

Play together, stay together

Musical progress and social inclusion in group instrumental teaching

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts at Lund University to be publicly defended on 10th of October at 10.00 in Lilla Salen, Malmö Academy of Music, Ystadvägen 25.

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Document name: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
2025

Date of issue October 10,

Author: Ida Knutsson

Sponsoring organization:

Title and subtitle: Play together, stay together. Musical progress and social inclusion in group instrumental teaching.

Abstract: This thesis explores how teachers in Sweden's art and music schools navigate the potentially conflicting goals of musical progress and social inclusion in group instrumental teaching. Group teaching has gained popularity due to cost-efficiency and its potential to meet children's social needs. However, many teachers trained in the one-to-one conservatory tradition express concern about maintaining musical quality in group formats.

Since 2020, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) has been Swedish law, requiring educational practices, including SAMS, to reflect democratic values. Against this backdrop, the aim of this thesis is to explore how teachers manage the dual goals of social inclusion and musical progress.

Theoretical perspectives of communities of practice and communities of musical practice were used to analyse how teachers develop their professional practice and how pupils learn in social and musical contexts. Data were collected through focus group interviews and stimulated recall, and analysed using qualitative content analysis.

These results, filtered through the theoretical perspectives, show that multiple conflicting dynamics coexist, which contributes to understanding the balancing act between social inclusion and musical progress. The social aspect, for instance, is connected to informal learning, the leisure activity discourse, child-centred teaching, and a standpoint that puts the collective in the forefront. The musical development aspect, on the other hand, relates to formal learning, school discourse, teacher-centred teaching, and an emphasis on the individual pupil. By identifying these tensions and connecting them to diverse aspects of the teaching practice, there is potential to move beyond the dualism and move away from the narrow view that there is a need to choose either-or.

This study contributes to the understanding of how pupil-centred and democratic principles can coexist with goals of musical development in group settings.

Key words: art and music schools, classical instruments, group teaching, musical progress, social inclusion.

Classification system and/or index terms (if any)

Supplementary bibliographical information

Language: English

Number of pages: 93

ISSN and key title: 1404-6539 Studies in Music and Music Education 26

ISBN: 978-91-88409-49-2, e-book 978-91-88409-50-8

Recipient's notes

Price

Security classification

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Date 2025-08-12