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Challenges and tension fields in classical instrumental group tuition: interviews with Swedish Art and Music School teachers

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Abstract

Group teaching is rapidly spreading across the world, but little research has been conducted to investigate its impact on students' musical abilities in comparison to inclusion in group tuition contexts. This article investigates how music teachers from the classical orchestra instrumental tradition discuss group tuition. Three focus group interviews were conducted with participants from one Art and Music School in Sweden. The results show a tension field between progression and inclusion as well as different views on the definition of these concepts. These differing views on teaching quality imply a balancing act for the different agents within the profession.

Keywords: Classical instruments; group tuition; inclusion; progression; quality

Introduction

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in and implementation of group teaching, in Sweden and globally – for both financial and pedagogical reasons. The social dimension of music is often highlighted as a pedagogical tool (Dehli, Fostås, & Johnsen, 1980; Hallam, 2015); it can promote tolerance, acceptance, and social ethics as well as support pro-social, team-working skills (Hallam, 2015). However, the transition from traditional, one-to-one teaching to group tuition can pose challenges for which teachers might not have adequate education (The Swedish Arts Council, 2019). Teachers often view one-to-one tuition as the only way of transmitting the detailed content knowledge necessary for building expertise (Carey & Grant, 2015).

Little research has explored the connection between social inclusion and musical progression. One aim of this study is therefore to explore different views on these concepts among teachers from the classical tradition with experience in group tuition. The Western music tradition is frequently accused of inherent exclusivity (Lubet, 2009). The question of how music can be used as a tool for inclusion, especially within the classical tradition, is thus widely relevant to music education. Much current knowledge regarding group tuition is based on teachers' experience and needs to be scientifically scrutinised. Thus, the results from this study shed light on tension fields and how teachers value different aspects of quality.

Background

The publicly funded municipal Swedish Art and Music Schools (SAMS) have, in later years, received increased focus as a possible way to include marginalised children in their activities and as a democratic tool for social change (Hofvander Trullsson, 2010; Bergman, Lindgren, &

Sæther, 2016; Lindgren, Bergman, & Sæther, 2016; Kuuse, 2018; Jeppsson, 2020; Di Lorenzo Tillborg, 2021). In 2015, with the intent of making SAMS more accessible and equal, the Swedish Government commissioned a special investigator to prepare proposals for a national strategy (Dir. 2015:46). In October 2016,¹ the commission proposed a new infrastructure with the aim of giving all children and young people in the entire country greater access to inclusive SAMS based on the democratic principle of everyone's right to culture (SOU, 2016:69).¹

By proposing that teaching should take place primarily in groups, this inquiry (SOU, 2016:69) challenges the traditional one-to-one teaching concept in SAMS. The conservatoire tradition, resting on a master–apprentice relationship, is strong in SAMS (Brändström & Wiklund, 1995; Rostvall & West, 2001; Tivenius, 2008). The inquiry (SOU, 2016:69) states that half of SAMS conduct up to 80% of their tuition individually, while, in 20% of SAMS, this statistic ranges from 80%–100%.

SAMS do not constitute a homogeneous group of schools but have a strong local touch. Many urban Art and Music Schools (AMS) have, for example, been struggling to become more inclusive (Hofvander Trulsson, 2004; Knutsson, 2020); one part of this social ambition is the introduction of the Venezuelan model, El Sistema (ES), which offers children on the margins of society intensive music education and thus opportunities for a better life. There are, however, scholars that problematise the actual social impact of the programme, as well as its signs of colonialism regarding the extended use of Western music (see for example Borchert, 2012; Baker, 2014, 2016; Bates, 2016; Bull, 2016; Dobson, 2016). It is important to highlight that the teachers in this study who applied for work in ES knew that the activity is based on social ambitions and that group tuition is the main method for teaching. This could of course affect their attitude towards group teaching.

Only a few music education research studies have been undertaken in group settings. Based on a small study, Ashton and Klopper (2018) noted that the teaching of successful Australian string group teachers was slow and steady, preferably taking place in teams and considering the community dimension of music-making. A report based on a larger population (Hallam, 2019) suggested that successful whole-class ensemble tuition (WCET) in the UK depends on enthusiastic and committed teachers and a clear progression route. These teachers' most common criterion for 'success' was the musical progression of the children (Hallam, 2019). This criterion arguably permeates Swedish music education as well; when the commission of inquiry (SOU, 2016:69) recommended group teaching as a norm, many SAMS teachers worried that the level of musical proficiency would drop drastically (Remiss SOU, 2016:69).

Teachers often view one-to-one and group teaching as opposites, considering group tuition as the second best (Hallam, 1998), but research shows that there are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. One-to-one teaching is mostly criticised for being too teacher-centred and for the unequal power balance between the master and apprentice (Rostvall & West, 2003; Carey & Grant, 2015). On the other hand, group tuition could enhance the leisure activity discourse of the music school, leading to pupils practising less at home and not taking the tuition seriously (Jordhus-Lier, 2018).

Teaching instruments in larger groups may have more in common with class teaching in schools than with one-to-one tuition. Instrumental group lessons must be planned and structured, and the teacher needs to set a pace of learning that is appropriate for all group members (Hallam, 1998). Butz (2019) describes teaching in a string classroom as a 'difficult mental workout' for the teacher, because he or she is 'constantly assessing multiple student problems while simultaneously brainstorming strategies in order to help students improve' (p. 9). Correcting individual errors is more difficult in group settings (Ordo, 2018), potentially leading to pupils suffering from more muscular tension and acquiring ineffective technique (Kaladjev, 2000).

Carter and Abawi (2018) describe inclusion as successfully meeting students' learning needs, regardless of their ability, individual conditions or background. In the case of instrumental music groups in SAMS, children are grouped mainly according to their age. Even if they do not have

special needs, it is almost certain that they will – to some extent – have different needs. Therefore, some sort of individualisation is needed if the teaching is to be considered inclusive.

Individualisation in group tuition could be achieved via differentiation; however, there may be little room for this since the group members need to progress at the same pace (Hallam, 1998). Fostås (2002) highlights two individualisation strategies: *pedagogical differentiation* and *organizational differentiation* (e.g., dividing pupils into almost homogeneous groups). Pedagogical differentiation in instrumental group tuition could be the use of arranged parts with simplified or elaborated music (Dehli, Fostås, & Johnsen, 1980; Hallam, 1998; Fostås, 2002).

The theoretical basis for this study is Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* (CoP), and Polanyi's (1966) concept of *tacit knowledge*. In CoP, issues of identity are considered inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning: 'Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities' (Wenger, 1999, p. 145). The theory of CoP was constructed in a workplace apprenticeship environment. Since apprenticeship is part of the conservatory tradition, this theoretical framework is highly applicable to music education, involving negotiation between novices and experts. Participation in social communities shape its members, while at the same time, members shape those communities; the transformative potential goes both ways (Wenger, 1999). Much professional knowledge is tacit, such as the intuitive decision-making of teachers (Elliott et al., 2011). Cianciolo et al. (2006) mention communities of practice 'as an effective mechanism to develop expertise through sharing tacit knowledge' (p. 623).

Aim and research questions

The aim of this article is to investigate how music teachers perceive inclusive instrumental teaching in groups and describe their efforts towards achieving the dual and possibly conflicting goals of musical progression and inclusion. The aim is also to map out differences in teachers' attitudes towards group teaching and how these attitudes are justified. The following questions were formulated:

- A. In what ways do music teachers talk about different aspects of quality in group tuition?
- B. What qualities of music teachers' communities of practice influence how and why they apply and value the social potential of music?

Methodology and procedure

I conducted three focus group interviews (FGIs) with 12 teachers and 2 leaders of the AMS within the two branches: the ES and the school's regular activities (see Table 1). The purpose was to investigate the opinions and beliefs of members of this community of practice. In my role as an FGI moderator and with insight in the specific activity, I determined which teachers had extensive experience with group tuition and thus were suitable for participation. The length of each interview corresponds to the number of participants.

The purpose of including the two leaders was to provide a broader picture of how group teaching is structured in this specific AMS. The interviews were semi-structured, featuring a number of questions and steered towards the central research questions; however, I was able to follow up on several additional themes. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the FGIs were held virtually via Zoom and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The participant information is compiled in Table 2. Age range, workplace, gender and position are presented separately to ensure the participants' confidentiality.

Two participants who work in both ES and the AMS are categorised as 'ES teachers'; their main work is situated at ES, and thus they participated in the ES FGI. The 14 participants are coded as L1–2 (Leaders), ES1–7 (ES teachers) and AMS1–5 (AMS teachers).

Table 1. Focus group interview information

Focus group interview	Number of participants	Duration
Leaders	2	00:38:29
Art and Music School teachers	5	01:00:38
El Sistema teachers	7	01:28:00

Table 2. Participant information

Age	Workplace		Gender	Position
30–39	4	Art and Music School (AMS)	6	Male 9 Teacher 12
40–49	5	El Sistema (ES)	6	
50–67	5	Art and Music School and El Sistema (AMS and ES)	2	Female 5 Leader 2
Total 14	Total 14		Total 14	Total 14

A qualitative content analysis was carried out by assigning the transcribed interview material to the categories of a coding frame (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Schreier, 2014). The analysis was performed using an abductive approach with the help of the software programme, NVivo.

Limitations

There are some possible limitations that I would like to address. Firstly, since the interviews were held via Zoom, it may have affected the participants' interaction. Furthermore, the results were based on the teachers' statements and not on direct observation, which may have restricted the reliability. In addition, my own pre-understanding as an insider may have affected both my questions and my interpretations of the answers. Awareness and constant reflection throughout the research process and transparency regarding these issues will hopefully grant reliability to the overall study. Claims of generalisability, however, must be made with caution due to the small population sample.

Ethical considerations

The participants received verbal and written information about the study. They were also asked to sign a letter of consent stating that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to leave the study and remove statements they regret making without any consequences or need for justification (Swedish Research Council, 2017). In order to protect the participants' privacy, confidentiality was granted by de-coding, and I also made some random alterations (e.g., substituting 'he' for 'she' or 'trumpet' for 'flute'). Not naming the city was deliberate due to ethical considerations. The informants' statements were translated from Swedish; some of them have been slightly altered to facilitate reading. I have applied for and received approval for the study from the Swedish Ethics Review Board (registration number 2020-06920).

Findings

The result shows that there are different attitudes towards group tuition and different views on the concepts of progression and inclusion among the teachers. Musical progression and the social

dimension are described as different aspects of quality in group tuition. Three main strategies for dealing with uneven groups in terms of skill are presented in the paper: Organisational differentiation, pedagogical differentiation and a no-stress approach. Finally, findings pointing to an intuitive practice relying on tacit knowledge are described.

Attitudes toward group tuition

The informants seemed to view group tuition positively overall. In the ES group, there was consensus that group tuition is preferable to one-to-one, but, in the AMS group, some hesitance could be detected. Groups typically become smaller (because some pupils quit), and those who remain eventually receive individual tuition. The definition of what constitutes a musical group, however, differed between the informants. For example, two teachers in the AMS group stated that every constellation beyond one student should be considered a group, while the teachers in the ES group asserted that two- to three- pupil tuition is still considered individual. ES2 found that the number of students and teachers in a group must be determined by the needs of the specific group – not by a fixed figure. In AMS, groups rarely consist of more than six pupils, while ES often teach groups with as many as 20 pupils. ES4 expressed that it is more fun for the teacher to teach a group with many pupils:

Something happens with the energy, (. . .) it's action in a different way. (ES4)

L2 argued that there is no contradiction between group teaching and quality and that individual teaching does not equal quality. Instead, group tuition has the potential to be superior in many dimensions if the teacher actually uses the group and its dynamics to provide momentum. Both leaders suggested that group teaching is less concerned with the instruments and more concerned with the social aspect of the group and that teachers need the right tools to work accordingly. L1 stated that there is widespread concern in both AMS and higher music education institutions regarding losing the craft (for which teachers once trained), i.e., educating pupils on a classical instrument.

How do you work with quality in this? And is there a concern of reduced quality compared to how it was before? Do you achieve the same result and how fast do you get there? Do you need to meet the pupils more often? Do you need to work in a different way? (L1)

There was consensus among both teacher groups that the students' instrumental progression will unavoidably be a bit slower in group tuition; however, the teachers in the ES group did not view this as problematic.

Musical progression and skill development

Views on what constitutes progression, specifically in terms of the need to push it, differed between the two teacher groups. One argument for trying to maintain a common progression was that it will enhance the students' joy of making music with others. AMS5 believed that two pupils can possess different abilities to understand instructions, which may complicate group progression. The teachers in the ES group agreed that progression has to be adapted to the weakest individual. In their view, slow progression is justified, since extra-musical skills and abilities are quite valuable.

There are a lot of other things you also learn . . . if you have pupils in a group, you can work with so many different things that are valuable. Whether we are going to be professional

musicians or we are going to learn to be functioning people, that's where all the big gains are. That we learn to listen to each other, we learn to empathise, we learn to take on different roles. And at the same time, all this musical work is going on as well. (ES4)

ES1 mentioned that there is a common view among AMS teachers that you have to push pupils who have potential and offer them a greater number of challenges; otherwise, they will become bored and quit. She stated that this is actually false: If pupils are comfortable in the group and enjoy playing, they will continue and attain a solid instrument technical ground upon which they can build. The teachers in the ES group agreed that instrument technique does not have to be perfect from the start – once the pupil is motivated, there are no issues with correcting bad habits. For learning to be fun for the children, there needs to be 'big meshes in the net' (ES7); the teacher needs to be able to stop fixing incorrect posture and drop technical elements that are not perfect. AMS1 shared this view, stating that he really had to work with himself and his beliefs to be able to let things go without 'getting a heart attack'.

ES 6 who also works in AMS expressed that pupils who receive group tuition are better at playing difficult rhythms and have better instrument skills than one-to-one taught pupils. AMS1 also reported that, after a year or two, his pupils who play in group have played more during lessons than his individual pupils, due to the longer group lessons. The teachers in the AMS group stated that the pressure for visible progression is partly external, coming from ambitious pupils or their parents (mostly from the wealthier parts of the city), but also internal: Teachers themselves may wish for progression and the need to show results. ES2, on the other hand, emphasised that 'my need for progression cannot spill over to the child'.

The pupils' social community

Another aspect of quality in group tuition emphasised by the teachers in the ES group was the social aspect of making music: Children appreciate doing things together. These teachers find motivation necessary for musical progression: 'Without motivation, there will be no progression' (ES1). In their view, motivation depends on a feeling of success; if the communal progression is slow enough during a lesson, all pupils may feel successful and included. AMS1 described inclusion as paying attention to every child in a group: 'Some are easily overshadowed, but it is important to see them.' This becomes more difficult the larger the group becomes.

The teachers in the ES group also discussed the identity-building to which music-making can contribute, which can be enabled by the social aspect of group tuition.

I think it's a big advantage of group teaching that you have friends that you can mirror yourself in. So, it really helps to build identity. (ES4)

The social context may also take some pressure off the teacher. If the pupils feel group affiliation and come to meet each other, successful lessons will not depend exclusively on the teacher's outstanding performance each week.

The teachers' social community

Teachers, in addition to children, enjoy doing things together. Based on the FGIs, the teacher community in the ES group is strong, exemplified by the participants reusing each other's phrases and expressions and referring to each other's statements. Also, the teachers in the ES group work more closely together than the teachers in the AMS group.

We teach in groups, but we also work in groups. It is also a key in this. Doing this job by yourself is really tough, but you have colleagues around you who support you: We relieve each other, we help each other, we reflect, and we try to develop. That makes it interesting. (ES4)

AMS1 and AMS5 collaborate in teaching groups of 12 pupils, a structure that resembles ES teaching. The benefit of such collaborative teaching was highlighted by AMS5.

If you think of AMS4's situation where she has a group of six pupils, there is such a big difference from having 12 pupils and being two teachers; it is not comparable. There may be a problem with an instrument. Then, I can fix it while AMS1 runs a song. It's less stress, so I can only recommend it – to try to work with someone. Because it's a lot of fun in a group. (AMS5)

This statement also highlights the fact that this group teacher team is exceptional in AMS. ES5 suggests that most teachers in AMS avoid team teaching due to a lack of experience. Another reason, suggested by one of the leaders, may be the fear of exposing their own ignorance or inadequacy.

Educational strategies for group tuition

The teachers mentioned two differentiation strategies for dealing with very heterogeneous groups: organisational (splitting the group) and pedagogical (playing elaborated or simplified parts). AMS2 pointed to pupils' different wishes concerning progression pace as a common problem in group tuition:

In one case, it is 'Ah, why don't we go faster?', and, in the other case, the pupil feels small and bad. (AMS2)

This type of heterogeneous group needs to be split, according to AMS2. ES2 stressed the fact that their groups are not fixed; a pupil can move between different groups according to their level of competency. The conditions for changing groups seem more favourable within ES, where all pupils attend music lessons at their comprehensive school in close connection to their school day schedule. In AMS, on the other hand, changing groups entails more logistics, involving parents and considering pupils' other leisure activities.

In contrast, ES4 described striving to keep the group together, emphasising affiliation and the feeling of security within the group as a motive and instead differentiating skill levels within the group.

Okay, here is a student who needs a challenge, then, here is a special part for you; or here is a student who really has to take it a little slower, well then we make material that works for those students. So, even though we have a group with so many students, we can have several levels running at the same time. (ES4)

This view was shared by AMS4: Group tuition requires more time for preparation, arranging musical parts on different difficulty levels to sufficiently take care of the entire group. Most teachers who teach large groups agree that a higher degree of structure is needed, including keeping the same routines every week.

A third strategy was also mentioned – the *no-stress approach* – which emphasises the importance of a supportive environment where everyone feels successful. The teachers describe this

approach as no pressure and no pushing of progression. There seems to be several strategies to achieve this, with teachers in the ES group indicating that they frequently work with rhythms. The no-stress approach was also present in AMS1 and AMS5's large-group teaching. AMS5 emphasised elaborating a narrow tone material with only five notes in order to help students improve – not only for those five notes but also for a solid foundation together.

Learning by trying

Some statements pointed to the importance of teachers' tacit knowledge, exemplified by their being forced to learn the job on the job.

It's not just someone telling you 'do this and this and this'. You have to practise it for a few years, and I am super happy that I was thrown into El Sistema and like just 'Aah! Eight trumpet players' or 'thirteen trumpet players' so that you could practise and try and not give up. (ES1)

This suggests that teacher education did not prepare the teachers adequately for the demands of their work. Some informants pointed to work experience in a compulsory school as useful for handling large groups. The teachers in the ES group reported that teaching in teams helps their development, almost like in-service learning. They have learned lessons from each other and shared their experiences through joint reflection.

Discussion

Overall, the informants highlighted the positive aspects of group teaching. Larger groups, however, require more teacher action to take advantage of the group's dynamics as a pedagogical tool, while smaller groups can still be taught individually. Two strategies for maintaining coherent progression in a heterogeneous group were specifically mentioned frequently: organisational and pedagogical differentiation. In addition, this study highlighted a third strategy: a no-stress strategy.

The aim of this study was not to compare ES and AMS, but the results show many differences regarding progression and inclusion as opposites or complementary traits of group tuition between the two groups of teachers. The result also points to different conceptualisations of what success looks and sounds like. In ES, the overarching goal of social inclusion is reflected in the teaching and is the aspect of quality that ES teachers value the most. The tradition of knowledge transfer in SAMS may lead teachers to continue to teach individually but in a group setting. Instead of one-to-one teaching, it is one-to-many, which can be perceived as unsatisfying and ineffective to a traditional music school teacher. The stress and difficulties of maintaining coherent progression in a heterogeneous group are noticeable in the teachers in the AMS group. Thus, the struggle to balance inclusion and progression can best be described as a tension field.

Comparing ES and AMS group teaching is not easily done, since the conditions of the two branches differ greatly, for example with regards to group sizes, where ES teachers deals with larger groups than AMS teachers. Teachers' beliefs, experiences and values as well as workplace conditions and structure could be discussed and explained within the framework of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The teachers that applied for work in ES knew the principles and fundamental values of the activity. They may already have had some enthusiasm for social development through music and also a positive attitude to group tuition. Teachers' identities form and are formed by the community in which they practise. The degree of sharing and making tacit knowledge explicit depends on the conditions facilitating joint reflection, which are more established in ES than AMS. ES has a strong community of practice and a shared repertoire along with a clear, common vision regarding teaching quality. Seemingly, AMS lacks collective ways of relating

to the practice. More beneficial conditions for a stronger community of practice (Wenger, 1998) may help develop group tuition in general. None of the teachers mentioned that a drive for in-service regarding group tuition is required. However, the leaders and ES teachers implied that AMS teachers lack the competence (or even willingness) to teach collaboratively in large groups – another tension field between the two teacher groups.

When the teachers discussed group differentiation strategies, they did not provide specific examples. This suggests a highly intuitive practice. Their difficulty in explaining what is meant by ‘inclusion’ in group tuition suggests that their work towards inclusion relies (to an extent) on tacit knowledge; teachers know more than they are able to communicate (Polanyi, 1966). Learning by learning (to teach as you have been taught) and learning by doing (trial and error on the job) were frequently reported in the interviews, and both phenomena highlight the importance of tacit knowledge in this context. A strong community with influence from colleagues may challenge teachers’ methods of teaching. Experience in compulsory schools may also be valuable for dealing with large instrumental groups. Additionally, Hallam (1998) recognises how group tuition and class teaching in schools share common traits, but not all specialist music teachers gain this competence during their education.

Teaching large groups in collaboration seemed more satisfactory according to the teachers who performed this type of teaching. This is an important finding to bear in mind when organising group tuition in SAMS, to enable team teaching. Team teaching enables one teacher to run the group, while a colleague assists at an individual level. This could be described as a *many-to-many approach* (as opposed to one-to-one or one-to-many). The teachers in the ES group (and AMS1) held that students’ musical abilities can indeed be developed in large groups due to longer lesson durations and thus more time with the instrument.

One frequent argument against group tuition (Remiss SOU, 2016:69; Ordo, 2018) was that the teacher cannot find the time to correct the individual. The teachers in the ES group found this false, arguing that bad posture or bad habits can easily be corrected once the pupil is motivated. AMS1, on the other hand, suggested that an inadequate technique can be corrected once the group size is reduced, and a more hands-on approach has become possible. The widespread belief that technique must be perfectly executed from the start needs to be investigated. As suggested by Kaladjev (2000), inadequate technique could make it more difficult to play the instrument, thereby causing pupils to quit.

In this tension field between inclusion and progression, both organisational and pedagogical differentiation strategies might be equally difficult to pursue. Pedagogical differentiation aims at keeping the group together despite differences in terms of musical skill and ability (Dehli, Fostås, & Johnsen, 1980; Hallam, 1998). Dividing pupils into different levels within the group may, however, have a negative impact on inclusion. Letting some pupils play an ‘easier part’ is not necessarily more inclusive or supportive of their feeling of belonging than placing them in another group. With this strategy, it may also be difficult to achieve inclusion in the sense of successfully meeting every learner’s needs (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Pedagogical differentiation is arguably only possible if there are two or more teachers that can play these different parts. It would probably be very difficult for a beginner pupil to play a separate part – no matter how simple – if the majority of students play something else. Therefore, this strategy may not be fully applicable to teachers who teach alone. Organisational differentiation was also perceived as more difficult in AMS, where group teaching conditions are less favourable than in ES due to, for example, limitations regarding the number of pupils, scheduling, conditions for collaboration, or room size. The third strategy mentioned in the FGIs is the ‘no-stress’ approach, which features no differentiation at all, but it is said to be a successful strategy for achieving both inclusion and progression. I suggest *peer teaching* as a fourth group tuition strategy, although it was not mentioned in the interviews. If two pupils differ in their ability to understand instructions, it would be productive and active to allow the one who understands explain to the one who does not. In each case, teacher professionalism must determine which strategy will best balance inclusion and progression in group tuition. The

question, however, is if all teachers hold the professional knowledge and understanding to make the most appropriate interventions.

The possibilities for differentiating group tuition may depend on the need for common progression (Hallam, 1998). In AMS, there is obviously a struggle to find this ideal pace, while, in ES, there is not, since the pace is set by the agenda to adapt to the weakest pupil. Even though research suggests that a slow and steady approach is successful for music group tuition (Ashton & Klopper, 2018), such an approach might be stressful to teachers of the classical tradition for whom the goal of ability development is still important. Slow progression is perhaps more obvious in a smaller group and could thus be perceived as more unsatisfactory in that context – at least for the teacher. In a large group, where the possibilities to individualise the lessons are minimised, the teacher can work for a longer period of time at the same skill level but with different tasks, for example playing multiple songs containing the same narrow tone material. Thus, the teaching can be experienced as meaningful for all students, even if the technical progression is slow.

The relationship between progression and motivation emerges as central in the interviews. ES1 stated that without motivation, there can be no progression. I would argue, first, that the opposite is equally true: without progression, there can be no motivation; secondly, the traditional concept of progression may need to be problematised in several ways. Understanding progression through quantifiable aspects, such as moving forward in a book or learning an increasing number of notes, is arguably not sufficient for current music education. Several diverse quality aspects may be equally relevant to the concept of musical progression, for instance, developing tone quality and building a solid foundation such as proficiency with complicated rhythms, but also building inclusion (e.g., nurturing a feeling of social and musical belonging). The way in which teachers value different aspects of quality also has an impact on whether they regard the tuition as successful.

Conclusions

Previous research does not sufficiently problematise the tensions between inclusion and progression in group tuition, instead focusing on these concepts as separate ideas. This study's contribution is to describe the tension fields that emerge when teachers from the classical tradition discuss these topics. It shows that teachers have different views on inclusion depending on whether they teach within ES or not. This is interesting, since the inclusive approach (shared by ES teachers) should be an explicit aim for all SAMS (SOU, 2016:69). The goals of teaching in the two branches differ. In ES, the quality aspect of social inclusion and every pupil's need to feel success, motivation and belonging are the most important; therefore, the teaching pace is adjusted to the weakest pupil. Teachers in AMS seem stuck between tradition and the demands of group tuition, struggling to achieve both progression and inclusion. The leaders' and the ES teachers' description of AMS teachers as lacking the willingness and competence for group tuition constituted a tension field between the AMS teachers and the other informants. Better conditions for AMS teachers to teach groups in teams are needed for several reasons. For instance, team teaching has shown to be more satisfying for teachers, and it helps them work with the social dimension of groups and form a common view on progression and inclusion.

The no-stress approach described in this study is said to achieve both inclusion and progression, but further studies are needed to investigate if this strategy actually can maintain inclusion, while individual learning is developed. In this approach, an additional tension field can be detected: progression as something that needs to be pushed *versus* progression as something that will emerge naturally. The no-stress strategy also challenges the teachers' roles and foundations of their tuition, such as their aims, goals and intentions. This study has mapped different aspects of the teaching qualities that these teachers consider the most important, and it has offered an explanation for how and why these views are formed through communities of practice.

This study points to the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of methods and strategies available in group tuition. Quantitative aspects, such as pupils' skill level and continuation rate, are often used for measuring successful teaching, but this study indicates that other aspects of quality, such as building a solid technical foundation and nurturing social inclusion, are also called for.

Note

1 The title of the Art and Music School Inquiry's report is *An Inclusive Art and Music School on its Own Terms*.

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