

Rethinking music activities in preschool

Exploring links between conceptions of the child and conceptions of music

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ABSTRACT

Music in preschool is mostly performed as singing-events in the form of circle-time, over which children do not have much influence. This article argues that research on music education in preschool often has overlooked this lack of influence. It explores how conceptions of 'the child' relate to different conceptions of music, and thereby impact on how music activities are staged in preschool. The primary empirical material consists of one group interview with four music pedagogues working together with 1–3 year olds in a Swedish preschool with an alternative approach. Through the use of Critical Discursive Psychology five interpretative repertoires of 'the child' are distinguished, among which 'a child with rights' is seen as encompassing the other four. Conceptions of the child as constantly learning and epistemologically equal to adults, and therefore granted the rights to explore the world without unnecessary bodily restrictions, 'requires' improvisational and trans-disciplinary conceptions of music, in which the child needs to have the right to bodily self-determination. The outcome of the study shows how conceptions of the child shape our conceptions of music, consequently resulting in multiple and diverse music practices. Keywords: music in preschool, children's participation, power structures

Introduction

Recent research shows that music activities in Scandinavian preschools are usually performed in strongly traditional ways in terms of content as well as methods (Söderman, 2012). Seen as a specific form of *teaching subject*, music is constructed as a *singing subject* (Still, 2011), consisting of an unquestioned canon of songs, mostly performed in reproductive ways, and 'appropriate' for preschool (Söderman, 2012). It has also been shown that the activities are almost exclusively staged in the form of *circle time*, and due to their adult-centeredness they do not to any significant extent include children as involved actors (Holmberg, 2012, 2014; Still, 2011). According to Young (2006), similar tendencies are also dominant in other (Western) countries.

This article draws on empirical material, consisting of a group interview with four music pedagogues working with 1–3 year olds in a preschool with an alternative music practice.¹ In order to understand why this practice has been constructed as alternative or different, it is necessary to dwell on how standard music activity in preschool is constructed in Scandinavia.

Music activities as daily circle time

There are not many thorough empirical descriptions of music activities in ordinary Scandinavian preschools (i.e. preschools without a music profile), but Holmberg (2014) and Still (2011) constitute exceptions to that phenomenon, describing Swedish and Finnish preschool practices. Also Holgersen (2008) briefly mentions how music in Danish preschools is staged. According to them (and according to my own and many other active pre-school teachers with extensive experience), music activities in preschool are usually performed through gathering the children in a circle at a specific time in their daily routines, as in the morning or before lunch. The children often participate in choosing songs, by using objects such as a *song bag* (containing small items representing different songs) or *song cards* with pictures (symbolizing the song to be sung together). Sometimes the children are also allowed to choose other songs not found in this pedagogical material, or to use instruments that have been handed out by the pedagogues. Even if some preschools have more diverse music

¹ The article is one of two in the second part of a PhD project. The first part was in the form of a licentiate thesis: *Musicking – Kreativ improvisation i förskolan* (Wassrin, 2013). The overarching aim of the doctoral thesis is to examine an alternative music practice in preschool with focus on the youngest children, 1–3 year olds and their music pedagogues, mainly through the concept of *music didactic identity* (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009).

activities (often due to pedagogues with a personal music interest), the staging of music activities at large seems hard to change (Söderman, 2012).

In a study of music activities in three Swedish preschools, Holmberg (2014) provides examples of how music activities are performed ritually in the form of a circle. In one example, the music activity involved playing the didgeridoo, and making the children sit at appropriate distances from one another in a circle formation, cushions having been placed on the floor by the pedagogue. These cushions were, according to the pedagogue who was in charge, meant to help the children sit down correctly. However, the children moved the cushions around, whereupon the pedagogues later glued figures (that were not possible to remove) on the floor for the children to sit on. Holmberg claims that the form of the ritual circle seems important to the pedagogues in her study insofar as it can be seen as a necessity and a secure base, from which variations can occur. But, as she goes on to argue, such circles can also be said to discipline the children's bodies in the room, and maybe interpreted as a 'straightjacket' from which it is hard to escape.

The circle formation may also be seen as a tool to create a sense of fellowship and togetherness, since all participants can see each other. Dixon (2011) argues that the circle formation has the advantage of enabling inclusion and listening to individual voices, but that it is also:

... an effective way of targeting the body in the exercise of power. The children are the circle. In this configuration they are all part of the disciplinary gaze as they watch each other, and are subject to the eyes watching them. It also means that children are not obscured by others as they might be when sitting randomly or in rows (Dixon, 2011: 5).

In order to make school and preschool settings work efficiently, it is necessary to create a certain number of *docile bodies*, which is accomplished through "techniques which affect how space, time, and movement are regulated" (Dixon, 2011: 5). Here, she refers to Foucault (1977) and his description of how bodies may come to be controlled through certain techniques, regulating *where*, *when*, and *how* bodies and specific actions are allowed and expected to occur—techniques that result in normalization and self-regulating bodies. In this way, the individual's scope for action is limited, and the individual becomes docile, regulating her/himself through habits and routines. According to Dixon, the circle formation thus seems to include a duality in terms of function; (i) enabling a positive interaction; and (ii) enabling the adults' control of the children's behaviour through disciplining their bodies.

Adult-child relation

Despite ample evidence of children's lack of influence on music activities in preschool, I have been unable to find any research with pronounced focus on participatory aspects of music activities in child group in preschool, regarding the youngest children (1–3 year olds). Much of the Scandinavian literature about music with children in preschool does not critically or explicitly examine the disciplined ways of making music, or power relations in music activities. A couple of scholars who incidentally touch upon the subject are Ericsson and Lindgren (2012), who mention that pedagogues' conceptions of *the child*² govern children's possibilities to express themselves aesthetically. Consequently, there seem to be reasons to delve deeper into the question of conceptions of the child, in order to explore how different conceptions of the child entail different ways of making music in preschool.

From a social constructionist and a post-structuralist perspective, categories such as *child*, *woman*, or *man* are to be seen as social constructions and thus, from egalitarian viewpoints, they sometimes need to be reconsidered (which is often done within gender research, wherein categories such as man—woman are examined and deconstructed). Alanen (2001) argues that if the question of children's *agency* (defined in the quote below) is to be penetrated, attention must be directed towards the relations and structures in which the category of children is a part:

A specific concern in exploring the generational structures within which childhood as a social position is daily produced and lived has to be on securing children's agency. In relational thinking, agency need not be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor (as in sociologies of children). Rather, it is inherently linked to the 'powers' (or lack of them), of those positioned as children, to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds. In researching such positional 'powers', they are best approached as possibilities and limitations of action, 'determined' by the specific structures (regimes, orders) within which persons are positioned as children. (Alanen, 2001: 21)

² The concept of conception is not to be understood as referring to psychological phenomena, such as internal mental states, which then are expressed in talk, but instead to shared processes of talk in which conceptions and such categories are discursively *produced* and *reproduced* by people in interaction, by means of verbal (and physical) actions (Burr, 2015), a matter I will return to in the theory section.

Alanen writes that it is important to address the socially built-in relation of power in the binary adult-child pair,³ since it is (but would not necessarily have to be) a general principle of social organization that defines our ways of thinking about children, and it also permeates all spheres of social life and social institutions (Alanen, 1992). Dolk (2014), who examines power relations in preschools in terms of gender work, similarly refers to the relational perspective of the adult-child pair, but adds that the asymmetry between adult and child is amplified when the relation is between a pedagogue and a preschool child. She also reminds us, that several scholars state that adult superiority over children is the least questioned dominant order in society (see e.g. Arnér, 2009; Näsman, 1995).

This may also be one of the explanations for why the topic of children's influence on music activities is almost completely neglected; research is performed by the superordinate, the adult. Transferred from gender concerns this is formulated by Alanen as follows:

... the child-related issues that get defined as problematic or interesting—and raise needs and interests for producing knowledge—might be those that concern the organizing, managing, and the occasional 'modernization' of the generational system, from the standpoint of those belonging to the hegemonic generation as well as the hegemonic gender whose business is to do the ruling (Alanen, 1992: 68).

Since these binary pairs can be understood as socially constructed and thus arbitrary (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2011), it might be necessary to deconstruct them, as well as other concepts "to produce a better understanding of what it is in them that generates such problems and, above all, what should be done to them" (Alanen, 1992: 73). Adopting such a (relational) perspective on music didactic questions may be fruitful not just to produce better knowledge, but to contribute to "empowerment and social justice for children [...] in societal practice" (Alanen, 2011: 147). Consequently and perhaps needless to say: what may be considered as social justice, or regarded as an equal and participatory music practice in preschool, may then be up to those who 'do the ruling' to decide. This tension is outside of the scope of this article, but should be explored elsewhere.

3 Alanen's sociological approach, taking structure as a fundamental starting point, may be beneficial when exploring power relations, but the categories of adult and child should in this study be understood as analytical categories and are not referring to naturally occurring, but instead, socially constructed classifications.

The connection between conceptions of the child and (music) practice

According to Ericsson and Lindgren (2012), conceptions of the child influence what is possible to think and say about children. This also concerns didactic situations such as, for instance, mealtime and music activities (Dolk, 2014). Conceptions are also materialized and expressed in practice through action, as *performed theories* about children's needs, learning, and development, which are visible in the material that is chosen for children's activities (Nordin-Hultman, 2004). Similarly, conceptions of the child are materialized in the physical environment in terms of furnishing, scheduling of time, and partitioning of space. Nordin-Hultman further claims that in order to enable changes in traditional practices it is essential to identify and explore—*deconstruct*—the taken for granted ideas and habits that pedagogical thinking and acting is based upon, both about the child and about knowledge, which govern our interpretation and direction of gaze.

The research described above points at the cultural dimension of music education, comprising the fact that it always takes place in a certain time and culture, with particular conceptions and assumptions about, in our case the child, which affect practice. (Conceptions and assumptions that also comprise lingering thoughts from earlier periods of time.) This corresponds to Dyndahl and Ellefsen's (2009) suggestion that music didactics should be regarded as "cultural didactics", because "(didactic identities of) school subjects are [...] created and negotiated by means of, and in relation to, culture, meaning, and power" (ibid.,: 9, my bracketing). (The concept of *didactic identities* is not explicitly addressed in this article, but is for teleological reasons simplistically understood as 'how the teaching subject of music is carried out in various ways in different practices, as negotiated and constructed phenomena'. I see this reading as sufficient here, without for that sake doing violence to the main point in Dyndahl and Ellefsen's advocacy of music didactics being studied in a broader context as cultural didactics.) The crux is that Dyndahl and Ellefsen here offer a post-structuralist understanding of the teaching subject of music, in contrast to a more traditional view:

Traditionally, the identity of a school subject was given by its more or less fixed and stable 'properties', 'character' or 'essence'. The 'natural' contents and activities of the subject were thus given by its self-evident 'core'. A post-structuralist perspective on didactic identity, however, must underline its shifting and decentered character, detached from any essential point. It then follows that music education is both affected by and reliant on the culture(s) in which it takes place. (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009: 22)

Thus, Dyndahl and Ellefsen emphasize the negotiated character of teaching subjects and therefore advocate research into how different ‘teaching subjects of music’ impact the ways in which music activities are staged in institutional settings. This is of significance because different staging entails differences in terms of power relations between the persons taking part in the events, concerning who is to dominate and who is to be marginalized. To sum up: Understanding the teaching subject of music as related to broader questions of power and culture makes it possible and important to explore in what ways conceptions about the child affect how music is staged in preschool and what power relations that are the result of different conceptions.

The relation between conceptions of the child and conceptions of music can also be understood as closely linked to how people make sense of the world through signs. As already has been partly indicated in the quote by Dyndahl and Ellefsen (2009), a post-structuralist perspective comprises the notion of language as unstable. Barker (2012: 471) claims that signs, like words and categories, are not to be conceived of as “single unitary objects with fixed meanings or single underlying structures and determinations.” Instead, in order to obtain meaning, signs, like *music* or *child*, have to be put together with other signs through *articulation*, that is, temporary fixations of meaning, since they have no stable meaning in themselves. Discourses about the child and discourses about music may thus be seen as intertwined, reciprocally impacting each other’s meaning.

Aim of the article

The specific aim of this article is to analyse how conceptions of the child and conceptions of music interrelate, and how these conceptions mutually influence music pedagogues’ didactic decisions about how music activities are shaped in preschool. An extended ambition is to explore how these conceptions legitimize children’s participation in preschool music events.

The research questions are:

- What conceptions of the child are presented in the music pedagogues’ talk?
- How do these conceptions relate to conceptions of music?
- What are the didactic implications of these different interrelating conceptions of children’s participation in music activities?

In order to take on this investigative task I apply Critical Discursive Psychology as a theoretical framework (Wetherell, 1998). In addition to microanalysis, this approach

advocates that broader theoretical framework should be used as a backdrop against which people's utterances are understood in a historical and cultural context. This analytical background is here provided by the New Sociology of Childhood (James et al., 1998), as well as by overviews of conceptions and positions within the teaching subject of music and their origins, respectively (Hanken & Johansen, 2011; Nielsen, 2010).

Exploring an alternative music practice

This article builds on a larger ethnographic study (Wassrin, 2013),⁴ in which I examined a specific alternative music practice in a Swedish preschool. (Alternative should here be understood in relation to the earlier described standard preschool music practice.) The environment in the youngest children's units was prepared for music activities and contained instruments, but very few common toys. Music pedagogues, all working 75 %—100 % on a daily basis in these units, were responsible for the music activities, which were found to be highly improvisational in character. The children had a major influence on them, as they were allowed to move around freely in the room and to decide *if*, *when*, and *how* they wanted to participate. Furthermore, the events were experimental, exploratory, and varied in character insofar as they contained singing, experiments with sound, playing instruments, different forms of dance, music listening, music combined with dramatic play or role play, and more.

One prominent trait of the evolving events was the music pedagogues' responsive attitude in the moment, wherein they often chose to wait, or ask for, the children's verbal or bodily initiatives or responses. The pedagogues had a permissive approach, taking up the children's initiatives as serious suggestions about how to perform the events, and showed openness to other expressions and actions rather than merely musical ones. Furthermore, the music activities were not held at specially scheduled occasions, or sporadically, but instead they were *the* activities. Each day, as long as the music pedagogues were present at the preschool, music events were the main activity.

The description of this preschool music practice indicates a somehow unusual approach towards both the relation between pedagogue and child, and towards how the subject of music in preschool usually is staged, as earlier described. In order to

4 The study was performed with focus on the interaction between the participants and in particular their co-construction of the music activities here-and-now, and on their use of discursive, semiotic, and material resources to constitute and sustain these activities.

understand more about why the practice was staged in such a way, I decided to do a group interview with music pedagogues from the preschool.

The music pedagogues

In the preschool studied here, the visual arts already had a strong tradition, while music activities had been absent due to former pedagogues' own acknowledgment of lacking the necessary musical competence. Therefore, educated music pedagogues were employed to work together with the youngest children in the preschool (1–3 years old), and economic investments were made through the purchase of instruments, in order to achieve the goal of introducing *the language of music* in the preschool. (The term *language* was used by the music pedagogues to describe different ways of expression.)

The participants in the group interview were four music pedagogues. At the time of the interview two of them were still working in the preschool, while two had left for other jobs. Their education in the subject of music differed in terms of educational degree: one of them was a music teacher in primary and secondary school, one was an educated singing teacher, one had a qualification as a community music teacher (also called music instructor, *musikhandledare* in Swedish), and one was a community music teacher in the middle of her education. Besides being educated in the subject of music, all of them were either trained in, or had experiences of pedagogical areas such as mother tongue teacher (Swedish), *atelierista*⁵, professional dancer, opera singer, musician, or had experiences in drama and crafts. Altogether the individual music pedagogues had access to different, though complementary, knowledge in their work with the children. Furthermore, their experience in terms of working with young children, and the length of their working experience, also differed.

As can be seen, the pedagogues' approaches, experiences, and educational background differed, though a common feature was their extensive experience. They also differed in their ways of making music, which made the music practice wide in terms of offered activities and the differences between the pedagogues' music making can thus be considered as complementary, since the activities varied from rule-governed singing games to more experimental events, such as exploring sound activities. Still, the singing of children songs was a common denominator for all the music pedagogues.

⁵ An *atelierista* is an artistic supervisor who works in preschool to ensure that an aesthetic dimension is present in all subjects and in the educational environment. The profession originates from the preschools in Reggio Emilia in Italy.

Theoretical and methodological frames for the study

The theoretical premises of this article are, as already briefly outlined, that *conceptions* are discursively constructed in interaction, and that these processes do not occur in a vacuum, but in relation to cultural and historical contexts. In order to cover both the speaker level—the immediate context in which “speakers construct different accounts, or versions, of the world” (Edley & Wetherell, 1999: 182)—and the broader context of shared sense-making resources, or “historically given set of discourses or interpretative repertoires” (Edley & Wetherell, 1997: 206), I apply a Critical Discursive Psychological approach (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, 1999, 2001; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Wetherell, 1998). Wetherell (1998: 405) describes this approach as “a discipline concerned with the practices which produce persons, notably discursive practices, but seeks to put these in a genealogical context.” Thus, this approach provides analytical tools for studying language use here-and-now, but it also advocates the use of supplementary theories, required when connecting this language use to the broader discursive domain, from which speakers draw meaning—in our case conceptions about the child and of music, founded in historical practices. Here, this genealogical backdrop is constituted by James, Jenks and Prout’s (1998) comprehensive review of (Western) conceptions of childhood and children, in which they claim that our thoughts of the child “crystallize around a series of discourses that are both of modernity and informed by earlier traditions of thought” (ibid.: 9), discourses operating both in everyday life and in various approaches of research. Their overview includes descriptions of various theoretical models, from the presociological child (represented by notions originating from Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, Piaget and Freud), to contemporary theoretical approaches. The analysis in this article is also made in relation to music didactic theories (Hanken & Johansen, 2011; Nielsen, 2010), which include historical and contemporary reviews of the conception of music, both as category/phenomenon and teaching subject.

Important analytical concepts in the adopted approach are *interpretative repertoires* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988), *subject positions* (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998), and *variation* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). *Interpretative repertoires* refer to ways of talking about a specific issue and can be understood as locally available social and linguistic resources for the speaker to employ, when making her/his version of the world credible. Using a repertoire can be described as doing and saying what feels natural in a specific situation (Burr, 2015). Through a specific utterance, you position yourself in taking up a corresponding *subject position* offered by the specific repertoire (Edley, 2001). Being positioned, or positioning oneself, can be considered as “being hailed as particular kinds of individuals or **subjects**” (ibid.:

210, bold type in original). In this, the speaker not only takes up a subject position her/himself, but simultaneously positions other persons, or phenomena as being 'true', in the sense of a temporary closure of meaning for the specific sign or category.

Method of analysis

The group interview was transcribed and some additional material was collected from the pedagogues afterwards by mail, among other things to obtain supplementary information about their education. In the sorting process of the empirical material, I first listed the pedagogues' utterances about *the child* and about *music* (which considered statements of both ontological and functional aspects of music). I was in this phase focusing on the *variation* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) in the pedagogues' talk about the same topic, in order to distinguish different repertoires. In this, I looked for patterns, figures of speech, and metaphors that recurred in the talk and which occurred across different pedagogues. These fragments of talk were labelled by a few words, covering the most characteristic features in the phrase, and subsequently grouped and categorized, which then formed the basis for the different interpretative repertoires. I also attempted to distinguish different subject positions, by determining 'who' were implied in a specific utterance (Edley, 2001).

In this first step of analysis, I tried to disconnect myself from the context and stick to the text itself, a way for me to try to understand the pedagogues' utterances afresh, and not only as confirmations of their actions and performances in relation to my previous study. This was of importance, since at the time for the interview I was very familiar with the preschool setting and had got to know the pedagogues fairly well during the previous data generation.

The second step in the analyses was to mirror these repertoires against the historical backdrop. It should be clarified that I here make an analytical distinction between the concepts *interpretative repertoire* and *discourse*. The former connotes small local discourses, that is, the pedagogues' linguistic resources in positioning themselves and others through talk, whilst in turn the latter stands for larger historical and cultural discourses, from which the former draw meaning. In this part of the analysis it turned out that one of the repertoires exhibited great similarities with an already recognised discourse—*the muse-ical child*, which is why I decided to use that specific term. The other categories showed only minor resemblance with other (larger) discourses and therefore received designations based on their characteristic content. Here, it is important to state that analyzing empirical material by means of making historical comparisons, may constitute a risk of being so strongly governed by theory, here in terms of already known (larger) discourses, that everything you see in your material

confirms one or the other of the already fixed and locked categories (Potter, 1996). By trying not to categorize the material too fast, but instead maintain my openness to alternative interpretations, I tried to avoid this risk. I also addressed the issue by not going too deep into the genealogical theory before doing the first step of analysis. As follows from the theoretical perspective described above, I did not link utterances to a specific pedagogue, since my concern was to search for different conceptions of *the child* and of *music*, and not to look for different professional didactic approaches linked to specific pedagogues. Furthermore, in my analyses I did not explicitly study the use of rhetorical strategies that the pedagogues use in the interaction and the analysis was therefore not fine-grained as in Discursive Psychology closer to Conversation Analysis (for a description of different approaches, cf. Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates, 2001). My focus has rather been on *what* interpretative repertoires the pedagogues use and their social and political consequences (Wetherell, 1998), here understood as, what possibilities children have to become particular kinds of, in our case, musical subjects as an effect of the use of different repertoires. I here also include the local preschool in the analysis of the construction of the child (which is thus not only identifiable in the pedagogues' talk), since the pedagogues refer to decisions performed by them materially and organized in their practice. It should also be mentioned that the quotes from the interview, used as examples in the analysis, are translated from Swedish to English by me, as are also the quotes from Swedish literature.

Five interpretative repertoires of the child

What emerges in the talk of the pedagogues is first and foremost a dominating image of a competent child, in line with the turnaround in the view of the child that took place in the 1990s (Kampmann, 2004)—from a lack perspective, which involved seeing children as insufficient, towards seeing them as competent social actors (Halldén, 2007). In the analyses four interpretative repertoires of the child emerged, which I will describe below as: *a muse-ical child*, *a constantly learning child*, *a child uninscribed in culture*, and *a child with rights*. In addition to these categories of an exclusively competent child, a conception of *a child in need of support* sometimes emerged.

A muse-ical child

The introduction of the subject of music in the preschool is described by the music pedagogues to derive from their (anthropological) belief that children exhibit a natural,

authentic, and immanent closeness to “music and movement”, and they therefore see music as a good “forum for encounters.” The children’s predisposition for music is described by the pedagogues as an urgent desire, a wanting and longing for possibilities to express themselves through different *languages*, among which they are closest predisposed to the *language of music*. Thus, the children were offered this opportunity of free expression in what was intended to be an appropriate music environment for their age, a practice which is humorously labelled as a “musically soaked environment” by the pedagogues. This conception of the child is similar to a *muse-ical child*⁶ (see e. g. Bjørkvold, 2009; Grahn, 2005; Uddén, 2001), who is compelled by *the music imperative* to express itself (Hanken & Johansen, 2011). Through organizing the environment specifically for music activities the child is in this practice consequently given possibilities to act in its ‘true’ element, where it becomes competent. This child’s preference for using music as a medium for *communication* of its inner self also requires the making of music in ways that consequently contain some amount of improvisation, which is also provided by the pedagogues through practice (Wassrin, 2013). Another pattern in the pedagogues’ talk that can be referred to the repertoire of the muse-ical child, is in comments reflecting a holistic view on human beings.

P: I think like this: using the concept ‘holistic’ and taking the overall picture. I think all the time that we divide body and head, that it is like two different things and that is also something that we have decided [here] that we don’t want it that way. We want it to be linked the whole body, and not divide it.

According to Nielsen (2010), the notion of humans as *muse-ical* beings includes holistic elements; body, feelings, and intellect should not be separated, but together form the person as a whole. Nielsen perceives this historical approach as a relatively comprehensive cultural idea, having its roots (both in ancient times and) in the 1920’s, thereby also being influenced by the contemporary focus on and interest in bodily movement. (One music didactic approach, which arose at that time, was the pedagogical work of Dalcroze, characterized by the combination of music and bodily movement.) In line with this, the pedagogue quoted above stresses bodily activities as being just as important as intellectual ones and a separation between them is not desirable.

6 The concept of muse-ical derives from antique Greece and the nine muses that were offered by the gods to human beings for rest and recreation in daily life (Grahn, 2005). In the Scandinavian countries muse-ical education is mostly inspired by Bjørkvold’s (2009) interpretation of the concept, which emphasizes the authenticity in children’s own culture and children’s experience of music, dancing, and singing as a whole. Also the child’s strong need of expression and play, through which the individual child will be able to fulfill her-/himself are underlined by Bjørkvold (Hanken & Johansen, 2011).

A permissive environment is also seen in relation to the children's actions and free expression is pursued, yet another feature in a muse-ical approach (Hanken & Johansen, 2011).

P: Music can easily become focused on achievement and to play right [...] that there is a right or wrong. So that is one thing that I want to abandon and just allow, allow all, all expressions somehow. And like affirm and strengthen the children in...

MW: That it's okay?

P: Precisely, their personal, unique expression.

Free expression is here related to achieving the goal of reaching the full potential of one's uniqueness, or to be a more complete human being and the music didactic work is therefore directed towards the *individual* child.

P: You make room for different children and like: "Now it's *your* turn to play! Can we hear?" That you get to play solo and "now it's only *my* time" and whatever you do it's accepted and okay and such. That you only receive cheering for what you actually do, when you express yourself in that channel.

This focus on the individual child can be traced back to Rousseau, who paved the way for children as individuals (James et al., 1998) that should be encouraged to develop their own particular personalities. I interpret the didactic goal to be not primarily educating *in* music, but developing the child's whole capacity *through* music (Lindström, 2012), and offering the child a positive experience of, and attitude towards, music. So, the point of departure for the activities is the pedagogues' interpretation of what is beneficial for the child (as for example, the decision to offer the children music activities for the good of the children) and not the teaching subject of music itself (Hanken & Johansen, 2011). This decision is based on the idea that adults know what is good for children. In taking this decision, the pedagogues and the principal have used their position as adults (and thereby belonging to the dominant pole of the binary adult-child pair), and through giving the children opportunities to make music, they at the same time limit the possibilities for them, by offering mostly musical activities and very few common toys, such as dolls and cars.

However, the pedagogues' talk not only mirrors an approach to music as a way for the children to express themselves, but also reflects a reverent and solemn attitude

towards the phenomenon of music itself, which is also in line with a *muse-ical* approach according to Nielsen (2010), who refers to Seidenfaden's words: "Muse-ical education builds on an anthropology that [...] takes artistic creation seriously—as something essential and something valuable in itself." (Seidenfaden, quoted in Nielsen 2010: 188) A similar conception of music is seen in the next quote:

P: Because you don't want music to be joked away. You still think that music is a serious thing. You want to take music seriously. Then you can joke with music with...reverence is too strong a word, but do you see what I mean? Because sometimes I get like...Sometimes someone walked in [to the room] and interrupted in the middle of things, just like that (snaps her fingers) and I went like: "But are you serious! You just don't do that! We are into something important here [...] something is going on here, so take that into consideration" [...] we were just in the middle of an "aaah"-moment.

According to this pedagogue, music is a serious thing, which shows itself in the intent or reverent atmosphere surrounding it and as something that should be cherished. The utterance also mirrors the importance of emotional, passionate, and sensitive presence in the moment, which reveals that music activities with children, no matter how young they are, demand just as good quality as adults. This is also reflected in other statements about the preference for tuned instruments with a beautiful timbre.

A constantly learning child

Another interpretative repertoire in the music pedagogues' talk is the child positioned as *learner*, mirroring a widespread and prevalent tendency in contemporary pedagogical discourse (Biesta, 2004, 2005, 2010). However, the specific feature of the learning child in this local context is that it is *constantly* learning. Such a child is sufficiently curious to explore its environment by its own, and consequently does not need to be forced, prompted or pushed to learn, but seeks knowledge in the events based on interests of the moment. The pedagogues put great trust in this explorative child, since they claim to rely on the presumption that learning constantly occurs, despite being often invisible to them and consequently beyond their control.

P: It's okay that they're here just watching, because they are nonetheless participating. It doesn't mean that they do not embrace dance as language or music as language. I mean, the most common example is that the children

do not sing here [at preschool] and then the parents come and like: “God, how they sing back home!”

And then you know that they have like...So, participation...precisely, getting rid of people...pedagogues shoving in [children into the activity] saying: “Sing now!”

The decision to let the children come and go between activities and the principle of letting the children decide *if*, *when*, and *how* they want to participate, as shown above, can thus also be traced to certain beliefs about how children learn. Even if children do not seem to take an active part in an activity, they still learn through watching and listening, and are therefore still seen to be participating in the music event. This conviction comes, according to the pedagogues, from scientific knowledge about the significant role of mirror neurons, which the pedagogues have read about, on the principal’s initiative. The pedagogue above strongly positions herself against pedagogues ‘shoving in’ children in activities and prompting them to participate in explicit action. According to her, children do not have to engage physically to learn songs, or to sing, or to dance.

This child is also capable of self-regulation in the events, absorbing just enough impressions that it could handle in the process of learning. Since it is capable of this it is allowed to come and go between events, adjusting the level of intensity in relation to the character of the events, as described in the quote below:

P: It becomes a natural flow going in and out of an activity. This depends also on, if you are saturated by an experience. And then you simply need to pause for a moment and then you go away for a while and do something else. And then I believe in some way that they are processing what they have been involved in and they perhaps do something else...a contrasting thing that is not similar.

Assumptions about how children learn were also questioned over time. The pedagogues described how they moved from a belief that children have to focus on one thing at a time, towards a belief that children use multiple modes simultaneously and in connection with one another.

P: It also had something to do with doing two things at the same time, I know we started to reflect on...that children...that children only focus on one thing at the time...while we thought: two things at least, is like better for the brain. Starting to connect...the different...[...] some synapses.

In relation to this child, music becomes a sort of 'glue', which connects different areas of the child's meaning making through the assistance of the music pedagogue. In the video data in Wassrin (2013), there are examples of how the music pedagogues connect the children's 'incidents' to songs or rhymes. This is mentioned by one of them:

P: Having an enormously rich 'bank of songs' is actually essential to be able to pick up the children's whims. Or at least to have some kind of association to connect, to get closer to children's ability to do these connections all the time.

To connect the children's actions through constant improvisatory music making seems to be a central task for these pedagogues who seek to facilitate learning and exploring of the social and material environment.

Even though the child is autonomously driven by itself to learn, it still requires pleasurable input as some kind of starter. When children seem unwilling to join in a proposed music activity, a great responsibility for this unwillingness is placed on the pedagogues themselves.

P: That could depend on so many things. They were not up to it. Wrong occasion. Wrong day. Wrong song. Wrong initiative.

P: Bad timing on the whole.

P: The material was wrong. That is, you start to reflect: Introduction was perhaps wrong, the material perhaps was wrong. Group dynamic perhaps was wrong. Wrong children. That is, you can find any number of reasons.

MW: But what is wrong in that then do you mean?

P: So, either it's...if it does not feel pleasurable and meaningful then something is missing, something which attracts, which makes it like exciting and with a feeling of urgency. New. It was perhaps no challenge in it. Or they didn't understand.

The pedagogues expressed that they put high pressure on themselves, which seem to relate to their competence to *sense* what the right moment is for the specific material or activity, to know what the interests of the specific child is, and to connect children in groups so the composition of individuals becomes dynamic. Overall, core words

describing a good learning environment were: pleasure, excitement, meaningfulness, and attraction.

According to the pedagogues' experiences, learning occurs by means of all the senses, among which 'hearing' is sometimes not taken into account.

P: The thing is that what we've discovered in terms of the youngest children; they have always [the mode of] sound turned on. They are *always* listening. [...] If they are examining a thing and how it feels, what colour it is; it sounds too. That aspect is like...often forgotten.

Listening (and sound) is an important, and often neglected or under-analysed way of exploring the world and music thus also takes on the character of a *sound subject* (Nielsen, 2010). In general, the pedagogues' conception of *the constantly learning child* can be seen to have the consequence for them of not having to struggle with the children for not wanting to participate in their activities. Thus coercion is absent also in this repertoire, insofar as children need to have the right to position their own bodies wherever their interest is at the moment, or to leave when saturated by their impressions. From the above said, children can be seen to possess their own learning process, but in strong connection to what is offered by the pedagogues, in terms of an appealing environment and intriguing events. Still, *what* children learn is beyond the pedagogues' control and consequently it can be related to the teaching subject of music itself, but also to other features in the situation, that is, learning *in* and/or *through* music.

A child uninscribed in culture

P: The youngest children, [...] they have not divided it [life] into different subjects. They don't think like: – Now I sing, now I stop singing and now I draw instead.

Utterances like this from the pedagogues reflect a holistic view of the child, which can be interpreted as a description of the youngest children's *trans-disciplinary* way of being—a notion which implies that children “do not divide and limit their experiences, their play or their experimentations into given categories or subject contents” (Elfström, 2013: 118). Furthermore, and due to their young age, children are not yet inscribed into the specific culture of their environment, and are therefore sometimes misunderstood:

P: But we so often overlook the children's creations, because we don't think they are anything that is like worth placing emphasis on. If they make sounds or if they play [an instrument] in some way that you are not up to, that one does not perceive as music, or dancing...

MW: Because it does not fit within our...?

P: ...no, within our view [of music]. And also that is something that the children can give to us adults. Thus, to get away from that it's always me who have to tell them like: "This is what counts." While they can actually show me: "Oh yeah! Oh yeah, music can be like that too!"

A new way. A new input. And that could either be about how they handle the keyboard, how they make different sounds, or how they handle the ukuleles. But then you have an adult model and that is what I would like to get away from.

Children are here seen as overlooked or misunderstood through not being able to reach the adult with their creations, because these are not recognized for the reason of not being similar enough to what is counted as appropriate aesthetic products within the specific culture. Correspondingly, Young (2005) claims the necessity to re-conceptualize music with children under three year olds. Drawing on a study of young children's improvised singing, and the interconnection between singing and other actions, such as physical movement and play, she claims that what is perceived as singing (by adults), is defined within "parameters drawn from the practice of Western art music" (ibid.: 270). She argues that definitions (singing in this case) are drawn from adult practices of music, and not from children's, which result in excluding anything which falls outside those expectations of what music is or could be. She adds that evolving from such assumptions is the risk of not hearing, or "to risk closing down creative, imaginative forms of singing/voice use among children; to risk not recognizing the insights to be gained from hearing their singing; and to risk denying cultural variations" (ibid.: 271). Also the pedagogue, quoted above, expresses thoughts about the risk of not acknowledging children's actions as music, though she believes that children have important contributions to offer adults. This point of view suggests that the child is not yet inscribed in the conventions and categorizations of the adult world. It is a child with a capacity for newness that has not yet been 'educated out of them' (O'Byrne, 2005). As a consequence a trans-disciplinary exploratory child comes to be visible. As in the image of *the muse-ical child*, this is a holistic view, though more

from a social constructionist point of view, because, since it is not yet fully inscribed in culture it has the capacity to construct culture differently. It thereby brings hope and anticipation to the adult, who in her-/himself no longer has the ability to see the world without preconceptions. Through this child, the adult has access to new understandings of the world, seeing it as for the first time through the child's eyes, which may convey something other than what is currently existing and known. Such an attitude towards what a child is denies music as a strictly demarcated subject, because this would be to limit children's explorations of the world as a wholeness not yet divided by the adult, and because it should prevent the possible outcomes of such an exploration in the form of new categories. At the same time, this repertoire positions children as a group with a particularity that "confound our taken-for-granted knowledge of how other (adult) social worlds function" (James et al., 1998: 29), a trait similar to what James et al. (1998) call *the tribal child*.

These didactic intentions can here be interpreted as a quest for new, not yet known, constructions of the world. The pedagogue states that it is not exclusively she, as an adult and pedagogue, who has the right to decide what expressions are recognized as music, and she thus expresses *epistemic modesty* towards the child's contribution. When dealing with such elusive questions like limits between music and non-music, we are not far from the area of philosophical reasoning, within which Murriss (2013) notes that much of children's thoughts are met by what she calls *epistemic injustice*, as they do not qualify as alternative ways of understanding the world. She states that: "pedagogues often put metaphorical sticks in their ears in their educational encounters with children" (ibid.: 245). Negotiations about what is valuable and relevant knowledge, and for whom, are then prevented. But as pedagogues learn from children, this relationship of power changes, and *epistemic equality* can be seen to emerge when the pedagogues listen to "what the children actually mean by the concept of music" (see also quote below). Thus, the concept of music is not set in stone, but instead it can be seen as open and temporary (Haynes & Murriss, 2011).

However, to make the child's newness a lasting resource, the child has to be protected from too much adult (cultural) impact, which is reflected both in the last sentence of the pedagogue's utterance above and in the following quote:

P: It is far too conventional instruments. I've talked about that for years, on several occasions. It should be like a little more experimental. We should not have premade things. It should be possible to discover this: sound. And to even more make visible what the children actually mean by the concept of music. There is still a little too much adult representation.

The desire to clean up the material from cultural references also has the consequence of going back to the raw material in the form of fundamental minor building blocks in music, or what Paynter calls: “[t]he true “rudiments” of music” (Paynter & Aston in Kanellopoulos 2008: 222), i.e. sound and silence. Kanellopoulos (2008) notes that such views as the one above, inherit an implicit universalistic stance, characterized as a belief in a (musical) unity beyond culture. However, as I interpret the pedagogue’s utterance in its context, this is not the case here. Even though the pedagogue wants children to remain ‘uncontaminated’ by cultural influences by avoiding adult models, she wants them to be able to define concepts differently from adults. A universalistic desire to discern the roots of *the* unknown is not the same as a desire to grasp new, *as yet* unknown constructions or interpretations of the world. From such reasoning, this child is seen as being capable of what can be described as: going beyond, outside, or before language. It is similar to *a natural child*, who is seen as a blank sheet, here not for the pedagogue to write upon, but on the contrary for collaboration and partnership with the pedagogue in pursuit of conceiving the world in new ways. If this is to be possible, children have to be treated as autonomous in their exploration of the world. This represents a political view of the child in the sense that there are other possible ways of conceiving the world than the present one. The quoted pedagogue expresses a curiosity about how children in their meaning making connect experiences in different ways than adults, not because they are different through their capacity of being children, but because of their newness in the world. I interpret this as a desire not to distinguish the world for the children in advance, but for doing it alongside and *with* children. What the pedagogue seem to strive for here, is to distance herself from an automated recognition of what music ‘is’, in order to restore the sentient to really *see* and not only *recognize* through vision (Lindgren, 2013), or, more suitable here, to really listen and not only recognize with the ears through hearing. Instead of seeing children as “a potential threat or challenge to social order and its reproduction” (James et al., 1998: 9), she rather sees them as a potential promise for *new* orders.

A child in need of support

At times an image of a more fragile child also emerges in the pedagogues’ talk. One example is when pedagogues consider themselves constrained to act to protect the child (or the group) from its lack of self-control. One of the pedagogues states that some of the children were so strongly “driven by impulse”, and so easily pulled along by their friends that sometimes the freedom to move around the room(s) turned the events into one single “wandering” which resulted in a restlessness amongst the group. She reveals that, for this reason, she and her colleagues secretly reintroduced circle

time to gather the children all at the same time. (There was an explicit directive from the principal of *not* using the form of circle time as a didactic method.)

P: I remember that was part of why we in this unit started to have ‘circle time’. No, you should *sit down* during circle time. That’s how it is!

The pedagogue here decides to use her option to exercise power as an institutionally authorized subject—as pedagogue (as well as adult and superior to the child in the generational order). The purpose is to do good for the children by organizing a calm atmosphere, but this decision at the same time leads to the deprivation of the child’s right to move around, and thus, of the right to its own body. This example illustrates the complexity in didactic questions where different conceptions of the child collide, thereby generating *ideological dilemmas* (Edley, 2001). This is not only seen in the pedagogues’ talk, but also mirrors tensions between principles, in this case of children’s right to bodily self-determination *and* the right to be supported by frames to overcome the lack of self-regulation in order to be able to experience music as a pleasurable phenomenon. However, according to the pedagogue this move of reintroducing circle time received unexpectedly positive reactions from the children:

P: And the children went like: “Oh we’re going to have circle time!” They were absolutely delighted, when we helped them to structure. Like Bonnie: “Circle time, circle time, circle time! What fun! When are we going to have circle time?” (The pedagogue tapping her fingers rapidly against each other).

This child consequently requires structure and frames, in fact it *requests* frames and gets happy when it obtains help from the pedagogues to achieve this. Another situation that could legitimize the controlling of the children’s bodies is expressed when it comes to the pedagogical desire to offer the children positive experiences of music:

P: It’s so amazingly awesome when many children gather together and go like ‘schesch!’ (Makes a huge gesture). And they, themselves become like: “Wow! Is it us sounding so awesome together?!” [...] But then they have to darn me...” Now we’re here to sing.”
Then you can’t just like walk away.

The child is the target of and the receiver of those good experiences that are chosen by the adults, for example through being *taught* a “pleasurable attitude to music.”

But to accomplish this, the children have to be bodily organized so that the “power of music” may emerge. The adult knows what is good for children and how to do good for them by directing them towards joint music making, so as to enable the flourishing of the competence of the child, which was also the origins of the implementation of the teaching subject of music in the preschool.

A child with rights

The last interpretative repertoire I will take up is *the child with rights*, who is entitled to music making. This right is taken seriously by the preschool, by actually employing music pedagogues to guarantee the children their right to the language of music in the first place.

P: It’s like a democratic right to devote yourself to music and to use it as an expression I think. [...] You should have, like, the *right* to music. This kind of like political rights (laughs).

MW: To music as...?

P: As a means of expression. Young children, as said before, are so much movement and music and that should be valued.

This is a child, who, similarly to the muse-ical child, longs to express itself through music. But in addition, it is a participatory and included child, who has the right to be asked and should consequently not be forced into certain activities, as we will see below. The rights of the child is a question that James et al. (1998: 100) claim is “being loudly championed in the adult world”, which is in line with what Holmberg (2014) notices, regarding the change of legitimization of music in preschool throughout the ages. From previously having functioned as a means for moral education (and subsequently having served as a tool for communication and then learning), music in preschool is now motivated by children’s right to create and communicate meaning based on their own interests and experiences, through aesthetic forms of expression. Holmberg claims that the conceptions of the meaning and function of music thus have developed from a discourse of morality towards a discourse of rights. One music pedagogue explains in the interview how the pedagogues themselves came to question the concept of choosing in the preschool context.

P: Once again you come back to this: ‘participation’; what does it mean that they choose to be in the music room? Let’s say they are standing in the doorway [...] say they are sitting on the green carpet, building. Are they participating in the music activity, or are they not?

[...]

P: Then you can wonder, what has that child chosen then? Yes, it has chosen to sit down and build with the building blocks at the same time as it is able to hear and see what is happening in the music room, unlike if we had closed the door and said: “You should only stick to your building. Now we close the music activities for you. You have chosen to build.”

And we don’t find that, like particularly fruitful. In that case we have decided that it should be a greater openness.

MW: The children should have the opportunity to choose?

P: Yes. And it [the actions] should also be possible to occur at the same time. I think the simultaneity becomes more and more important.

As shown, this child is taken seriously, is treated with respect, and has the right (and is also able) to choose for itself. The sequence is interesting because it shows a hint of the process of the work to enable rethinking certain issues or concepts related to practice, which in turn impacts on the development of the music activities according to the pedagogues. Consequently, the quote should be understood in the light of how the pedagogues’ notion of the participation and self-determination of the children changes over time. According to the video ethnography (Wassrin, 2013), the music activities were at an earlier stage separated from other activities through performing them in different rooms, between which the doors were mostly closed. Consequently, the teaching subjects were totally separated. At the time of the interview this had changed to enable more open forms, whereby the children could come and go between activities. The contents of the different rooms were also more mixed, containing materials belonging to different ways of expression. In the path of the pedagogues’ changing view of what it could mean to choose (for the children), they took it seriously and changed the practice, which can be connected to Nordin-Hultman’s (2004) claim that pedagogues’ conceptions of children and their capabilities impact on the physical environment in terms of furnishing, scheduling of time and partitioning of space (in many cases unconsciously). In this case, the pedagogues can be said to have

deconstructed the underlying and taken for granted ideas, assumptions and habits that their pedagogical thinking and acting was based upon. This view of the child as having the right to choose by having the right to position its own body anywhere in the rooms, consequently had a deep impact on the pedagogues' didactic organization of music activities, and seems to derive from a genuine interest and respect for the child's endeavours, thereby encouraging the pedagogues to evolve new understandings of what the act of choosing can mean and encompass for these children.

In Swedish preschools it is often the norm that children get to choose what to do at certain times. They are then usually offered, and expected, to choose between pre-determined activities. The standpoint is clear: children have the right to choose, but the alternatives are often chosen by the pedagogues, in order to direct the children towards what they think is good and developmental (Dolk, 2014). In contrast, children in this pedagogue's talk are seen as competent to combine different actions (from different subject areas) on their own, with the purpose of fitting their meaning-making or desire in the specific situation (cf. Holgersen, 2002) and they therefore have a legitimate right to be acknowledged in the making of their own choices. *Participation* is here seen as something more than choosing "something already existing" (Dolk, 2014: 180). The term *participation* should here be understood in the meaning of *inclusion* and not as the concept *participation* in interactional studies (see for example Duranti & Goodwin, 1992).

The right to choose is also addressed by Holmberg (2014), who shows that there is often a certain codetermination for preschool children concerning whether to participate in a music activity or not. However, once they have entered the activity, there are rather limited possibilities about what issues might influence the event. One interpretation of Holmberg's observations is that pedagogues then find that they have fulfilled the children's right to choose and the (adult-) prepared activity can move on. In the sequence above, the pedagogue expresses a somewhat different view of the act of choosing: the possibility to choose *simultaneity*, an idea that originates in the pedagogues' observations of the children's preference for doing more than one thing at the same time. The word 'choosing' thus comes to comprise an alternative meaning compared to connotations and applications existing in more traditional preschool practices. This alternative comprehension of the word 'choosing' is also developed in relation to the questioning of the categorization of accustomed preschool practices, for example the separation of actions in time and space because of their affiliation to certain educational subjects, such as music, visual arts, or construction. The pedagogues here give the children possibilities, not only to be integrated in already formulated models and perceptions of an already existing world, but to recognize the child as having the right to be included in the construction of this common world

(Biesta, 2010). This is an issue that is also highlighted in the section about *the child uninscribed in culture*.

From the legitimate codetermination of the child (in the pedagogues' acknowledgment of children's choosing simultaneity), music is, in this practice, included in and intertwined with other actions and activities. Since the child is seen as someone who should be asked, chosen music activities need to be improvisational and not coerced. In Wassrin (2013) it is further shown that the instruments were easily accessible, because they were placed in children's height. This circumstance is a phenomenon that substantiates or validates the present image of a child with rights that is constructed also in the material environment.

In the section above, the rights of the child imply great opportunities of choosing. However, to make this bodily choosing work in preschool practice, the child needs to be fostered, and has to learn certain rules:

P: But, introducing the instruments is really important. You cannot simply give a ukulele to a little child and believe that it shall relate to that as an instrument in the first place. It requires a lot [...]. Nowadays the ukuleles are breaking and they turn on the tuning [pegs]... and that is because we are not tough enough.

It is here associated with hard work and persistence to ensure that the children through the process of learning know how to handle the instruments with care. Still, to avoid the instruments being damaged, the children need to understand them as fragile artefacts and not as robust toys. But this work also has another purpose: to make the music environment work in the sense that it enables the children to act independently when using the material. The rules are thereby constructed as preconditions for *the child with rights* to have a music environment in which it can position itself as musical subject without constant approval by adults.

One overarching interpretative repertoire

Drawing on the pedagogues' talk, I have presented five discourses of the child, which all entail corresponding conceptions of music, respectively—functions and ontologies in relation to the specific discourse of the child (see diagram 1 below, which is an illustration of what I describe throughout this concluding body of text).

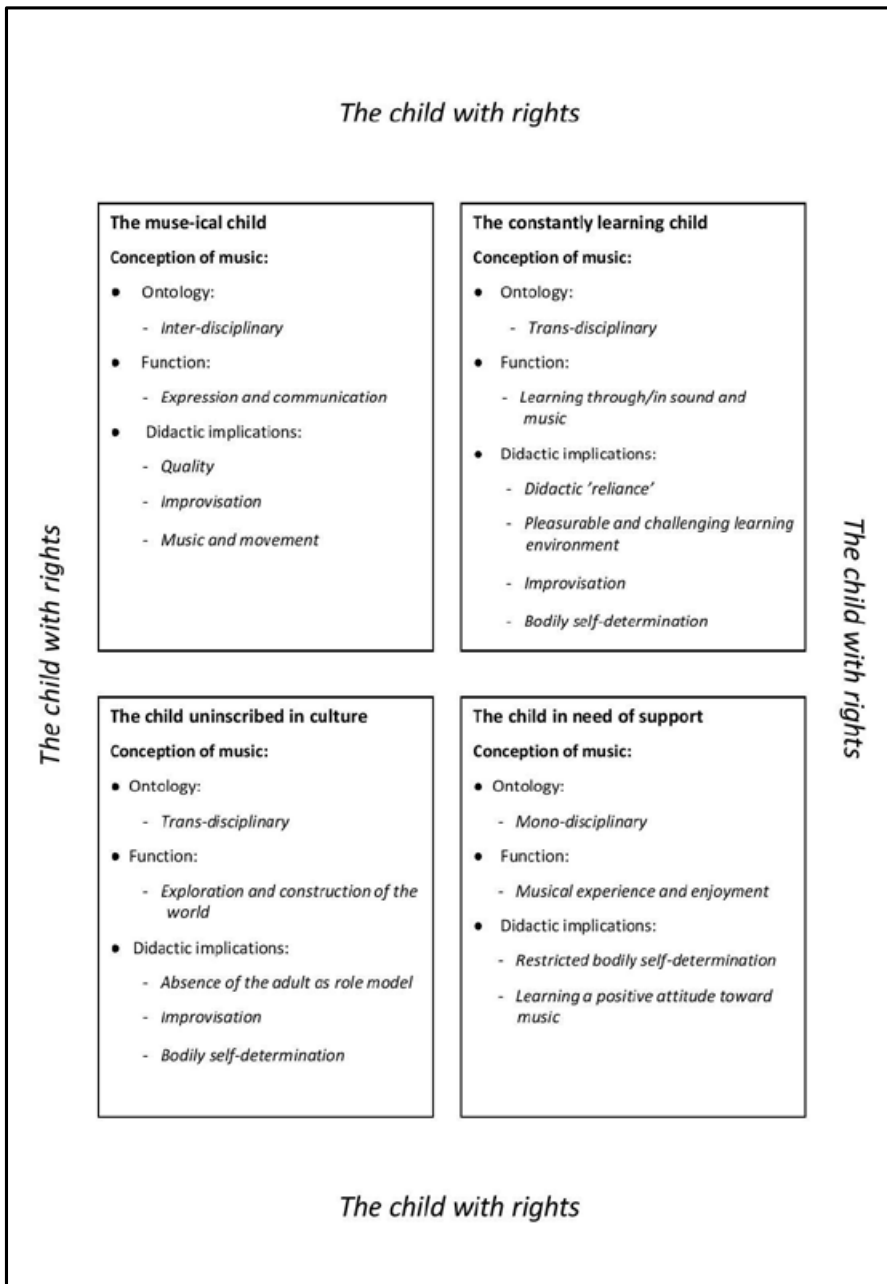


Diagram 1. Four interpretative repertoires of the child and their corresponding conceptions of music. All four categories enclosed by *The child with rights*.

One of the interpretative repertoires that the pedagogues draw on can largely be seen to encompass the other four—*the child with rights*, which entails improvisational ways of making music, since the child should be allowed to have impact on events, and must not be totally ruled by the pedagogue. As has already been mentioned, Holmberg's (2014) historical overview shows how the legitimization of music in preschool has changed from a discourse of morality towards a discourse of rights, a claim that is interesting in the light of the result in current study. In this discourse, the relation between the child and the adult is at the core, since the rights of the child often involve the sharing of command between adult the child, for instance when it comes to choosing means of expression in the moment. This consequently entails the pedagogue's voluntary loss of control over the didactic outcome, which, in extension, brings about a conception of music with open boundaries towards other aesthetic languages, not only in form of collaborations between demarcated teaching subjects, but for possible mixing and blending of the languages.

Furthermore, the child's rights can be seen to have various connotations in the different repertoires of the child. While opportunities to make music to communicate and express oneself in a musical environment of good quality may be the rights of *the muse-ical child*, the rights of *the child unscripted in culture* concern being a legitimate contributor to new knowledge about the world in relation to adults' often monopolistic and privileged epistemic positions, and thus to construct its own meanings through categorizing the world differently, for instance, without a fixed and ready concept of music. *The constantly learning child* on the other hand has the right to decide on the object for its own learning (in and through music) and to do this in a pleasurable and challenging music environment, while *the child in need of support* has the right to be supported through structures and frames just enough for its capacity; one teaching subject at a time, in more controlled forms.

These different interpretations of the rights of the child in music making are shown to be quite compatible, and they easily exist in parallel and do not usually end up on a collision course, or as dilemmas, in the talk of the pedagogues. The pedagogues are not quick to exercise (bodily) discipline, and the children are allowed and encouraged to take initiatives. Despite this study not being explicitly comparative, it seems that, contrary to the results of previous research on standard music activities in preschool (exemplified at the beginning of this paper), the pedagogues in this music practice express great confidence in the children, and therefore yield and entrust much of their command as adult leaders to them. All conceptions largely converge in the approval of the child as bodily active in its participation in events, and, regardless of whether the function is seen as *expression, exploration, communication, or learning*, the child has the right to decide over its own body. One exception to this is *the child in need of*

support, who occasionally needs to be assisted towards concentration, by having its body disciplined, which slightly restricts bodily expression and delimits the subject of music from other actions and languages. Still, improvisational music-making can be performed, but with less bodily freedom. Further, like the *child in need of support*, the *muse-ical child* does not require to be physically in charge about what to do and where to be in the rooms, because it can have its needs (and rights) for expression through the musical language fulfilled without it. The *muse-ical child* is not in urgent need of being participatory and autonomous to the same extent as for example the *child unscripted in culture*, as long as it has the expression of music within reach; it may be directed in music activities as long as they are joyful and emotionally worthwhile. Thus, in some of the repertoires, children seem to have a more powerful right to their own body. To be able to position themselves as autonomously driven *constantly learning children* or as *children unscripted in culture*, one precondition is to have the right to bodily freedom.

Music as a trans-disciplinary subject with different origins

What emerges in the material is an exceedingly trans-disciplinary conception of music that is open towards other languages or modalities, wherein the *ontological* traits in the different discourses of the child pull in a mutual direction. It appears like the pedagogues are not confined to established concepts of music that foreclose new understandings of what music can be in this particular preschool. Their didactic approach entails a permissive attitude in which bodily expressions are allowed and encouraged to enable the incorporation of elements from diverse languages. For example, to become a more complete human being, the holistic *muse-ical child* needs to have multiple ways of expression at its disposal, although these are inter-disciplinary rather than trans-disciplinary (Nielsen, 2010), though in practice the difference might be small. The *function* of music related to the different conceptions of the child is thus dissimilar, and the origins and reasons for this trans-disciplinary approach diverge. However, the *child in need of support* is an exception to this trans-disciplinary approach, since this conception of the child instead may lead to a restriction of bodily mobility in the spatial environment, and is therefore directed towards a more demarcated music ontology than the other repertoires.

Conclusion

The music activities discussed in the interview with the pedagogues concern very young human beings, positioned by society as children in preschool. I reconnect to the beginning of this article with a reminder from Alanen (2001: 21), who states that it is of utmost importance to secure children's agency, defined as opportunities "to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds" and that one way to do this through research is to explore possibilities and limitations of action related to the social and institutional structures and orders operating wherein those positioned as children live their daily lives. In this study I have shown that different conceptions of the child interrelate with certain ontological and functional conceptions of music, which could give diverse opportunities for children's (bodily) agency. This also demonstrates that music practices in preschool are not neutral, natural or essential phenomena, but are highly dependent on culturally and socially developed assumptions about the child, music, and knowledge (among other things). This points to the importance of studying music practices as intertwined cultural processes, and not separated from other systems of meaning making (Dyndahl & Ellefsen, 2009). Consequences from this should also be drawn with how the subject of music is presented in teacher education and in-service training, wherein both mono-disciplinary *and* trans-disciplinary perspectives could be adapted. Implications first and foremost concern the role of the pedagogue; because when the pedagogue diminishes her/his exercise of control by allowing the child to decide over its own body, the role of the pedagogue may change towards other functions than as a central figure at circle time. I would emphasize the need for pedagogues to become attentive to how certain conceptions of the child form the practice of limiting, or increasing, children's participatory opportunities in their daily life, such as music activities in preschool. A view of the young child as, for example, epistemologically more equal to the adult (Murriss, 2013), in extension requires improvisational and trans-disciplinary conceptions of music.

However, the ways in which pedagogues and children make music together in preschools are complex networks consisting of a multitude of discourses, interrelating and impacting on each other and thus, research about other parts in this network is needed. The reciprocal influences between conceptions of the child, conceptions of music and didactic practice, open up a range of new questions for educators and researchers to take into consideration. Could music in preschool be something else? Could *the child* be (re)considered to be someone else? How does this influence the conceptions of *preschool* and *pedagogue*? These are vital questions for music education,

as well as for Early Childhood Education, which need to be treated thoroughly by pedagogues as well as teacher education.

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