Might not be suitable for all teaching practices and forms of creativity.	In practice, emphasises children's autonomy, risk-taking, and imagination. Innovation is seen as the ability to propose and solve problems.	Offers insight into the creativity practices of early childhood educators.
Gardner's (1993) Multiple Intelligences	Recognises diverse forms of intelligence beyond traditional measures.	Critics (e.g., Waterhouse, 2023; White, 2006) argue there is a lack of empirical evidence and consistency in identifying distinct intelligences.	Generalises the description of thinking modes and the definition of intelligence.	Explores varied creative expressions and aids in understanding how musical intelligence is distinct from other intelligences, including comprehension, appreciation, performance, and creativity.
Fung's (2018)"trilogy" of music education; Confucianism's and Taoism's view on creativity (Lai, 2008; Niu, 2013; L. Tan, 2016); etc.	Emphasises the importance of mindfulness and openness in creativity (Niu & Sternberg, 2006; Shao et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2021).	May lack empirical evidence and be difficult to integrate into Western scientific frameworks.	Focuses on creation within context rather than from nothing. Highlights creativity as a culmination.	Offers alternative perspectives on creativity and cognitive processes.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) systemic model of creativity suggests that creativity can be observed through the interplay between the domain, field, and individual, highlighting the role of social and cultural factors. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe (2000) emphasise the importance of considering the teacher's role and the impact of culture on the student in educational settings when applying this model. My study draws on Csikszentmihalyi's framework to explore how factors such as exams and the social environment influence teachers and their approaches to fostering and assessing student creativity. The model acknowledges the context-dependent nature of creative expression, aligning with Burnard's (2012) focus on the social and cultural contexts in musical creativity. Burnard advocates for a redefinition of creativity that accommodates various musical practices and creativities.

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) highlights the role of novelty in assessing the creative processes within his model, noting the interconnectedness of teachers stimulating novelty and students generating it (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000). His approach to novelty in creativity includes metaphors of individual production, social selection, and cultural transformation of 'memes' (as detailed in Section 2.2.1 and Figure 2.2). Both his and Burnard's theories offer valuable insights into the notion of novelty in creativity studies. However, they may simplify individual cognitive processes, potentially overlooking individual differences. Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (2005) concentrates on the experiential aspect of creativity in the process of creation, rather than on patterns of thinking or individual intelligence. It situates creativity within a broader social, historical, and cultural context, known as Big C creativity (e.g., Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). When examining teachers' perceptions of creativity, consideration should be given to not only these broader contexts but also the cognitive and psychological aspects, denoted as 'little c' creativity.

I reviewed Craft's (2000, 2012) model of possibility thinking and Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence theory for their insights into the cognitive aspects of creativity. Craft's model involves immersive play to explore and understand children's thinking patterns, emphasising self-determination, risk-taking, and imagination, with a significant role for adults in facilitating children's creative development. The role of the teachers is to provide children with adequate time and space to develop their ideas. This model offers a valuable framework for

understanding and promoting creativity in educational settings, particularly for studying the creativity practices of early childhood educators. However, research on the application of this model has been limited to UK and Western settings, and it may not apply to all pedagogical practices and types of creativity, since the model was developed with specific play settings (e.g., Craft et al., 2008; Burnard et al., 2006).

Craft's studies, alongside Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, present different perspectives on intelligence. Craft provides a specific description of children's and students' thinking patterns in practical contexts, while Gardner's theory offers a general framework for diverse types of intelligence. Gardner's theory challenges the traditional scope of intelligence tests, suggesting a broader range of intelligences that may manifest differently in individuals. He advocates for assessing individual performance across various domains, such as artistic expression, interpersonal skills, or understanding of the natural world. His concept of musical intelligence includes comprehension, appreciation, performance, and composition, with a focus on understanding the historical and cultural context of music. This includes knowledge of the tradition and development of musical styles, genres, and the contributions of different composers and musicians over time. However, the evidence supporting this theory's assumptions about the progression from sensitivity and imitation to product creation is limited (Gardner, 1993). Critics, such as Waterhouse (2023) and White (2006), argue that there is a lack of empirical evidence and consistency in identifying distinct intelligences. Some research (e.g., Zhou & Hedges, 2020), has explored the application of Gardner's theory in China, highlighting the tensions between traditional Chinese educational values and Gardner's principles. These tensions are evident in the dichotomy between teacher-centric and student-centric educational approaches. This discussion underscores the cultural considerations essential when applying these theories in Chinese contexts. Therefore, in Section 2.3, I will delve into cross-cultural perspectives on implicit theories of creativity, thereby extending the discourse on Eastern theories of creativity, e.g., Fung’s (2018) work, introduced in Table 2.1, inclusive of their strengths and limitations. Additionally, the section will compare these theories in terms of novelty and intelligence, and their pertinence to my research.

2.3 An Eastern perspective of creativity and music education: some cultural differences

Cross-cultural research indicates that teachers' implicit theories of creativity are influenced by their cultural heritage, values, and expectations (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010). Runco & Johnson's (2002) study, for instance, found that cultural traditions and expectations shape individuals' implicit creativity theories, as evidenced by the differing views between the United States and India concerning parents' and teachers' perceptions of child creativity. Additionally, within East Asian and Confucian societies like China, Japan, and Singapore, cultural values and expectations diverge due to distinct social values and traditions. For example, Seng et al. (2008) compared the creativity beliefs of trainee teachers in Hong Kong and Singapore, revealing a more rigid perception of creativity in Hong Kong than in Singapore. Furthermore, Huang & Yang's (2021) investigation into Chinese teachers' implicit creativity theories in mainland China's international schools uncovered varied patterns of these theories among teachers from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. The study attributed these differences to divergent curricula and evaluation systems, suggesting that these factors influence teachers' implicit theories of creativity. Chapter 3 will explore the development of curricula and assessment criteria in contemporary Chinese education and music education.

My review of general creativity studies and the creative strand in Chinese music education (e.g., Lai, 2008; Niu, 2013; L. Tan, 2016) will inform the next two subsections. These sections will consider Eastern cultural perspectives on knowledge (Section 2.3.1) and aesthetics (Section 2.3.2). Given the emphasis on knowledge and aesthetics in Eastern culture, these factors may lead Chinese music teachers to adopt distinct viewpoints on creativity and creative processes.

2.3.1 Emphasis in music education: knowledge

Although, as mentioned earlier (e.g., in Section 2.1), novelty is generally considered important to the concept of creativity in the West; however, in the Chinese context, novelty seems to be undermined. Confucius states that reviewing old knowledge is the foundation of knowing new perspectives. The creative process then seems to start from reviewing the prior experience and

knowledge that provides a frame of reference; then, newness makes sense through this frame of reference (Fung, 2018: 149):

> Confucius states that reviewing the known is the foundation of knowing new perspectives (Analects 2.11: 溫故而知新). 'The known' refers to prior experience and knowledge that provides a frame of reference. Newness makes sense through this frame of reference. Confucius follows that knowing newness is expected of all teachers (Analects 2.11: 可以為師矣), which suggests that all teachers should be reviewing the known.

In his book *A Way of Music Education: Classic Chinese Wisdoms*, Fung (2018) delves into classical Chinese philosophy and examines the differences between Eastern and Western approaches to music education. He explores the relevance of traditional Chinese philosophy to music education in contemporary China. In terms of creativity, he proposes the "trilogy" of music education: change, balance, and liberation, and therefore suggests that creativity could emerge in the last stage. Similarly, Niu (2013, p. 277) suggests that Chinese wisdom does not share the understanding that creation is from nothing, according to Chinese traditions such as Confucianism and Taoism:

> According to many Sinologists, there is no biblical idea of God and God's creation in Chinese wisdom. Therefore, it is inappropriate to search for a similar concept to *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) in ancient Chinese philosophy, such as Confucian and Taoist canons. […] Therefore, some scholars suggest adopting a parallel concept, *creatio in situ* (creation in context) […] in describing the Chinese notion of creativity. (*Italics* from the original text)

In terms of innovation and creativity, Confucius' educational philosophy suggests that we learn new things from the past (Analects 2.11); that is, new things often exist in the shadow of old knowledge, and reviewing the known is the foundation of progress and innovation (Lai, 2008; L. Tan, 2016), wherein the known refers to prior experience and knowledge that provides a frame of reference, allowing newness to make sense through that frame of reference (Fung, 2018). At the same time, researchers have pointed out (e.g., Fung, 2018) that Confucius' understanding of creativity was similar to that of Csikszentmihalyi in that both

identified the known, both in the cultural (domain) and social systems (field). In addition to Confucianism, there are other commentaries regarding creativity in Taoism in traditional Chinese thought, which also use abstract words – e.g., 'Dao' – to describe the laws of all things, including nature, people and society. The law of Taoism contains the meaning of creation and creativity (Fung, 2018; Niu, 2013), but Taoism has been less prominent in education during Chinese history than Confucianism has, and therefore the influence of these ideas on education is not as deeply rooted as that of Confucianism.

In terms of students' ability and education, Confucian treaties on "*si* (to think and ask)", "*yueerbuyan* (learning with patience)", "*junzi buqi* (open-mindedness)", and "*xin* (trustworthiness and loyalty)" give rise to four elements: "questioning, patience, openness to fresh ideas, and high levels of trust", which are suitable elements in contemporary education for developing creativity (e.g., Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 57–58). Therefore, in accordance with the final aim of Confucian education – the five virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity) – Confucius devised his own teaching content, namely the theory of *liuyi* (the Six Skills, also known as the Six Arts): ritual, music, archery, riding, calligraphy, and calculation (according to the I-Ching). Of these, ritual and music are considered the greatest symbols of the *junzi*, as music and manners can best demonstrate the nature of a *junzi,* and both take longer to cultivate and reveal itself (according to *xueji* or studies: e.g., C. Tan, 2015).

Their pursuit of creativity is not aiming for innovation or a product but for their own development, hidden in metaphors, such as the ancient Chinese pursuit of the status of a *junzi* – an ethically exemplary and noble person. Confucius advocates self-cultivation through self-discipline, but since every situation in life is different, one should not apply moral rules in a rigid fashion (Analects 18.8). What was sought here was a balance "between man and nature, order and creativity, morality and flexibility, material and spirit, freedom and justice, affluence and frugality, and the like" (Kim, 2017, p. 217). For Confucius, the *junzi* makes the appropriate judgment at the appropriate time, exercising flexibility. In his series of works on Confucian education theories, Leonard Tan put forward a theory regarding creativity for instrumental music education inspired by the Confucian idea of *creatio in situ* ("situational creativity") that newness does not stem from nothing but rather stems from interpreting things in

another way (L. Tan, 2016a, 2016b, 2018). Drawing on three major Confucian texts - the Analects ('collected sayings' or *lunyu*; 論語), the *zhongyong* (中庸; 'Doctrine of the Mean') and the *daxue* (大學; 'the Great Learning') - Tan proposed that (L. Tan, 2016b) Confucius explicitly warns against being stubborn and inflexible (Analects 9.4) in his doctrine of timeliness (*shi*; 時), advocating "responding flexibly and appropriately to the situation with which one is confronted" (Analects 7.11; Slingerland, 2003, p. 67).

However, Confucianism has also been criticised in some respects for suppressing creativity; for example, in a study of Chinese values in education, Kim (2009) claims that Confucianism's insistence on obedience and submissiveness suppresses the ability to think independently and the motivation to create. Kim argues that the ideological basis for obedience "stifles creativity through suppression of emotion, the silence ethic, an extreme value of humility, conformity, and stigmatised eccentricity" (2007, p. 45). In contemporary education, it is also believed that the tradition of obedience has led teachers to focus more on good behaviour and classroom discipline and to neglect curiosity, exploration and independent thinking. Staats (2011) indicates that Ancient China is recognised as one of the four great civilisations of the ancient world, together with Babylon, Egypt and India. The four great discoveries of the compass, paper, printing and gunpowder are celebrated in Chinese culture for their historical significance, as each has had a large impact on the development of civilisation throughout the world. Ancient Chinese innovations, however, grew out of the desires and dictates of the authoritarian regimes of the time. Under the three rules of Confucianism (ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife) and five constant virtues of Confucianism (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity), some argue, one could not truly pursue independent thinking or freedom to innovate (Van Someren & Van Someren-Wang, 2013).

2.3.2 Emphasis in music education: aesthetics

Hargreaves (2011), in his study of intercultural perspectives on music education, argued that arts educators with a Confucian philosophical foundation value "the moral and spiritual role of the arts" (p. 56) more than Western teachers, and

that “technique” and “tradition” (p. 57) were considered by them to be far more essential than pupils’ self-expression. It could be explained from two different perspectives.

In the Chinese context, according to Rudowicz (2004), everything good and of quality are seen as integrated; in Chinese fine art, truth, goodness and beauty are often linked together (Fraser et al., 2020). This means that people can become used to thinking that what is good should include all the good characteristics at the same time. Music education and musical creativity were considered subjects only those with a certain level of literacy and knowledge could comprehend (e.g., Fung, 2018). Confucius’ musical works are widely believed to have been lost; however, Leonard Tan put forward a theory of creativity for instrumental music education inspired by Confucian *creatio in situ* (‘situational creativity’) in his series of works on Confucian education theories (L. Tan, 2016a, 2016b, 2018). Drawing on three major Confucian texts - the Analects (‘collected sayings’ or *lunyu*; 論語), the *Zhongyong* (中庸; ‘Doctrine of the Mean’) and the *Daxue* (大學; ‘the Great Learning’) - Tan proposed that newness does not stem from nothing, but rather stems from interpreting things in another way. To be more specific, the Confucian attitude towards music is *wuwei* (無為), which relates to the aim of making oneself an ethically exemplary person (*junzi*; 君子) who ‘makes the appropriate judgement at the appropriate time’ (L. Tan, 2016b, p. 1237). Confucius explicitly warns against being stubborn and inflexible (Analects 9.4), which also recalls his doctrine of timeliness (*shi*; 時) (Analects 7.11; Slingerland, 2003, p. 67).

In addition, to explain the orientation of these musicians towards the purpose of music education, some studies on Eastern music education (e.g. Hargreaves, 2011) argue that traditional Eastern educators asserted that the main purpose of education was to develop ‘the character of pupils’ and ‘a virtuous and joyful life’ (Hargreaves, 2011, p. 56). For instance, Confucius established the ‘lecture hall’ and taught the Six Renewed Virtues, including music: ‘(1) benevolence (*in* or *jen*; 인, 仁), (2) righteousness (u*ĭ* or *i*; 의, 義), (3) propriety in conduct (*ye* or *li*; 예, 禮), (4) music (*ak* or yüeh, 악, 樂), (5) wisdom (*chi* or chih, 지, 智), and (6) trust (*sin* or *rhsin*; 신, 信)’ (Kim, 2017, p. 217). For Confucius, since every situation in life is different, one should not apply moral rules in a rigid fashion

(Analects 18.8). Rather, an ethically exemplary person (*junzi*; 君子) makes the appropriate judgment at the appropriate time, exercising flexibility (Huang, 2012).

The focus on knowledge and aesthetics within the realm of Chinese music education enables an exploration of unique perspectives on fostering creativity. Eastern creativity theories advocate not for creation from nothing but for innovation within a given context. The influence of traditional Chinese philosophy, particularly its ethical principles, is notable (e.g., Hargreaves, 2011). Intelligence, wisdom, and adaptability are deeply embedded in these traditional Chinese music education theories (Kim, 2017; L. Tan, 2016a). These Eastern theories highlight that creativity is the final step in the learning process, and that knowledge and aesthetics are important parts of the process of creativity development. The evaluation of students' thinking in traditional Chinese music education is closely linked to the development of their sense of aesthetics and aligns with the ideal of *Junzi*.

Eastern theories of creativity and music education philosophies offer insightful perspectives for understanding creativity and conceptualising its development through mindfulness and openness (Niu & Sternberg, 2006; Shao et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2021). However, integrating Eastern aesthetics and knowledge into Western paradigms presents challenges due to the absence of a consistent understanding of the concepts of creativity. The frequent use of metaphors, such as "*Junzi*", adds complexity to this integration. A more in-depth examination of how Eastern theories of creativity can be applied to the practice of music education, particularly in Eastern contexts, might prove beneficial for a more comprehensive understanding of these theories.

Summary

This chapter reviews the concepts and theories related to creativity and teachers' perceptions, addressing the field's main studies on the definition of creativity and the teachers' perceptions and the understanding of the concept of creativity in Eastern cultures (e.g., Confucianism, Taoism), respectively. The perspectives from past research support the empirical research conducted with teachers, and understanding and categorising of teachers' perceptions of

creativity might be based on the contexts in which these teachers find themselves, as well as their thinking and experiences. It appears that some traditional Chinese educational philosophies, such as the emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge and experience, may not mean that teachers do not support the development of students' creativity. However, their pursuit of creativity is not expressed in a straightforward manner, but hidden in metaphors for good things, such as the ancient Chinese pursuit of the *junzi* (e.g., Slingerland, 2003; Xu, 2020). In the next chapter, a detailed account of these contexts will be presented, i.e. the development of music education and creativity in China over the past 20 years.

3 Literature review: Chinese context of music education and creativity progress in the past 20 years

Overview

In this chapter, I review the educational policies and empirical studies over the last two decades, on the topic of creativity in education and music education in China that are relevant to the aim and context of this study, i.e., Chinese teachers' perceptions of creativity and the factors that might shape those perceptions. The key policies for education in China in the twenty-first century are reviewed in Section 3.1. In Section 3.2, I provide the exam requirements of the curriculum standards for music courses and review the requirements for piano examinations. This section will provide information for discussing the responses of each of the two groups of music teachers to the examinations and the assessment of the teachers. The issues identified in the empirical studies regarding teaching creativity in China are considered in Section 3.3, including research on creativity in music education in China is analysed in terms of in-school and out-of-school music education, and Chinese music teachers' perspectives on creativity.

I investigate the emphasis on innovation and the need for creative talent in China's national development strategy, over the past two decades. I explore potential interpretations of creativity in national policy using a table I have summarised. I also discuss the requirements of the curriculum standards for creativity and school music teachers. Despite the paucity of literature in this field, a review of music lessons and piano grade examinations in China provides an important research context for this study. In light of the key literature on creativity, this chapter concludes with a review of research on Chinese education and music education, analysing the challenges of fostering creativity in Chinese education in the twenty-first century. Among these challenges are the tension between the pressure of examinations on students and their creative development, and the obstacles to creativity in teacher-centred classrooms, such as primary schools and piano lessons. Primary schools and piano lessons are examples of potential classroom challenges centred on the teacher.

3.1 Policy for innovation and creativity in Chinese educational context

China's twenty-first century policies stress the importance of innovation to national development, and creativity to education. In this section, I outline the key policies for creativity in education over the past 20 years, in three sections: the 2016 national plan for innovative talents and creativity in education (Section 3.1.1); curriculum reform since 2001 (Section 3.1.2); and the 2011 *New Curriculum Standards for Music* (Section 3.1.3).

3.1.1 Innovation and creativity in national policy: Reform in the field of culture and education

The idea of innovation was introduced to China's National Strategic Plan (NSP) at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Pang and Plucker's (2012) study points out that the number of references to 'innovation' and 'creativity' in government documents and education policies, from top to bottom, gradually increases from that point, and creation and technological innovation in science and technology play a leading role in the NSP (Hu, 2017; Yu et al., 2018). Policies use the Chinese word 创 *chuang* (meaning to create) to refer to the need for innovation and creativity – rather than just using the concepts of innovation and creativity – in a range of terms that innovation in Science and Technology and innovative institutional mechanisms and entrepreneurship, to a personal capability, interest or spirit in innovation and/or creativity. The *13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of The People's Republic of China (2016–2020)* (also known as the 13th Five-Year Plan) (State Council, 2016) was the most important national policy until 2020 and acknowledged China's ability to innovate was not strong enough, linking creativity with individual and collaborative creation and entrepreneurship, as well as innovation in science and technology (Jing & Osborne, 2017; Phan et al., 2010). For example, the plan proposed to develop educational reform in order to

> increase students' sense of social responsibility, their awareness of the rule of law, their spirit of innovation, and their ability to put ideas into practice; to strengthen education in sports, physical health, mental health, the arts, and aesthetics; and to cultivate students' interest in

> innovation and their scientific literacy. (State Council, 2016, p. 25, translated by me)

Taking the 13th Five-Year Plan as an example, Table 3.1 presents these terms alongside their meaning in the policy context and the frequency with which they appear.

In 2021, the government summarised the implementation of this policy and published the following 14th Five-Year Plan, which proposes maintaining innovation-driven development.

Table 3.1 'Create (创 *chuang*)' in the 13th Five-Year Plan

	Frequency	Chinese characters	English translations
Chuangxin	211	创新	Innovation
Chuangyi Gongye/Nongye	2	创意工、农业	creative industry/agriculture
Chuangyi Wenhuachanye	4	创意文化产业	creative culture industry
Chuangzao	12	创造	creation
Dazhong Chuangye Wanzhong Chuangxin	28	大众创业、万众创新	mass entrepreneurship and innovation,
Double "Chuang"		"双创"计划	also known as the Double '*Chuang*' plan
Zizhu Chuangxin Nengli	3	自主创新能力	independent innovation capability
Goujian Chuangxin Tizhi Jizhi	19	构建创新体制机制	building an innovative institutional mechanism
Shehui Chuangzaoli	1	社会创造力	social creativity
Chuangxin Jingshen	1	创新精神	Creativity
Chuangxin Xingqu	1	创新兴趣	creative interest
Chuangxinxing Zhuanhua	1	创造性转化	creative transformation
Chuangxinxing Fazhan	1	创造性发展	creative development
Chuangzuo	2	创作	Creation
Yuanchuang	2	原创	Originality
Jifa Chuangzaoxing	1	激发创造性	inspire creativity
Peiyang Chuangzaoli	1	培养创造力	foster creativity
Chuangxinxing Guojia	1	创新型国家	innovative country

Note. 1: Keyword frequency shown above made by the software Quirkos ver.2, according to the original/Chinese version of the 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of The People's Republic of China (2016–2020) (13th Five-Year Plan) (State Council, 2016) [translated and analysed by me]

2: Due to the ideographic nature of Chinese, some Chinese translations in this thesis retain the Chinese characters to avoid ambiguity (Hansen, 1993; Wu & Tseng, 1993)

3: The frequency of the Chinese character "Chuang" is slightly more than 1000 in the 13th Five-Year Plan (Chinese version).

3.1.2 Curriculum reform since 2001 and *New Curriculum Standards:* education reforms on creativity

In 2001, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a series of curriculum standards - *Guidelines for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (trial edition)* emphasising the importance of modernisation and quality education (素质教育 *suzhi jiaoyu*), which is seen as a reaction against examination-oriented education with rote memorisation and rote learning as the standard teaching method (e.g. Dello-Lacovo, 2009). The 'New Curriculum Reform' was formally launched in 2001 with the release of the *Guidelines* (e.g., MoE, 2001).

In 2001, the first version of *Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards* (MoE, 2001) for primary and secondary schools (referred to as the *New Curriculum Standards*) was released, proposing the importance of music education in developing students' abilities and creativity. Music curriculum and music-related activities are considered beneficial to creativity development; therefore, the government emphasises ensuring that (primary and secondary) schools provide music lessons, allot sufficient time for music lessons, and conduct regular and diverse music activities (e.g., State Council, 2016; MoE, 2013).

Since 2011, the Chinese government has put forward a series of standards and requirements for teachers to cooperate with and enable innovation-talent cultivation (MoE, 2011, 2013), which require all teachers to focus on students' independent-thinking skills and guide their thinking and development processes. The *National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* (MoE, 2010) claimed China lacked innovative talents. Consequently, this plan set the goal of developing "high-quality workers" and "specialised and innovative talents", while cultivating students' "innovative spirit" and "practical ability to solve problems", stating that innovative talent training should focus on "the combination of learning and thinking" (MoE, 2010, p. 13; my translation). According to Fan & Wang (2018), this mode advocates heuristic inquiry, discussion and participatory teaching to help students to stimulate their curiosity, cultivate hobbies and interests, and create a good environment for independent thinking, free exploration and innovation. In the education-strategy section, the reform plan clarified the importance of moral education and ability,

combining “moral education (德育 *deyu*)” with “academic education (智育 *zhiyu*)”, “physical education (体育 *tiyu*)”, and “aesthetic education (美育 *meiyu*)”. These four aspects of education were collectively referred to as (students’) “comprehensive development” (全面发展 *quanmian fazhan*) (State Council, 2016, pp. 45-46). At this time, the reform plan only emphasised the urgent need to cultivate talent, without explaining what abilities this talent should include, what innovation meant or how to cultivate it.

In 2016, the 13th Five-Year Plan proposed to develop, reform and modernise education through artistically and aesthetically focused schemes; at the same time, it aspired to increase students' enthusiasm and interest in innovation, as well as “their ability to put ideas into practice”, and to “inspire minors' creativity”. The *13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education* (State Council, 2016, p. 45), following the main version of the 13th Five-Year Plan, further pointed out that it is necessary to improve students' cultural accomplishments (with comprehensive development) and introduced the concept of “aesthetic education”. Aesthetic education is defined as using “aesthetics” to educate people and using “culture” to influence people to improve students' artistic qualities, cultivate noble sentiments and profound national emotions, and stimulate a consciousness of innovation.

The specific learning-materials for cultivating aesthetics include: “Chinese and foreign literary and artistic classics”, “elegant art forms”, “intangible cultural heritage”, and “excellent national and folk culture”, as well as “school mottos and family mottos” (State Council, 2016). Music is also included under “aesthetic education”.

> (Healthy Development of Minors) We will implement a plan for children's development. […] We will promote coordination and interaction between school education, family education, and social education and help young people to be studious, virtuous, upright, and able to tell right from wrong to inspire energy and creativity in them. (State Council, 2016, translated from Chinese).

The plan also suggests incorporating artistic practices into curriculum management and encouraging students to "form artistic expertise or hobbies" (State Council, 2016, p.46).

3.1.3 The 2011 *New Curriculum Standards for Music*

In this subsection, I introduce the New Curriculum Standards for Music and analyse the challenges of creativity within them. In 2011, the Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards were revised, and the Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards for Music (2011 Edition) (MoE, 2011), for the first time, included creativity as a separate section.

The *New Curriculum Standards for Music* divide music curriculum teaching into four areas: feeling and appreciation; performance; creativity; and music-related culture. One of its three main teaching objectives – education for creativity – requires teachers to pay attention to the creative process in music practice, give full rein to students' imagination and creativity, and not bind students with "standard answers" or "single models" (MoE, 2017, p. 2).

The 2011 edition of the standards summarises the value of the music curriculum:

> The value of the music curriculum is: to provide students with **an aesthetic experience**, to cultivate sentiment, to enlighten wisdom; to develop **creative development potential**, enhance **creativity**; to pass on the excellent national culture and enhance understanding of world music culture and its richness and diversity; and promoting interpersonal communication, emotional communication and the construction of a harmonious society. (p.1; my translation from Chinese, **bold** emphasis mine)

In a specific teaching guide, Fan and Wang (2018), for example, wrote reference materials for undergraduate students studying music teaching, based on the new curriculum standards written in Chinese. They suggest teachers should grasp three aspects, to cope with the requirements of the new curriculum standards: (1) imitation is the premise of creation; (2) improvisation is the foundation of creation; and (3) listening is the cornerstone of creation. They added that, in

the school textbooks written under the guidance of these music curriculum standards, the teaching content is rich in content and illustration, providing teachers with rich materials and multi-faceted information. The new textbooks may give teachers more autonomy and flexibility to use practical materials based on their own strengths and pupils' personalities (Fan & Wang, 2018); for example, each chapter of the textbook is a different unit story, rather than a specific point of musical knowledge. It may mean that teachers are allowed to design activities outside the textbook, and they may use materials creatively.

Following a long tradition of state-produced textbooks, during fieldwork Primary schools in China were using the same textbooks, one book for each term of the six different grades, a set of 12 books in total. Textbooks were produced by the People's Education Press, or PEP, and written by the PEP Music Textbook Team. Appendix 1 provides a sample of textbook content, giving examples of creative activities found in school music textbooks. Based on the reform and its requirement for creativity, the new textbooks for primary school education also cover creative activities in each lesson, after learning songs. Teachers' introductions in each lesson and this creative activity are seen as a means of stimulating students' creativity in primary school art class (Fan & Wang, 2018). Teachers are encouraged to use a piece of music, video clips or other dynamic techniques to stimulate students' interest and resonance (Lai, 2015).

> The combination of music and related culture is an important embodiment of the humanities nature of music lessons. The use of music and related cultural content as an introduction not only helps to expand the horizon of students' music culture, but also promotes students' experience and feelings of music, and enhances the ability of music appreciation and artistic creativity. (Fan & Wang, 2018, p. 143, my translation from Chinese)

In addition, the curriculum (MoE, 2011) also encourages schools to choose their own teaching content, and to design their own teaching materials or local curriculum according to their own characteristics.

> [S]chools should combine local humanities and geography and national cultural traditions to develop music curriculum resources with regional,

> ethnic and school characteristics. It is necessary to be good at applying the folk music of the region (especially the music project in the intangible cultural heritage) to the music curriculum. (MoE, 2011, p. 25, my translation from Chinese)

Primary school textbooks largely feature Western musical notation, such as the stave, to teach songs, but there are textbooks marked in numbered notation (a musical notation system widely used in music publications in China) at the same time for schools to choose from when purchasing their materials. *Gongche* notation is sometimes found in textbooks as optional teaching material, e.g., when introducing Beijing opera or if traditional Chinese instruments will be involved. This notation used Chinese characters as solfège and was widespread in ancient China.

Appendix 2 also provides examples of notes from the textbook. Primary school teachers are required to teach their pupils the Stave and the Chinese notation. Textbooks largely provide Western musical notation – Stave, to teach the songs. Additionally, the People's Education Press also issues textbooks marked in Numbered notation (a musical notation system widely used in music publications in China) at the same time for schools to choose from when purchasing their materials. *Gongche* notation is sometimes found in textbooks as optional teaching material, e.g., introducing Beijing opera or traditional Chinese instruments will be involved. This notation used Chinese characters as solfege and was widespread in ancient China.

Ng and Smith (2004) indicate a paradox in fostering creativity in Asian classrooms: most teachers strongly endorse creativity in theory but, in practice, dislike the associated characteristics. This is often considered the case in Asia; however, according to research on teachers' perceptions of creative pupils, a similar situation may exist in Western classrooms.

> [T]eachers frequently perceive creative student behaviours as ‘misbehaviours’. Creative students often display characteristics disliked by teachers such as hyperactivity, argumentiveness, selfishness, stubbornness, and independence. (Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005, p. 28)

Nonetheless, these disruptive aspects that cause displeasure to the teacher are not a necessary feature of creativity (Runco, 2010); hence, Cropley (2010, p. 312) suggests that these teachers "need better understanding of the process of generation of novelty and the nature of creative products" rather than merely treating creativity as negative.

3.2 Music lesson and piano grade examinations in China

In this section, I introduce the exam requirements of the curriculum standards for music courses and review the requirements for piano examinations.

The standards for the school music curriculum do not set out specific requirements for assessment or examination. Also, according to the previous discussion, the new curriculum standards do not support an examination-centred approach to teaching and learning. Some provinces have previously considered adding a unified music examination for all schools, based on the new curriculum, but have not implemented such unified exam. For example, Shandong have published their guidelines for academic tests for junior high school students (14-16 years old) (Shandong Education Department, 2018) – although this was ultimately not implemented. However, this may not mean that music lessons are not assessed. For example, my research outlines how primary school music teachers and their schools design their own assessment of pupils, and of teachers, to ensure the quality of teaching and learning (see Section 6.2.2).

In terms of piano lessons, as explained before, children would ask the teacher to prepare them for a piano grade exam held in a piano shop or studio. Bai (2021) studies the reasons for the dramatic increase in the popularity of piano learning in China over the past thirty years. He points out the utilitarian elements of piano learning in China, such as the quest to improve the competitiveness of children. Although not much research has been done into the holding of piano examinations in China, I provide two sample examinations schemes in Appendices 3 & 4. There is no detailed guidance on the content of the piano exams: for example, the sample programmes for the two exams are quite general that it may be difficult to understand what preparation is required for the exams if one simply refers to them. I found these programmes to be general and it may be difficult to understand what preparation is required for the exams

if one only refers to them. Through interviews with piano teachers, this study will add more details (see Section 6.2.3).

3.3 Challenges in fostering creativity in twenty-first century Chinese education

In this section, through a review of research on the development of creativity and music education in the Chinese context, I discuss the tensions in creativity in music education in China observed in the literature. I consider the challenges: the excessive focus on exams and grades, and teacher-centred classroom. These challenges will be discussed through the discussion of the tensions between creativity and examinations (Section 3.2.1); and teacher-centred and student-centred classrooms (Section 3.2.2).

3.3.1 Tensions between creativity and examinations

Under the influence of high-stakes testing and accountability, Chinese education has often been criticised for neglecting the process of learning and ignoring authentic and multidimensional assessment in favour of grades (Zhao, 2018); however, over the past two decades, China has promoted ‘quality education’ as opposed to ‘exam-oriented education’. For example, musical activities were encouraged, music lessons were guaranteed in schools, and schools were banned from assigning homework to students during non-study periods (MoE, 2001, 2011, 2022). However, due to the pressure placed on students by the two main entrance examinations in China, the *zhongkao* and *gaokao* (see Section 2.3.1), “quality education” measures have had little effect. Researchers have argued that high-stakes tests, such as the PISA and Chinese entrance exams, demonstrate limited ability to assess students' “non-cognitive abilities” (Zhao 2018, p. 172; Sjøberg, 2012). This motivational education system puts pressure on students to become “great test takers” (Zhao, 2018, p. 204) and costs them their intrinsic curiosity, interest and passion for creativity, and their love of learning (Zhao, 2018). Excessive discipline and the pressure of exams suppress students' instincts and hinder creativity and critical enquiry in the classroom (Ho, 2017). Test-oriented teaching can also lead to a situation wherein teachers may be more inclined to teach the scope of the test at the expense of what education should be (Wu, 2016).

In the second half of 2020, an explosion of tweet-style posts – short texts, cartoons, or mini videos – emerged among young people in China reflecting on their current state of competitive social pressure, which was initially mainly among groups of university graduates and office workers but later expanded in scope and evolved into an online trending term that took centre stage in the overall public discourse, attracting the interest of researchers in education and other social sciences (e.g., C. Li, 2021; Xue, 2022). The term involution is an internet buzzword that originally emerged in China in late 2020. However, unlike its original conceptual and theoretical context, this word has been given its own definition by young people in China, to the extent that it is used collectively for a range of concepts, such as 'Dagongren (labourer)'; and 'lying flat'. Researchers have described the problems behind the phenomenon as multifaceted, including educational inequality, exam pressures, anxiety, and unreasonable competitive expectations, while some researchers have also hinted at positive aspects, such as the promotion of motivation through competition (Beck & Nyíri, 2022; Chen et al., 2021; C. Li, 2021; Kang & Jin, 2020). However, instead of engaging with the original meaning and evolution of the term in China, this study is more concerned with the problems in education that lie behind the phenomenon, or its implications for the study of creativity and education.

When we revisit such Chinese youth's 'involution' through the lenses of education (Xue, 2022; C. Li, 2021), research implies that the problematic nature of exam-oriented education might reflect the failure of teachers to foster intrinsic motivation in students. First, the issue of involution – whereby young students feel pressured to prove themselves in competition – may reveal that the current Chinese education is not only exam-centred but oriented towards competitive outcomes. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe's (2000) study, which applies a systems model of creativity to the field of education, competitions and extracurricular activities are the driving force that helps the acquisition of new knowledge in this field; the purpose of these activities is not that students are passively accustomed to accepting the external requirements of a particular field but rather that they internalise knowledge and thus create their internal requirement. The internalised requirement, in conjunction with motivations such as interest, or curiosity, stimulates student's individual

creativity. If competition and examinations are aimed merely at achievement and accomplishment without establishing students' self-requirements, then the result may be the opposite of stimulating creativity. Secondly, as with this current tension between examination and creativity in China, if teachers ignore the intrinsic motivations of their students because of more demanding requirements, such as examinations, they will not be able to embrace their students' creativity. Although Chinese education has come to value student creativity, if the focus remains on examinations, it is likely that academic performance will continue to take precedence. Teachers may still prioritise students achieving high grades in exams, even if this comes at the expense of fostering creativity. According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) interviews with successful people, creative people rarely point to their schooling as contributing to developing their creativity, but most of them refer to teachers who have influenced their lives through their student years. Teachers who play an important role in the creative process may not be seen as gatekeepers unless they have clear criteria to measure whether things are good for the field (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000). However, if teachers prioritise achievement over creativity, they will likely increase the burden and pressure of exams on students, even while neglecting their motivation and interest. From the point of view of this study, what may lie behind the problem of young people's involution is the tension between examinations and creativity. On the one hand, through examinations, students may develop internal self-standards that are conducive to the development of their own personality and creativity. However, it is important to avoid the risk of blindly pursuing grades and results and succumbing to external evaluations and demands. If teachers over-emphasise exam results, they will not only increase negative effects, such as the pressures of exams and competition, but, more problematically, will do so at the expense of pupils' interests and motivation for exploring and creativity.

Chinese students are often considered to have no creativity or a lack of understanding of creativity (Cheung & Yue, 2007; Yue et al., 2011; Yue, 2004). Chinese students understand creators more as a description of politicians than of musicians (Yue, 2004). Students often require permission to be creative, and can lack some abilities required for independent thinking and motivation (Niu & Sternberg, 2001); their creativity actually increases when they were explicitly

told the goal of the creativity and the means by which to attain it (Niu & Liu, 2009).

3.3.2 Tensions between teacher-centred and student-centred classrooms

Chinese education is influenced by its tradition of teaching by rote memorisation; teachers are used to lecturing, and students are used to imitating and taking notes (Ho, 2019; Yu, 2021). Students focus on lectures by authorities (e.g., teachers) at the expense of their active construction of knowledge and meaning. As a result, teachers often highlight the value of hard work and conscientiousness at the expense of the enjoyment of learning and student motivation (Wu, 2004). Some Chinese teaching traditions have been considered to be obstacles to the fostering of creativity in young children, such as ignoring independent thought (Leung, 2004), requiring obedience to teachers and parents (Leu, 2008), and neglecting students' personalities during music classes (Leung, 2013). It has been suggested that such educational practices make Chinese children less independent (Leu, 2008), and lead to a lack of personality and creativity (Niu and Sternberg, 2003), although it was also noted that many Chinese students achieve higher levels of academic achievement than their Western counterparts (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). This suggests that in the context of contemporary Chinese society, a number of older Chinese values may be another factor influencing music teachers' methods and their approach to creativity.

Researchers tend to argue that this incentive education system both generates pressure for students to be "great test takers" (Zhao, 2012, p. 204) and robs their inherent curiosity, interest or passion for creativity, and their love of learning (Jiang, 2013; Zhao, 2018). Students' high test scores (e.g., OECD, 2019) in maths, science, and reading, once again show that Chinese students' perform well academically. Schleicher (2016), the de facto spokesperson for PISA, has explained that 15-year-olds in Shanghai are trying to memorise and master and are able to use information creatively, more than students in Western countries. However, many researchers believe that high-stakes tests like the PISA exam are a limited method of assessing students' "noncognitive skills" (Zhao, 2018, p. 172), such as humanities, social skills, curiosity and creativity, which are at least as essential, perhaps even more vital, for them to live a satisfying life (Sjøberg,

2012). Therefore, the Chinese education system might be the best education for producing students with good test scores, and the worst in terms of costing creative talents. For example, Zhao (2018, p. 72) argued that "Steve Jobs would not have become Steve Jobs in China", and Ho (2017) also claimed that excessive restraint and the pressure of examinations suppress the nature of students and hinder creativity and critical inquiry in the classroom. On the other hand, what the Chinese traditionally value, such as spirituality and heritage, is also considered to violate the basic logic of creativity, such as autonomy and self-awareness (Zhao, 2018).

Summary

This chapter reviews the contexts of educational policy, education in general and music education practice within reform of teaching creativity in China in recent years. I analyse the growing emphasis on creativity in policy over the last 20 years and review the different approaches to school and piano examinations. And I conclude with empirical data in which I review tensions that can arise in music education. The next chapter will present the methodology of this study in greater detail.

4 Methodology

Overview

The literature review chapter reviewed educational policies and studies on creativity in China over the past two decades. Due to the current lack of in-depth research into Chinese music teachers and piano teaching, there is a lack of understanding of how they foster pupils' creativity. Further research also needs to focus on the value of policy in fostering creativity and how teachers interpret policies in their daily work. I reviewed three key policies that may affect primary school teachers, as described in section 3.1. Therefore, this study aims to investigate in-service teachers' perceptions of creativity and to address the following research questions:

1. What are these Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity?

2. In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music, music education and current policy?

This chapter has seven sections. The following section describes and justifies the interpretivist research paradigm (4.1), in line with the research aims and questions. Section 4.2 introduces an educational criticism and connoisseurship approach in an educational enquiry from Eisner. Section 4.3 discusses my research positionality. To explore research design, Section 4.4 introduces my participants, and 4.5 discusses the four data collection tools and fieldwork processes, including video elicitation during interviews. Three pilot studies were conducted to refine my data collection tools before the main study. The last three sections focus on data interpretation and analysis (Section 4.6), ethical considerations (Section 4.7), and a summary of the chapter.

4.1 Interpretivist research paradigm

The purpose of this study is to investigate music teachers' perceptions of creativity and interpretations of their personal experiences of music education, so the interpretivist paradigm provides an appropriate underpinning for addressing the research questions. Research paradigms are ways of 'looking at or

researching phenomena' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8) and consist of different views about 'how the researcher 'sees the world and acts in it' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 56). Based on the definitions, paradigms identify the philosophical assumptions of researchers, or the 'shared understandings' (Coe et al., 2017, p. 7) - 'consensus on what problems are to be investigated and how to investigate them, typical solutions to problems, and an understanding that is more acceptable than its rivals' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8). Depending on the research purpose, the choice of a research paradigm will influence the methodological design, the research outcome, and the relationship between researcher and the research participants (Livingston, 2020; Cohen et al., 2018). According to Cohen et al. (2018, p. 19), a distinction can be made between two paradigms using different conceptions about 'behaviour' and 'theory' - firstly, in the normative paradigm, behaviour 'lies in the past', as a response to the external environment, whereas interpretivism is concerned with 'behaviour-with-meaning'. Therefore, the normative paradigm prefers to find the causal relationship between human behaviour and the environment. Interpretive research, on the other hand, aims to investigate participants' interpretations in their context to understand their behaviour and attitudes. Secondly, in terms of 'theory', normative researchers use research methods to test theories and attempt to construct 'general theories of human behaviour' - their research is mainly grounded in theory; however, in interpretive research, 'theory should not precede research but follow it' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 20). The theory of the study will emerge from a specific context and be based on data. Interpretivism is described as 'the school of thought that stresses the importance of interpretation as well as observation in understanding the social world' (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 13).

The study is about individual teachers, focusing on their experiences, their understanding and definition of creativity in their everyday teaching, and their interpretations of contemporary music education in China. This is an important reason for choosing interpretivism, as it looks at the individual and emphasises personal interpretations of the world (e.g., Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interpretivism embraces that knowledge is holistic (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985); knowledge comes from the exploration and understanding of the social world of the people being studied and is part of personal experience rather than existing

independently in the external world waiting to be discovered, and the knower and the known are interactive and inseparable (Cohen et al., 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Ritchie et al., 2014). That is, the teacher's understanding is important to educational research; education and the teacher are inseparable.

In addition, this study recognises that the participants, each music teacher, are in different situations - with diverse experiences, educational backgrounds, and teaching settings - such as giving instrumental tutorials or teaching in a primary school. In line with this recognised diversity of participants in this study, the interpretive paradigm rejects a single reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018) - researchers seek to explore complexity and diversity as there are changes and diverse perceptions and understandings in the real world (Cohen et al., 2018). By focusing on individual teachers and their own experiences, rather than categorising them or finding representative views, the expected outcome is, a range of descriptions of six music teachers in different settings - What are these teachers like, how do they nurture their creativity, and how do they interpret contemporary music education and creativity in China in their own terms. For this purpose, I also draw on Eisner's (2017) educational criticism and connoisseurship approach as the lenses which assist in giving direction to the research methodology and a stand for researcher.

4.2 Educational criticism and connoisseurship in educational enquiry

This study focuses on interpreting the different perceptions of teachers and investigating the extent to which these perceptions arise as a result of different experiences as discussed in the literature review chapters, i.e., emphasising the diversity of teachers' experiences, such as an instrumental tutorial or school music lesson, leading to different understandings of music education.

For this purpose, I draw on Eisner's (2017) educational criticism and connoisseurship approach. This framework guided the investigation in identifying the appropriate direction to pursue. Eisner focuses on the role of the arts in education, using artistic processes and aesthetic frameworks as inspiration to improve teaching and educational research. His focus on educational practice and the arts is in line with the research themes of this study. While this study does not directly adopt his qualitative approach, known as ‘educational criticism

and connoisseurship', I will discuss his notion of 'educational connoisseurship' as the art of appreciation in educational studies, and the researcher's position (in the following section) implicit in this approach.

The educational criticism and connoisseurship approach in an educational enquiry, as outlined by Uhrmacher and Moroye suggests,

> Connoisseurship as the art of appreciation, and criticism as the art of disclosure. […] the manner in which one might disclose what one has learned through his or her connoisseurship as description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. (Uhrmacher and Moroye, 2017, p. 11)

According to the definition, appreciation in education is an exploration of the whole through the quality of the details.

First of all, the approach works with qualitative inquiry and an emphasis on the pursuit of quality; the quality is also known as trustworthiness, persuasiveness or credibility (e.g., Cohen et al., 2018; Uhrmacher & Moroye, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research uses various methods to collect, interpret, and make sense of data in order to reflect complex realities, i.e., the real world with its diversity and individuality (Eisner, 2017). Therefore, a qualitative approach makes it possible to study the complexity of education in China today. The results cannot be generalised across the entire population under study, but they may provide valuable insights into the research questions. For example, teaching processes, or other qualitative descriptions, such as perceptions and reflections, are difficult to measure numerically; therefore, the data collected in this study focuses on interpretation and collecting rich data using qualitative approaches, mainly through observations and interviews.

The second key point of this approach is investigating how teaching practice might reflect educational research issues, which is often considered straightforward and effective (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of creativity; nonetheless, the researcher must pay attention to teaching practice and collect frontline data to ensure the study's persuasiveness and trustworthiness (Eisner, 2017). In the following Sections covering the research design and analysis of the findings, as well as the

final chapter, I discuss further how this study ensures trustworthiness. For example, during the interviews, participating teachers were advised to talk about their personal understandings and interpretations, bringing in their own experiences, rather than using general language and vocabulary to answer the questions.

Through the research process, this study has identified and justified the importance of observing teaching practices in the study of music education and general educational issues. Issues that may be challenging to reflect on in response to direct questions – such as how flexible teachers are when designing curriculum activities and whether they strictly follow textbooks or other guidelines or how learning to play an instrument after school is perceived if it is seen as a supplement to schooling – might be more easily reflected on through observation teaching practice; this is why observations and video elicitation during interviews helped to ensure trustworthiness (Details are provided in the Research Design Section - 4.5.1 Data gathering tools: Non-participant Observation and Semi-structured interview). These tools effectively helped the researcher consider the context in which teachers' perceptions arise.

4.3 Researcher positionality

The study advocates analysing teachers' distinctive perceptions and the diverse experiences that generate them, emphasising consideration of context and practice. Before introducing my research design, I will discuss my position as a researcher.

In interpretivism, researchers' backgrounds may influence interpretation (Ritchie et al., 2014). Their own experiences and contexts shape their interpretations. Therefore their study requires locating the 'I' in the research, i.e., acknowledging how their interpretations emerge from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences, and from what they see during their observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a Chinese PhD student at a UK university, I tried to put myself as an outsider and study teachers' perceptions of creativity from a researcher's perspective. Formulating research questions and studying groups of teachers based on my academic and research background, I referred directly to teachers' self-interpretations and their discourses to avoid

bias from my own experiences and attitudes. For example, on the question of the definition of creativity, I reviewed, mainly in studies published in Western journals, understandings of creativity in the English literature and re-examined the different pursuits of innovation and creativity by the government and artists in China over the last two decades. Schoolteachers and instrumental teachers presented their own interpretations of creativity in the study, based mainly on their own experiences and motivations. On the other hand, I am also an insider as I have a background as a Chinese student, having studied piano and received my schooling in China. I can engage directly with the participants, use their language and share common experiences.

In this case, first of all, the participants and the researcher discussed the same issues in music education from different standpoints and positions. I understand the Chinese educational context, and have experienced both piano lessons and music classes in school in China. Secondly, as an outside researcher, my purpose was to listen to the voice of the teachers. This meant addressing two issues: a) how to engage with teachers' real perceptions and how to capture their voices in a trustworthy way; and b) how to regard my personal experiences and opinions in qualitative research.

Based on the educational criticism and connoisseurship approach, I sought to attach research significance to the data collected from my standpoint and ensure openness in the research design and process. Educational research needs an understanding of teaching practice, as well as research expertise and competence. Although researchers should already have a wealth of learning experience and often have access to classrooms, Eisner (2017, p. 231) highlights the challenges of interpreting what is said and what is seen:

> One can spend a lifetime in a community and still experience only a tiny portion of what is there. It often takes perceptive and articulate writers to point out what one missed.

In other words, while researchers have their own experience of education, they still need to explore the areas they are studying during the explorations. At the same time, I, as distinct from other participants in the field, should have a clear research purpose. For example, during the observation, I considered myself an

observer with my research questions and aims, and engaged in conversations with a purpose, which I considered in Section 1.2. In order to reflect the teachers' real thoughts, I attempted to understand the teachers' contexts by observation and in conversation with them about their teaching practices: how they help their students develop creativity; how they identify their students' talents; and how they felt their experience of music and music education had developed their perceptions of creativity. These perceptions could reflect their real perceptions, feelings and understanding concerning creativity. Eisner (2017) implies that connoisseurship experiences will help us build connoisseurship skills. He suggests that researchers learn to observe teaching practices, including watching classroom videotapes and entering classrooms: "We can only appraise and interpret what we have been able to experience. At the most sophisticated level, we call these people connoisseurs" (Eisner, 2017, p. 38). With each step in the fieldwork, I gradually enriched my knowledge and understanding of this research topic, sharpened my research instruments, and clarified the direction of my data processing.

Concerning how the researcher's experiences and interpretations are perceived, according to Eisner's statement, the purpose of criticism and connoisseurship is not to judge but to add material to education and interpretation. In the educational criticism and connoisseurship approach, researchers are required to be open-minded (Eisner, 2017), and openness is reflected in my data collection and processing methods, see Sections 4.5 & 4.6. Such a researcher orientation will be throughout these processes. For example, in data collection and processing, classroom video excerpts are discussed with the teacher, and open-ended interviews are used to avoid collecting and interpreting data only from the researcher's perspective and understanding. Sections 4.4 and 4.5 will discuss my participants' information and the research design, which employs four methods: observation, interview with video elicitation, critical incident charting, and my researcher diary.

4.4 Accessing, selecting, and introducing the teachers

In this section, I introduce my participants: two groups of teachers working with primary school age children – namely, Chinese primary school teachers and piano teachers (who provide private piano lessons for primary school age children,

especially at the elementary level). It takes four years in China to gain a primary or secondary school music teacher qualification. Primary school teachers in other countries, such as the UK, might be generalists, teaching all curriculum areas, but compared to them, Chinese teachers are all specialists. Since 2001 an increasing number of teacher training colleges in China have offered music education programmes to train specialist music teachers (MoE, 2001; Ho, 2023). The appetite for growth in classical music and musical instrument education in China has been developing since the late twentieth century (Ho, 2019). Following the description of the Chinese context in other empirical studies (e.g. Woronov, 2008), primary school children (6-11 years old) have started to learn musical instruments after school, and many teachers with musical instrument skills – mostly conservatoire students and professors – also invest in music education as instrumental teachers. There are no standards or teacher qualification tests for these instrumental teacher roles.

With the approval of the Ethics Committee at the College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow (see Section 4.7 for details), I contacted piano teachers and music teachers in primary schools that I was familiar with from my primary school and piano studios, using a snowball sampling technique to engage with more teachers interested in my topic (Gary, 2018, p. 220). According to Gary (2018), the snowball technique is suitable when the potential research participants are in the same field, such as academia, music, or the music education. After identifying the initial interviewees through my networks, I asked each interviewee to put me in contact with other teachers in an attempt to ensure that the sample was as diverse as possible, including diversity in qualifications, teaching style, and type of education institution or school (Eisner, 2017).

Participants participated in the study freely and voluntarily and knew and understood what the study involved. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and that this research guaranteed their anonymity and confidentiality. The final participants were selected from teachers who were interested in my study and had different school backgrounds and experiences. After identifying the final participants, I contacted the interviewees through the contact methods they each said were most convenient, such as by phone, a message, or email. Due to the pandemic, I was only able to

enter the school for visits within the time allowed by their headteachers, but instrument teachers, who usually teach in their own place or studio, allowed me to conduct my work at any time, even though our meetings were also affected by the local segregation policy.

All the participants are shown below. A list of participants (using pseudonyms) is given in Table 4.1, and short personal backgrounds follow.

Table 4.1 Participating school teachers and piano teachers in the pilot and main studies

No	Participants (pseudonym)	Gender	Type of school/studio	Institution's name (pseudonym)	Courses/ instruments
Pilot 1	Zhang	F	Public, Urban	Mountain Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
Pilot 2	Li	F	Music Studio	Own piano studio	Teaching piano to students aged 3 to 15
Pilot 3	Xu	F	Public, Urban	Mountain Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
Main study					
01	Wang	F	Public, Urban	Sunny Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
02	Zhao	F	Public, Urban	Garden Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
03	Duan	M	Public, Rural	Riverside School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
04	Liu	F	Music Studio	Own piano studio	Teaching piano to students aged 4 to 15
05	Chen	M	Private piano lessons	Teaching at his home	Teaching piano to students aged from 6 to 18
06	Huang	F	Music Tutoring	Little Genius Pupil Service Centre	Teaching piano to primary school students (6 and 11 years old)

Introduction of my main study participants' backgrounds

Wang (Pseudonymous surname)

Wang has over ten years of teaching experience, first at Golden Primary School and then at Sunny Primary School (all are pseudonymous names, same below). Golden Primary School had about 2,000 pupils in the whole school, and Sunny Primary School had about 2,500 with 50-55 pupils in each class, but the number of classes in each grade varies from school to school. In the case of Sunny Primary School, there were 47 classes (covering Years 1 to 6).

She currently belongs to Sunny Primary School, a public school in the city. In 2010 it had more than 2,500 pupils, according to the school's official website. She is a specialist music teacher, teaching pupils 7-12 years old, Year 1 to Year 6. Every year she may take a different class. She is the leader of all the music teachers in the school and has teaching and teaching research responsibilities.

Zhao

This is Zhao's sixth year teaching music at Garden Primary School, an urban public school with approximately 2,500 pupils and 50-55 pupils in each class, with 11 in Year 1.

She is a specialist music teacher. She teaches pupils aged 7-12, from Years 1 to 6. Each year, she takes a different class, depending on her responsibilities.

Zhao considers her background to be quite straightforward - after graduating from university she passed exams (obtained a primary school music teaching qualification, passed the teachers' civil service exam, and the recruitment exam and interviews of Garden Primary School) to join this primary school.

Duan

Duan has five years of experience teaching Chinese classes (in other schools). He has now been a music teacher at Riverside School for three years, a rural public primary school with around 2,000 pupils (from Years 1 to 6) and 50-55 pupils in

each class. According to Duan, there were five classes in Year 2 last year (2021). He teaches pupils from Years 1 to 6 (aged 7-12). Each year, he takes a different class, depending on his responsibilities.

He has a teaching certificate as a primary school music teacher (and a certificate in Chinese language teaching). He is now both a specialist music teacher and a specialist Chinese language teacher.

Duan is a substitute teacher. Substitute teachers exist in almost every school due to the lack of teachers. Three participants had a similar situation in their schools. Wang explained that their school had more than 10 music teachers, which was still not enough to cope with the workload of more than 40 classes and two lessons per class per week. As a result, policy allows these schools to recruit some substitute teachers themselves. A substitute teacher will also need to have a music teaching qualification and take the school's entrance exam and undergo an interview. Once they have passed, they may only teach music but may also be required to teach other subjects, such as Duan, who wants to become a non-substitute teacher (with State Welfare). To achieve this, he also needs to take a further ‘public service unit’ exam (similar to the Civil Services Exam); however, this exam has a low pass rate and is more challenging than merely taking the school's entrance exam and interview.

Liu

Liu has over ten years of piano teaching experience and graduated from a Normal University, where she majored in piano. She used to teach music lessons in a secondary school with students from Years 7 to 9 (aged between 12 and 14), but now she has her own piano studio – a piano room where she usually teaches and practices – and sometimes teaches at home. She now teaches pupils from the ages of 4 to 15.

Her sessions are all recorded in Liu's own studio. The place is relatively small, with an upright piano occupying almost a third of the room. Usually, the pupil and Liu sit next to each other; however, if parents come with their children, there is also an extra chair by the door.

Chen

Chen is a professor at the School of Music at a Normal University in China, located in a large city with a population of over 11 million in Shandong province. His primary research and teaching interests are piano and piano improvisation (performance and singing), and he has decades of experience teaching piano. His students' range in age from seven years old (Year 1) to teenagers. He usually teaches at home. When I asked him if I could observe his lessons, he invited me to a friend's piano studio to facilitate the recording, where I recorded all my videos of his lessons. The piano here is a Yamaha upright, as in Chen's home, but with more space in the room. I can move the camera around to focus on the teacher. The teacher and I both have space to move around.

Huang

Huang has five years of piano teaching experience and graduated from Normal University, majoring in piano. She teaches in a piano studio located near a primary school where some pupils come to practise the piano after school. Huang usually spends her days accompanying and tutoring three to five children while they practise after school and gives them regular lessons once a week. Huang explained that the process is the same – 40 minutes of practice – but the teacher assigns a new task during the lesson. Her pupils are all primary school children, from Years 1 to 6, ages 7 to 12.

The studio has seven piano rooms. The place is relatively small, with an upright piano taking up almost half of the room. Therefore, the pupil and Huang sit next to each other. For recording purposes, I put the video recorder on the other side of the pupil, parallel to the teacher, and sat next to the video recorder, which meant the piano room felt a bit crowded.

4.5 Research design

Four data collection methods were used to address the research questions in this study; these methods were piloted three times. In my main study, six participants - music teachers from different backgrounds (see Table 4.1 and participants' backgrounds above), were interviewed in three stages for this study, including three times non-participant observations per participant, and three interviews with video elicitation. I also used critical incident charting and my research diary for data collection. The following subsections discuss the specific data collection methods (4.5.1), and the research process, including the three pilot studies (4.5.2) and the main study (4.5.3).

4.5.1 Data gathering tools

The study was conducted with 3 primary school and 3 piano teachers to explore their perceptions of creativity and teaching reflections and experiences within twenty-first century Chinese policy. To facilitate the research aim and questions, four methods were designed for data collection. In this section, I introduce them in detail: observation, critical incident chart, semi-structured interview, and researcher diary.

Non-participant Observation

Non-participant observation is one of the two main types of observation in case studies: In participant observation, the observer is involved in the activity he or she is observing and may only be a member of the group as far as the other participants are concerned; in contrast, in the method used in this study, the non-participant observer remains detached from the group activity he or she is investigating, eschewing group membership, i.e. the investigator does not participate in the teachers' classroom activities (Cohen et al., 2018). Eisner mentions that videotapes of the classroom can be used as a point of observation. The advantage of videotapes is that they can be replayed and allow for greater caution and reflection during interpretation (Eisner, 2017). In a study of secondary school music teachers' perceptions of creativity, Odena (2001) proposes a video technique to explore teachers' perceptions. In this method, the teaching process is recorded and edited into clips according to the research

purpose. This study used excerpts from the videotapes to discuss with my teacher during the interview as an elicitation (see Semi-structured interview).

My observation was a gradual process: to gather sufficient evidence to understand the teachers' teaching practices, I planned to conduct three rounds of observations over six months, at the beginning (the first two months), in the middle (the next two months) and at the end (the last two months) of the study; however, ultimately, due to the pandemic, my fieldwork was intermittent and took over 12 months, as detailed in the table of observations and interview schedule in the findings chapters. With the participants' permission and invitation, my observation of each teacher's teaching process started before their first interview. The entire teaching process during observations was video recorded in order to observe the context of teachers' perceptions and how these teaching practices reflect their perceptions of creativity. The camera was focused on the teacher and teaching tools, including the necessary interaction between teacher and pupil (More details on ethics are in Section 4.7.).

The narratives for all observations will be provided and discussed as part of my findings (see Chapter 5 findings). In addition, after editing, the video extracts were used to elicit the conversation during interviews. Extracts from these observation videos that I considered reflect the teacher's creativity perceptions were cut out and edited – for use as part of the interviews (details in semi-structured interview theme A) to watch back and discuss with the class teacher themselves. I chose three to five specific teaching excerpts to watch and discuss with the teacher in each interview; each excerpt in school music lessons lasts around four minutes, whereas excerpts from instrumental lessons usually last a minimum of seven minutes – due to the piano lesson generally being longer than the school lesson, as it contains many student performances. For example, one piece of piano music might take 20 minutes to play.

My initial selection criteria were based on this study's understanding of creativity (regarding Section 1.1.3 and Section 2.3; see also, Appendix 5 Observation Schedule) and teachers' feedback in the interviews, and I selected those that are most relevant to pupils' creativity and most likely to express the teacher's thoughts and perceptions.

For example,

1. How did the teacher help students achieve creativity? For example, through improvisation and composition, activities, teachers' language and behaviours, and teacher-student relationship/interactions? (for all participants)

2. How does the teacher evaluate creativity? Any assessment of creativity carried out? (for all participants)

3. How does the teacher provide teaching as complementary to schooling, i.e. what are the creative processes that schools cannot provide for their students? (for piano teachers)

At the end of the interview, I designed open-ended questions to ask the teacher about their views on the video clips I chose and the excerpts about the activities they might want to discuss or suggest I look into next time and why. Based on the teacher's comments, I then conducted the following second or third round of observations and interviews.

The purpose of these extracts was to allow teachers to reflect on their teaching during the interviews. Firstly, a conversation about excerpts during the interviews might avoid interpreting and observing these extracts only from the researcher's perspective (Eisner, 2017). Using the teachers' interpretations of the videos, I reviewed whether the clips reflected the teachers' understanding of creativity as I had thought. Secondly, this added to the openness of the interviews and allowed the interviewees to be elicited (Odena, 2001). There were three rounds of observations and interviews, and the selection of excerpts was modified according to teachers' reflections on their teaching during the interviews.

Overall, two issues emerge from the observation method and the use of video extracts. The first is the teacher's feelings when watching their video footage; having teachers watch videos of themselves might cause awkwardness for them, especially younger teachers. Due to this challenge, in my first two pilots (details in Section 4.5.1), the process of applying this video elicitation method was not

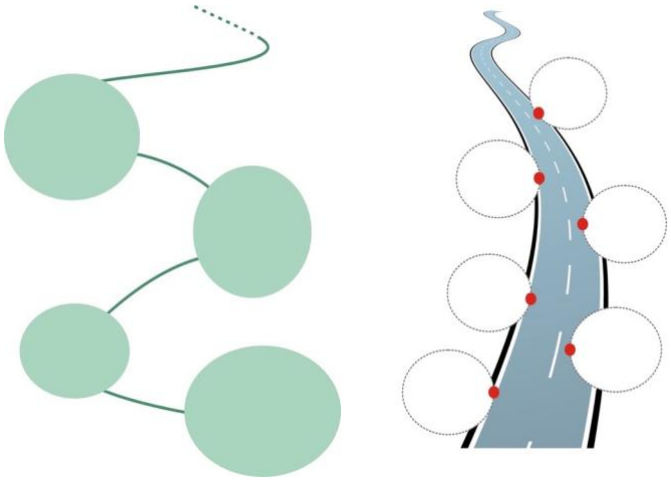
quite what I had expected. Both teachers hinted to me as I watched the first excerpt that they were familiar with their classrooms and had no need to continue watching. The piano teacher involved in the second pilot participant said that she felt pretty shocked that this was a new way of reflecting on her classroom. Although they do not explicitly say or show their feelings or embarrassment, the feedback from two pilot participants and both teachers made me reflect that I needed to be more explicit about the purpose of inviting teachers to watch their own teaching clips and to identify for them in advance the questions I would ask and talk about with them to make this method work better. The second issue is that during the data processing, I found that the observations were playing a more important role in this study than I expected; I had initially planned to use these extracts as an interview tool only, rather than analyse my observation data. I will expand more on this issue in the data analysis section, wherein I will provide how I analysed my observation data in three parts: video excerpts of classroom discussions with the teachers in the interview transcripts; narratives of all observations; and observation notes recorded in my research diary.

Critical Incident Charting (CIC)

Before the data collection stage, I sent an email to each participant with a chart to complete a week in advance in the attachments – the Musical Career and Education Path (see samples below in Figure 4.1). The teachers were asked to fill in the chart to review the experiences that had influenced their career path, as another tool for use later in the interview; follow-up questions would be found in the semi-structured interview Theme B. This chart was used in the second round of interviews and is detailed in the semi-structured interview subsection. Excerpts from the completed paths will be shown in Chapter 6.

Figure 4.1 Musical career and education path: samples

Please recall times in your musical life when you studied, performed, wrote, or taught music with friends and family, at school or in the community, and identify specific events or experiences that influenced your career direction. Reflect on specific instances or key events that you feel have influenced the direction of your musical life. Make a brief note of any experiences that precipitated these changes in direction or any influential events. (Please fill in the Musical Career and Education Path below.) [The teacher received the Chinese version, translated by me]



Semi-structured interview

The interviews are designed as semi-structured, i.e., each interview includes themes given by the researcher, e.g., on teaching, about experiences, and ends with open-ended questions such as “what else?” or “why?” The order of these themes and questions may change depending on the direction of each interview and the interviewee’s responses (Gray, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the interviews were structured with openness around the discussion of extracts from their teaching practice and critical incidents of exercises.

The semi-structured interview, rather than a structured or unstructured interview, was chosen because of its flexibility and openness (Cohen et al., 2018; Brinkman & Kvale, 2018); participants engage in practical discussions

around a few specific themes, which helps to identify particular research questions to explore. Simultaneously, the open-ended questions provide space for unexpected themes to emerge and allow further investigation and the provision of more detail (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). Although the process of collecting and analysing data in semi-structured interviews is often criticised as time-consuming, this approach is generally preferred in qualitative research precisely because it provides the flexibility to focus on each participant's personal stories and experiences and to explore different perspectives on assessment and feedback (Ritchie et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2018).

The interviews for each participant were broadly divided into two themes; see Table 4.2 below. Under the first, *Theme A – Teaching Practice*, I watched excerpts from classroom videos with the teachers (each teacher watching only their own teaching videos) and then interacted with them based on these video clips. This theme focuses on their teaching practice, e.g., their teaching priorities and aims; method and assessment; and lesson design. In *Theme B – Experiences and Policy,* I mainly discussed the *Musical Career and Education Path* (see the CIC Section above for the sample) with teachers and explored these experiences and discovered why they thought these experiences influenced them. This method allowed participants to review relevant experiences. Participants were asked to reflect on their own life experiences and asked to give specific examples of experiences that have influenced their musical or educational careers. These experiences could include their own educational experiences, teaching experiences and musical performance experiences. Teachers' diagrams can also include information about and reactions to educational policies, textbooks and teaching guidelines. This technique's openness allows teachers to select the experiences and periods of their lives they wish to highlight (Odena & Welch, 2009). Moreover, regarding this theme, I would be in conversation with them about what they considered to be relevant policies and their understanding of the requirements of these policies.

Table 4.2 Interview themes

Theme A	Watch excerpts with the teacher *On teacher's interpretations and reflections of their teaching*	*Samples questions:* *Why were you doing this? How do you understand the (relevant teaching requirements, teaching arrangements)? Do you think the students' response is in line with your expectations? (If yes), what would you do if their response was not what you expected?*
Theme B	Musical Career and Education Path (critical incident charting) with teachers	*Samples questions:* *Why do you think this (or that) experience has the biggest (or smallest) impact on your teaching? This experience is very interesting. Could you tell me a bit more about this story? I find you mentioned (this). Could you tell me a bit more about this story?*

Research diary

Finally, I kept a research diary (over 300 entries) reflecting on the day's events, at the end of each day's fieldwork. As Gary (2018) claims, this approach allows me to record my research process, my positive and negative research experiences, my reflections, some unexpected inspirations, and perhaps "important changes in direction" (p. 180). Everything related to the field and research topic might therefore be included in my diary, including the pictures and related accidental conversations with others. Some of this data is referenced where ethics permit. These notes that related to the field and

research topic were included in my diary, including the pictures and related accidental conversations with others.

4.5.2 Pilot studies

With the approval of the Ethics Committee at the College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow, the first two pilots, with one schoolteacher and one piano teacher, were conducted to sharpen and develop these four data collection tools; as some of the details needed to be clarified and the interview schedule with schoolteachers revised, a third pilot with another schoolteacher was organised. The information about these three participants can be found in Table 4.1; Table 4.3 includes the timeline design of the first two pilot studies. An initial plan for data interpretation and analysis methods was then refined after the data from the pilot was assessed, although no full data analysis was completed for the pilot studies.

During the first and second pilots, I identified two main points and issues. First, and most importantly, there is the tension between openness and the purpose of my pilots, i.e., trying to maintain the balance of pre-designed questions and open-ended questioning. I initially planned to go into the field without any preconceived ideas or arrangements, and all conclusions were to be based on extensive observations and conversations with the teachers; although I had some prepared questions and materials at hand, the questions were intended to go the way the teachers wanted them to. However, from the start of watching the video, our conversations were almost always open-ended. I tried to guide them during the interview and then have them answer the questions I had prepared, which was a huge challenge for an interviewer with as little experience as I had. This left me completely passive in both pilots, and the interviews took longer than expected.

The first two pilots made me realise that I needed to be more explicit about the purpose of inviting teachers to watch the videos with me and with specific interview schedules. Therefore, I wrote the data gathering schedule (Appendix 8) with refined criteria in order to select the extracts and clarify questions. This gave me a more explicit agenda for my observations. More importantly, the different interview questions and observation guidelines distinguished the

particularities of the schoolteacher and the piano teacher, which also gave significance and trustworthiness to my data study.

Secondly, regarding the critical incident chart, in the first two pilots, I considered occupying the teachers for as little time as possible, giving them the form at the start of the interview and asking them to take 10 minutes to fill it in. However, this used up too much of the interview time as the maximum total length was approximately only 60 minutes. Furthermore, in both pilots, the teacher chose not to fill in the chart but gave oral narratives of their experiences. To make this charting method work, I chose to give participants an electronic version of the informational letter and the contract together with this chart (naming it the Musical Career and Education Path) by email a week in advance. The teacher was informed that the chart would be used in the second interview and asked to complete the form at a time convenient for them, either hand-written or printed, by a set date (in time for their second interview).

Then, I adjusted and clarified the details of the interview schedule and consequently designed a third pilot. In the third pilot, I observed five of Xu's lessons on three separate days of the week and recorded a total of 200 minutes of video; however, I tried to edit only five video clips of about 10 minutes in total length to talk to her about in detail. In addition, the rest of the videotape was retained, in case they might be reviewed to identify other issues for the second round of interviews and observations. The observation notes, which also contain extensive details of the observations, were kept together with other data and research diaries.

Table 4.3: Sample Timings of the Pilot Studies

WEEK	DATE	DATA COLLECTION		PLACE
WEEK 1	DAY 1	OBS1(TEACHER A)		(TEACHER'S SCHOOL)
	DAY 2	VIDEO EDIT (FOR OBS1)		(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 3	INTERVIEW (TEACHER A)	OBS2(TEACHER A)	(SCHOOL)
	DAY 4	VIDEO EDIT (OBS2)	TRANSCRIPT	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 5	TRANSCRIPT	TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
WEEK 2	DAY 1	REFLECTION	TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 2	INTERVIEW (TEACHER A)	TRANSCRIPT	(TEACHER'S SCHOOL)
	DAY 3	REFLECTION	TRANSCRIPT & TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 4			
	DAY 5			
Notes:	Based on data collection, analysis and reflection over the past two weeks, the schedule and activities may be revised for the next two weeks.			
WEEK 3	DAY 1	OBS3(TEACHER B)		(TEACHER'S SCHOOL)
	DAY 2	VIDEO EDIT (FOR OBS3)		(WORKING E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 3	INTERVIEW (TEACHER B)	OBS4(TEACHER B)	(SCHOOL)
	DAY 4	VIDEO EDIT (OBS4)	TRANSCRIPT	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 5	TRANSCRIPT	TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
WEEK 4	DAY 1	REFLECTION	TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 2	INTERVIEW (TEACHER B)	TRANSCRIPT	(TEACHER'S SCHOOL)
	DAY 3	REFLECTION	TRANSCRIPT & TRANSLATE	(WORKING, E.G. AT HOME)
	DAY 4			
	DAY 5			

Notes: 1) OBS1 in the table means the first-time observation.

2)As the table above shows, after completing the first column as planned (e.g. Observation 1 and video edit), I undertook the second column of tasks as time allowed (e.g. on Day 3, to do another observation after completing the interview with teacher A). I carried out two observations, an interview with the same teacher during the first week of the study, and collated data and reflected on research methods during the second week.

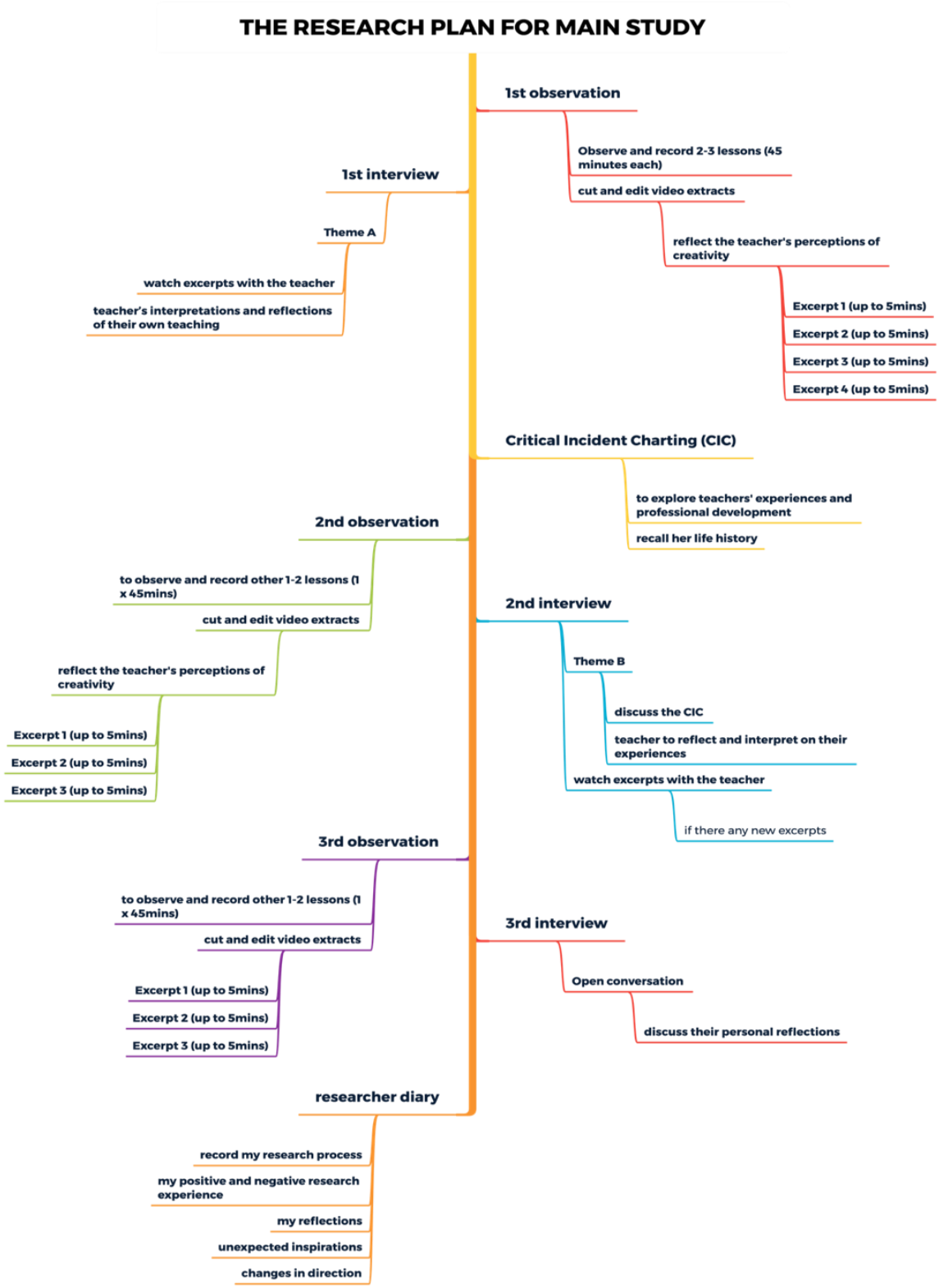
4.5.3 The main study

Following the three pilot studies, the main study, from December 2020 to January 2022 (affected by the pandemic), obtained a more detailed data collection schedule (see Appendix 8), including different questions and open questions for the three phases for the music teachers and piano teachers, and the plan for the process of the main study was determined. The schedule of the three stages of interviews and observations for each teacher is also presented in the form of a flow chart below (see Figure 4.2).

Regarding the first research question – *What are Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity?* – the video clips and observation diaries from the fieldwork captured examples that illustrate the teachers' perceptions of creativity. Their comments during the interviews regarding what they did during the clips we watched together, and their narrations and explanations of their thinking during the interviews also illustrated their perceptions.

Regarding the second question – *In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music and music education and the current policy?* – the Musical Career and Education Path and comments during interviews were used to collect their experiences. Furthermore, I recorded their interpretation of policy, which was firstly reflected in their classroom designs and their assessment criteria for pupils, through observation and research diaries. Secondly, we discussed the policies during the interviews.

Figure 4.2 Main study process: working with one teacher



Notes. 1st observation in the map means observations during the first two months, as round/stage 1. 2nd stands for the third and fourth months and 3rd for the last two months.

4.6 Data analysis

In seeking a deep comprehension of music educators' perceptions and experiences, this study employed thematic analysis (TA), utilising the systematic framework proposed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2018). Their thematic analysis approach was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, this approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm that underpins my study. This is different from other thematic analysis approaches that are more suited to positivism and constructivism, such as Braun & Clarke (2022). Secondly, Brinkmann & Kvale's approach is designed to explore and interpret participants' lived experiences in depth. This approach guides the researcher through the process of reading and re-reading interview transcripts, to identify rich data that reveals the experiences of the participants. Thirdly, their approach offers both rigour and flexibility, enabling in-depth exploration of qualitative data derived from various sources, such as observations, research diaries, and the Music Career and Education Path (Path) articulated by the teachers. Section 4.6.1 elucidates the rationale behind selecting the thematic analysis approach and introduces the four datasets utilised, along with their integrative methodology. Sections 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 outline the TA process and discuss the measures implemented to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

4.6.1 Integration of datasets and thematic analysis rationale

This study involved diverse data types, encompassing observations, interviews, handwritten 'Path' charts from teachers, and my research diary entries. The data were transcribed and contextualised with notes from research diaries, enhancing their analytical depth (Saldaña, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). The study generated extensive qualitative data, including 19 pages of double-spaced observational narratives and over 300 diary entries. Additionally, each participating teacher contributed their Music Career and Education Path, visualising their professional journey. Aligning with previous applications of critical incident charting (e.g., Odena & Welch, 2009), this study demonstrates the teacher's experience through textual description. For experiences highlighted by the teacher during the interview, the study includes excerpts from the original document images found in Chapter 6, such as in Box 6.1. For all the image data, I guaranteed non-identification; participants could only see videos of themselves (not those of any

other participant). While efforts were made to ensure anonymity, complete confidentiality was challenging to uphold given the limited sample size and the fact that the participants were music teachers in the same city who may have known each other from work.

In order to ensure that the interview data were preserved, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As the interviews were conducted in the mother tongue (Chinese) of the interviewees and the researcher, the transcribed text was then fully translated into English by me, resulting into 124 pages of double-spaced transcripts. This translation served as the basis for peer checking with my supervisors and also highlighted cultural nuances in discussing music education and creativity in Eastern and Western contexts. Selected bilingual quotes in the findings chapters aim to illuminate translation challenges, accompanied by explanatory notes on the nuances between the Chinese and English versions.

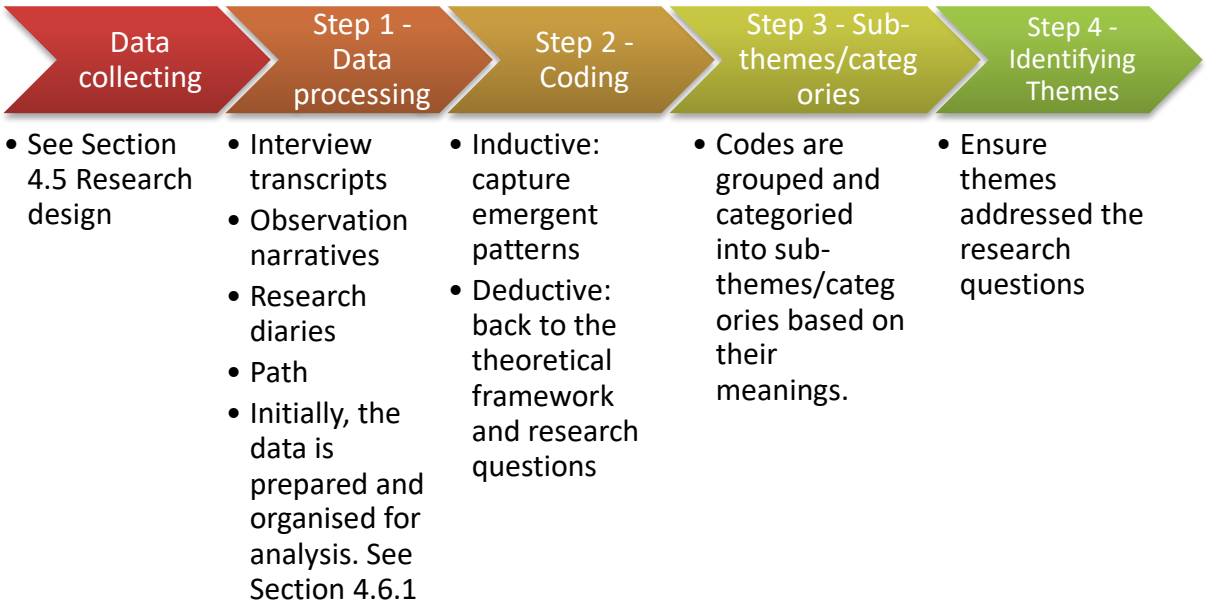
My two research questions explored teachers' perceptions and the experiences that shaped these perceptions. The four distinct sources for data collection were intended to enrich the data acquired through interviews, to provide distinct perspectives and foster a more comprehensive comprehension of the two research questions. Thus, there was continuity in the content across the four different data sets, facilitating the integration of diverse perspectives and sources of information into a cohesive analytical framework. Consequently, a single and unified thematic analysis was conducted for both research questions. This analytical process utilised both inductive and deductive techniques, systematically applied to ensure thematic consistency and to enable a thorough exploration of the research inquiries. The integration of the four distinct datasets was facilitated through a triangulation approach. This involved cross-referencing data from each source to augment the depth and reliability of the analysis. For example, observations and diaries contributed valuable contextual information, enriching the interpretation of interview responses. By employing this comprehensive integration, a more holistic exploration of the research questions was achieved, providing a detailed portrayal of Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity. The triangulation approach not only strengthened the overall trustworthiness of the findings but also ensured a more

robust and multifaceted understanding by incorporating diverse perspectives from various data sources.

4.6.2 Thematic analysis steps: Inductive and deductive coding

The thematic analysis in this study followed five steps, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 below: Data processing, coding, sub-themes/categories, and identifying themes, in order to address the research questions.

Figure 4.3 Thematic analysis process



This initial stage involves organising and preparing the data for analysis, such as transcribing interviews and narratives from observations based on video recordings and research diaries.

Subsequently, a systematic application of both inductive and deductive coding strategies was employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis of these data. The thematic analysis commenced with an inductive approach, which involved exploring data without being constrained by the theories or frameworks. Inductive coding, in this context, aimed to capture emergent patterns based on

the fieldwork and data collected, and identify emerging patterns and themes directly from the data, encapsulating the nuances of participant perspectives. Inductive coding involved the systematic coding of interview transcripts and the categorisation of observational narratives, texts from the teachers' Paths, and diary notes to discern emergent patterns. This process was facilitated by qualitative data processing tools such as NVivo and Microsoft Word (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Wong, 2008). NVivo was chosen for its robust coding and data management capabilities. For instance, it allowed the editing and refinement of coding, enabling the differentiation of nuances within the coded content. Moreover, NVivo facilitated the identification of categories and themes through visualisation features like mind maps and diagrams. I exported the coded content from NVivo to Microsoft Word for editing, and enhancing the readability of the coded text. For instance, I could differentiate coded interviews using various text colours in Word, as exemplified in Appendix 10 (p. 215). The coding process for the interview transcripts is also detailed in Appendix 10, where inductive coding is noted with '(I)' and deductive coding with '(D)'. Inductive codes were identified through the process of data analysis. Examples of these include 'Exam pressure for university entrance', 'Challenge of class size', and 'Pupil engagement and interest'.

Deductive coding aligned the identified codes with the research questions, forming an iterative cycle of reading, coding, and categorising for a holistic analysis of the data. Deductive codes, for example, encompass 'New Curriculum Standards', 'Teacher's perception of creativity', and 'Challenge of classroom management'. Take the code "New Curriculum Standards" (D) as an example, it would represent codes derived from literature I reviewed in Chapter 3 (p. 44). These codes are applied deductively to the data to capture themes or patterns that align with established concepts or frameworks. On the other hand, "Classroom activities (example - Creative activities)" (I) indicates inductive coding, where themes or patterns emerge directly from the data without a predetermined theoretical basis. In this case, classroom activities, particularly the creative tasks in the textbooks of my participants, emerged as themes from the data itself during the analysis process.

The integration of both deductive and inductive coding allows for a comprehensive exploration of themes, encompassing both established

theoretical frameworks and emergent patterns from the data collected during the study. This approach enriches the analysis by incorporating existing knowledge while also capturing new insights derived directly from the research context.

Step 3 as outlined in Figure 4.3 involved the categorisation of recurrent codes into broader themes and/or categories. Recurrent and discernible codes or ideas that significantly represent the music teachers' perceptions and the factors influencing these perceptions are categorised into various categories and their subcategories. Themes are conceptualised as recurrent and discernible categories to address the two research questions. These categories and subcategories elucidate the richness of each theme and provide a comprehensive organisation of the findings. The detailed exposition of these themes, categories, and subcategories can be found in Table 5.1.

Finally, I ensured that these themes and/or categories addressed my two research questions. I identified the final five themes, which are presented in Table 5.1 (p. 91). The coding and identification process of themes and categories for the interview transcripts is meticulously outlined in Appendix 10. This appendix serves as a sample of my 4-step analytical techniques employed in this study.

4.6.3 Validation and trustworthiness

In the pursuit of validity and trustworthiness, it has been argued that all research must be considered on issues of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With regard to the validity of the observation, according to Cohen et al. (2018), the researcher must ensure that the indicators of the structure under investigation are fair and actionable and that the question of what is to be addressed by the observation is clarified and specific. These issues were considered carefully in the pilot of this study; for example, I repeatedly revised and clarified the purpose of the observations, and the criteria for selecting what to observe, which were developed in the previous observations and pilot

sections. However, they also mention that the experience and quality of the researcher affect the reliability of the study (Cohen et al., 2018).

Brinkman and Kvale (2018) conceptualise validity as a form of quality control that applies to the seven stages of the research process – thematisation, design, interview, transcription, analysis, validation and reporting. The trustworthiness issues relate to the way interviews are designed and conducted, the accuracy of translation and transcription, and the method of data classification. Most of these issues have already been discussed in this chapter. During the interviewing stage, I developed a detailed interview guide that facilitated rich and insightful discussions with participating teachers. All data processing was carried out by this researcher with the aid of Nvivo, in order to increase accuracy. The transcription process was approached with a commitment to accuracy, ensuring that the data was faithfully represented in the analysis. In terms of the validity of observations, I conducted three-round observations of the same participants and settings at different times to capture a fuller picture of the educational practices under study. It allowed for the identification of patterns and nuances that might not be evident from a single observation. This precision in defining and addressing the research questions underscored the importance of clarity and specificity in enhancing the study's validity, as per Brinkman and Kvale's framework. Furthermore, the inclusion of additional methods such as maintaining my research diary and asking participants to create a hand-drawn Path provided detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and interactions.

To further enhance the study's trustworthiness, additional strategies were employed, such as reflexivity, peer debriefing, and engagement with diverse perspectives from supervisors. Throughout the study, I engaged in continuous self-reflection, utilising tools such as the research diary to scrutinise personal biases, assumptions, and their influence on the research process. In order to improve my understanding of the study, regular sessions were held with my supervisors to discuss the research findings and analysis process. I discussed and analysed further with my supervisors and other PhD researchers from Eastern and Western contexts after the initial data processing was completed. These sessions provided critical feedback and alternative interpretations to enhance the study's credibility (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018).

4.7 Ethical considerations

On ethical issues, throughout the whole process of data collection and analysis, I complied with the *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (Fourth Edition)* (BERA, 2018), paying particular attention to the 'Responsibilities to participants' and 'to the community' sections. The research design was reviewed and permitted by the university and conducted under their supervision; meanwhile, there were no health and safety concerns during this project as per the *Ethical Guidelines* (BERA, 2018).

The study occurred within the Chinese context and Chinese schools and institutions, with which I am familiar. My research objects are experienced adult teachers, and observations were all conducted at the teacher's usual teaching locations, places selected by the teachers themselves, e.g., in their schools or music studios. The research was carried out with the permission of those teachers, without affecting the normal teaching process and in a comfortable environment for the participants. Interviews were also conducted in a safe, quiet place, and I was able to ensure that participants felt comfortable from the beginning. These were typical face-to-face interviews and did not cause any security problems. Overall, the entire research process could not and did not cause any security concerns.

However, confidentiality in this study was hard to guarantee due to the size of the sample, and the research locations: the schools and other institutions. My six participants and three pilot participants were all situated in the same city and may have known each other, but I maximised the anonymity of their information.

All participants were informed verbally of the nature of the study and were provided with a written participant information sheet prior to the interview. They were invited to read and complete a written consent form (see Appendix 9) before the interview and observation began. Participants were informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed, that only the researcher would have access to the recordings and transcripts and that their right to anonymity would be guaranteed. To protect their confidentiality, participants were informed that transcripts would be kept and referenced by number and

might be translated and added directly into the researcher's PhD thesis and later publications when necessary (see Appendix 9). The participant information sheet and consent form were provided in both English and Chinese. All participants agreed to participate in this study.

As mentioned above, the study would be in the Chinese context and Chinese schools and institutions. All original research data were in Chinese and transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. The transcriptions were carried out with the aid of digital recorders and automated (non-human) transcriptions, which were then checked by the researcher personally. This facilitated a better understanding and transcript of the teachers' points of view; on the other hand, it also increased the difficulty of my translations and data processing workload.

Summary

This study takes an interpretivist position around the research objectives and research questions, analyses the research participants and research methods appropriate for this study, and makes a predetermined judgment about the data analysis method of the study, i.e. systematic analysis. For the study, and the feasibility of qualitative research, this study requires adequate knowledge and research data. Observations should be and can be in-depth due to the small sample size, as the whole teaching process is investigated to collect diversified teaching practices. In the following two chapters, I will discuss my data regarding themes and research findings.

5 Findings and discussion: teachers' perceptions of creativity and music education

Overview

This chapter sets out to develop a critical response to the first research question:

> What are these Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity?

The empirical data discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 were accessed through three rounds of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. As outlined in Chapter 4, during fieldwork, I gathered 124 pages of double-spaced interview transcripts and 19 pages of observation narratives. In addition, each of the six teachers completed a Musical Career and Education Path, and I gathered over 300 entries in my researcher's diary. The data were anonymised, coded and analysed using thematic analysis (see Section 4.6). All participants names of their schools or music studios are listed in Section 4.4 (Table 4.1), and pseudonyms are used. The teachers all taught music to children aged 6 to 11; the three school-based teachers taught from Year 1 to Year 6, though they could be assigned to any grade level, with the teacher sometimes following their class into the next grade. The three piano teachers participating in my study taught children aged 6 to 11 as their primary job, although they also worked with older students.

To address my first research question, in this chapter I present and discuss the perceptions of the teachers regarding creativity and how they thought music education might develop pupils' creativity. In Chapter 6, I discuss the factors that appear to have influenced their perceptions, including the teachers' experiences and those related to national and local policies, which relate to the second research question. In these two chapters my discussion of the findings is organised around five themes – the first three themes and their associated eight categories and six subcategories are discussed in this chapter. Chapter 6 is organised around the other two themes and their five categories. These themes and their categories are shown in Table 5.1 below, which also lists the section numbers in which each theme is introduced.

Table 5.1 Emerging themes, categories and subcategories with section numbers

Chapters	Themes	Categories and subcategories	
5. Teachers' perceptions of creativity and music education	5.1 Teachers' definitions of creativity	5.1.1 Creativity is a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials	5.1.1.1: "Build up your experience"
			5.1.1.2: "Gain nourishment from classics"
		5.1.2 Embracing creative thinking in music	5.1.2.1 Flexibility in music education
			5.1.2.2 Allowing for different understandings
	5.2 Teachers' perceptions of teaching for creativity: the music learning spectrum	5.2.1 Creativity in the continuous music education process – continuity and coherence	
		5.2.2 The basis of creativity in the spectrum of musical learning	5.2.2.1 Interest and engagement
			5.2.2.2 Basic knowledge/skills and practice
		5.2.3 Permission and guidance for creativity	
	5.3 The challenges of teaching for creativity	5.3.1 Pressure of too many pupils	
		5.3.2 Lack of teaching resources and professional development opportunities	
		5.3.3 Pressure of exams	
6. Factors influencing teacher's perceptions in fostering creativity	6.1 The influence of music learning and teaching experience on teachers' perceptions	6.1.1 Reflections on their own music learning experiences	6.1.1.1 Emphasis on interest
			6.1.1.2 Emphasis on musical knowledge learning
		6.1.2 Experiences in different teaching settings	
	6.2 Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers	6.2.1 Creative activities – New Curriculum Standards	
		6.2.2 Assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context	
		6.2.3 Piano grade examinations and competitions	

Throughout the thesis, interview quotations are identified in brackets as 'Interview' followed by a number, indicating the numbered answer within the transcript. For example, '1st Interview with Liu, 25' refers to the first interview with Liu, and the 25th response, whereas quotations from observation narratives are identified as 'Observation'. Furthermore, I will use more detailed narrative boxes in the text to quote longer extracts from diverse sources, including my research diary, teachers' Paths, observation narratives and excerpts from textbooks. As discussed in Section 4.5, I hope the use of narrative boxes (e.g.,

Box 5.1) to display detailed extracts helps readers to consider the social and cultural background and music education contexts of these teachers when discussing their perceptions (e.g., Barrett & Stauffer, 2009).

This chapter includes four broad sections. In the first three sections I introduce the first three themes, namely the teachers' definitions of creativity (Section 5.1); teachers' comments on teaching for creativity and the music learning spectrum (Section 5.2); and their comments on how their contemporary educational environment poses challenges to teaching creativity (Section 5.3). For the sake of clarity, all section headings take the name of themes and their categories as listed in Table 5.1 above. In Section 5.4, I outline and discuss the key issues arising from this chapter, followed by a summary section.

5.1 Teachers' definitions of creativity

During the interviews, none of the six teachers appeared to have a concise and fully-formed definition of creativity. Regardless of whether the teachers were engaged in school-based music education or teaching piano, they said that they had no books or materials to support their definition, with neither the textbooks nor the piano teaching books providing a definition of creativity. Thus, their views on creativity were likely to be based on their personal experiences and reflections. Before explaining how these teachers fostered creativity through a process of working from fundamentals to innovation rather than directly through creative exercises, it is necessary to clarify how these teachers attempted to define and embrace the concept of creativity. They suggested that they usually spent time on children's basics, including technique and knowledge, as well as music appreciation and aesthetic capabilities, because they believed that having a solid foundation would not be a barrier but a positive help to children's creativity.

Following an iterative analysis and review of the interview data, in this section, I outline two aspects of teachers' definition of creativity that were coded under the categories – 'Creativity is a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials' and 'Embracing creative thinking in music'. The former focusses on teachers' comments regarding the innovation concerning musical works, i.e., creativity in musical performance and composition, which will be presented and

discussed in Section 5.1.1. The latter is concerned with how they considered children's creativity as a pattern of thinking, i.e., the creativity that children acquire or develop during their musical learning, which will be presented and discussed in Section 5.1.2.

5.1.1 Creativity is a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials

In this section, one of the aspects through which teachers define creativity is outlined: the ability to refine an interpretation by having a deeper understanding of the meaning of musical works. At the end of this section, I also provide the teacher's terms, under two fourth-level numbered headings - Section 5.1.1.1: "Build up your experience", and Section 5.1.1.2: "Gain nourishment from classics". These two subsections explain how they define creativity based on their views on music education.

My participants all believed that creativity in musical performance meant interpreting the meaning of a piece and expressing the emotion of the music better and more accurately, although they explained with examples tied to their work context. For example, the piano teachers understood better interpretation of music as choosing a more appropriate technique, whereas the music teachers understood this as choosing the right dances or instruments to enhance performance.

> He played it like this, which I hadn't heard before, but I found it more **comfortable** and refreshing. [...] This understanding of music changed my previous perception, the inherent, habitual view. That's creativity. (2nd interview with Chen, 45) (Emphasis **in bold** mine)
>
> Original interview transcription in Chinese：他这样弹，和我原来听到的不同，我觉得这样弹更舒服、更新鲜。……对音乐的这种理解改变了我之前的看法，改变了我固有的、习惯性的观点。这就是创造力。

A comparison between the Chinese and English texts reveals that the position of the nouns and verbs used by the teacher changed during the translation. However, in this dialogue, I did not change the position of each sentence to

ensure the teacher's meaning was captured in the translation following the sentence construction in English. For example, Chen gave a detailed answer first, and then concluded with the statement, "This is creativity". I translated it this way to ensure a smooth English flow without altering Chen's intended meaning. As I will further explain in Section 7.6 on the limitations of my study, one of the challenges I faced while translating was to consider both the accuracy and fluency of the translation.

In terms of composition, similarly, they explained creativity as finding a new and better way to express the lyricism or composers' emotions. In Box 5.1 (p.84), I provide an example of a schoolteacher's narrative of a choreography experience – Wang talked about an opportunity for pupils' creativity training – how choreography can be used to showcase on stage what pupils and teachers do during the day, and how she felt the need to choreograph music and pupils' physical expressions to show pupils' energy and enthusiasm, as well as the teacher-student interactions. In addition, I quote piano teacher Chen's comments on piano adaptations of traditional Chinese music, in Box 5.3); he mentions the expressive power of the tone of the instrument itself, such as the 'wretched beauty' of the sound of the *erhu*, a traditional Chinese instrument (see a photo of *Erhu* in Figure 5.1). He also suggests that although the piano cannot simulate the tone of the erhu, when playing it, one can be trained to play the tension of the music through the practice of their finger technique.

Figure 5.1 A photo of an *Erhu* (open access photo by LDHan, 2006)

Regarding adaptations, Chen believed that the advantage of the piano is its wide range of sound, which is different from that of traditional Chinese instruments, which means the piano version often adds harmonies to the original melody, which he considered to be the advantage of such Western instruments like the piano and other instruments in the symphony orchestra, which then collide with traditional Chinese music to produce innovation.

Therefore, embedded in the new performances and compositions seemed to be a re-interpretation of the old works and the inherent knowledge of the creator, and thus a new, deeper, and more profound understanding of the old emerges. As Chen suggested, re-interpretation for the sake of creation meant gaining a richer, and more insightful interpretation of musical pieces:

> I think creativity in music is a **deep feeling** of a piece of music or a melody. […] when their understanding is deeper, they perform or sing it in a little deeper and richer way than others do. (1st interview with Chen, 3)
>
> Original interview transcription in Chinese：我认为音乐中的创造力好比是对一段乐曲或旋律的深刻感受。…… 他们的理解更深刻，他们在演奏或者演唱时，就会比其他人更深刻、更丰富一些。

'Deep feeling' may not be an accurate translation of the original Chinese text; however, it seemed that Chen used the word 'deep' to mean a more accurate and thorough understanding of the music. So, here I have included the original Chinese text to enable Chinese readers to consider my interpretation.

Thus it seemed important to include two perspectives. Firstly, a deep knowledge is required of musical genres and techniques and the accumulation of a broader range of performance methods and expression approaches. There is an example of that, in a music class, when school teacher Zhao showed the children an orchestral piece, ‘The Forest Ball’, which was adapted for children, and guided them to identify that the light sound of the violin was an imitation of a rabbit while the thick sound of the cello was a tiger; then, depending on the rhythm of the music, Zhao had the pupils imitate a rabbit jumping and a tiger spinning in a circle.

> In the next 30 minutes, she took the children to listen to the piece again in sections. After listening to each section, Zhao asked the class to find out which instruments were used to imitate which animals in the forest. (Observation 2021 01 08)

Zhao, and another school teacher Duan used this approach in their music appreciation lessons, allowing pupils to make connections between the sounds of vocals or instruments, and what they represent, such as 'lovely rabbits' or 'a powerful tiger'. Appreciation lessons were highly valued by teachers, even the piano teachers, who mentioned in interviews that more appreciation and listening were helpful for interpreting music and developing creativity.

Secondly, in order to create, it is important to be able to judge and choose the appropriate expressions and performances – having the sense of the sound and musical pieces, or the aesthetic judgement (e.g., 'judgment of taste' in Kant, 1790). However, all my participants accepted the idea that this distinction was something the children might not be able to accomplish. In the example below of Wang's narrative of an extra-curricular choreography activity for the pupils (Box 5.1), Wang asked the pupils to think outside the box and brainstorm, but then she would choose the appropriate and relevant choreography herself instead of letting children decide about the discussion and final works, e.g., costumes and overall stage design. However, she believed that more opportunities like this could develop the pupils' senses and feelings of music.

Box 5.1 Diary extract: extra-curricular activity

During the interviews, Wang said that creative activities outside of the classroom and the chances that extracurricular activities gave pupils to develop their creativity. I remember that Zhao also stressed the importance of this as well. Wang believed that when pupils were given a piece of music, the scenes and movements they came up with showed pupils' creativity.

Wang told me that letting children participate in performance activities, especially when they are required to create and rehearse these activities independently, is an excellent opportunity to practise and develop their creativity. To choreograph the show, Wang said, first, the pupils brainstormed ideas based on a theme, thinking of as many sounds and dance moves that might express it. The teachers then worked together to find a suitable framework within which to choreograph these ideas into a programme. In addition, the teachers had to think about costumes, stage design, and the production of the background track.

However, she felt it was a pity that such opportunities were only rarely available. […] Although Wang might not think the pupils would be able to meet the requirements of choreography in terms of aesthetic ability, according to her it was valuable and helpful to get them to think outside the box and to allow them to follow the teacher's experience of the creative process from nothing to the final show.

Wang emphasised the importance of rehearsals outside the classroom and said that this experience was "the closest" she considered herself to the "core of creativity".

> What we had was merely a theme: no music, no props, nothing. We had to design and prepare [them all] ourselves [the school music teachers and our pupils]. I [as a teacher] even found it challenging. […] After this rehearsal, pupils saw what true creativity is. (1st Interview with Wang, 3&6)

Wang said that the complete choreography of such a performance activity was a challenge to the creativity of both the pupils and the teacher.

> I think all that stuff comes from imagination and creativity. It can come from imagining the music and then thinking about it and creating it from the music and listening to it over and over again, and that's a creative [learning]. It's challenging to design that kind of programme. […] Children made the best use of their creativity. Well, of course, it was our [teachers'] creativity as well, and we faced a challenge together. (1st Interview with Wang, 3&5)

This excerpt in Box 5.1 is from my diary following my first interview with Wang. When writing up my research findings, I reviewed the transcription of the interview at the time again. I found that Wang made several references to the experience and described it in detail in the interview.

> Usually [when rehearsing a programme], we only choreograph a dance, or a chorus, based on a piece of music. However, this rehearsal was created from scratch, entirely produced by us, and we tried to express the theme [of Teachers' Day and a day on campus]. (1st Interview with Wang, 6)

Her comments on the activities reflect Wang's holistic understanding of what creativity is and how it can be trained – there are many messages in her narrative and comments – so the points that she mentioned about those factors are discussed separately in this thesis. She encouraged the pupils to express themselves and to demonstrate their understanding of the music, even though she believed that children's aesthetic skills might not be perfect and were still developing.

> [The pupils] choreograph in groups. The movement they choreograph may not be as **beautiful** as the dance moves, but it is based on their understanding of the music. (2nd Interview with Wang, 49)

In addition, she saw such expression through music and dance and choreography as a reflection of both the pupils' ability to think outside the box (which is my second point – see Section 5.1.2) and their aesthetic ability, or that of their teachers. She therefore argued that music teaching should and can enhance pupils' aesthetic ability by allowing them to practise appreciation and thus, aesthetic judgement.

> You become more **comfortable** with it if you practice this more. […] not just dancing; you can do percussion, for example, string bells, double bells, little wooden fish, and triangle (musical instruments). (2nd Interview with Wang, 49)

Both Chen and Wang mentioned being comfortable, which was their own terminology. When the word comfortable is used, it sounds like the pupils are being told to become accustomed to beauty and therefore develop an aesthetic. However, they explained that being comfortable was different from getting used to something. Chen also used the term - comfortable - but pointed out that everyone feels comfortable in different ways and, therefore, everyone has different techniques for expressing music (in performance) or emotion (in composition). In this example, Wang also used the term comfortable, agreeing that comfortable is a state of change; for example, she said, there was a lot of classical music that pupils found uncomfortable and unacceptable when they first heard it, but as they listened to more of the genre, they were able to understand the music better and on a deeper level, which took them from being uncomfortable to comfortable.

Box 5.1 also illustrates the teachers' definition of creativity as a deeper reinterpretation of existing musical work. In addition, it is likely that teachers believed that children might spend time acquiring musical knowledge - this issue will be discussed from multiple perspectives in the following sections and the following findings chapter - before they acquire an aesthetic judgement. In the two subsections that follow, I will introduce the issue for the first time,

borrowing the teacher's terminology that creativity may require to "build up your experience" and to get "nourishment from the classics". Thus, it is important to mention the teacher's view that music education has a progressive and implicit impact on children.

5.1.1.1: "Build up your experience"

All six teachers believed that unless a child were exceptionally talented, the majority of children would struggle to meet the aesthetic demands of musical creativity, and that they required more time with the music to learn various genres, instruments, and rhythms, as well as to master piano techniques and skills. Chen argued, for instance, that if a person is not born with artistic talent, it needs to be developed over time through appreciation and reflection on music.

> Some might feel better and hear more [emotion] in the melody or music. This could be something he felt later in life, or it could be his talent. (1st interview with Chen, 10)

However, even gifted pupils may need time to comprehend and practice in order to meet such artistic demands. My participants perceived music education as having a gradual, hidden impact on pupils, for instance, Wang (2nd interview, 45) said that:

> Cultivating creativity can't just be done by joining these various classroom activities. It must be nurtured in each and every music class.
>
> Original interview transcription in Chinese：培养创造力不能只靠这些多样化的课堂活动。它必须是潜移默化地 [进行]，在每一堂音乐课上 [都如此]。

My participants used two words to summarise the role in an abstract way – 'nurturing' (or 'immersion'; my translation), '*Xun tao'*, and the idiom in Chinese '*Qian yi mo hua'*. My participants frequently used these two words when describing and commenting on their perceptions of the role of music education in pupils' development and the place of creativity in music education, so

understanding these two words is important for understanding my participants' perceptions of creativity. However, these words have an abstract and generalised meaning in Chinese, which makes it challenging to translate them into English accurately. A mere translation of these words as 'immersion' may not convey their complete meaning. Therefore, analysing the context in which teachers used these words may help to understand these terms. I have included the original text of this quotation to help Chinese researchers in their interpretations. Both terms are similar in meaning, referring to secretly influencing. '*Xun tao'* means that a person's mind, character and behaviour are gradually influenced by something good.'*Qian yi mo hua'* comes from a traditional Chinese allusion, indicating that an individual's thoughts and character change unnoticed, influenced by the environment and others. The two Chinese phrases imply three aspects: it takes time to occur; it is unnoticeable/hidden learning; and children's thoughts, character, and behaviour are influenced by good things and qualities. I have included the translations of the words used by the teachers in Box 5.2 below, including the notes I took when translating the data, which I also discussed in Chapter 4 Methodology. See Section 5.1.1.2 for more details on 'nurturing' and 'good qualities' and the discussion on teaching for creativity in Section 5.4.2.

Box 5.2 Diary extract: my translation of teachers' terms

Regarding translation, the dual interpretation issue is one of the challenges in an interpretivist paradigm. However, to make sure that the translation kept as much of the teacher's original meaning as possible, I did a two-way translation of all the Chinese content from Chinese to English and from English to Chinese to verify the word choice in the translation. In cases where I cannot find an English translation that conveys the teacher's meaning, I use a phrase or a paragraph to illustrate the teacher's words (e.g., the two Chinese words discussed above – "*Xun tao*" and "*Quan yi mo hua*" – as well as some teacher's terms like *Mo erduo*, i.e., "honing your ears"). I translated the teacher's terminology and added an explanation of what she means, based on the teacher's own interpretation.

The issues of translation from Chinese have been explained in the methodology chapter well.

Four of the six participating teachers considered the process of developing children's aesthetics to be nurturing or immersive; based on their comments and my observations, the main goal of their teaching was to develop appreciation – to get pupils to listen to and gradually understand music:

> I have intentionally let them listen to it since they were in Year 1. I think it's a **habit** […]. For example, I can have my child listen to music for an hour a day at home. I won't tell him; I just have the audio on, while he plays on his own. I think music is a spiritual thing; it's not about what I will do today, what I'm going to listen to with a clear purpose and schedule; it's not. It's about **honing your ears** and getting used to it; so, you should go and listen to it regularly. (Emphasis **in bold** mine; 1st interview with Zhao, 15)
>
> Original interview transcription in Chinese：从他们一年级开始，我就留意让他们多听。这是一种习惯。…… 比如说，我可以让孩子每天在家听一个小时的音乐。我不告诉他，我只是开着音响，让他自己玩。我觉得音乐是一种精神上的东西；它不是，我今天做什么，我要听什么，有明确的目的和时间表；它不是。它是磨练你的耳朵，让你习惯它；所以要多听。

This long quote in which Zhao described the details of getting pupils into the 'habit' of listening to music over time and summarised how this helped pupils to build their own musical experiences. Similar to the quote on page 88, this example shows once again that the teacher gave a detailed answer and then concluded with the last sentence. Problems such as grammatical issues encountered in translating Chen's transcription and difficulties in translating for accuracy and logic also appear here and elsewhere. I will focus on the challenges of translation in Section 7.6 (p. 191 & 192) on research limitations.

It is worth noting that Zhao used the terms “habit” and “honing your ears” rather than honing skills, which seems to prove that the teacher believes music education is about having an impact on people rather than acquiring particular skills. They stress the importance of time for music education to develop your sense of music, or musical aesthetics. For example, piano teacher Liu added that pupils need to accumulate and imitate in order to take on board the musical aesthetics:

> When he plays more, he will find that there are patterns to follow. [...] But most of [the children] **accumulate** too little experience. […] [Accumulation] cannot be thought of as creative; it is considered **mimetic**. It is only after this that renewal is possible. Only after this can people add some of their own senses of music. (Emphasis **in bold** mine; 1st & 2nd interview with Liu, 7&28)

Therefore, they emphasise time, that pupils need to be patient and persistent and to practise, which they believed would lead to their own deeper understanding of music as they learned over time. They believed that during this process of learning music, pupils’ thoughts, personalities and behaviours would be affected and change, but that such changes would not be rapid, and that while some might be visible in the short term, others might not be evident until their future studies. Therefore, as I will discuss in Section 5.4.2 (Teaching for creativity: do teachers value creativity and what can they do), teachers did not believe that their current teaching would immediately affect their pupils’ creativity.

5.1.1.2: “Gain nourishment from classics”

By letting pupils enjoy music, teachers would be asking them to experience the quality of the music and develop their taste for melodies as well as their judgement of what makes a good rhythm; this is what I refer to as music-making based on musical aesthetics. Teachers who believe in providing children with opportunities to experience and appreciate music are more concerned with their musical aesthetics than their creativity. According to school teacher Duan, although he found that musical aesthetics were essential to pupils’ creativity

because learning music was nourishing, he emphasised the 'nourishment' derived from music:

> It would be better to listen to some classics. Children are very good at mimicry, and listening only to catchy songs. […] They are not nutritious at all, I think. (1st Interview with Duan, 33)

In terms of gaining nourishment through listening to the classics, Wang also explained that as the classics contain many valuable perspectives, they are worthy of repeated listening and that, at different ages, students may come to understand the music differently.

> A good book can be read carefully over and over again. You may have read this book once when you were at school and will have a different experience when you read it again in a few years. This is the charm of the classics. And this is also true in music. (2nd interview with Wang, 46).

Piano teacher Chen added that there is cultural content in classical music, such as in the Western classical piano pieces of Chopin, and said he would choose some Chinese music for the children, such as *Erquan*, *Sunset Flute and Drum*, and *Pinghu Qiuyue*, which are piano adaptations of traditional Chinese folk songs. (A sample of Chinese piano pieces, like 'The Moon Mirrored in the Pool' or *Er Quan Ying Yue* available on YouTube, played by a famous Chinese piano player B. Wang (2016), which can be compared with a historical recording of the original piece played in 1950 by the composer on the *erhu*.) Chen's narrative concerning *Erquan* will be developed in Box 5.3 (p.94) regarding teachers' aesthetic perceptions, integrated with comments from my research journal. Chen pointed out that cultural background would affect the understanding and expression of music but that studying music makes culture more accessible to us:

> Chinese classical and traditional works have become **cultural classics** because of the many **excellent qualities** folded into their content that deserve repeated listening and need to be appreciated. (1st interview with Chen, 15).

On the following page, Box 5.3 is an extract from my research diary, in which I reflect on the factors related to my participants' understandings of aesthetics; different people, at different times, interpret it differently. For example, Chen would be flexible in how the children performed the pieces, as long as the child felt comfortable with the sounds.

It is worth noting that he believed that the children had to master the basics before they could feel that the sounds were comfortable; their technique had to be adequate. This might include when the composer marked the score with the word 'elastic' and the children's fingers were able to play in an 'elastic' way, or when their ears can hear how someone else plays in an 'elastic' fashion, and their fingers are able to play the same way, which might be accepted as accurate technique; in another case, the rhythm of a part of the piece may express the author's calm state of mind, requiring the pupil, or their teachers, to decide how to play it and what technique to use.

Their technique has to be able to meet the requirements of the piece they are playing, in order, for example, to pass the piano examination, when they must play the prescribed piece precisely according to the rhythm of the piece. This is an issue discussed in the next chapter (subsection 6.2). Additionally, Chen argued that it is important to balance the need to meet the requirements with the need to develop this own aesthetic with reflective skills. As he argued in Section 5.1.2, piano teachers should give their pupils the space to think flexibly. In response to this, both the schoolteacher and the piano teacher I interviewed agreed that aesthetics need to be built up over time, based on regular learning of musical and technical skills with strict requirements, and that teachers need to be aware of flexibility in the learning process: for example, allowing pupils to have the freedom to think, which facilitates the development of their creative thinking, and 'avoiding rote learning'. I will continue to discuss this point in comparison with the challenge of exams in Section 5.3.3, and in relation to the literature in Section 5.4.3 on how teaching for creativity balances building pupils' aesthetic sense and allows them to think.

Box 5.3 Diary extract: Chen's example concerning *Erquan*

Teachers in this study suggest that music is beautiful because of its complexity – different people, at different times, interpret it differently, e.g., Wang said that – "A good book can be read carefully over and over again…". For these music teachers, understanding children's aesthetic abilities can be as complex as creativity. Other teachers may make similar comments but with more abstract descriptions of what is aesthetic, e.g., the 'colours' or 'soul' of music, Liu said.

Chen said that people have different opinions about the interpretation of *Er Quan Ying Yue*. The composition was written for the erhu, and the rhythm of the piece itself implies sadness, poverty and desolation. Chen thought that playing it on the piano might discount this metaphor. But on the other hand, he said, the piano has a wider range than the erhu, which also adds new possibilities. He suggested that pupils should be free to use the techniques they choose to express their own understanding of the music; however, on the other hand, they must have a deeper knowledge of the techniques, Chen used the word, such as elastic.

Chen pointed out the contradiction in a teacher being expected to take developing piano teaching into account as a tool for aesthetic education. For children, he will be flexible in how the children perform the pieces – as long as the child feels comfortable with this, it is not necessary for them to technically follow the strict requirements of Western classical music for pianists, e.g., pause and rhythm. Chen's suggestion – that there is no single aesthetic standard for music – seems to explain the teachers' claims about the link between musical aesthetics and creativity.

The extracts in Box 5.3 are from my diary after the last interview with Chen. Chen mentioned that the sound could be more elastic and that pupils could express the tension of the Chinese instruments.

> Something in the music should stir up their feelings and emotions. But here, to express their feelings and emotions, they need [to be able] to evoke them through their hands and their playing technique. (1st interview with Chen, 10)

Chen added that playing traditional Chinese music demands different techniques from the pianist – Chinese music requires a mood, and sometimes the pianist loses the melody of the Chinese music in their pursuit of rhythm and clarity.

> But when you play it like that, the piano teacher will tell you that it's not right, you don't have a rhythm; the rhythm is [the teacher sings the

> melody with rhythm] like that. So, they ask you to play it like that. (1st Interview with Chen, 3).

Box 5.3 summarises my discussion of the teacher's comments about creativity as a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials. As discussed in this section, through my observations of teachers, I discovered evidence to support their emphasis on the learning of musical materials and knowledge; whether it was having pupils to listen to a wide range of music, gaining experience from traditional Chinese and Western classical music. As the teachers suggested – the abstract and hidden nourishment of music, they emphasise music appreciation and aesthetics, and this is where the teacher may hold a dominant position (Yu & Leung, 2019). However, teachers believe that as pupils make sense of the musical material, they will develop a deeper understanding of it, although this may be an invisible process. Furthermore, in terms of fostering pupils' creativity, the interpretations of whether pupils' deeper understanding of music enables them to develop their own reinterpretations, and how this occurs, emerges merely through dialogue with the teacher.

Through Chen's example, I tried to explain this tension between the teacher's insistence on musical technique and knowledge and allowing pupils the freedom to generate their own ideas. Yet since teachers described creativity as a product that emerges when there is a deep understanding, as a better re-interpretation of an existing musical work, rather than something that can be had from the beginning of exposure to music, they may have to put the teaching of traditional musical knowledge ahead of the development of creativity in their pupils. Further, as shown in the beginning of Box 5.3, the three teachers had different interpretations of aesthetics. They saw aesthetics as producing complex metaphors – keep thinking and finding creative ways to interpret while learning traditional knowledge.

5.1.2 Embracing creative thinking in music

In Section 5.1.1, I discussed the demands for music appreciation and aesthetic judgement when defining creativity for school music teachers and piano teachers. They take into account the creativity that children acquire and develop through music learning over time. In this section, I explain the way teachers in various contexts view children's creativity as a mode of thinking, i.e., how teachers identify flexibility in music education (Section 5.1.2.1) and the extent to which they permit pupils to express their diverse understandings in the teaching and learning process (Section 5.1.2.2).

5.1.2.1 Flexibility in music education

The piano teachers argued that they would not be too strict about the child's playing, considering the joy and beauty of music instead of exams or competitions. For example, piano teacher Chen said that 'everyone has a different understanding of music' and 'each person has a different level of satisfaction with sounds' (1st interview with Chen, 23). For children, he will be flexible in terms of how they perform the pieces; as long as the child feels comfortable with this, it is not necessary for them to technically follow the strict requirements of Western classical music for pianists, e.g., pause and rhythm. As mentioned above, Chen's suggestion that there is no single aesthetic standard for music seems to explain the teachers' claims about the link between musical aesthetics and creativity.

Similarly, the primary school teachers also pointed out that there are no standard answers in music assessment because there is no single understanding or interpretation of music. For example, Wang said:

> Language and maths lessons will be tested, and the answers will be fixed. But not music. […] We can use music and art to stimulate children's imaginations and creativity because there is divergent thinking in these [artistic activities]. […] In music, you can add movement, as long as the pitch is right; you can add any movement, and these are very flexible. It's not mathematics; the answer is not fixed. (2nd interview with Wang, 43&44)

Consequently, the teachers explained that they could have the children listen to or play music during lessons without having to explain musical concepts and learning points or lecture them.

> They feel music lessons are more approachable and will not lose concentration or feel exhausted from acquiring a lot of knowledge. […] They can listen to the music in their way and have their interpretations. They can freely follow their imagination in music. (1st interview with Duan, 1&2)

They believe that music lessons not only provide a mental break for pupils but also help them develop critical thinking; the teachers observed could see the children's joy, energy, and imagination, which the teachers felt was conducive to their creativity and well-being:

> Pupils feel tired after a morning of learning. In a music class, you can clearly tell that they are happy, and their brains are relaxed. (1st Interview with Zhao, 23)

In an examination- and knowledge-driven education system, schoolteachers may be required to impart large amounts of knowledge in order for students to pass exams (e.g., Zhao, 2012). The three primary school teachers I interviewed and observed said they had to deliver a significant amount of textbook content, while ignoring the children's creativity, because of the limited time available for lessons. In contrast to other courses such as mathematics and English, my participants believed that primary school music lessons liberated pupils from textbook rote learning and memorisation, allowing them to enjoy music and think creatively. Here, the three piano teachers had very few comments concerning how examination-driven education would fix children's thinking, but Chen mentioned that he does not limit the children's understanding of music, believing that the openness and liberation of music education are reflected in this way. However, I found that the piano exams and competitions challenged the piano teachers, to some extent, in their efforts to help with creativity and openness in their daily teaching, which is discussed in Section 6.3 of the next chapter and explained in the light of the observations and interviews with the three piano teachers.

As discussed in Chapter 3, an increasing body of literature emphasises that under China's examination- and knowledge-oriented education, students have to be exposed to a great deal of knowledge and learning tasks in order to succeed in tests (e.g., Zhao, 2012). According to the three primary school teachers, pupils liberated from such learning can enjoy themselves during music classes. The teachers clarified that primary school music assessments are often performed based on individual student singing, and marked by several examiner teachers based on criteria, with very few exceptions. (Sometimes teachers or the government will try to assess pupils' performance with questionnaires or by taking multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank tests.) They do not evaluate the memorisation of textbook materials.

5.1.2.2 Allowing for different understandings

The creative nature of music, and the flexibility of music education, gives teachers the opportunity to allow pupils to use their divergent thinking. Chen said that music learning allowed pupils the freedom to develop their own ideas. Similarly, school music teachers believed that creativity in the music classroom meant allowing pupils to have their own interpretations and think outside the box. For example, Duan said,

> They are able to come up with new ideas out of the box, different aspects or different from what the teacher is talking about, or what they heard before; that is their creativity. (1st interview with Duan, 23)

Wang added that freedom of the mind meant liberation from rote learning and fixed thinking:

> If the teacher only instils knowledge, for example, "Today we are going to learn 2/4 time; the strong and weak beat is the first beat is strong, and the second beat is weak. Okay, everyone, remember that", that seems to work, but it's not good for children's creativity. The pupils' minds are then fixed. If we only teach them to memorise knowledge by rote, then they may end up just knowing rote learning; so, we need music lessons to get them thinking out of the box. (2nd interview with Wang, 43)

According to Wang, this requires teachers to be aware of the need to actively change their previous approaches, to guide creativity and to permit creativity, i.e., to reduce the amount of knowledge required and increase the focus on creativity. Wang mentioned that, for the teacher, teaching for creativity means 'an approach to guidance, about a philosophy of education[/an awareness]' (3rd interview with Wang, 57).

Chen told the pupils that 'as long as you are expressing your feelings and you are comfortable with the sound you are playing, that is all that matters' (1st interview with Chen, 24). Chen believed that the intensity could be decided by the players, according to their feelings, as long as they did not play the wrong notes and the rhythm was stable. Here, he mentions his idea of unacceptable mistakes, e.g., a wrong note. He said that apart from these unacceptable errors, pupils should be allowed to play the piece as they would like to present it. School music teacher Wang argued that creativity in the music classroom allowed pupils the freedom to develop their own ideas.

5.2 Teachers' perceptions of teaching for creativity: the music learning spectrum

Creativity is now a guide and a goal for teachers in recent years (MoE, 2011, 2022; Ho, 2023), but the concept of creativity remains at a distance from their actual teaching practice. This is because the work they have to do is mainly about children learning techniques and music appreciation. However, interviewees believed that the process results in pupils' creativity being increased. They would call their work a basic stage of education. In this section, I will discuss these teachers' perceptions of the continuous and coherent relationship between learning the old and innovating the new. Section 5.1 discussed teachers' definitions of creativity, which implied there was a spectrum of music learning, based on teachers' views on how music education fosters creativity in pupils.

I focus on one of my key findings – the spectrum of music learning, which is discussed in the context of relevant literature and further outlined in Table 5.2 below. I also provide a discussion on the teachers' perceptions of the development of children's creativity. I will discuss the teacher's holistic

understanding of music learning and analyse the three main points of the teachers' views of creativity, and how they consider that an interest in music and the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills are fundamental to the learning of music for pupils. However, they argue that the music learning process relies on practice and reflection, which means there is a need for time and accumulation.

I outline three aspects of the music learning spectrum that were coded under the categories – 'Creativity in the continuous music education process – continuity and coherence', 'The basis of creativity in the spectrum of musical learning', and 'Permission and guidance for creativity'. In Section 5.2.1, I introduce the spectrum of music learning and the teachers' views regarding continuity and coherence in music learning. Section 5.2.2 discusses how teachers introduced foundations in the music learning process, showing their views on the 'interest' and the 'basis' in the spectrum. In Section 5.2.3, I discuss teachers' views on teaching for creativity, and their beliefs that teachers should allow pupils to engage in creativity and how teachers can guide pupils.

5.2.1 Creativity in the spectrum of the continuous music education process – continuity and coherence

In Section 5.1, I considered the view of school teachers and piano teachers agreeing that music education is an ongoing process and has a progressive, implicit impact on children. Thus, they felt that aesthetic goals may be a prerequisite for creativity. Referring to the teachers' understanding of aesthetics – see also examples in Box 5.3 – they tended to favour complexity and metaphor, suggesting that the music was worth taking the time to understand and evoke emotions. Therefore, I introduced two different definitions of creativity by teachers in which they see creativity as a deeper reinterpretation of existing musical material – it may therefore occur after a long period of accumulation of appreciation experience. At the same time, they may be trying to embrace and develop pupils' creative thinking in their learning process.

In this section, I outline seven phases in music education that emerged across all teacher's comments. From stimulating pupils' interest in music to developing a deep understanding of music and beginning to create a product – teachers

suggested that these phases have continuity and coherence, and they found it difficult to specify how long each phase takes. For example, Liu believes that pupils initially choose piano because they are interested, but as the technique becomes deeper and more difficult, their interest is challenged – and without further study, the interest will not last.

> As he learns, he feels a little progress and achievement, slowly developing a deeper interest. If he stops learning [because it's hard], that initial interest, it's hard to maintain. (1st Interview with Liu, 8)

Chen offers a similar comment on the gradual development of interest.

> If you have an interest, you have to keep adding new things to it in order to maintain that interest. For example, if he likes the piano but doesn't have anything new to add, no new elements to pump in, and stays at that level, he will slowly get bored. If you don't go deeper, you will get bored. [...] That's why you stop progressing, and your interest in the piano fades. [...]. You usually like the piano first, then you discover a curiosity, start to learn the piano, develop, and then slowly, the interest grows. (2nd Interview with Chen, 41)

Another example of a spectrum can be found in the three schoolteachers' comments:

> He needs to be engaged with the music first, so they can think outside the box and develop something else through it. (1st interview with Wang, 24)

Similar to Craft's (2001) suggestion that there might be a spectrum of innovation, following data analysis in Table 5.2 I developed seven progressive phases of continuity and coherence to propose a spectrum of creativity development in music learning. Based on the teachers' comments, in Table 5.2, I introduce the teachers' views of music learning as a continuous progress with seven phases with illustrative quotations. They believed each phase of music learning could be crucial to the development of children's creativity, rather than looking at which factors contribute to whether creativity develops successfully or whether the products of creativity are available.

Table 5.2 Spectrum of music learning with 7 phases

7 phases	Summary of the phase	Examples for the phase (with quotations)
1.Interest/engagement	Interest and engagement drive children to start learning music and developing creativity.	"Engaging pupils in activities" "They are interested in learning piano"
2. Basic knowledge/Technique	Learning music appreciation/performance techniques.	“Geting formal learning/ Technique” “With certain techniques” “Musical knowledge”
3. Practice	Keeping practising in order to understand the music and master the techniques.	“Practice makes perfect”. “Imitation more often” “An average amount of practice is necessary”
4. Thinking/reflection	Adding pupils' own thinking to their understanding of the music.	“Guiding them to feel, to understand” “Reflection” “Thinking outside the box”
5. Developed sense/understanding	Geting a deeper understanding.	“Developed feeling/ Understanding” “Had their own understanding”
6. Advanced technique	Learning advanced music appreciation/performance techniques.	“Ability to express through hands”
7. Deeper re-interpretation	Generating your own re-interpretations, or style (Matsunobu, 2011; Leung, 2015).	“Re-interpretation” “Deeper understanding” “A further requirement for music learning” “Sense of music”

Both the piano teachers and school music teachers in my study believed that the development of creativity is likely to work along with other aspects of development in music education, as shown in Table 5.2 above. They considered that the spectrum of music learning ran as interest, formal learning of knowledge and technique, regular practice, reflection, development, and to have a deeper re-interpretation. It is important to note that the final phase in my spectrum could not cover all of their explanations of the definition of creativity. The teachers agreed that interest and engagement drive children to learn music and develop creativity. As pointed out in Section 5.1.2, through this learning process, pupils would be able to develop their processing, expression, and presentation, as well as develop their new interest in music learning.

> […they will] create their own movements for this song based on its lyrics and melody. That's a creative expression. (2nd Interview with Wang, 49)

For example, although Wang referred to 'expression' as a creative product for her pupils, she said that 'thinking outside the box' was already her main goal for their creativity.

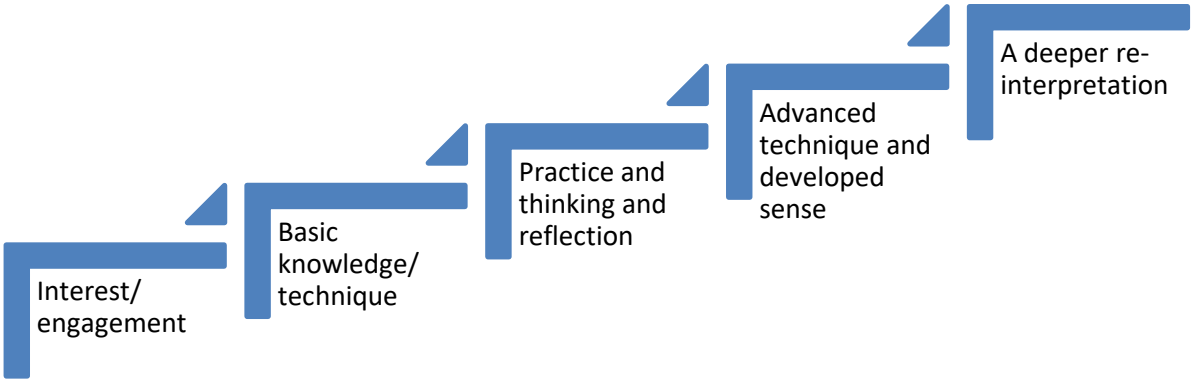
As analysed in Section 5.1, the two definitions of creativity by teachers are found, firstly, at the end and as a result of these phases. Secondly, the teachers believe that the pursuit of creativity should be integrated into each stage, rather than a specific developmental phase. By showcasing creativity as an integral part of each phase, this framework challenges the perception that creativity exists in isolation or is only relevant in specific stages of music education. This aligns with contemporary theories of creativity in education, emphasising its integrative and pervasive nature across learning domains (e.g., Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Lage-Gómez & Cremades-Andreu, 2020).

In addition, the issue of whether these phases are meant to be linear or not is an important consideration. If the phases are interpreted as linear, it may suggest a progression where one must master each phase before moving to the next. Alternatively, if the model is seen as cyclical or interconnected, it could imply that these phases are fluid and may overlap. This ambiguity allows for flexibility in interpretation, catering to diverse teaching philosophies and methodologies. Further enquiry into Chinese teachers' perceptions and practices of creativity could potentially provide a more explicit indication of how these stages are combined and their process of development.

In this study, based on the teachers' comments, they suggested that pupils reflect in practice; and they also made a generalised link between advanced technique and developed sense - this was probably because they felt that advanced technique and developed sense were not their current teaching scope, as they were teaching children. Therefore, I combined phase 3 with 4, and phase 5 with 6. This gives a simplified five-step process, arranged in a linear progression. As shown in Table 5.2, the five different colour blocks indicate how the seven phases are combined into five steps.

As shown in Figure 5.2 below, the teachers agreed that interest in learning, and basic knowledge/technique, were the basis for music learning. They realised the importance of flexibility for children's imagination, adding that pupils' imagination does not rely on basic knowledge or aesthetic competence, which were likely more relevant to their teaching for creativity, require time and practice, knowledge and thinking, as discussed in Section 5.1.2.

Figure 5.2 Spectrum of music learning



This would allow for any creativity that the child might show later on – for example, in their future work – although this new interpretation would not require a performance or a product.

> It's a change and, of course, for the better. […] I think creativity is having something new, a new expression, or just a new idea. (1st interview with Duan, 23)

> I don't think creativity needs to be assessed. […] I praise them as long as they are happy to create [when they show me their own work]. (1st interview with Wang, 15)

The teachers believed that not requiring pupils to make creative products in the foundation stage did not mean that pupils could not make any creativity progress; their creativity was visible, and if they were creative, it would be reflected in their creative products: for example, in terms of processing, expression, presentation, and new interests. They suggested that such creative

products are linked to their creativity and future innovation. Although they believed it is directly related to the products of creativity, the teachers referred to what they called the development of taste: i.e., aesthetic and appreciation skills.

5.2.2 The basis of creativity in terms of the spectrum of musical learning

At the end of Section 5.1.1, I discussed that although the teachers talked in the interviews about how the pupils could develop deeper interpretations of musical works through continuous musical learning, my classroom and studio observations was that the teachers emphasised the acquisition of knowledge and practice of skills, which seemed to be loosely linked to the pupils' creative thinking. Based on the spectrum presented earlier in Section 5.2.1, specifically, they seemed to place a high value on the second and third stages - basic knowledge/technique, and practice. In this section, I will present how the various stages of the spectrum are reflected and explained in their teaching in practice. I will focus on the first two parts of the spectrum - 5.2.2.1 Interest and engagement and 5.2.2.2 Basic knowledge/skills and practice.

All six teachers claimed that their work occurred in the first part of the spectrum, as they mostly taught children aged six to eleven; they saw their role as building the foundations of a lifetime of musical and creative development of children:

> I think creativity or composing is based on a certain foundation, **not something that comes from nowhere**. This **foundation** is vital; for example, for a child in the first grade, if he can't even sing those notes and doesn't understand the concept of pitch, how will he compose a song? Right? (2nd interview with Wang, 42; emphasis **in bold** mine)

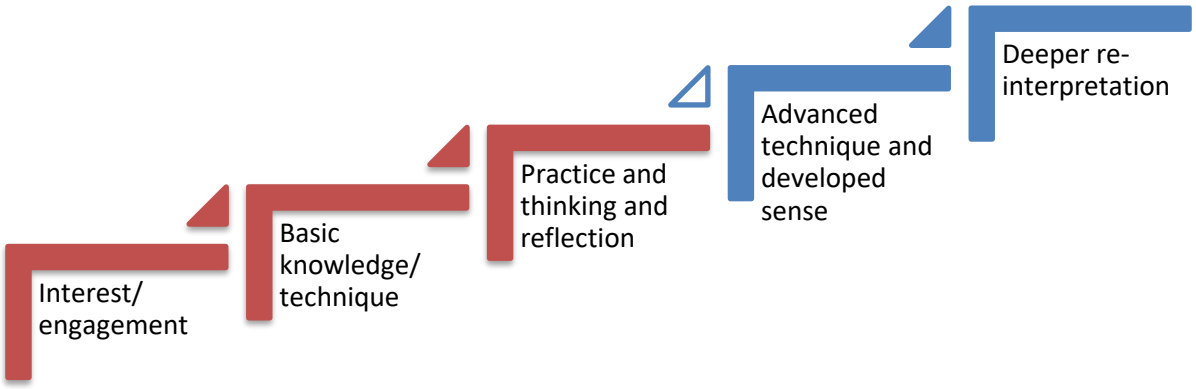
However, the piano teacher Huang felt that the teacher's demands for technique and practice often overtook creativity during the lessons. She argued that the piano education she was involved in was not centred on creativity and that her focus might be on getting children to build a good foundation; she didn't mention the next phase after this foundation level, and she didn't mention a spectrum. She would not link her work directly to creativity, saying

that her pupils are still at a ‘very basic stage’ and that ‘the best thing we teachers can do’ is to encourage these children to practise more. There is tension in the teachers’ distinction between technique and the basis of creativity. However, unlike Wang’s comment, Huang said, to balance the acquisition of knowledge with the development of creativity, that,

> The teacher’s energy is limited. So, it’s hard to manage creativity if I want them to build a good foundation first. (3rd Interview with Huang, 39)

Regarding what the basics are, the teachers named the first three elements in the spectrum as interest, underpinning knowledge, and exercises (see Figure 5.3, where I will explain them in detail in the following subsections). The teachers highlighted the pupils’ interests and involvement as the first phase on the spectrum; more precisely, they frequently placed interest on the spectrum ahead of children actually learning music. Thus, when it comes to the foundations of creativity, all six teachers agreed that participation is necessary for fostering creativity but simply having an interest is insufficient. For example, the schoolteacher Wang said it is important to acquire music knowledge and theory, addressing an apparent tension between fundamental knowledge and the basis of creativity. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.1.1, employing listening to music more regularly and accumulation as a strategy, the teachers had a specific aim in mind for their pupils’ daily practice – fluency – as they pointed out that practice would make perfect.

Figure 5.3 Spectrum of music learning: The basis



Aesthetic and criteria ----------→

Practice & thinking/reflection ----------→

As explained in Section 5.1, the teacher's understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and creativity, as the arrow below the spectrum shows, means teachers expected pupils to develop their aesthetic ability, the critical criteria (Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe, 2000), during their basic learning, while developing a sense of music. This finding will be discussed in relation to the literature in Chapter 7. As the finding was uncovered later during fieldwork data analysis, I was unable to ask teachers in the interviews about their interpretation and understanding of the relationship between the foundational elements and aesthetics. However, they, coincidentally, tended to regard pupils' music tastes and critical criteria as being developed in the learning process of practice and thinking/reflection when they had interests in music.

5.2.2.1 Interest and engagement – "Interest is the best teacher"

All six teachers agreed on the importance of interest for music learning and teaching; however, the problems encountered by all six teachers were not the same. In general, the three primary school music teachers, who worked in both urban (Wang and Zhao) and rural primary schools (Duan), were dealing with pupils who might not all be interested in music; in contrast, for children learning the piano, although they would be considered or expected to have developed an

interest in music, teachers were faced with the challenge of getting their learners interested in piano.

The three primary school music teachers wanted children to be happy when learning music; they felt that enabling children to create music that they enjoyed was predicated on feeling the joy of music and being involved in the teacher's activities. They noted that many pupils had no knowledge of music at all before they entered primary school. For example, Wang said,

> I want them to […remember that…] when I was in primary school, I had a music teacher who would take me along to play music and create some rhythms, which was particularly enjoyable. […] The impact of my teaching on them hopefully could last a lifetime. (1st Interview with Wang,16)

Thus, she said that engaging them and engendering an interest in music is vital for teaching children:

> First, you have to engage them. Then, you may consider whether the teacher's activities on imagination and creativity are working. (1st Interview with Wang, 20)

However, the teacher acknowledges that existing teaching methods do not consider pupils' creativity; in the current textbooks (e.g., People's Education Publisher Music Textbook Team, 2013), teachers are asked to carry out creative tasks for children. As a result, this is likely to mean that teachers will have to use their understanding of the curriculum and musical works to employ their own creativity and change their previous teaching methods. As discussed in Section 5.1.3, schoolteachers felt the pupils could get a break from knowledge-focused learning during music lessons. However, they could not avoid having examinations and teaching the knowledge required by the curriculum (MoE, 2011). Instead, they attempted to use a different approach to lecturing or rote memorising. Thus, Wang said that her understanding of creativity was to involve children instead of merely lecturing them:

> If you do not let children participate and rely on only the teacher's lectures, that's impossible. You may just be an armchair strategist. (1st Interview with Wang, 24)

From my observations in two of Zhao's lessons, for example, there was a Warm-up Section of about two minutes. In addition, there was a similar Section in Wang's class in which she used simple percussion instruments. Zhao would first introduce the background information of the song and then play the music for the class to listen to carefully or lead the pupils into a Warm-up Section – for example, using the Orff method. Wang also used some simple percussion instruments as teaching aids for engagement.

> The teacher gave each pupil a teaching aid and told them we had come across a new musical instrument – a bell ringer – and asked them to play it themselves for a while to see what they could do. The pupils were very excited. <u>After two minutes, Wang asks the pupils to return their attention to her and keep quiet, and then the lesson begins.</u> (Observation with Wang, 14-12-20; in-text underlining mine)

They clarified that this was to make the music more accessible to the children, especially the younger children, who might be willing to join in the lesson:

> All parts of [each lesson] are designed to teach the children; [the use of pedagogy] is secondary, not adding these [activities] for the sake of adding them. If teachers' focus is only on pedagogy, it is rigid and not focused on what children should be learning. (1st Interview with Zhao, 9)

Box 5.4 below shows the teachers' comments on pupils' interest in music as individuals; for example, Duan suggested engaging pupils according to their personalities and interests. According to my observations, there were many children in each class in the three teachers' schools, and the teachers tended not to tell individual pupils what to do. However, they still paid attention to the pupils' characteristics, such as their gender and age, and they could even name some of the individual pupils' personality traits and design lessons according to the interests of different pupils.

Box 5.4 Diary extract: Gender and age differences

Duan used group work and presentations, giving children group tasks and letting them prepare during the ten to twenty minutes of the class. He, therefore, points out that boys and girls, young children and older children, often have different interests, and he often needs to vary his approach. This is an interesting point because, in my observation, there are many pupils in the class and the teachers tend not to tell individual pupils what to do. However, they may still focus on student characteristics such as their gender, their age, or even, e.g., this time, Duan even remembers a particular pupil's personality traits. For example, there is an extract from the observation narrative of 'Red River Valley', an ocarina lesson and one of Wang's lessons.

Duan suggested engaging pupils according to their interests. For example:

> The **boys** in this group were rather shy; so, this **girl** was very active in acting out the Big Bad Wolf. (Interview with Duan, 7; Emphasis **in bold** mine, same below)

In addition to the gender difference, Duan also mentioned that the difference in age would also lead him to choose different lectures. He added that,

> In **Year 2**, they are less shy; in Year 5, the children are timid. By Year 5, and especially by **Year 6**, I think it's probably early adolescence; some of them may be rebellious, some children like to be themselves. So, they don't want to come up and perform voluntarily; they're not that enthusiastic. […] What do they like? Like pop music. but, you know, there are many popular music genres, and the textbooks we have to learn are still the old songs. You can give them some new versions, the remixed ones related to the old songs. (Interview with Duan, 8-9)

In our last interview, he also gave some insights into this experience and described how he dealt with students of different ages.

According to the comments of three piano teachers, just like the primary school teachers, they want the children to have fun while learning music. All three piano teachers place extra emphasis on interest in learning, agreeing that if a child loses interest in the piano during the lessons, then they are likely not to stick with it and they will stay at the same level they were at then, or they will probably give up studying. The difference is that they see their main challenge as being - to get the children to practise the basic skills without killing their interest in music and piano.

For children learning piano, the teachers said they were supposed to be those who were interested in music and therefore wanted to learn the instrument:

> She may hear the piano when I am playing and come over to listen, which means she enjoys listening and will listen attentively. Alternatively, sometimes she[/he] will actively sing or dance with my piano. (1st Interview with Liu, 25)

Chen and Liu argued that the spectrum of music learning is that of interest, thinking, developing, creating and generating new interests. They thus argued that children's interest in music and their subsequent love of music are not exactly the same interests or motivations.

> It's almost impossible for a child to say of their own accord - I will practise every day. They may be interested, but if they know they have to practise every day, they won't stick to it. (1st interview with Liu, 25)

So, she often tried different strategies to stimulate her pupils' interest in practising the piano, in order to provide them new motivation of music learning. - the piano teachers argued that interest in music is recurrent and progressive in its subsequent emergence.

> It will have to rely on their parents to guide them - If you find he's running out of attention, you can give him a break and come back later. [...] Or encourage them, maybe reward them. For some little girls, you can let them wear nice clothes when they practise at home, and their parents can be an audience for them or record a video for them. [...].

> When I meet her, I bring her candy. She will be happy too. [...] Think of all you can do to encourage them, stimulate their interest and keep them going. (1st interview with Liu, 25)

5.2.2.2 Basic knowledge/skills and practice - "Practice makes perfect"

Five of the six music teachers interviewed stressed the importance of children having fun and being interested in learning, but they felt that basic knowledge and skills as well as practice were essential to learning music. For instance, piano teacher Liu stated that piano learning should rely on formal study:

> [...] I often tell pupils that for the initial exercises, they have to practise formally [with fingers, hands etc.]; otherwise, the sound that emerges is sticky and grainy, and pupils have to go through this stage and slowly and consciously add some of their own feelings. (1st Interview with Liu, 27)

The schoolteacher, Wang, claimed that:

> Practice makes perfect, and I think practice also makes creativity. Because […] if you are not familiar with it, how can you sing it well and express the emotions in it? So first and foremost, you must listen to or sing it over and over again until you are very good at it; you get the experience. (2nd Interview with Wang, 42).

The piano teachers emphasised the formal learning process, in the same way, that the primary school teachers required pupils to take the task of music lessons seriously. Meanwhile, all interviewed teachers emphasised the amount and length of exercises; it seems that they might neglect pupils' thinking during their practising, or imagining. Listen and practise more – they all stress the importance of time for music education. The length of time needed is likely one of the reasons why the music education process goes unnoticed, as it often requires long-term observation, and no quick conclusions can be drawn. Although exposing children to music had nurturing and cumulative benefits, they all believed that creativity might not be straightforward - as Wang said, 'maybe there is a better way, we just haven't got it' (2nd interview with Wang, 38); she added, "if only there were a manual on how children's creativity is nurtured. So,

what we can do is actually only that we have to be patient, it doesn't happen overnight" (2nd interview with Wang, 42). While Wang may agree that more effective teacher training and more explicit guidance for teachers are needed, on the other hand, this also reflects Wang's belief - time and accumulation are necessary.

However, both Liu and Zhao said that the practice or quantity of accumulation was inadequate. They declared that the appreciation process is completed through reflection in the accumulation process. The criteria might be internalised in the process - as Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe (2000) state; however, in the teachers' comments, they emphasise the importance of time rather than reflection.

Liu said they should think, not just count the playing time and let the music flow.

> It's not like if you listen or sing more, you'll get it. [Hearing it] may just pass by. You need to think about it. [.....] In this case, you must be enlightened, […] if you can grasp it, as realising the truth. (2nd Interview with Liu, 46)

Zhao explained that she encouraged pupils to feel the music while having them listen to the musical piece or song rather than leaving them to pretend to be listening merely.

> Probably just pretending to listen. [...]. No reaction, no expression on his face. [.....] Well, if it were me, I can't help but tap my foot to the beat when I hear music. (1st Interview with Zhao, 21).

Similarly, Wang considered appreciation more important than singing or listening; nevertheless, she does not explicitly explain the reason or whether pupils should have their reflections during appreciation or not:

> Singing was quite simple and just a demonstration of skills, while being able to appreciate music would reflect one's abilities and qualities. (1st interview with Wang, 20).

As for technical training, Chen, the piano teacher, said he did not see it as the basis for developing pupils' creativity:

> To be a pianist, you must solve almost all the technical difficulties before you are 13 or 14. [...]. To be able to enjoy music, or as a general player, in your future life, I think you don't have to. But it probably still requires a certain ability, which has to be formed through formal, technical, and musical training to reach a certain level, precisely what level, depending on you. Because if you're very skilled, you can play a broader range of pieces, and if you're less skilled, you can play some simpler pieces. So, you don't have a specific standard. (1st interview with Chen, 18).

He believed pupils had their own understanding of music, deep or shallow, but if they wanted to be creative in their piano playing, they needed technical support. However, Chen did not emphasise practice and effort; he said that practice should be done 'with quality' in order to be considered satisfactory - working towards the required standard, not just being able to play or play the piece correctly:

> There are exercises of different levels, Beyer, [Czerny] 599 849 299 740, etc. Composers have different sets of exercises designed for different levels of difficulty and ask you to reach that level of play. [...] If you play a piece very slowly, it's not as tough as it once was. What I mean is that if you reduce the standard of it, you may be able to complete the performance, but, in fact, your ability is not there yet. (2nd interview with Chen, 44).

He considered all the factors above the spectrum and preceding creativity to be the foundation for creativity, which he referred to as an interest in and comprehension of music.

5.2.3 Permission and guidance for creativity

In the previous two subsections, I have introduced that, in the six teachers' view, 'interest is the best teacher' for children, but when it comes to their teaching, they stated that it is important to let the children practise and the teacher should provide guidance. Teachers agreed that, at the same time, if music lessons were to foster creativity, on top of these foundations, teachers should consciously guide pupils to feel the creativity of music. In this section, I outline and discuss participants' perceptions of the role of teachers in identifying and providing opportunities for creativity.

Schoolteachers felt that they had traditionally given priority to delivering musical knowledge. Therefore, they believed that it was now necessary, first and foremost, to realise the importance of teaching creative tasks, as the textbooks had changed. They felt that in response to the demands of fostering creativity, they needed a different frame of mind and approach to their teaching. All three teachers said they need to start allowing children to be creative and value creativity in classrooms:

> Since we want [pupils] to create, [the teacher] has to let it go and give the pupils space and … [freedom]. (1st interview with Wang, 8)

Wang believed that allowing pupils to engage in independent learning should also be supported by teacher guidance. She supposed it meant teachers had to be aware of guiding their pupils to be creative.

> How to **guide** them? For example, you may give them a new instrument; they probably don't know what it calls now; and they don't know how he plays it, yes, but I don't think you need to tell them then. For **independent learning**, the thing is, after you give them something new, this is a string bell, you can play it freely on your own, try it out, what do you think, how does it sound, how do you accompany this piece of music? You can give him the rules when they have had enough of playing. (3rd interview with Wang, 59; Emphasis **in bold** mine)

Secondly, they did not think that permission for creativity meant allowing children to play during class time. For example, both Wang and Zhao mentioned that the school requires teachers to play a part in the lessons, and that teachers should be responsible rather than doing nothing. Wang added that she usually would" give them some sound activities to do with creativity". (3rd Interview with Wang, 56)

> The teacher can't just say to the children, create your own music; pupils will be at a loss; they have to be guided by the teacher to do this. Through the teacher's guidance, they can think outside the box and create. Creativity doesn't come out of nothing, you have to give them something, like a piece of music, to create [the lyrics/movement], to do it with the teacher's guidance, and slowly, they can do it. (3rd Interview with Wang, 56)

Other schoolteachers Zhao and Duan, as well as the piano teacher Liu, argue that teachers need to guide pupils to understand and think. Duan said, "They have to be guided to perceive the music until they have their own understanding. (1st Interview with Duan, 2)

> They are not yet aware of the intensity of the music, where the strong beat is and where the weak beat is. After I have taught them how to listen to music, I guide them a little in that direction, and they will start to feel that strength and weakness. (3rd Interview with Duan, 34)

Zhao said to guide and allow them to create:

> Our children, I think, for example, listen to a piece of music in the classroom, and very few of them will move casually to the music; usually, the child will choose to sit or stand there, which seems to be good behaviour, they sit upright, but there is no reaction, there is no expression on their face. You have to tell him, okay now, to move gently, or let them follow you. Alternatively, there are children, I do my thing, and he does his. So you have to try everything to **guide** them. (3rd interview with Zhao, 36)

Thirdly, as schoolteachers were asked to value creativity and prepare pupils for examinations, it was important to balance independent learning with teacher guidance. Wang said that the main challenge of 'letting the pupils go' was that it became a problem to take them back once she had done so. She found this problem even trickier with the junior teachers she was leading:

> It's easy to let the kids go, but it's hard to get them back. It is most difficult for teachers. (3rd interview with Wang, 60)

She believes that whether the future of education is exam-centred or creativity-centred, building a decent foundation is the most important thing for pupils. She worried that,

> They will be so immersed in their own creation that some don't even listen to the rest of the lesson. (1st interview with Wang, 8)

The importance of independent student participation and investigation is likely to be undermined by teacher guidance, and some teachers may now discover this challenge as well. The other two schoolteachers also recognised combining independent student learning and teacher advice as a difficulty for teachers who are just starting to teach creative practices. In Section 5.3, I will discuss the issues in more detail based on teachers' comments regarding the challenges they perceive themselves to be facing.

On the other hand, the piano teachers felt that they had never favoured a rote approach to teaching, which did not seem to work for children's piano teaching in the first place; therefore, they suggested that the pupils should understand music, rather than merely memorise how to play it. In Chapter 7, I will integrate these piano teachers' comments and discuss the altered views they had on teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. For example, Liu said,

> If you just tell them that it gets stronger or weaker here, that will not work. The teacher has to sing it out or play it on the piano to sing it and guide him through it. That's a better way. If the child doesn't have a particular concept of strong or weak in their mind, he won't feel it. [...]

> In fact, it is through the teacher's demonstration that the pupil can feel it. (1st interview with Liu, 24)

Chen also suggested teaching pupils using the piano and its sound:

> I would use the piano and tell him about the sound. First, the general technique is this, and the rest relies on the sound. (1st Interview with Chen, 20)

In her interview, Wang also gave examples of teaching with sound, but the difference was that she said it was "giving the children something creative to do" (3rd Interview with Wang, 56).

> For example, when teaching Year 1, I found that the children were particularly interested in sound. So, to develop their creativity, I gave the children a live sound, such as a firecracker, from the initial ignition to the final explosion [...] Some children describe the series of sounds: first, the lighter, the pop, the wick that lights the firework, then the 'zzz', then the 'bang', 'bang, bang'; that's the sound. Then you can ask your child to listen to the sound again: "Can you describe it using your paintbrush, draw lines or shapes?" Through this drawing, he can express what he hears. Alternatively, what other ways can you make a sound? Let the children think about it. Some children can clap their hands, slap the table, ball up the paper, tear the paper, and imitate the sound they just heard. That's creativity. (3rd Interview with Wang, 56)

Teachers in primary schools were asked to add a creativity strand, and as a result, they began to allow and guide pupils' creativity. The piano teachers agreed with the importance of creativity to musical learning. They believed that piano learning could not be achieved without disciplined technique learning and a great deal of practice, but this could not be at the expense of a child's interest in music. However, they all had to overcome problems such as too many pupils, lack of educational resources, and the stress caused by examinations. In the next chapter, I will present a detailed narrative of their views on the challenges they face.

5.3 The challenges of teaching for creativity

In the previous section, I discussed the continuous spectrum that teachers presented about the music learning process. What they saw as their classroom practices were only the first three elements on the spectrum, i.e., the basis for developing creativity in pupils. However, in their teaching practice, teachers encountered difficulties arising from their actual teaching situations. This section outlines three main challenges the teachers have faced since teaching creativity. They highlighted and discussed what they saw as the main difficulties affecting their teaching creativity. This section introduces three categories that emerged from the teachers' comments – 'Pressure of too many pupils' (Section 5.3.1), 'Lack of teaching resources and professional development opportunities' (Section 5.3.2), and 'Pressure of exams' (Section 5.3.3). I will also continue to explore how policy reform tendencies towards creativity and examinations have affected teachers, in Section 6.2, and in the next chapter.

5.3.1 Pressure of too many pupils

All six teachers agreed that there was still a lack of opportunity to value children's creativity in education, although there have been many attempts and efforts to do so. In the previous section, the teachers mentioned the need to give pupils freedom, but the school music teachers found that this led to a corresponding problem with classroom disruption, which was firstly because, the teachers explained, pupils might not often see fun activities like percussion, which made them extremely excited and curious, and it might take a long time to calm them down. Some of the teachers mentioned that these issues were related to teaching resources, such as insufficient teacher training and teaching materials, and this will be outlined in Section 5.3.2. Secondly, Wang and Zhao suggested that it was also related to classroom management, including the number of pupils, the teacher's ability to control the classroom, or the limited space. For example, Wang said that there were too many pupils in the classroom:

> Once you let them go, they, the [problem] is that it's easy to let go, and it's tough for you to take it back in **a class of fifty or so.** There may be a dozen pupils who immediately listen when you say [continue with the

> lesson], a few others who may listen when you say it again, and then there are so many dozen pupils who don't listen no matter how many times you say it. He [or she may] be so immersed in their own creation that he [or she] doesn't listen to the rest of the lesson. This is [a problem] in our music classes. (1st interview with Wang, 8; Emphasis **in bold** mine)

Zhao also mentioned the issues of the large number of pupils in the classroom:

> We have so many children now, over fifty, we are exhausted. (1st interview with Zhao, 23)

They added that classroom discipline is the foundation for teaching knowledge or developing creativity.

> Regardless of whether the teacher is in charge or not, setting rules for the pupils and keeping the children disciplined is important. If you have good discipline, it is one classroom effect, if you have poor discipline, it is another. […] But where is the balance [of creativity and discipline]? It's hard to say. (3rd interview with Wang, 60)

> The children being disciplined is the only way we can complete a lesson. (1st interview with Duan, 16)

However, the teachers believed there were few teachers who could do much in the face of a large number of pupils, other than improve their classroom management skills, and, as Wang added, the matter of whether a teacher has the ability to manage such a large classroom is also taken into account by the school when selecting teachers. They claimed that the large number of children in the classroom places demands on the teacher's ability to do more than the teaching task alone.

> A teacher with good classroom management skills, like, you'll find that sometimes a person stands there, and he just naturally has an aura around him, and maybe the children's attention is focused on you. It is a matter of the teacher's competence. It's a challenge for the teacher's ability. (3rd interview with Wang, 52)

They stressed that a large number of pupils would, on the one hand, make it easier to create classroom chaos, and the teachers argued, on the other, that this made the requirement to maintain classroom discipline even more necessary.

The problem of having too many pupils was not encountered by the three piano teachers, as they only gave lessons to one child at a time. However, they did face other problems: for example, in the classes I observed, children sometimes began to lose concentration in the classroom. I suppose the pupils' tendency to be easily distracted by other things, or the fact that pupils' attention might not be maintained for as long as 45 minutes, should be taken into account, given the young age of their students.

5.3.2 Lack of teaching resources and professional development opportunities

Four of six teachers mentioned a lack of opportunities to value children's creativity in education. Four teachers – the schoolteacher Duan and piano teachers Chen, Huang, and Liu – mentioned issues related to teaching resources, such as insufficient teacher training and teaching materials.

For example, Duan said that creative activities were not often available at his school.

> The creative activities are not really something that can be done in every lesson in the normal course of teaching, and every lesson allows them to think and create on their own. It is more often the case that this creativity is shown when listening to music and singing. (3rd interview with Duan, 44)

Duan identified that the lack of teaching resources could be the major challenge:

> Teaching aids, and percussion instruments, for example, work better if you have one in hand. [...] But we can only have three or four at the moment and let them take turns experiencing it. (3rd interview with Duan, 30)

In contrast, piano teacher Chen mentioned the lack of qualified teachers as the main problem for the lack of opportunities in piano education. First, both Chen and Wang mentioned the few opportunities for them to interact with each other, which they saw as a result of a lack of resources.

> The real challenge is the level of the teacher. With so many children learning the piano in China, there is very little real access to good teachers, and most are just learning techniques, some even at a poor technical level. (3rd interview with Chen, 53)

> All this [understanding of the piece] reflects the teacher's creativity, and pupils are just imitating the teacher. (1st interview with Chen, 17)

Chen argued that pupils would imitate their teachers, and another piano teacher, Liu, mentioned that pupils must imitate their teachers and add their own thinking before they can innovate; they agreed that piano teachers must be able to guide their pupils in correct practices and thinking.

5.3.3 Pressure of exams

The importance of pupils' capacity to think - such as divergent thinking - was raised by all participants when defining creativity and talking about creative thinking. Additionally, when analysing the music learning spectrum, teachers also tended to make thinking the key to balancing the emphasis on basics and creativity, as seen in Figure 5.3. Thus, teachers, regardless of their teaching contexts, raised the impact of exam pressure on children's minds and thinking space, indirectly challenging them to advance creative teaching.

> The university entrance exams [*Gaokao*] put a lot of pressure on [students and parents]; [students] study at a fast pace and don't have time to think. They see more of the immediate benefits [than the long-term benefits]. Because [if] I get a higher score today, I might go to a better university tomorrow. (1st Interview with Wang, 2)

The pressure of exams may also drive teachers and pupils to ignore creativity, but because school music or piano lessons may not be part of university entrance

exams, they may be seen as an unimportant subject for most children, except those who will become music majors.

> The children don't feel that music is as important as language and maths. They also believe in their heart of hearts that the main subject is more important, and that music, although the teacher will also test me, is not that important, because, after all, it won't affect my future university entrance exams. (2nd Interview with Duan, 40)

Zhao believed that it was not only the exams or *Gaokao* but also societal pressure, as parents are likely to view schooling as preparation for future employment.

Parents have to see that their children are getting feedback on their knowledge, and that the things they learn are useful. They can't help but wonder what their kids are going to do when they grow up. (1st Interview with Zhao, 8)

In Chapter 6, I will explain the impact of examinations on teachers' perceptions and the teaching of creativity, as the wide-ranging and flexible criteria for both the piano and primary music exams may have led teachers to feel less pressure to prepare pupils for the exam itself, which, according to their own accounts, they did not see as one of the main challenges. Rather, as discussed in this section, they named the fact that music exams are not included in *Gaokao* as one of the main challenges, as children do not then take their music lessons seriously. The piano teachers also mentioned that if children do not take piano exams and enter competitions, they may lose the motivation to increase their practice and standardise their skills.

5.4 Discussion of key issues arising from these findings: basic knowledge/technology, aesthetics, and creativity

In this chapter, I presented my findings regarding teachers' perceptions of creativity and their reflections on teaching for it. As interpreted in the above three sections, all 6 teachers agreed with the children they teach reaching a certain age (6-11 years), they can now show their talent, imagination, and their own expressiveness, albeit not to the extent of having a deep creative understanding of music. Instead, they need more accumulation and more advanced techniques. Therefore, they considered their teaching as being at a basic stage of music education, and they thought they should first and foremost provide the knowledge and skills to underpin it. On the one hand, these teachers sought to guide children in acquiring knowledge creatively; on the other hand, they were likely to find it difficult to implement teaching for acquiring extensive knowledge while fostering children's creativity. There seemed to be a contradiction between what these teachers thought they needed to do, and what they could do. Teachers felt that time and energy were limited. In both the classroom and studio lessons, the primary school teacher has to give priority to textbook knowledge and the piano teacher has to teach the basic techniques first. Key issues from the findings are discussed in this section (keywords are marked **in bold** in text in the following subsections). I will discuss these teachers' understanding of the concepts of creativity – the issue of whether children can create with basic knowledge/technical issues – in Section 5.4.1; and I will include a discussion of issues about how these Chinese teachers teach to develop pupils' creativity in Section 5.4.2. Finally, I will discuss how teachers balance building pupils' aesthetic capabilities with their creative mind development in Section 5.4.3.

5.4.1 The concepts of creativity: Can children be creative? Can they create with basic knowledge/techniques?

My participants proposed their definitions of creativity – 'Creativity is a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials' and 'Embracing creative thinking in music'. In the context of their teaching, I interpret it in this study in two ways, namely,

- **Teaching for aesthetic**: a deeper re-interpretation (a term used by the teachers); teaching needs to provide foundations of the music subject – aesthetic; discipline; and external assessment (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000).

- **Teaching for creative mind**: freedom/liberation; learning in a creative way.

Creativity in the classroom is generally understood to be accessible and teachable (e.g., Craft, 2005), as outlined in Section 2.2. Craft (2008) suggested little-c creativity, which is like everyday breathing, and such a classroom would be centred on creativity. Teachers should pay attention to whether pupils can use their knowledge and skills creatively while asking and answering questions in their daily lives. However, all my participants believed, even as they were stressing creativity, that their pupils should still focus on learning basic skills, when they are around six years old and just starting schooling or to learn the piano. Based on these understandings of creativity, they provided comments both on teaching for future musical creativity (e.g., reinterpreting) and on teaching music creatively or musically. They argue that whatever pupils experience in the process of learning would be meaningful for their creativity because children will develop their aesthetic criteria. Their interpretations of the 'aesthetic criteria' are more closely related to Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) systems model of creativity – i.e., education for innovation in the domain – where teachers act as the goalkeepers in the field, their teaching practices are seen as stimulating and innovative, and the children are individuals in the system.

> A young person will be best prepared to introduce valuable novelty into a domain if he or she has identified himself with the rules and contents of a given discipline, and developed internal criteria of excellence in it. (Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe, 2000, p. 175)

Yet children cannot be considered innovative until their creations have been incorporated into the field. The teachers I interviewed assumed that pupils are not capable of innovation at their basic stage, from finding an interest in music to starting to learn basic knowledge and skills (as shown in Figure 5.3). Some of my participants pointed out that children's creative potential can be discovered

through their current handling, expression and presentation of music, or, if they are talented enough, they will show their musical abilities at a very young age. Therefore, at this basic stage, teachers said they tended not to assess or set loose evaluation criteria to assess, for example, whether pupils were actively expressing their feelings in the music, handling the music, or whether they developed an interest in further study of advanced techniques. Their explanations, when compared with Craft's little-c creativity, did not mention originality, risk-taking or emphasise the children's thinking and imagination. They did not think that an emphasis on creativity meant a reduction in the requirement for basic training, nor did they believe in embracing creativity methods as a result, as when Zhao mentioned that the Orff method only helps with teaching. This is important, as if they did not have a focus on creativity in their classroom, it would likely limit their implementation of teaching for creativity.

5.4.2 Teaching for creativity: do teachers value creativity and what can they do?

As reviewed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2, according to empirical data from the past, Chinese music education lacks an emphasis on the pupils' creativity, although there are no detailed descriptions of music teachers or their teaching practices (e.g., Huang, 2021). Several scholars have pointed out how Chinese music education used to be centred on values education (Ho, 2018), and the importance of achievement at the expense of creativity (Zhao, 2012). It was not until the 21st century that Chinese curriculum reform began to emphasise creativity. However, due to the lack of detailed empirical data on music teachers, it is not clear how teachers perceive creativity and how they implement teaching for creativity. Their hypothesis was that if teachers care about pupils' creativity, then they should focus on creativity rather than pupils' good behaviour in the classroom (e.g., Ng, 2004; Niu & Zhou, 2010). For example, based on Lin (2014, p. 44), teaching for creativity, focuses more on the objectives and strategies of developing learners' creative capacities. Strategies such as using a pragmatic approach to enhance creativity and pedagogical principles such as standing back, profiling learner agency, and creating time and space (Burnard et al., 2006) are considered useful methods of developing creative capacities. Despite having different foci, these two

elements of creative pedagogy, namely teaching for creativity and creative teaching, are deemed interconnected.

However, my participants said that if there is a lack of order in the classroom, it will affect the children's acquisition of knowledge. They see it as the first phase for developing creativity, as shown in Figure 5.3.

Drawing on the empirical data from this study, I presented what these participating teachers' everyday teaching practices looked like and how they felt that pupils' creativity was being nurtured to gain an insight on their perceptions of creativity. The teachers in this study clarified that classroom discipline is what ensures that the teacher is able to complete the task of teaching knowledge and skills in time. However, these teachers did not embrace a creative pedagogy (e.g., Lin, 2011, 2012), as they felt it was more urgent to have pupils formally learn skills and knowledge at the foundation stage (from the age of six) than for them to play creatively. All six teachers interviewed were teaching music to children aged from six to eleven and felt that it was necessary to provide children with a basic introduction to the subject of music. In contrast, music pedagogies aimed at children, such as the Orff method, tend to use music education as a way of engaging children in the classroom or allowing children to learn by doing, although this was not the reason the Chinese teachers valued music. Thus, referring to Figure 5.3, one teacher said that what they can do to pupils at each learning phase would be little and that they cannot involve themselves in every creative stage of the pupil's life.

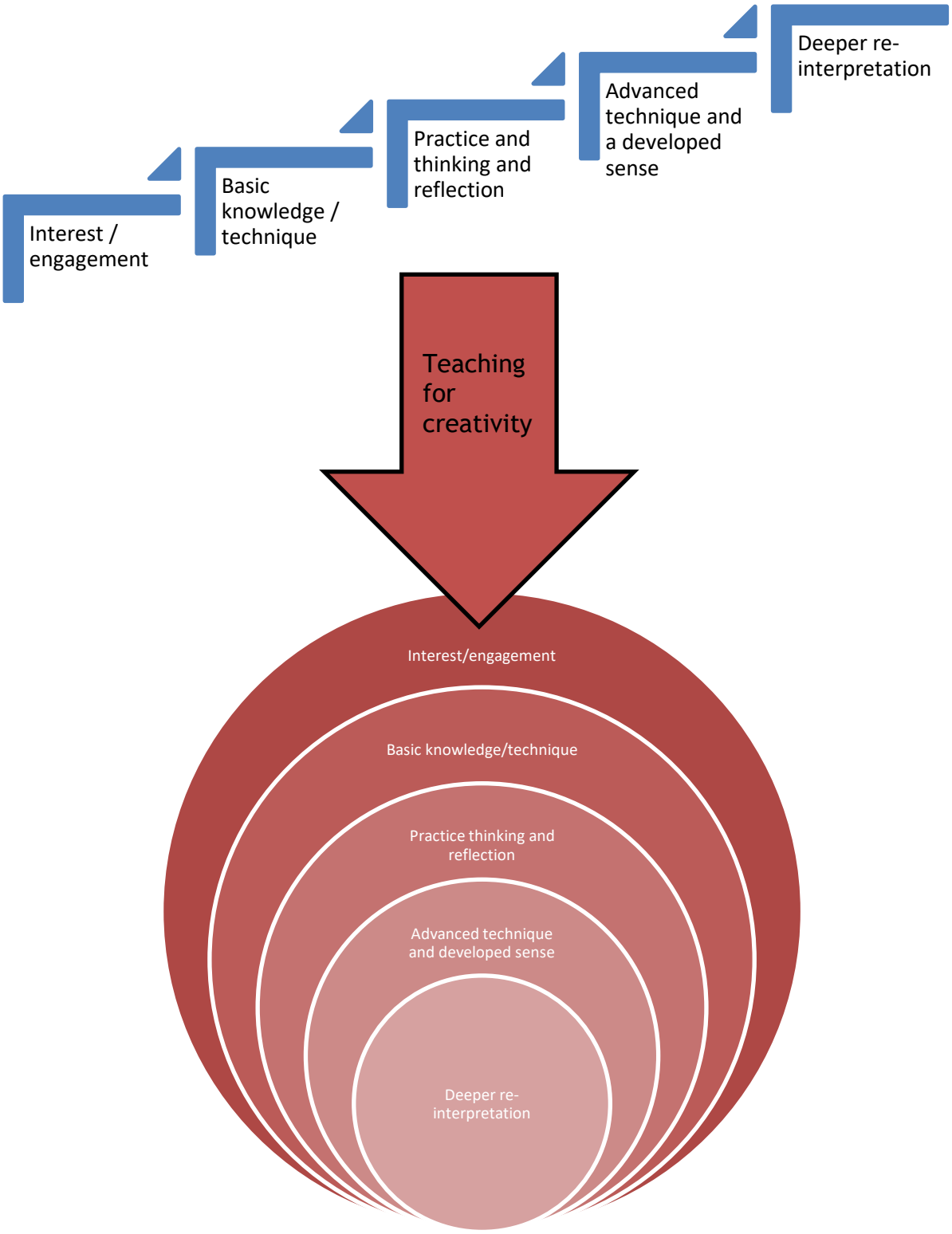
Following their views of **teaching** rather than learning **for creativity**, I have converted the model of the learning process into these teachers' model of teaching for creativity based on their descriptions, shown in Figure 5.4 below. The red part of the graph below, where the arrow points, indicates the teacher's efforts to nurture creativity. They said they were teaching for the pupils – starting from the outside, i.e. engaging them, but aiming at the core, to produce a deeper reinterpretation. In this orange graph, the lighter the colour, the less the teacher can help, according to what the teachers told me. They believed that their teaching fostered an aesthetic in their pupils, and that if children continued to work on it, the products of creativity and innovation would emerge.

The teachers believed that they could teach their pupils knowledge and technique but they could not influence their pupils' insights into music and creativity; they believed that perception would either come from innate talent, on the one hand, or be a result of time on the other. Therefore, instead, they tried to expose pupils to different types of music for long periods of time, and more often, so that they might grasp for themselves the nourishment it would bring them or venture into the inner core of musical learning; however, they only engaged in an effort of external content. This perception plays a vital role in their view of music education; they find that 'time' is important in their own experience. These teachers, for example, all studied music from an early age, and they had a sustained interest in music at different stages of their lives. What they emphasised here is time, or rather, patience from the perspective of the teacher and the student. Chen said that,

> If you think of it as your life's work [your career], you don't feel rushed. It's not a task you have to solve it right away, just take your time. (2nd interview with Chen, 43)

The teachers felt that there was very little that they could teach the pupils in terms of forming or developing their creativity, preferring to 'nurture' them on an ongoing basis rather than 'teach them something, also referring to Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.4 Learning for creativity and teaching for creativity



As previously discussed, in the interviews, the teachers closely linked the concept of creativity to the description of good quality (see Section 5.1.1), and they agreed that good teaching was closely linked to the teaching of creativity and creative teaching.

Looking at teaching for creativity, in this joint set of circles, the outermost circle is ‘engaging pupils’, which agrees with what other researchers have previously said about focusing on students’ interest and motivation to learn. From my observations, schoolteachers try to foster pupils’ interest in music by firstly using creative pedagogies such as the Orff approach to engaging them and, secondly, by getting them to participate in the performance rather than sitting there listening and thus feeling that the music is not relevant to them. In addition, the piano teachers’ pupils mostly did not need this phase; they simply stated that if you are not interested in music, you will not want to learn piano.

It is worth noting that the subsequent two phases – knowledge/technique and persistent practice – also refer to stimulating and engaging pupils. They argue that teachers should remain flexible and allow pupils to bring their own, different understandings, and that they should not allow pupils to learn mechanically but encourage them to think independently and reflect during their learning. Unfortunately, they do not mention the use of creative practices, such as Dewey’s learning by doing or Paynter & Aston’s (1970) creative ideology, in music education. From analysing their comments – for example, the schoolteacher Zhao and the piano teacher Huang mentioned that pupils were interested in these activities but learning nothing – it seems likely that they under-valued these creative pedagogies.

In the following subsection, I will continue to analyse how their understanding of teaching knowledge/technology balances the two elements of developing students’ potential creativity – discipline and freedom – and how persistent practice emphasises both pupils’ patience and thinking.

5.4.3 Teaching for creativity: balancing the aesthetic and creative mind

The teachers explained that the development of **aesthetics** requires long (and possibly boring) periods of learning and practice and an emphasis on regulation. At the same time, they pointed out that in order for pupils to be able to think divergently, teachers need to relax their requirements and allow freedom and flexibility. The problem they may face is how to balance discipline and freedom, and to decide the extent to which should teachers allow children's **creative thinking**. This section will discuss 'discipline' alongside several concepts: culture (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), knowledge (Dewey, 1916), and discipline (Kant, 1803). In the next chapter, I will continue this discussion by considering how teachers can balance the rigour of examinations with the creative thinking of their pupils, and where they might face the problem of balancing examination requirements and creative thinking.

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) proposes that innovation requires social and cultural acceptance of the novelty and, therefore, in his model, understanding the culture in order to innovate for that domain. He suggests that the role of education is to make these potentially creative students understand the standards:

> It is more important to nurture development of these internal standards than to make sure that students are able to perform according to standards set externally, as when they take tests and examinations. (Csikszentmihalyi and Wolfe, 2000, p. 175)

In both Kant's (1803) and Dewey's (1916) discussions on the nature of education, both refer to such rules. However, Kant suggests social discipline and cultural cultivation in education, while Dewey proposes experience for the sake of knowledge. Although this cannot provide support to the idea that teachers should teach knowledge as the primary purpose of teaching, it can explain why teachers still emphasise knowledge and discipline when teaching for creativity.

My participants believed that discipline was not only necessary but important if the educational (or educated) spectrum was to be viewed as a long-term benefit to children's development. The data analysed in this chapter demonstrate the

teachers' reflections on teaching for creativity; however, they do not see the main challenges they face as a contradiction between the rigours of examinations and creativity requiring flexibility. They expressed the contradiction they felt when they talked about 'what I should do' and 'what I can do':

- **'What I should do'**: 1) Foster creativity and make their pupils more creative in order to meet the needs of the development of society. 2) Build a good foundation for children – meaning knowledge, techniques, and supervising pupils to practise more.

- **'What I can do'**: Develop pupils' aesthetic criteria with basic knowledge/skills, and encourage and urge them to practise and help their formation of qualities and abilities (e.g., persistence and patience).

When I interviewed the participants, I found that they had actually reached the path of solving the problem quite early, although they might still have been exploring better solutions, such as hoping that the government and examination reforms would give them positive help. Policies require schoolteachers to undertake creativity tasks in the classroom, but this is not included in the exams e.g., *gaokao*. The requirements for them to be rigid mainly come from the assessment of teachers, the examination of pupils, and piano exams; they consider passing the exam as requiring knowledge and techniques. However, in the next chapter, I will discuss that examinations are not very strict about discipline, and that it is likely that the pressure on teachers and their insistence on standards in pupils' knowledge and technique in both the music curriculum and piano lessons comes from the demands they placed on their pupils and themselves rather than any pushed by strict examination requirements. Therefore, teachers said that it is important for themselves to give pupils space for their own understanding when teaching musical knowledge and piano pieces. In their own way, the teachers balanced the aesthetic demands on pupils with their creative thinking; for example, school teachers and piano teachers both had different tasks for different age groups of children. They suggested that teachers should not give too difficult a lesson to pupils who are too young, even if it is the requirement in the textbook, or that children should not be allowed to play music they cannot understand at their age. Moreover, Chen and Wang

both discussed considerations for the future development of pupils, believing that teachers should not focus only on the immediate pressures of school or examinations on their studies but rather consider the lifelong impact of their music teaching on their children. This may explain why my participant teachers considered music teaching to be a long process, even though they considered their own teaching as among the very first few phases.

Summary

This chapter presents and discusses my research findings that relate to the first research question and the first three themes in the data analysis. I present the perspectives of six teachers regarding creativity and music education, including their views of what creativity is and how to develop creativity during a continuous process of music learning. The chapter finishes with how the teachers highlighted contemporary challenges in promoting children's creativity in music education in China. In the next chapter, I discuss the remaining themes and the factors influencing these teachers' perceptions.

6 Findings and discussion: factors influencing teachers' perceptions in fostering creativity

Overview

In the previous chapter, I outlined my findings concerning teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education. I introduced and discussed the interviewed teachers' definitions of creativity and their understanding of teaching for creativity, reporting on the emphasis of these teachers on disciplining their pupils' learning of musical knowledge and techniques – perhaps not only so that they could pass their exams. They balanced allowing pupils creative thinking with giving them a formal education in piano knowledge and technique, both in school and during private lessons, thereby placing them both in the long-term and even lifelong process of music education.

While the teachers' perceptions of creativity were influenced by their responses to policy, there were more factors that influenced their perceptions, which meant that I might have been able to identify from their experiences. The data I collected to address this research question consisted of career Paths and interview transcripts from the six teachers about their experiences. Teachers were asked about significant events that had influenced their perceptions of creativity during the interviews, as shown in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I will present my findings on the second research question:

> In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music, music education and current policy?

Following the overview, the chapter includes five broad sections. These sections are organised around the themes, and their categories and sub-categories, arising from data analysis, as shown in Table 5.1 and again in Table 6.1 below. In the following two sections I present two themes that emerged from my data, which include the apparent impact of the teachers' own music learning and teaching experience on their perceptions (Section 6.1), as well as how the curriculum and examination requirements influenced them (Section 6.2). In the final Sections 6.3 and 6.4, I outline and discuss the key issues arising from this

chapter in relation to the relevant literature, including on Chinese teachers' experience and their exam-centred education.

Table 6.1 Emerging themes, categories and subcategories on factors influencing teachers' perceptions, with section numbers

<table>
<tr><th>Chapter</th><th>Theme</th><th colspan="2">Categories and subcategories</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">6. Factors influencing teacher's perceptions in fostering creativity</td><td rowspan="3">6.1 The influence of own music learning and teaching experience on teachers' perceptions</td><td rowspan="2">6.1.1 Reflections on their own music learning experiences</td><td>6.1.1.1 Emphasis on interest</td></tr>
<tr><td>6.1.1.2 Emphasis on musical knowledge learning</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">6.1.2 Experiences in different teaching settings</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">6.2 Curriculum and examination requirements</td><td colspan="2">6.2.1 Creative activities – New Curriculum Standards</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">6.2.2 Assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">6.2.3 Piano grade examinations and competitions</td></tr>
</table>

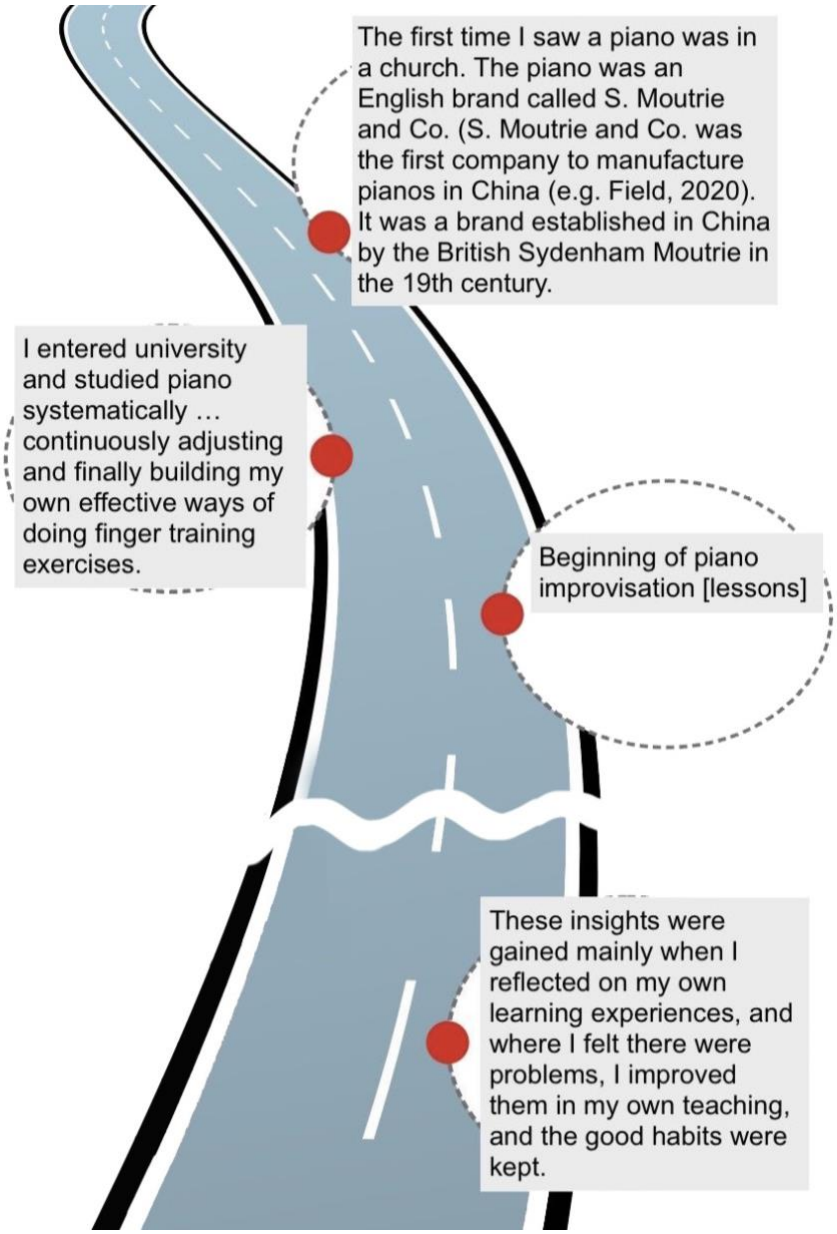
6.1 The influence of own music learning and teaching experiences on teachers' perceptions

This section presents teachers' learning and teaching experiences using the data provided by the teachers' Paths; I will also discuss comments teachers made on their experiences in the interviews and separate them into categories of reflections on their own music learning experiences - which include subcategories emphasising interest and emphasising musical knowledge learning – and experiences in different teaching settings. All of the teachers' completed their Paths chronologically (see boxes for the excerpts from their Paths). For example, piano teacher Chen explained when filling in his Path:

> I didn't grow up with the piano, because I was born in an earlier time; so, I didn't have access to it as a child. I actually learned the piano rather late, when I was in my teens. [...] I started learning systematically when I was at university, and I was very diligent. (2nd Interview with Chen, 40)

As shown in Box 6.1, Chen said that his understanding of fostering creativity emerged from his reflections during his own musical learning process.

Box 6.1 Excerpt from Chen's Musical Career and Education Path



Similarly, all my participants talked about experiences that had transformed their career and educational paths, and again, through these experiences, they reflected on how to avoid problems and identify good practices. I will outline how they reflected on their own experiences of musical learning and teaching in Section 6.1.1. However, participants reported different experiences in different teaching settings, which I will discuss in Section 6.1.2.

6.1.1 Reflections on their own music learning experiences

Each of my participants outlined their own musical learning experiences and explained how these had helped them to build their perceptions of creativity in music education. It was noteworthy that there was no explicit instruction to help them learn and comprehend what creativity is.

In the following two subsections, I will consider two categories: Emphasis on interest and emphasis on musical knowledge learning. I found that those participants (five of the six, apart from Huang) who valued interest in learning made this point, based on their own experiences with music learning, as well as their reflections on other experiences of their own, such as the influence of their parents and children (Section 6.1.1.1). They recalled that the encouragement of a particular teacher or the influence of their parents on them in their childhood sparked their interest in going on to study music and helped them develop creativity – so that when they became teachers, they were proactive in nurturing their pupils' interest in music and tried to motivate the children to persevere in their musical studies. In addition, I found that teachers' beliefs about the relationship between aesthetics and creativity – emphasising foundations, technique and perseverance – probably also stemmed from their learning experiences (Section 6.1.1.2).

6.1.1.1 Emphasis on interest

I found that the teachers all mentioned that their beginnings in learning music came from an interest in music, influenced by family, a schoolteacher, or another experience: e.g., Chen's experience of discovering a piano in a church, as mentioned before. School teacher Zhao, and piano teacher Huang told of learning piano from primary school age, and, similarly, piano teacher Liu said that she was influenced by her parents' interest in music from a young age and introduced to the musical instrument in her primary school concert band. They believed that an interest and passion for music was a starting point and crucial to their creativity and attention to pupils' creativity in teaching.

Box 6.2 below shows the excerpt from Zhao's Path, in which she noted her own childhood influence from a teacher that nearly made her give up studying music, adding in her interview that,

> When I started learning piano there was a teacher who might not have been right for me, and made me almost give up learning. When I was a child, he would discourage me and keep pushing me to practise. […] but I'm afraid he was too strict for a child [me]. (2nd interview with Zhao, 53)

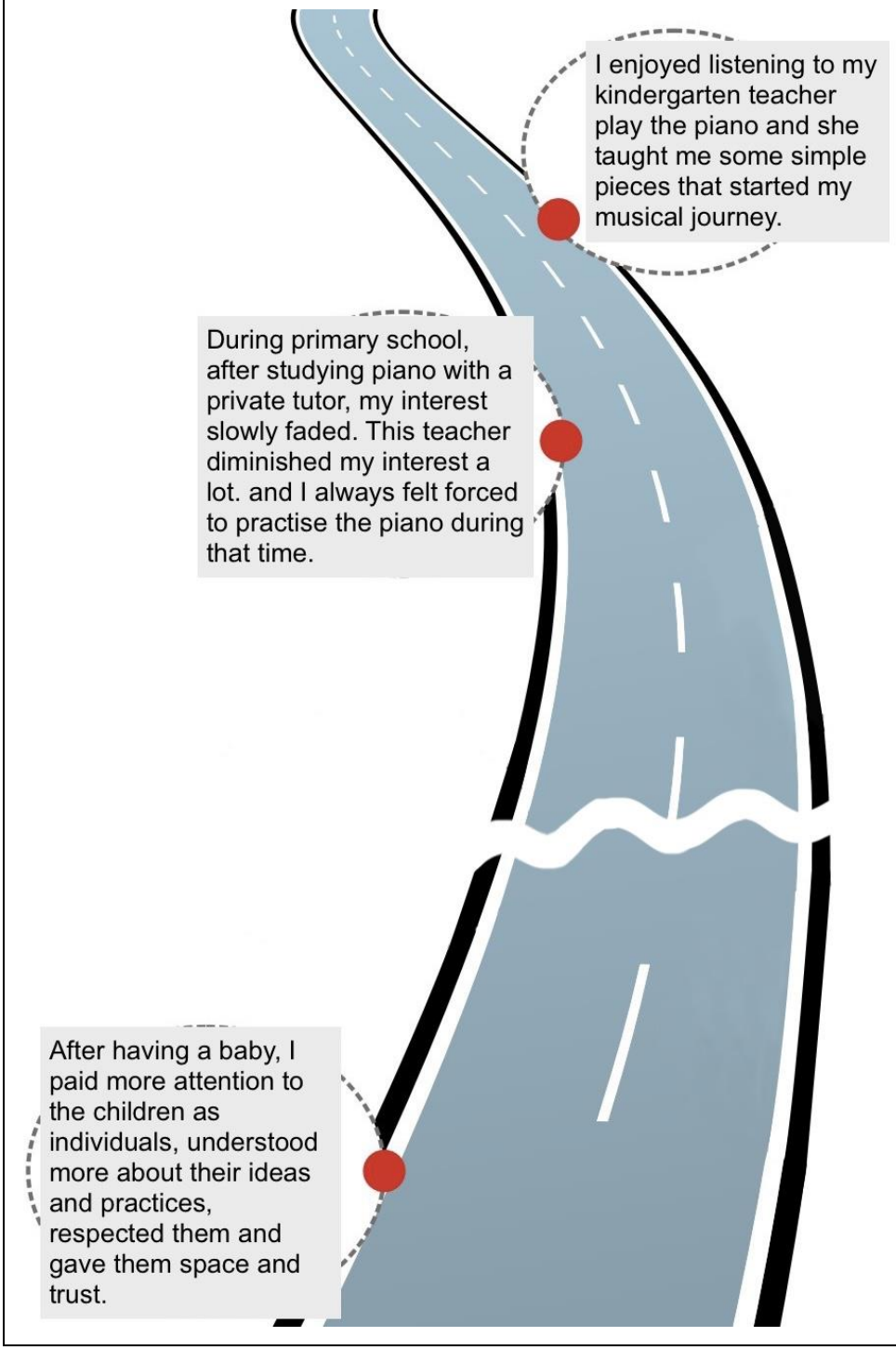
This experience led her to reflect on the need for teachers to teach pupils according to their individual abilities and situations and not to give them the knowledge that is too difficult or to assign them exercises that are not suitable for them or that take too long, as these can kill interest. As Chen said, reflecting on his own learning, he accumulated many demonstrations of teachers' mistakes and got to know what he should not do as a teacher, though he may still be unclear about what he should do.

As shown in the Box 6.2 below, Zhao added that children's interests are likely to be different from those of adults, and that teachers need to try to think from the child's point of view in order to do what is best for the child. In the interview, she talked enthusiastically about how she had come to understand the way children think differently since she became a mother. It is worth noting that, Zhao mentioned that, when she had a child, she became very concerned about the potential damage to her child's imagination:

> Now that I have children, I'm very concerned, even worried, about education. But also because of having children, I think I am able to understand my students better; they are like my children, and I try to understand them in a certain way. [...] They're playing; they're learning through playing, and that's how children learn. (2nd interview with Zhao, 40)

Similarly, Liu added that the experiences that had influenced her understanding of creativity had come from her family, such as the influence of her parents, and her concern for the education of her two children.

Box 6.2 Excerpt from Zhao's Musical Career and Education Path



Except for school teacher Wang, my participants found it hard to recall any of their experiences of using creativity as children.

> My [primary school] head teacher was very musical; he was a little old man and he loved to sing. As far as I can remember, he taught us all the songs I learned in primary school. […] He gave me the task [of an evening

> gala to celebrate Children's Day] and told us to prepare the programme ourselves (2nd Interview with Wang, 36).

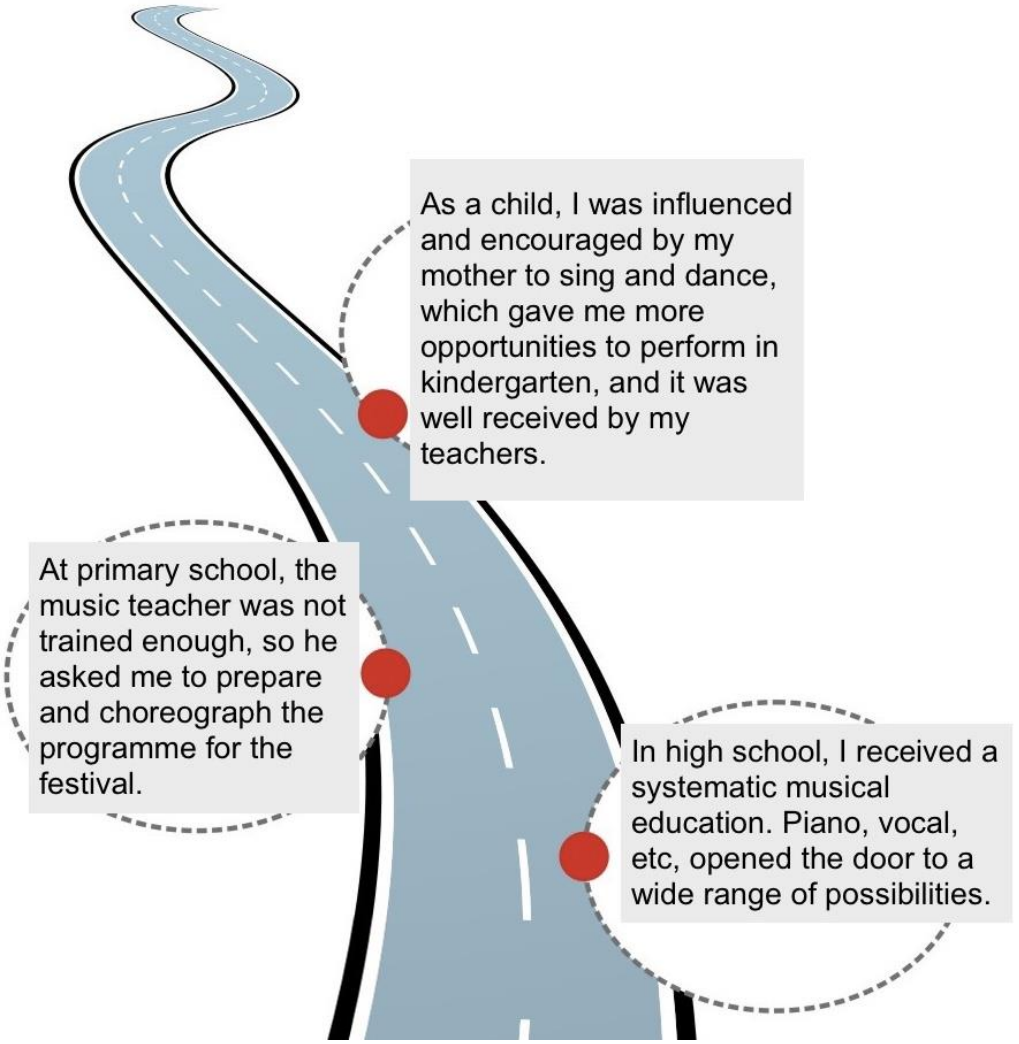
Wang mentioned that her primary school teacher was the start of her interest in music, and since then, she said, she had been building up her experience and enjoying the choreographic and musical creative experience. There is an excerpt from her Path in the box below; and she offered her childhood experience of creativity:

> We didn't have a dance teacher to teach us which moves were standard and which weren't. It was (she gestured) like a little boat. […] or like the sun. It was all like that; that was my first choreography experience. (2nd Interview with Wang, 36)

In Chapter 5, I found that Wang also encouraged her pupils to participate in creative activities and choreography in order to develop their interest and creativity in music learning.

It is noteworthy that in this excerpt, Wang, while emphasising interest, also suggested that the 'systematic' study of music theory and instruments in high school was helpful to her creativity; she felt that learning a wider range of musical knowledge and techniques opened up more possibilities for creation. In the following subsection, I will continue the analysis of how the teachers' emphasis on the systematic study of music theory and instruments appears to have developed through their own learning experience.

Box 6.3 Excerpt from Wang's Musical Career and Education Path



6.1.1.2 Emphasis on musical knowledge learning

All six of the teachers I interviewed had the 'systematic' experience of music learning: e.g., mastering basic performance skills in at least one instrument. With the exception of Chen and Wang, who did not study piano until after high school, they all started learning piano at a very young age, including the three school teachers; in addition, they all studied music or piano as their major and learnt other instruments during their university years. This was not a reason I chose them, but the teachers in the interviews had coincidentally shared the same experience. According to their interpretation and my analysis, it is likely that the values teachers talked about in the previous chapter in relation to

classical music, fundamentals and techniques, and their views on learning an instrument, were based on their own experiences of learning music.

Reviewing the Paths, I found that they all had a background of long-term professional instrumental learning experiences and that five of the six teachers mentioned in their interviews that instrumental learning had helped them in their own creative development. Wang mentioned that systematic study of an instrument had improved her aesthetic and musical literacy in a more obvious way, although her personal love and appreciation of music would also have helped in an 'unnoticeable way' – see the explanation of her terminology in the previous Section (5.1.1). They explained that learning an instrument is also useful for children's creative development, such as creative thinking and musical appreciation ability. For instance, two of the school's teachers, Wang and Zhao, were teaching the ocarina as part of their local curriculum; they valued it because they believed that the instrument could be 'a friend to their pupils' and that it offered the opportunity to learn notation skills, performance techniques and music theory in a systematic way.

> It's a systematic method of learning [of an instrument], which is why this course is important. (1st Interview with Wang, 23)

As Zhao said, the teachers emphasise musical instruments and use instruments such as the piano and the ocarina as tools to allow pupils to experience music and to learn the knowledge and techniques, instead of listening to lectures and the play and interpretation of others.

> We have two music lessons a week, one specifically on the ocarina, which helps a lot with pitch. Because they're playing the instrument, the pupils' pitch is excellent. I think the high quality of musical ability of the children in our school is because we have carried out the ocarina lessons very well. (1st Interview with Zhao, 23)

However, I also found that they valued discipline (as discussed in Section 5.4) musical learning alongside basic knowledge and technical practice, as they would bring their professional experience of music or piano learning to their teaching. For example, the piano teacher Liu mentioned that, although piano

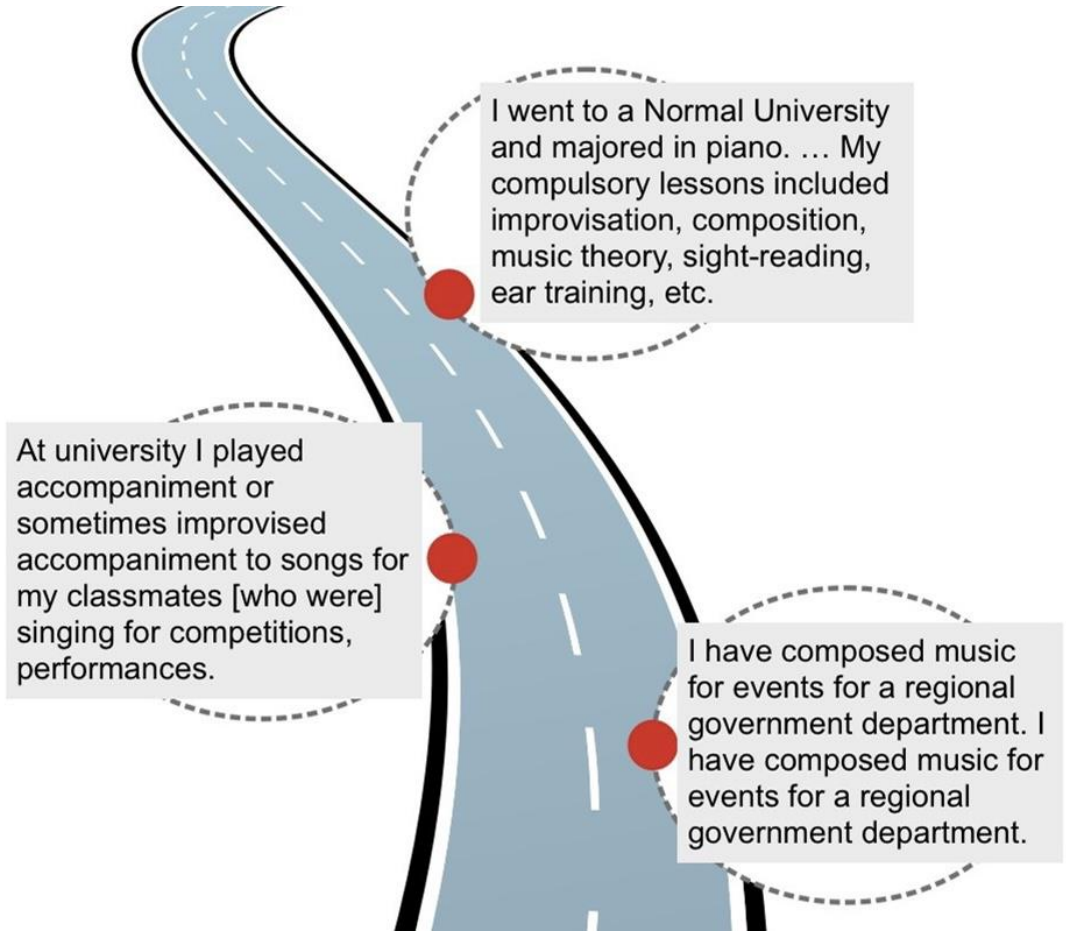
studies in childhood and majoring in piano at university (as well as the high school curriculum, as Wang previously mentioned) are helpful for improving classical music appreciation and aesthetic skills, they may be of limited use in the development of creative thinking, and improvisation and compositional skills.

All my participants felt that they had little experience with musical creativity during their university music learning and no formal training to guide/help with creativity. Liu mentioned one experience of composing music for non-educational institutions, remembering that this was her only experience of what she would call musical creativity. As outlined in Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 Methodology, two of the six participants were piano majors at the College of Music; one teacher was a music major at the College of Education; and the others were piano majors at a normal university, according to their own introduction. Although all of them mentioned they were required at university to accompany their fellow classmates improvisationally on the piano, they believed that this is actually to teach and test their understanding of the chords and their experience in the accompaniment. There is an example of Liu's excerpt in the box below.

As shown in box 6.4, Liu answered on the Path that she had advanced composition lectures when she was studying in the Normal University, but she felt that this did not allow her to experience creativity as these courses were focused on learning music and educational theory and were of limited help with practice and application:

> You can use different chords; you can use arpeggios; you have to learn how to change the rhythmic patterns. But there are patterns: for example, if it's lyrical, there will be more arpeggios, in a minor rather than a major key. (2nd interview with Liu, 39)

Box 6.4 Excerpt from Liu's Musical Career and Education Path



She added that their college also had lessons from foreign teachers (which, she said, were not piano masterclasses), and that they were different from most of the lectures she had been given:

> We also had lessons with foreign tutors at the university, and I remember my foreign tutor from Russia, who wouldn't talk about it during the lessons, was more interesting. It was very graphic. She would always emphasise the feeling of the music rather than the technique, probably because we were university students. She showed us how to do melancholy with piano. (2nd interview with Liu, 40)

However, she commented that she would not be teaching in this way.

According to my fieldwork observations, the three piano teachers taught piano lessons with a focus on technical explanations and exercises; for example, in the following Box 6.5, there is a narrative description of an observation of Liu's lesson - during the 40 minutes sessions, the pupil would firstly present scales, followed by piano exercises pieces. Liu would correct any mistaken notes the pupil played, and interrupt them for problems in their playing, and give feedback and guidance when they finish. Liu commented that it is a habitual piano teaching arrangement; and she seemed likely to bring her own piano learning experience. However, she added that different exercises would be chosen for each pupil according to their progress.

Although they did not have the direct experience to help them learn and understand creativity, the three schoolteachers felt that the teacher seminars and lecture competitions helped them to understand how to implement the curriculum and design their own lessons better. For example, Zhao would use such as the Orff approach, and Curwen gestures; Zhao continued that adding these diverse activities and pedagogies to the classroom, in fact, came from suggestions from the more experienced teachers as she prepared for the lecture competition. Some of the activities were modified and added after the seminar.

> It was considered a more appropriate design for the lesson, initially designed for a competition. Since then, I have been using that framework to teach this song. You may know that I'll keep adding my own ideas to it. Usually, we have a general direction or framework, the goal of which is to teach the children, to let children progress from not knowing to knowing. The aim is for the children to learn. (3rd Interview with Zhao, 52)

Zhao said that the competition was the most important experience for her after becoming a primary school teacher and that learning what was more effective in teaching practice was useful.

> To prepare for the lecture competition, I heard a lot of advice from professionals who are more experienced, and judges who may have a more reasonable understanding of instructional design. (3rd Interview with Zhao, 47)

Box 6.5 – A sample piano lesson: An observation narrative of John Thompson's easiest piano course for children – Emma, seven years old – a lesson taught by Liu

Emma is in the first year of primary school. Today Emma's dad is with her in class. For recording purposes, I put the video recorder on the other side of the pupil, parallel to the teacher. I sit next to the video recorder, and Emma's dad sits by the door, as the piano room is a bit crowded today.

Each of Liu's lessons is scheduled to last for about an hour. As Emma is so young and tires quickly, the session lasts just over 40 minutes, allowing for a short break of about five minutes in between. Before the lesson starts, Emma's dad takes two exercise books and class notebooks out of her school bag while talking to Ms Liu about Emma's usual practice. According to the feedback from the previous lesson, Emma had been practising the G major scale and the Thompson exercises last week.

Ms Liu opens her notebook and says to Emma, "Let's play the scale we learned in the last lesson first, ok? Do you still remember? In G…?" Emma is shy, and she puts one hand on the piano and doesn't play it right away. Liu continues, "G Major… has Fa-Sharp… Let's play this scale." Emma can only play scales with one hand now, so she plays them first with her left hand and then again with her right hand. As she plays, the teacher chants with her, "Do re mi, say this with me, Emma. Fa-Sharp, thumb across, sol, yes, and then..."

This is followed by Hanon practice. Again, Emma plays and Ms Liu chants and sings with her. Fifteen minutes pass, and Emma's arms are getting a bit tired; so, Ms Liu lets her take a five-minute break. After the break, Emma has one task left, the Thompson practice. Ms Liu says these little pieces, almost half a page each, are Emma's favourite part, and Emma picks up the book and puts it on the shelf and just starts playing the one she had practised last week. She plays very slowly, counting the beats as she plays, "Do, two, three, four, re, two, three, four", counting like this and making sure that each of her fingers sit still as she plays. Ms Liu says, "Very well, that's a good one, so you can play the next one now". Emma nods her head, happy.

Ms Liu gives her a new task and writes down the main points of the lesson and the tasks she needs to practise next week in her own 'lesson notebook', which Liu says has been her habit for many years – to record tasks for her pupils because most of them were still in the beginning stages of learning. Emma's dad confirms the tasks set by the teacher and then puts the book and notebook in the bag for her.

All three school teachers mentioned that through this exchange opportunity, they could reflect on the gap between their own practices and the requirements of the curriculum, so that they could make the transition from being suited to traditional teaching methods to being suited to the requirements of creativity.

6.1.2 Experiences in different teaching settings

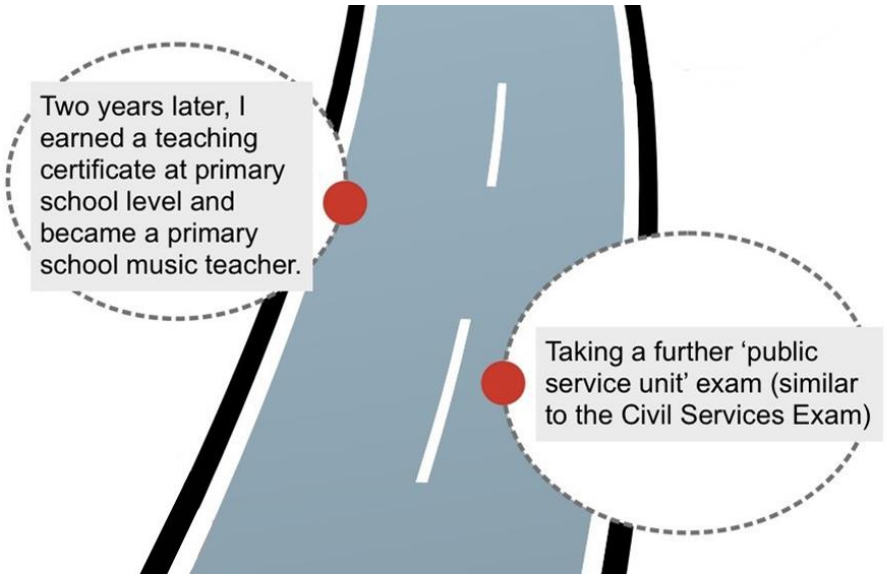
As can be seen from the findings in previous chapter, it could be argued the six teachers had different perceptions of creativity due to their different teaching contexts. In addition, the teachers' gender and the type of school they attended may have influenced their views. For example, school teacher Duan, who came from a rural primary school, mentioned the lack of resources, while the other two teachers from the urban primary school did not mention these issues. In addition, Wang and Zhao highlighted that the ocarina lessons on their local curriculum and extracurricular activities provided opportunities for pupils to explore their creativity. Duan, however, was a substitute teacher (as discussed in Section 4.4), and his school did not offer these courses. Table 6.2 below outlines the background information on the six teachers, as introduced in Chapter 4. This study takes into account the impact of these factors on teachers' perceptions; however, the empirical data provided in this study is not intended to demonstrate the relationship between these factors and the kind of perceptions teachers have, but rather to explain the six teachers' perceptions of creativity based on diverse contexts and how teachers develop pupils' creativity within different teaching contexts.

Table 6.2 Information about the participating schoolteachers and piano teachers

Participants (pseudonym)	Gender	Type of school /studio	Institution's name (pseudonym)	Courses/ instruments
Wang	F	Public, Urban	Sunny Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
Zhao	F	Public, Urban	Garden Primary School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
Duan	M	Public, Rural	Riverside School	Music class for students aged 6 to 11
Liu	F	Music Studio	Own piano studio	Teaching piano to students aged 4 to 15
Chen	M	Private piano lessons	Teaching at his home	Teaching piano to students aged from 6 to teenagers
Huang	F	Music Tutoring	Little Genius Pupil Service Centre	Teaching piano to primary school students (6 and 11 years old)

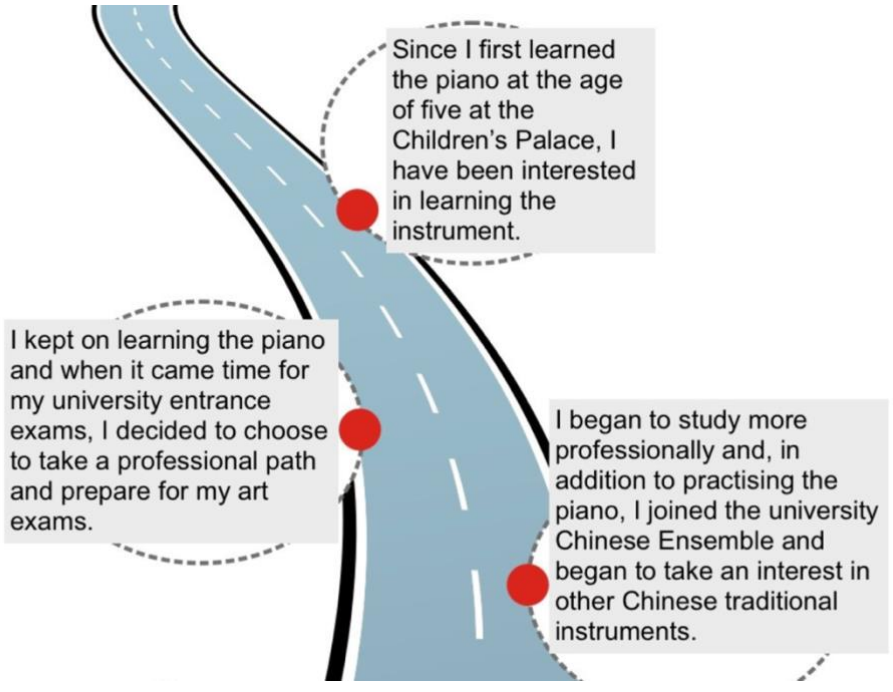
The three primary school music teachers involved in this study – Wang, Zhao and Duan – hold primary school music teacher certification. Wang is an experienced primary school music teacher and also the team leader for teaching music of the school, leading 12 young music teachers with less seniority than her. Zhao is a junior music teacher with five years of primary school teaching experience. Duan also has five years' experience as a primary school teacher, but he is a substitute teacher in music. Substitute teachers exist in almost every school due to the lack of teachers. Three participants had a similar situation in their schools. Ms Wang explained that their school had more than ten music teachers, which was still not enough to cope with the workload of more than 40 classes and two lessons per class per week. As a result, the policy allows these schools themselves to recruit some substitute teachers, who will also need to have a music-teaching qualification, take the school's entrance exam and undergo an interview. Once they have passed the recruitment process, they might only teach music but may also be required to teach other subjects, as Duan does, as someone who wants to become a non-substitute teacher (with state welfare). An excerpt of Duan's Musical Career and Education Path is shown in box 6.6. To achieve this, he also needed to take a further 'public service unit' exam (similar to the Civil Service exam); however, this exam has a low pass rate and is more challenging than merely taking the school's entrance exam and undergoing an interview.

Box 6.6 Excerpt from Duan's Musical Career and Education Path



In terms of piano teachers, Liu had over 10 years of piano teaching experience and was a graduate of a normal university, where she majored in piano. She used to teach music lessons in a secondary school with students from Years 7 to 9 (aged between 12 and 14), but at the time of the study she had her own piano studio – a piano room where she usually taught and practiced – and sometimes taught at home, teaching pupils from the ages of 4 to 15. Chen was a professor at the School of Music at a normal university in China, located in a large city with a population of over 11 million in Shandong Province. His primary research and teaching interests were piano and piano improvisation (performance and singing), and he had decades of experience in teaching piano. He spent his free time, usually at home, teaching piano to children – his pupils' ranged in age from seven years old (Year 1) to teenagers. Huang had five years of piano teaching experience and graduated from a normal university, majoring in piano. She taught in a piano studio located near a primary school where some pupils would come to practise the piano after school. Huang usually spent her days accompanying and tutoring three to five children while they practiced after school and gave them regular lessons once a week. Huang explained that the process is the same – 40 minutes of practice – but the teacher assigned a new task during the lesson. Her pupils were all primary school children, from Years 1 to 6, aged between 6 and 11.

Box 6.7 Excerpt from Huang's Musical Career and Education Path



As shown in Box 6.7, the piano teacher Huang mentioned that she started preparing for the national admission exam to art colleges, in their final year of high school, and eventually became music majors in the normal universities (i.e., teacher-training institutions in China). This is similar to the experience of the school teachers, but the school teacher, for example, Zhao, said that she had obtained a primary school teaching certificate and passed the civil service exam to become a primary school teacher; however, Huang did not need a certificate or to pass the civil service exam, because she did not intend to teach at a school.

6.2 Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers

In this section I consider the theme contemporary curriculum and examination requirements for teachers, including three categories 1) creative activities - new curriculum standards, 2) assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context, and 3) piano grade examinations and competitions. Section 6.2.1 outlines that under the education reform, the new curriculum standards require school music teachers to target pupils' creativity with all primary schools required to follow the unified national curriculum standards for the nine years of compulsory education: e.g., the *2011 Music Curriculum Standards* (MoE), as discussed in the earlier sections of research contexts (in Sections 1.1 and 3.1). Teachers in all three primary schools, whether rural or urban, were using the same textbooks as advocated for the national music curriculum and produced by People's Education Press (PEP) (People's Education Publisher Music Textbook Team, 2013). In Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3, I present pupil assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context and the pressures on piano teachers from piano grade examinations and competitions.

6.2.1 Creative activities - *New curriculum standards*

School music lessons followed the requirements of the national curriculum. Wang, Zhao and Duan – teachers at three primary schools – were asked to follow the requirements set by the *2011 Music Curriculum Standards* (MoE, this version was in use until 2022; see also Chapter 3). The *2011 Standards* divided music curriculum teaching into four areas: feeling and appreciation; performance; creativity; and music and related culture. According to the curriculum and in

their textbooks, there are ‘creation and activities Sections’ at the end of each lesson, the standards can be found in Section 3.1. They were all teaching appreciation and singing lessons, including creative activities too. In addition, Wang and Zhao highlighted that the ocarina lessons from their local curriculum and extracurricular activities provided opportunities for pupils to explore their creativity, as shown in Table 6.3.

The coloured boxes in the Table 6.3 mark what is not part of national curriculum: blue is the curriculum promoted by the local government, while yellow is the extra-curricular activities designed by the teachers themselves.

All three schoolteachers pointed out that, in the textbook, each song had corresponding creative work task – namely, the ‘creation and activities section’ – and they explained how these ‘creation and activities sections’ were implemented and how creative activities were designed for the singing and appreciation lessons. During the interviews, I discussed these creative tasks with the teacher based on the video excerpt and my observations. For example, Wang said she had prepared many creative activities based on the textbooks and wanted to have similar training for each lesson as an extension of the songs that pupils had learned.

> The textbook we use has a section of creative activities after each song. I can’t remember the year I first used this textbook, but I’ve been using it for at least five years now [by 2021], and the next edition is coming out soon. (1st Interview with Wang, 30)

As mentioned earlier, Zhao sometimes would ask pupils to engage in creative activities, letting the class improvise through group or pair work.

> […] in the last ten minutes, Zhao guided her pupils to improvise through group work using ‘do’, ‘mi’, ‘sol’. (Observation 09-03-21)

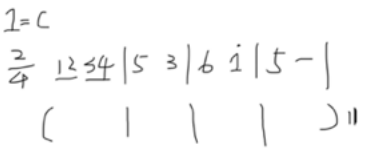
Duan used group work and presentations, following the main teaching task – singing or appreciation – and he let pupils work creatively in small groups of four, although he did not call them creative activities or use tasks in the textbooks.

Table 6.3: Multiple classroom activities for creativity – three schoolteachers

The teacher	Classroom Observation Lesson	Activities: In the video excerpt during interviews	Activities: In open-ended questions
Wang	Red River Valley **Ocarina** Year 3	Learning the technique of blowing: an imaginative approach	Extracurricular activities (gala)
	Yi folk song and the bell **Singing** Year 5	**Creative activities:** Write a melody or lyrics	
	Forest waterwheel **Appreciation** Year 3	Free time for self-exploration	Creative activities
	Jasmine Flower **Singing** Year 5	**Creative activities:** Make up your own moves for the song	Introductory Section: Stimulate students' creativity through some simple musical instruments (e.g., in Yi folk song and the bell)
	Ode to the Yellow River **Appreciation** Year 5	**Creative activities:** Make up your own moves for the song	Sounds from everyday life, such as a firecracker
			Introductory Section
Zhao	Ball in the Forest **Appreciation** Year 1	Introductory Section: Percussion	Ocarina lessons
	The Ocean **Singing** Year 2	Free time for self-exploration	Ocarina – an open lecture
	A Children's Song of the Tujia **Singing** Year 2	**Creative activities:** Write a melody or lyrics	No additional activities
	Hand Clapping Game **Singing** Year 1	Introductory Section: the Orff Approach	
	Weaving Flower Baskets **Singing** Year 1	Discussing pupils' progress with the teacher	Creative activities and giving free time for self-exploration
Duan	Little Red Riding Hood **Singing** Year 2	**Group presentation activities**	No additional activities
	Three Little Pigs **Appreciation** Year 2	**Group creative presentation activities** and pupils' progress	Extensive knowledge activities

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I used narrative boxes in the text to quote excerpts from my fieldwork diary, my participants' handwritten Paths, observation narratives and other materials, such as excerpts from textbooks. Box

6.8 presents a sample of the creative tasks provided in the textbook, and my translation of the original textbook is attached. It is from a singing lesson, during which Wang gave two optional tasks, which she called creative activities:

> After about five minutes, the teacher said, “In this lesson, we learned a song in which the Yi people (an ethnic group in China) express their joyful mood. How would you like to use the song to express your cheerfulness? You can write a melody of your own using simple notes, such as ‘do’, ‘re’, ‘mi’. Alternatively, write the following phrase to this melody:
>
> 
>
> ” (my handwriting). Wang gave the melody in their textbook, and the teacher quickly wrote it on the blackboard. (Research Diary 14-12-20)

Wang suggested that textbooks and teachers’ reference books were the proper materials and sources of ideas for designing activities. In the textbook, three tasks belonged to this song, and this is an example of the ‘creation and activities’ section, as shown in Box 6.8 below.

Wang said that when the pupils had learned the song or completed the appreciation task, she would ask pupils to arrange or write their melodies based on what they had learned or add movements or instruments to the tunes they had learned to show their understanding of the music.

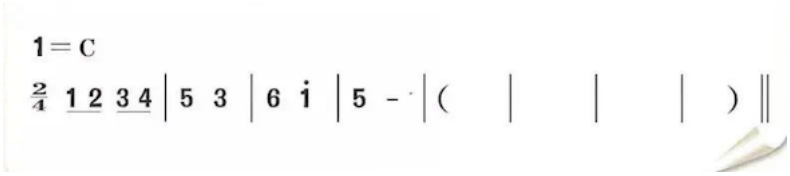
> Most of my creative activities take place about five to 10 minutes after the main task of the lesson has been completed. […] You can do this for each lesson if you like. (1st Interview with Wang, 12&13)

Box 6.8 Textbook sample: The 'creation and activities' section

Translation:

- The lyrics 'a-li-li' appear several times in the song. Can you try to express them in different strengths?
- Perform the song in groups in a variety of ways.
- Complete the melody below and sing it.

(The third was the task that she had given in class.)



Original in Chinese:

1. 这首歌曲多次出现讨词"啊哩哩", 它表现了怎样的情绪？你能用不同的力度来表现吗？
2. 分小组设计多种形式表演歌曲。
3. 将下面的旋律补充完整并唱一唱。

From: People's Education Press Edition Primary Music 5th Grade Book [Electronic Version] (PEP Music Textbook Team, 2013)

The textbook helped three schoolteachers realise the need to allow pupils to work creatively in the classroom compared to the original arrangement and design. For example, Zhao said, except for the tasks in the textbooks, she would give pupils free time for self-exploration, and sometimes, she would include simple activities employing the Orff approach, Curwen gestures, and visual aids to engage pupils.

Zhao explained that she preferred to give pupils free time for self-exploration.

> I don't think you need to frame their [thinking] in order to apply teaching methods, like Orff, which is also a good approach, but the idea is for the child to enjoy the music. Sometimes it's that you have, for example, children in first grade now, and I'm going to let them to clap their hands, clap their legs, move their body, and they'll have fun, and they'll learn without realising it. It's the most important thing. It's important to get them involved first. (1st Interview with Zhao, 4)

Therefore, she does not have a fixed teaching schedule for each lesson. There is an example in Box 6.9 below, which offers an excerpt from an observational narrative of one of her sessions. It is worth noting that in the example it can be seen that after Zhao watched that the pupils might not be very interested in the original design of the lesson, she modified her plan during the class.

Box 6.9 An excerpt from the observation narrative – 'The Ocean'

This is my first observation of Zhao's class. [...] She changed her plan depending on how well the class took to the song.

She opened the textbook and told them they would be learning the song 'The Ocean' in this lesson. It started by them listening to the song, which took close to three minutes to play. During this time, Zhao walked around the class while observing the pupils, whispering to me when she had finished that the song was a relatively quiet song with a slow rhythm, which the pupils might not like and might be challenging to learn. The song ended, and she asked the class if they had ever seen the ocean or beach. Children answered loudly, and one said he had been to the sea for his own experience. The teacher then asked, "What do you feel about the sea?" Although many of the children said they had not seen the sea before, they all shouted out loud: "blue", "very very huge", "cold", "very beautiful", and so on. The teacher then continued, "OK, let's listen again and feel the ocean in this song". The teacher then started the slides on the screen and played the song again.

[…]

Instead of teaching the class the song as initially planned, she spent the next 20 minutes repeating the song 'The Ocean', leaving the children free to do what they liked. She told the children that they could express the sea in any way they liked for the rest of the lesson. They could sing along with the music, draw pictures, cut out paper, etc. They could also do activities in their group, but not be 'too noisy'. During this time, she joined the children and discussed with each child what they were doing. Towards the end of the class, the teacher spotted one of the pupils' drawings and liked it. She showed it to the rest of the class; it was a girl's drawing of the sea. (Observation, 08-01-21)

She later explained in an interview:

> This song is one of those where you have to be quiet and listen; you should feel it, and they just couldn't do that. So, I came up with an idea; in that case, let's draw today, let's combine music and drawing. (1st Interview with Zhao, 2)

As Zhao mentioned in the previous section, she often figured out on her own how to apply the textbooks and implement new teaching instructions on creation activities, and would sharpen them in her interactions with other teachers.

During the interview, Duan mentioned that he sometimes gathered materials on the internet and in picture books based on the textbooks (see Box 6.10 for the excerpt). Wang also remarked that she would often not fully follow the tasks in the textbook, nor does she limit herself to the textbooks or a particular method: 'Encourage teachers to use textbooks, but do not rely on them too much' (2nd interview with Wang, 31).

Box 6.10 Excerpt from the narrative of Duan's classroom observations

This is an appreciation lesson for a Year 2 Class 1. Duan says that this song was based on a fairy tale, 'The Three Little Pigs'. There are 55 pupils in the classroom, in rows of seven. There are four in a group at the front and back, and their positions are also fixed. The main objective of this lesson is to learn introductory musical notes and enjoy a symphony specially adapted for children.

Firstly, the teacher plays the music while telling the pupils the story of the three little pigs with the help of drawings from the picture book at the same time. In the next part, the teacher uses the slides to teach the class a simple melody and identify the instruments played in the piece. In this part, Duan showed a slide of Peppa Pig and the note of a melody on the screen, breaking the music pieces down phrase by phrase and explaining them. In the last part, the teacher and the pupils perform together. Duan takes out the prepared A4 paper with drawings and gets four pupils from the class to perform on the podium, playing the three little pigs and the bad guy, the wolf. (Observation, 10-12-21)

Wang added that the tasks given in the textbooks were few and limited; there was plenty of scope for teachers to devise their own creative activities based on the songs the pupils had just learned.

> […] you can do percussion, for example, string bells, double bells, little wooden fish, and triangles (musical instruments). You can use a similar approach, like, telling the class, "Now that we have learned the song, could you add the percussion instruments you have to this rhythm?" If they try to add them to the rhythm, the process is creative, I think. (2nd Interview with Wang, 49)

Wang studied the methods of the model lessons designed by teachers in other schools and cities and would discuss with her colleagues in teaching seminars, then modify them for her own teaching strategies:

> Depending on the seminar's scope, teachers from all classes, schools or towns meet to discuss and design the lessons according to government guidelines and testing criteria. [...] Through the teaching seminars, experienced teachers will share [some of their lesson designs]. Most of our designs are the product of many discussions and a few years of practice, which is better than if they had to figure out [the course design] themselves and use their pupils to test [the new course design]. (1st Interview with Wang, 14)

However, she does not believe that teaching seminars is the only way for teachers to gain insight into creativity.

> Creative activities [come in many forms]. It depends on the teacher. If the teacher loves music from the heart, she might extend her knowledge into many parts of the lesson. [...] If the teacher explores and teaches attentively, they can design many such activities. (1st interview with Wang, 12)

In this way, Wang suggested that, in order for pupils to learn creatively, teachers should use and reflect on their own creativity.

6.2.2 Assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context

This section will explain how examinations and teacher assessments are conducted and impact on teachers – this category has emerged solely from the analysis of data from school teachers. According to the teachers' comments, exam preparation is currently more important for children and teachers than creativity. The three school teachers felt that, on the one hand, the music exams added to their teaching load, and on the other hand, teachers and pupils might have neglected their music classes and creativity under the pressure of the exams, because they were not the focus of the assessment. All three teachers said that, as it was a music course, pupils would be assessed at the end of the term with the main aim of quantifying the teacher's teaching outcomes. In most cases, the schoolteachers set the questions and act as judges, and the exam format is intended to score the pupils' singing and playing.

> [B]asically can sing correctly, with only one or two tiny mistakes, this is considered a **pass**. If you can sing without any mistakes, and if you can sing in a loud and clear voice, then you have achieved a **good** result. If, on top of this, the voice is bright and expressive, and the singing is vocal, and the voice is carried by the emotion, then this is **excellent**. (1st Interview with Wang, 18)

Wang argued that the lack of clear assessment criteria in the exams for creativity was a challenge for their teaching. She considered assessment to be essential to ensure that teachers' teaching was up to standard:

> When you have creative activities, teachers don't take them seriously if you don't include them in evaluation. It is still important to at least include it in teacher evaluation and to assess teachers through their pupil grades. (1st Interview with Wang, 2)

Wang added that although creativity was not scored, it was seen in the performance of the children, as in whether their performance was lively or whether the pupils' understanding of the music made sense.

> If a teacher pays little attention to the creativity in the classroom, he may stand there with a rather wooden expression and dull movements when singing; or he may do nothing, just try to finish the song. In classes where the teacher pays attention to the child's creativity, the child will be significantly different. (1st Interview with Wang, 19)

However, Zhao and Duan argued that exams pressure both children and teachers.

> I think that music in primary schools nowadays is influenced by the examinations, and the way we test children. Teachers can teach with **flexibility**, but the minimum request is that the exams have to be passed. [...] So, I told the pupils that I understand that you have your own understanding and expression of music, but when you take the exams, for example, if the song in your textbook is saying happy, you must show people [the examiner] that you are happy. I don't expect a perfectly high score, but at least pass the exam. (2nd Interview with Zhao, 44)

Wang also believed teachers were overwhelmed with the workload generated under the current assessment criteria. As a result, there was a rush to schedule courses, which resulted in insufficient attention being paid to pupils:

> The amount of time we spend in the classroom [doing creativity activities] now is very small and far from satisfactory. [...] I only have 40 lessons per term, 16 appreciation lessons. The rest of the time, I have to teach the children 16 songs and [how to play] the ocarina. (1st Interview with Wang, 11&19)

The assessment of teachers has increased their workload to the extent that they fail to pay attention in the classroom to elements that do not need to be assessed, such as whether children's creativity is being developed. Zhao told of an experience that she saw as showing clear disapproval from more experienced teachers of her understanding of creativity and teaching creativity.

> [After that open class] I think I managed to engage pupils; I connected with the children and got them involved. They had so much fun in this

> class. But the feedback I got [before the competition] was "What have you done to teach them?" (2nd Interview with Zhao, 50)

Zhao thus found that the assessment requirements for teachers could also create difficulties when teaching creativity.

6.2.3 Piano grade examinations and competitions

This section will explain how to grade examinations and competitions have influenced piano teaching and have made an impact on teachers - this category emerged from the analysis of data from piano teachers. The piano teachers in my study believed that commercial piano exams have greatly developed in China in recent years but offer little assistance to children's creativity.

Teachers said that the number of children learning piano is huge and that there is a wide variety of grade exams:

> Exams of the China Conservatory of Music, of the Ministry of Culture, examinations of the Chinese Musicians' Association [...] 20,000 people take the exams. In our area, I estimate that over 15,000 people take the grade exams every year. Of course, there are many children who choose not to take the exams. (1st Interview with Chen, 4)

These examinations are commercial examinations, though some are organised by conservatoires.

> The current examinations and competitions are commercialised. It is not aimed at communication and progress among students. You don't see creativity in the competitions. [...] I would advise them to stay and watch other students on stage; otherwise, they just finish their pieces and go home, which I don't think is helpful. (3rd interview with Chen, 52)

Therefore, these piano teachers argued that these commercialised exams in China are of limited value for pupils' creativity. They pointed out that if children learn piano with the aim of taking exams, it may keep them practising, but it is very difficult to make progress. Moreover, the motivation generated by such

exams and competitions could be difficult to maintain; it could mean that after completing the exams and competitions, they lose their motivation to practise and their interest in learning music.

> I'm afraid that… A serious utilitarian mentality prevails among many parents and teachers in China… But teachers can't say no to their children's exams. For parents, they need feedback; they need to see how their child is doing, otherwise they don't know what level their child is playing at. For the teacher, the teacher needs this to prove that he is teaching properly. (1st Interview with Chen, 4)

> I think that if the quality of the exams and competitions is acceptable, I would recommend they take them. I consider these [exams and competitions] just as ways to push them to practise and urge them to progress. From Grade 5 to Grade 6, they increase in difficulty. […] But, you know, some children learn to play the piano just for exams and after they finish [in Grade 10], they stop studying. (1st Interview with Huang, 15)

There is no detailed teaching guidance for the content of piano examinations in China: for example, Appendices 3 & 4 provide two types of sample schemes for the exam that are sufficiently general for it to possibly be challenging to understand what preparation is required for the exam if one merely refers to these schemes. Lui explained the numerous piano exams available as follows:

> There are specified books for the exams, and different materials for different exams. [...] There are only repertoire requirements in their books. There are the exams of the Central Conservatory of Music, of the China Conservatory of Music, the exams of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the exams of the Chinese Musicians' Association, the exams of the Opera House, the exams of the Xinghai Conservatory of Music, the exams of the ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), you mentioned, the exams of the Shandong Education Commission. [...] At least 10 or more. (3rd Interview with Liu, 30)

Therefore, pupils will likely have to seek the help of an experienced teacher if they wish to prepare for the exam.

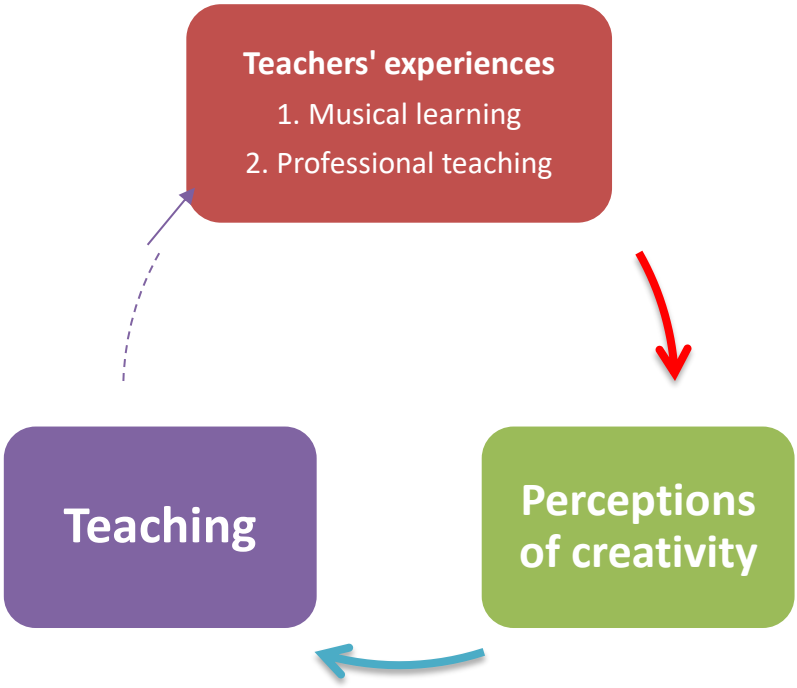
These grade examinations have been changing in recent years: e.g., some institutions have added written examinations to test, for example, the basic music knowledge (see Appendix 3, text **in bold**). Liu offered an interpretation:

> The exams are now more difficult than before, with some requiring a music theory test. The exams are taken using a computer. [...] It's not in the textbooks, but the exams won't be difficult. Music theory is also really important, and I make sure that the pupils are aware of it when they are playing the piano. (3rd Interview with Liu, 50)

6.3 Discussion of key issues arising from findings 1: Teachers' experience

In Sections 6.1 and 6.2 above, I analysed the impact of teachers' musical learning and teaching experiences on their perceptions. I identified the interaction between these teachers' perceptions of creativity, teaching and learning experiences, and teaching for creativity. These three elements interact with each other, as discussed below in Figure 6.1. Reviewing my participants' responses and their Path, I identified two main issues regarding their experiences. Firstly, in the data analysis (Section 4.6), I mentioned that they chose the smoother route option of the two Path templates I provided: the 'snake' (e.g., Burnard, 2000) and the Path (see examples in this chapter). According to Denicolo and Pope (1990), each turn in the snake Path signifies a shift in the teacher's path or understanding. However, my respondents did not mention similar shifts when faced with my Path template; they mentioned that their perception of education was cumulative rather than changing.

Figure 6.1 The relationships between teachers' perceptions, teaching, and experiences



The red arrow indicates that teachers' perceptions of creativity came from their reflections on their musical and professional learning.The blue arrow indicates that their perceptions influenced their implementation of teaching for creativity. The purple arrow (the dotted line), as Odena and Welch (2009) suggested, shows how teachers developed 'educational connoisseurship' (Eisner, 2017) from their experiences. I will analyse, based on the data I have collected, why this reaction is not well represented, and therefore I have designed it as a dotted line in the graph.

Secondly, I found that these teachers mentioned that their ideas came from reflecting on both their learning and teaching experience. However, as they believed that the creative outcomes in music education are 'invisible' and take time to discover, reflection on teaching may be difficult for them as well as generating new ideas in a short period of time. The reflection on teaching is often experienced by teachers who have been teaching for a longer period of time, such as Chen and Wang.

6.4 Discussion of key issues arising from findings 2: Creativity or examinations?

At the end of Chapter 5, I summarised the key insights from the findings, including a contradiction between what the teachers I interviewed thought they needed to do and what they could do. In this chapter, I introduced the key issue arising from this chapter: **'What am I being asked to do?'** - The requirements for them to be rigid mainly came from the assessment of teachers, the examination of pupils, and piano exams; they considered passing the exam requires knowledge and techniques. Policies required the schoolteachers to undertake creativity tasks in the classroom, but this was not included in the exams.

As discussed in the previous chapter, although past research on Chinese education has pointed to the pressure and limitations on creativity that examinations bring to students in the present day (e.g., Zhao, 2018), the teachers in this study did not consider examinations as a pressure on music learning or a challenge to children's creative development. Conversely, teachers said that it was the lack of emphasis on music and creativity in the *Gaokao* that left teachers with no direction or assurance about how to implement the creativity section in the new curriculum (e.g., the 2011 music curriculum standard).

What is clear from this chapter is that the schoolteachers were constantly trying to improve their teaching methods and time allocation for the implementation of the new curriculum and its emphasis on creativity. In the assessment of music as set by the school, the teachers raised the issue of the assessment's scope making the teaching task too heavy. However, such an assessment was not likely to put pressure on pupils to learn music knowledge and skills; for example, the teachers mentioned that the assessment was not rigid in terms of pitch and rhythm, but rather left room for their imagination and creativity. In contrast, piano examinations – grade examinations and competitions for the piano – with their technical requirements for students, were more rigorous, though these requirements were not in the examination syllabus, but in the hands of these teachers. This likely means that teachers will have to be strict with pupils for as long as they prepare for these exams and competitions.

Summary

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of my research in relation to the second research question and the two themes in the data analysis. This chapter provides reflections by teachers on their learning and teaching experiences (Section 6.1) and on the pressures placed on teachers by policy requirements, examinations, and assessments (Section 6.2).

7 Conclusion

Overview

This chapter concludes the thesis; following this overview, I provide a summary of my study in Section 7.1 and five key findings and the relationships between the key findings in Section 7.2. I outline the study's original contribution to knowledge in Section 7.3, discuss the implications for the future of educational research, policy, and practice in China, and make recommendations for future research in Section 7.4. Issues for further inquiry are considered in Section 7.5, and the research limitations are discussed in Section 7.6. Finally, in Section 7.7, I provide some final thoughts and reflections on my personal development.

7.1 Overview of the study

This study aimed to address a research gap regarding the investigation of Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity and discussed the perceptions of six Chinese music teachers, including their definitions of creativity, and their reflections on teaching practices in primary schools and piano studios. I reviewed studies of music teachers' perceptions of creativity, for example, in Europe (Schiavio et al., 2023) and the United States (Kladder & Lee, 2019); however, little is known about Chinese music teachers because of the limited amount of research conducted on their perceptions. Studies on general creativity suggest that Chinese understandings of the concepts of creativity differ from those in the West (e.g., Rudowicz, 2004; Huang & Yang, 2021). In addition, research on music teaching practices of creativity suggests that teachers in Eastern educational contexts have diverse experiences in relation to creativity (e.g., Wiles, 2017).

Following China's curriculum reform, fostering students' creativity has become one of the key tasks of the music curriculum (e.g., MoE, 2011, 2022). However, little is known of the implementation of the new curriculum because of limited research into the teachers' implementation. A recent study of music teachers' implementation of the *2011 New Curriculum Standards* argued that it is likely that, while the new curriculum standards emphasise creativity, their implementation in practice is not satisfactory (Yu & Leung, 2019). Ho's newly

published book (2023) includes a chapter presenting school teachers' perspectives on creativity education in China. She interviewed school leaders, music teachers, and teachers of other subjects in primary and secondary schools from three different regions of China, who are involved in creativity education or art education (including such as drawing, calligraphy and dance). Ho suggests recent curriculum reforms encouraged teachers to spend more time focusing on pupils' creativity, but seemed to be of limited help with teaching practice, with teachers having to implement teaching based on their own understanding of creativity. It is necessary to explore the teachers' perceptions, while considering their experiences of implementing the new curriculum.

This study examined 6 Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity in music education from their perspective as teachers. In order to consider both the school and out-of-school music education contexts in China, I included the perceptions of both primary school music teachers and piano teachers in instrumental studios.

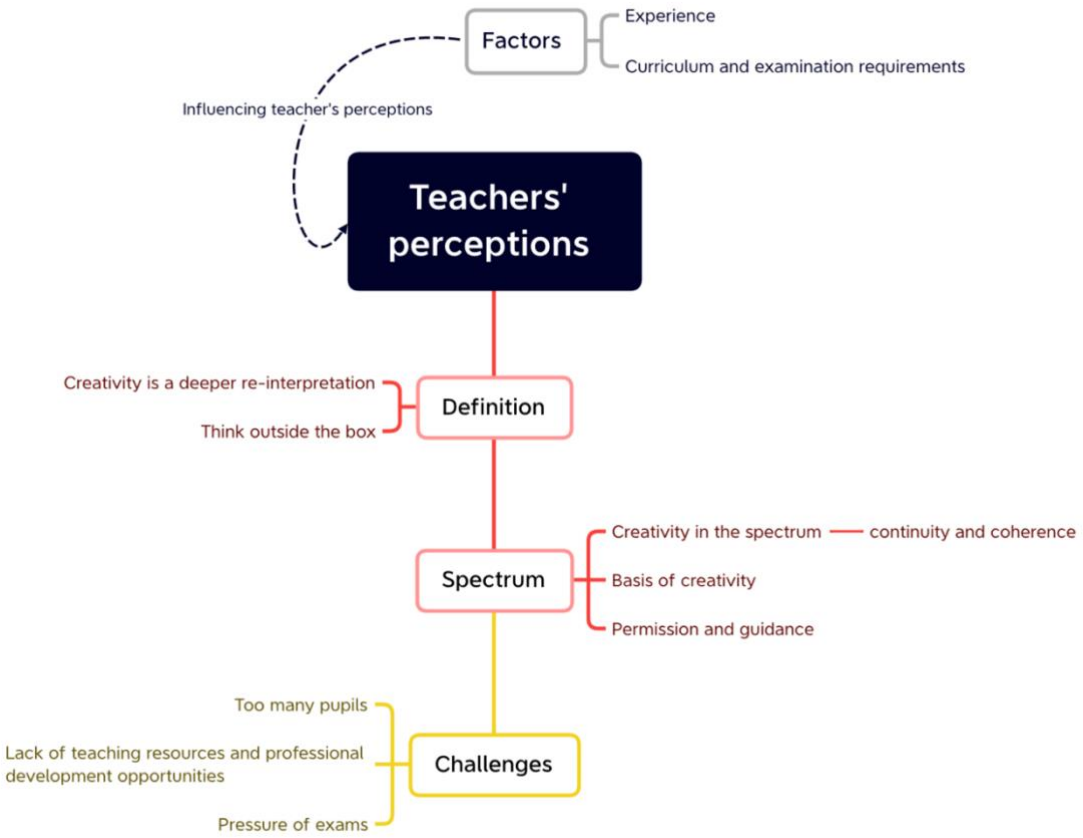
In Chapter 1, I presented the background and rationale for this study and posed two research questions: 1) What are these Chinese music teachers' perceptions of creativity? and 2) In what ways are their perceptions influenced by their experiences of music, music education and current policy? In Chapters 2 and 3 I developed my theoretical framework and reviewed the policy and empirical research on creativity within the Chinese context. Chapter 4 presented the methodology that underpinned my research process. Chapters 5 and 6 analysed and discussed the study's findings. Key findings included the Chinese music educators' perceptions about the spectrum of learning about music and approaches to teaching for creativity, as well as the factors that influence these perceptions, thereby providing evidence of the relationship between teachers' learning experiences, their perceptions, and their teaching practices within the Chinese music education context. My key findings and their relationships are explored in the following Section 7.2.

7.2 Key findings: A map and their relationships

The findings of this study are based on the theoretical framework of teachers' definitions of creativity and the factors that influenced teachers' perceptions, as shown in the diagram below. My findings are organised around three main strands. Firstly, the red branching strand deal with the theme of the teacher's definition of creativity (Section 5.1). The teachers gave their views regarding the definition of creativity, which they described as musical creativity and creative thinking. In addition, based on the non-participant observation of the teachers and interviews, together with their perceptions of music education, this study found that the process of music education in the teachers' perspective could be considered as a continuum. One of the main findings of this study, the spectrum in music education, and the presentation and analysis of this spectrum, is discussed in Section 5.2. The second strand, shown in the yellow branch of the diagram, shows the difficulties in everyday teaching that teachers identified (Section 5.3). The third strand of the findings, the grey section at the top, is concerned with the different factors that influence teachers' perceptions, which are developed in Chapter 6, including teachers' reflections on their learning and teaching experiences (Section 6.1), and the pressures of policy requirement, examination and assessment for teachers (Section 6.2). Chapter 6 presented and discussed the findings of my study, corresponding to the two themes in the data analysis, namely 'The influence of own music learning and teaching experiences on teachers' perceptions' and 'Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers', which are presented in Figure 7.1.

Overall, the five key findings (KF) are: KF1) The teacher's definition: creativity is both a deep understanding of the music and a divergent way of thinking. KF2) The spectrum of music education with 7 phases: 1) Interest/engagement; 2) Basic knowledge/Technique; 3) Practice; 4) Thinking/reflection; 5) Developed sense/understanding; 6) Advanced technique; 7) Deeper re-interpretation. KF3) The challenges of teaching for creativity. KF4) The relationships between these teachers' perceptions, teaching, and experiences: a teachers' thinking model. And KF5) The curriculum and examination requirements for teachers.

Figure 7.1 The relationships between the key research findings



According to the responses of all six teachers I interviewed, the demands placed on them came mainly from the evaluation of teachers and the examinations of pupils, and they were rigid. Firstly, the teachers were engaged in primary education – the 'basic stage', in their own words – and they felt they needed to build a good foundation for their children in terms of knowledge and skills and supervising their pupils to practise more. Secondly, with the demands of examinations, they had to prepare pupils to achieve better results. In this regard, the piano teachers did not consider exams to be a source of pressure. They considered preparing pupils for examinations to be part of their lessons, but they did not agree that pupils should treat learning the piano or taking piano examinations as a competitive process. They explained that the repertoire practised for the exams was part of the study to get basic technique, as I summarised in the second phase in the spectrum.

However, based on the development of education policies over the last 20 years, teachers began to believe that they should make pupils more creative in order to meet the needs of a developing society. Although all the teachers felt that the

children should be given more freedom to be creative, they felt that what they could do was use the classroom/studio as a basis for each lesson; the primary school teacher had to give priority to textbook knowledge, the piano teacher had to teach basic skills first. Teachers, therefore, were facing the problems of how to balance exams and creativity and how to balance discipline and freedom.

7.3 Original contribution to knowledge

This investigation contributes original knowledge from the perspective of creativity in music education and music teachers' thinking within the Chinese context. The following points set out some of the details of this study's contribution to knowledge:

- Situating Chinese Music Educators' Perspectives on Creativity within their Cultural and Educational Traditions

This study delves into the teaching practices and perceptions of creativity among Chinese music school teachers and private piano teachers. It presents empirical evidence showcasing how these educators' perspectives are shaped by their past musical learning experiences and entrenched within Chinese educational traditions. This includes a belief in the continuous nature of music learning and a strong emphasis on fundamental skills.

The study examines the perspectives of Chinese music teachers, particularly their views on creativity within the cultural and educational traditions of China. The findings align with existing literature on teachers' implicit theories of creativity, highlighting the influence of cultural and educational systems, such as examination pressures (e.g., Andiliou & Murphy, 2010; Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018; Huang & Yang, 2021). Rudowicz (2004) and Yue et al. (2011) in their comparative studies of China and Western countries (e.g., Germany), emphasised the pivotal role of cultural and social factors in shaping the understanding of creativity. This study contributes valuable empirical evidence that reinforces and supports these theoretical perspectives. The findings of my research explore teachers' views on creativity; for example, Key Findings 1 & 2 include a belief in the continuous nature of music learning and a strong emphasis on fundamental skills, which adds empirical evidence to recent studies. The

emphasis on basic skills within the Chinese music education context is situated within the broader educational traditions prevalent in the teaching landscape in China and other Eastern countries (Fung, 2018; Ho, 2023; Leung, 2015; Matsunobu, 2011). This alignment underscores the enduring influence of cultural and historical factors on pedagogical approaches, enriching the understanding of the contextual nuances shaping creative and music education practices. This contributes to the gap in empirical research on the process of fostering creativity during music learning, and my study has provided evidence supporting the idea of the nurturing process of creativity from the perspective of Chinese music teachers.

An additional contribution of this research is the perspective it offers on creativity in the context of music education. Studies have delved into the role of creativity in this field, underscoring its significance. Burnard (2010) and Bújez & Mohedo (2014) both highlight the necessity for creative mediation and innovative methodological approaches in music teaching. Kladder & Lee (2019) provide insight into music teachers' perceptions of creativity, emphasising the importance of a supportive classroom environment and identifying characteristics of creative students. Additionally, my findings are in concordance with the model of Odena and Welch (2007, 2009), which recognises the complex interconnection between teachers' perceptions of creativity, their teaching strategies, and experiences. My model suggests that teachers tend to view their own musical learning and teaching experiences as a process of accumulation, enriching the existing discourse on educational development. While my findings echo the idea that reflections on musical and professional learning shape teachers’ perceptions of creativity, the development of educational connoisseurship proposed by Odena and Welch was not as prominent in my research outcomes. My original framework of teachers’ understanding of teaching for creativity (i.e., Figure 5.4) indicates that reflective teaching practices may pose time challenges for teachers, as the results of creative work in music education tend to be subtle and slow to manifest. Owing to the constraints of this study, there is an evident need for additional exploration of this model. Specifically, there is a scope for investigating how the nuanced and long-term pedagogical results can assist educators in acknowledging and evaluating feedback on their educational approaches.

- An Original Framework of Music Teaching and Learning in the Chinese Context

I present an original framework with 7 phases – spectrum of music teaching and learning, see Figure 5.2 – based on the music teacher's interpretations. Within the spectrum, I found that teachers tended to divide music education into different stages with the piano teachers and the school teachers describing the stages similarly, though they would use different terminology. For example, in the second stage, the piano teacher used terms such as fundamental techniques, whereas the school teacher placed more emphasis on the basic knowledge in their textbooks. Overall, the spectrum further evidences their emphasis on continuity and the developmental nature of creativity in music education.

The spectrum model extends beyond existing developmental frameworks by incorporating cultural and contextual factors relevant to Chinese music education. While creativity is often synonymous with innovation or intelligence in education (e.g., Kanematsu & Barry, 2016, Roopashree, 2021; also see Section 2.2.5 and Table 2.1), the viewpoints expressed by participants indicate that, within the Chinese music education framework, creativity is intricately tied to continuous learning and the mastery of fundamental skills. It enriches the existing theoretical framework by providing empirical insights into how cultural and educational contexts shape the conceptualisation and enactment of creativity in music education. The spectrum offers diverse perspectives on how Chinese music teachers perceive and structure the process of teaching and learning music. The seven phases outlined in Figure 5.2 provide a structured view of the continuum of music education as interpreted by teachers, highlighting both the commonalities and differences in terminology between participating piano teachers and schoolteachers.

This model's significance for teachers extends to its capacity to serve as a guide for curriculum development, lesson planning, and teacher education in the realm of music education. Offering a holistic perspective, it prompts educators to discern the interconnected nature of various aspects across different stages of the educational journey. Moreover, as presented and discussed in Figure 5.4 (page 141), the model reinforces the notion that creativity is not an isolated entity but rather intricately woven throughout the entire music education

process. Neglect of any of these aspects may impact the development of creativity.

- Exploring the integration in China of Western educational ideas with Eastern educational values

Examples were provided in this study to explain how these Chinese teachers understood the nurturing role of music education for children, and how they believed that there was continuity and coherence in the various stages of music learning. These explanations were influenced by their beliefs about lifelong learning in music, such as the notion that it is important to continue learning and that formal foundation learning can travel further along the musical path.

A unique contribution of this study lies in the exploration of how beliefs about music education are influenced by the integration of Western and Eastern educational philosophies in the Chinese context. While there is existing literature on the globalisation of education and the transfer of educational practices across cultures (e.g., Smith & Hu, 2013; Windzio & Martens, 2014; Rodwell, 2013), this study delves deeper by examining the specific ways in which Chinese music teachers reconcile and integrate these diverse influences within their pedagogical beliefs. The exploration of Western educational concepts with Eastern pedagogical values in the context of Chinese music education provides a rich illustration of how cultural hybridity manifests in music pedagogy. This study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between global and local educational influences in the context of music education in China. By providing specific examples and insightful analyses, it sheds light on the multifaceted nature of this integration.

- Curriculum Implementation in Primary School Music Education

This study has added to existing research on the implementation of the new curriculum with rich qualitative examples of primary school music teachers' implementation and reflections. The *New Curriculum Standards* (e.g., MoE, 2011, 2022) impose demands on creativity, but in terms of the implementation of the *2011 New Curriculum Standards*, it appears that there are still problems and challenges for music school teachers, such as the pressure of examination

and teaching large numbers of pupils in classrooms. Previous survey-based studies found that the teaching methods of these school teachers may be exam-oriented (e.g., Yu & Leung, 2019; Ho, 2023). However, this research expands on earlier studies by adding teachers' own identification of challenges, and observations of teachers' teaching practices and discussions of extracts of their lessons through three rounds of in-depth interviews.

The identification of exam-oriented teaching methods among music school teachers, as indicated by prior survey-based studies, serves as a point of connection with existing literature (Ding, 2023; Liu, 2023; Song, 2016). Some exam-oriented teaching methods, as underscored in the research by Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011), suggest that a focus on exams may stifle creativity and imagination in students. Additionally, the global concern about the emphasis on examination outcomes in educational research is echoed in recent studies like Xiong's (2021), which explores the impact of college entrance exams on students' motivation in music education. The emphasis on examination outcomes has been a concern of research in education globally, and this study reaffirms these findings within the specific context of primary school music education in China. This consistency underscores the persistence of certain challenges despite curriculum changes, suggesting the need for targeted support.

My research extends beyond earlier studies by incorporating Chinese teachers' perspectives and reflections. This qualitative approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of teachers, shedding light on the motivations and constraints they encounter. This approach aligns with the constructivist perspective on policy implementation, which outlines the crucial role of teachers as active agents interpreting and adapting policies based on their professional judgment and contextual constraints.

7.4 Implications and recommendations for research, policy and practice

In this section, some of the implications for research, policy, and practice are considered. Section 7.2.1 discusses the implications of this study for conducting studies on music education and music teachers in China. Section 7.2.2 considers implications for policy leaders at state, regional and city levels and their development and implementation of the curriculum guidelines. Section 7.2.3

addresses the significance of this study for music practitioners, teachers, and teacher educators.

7.4.1 Implications for educational research in China

This study provides perspectives regarding conducting studies on creativity and music education in China, including issues of the influences of Eastern perspectives regarding creativity on music teachers, the Chinese music education philosophy of nurturing creativity and musical learning process, and diverse approaches and practices of creativity in contemporary China.

In terms of contemporary Chinese teachers' perceptions, the participating teachers felt the tension in traditional Eastern understanding between mastery of knowledge and technology, and thinking outside the box, and tried to balance the two. The participating teachers narrated creativity as 'deeper re-interpretations' when defining and describing creativity emphasising 'change' and 'refinement', without much commentary on 'novelty' and 'originality' (Rudowicz, 2004). In traditional Eastern approaches, while novelty would not be emphasised, they believe that it is possible to build the personal style based on inherited traditions. Leung's (2015: 494) study on creativity within a traditional apprenticeship approach to transmitting Cantonese opera highlights the application of knowledge and inherited tradition, stating that "some of the learners may become masters by creating and establishing their own personal style which is unique and recognised by the field". Similarly, Matsunobu's (2011) study introduces the pedagogy of imitation and repetition and creativity of formulaic learning in the Japanese context. Creation was described as the product of the perfection of imitation and the familiarity of mastering the mode of operation, and Matsunobu hints at the need for the teacher to do better than the students and for the students to imitate the teacher. However, a growing body of pedagogical research examining the Chinese context (e.g., Mullen, 2017; Huang et al., 2019) argues that the perceived over-emphasis on mastering old knowledge hinders the development of students' creative thinking. In music education, Ho's (2023) recently published study of Chinese culture and creativity argues that Chinese school education does not sufficiently develop students' personalities nor their divergent thinking due to its focus of knowledge.

Investigations into the traditional Chinese philosophy of music education, such as Fung's (2018) interpretation of creativity, have indicated that creativity may be present throughout the process of musical learning, but that creation could only be achieved during the last stage of learning. Fung proposed a way of thinking about and practising music education that is rooted in traditional Chinese music education philosophy, which he called a 'trilogy': change, balance and liberation. However, there is a lack of empirical research in the recent literature on the process of learning music, and my study has provided some evidence supporting the idea of the 'nurturing process of creativity' from the perspective of Chinese music teachers. My participants believed that fostering creativity would not achieve immediate results, and the spectrum I presented not only demonstrated the teachers' understanding that music learning would be a long process, but also showed the unpredictability of achievements in music education. Both piano teachers and schoolteachers have mentioned that the impact and achievements of music learning on pupils can be invisible. They therefore seem to value music in terms of quality of life and self-improvement more than of creativity, which is similarly the case in Japan (Matsunobu, 2018), while Fung (2018) interprets creativity as part of the pursuit of one's self-cultivation, adding that personalised creation will occur later.

Reflecting on the views of the teachers interviewed, the findings illustrate that they were considering how to balance teaching pupils' basic musical knowledge and instrumental techniques alongside giving them space to think independently. However, the participants did not embrace a student-centred classroom or piano lesson, and it seemed that because students needed to learn from their teachers, their interaction in class was not always mutual, or equal. There are studies examining multiple aspects of the different approaches to music education and the development of creativity in different educational practices (e.g., Burnard, 2012; Cain & Cursley, 2017), and music practices that focus on student creativity are often associated with student-centred approach and creative pedagogy. In the contemporary Chinese teaching context, a teacher-centred approach, which may be common in China – even where teachers implement creative pedagogies – creates a divide between teacher-led pedagogy and giving students some flexibility (e.g., Cheung, 2017). Music teachers are considered to dominate the classroom, both school teachers who have to deal

with classes of students (40 or more) and piano teachers who are engaged in one-to-one teaching (Benson & Fung, 2005; Wiles & Kokotsaki, 2021; Wiles, 2017). This study was not conducted to discuss whether the teacher-centred classroom can foster creativity in students. However, in this teacher-based investigation, teachers were positive about their efforts to foster creativity, and they felt that their attempts had also enabled positive feedback from their students.

7.4.2 Implications for educational policy in China

In this section, I provide the potential implications of this study for education policy in China, considering the implementation of the new curriculum standards, and the tension between examinations and creativity.

There might be insufficient discussion of creativity in music education since the implementation of the new standards in 2011, as discussed in Section 3.1. Recently, the latest *2022 New Curriculum Standards* (MoE) have since been issued. Comparable studies point to changes to high school classroom practice due to the implementation of new curriculum standards with similar high school curriculums, including a requirement for creativity to become one of the core competencies (e.g., Wang, 2019). Yu and Leung (2019) have reported on Chinese music teachers and the implementation of the new music curriculum standards. According to them, the new standards emphasise creativity – with a core of practical musical experiences complemented by a balance of areas such as listening, performing, creating music and contextual music – and consider creativity and different assessment methods. However, this has not generated sufficient attention for creativity in music education in Chinese schools. Ho's (2023) new book reviews the development and challenges of creativity in Chinese music education, including the policy of creativity and innovation in the context of school education. She also reports how teachers – especially music teachers at the primary level – found it challenging to adopt creativity as a classroom target, as it was new to them and there was no specific training and guidance available. Participants in this study felt that more experienced teachers would give advice on how to implement creativity teaching in seminars on the new curriculum, although there were also few opportunities for seminars focusing on developing pupils' creativity.

In addition, the pressure placed on students by competitive examinations may not be underestimated. As mentioned in Chapter 1, students claimed that they were not allowed to use their imagination, due to the pressure of College Entrance Examinations in China (*Gaokao*) (e.g., M. Li, 2021; Zhao, 2018). In response to this, this study found evidence from music school teachers that students felt mentally relaxed away from academic learning and were given the freedom to think and imagine during music lessons. Children at primary school level (6-11 years) may well be affected by the pressure of exams from an early age, even though they have many years before they begin to prepare for the university entrance exams. The impact of exams on children is manifested in different ways: for example, 1) in their preference for academic studies at the expense of subjects like music and art, which will not be assessed in the university entrance exams (e.g., Wang, L., 2022); 2) in their sense of competition, as they are told from an early age that exams mean competition and selection; and 3) in leading pupils to adopt rote learning (e.g., C. Tan, 2015). Dealing with a sense of competition, they are likely to focus more on how to win over others rather than on their own abilities. The participating teachers in the primary schools of this study explained how they perceived the pressure of examinations, as they felt they were flexible in what they asked of their pupils except when preparing for them to take examinations, and they explained how they implemented teaching and understanding the different situations in education that allowed pupils to use their imagination and creativity.

7.4.3 Implications for music and teacher education

This study attempted to provide empirical data to explain how Chinese music teachers reflect on the experiences that have shaped their thinking and career paths, in the hope of being useful to practitioners working in music teacher education. The teachers suggested that their own perceptions of creativity came mainly from their reflections on music learning, which may explain why school teachers and piano teachers held similar ideas about the definition of creativity and perceptions of music education, as they recounted many similarities in their own learning experiences. My participants have suggested that having studied mainly music-based courses at university, e.g., instrumental learning and musical knowledge and theory learning, may mean that they received insufficient specialised teacher training. Educational educators can find these

self-narratives and comments from teachers about their musical learning experiences in this study for their reference.

In addition, although it is not the focus of this study, it provides examples including the approaches of both primary school teachers and piano teachers for teaching children and their attempts to make changes targeting the pupils' creativity, which will hopefully provide a reference for other music educators.

7.5 Issues for further enquiry

In this section, I raise potential issues that could be further investigated. This study was conducted to examine music teachers' thinking and musical creativity, which I believe is an important area for future research. As a result of the current lack of knowledge, music teachers, music teacher educators, and researchers have little empirical evidence of how teachers implement and foster creativity in the music classroom and studio. I offer the following suggestions for future research.

There is a hint of a different interpretation of the purpose of teaching and the teacher-student relationship found in the Eastern teachers' view of creativity. According to this tradition, they want to transmit knowledge to their students (which at the same time requires the teacher, to have a large stock of knowledge along with teaching skills), while in the process leaving space for students to think and progress on their own, with teachers even helping them to develop their own style. Moreover, students undergo a long period of musical study (or training) in order to develop their own creative interpretations (or styles). Given the important role that the teachers play within the Chinese context, the spectrum of learning music presented in this study demonstrates that lifelong learning is possible, and there are studies exploring views regarding lifelong learning in terms of Chinese music education philosophy (e.g., Fung 2018). I would suggest that there might be more research on teachers' perceptions and their experiences: e.g., their views on the development of creativity in long-term learning. Additionally, an in-depth exploration of their understanding of long-lasting learning processes may also provide new ideas for understanding how Chinese teachers, and other Eastern teachers, interpret the

same concepts that Western ones encounter, such as creativity, aesthetics, and pupil motivation.

It would also be interesting to conduct research on how teacher-led classrooms can foster students' creativity while imparting knowledge and skills, in other teaching practices, and from students' perspective. The issues that can arise from this challenge need to be examined further. From the perspective of research on creative pedagogy in Western contexts (e.g., Dezuanni and Jetnikoff, 2011), children are supposed to develop creativity through their own self-guided play – a direct way of creative development – rather than learning by following teachers' guidelines to think creatively, e.g., suggested by teachers' in the Chinese context (e.g., Ho, 2023; Wiles, 2017). However, my participants and teachers in the Chinese context tended to suggest that students should have both a 'perfect' grasp of traditional knowledge and the ability to think outside the box. There is a gap for future research and development to address as to how such teaching practices can be carried out.

With reference to the Chinese example, how teachers have developed their ideas in teaching and how they reflect on their pedagogy could be an interesting topic for future research. This study suggests that research into teachers' perceptions plays an important role in music education and in wider pedagogical research. Teachers, teacher educators and policy makers might also benefit from such research.

7.6 Research limitations

This study involved six teachers working in the same province of China, and due to time and resource constraints, and the impact of the global pandemic, it was impossible to recruit participants from greater distances. However, music teachers from other regions in China and other contexts and backgrounds may have different experiences and understandings of creativity. For example, teachers in different provinces of China face different pressures from the college entrance exams due to differences in population; and the geographical location also influences the scores that students need to be achieved to enter universities.

In addition, the importance attached to music education and teaching resources differs between first-tier and second-tier cities in China (see studies, e.g., Wang, Y., 2017). Teachers in Shandong may not have access to the same music pedagogy as those in Beijing, and teachers in the two cities might well have different educational backgrounds.

Another potential weakness in the participant groups was the small number of male teachers. Although I tried to ensure that male teachers were considered for participation in this study, there were only two male teachers out of a sample of six. Although this may be representative of the gender ratio of music teachers in China and also a result of the small number of participants, it may also be considered a limiting factor in the study.

One of the most challenging aspects of this study was the problem of translation when conducting research in Chinese and writing in English. My experience as a Chinese student and studying in the UK for many years relieved one aspect; I could both understand what my participants meant and present their ideas in English as far as possible. However, I still needed to work on two things. Firstly, during the interviews and while I was observing the teachers' classes, they referred to a lot to their own terminology and Chinese slang, which made it difficult for me to translate what they said into English. In Chapter 5 (See Box 5.2, p. 102), I gave examples of how I translated a word with three different meanings; I first found the English corresponding word and then explained that when the teacher used the word, it might also mean something else. Then, when processing the data, I found that many of their verbal expressions might not have followed the grammatical and logical rules of English, which greatly increased my translation difficulties. A clichéd example is that Chinese teachers like to put examples in front of their main ideas and give their supporting evidence before introducing the arguments they are going to make; this was very noticeable when they became more comfortable after we had talked for more than half an hour in each of our interviews. When I translated the original transcript of the interview, I kept the teacher's phrasing order in order not to change their original meaning, but there were some comments that I had to adjust in order to make them accessible to my readers in English. It is worth suggesting that a native command of Chinese is helpful if one wants to be aware of the nuances of interviewees' talk and cultural settings. (In contrast, non-

native researchers often use translators during fieldwork and potentially miss the linguistic and cultural nuances.)

To address these issues, I employed a dual translation method (e.g., Maranhão & Streck, 2003) – first from Chinese to English, and then from English to Chinese – to ensure that my translation conveyed the teacher's meaning as accurately as possible. However, I also had to abandon some of their comments. This translation problem was also encountered early in my research when explaining my research aims to my Chinese participants. However, such issues were avoided by using academic words rather than verbal and informal language. In response to this, the ideal solution would be to have more attempts at translating these terms in the future, having found better ways of translating and understanding what the teacher's ideas were originally in Chinese.

This study was designed and conducted by me alone, a Chinese female PhD student – in order to increase the openness of the study, I discussed music teachers' perceptions and the concept of creativity in both Eastern and Western music education contexts. I discussed my research with my two supervisors and with other PhD students and music educators from different countries. The considerations of trustworthiness were discussed throughout the study and in each aspect, such as the literature review, methodology, and data sections.

7.7 Personal development and final thoughts

This research was a four-year PhD study that provided me with valuable insights and learning opportunities. These opportunities were demonstrated in this study by conducting an extensive literature review alongside data analysis that broadened my knowledge and thought processes. Continued reading has enabled me to explore the concepts under investigation in my study and other aspects of music education extensively and to review past research exploring primary school education and music education in China. I continued to read and write daily reading notes and field journals during my fieldwork. During the data processing phase, I found that the creativity my participants talked about required discipline and aesthetic judgement, which was different from the discussion of creative pedagogy I was expecting; therefore, I spent much of the pandemic period when stuck in China rethinking my theoretical framework for

the research and studying educational philosophy and more literature on music education.

Although I have been interested in researching pupils' and teachers' perceptions regarding pedagogy since my undergraduate studies, and I have studied qualitative research and analytical methods during my master degree dissertation, I felt challenged on a four-year doctoral project like this one by the interpretative paradigm and how to deal with the large amount of knowledge gained from both readings and my own fieldwork. It developed my information-processing skills and my ability to extract key themes from the original data. I feel that I think when I read, I think when I conduct observations and interviews, and I even generate new thoughts when I write. My thoughts on the research topic moved forward or backward, but the thinking never paused. The questions of how to keep track of thinking and how to pick some of the ideas in a logical way when writing was challenging. I found some good ways to do this – for example, using one of the research methods, keeping a research diary – and in the findings chapters, I inserted narrative boxes.

I remain very interested in further research and discussion on creativity in music education. From my interviews with these teachers, I found that these music teachers insist on the importance of aesthetic judgement - and describe the process of developing creativity as hidden and ongoing. This made me think that the development of artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an essential agenda in the discussion of musical creativity. However, this aesthetic ability is likely to be difficult for AI to achieve - if it is developed without awareness, and gradually as a human develops. In this thesis, I used the metaphor of the spectrum to explain that the aesthetic judgements interpreted by the teacher are likely to have developed in the process of musical learning, or even in the lifespan, without being identified, with no visible traces.

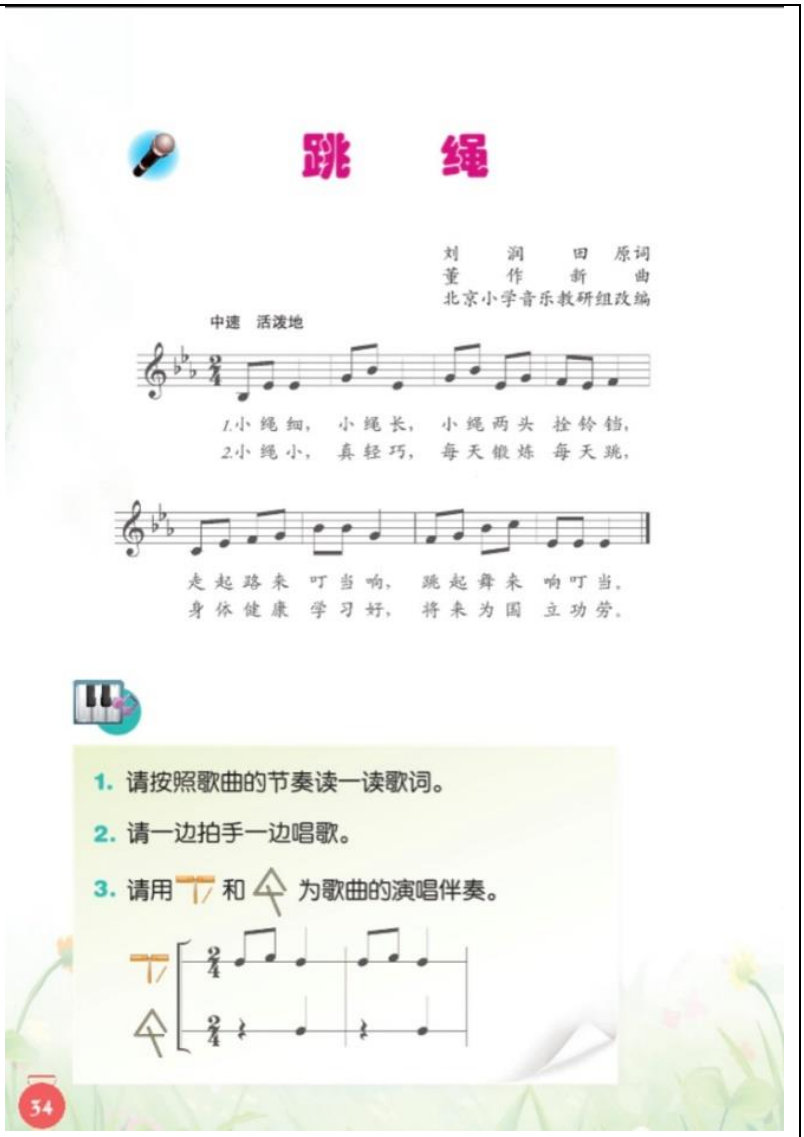
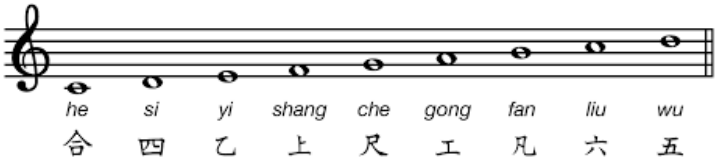
In the coming years, I hope to be able to conduct post-doctoral research in the UK or China. After four years of doctoral study, I believe I have gained experience and lessons from identifying research questions, designing appropriate research methods, and attempting to address difficulties during my fieldwork and data processing. For example, as I mentioned in my research

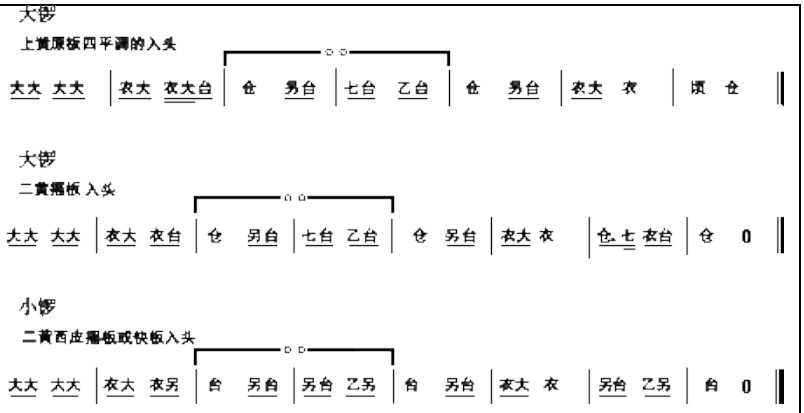
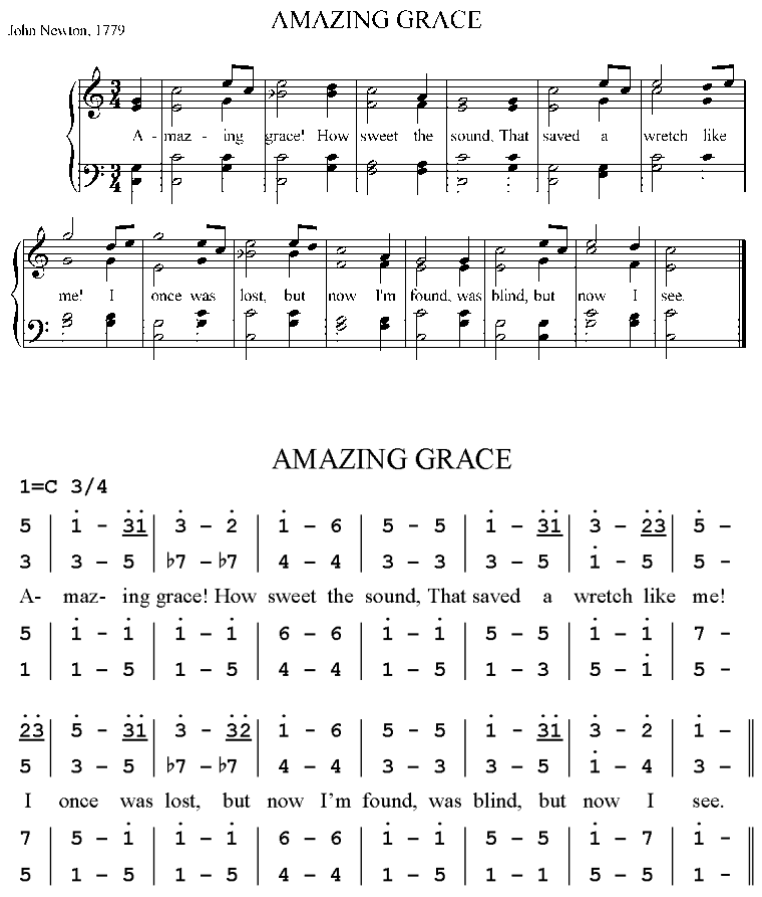
limitations, I attempted to interpret and translate the Chinese teacher's perceptions in an English context.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Primary School Music Textbook content: A sample of creative activity from Grade 1 music textbooks (adapted from PEP Music Textbook Team, 2013)

Appendix 2 Primary School Music Textbook content: Stave, numbered musical, and *Gongche* notation samples (adapted from PEP Music Textbook Team, 2013)

Textbook content (sample 2 from Grade 1's music textbooks)	
Gongche notation with its relation to *solfege*	

Gongche notation in the textbook	
Amazing Grace in Stave and Numbered musical notation (open access photo by Wan, 2007)	

Appendix 3 Excerpt from the 2020 China Conservatory of Music Social Arts Proficiency Examination Scheme, my translation

Textbooks and Examination Requirements

●1. Textbooks and selection of repertoire: All examination textbooks will use the "China Conservatory of Music External Music Examination National Common Textbook" or "China Conservatory of Music Social Art Proficiency Examination Common Textbook", compiled by the Examination Committee of the China Conservatory of Music. The examination repertoire should be chosen strictly in accordance with the requirements set out in the textbook of the subject to which you are applying and should not be reduced or replaced by repertoire from other textbooks.

In order to emphasise the training of basic skills and to prevent candidates from being hasty, parents and instructors are requested not to allow candidates to skip grades. For candidates who want to skip grades, they are allowed to do so once in a year. (**Basic music knowledge** cannot be skipped.)

Original in Chinese:

教材及考级要求

●1、教材及曲目的选用： 考级教材一律使用中国音乐学院考级委员会编选的《中国音乐学院校外音乐考级全国通用教材》或《中国音乐学院社会艺术水平考级通用教材》。考试曲目应严格按照所报科目教材中规定的要求进行选用，不能减少曲目也不得用其它教材曲目代替，根据考试的需要考官可以抽查其中部分曲目或部分章节。

Online Sources: China Conservatory of Music official website http://www.ccmusic.edu.cn/ [Accessed 4 Jun 23]

Appendix 4 Excerpt from the Central Conservatory of Music External Music Level Examination Series - Piano (Amateur) Examination guidelines, my translation

Requirements and the Basic Exercises for the Exam:

The examiner will draw from the following keys according to the requirements of each grade.

Grade 1: C major, A minor, G major, E minor – scales, decomposed chords (major triads)

Scales at a tempo of no less than ♩=54

Decomposed chords at a speed of no less than ♩=42

[…]

Grade 9: E major, C natural minor, B major, G natural minor, B major, G minor, G major, E minor – scales, arpeggios (dominant triad, major 7th chord, minor 7th chord)

The tempo of the scale is not less than ♩=108.

Arpeggios at a speed of not less than ♩=96

Performance requirement: specified in the textbook.

Original in Chinese:

基本练习考级要求：

按各级要求由考官从下列各调中抽考。

一级：C 大调、a 和声小调、G 大调、e 和声小调，音阶、分解和弦（主三和弦）。

音阶速度不低于 ♩= 54

分解和弦速度不低于 ♩= 42

[… …]

九级：E 大调、升 c 和声小调、B 大调、升 g 和声小调、降 B 大调、g 和声小调、降 G 大调、降 e 和声小调，音阶、琶音（主三和弦、大调属七和弦、小调减七和弦）。

音阶速度不低于 ♩= 108

琶音速度不低于 ♩= 96

演奏级：按照教材规定执行。

Online Sources: Central Conservatory of Music official website http://www.ccom.edu.cn/ [Accessed 4 Jun 23]

Appendix 5 Observation Schedule

I will participate in the teacher's (a primary school teacher or instrument teacher) classes or tutorials to watch their teaching as an observer and record a video of the entire teaching process. The teacher will arrange the classroom or tutorial settings and activities as they wish, and I will tape the whole lesson. Hence, observation duration is based on the length of each teacher's lesson, e.g., schoolteachers take 45 minutes per class, and the instrument teacher usually takes 1 hour per class per student.

Criteria, e.g., (PT, stand for the aims for primary school teachers; IT for instrument teachers, and BOTH for both groups of these teachers):

1. What pupils does the teacher regard as creative? These questions will focus on the teacher's perception of the students' characteristics as a group, not on the assessment/analysis of individual students. E.g., their personalities, attitudes and behaviours? (BOTH)
2. How did the teacher help students achieve creativity? (BOTH)
3. What does the teacher consider to be the appropriate environment for creativity? including such as classroom setting, teaching methods, teacher-student relationship, motivation. (BOTH)
4. How flexible is the teacher in designing course activities and objectives? Does the teacher follow the textbook or other guidelines strictly? (PT)
5. How does the teacher consider the creative process of their students? Includes activities? Improvisation and composition? (BOTH)
6. How does the teacher consider the creative process as complementary to schooling, i.e. the creative process that schools cannot provide for their students? (IT)
7. How does the teacher evaluate students' creativity products? How is the assessment of creativity carried out? What criteria are used? (BOTH)

The observations will focus on the teacher, not the pupils. By adjusting the camera angle, I will record and observe only the teachers and their teaching aids (e.g., slides, computers, and musical instruments). This research will borrow from Wang and Rao's (2019) work on classroom observation in China, in which they installed cameras in the classroom with fixed angles to facilitate recording only the teacher and the slides used by the teacher. This technique helps to prevent the children from being photographed or videotaped and avoids ethical issues. Given that the music lesson observed will probably take place in a music classroom or an instrument practice room, the camera angle will be adjusted to

suit the specific room. (For some teachers' classroom activities, a mobile focus may be required.) Therefore, I will adjust the camera angle according to the teaching activities so that only the teacher and their teaching aids are recorded and observed. Pupils' faces will not be included in the recordings.

The video recordings will be made by me alone, using a mobile phone or another camera to avoid affecting the teaching process. By using a familiar recording tool, I ensured the observations progress. My position in the room will generally be next to the camera to adjust the angle of the camera and confirm its proper functioning at all times.

Figure - Image of video recording using a mobile phone (in Appendix 5)

After the observation, excerpts from the videos will be selected for both data analysis and discussion with the teacher during the subsequent interviews

(Odena & Welch, 2009; Jewitt, 2012). I will edit video clips and invite the teacher to watch an excerpt of the teaching process. The criteria for selecting these excerpts will mainly be based on my observation aims. Additionally, as part of the data analysis, I will discuss and analyse how moral issues, social values, utility and practicality manifest themselves in the teacher's understanding. I will also select the excerpts that most reflect this understanding for discussion with the teacher.

The videos will all be anonymously analysed and coded.

As discussed above, any pupils' images will be post-processed or removed, and no individual student will their grades or classroom performance be evaluated in this study. Any information in the research data that identifies a pupil, including voice or accidentally recorded footage, will be not be edited so that the pupil is no longer identifiable nor deleted.

However, the video will include audio recordings of students, e.g., teacher/pupil interactions/speaking. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Teachers and parents/pupils will be provided before the observation.

References

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Wang, J., & Rao, N. (2019). Classroom goal structures: Observations from urban and rural high school classes in China. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56(8), 1211-1229. doi:10.1002/pits.22271

Appendix 6 Critical Incident Charting (Additional data gathering tool)

Before the interview begins, I will ask them to draw an 'undulating path' (Odena & Welch, 2009: 72) or a 'snake' (Denicolo and Pope, 1990: 157) on a blank piece of A4 paper. Participants are invited to reflect on their life experiences and are invited to give specific examples that have influenced their music and educational perceptions. This technology's openness allows teachers to choose the experience and life period they want to emphasize (Odena & Welch, 2009).

These experiences can include their own experience of being educated, their teaching experience, and their experience of performing music. Furthermore, the teacher's writing in the charting could involve the relevant information and reaction about the policy, textbooks, and teaching guidelines.

I will not guide teachers in this section to write about policy-related experiences to ensure the study's feasibility. Furthermore, if the teacher does not mention the policy, I will ask about the policy part at the end of the semi-structured interviews or discuss the textbook and teaching guidelines. The figure below is an example (Odena, 2012: 39) of a completed tool from a published study.

Figure - Critical Incident Charting sample (in Appendix 6)

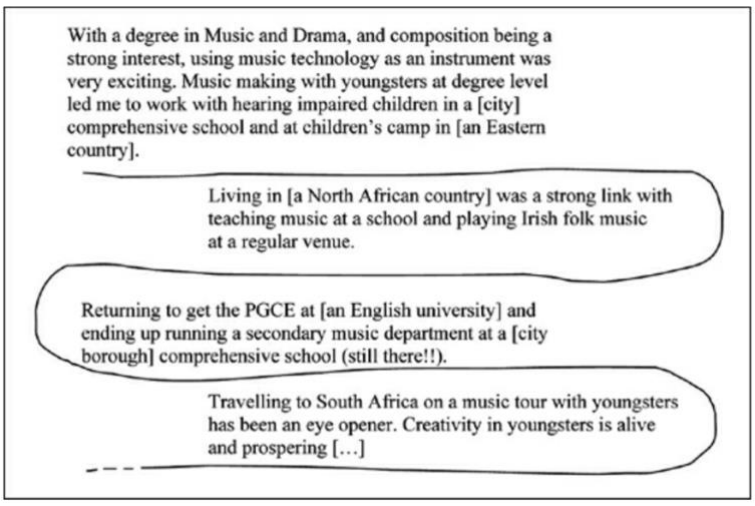

Figure 2.3 Extract from Laura's Musical Career Path response sheet

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Appendix 7 Interview Schedule

The whole interview will be semi-structured and divided into three themes: teachers' self-interpretation of their teaching, past experiences, and policy feedback. Each semi-structured interview will be taken with given themes and open-ended questions, e.g., 'what else?' or 'why?' (Cohen et al., 2018: 199). However, the order of themes and questions may change depending on the direction of each interview and teachers' answers (Gray, 2018).

Each interview will be audio-recorded to make sure all information can be kept. The interview will be conducted in Chinese, and the transcripts will be translated into English. After the interview, the translated transcripts will first be interpreted as to its central theme, which is related to research questions, then it will be coded and categorized (Saldaña, 2014). After the interview, I will inform the participants that they have the right and opportunity for feedback on findings and use (Ritchie et al., 2014).

Interview questions samples:

Theme A - Experience: I will watch selected classroom video extracts with teachers (each teacher will watch only his/her own teaching), interact with teachers based on these video clips, and understand teachers' teaching focuses and application methods.

Possible questions, e.g., Why were you doing this? How do you understand the (relevant teaching requirements, teaching arrangements)? Do you think the students' response is in line with your expectations? (If yes), what would you do if their response was not what you expected?

Theme B - Past experience: To discuss with teachers, based on 'critical incident charting'.

Possible questions: Why do you think this (or that) experience has the biggest (or smallest) impact on your teaching? This experience is very interesting. Could you tell me a bit more about this story? I find you mentioned (this). Could you tell me a bit more about this story?

Theme C - Policy: Teacher's reaction, implementation and feedback of current education policies, including the state-approved music textbooks, the curriculum standards or other guidelines.

Possible questions: What are your thoughts on (this policy or guideline)? What do you think of its effectiveness? How have you helped students meet those requirements?

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Appendix 8 Data gathering schedule

	School music teachers	Instrumental teachers
1st observation	1. 2-3 lessons (45mins each) 2. Extracts – 10 mins - Select classroom activities or teacher-student interactions that I believe convey the teacher's perceptions of creativity: • composing or improvisation activity • pupils' performance/group presentation • creative activities • other activities found?	1. 2-3 lessons (1-2hrs each) 2. Extracts – 10 mins - Select activities or teacher-student interactions that I believe convey the teacher's perceptions of creativity: • Creativity activities • Feedback from the teacher on the students' performance • Understanding of the piece • Other?
1st interview	Theme A: about teaching - questions: • What do you think of creative activities? Improvisation and composition? Other activities? • How do you think this activity reflects/fosters students' creativity? For example, in terms of teaching methods? Activity design? Teacher-student relationship? Students' motivation to learn. And why? • How have these activities been designed? Based on the textbook, the teacher's discussion, or other guidelines? • What attitudes, personalities and behaviours do you think reflect the students' creativity? • How do you evaluate their compositions and improvisations? How is it assessed? What criteria are used? Where do they come from? • Is there anything you would like to add about the understanding of creativity (or one of the policies you mentioned earlier)?	Theme A: about teaching - questions: • What do you consider to be musical creativity? Improvisation and composition? Other activities? • <u>What activities in your teaching pattern do you think reflect/foster creativity in your students? How is it achieved? For example, when students interpret a piece of music? When students practice composing and improvising? (Due to the fixed pattern of private piano lessons.)</u> • What kind of performance, interpretation, composition, and improvisation do you consider to be creative? • What kind of students do you consider to be talented? How does this come across? • What attitudes, personalities and behaviours do you think reflect the creativity of students? • Is there anything you would like to add about your understanding of creativity (or policies you mentioned earlier)?

	Teacher feedback on these excerpts Open questions	Teacher feedback on these excerpts Open questions
Musical Career and Education Path	I send an email to each interviewee with a chart to complete in the attachments, a week in advance - the Musical Career and Education Path (see samples below in Figure 4.1). The teachers were enquired to fill in this chart to review the experiences that had influenced their career path. See also potential Questions in the Theme B, 2nd interview.	
2nd observation	1. 1-2 lessons (45mins each) 2. Extracts - Select or supplement more focused activities based on teacher feedback e.g., music appreciation session [1]	1. 1-2 lessons (1-2hrs each) 2. Extracts - Select or supplement more focused activities based on teacher feedback e.g.,??
2nd interview	Theme B: about music and education experiences - questions • Please could you tell me in more detail how this experience has influenced your perception of creativity, based on the experiences provided in the chart. • How has this background in music and music education helped you in response to the current demands of creativity? • Open questions. Watch the complementary new video excerpt	Theme B: about music and education experiences- questions • Please could you tell me in more detail how this experience has influenced your perception of creativity, based on the experiences provided in the chart. • For musical innovation and creativity, do you see any difference in terms of performing and teaching students? • Open questions. Watch the complementary new video excerpt
3rd observation	1. 1-2 lessons (45mins each) 2. Extracts - Select or supplement more focused activities based on teacher feedback (if found any new)	1. 1-2 lessons (1-2hrs each) 2. Extracts - Select or supplement more focused activities based on teacher feedback (if found any new)

3rd interview	Supplementary question, e.g., on policy, In the first two interviews, I may have talked to the teachers about the new curriculum requirements for composition and improvisation, and their reflections on educational policy and the content of examinations and other assessments. Questions such as, • Do you think that current education policies focus on or require creativity? If so, what are the requirements for creativity? Could you tell me more about your experience or understanding about this requirement? • What are your thoughts on (this policy or guideline)? What do you think of its effectiveness? How have you helped students meet those requirements? Here, discussions on education and cultural policy can be added, based on conversations and observations.	Supplementary question, e.g., on policy, In the first two interviews, I may have talked to the teachers about cultural and educational policy on innovation and creativity. Questions such as, • Do you think that current policies focus on or require innovation or creativity? If so, what are the requirements for creativity? Please tell me about your relevant experience or understanding? • As a musician, how do you think about innovation and your consequently music education? • What are your thoughts on this policy? How have you helped students meet those requirements? Do you think such a policy has had an impact on your teaching design and targets and what impact has it had? Here, discussions on other policies, such as examinations can be added, based on our previous conversations and my observations.

Notes. 1st observation in the table means observations during first two months, as round/stage 1. 2nd stands for the third and fourth months and 3rd for the last two months.

Appendix 9 Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form for Teachers (Observations & Interviews)

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers (Observations & Interviews)

Title of Project: The influence of teachers' experiences and policy background on their perceptions of musical creativity: A qualitative study with Chinese Primary school teachers and instrumental tutors

Name of Researcher: Xiaowen Ge 葛小文; School of Education, University of Glasgow, x.ge.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Names of Supervisors: Dr Oscar Odena, School of Education, University of Glasgow; Professor Kay Livingston, School of Education, University of Glasgow.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. This project has been considered and approved by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Before you decide whether you wish to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, please contact the researcher.

Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' perceptions of musical creativity and investigate the influence of teachers' experiences and policy background on their perceptions of musical creativity. The research questions are as follows, 1) What are the music teachers' perceptions of creativity? 2) In what ways are their thoughts influenced by their music and music education experience and current policy background?

I am looking for experienced music teachers in China who use a variety of teaching styles, and so I invite you to participate in this research.

Please note that, although I do not anticipate that there will be any risks associated with your participation, you will have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time, without stating the reason.

What will happen?

Your participation will entail three observations and three interviews, over 4 to 6 weeks. I will be finished gathering information by ……(date). The participation is voluntary.

With your permission, I will attend your class and record a video of the lesson. I will not participate in any of your classroom activities or disturb your teaching. I will videotape your whole teaching process, which will take about …… (time). The video clips will be used as research data and as conversation materials in our subsequent interviews. During the interviews, you will see video excerpts only of yourself, not of other teachers.

Each interview will take up to 60 minutes and will take place in a seminar room on your campus (potentially campus name). I will record our interview on a voice recorder so that afterwards I can listen carefully to what you said and what we discussed. Before the interviews, I will email you the details of the interview procedure and questions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. The audio of each interview will be recorded, and I will produce a transcript. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the transcript. The interview transcripts will be translated into English for analysis and will be accessed only by me. You may request the transcripts of your interviews and add any comments and feedback, which will be on your own request.

Data management/storage/sharing

Observation, video recording, and data analysis will be conducted by me alone. If necessary, some of the data will be translated into English by me. This will be done anonymously, and I guarantee that you will not be recognized. Your name, the name of your school, and the name of your organization will be anonymized. Care will be taken to ensure that other information in the observations and video clips that could identify you is not revealed. Please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed; due to the limited size of the participant sample. Confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others.

I will keep the information in a locked cabinet or in a locked file on my computer. The original data will only be accessed by me and my supervisors. My supervisors will be able to access the original data only if issues need to be discussed. In such a case, they will only access an excerpt of a video and watch it with me.

I would like to use selected quotations in my thesis and potentially in future academic publications, e.g. conference papers, journals. There are no sponsors for this study, and the data collected in this research will not be shared for discovery or analysis by other researchers. Anonymous data may be reused to secondary analysis by the same researcher to address new research questions. The research data is expected to be retained for 10 years.

Contact Information

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact me: Winn Ge, School of Education, University of Glasgow, x.ge.1@research.gla.ac.uk

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can also contact my supervisors:

Dr Oscar Odena, School of Education, University of Glasgow,
Oscar.Odena@glasgow.ac.uk

Professor Kay Livingston, School of Education, University of Glasgow,
Kay.Livingston@glasgow.ac.uk

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Consent Form for Teachers (Observations & Interviews)

Title of Project: The influence of teachers' experiences and policy background on their perceptions of musical creativity: A qualitative study with Chinese Primary school teachers and instrumental tutors

Name of Researcher: Xiaowen Ge 葛小文; School of Education, University of Glasgow, x.ge.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken by UK institutions require that participants explicitly agree to be interviewed and observed and agree to how the information derived from the interviews and observation will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. I do not anticipate that there will be any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time, without stating the reason.

Please confirm the following:

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for Teachers for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I will participate in three observations and three interviews. Each interview will take up to 60 minutes. My participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

The material will be kept in secure storage at all times.

The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research and in future publications, both print and online.

I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

I understand that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee if there are few participants or in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others.

I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research works, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I consent / do not consent the researcher to use direct quotes of observations and interviews in the findings.
I consent / do not consent to observations being video-recorded.
I consent / do not consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

I agree / do not agree to take part in the study referred to above.

Name of Participant …… Signature ……

Date ……

Name of Researcher: Xiaowen (Winn) Ge 葛小文 Signature:

……

Date: ……

Appendix 10 Interview transcript and coding samples

	Codes - Inductive Coding (I) & Deductive Coding (D)	Subcategories	Categories	Themes
INTERVIEWS WITH XXXX **X interview with XXXX** **Theme X: (60 mins)** **Interview date: XXXX** **Location: XXXX** So, (Based on what was said in our pre-interview chat), you believe that music education fosters creativity, right? ... First of all, in our country [China], where the population is particularly large, but seventy to eighty percent of them they are still in the manufacturing process, and for creativity, there is still not enough to go around. The college entrance exams put a lot of pressure on [students], they are studying a bit too fast to have time to think about it. [Students] see more the immediate benefits [rather than the long-term benefits] ... umm because [if] I get a higher score today, tomorrow I might go to a better university. [However,] if I focus too much on the creativity in the process, I will... Although, of course, some parents are now receptive to new ideas, and they may also be concerned about their child's creativity and also afraid of stifling [their child's] creativity, understanding of and concern for	Exam pressure as a challenge to creativity (D) Exam pressure for university entrance (I) Challenges (General Comments) (D)		Pressure of exams Assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context	The challenges of teaching for creativity Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers

creativity may only scratch the surface of this and not [go] deeper into it. Secondly, in my teaching practice, I might be concerned about the [school and governments] evaluations of the teacher. [Those evaluations] don't assess whether [teachers are concerned about] the creativity of their pupils, even they do, they don't put [fostering pupils' creativity] very high on their list. So, in the classroom, teachers focus more on the development of existing knowledge from the textbook, and the development of creativity, which may be there, is not given a high priority. The assessment of the pupils is also the evaluation of the teachers by the school, and governments. The evaluation of the teacher is necessary, but the evaluation [criteria], it probably needs to be improved, right? These are the first two points. … **OK, as you also know I went to two of your classes yesterday (laughs). Shall we watch the first video excerpt I took?** **Context and description of the 1st video excerpt:** This extract is taken from (2020 12 14) lesson with Year 5 Pupils. This is the Creation activity (New Curriculum Standards required). This activity happened after the main teaching of the whole lesson finished and at the last 10 minutes of the class. In this video, the teacher was guiding pupils; then the pupils had 5 minutes to work on their own/or in groups of 4. There is a tune in the simple scores – e.g., 1 2 3 - in the textbook, Wang also wrote them on the blackboard.	Evaluation for teachers (I) Challenges (General Comments) (D) Evaluation of teachers (I) New Curriculum Standards (D) Classroom activities (example - Creative activities) (I)		Lack of teaching resources and professional development opportunities Creative activities – New Curriculum Standards	The challenges of teaching for creativity Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers

Would you briefly describe this part of the teaching activity?				
Yes, I let them write down their own melody using 'do' 're' 'mi', or [pupils could] only write [their] own lyrics to this melody [the tune in the simple scores], I said that, right? This is new. Create	Classroom activities (example - Creative activities) (I)			
[activity]. Since we want [pupils] to create, [the teacher] has to let it go and give the pupils [freedom]. Once you let them go, they, the [problem] is that it's easy to let go,	Teacher's perception of creativity (D) - Let it go (I)	Flexibility in music education	Embracing creative thinking in music	Teachers' definitions of creativity
and it's especially hard for you to take it back. In a class of fifty or so. There may be a dozen pupils who immediately listen when you say [continue with the lesson], a few others who may listen when you say it again, and then there are so many dozen pupils who don't listen no matter how many times you say it. He [or she may] be so immersed in their own creation that he [or she] doesn't listen to the rest of the lesson. This is [a problem] in our music classes nowadays. In music classes in China, the class sizes are large and it is not easy to control [classroom] discipline.	Challenges (General Comments) (D) Challenge of classroom management (D) Challenge of class size (I) Classroom activities (example - Creative activities) (D)		Pressure of too many pupils	The challenges of teaching for creativity
...				
So, do you assess pupils? do you have clear marking criteria? Or something like that?				
Yes, of course. The school organises tests, a few students from each class are selected for testing. [Every term, half year], one singing test and one ocarina test. There are at least seven assessors, sitting there, marking at the same time. A music test is different from other language and maths tests where you give someone a paper, so the teacher just marks the	Assessment for pupils (D)		Assessment and teacher evaluation within the school context	Curriculum and examination requirements for teachers

correct number, but music actually depends a lot on aesthetics... Music is often based on a feeling, isn't it? The scoring criteria, I can show you. (show me the criteria sheet.) ... **OK, so is there anything else you would like to add? About this new section [in the new curriculum standards], on creativity.** In fact, there is another one, which is appreciation, because nowadays when we assess a teacher, he basically does not assess the appreciation piece, so what does appreciation mean? appreciation of songs, music, and maybe appreciation of film music sometimes. In fact, our music teaching materials, in terms of the current arrangement, are still very scientific and comprehensive. For example, some teachers focus on assessment and may have to give the children less appreciation, sometimes not even appreciation, like in some rural schools. Some teachers focus more on assessment and some focus more on developing students' musical ability. But... ... **OK. I have a quick question here. You mentioned student inclusion and participation, when we talked about instruments and ocarina lessons, what do you think is the purpose of involving students? In other words, do you aim to involve all students, whether interested or not? Including those who are not interested in music?**	Classroom activities (example - Appreciation lesson) - "Gain nourishment from classics" (I)	"Gain nourishment from classics"	Creativity is a deeper re-interpretation of existing musical materials	Teachers' definitions of creativity

I designed this activity and I just wanted to, as much as possible, involve the child. For example, Jasmine, that lesson, some children like it, some children, he really does not have the talent, but you have the talent, you go to sing, no talent, you go to talk, in the process, he experienced, music brings him pleasure, that's enough, he later, may be in a bad mood, I have an outlet, I have an initial channel. I don't think it's necessary to say that everyone is a musician. There's no need to say that everyone becomes a musician. Maybe in this activity, some students, some students with good musical qualities, open another door, and students with bad musical qualities may open their interest in music again, and that's enough.	Pupil engagement and interest (I)	Interest and engagement	The basis of creativity in the spectrum of musical learning	Teachers' perceptions of teaching for creativity: the music learning spectrum

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