



Research Article

An integrated approach to instructional and management techniques in undergraduate music teacher education: A theoretical framework proposal

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Abstract

Undergraduate music teacher education programs often teach instructional methods and classroom and ensemble management in separate courses. However, during practicum and after graduation, pre-service teachers are required to carry out these two tasks simultaneously in the classroom. Drawing on the author's master's research on the integrated use of storytelling, songs, games, and instrument design in preschool music education, this article proposes a theoretical framework applicable at the university level. The central argument of the framework is that, in music lessons, narrative, song, movement, and production are not alternative activities but mutually reinforcing phases of the same learning process, while management is the condition that enables these phases to function coherently without disruption. The article examines Uçan's definition of music education, the developmental approaches of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, and the pedagogical approaches of Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze in relation to this argument. Instructional techniques (singing, rhythm, instrumental activities, listening, and improvisation) are considered within the same continuum as classroom and rehearsal management. Preschool education is not treated as the sole field of application of the framework, but rather as one of the first educational levels encountered by pre-service music teachers. The study is theoretical in nature; it proposes empirical testing and makes no claim of providing empirical evidence.

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Introduction

Throughout their undergraduate education, music teacher candidates assume several identities simultaneously. They are still learners in developing their own instrumental and vocal skills; they are teachers in their practicum classrooms; and in choir or chamber music settings, they sometimes lead and at other times are led. Teacher education programs often divide these identities across separate courses. Orff and Kodály may be taught in one course, lesson planning in another, while choir management is left to teaching practicum or ensemble activities. Yet the work encountered by the teacher candidate is not fragmented. Within the same lesson, the candidate teaches a melody, keeps the group engaged, manages time, and directs students' attention toward the next task.

Uçan (1994) defines music education as a process of purposefully and systematically developing musical behaviors in individuals through their own experiences. Three components of this definition are particularly relevant to the present article. "Own experience" indicates that music is learned through doing rather than merely through explanation. "Purposefulness" reminds us that singing songs at random does not in itself constitute education. "Systematicity" brings

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technique, sequencing, and management into the educational process. The focus of this article is the classroom manifestation of this third component.

In the literature, song teaching, instrumental instruction, play, listening, and creativity are often examined under separate headings (Akıncı, 2018; Eskioğlu, 2003; Sedef & Canan, 2013; Türkmen, 2020). Such differentiation is understandable from an academic perspective. In practice, however, teachers may lack a framework that explains according to which principles the tools at their disposal should be connected. Studies on preschool and general music education in Türkiye have likewise tended to address these components separately (Akçaylı, 2018; Kivılcım, 2015; Taşlık, 2019). Turkish-language sources that integrate instructional techniques with classroom and rehearsal management within a single framework remain limited. Method books teach techniques, whereas management is often left to the contingencies of teaching practicum.

This article seeks to address this gap at the theoretical level. Its central argument is that storytelling, singing, play, instrumental activities, listening, and improvisation in music lessons need not be alternative types of activities; rather, they can function as mutually reinforcing phases of the same learning process. In the preschool classroom, this proposition takes concrete form in the SSPI model (Story–Song–Play–Instrument). For undergraduate music teacher candidates, it develops into a more general principle of lesson design: first establish the context, then encode it in memory, subsequently transfer it to bodily and group experience, and finally move toward production and creation.

Management constitutes the second component of this argument. A music lesson creates a sound environment different from that of a primarily verbal classroom, while rehearsal requires an organization of time and attention distinct from individual learning. Accordingly, instructional design and management cannot be treated as entirely separate dimensions of music teaching.

This article is theoretical in nature. It does not present a new repertoire, a collection of musical scores, or experimental findings. Its purpose is to provide a framework through which pre-service music teachers can justify the techniques they employ, construct lessons as coherent wholes, and manage groups without allowing the learning process to become fragmented. Preschool examples are retained because preschool education represents one of the first fields of practice that music teacher candidates may encounter. At the same time, the framework is formulated so that it can also be applied to primary and secondary education, general music classes, choirs, and instrumental ensembles.

Dimensions of Music Education and Shifts in Scale

Music education is generally considered within three dimensions. General music education is intended for everyone and aims to develop musical sensitivity. Amateur music education is directed toward individuals who engage with music at an amateur level. Professional music education is provided to those who choose music as a profession (Uçan, 1994). Undergraduate music teacher candidates experience these three dimensions simultaneously. They themselves receive professional music education, while during teaching practicum they most often provide general music education. If this shift in scale is overlooked, instructional techniques may fail in the classroom. Professional music education involves extended rehearsals, refined technical work, and high performance expectations. In general music education, time is limited, groups are heterogeneous, access to instruments is uneven, and music may not be the students' primary area of study. The same rhythmic pattern may be practiced with a metronome in a professional studio but through stepping and rhythmic speech in a general music classroom. The problem lies not in the pattern itself, but in failing to recognize the change in scale.

Ürfioğlu's (1989) formulation remains relevant to preschool and primary education: music education also serves to reduce developmental differences arising from variations in social environments and to prepare children for basic education by supporting creativity, personality development, and first-language development. In a poorly equipped school, the absence of instruments changes not only the instructional technique but also decisions concerning management and materials. For this reason, instrument design and the use of recycled materials are not merely creative activities; they can also serve as means of compensating for disparities in available resources (Sedef & Canan, 2013).

Developmental Theories

In Piaget's (1962) preoperational stage, symbolic function becomes prominent: a child can use one object to represent another. The principle of providing concrete representations is relevant not only to preschool practicum. Concepts such as high-low, fast-slow, and long-short remain merely verbal definitions unless they are connected to bodily and material experiences. Vygotsky (1978) locates learning within the zone of proximal development, the space between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance. In music education, this becomes visible when, rather than simply instructing a student to "sing the correct note," the teacher adjusts the next achievable step: rhythm before melody; one part before two parts. Vygotsky (2004) also argues that imagination is nourished by experience. As the range of experience narrows, so does the basis for creativity; repertoire selection is therefore not merely an ornamental component of instruction.

Bruner (1990) conceptualizes narrative thinking as a way of organizing the world through plot, character, and intention. When a musical concept is situated within a narrative, it ceases to be decontextualized information. Bruner's (1966) spiral curriculum is also useful for planning: a concept is introduced early in a simplified form and revisited at progressively more advanced levels in subsequent years. The assumption that "it has been taught once, so it is finished" is incompatible with this understanding. Gardner (1983) does not conceptualize intelligence as a single dimension. Narrative, song, play, and instrument design engage different domains; a lesson restricted to a single technique may therefore exclude some learners.

Swanwick and Tillman (1986) model musical development as a spiral involving materials, expression, form, and value. Preschool education largely corresponds to the materials stage; expression and simple forms become more prominent in primary school, while form and value gain greater importance in secondary education. Gordon's (2003) concept of audiation places the ability to hear music internally, even when it is not physically sounding, at the center of musical development and requires exposure to a variety of patterns. Conducting an entire school year with the same three songs may appear to make classroom management easier, but it restricts the diversity of musical input and may slow the development of musical hearing.

Instructional Approaches

Although twentieth-century approaches to music education emerged in different countries, they converge on several common principles: experiencing music before naming it, integrating sound with bodily movement, and taking spoken language and local culture as points of departure. These principles are not confined to preschool education. Even in a general music class at the secondary-school level, conceptual terminology can follow musical experience rather than precede it. What changes is the material and the amount of instructional time available.

In Orff pedagogy, elemental music is based on an understanding in which speech, sound, and movement are inseparable (Orff & Keetman, 1950–1954). Speech provides rhythmic material, improvisation occupies a central position, and the instrumental ensemble enables learners to produce sound from their first attempts. From a management perspective, however, an Orff-based lesson also generates materials, movement, and noise. Improvisation can easily become disorganized unless routines for taking, using, and returning instruments are established. In the Kodály approach, education begins with the voice, and folk melodies provide core instructional material (Choksy, 1999). Distinction between imitation songs and Turkish school songs reminds us that repertoire selection is both a pedagogical and a cultural matter. In Dalcroze pedagogy, rhythm is learned through muscular and bodily experience (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921). Stop-and-go activities develop auditory attention but are difficult to implement in classrooms where desks remain fixed and movement is restricted. Suzuki emphasizes listening and imitation, whereas Gordon emphasizes diversity of musical patterns. None of these approaches, by itself, provides a complete solution to classroom management.

Their application in Türkiye therefore requires adaptation rather than direct transfer. Orff's use of speech rhythm was developed in relation to the syllabic characteristics of German; the agglutinative structure of Turkish generates different rhythmic patterns. The Hungarian sequence associated with Kodály should likewise be reconstructed in this context through Turkish folk music and Turkish school songs. Orff instruments are unavailable in many schools; instruments made from recycled materials can transform this limitation into an educational opportunity. The expression "creating a

musical story” in the Ministry of National Education Preschool Education Program (MEB, 2013) provides one curricular basis for such an integrated design.

Instructional Techniques

A method determines the general direction of the learning process; a technique is the concrete classroom action through which that direction is implemented. Kodály represents an approach, whereas representing pitches through hand signs is a technique. A common difficulty among pre-service teachers is memorizing the names of approaches without developing the techniques through which they can be implemented. The opposite problem also occurs: accumulating techniques while losing sight of the learning outcome to which each technique is connected.

Song and Rhythm

The literature consistently emphasizes several criteria for song selection: lyrics should be simple, the vocal range should be appropriate for the learners, the melody should contain recurring elements, and the correspondence between words and music (prosody) should be maintained (Türkmen, 2020; Akıncı, 2018). An integrated design adds another condition: the song should be consistent with the context of the lesson. If a concept introduced in the story has no correspondence in the song lyrics, the song becomes an independent activity rather than a continuation of the same learning process.

A common instructional sequence involves listening, learning the words through speech rhythm, imitation in short phrases, combining the phrases into a whole, adding accompaniment, and finally singing independently. Playing an entire song once and then saying “now, let’s sing it together” is particularly ineffective with groups that have limited musical experience. Mayer’s (2009) account of dual coding helps explain the combined retention of melody and words; a song with poor prosody, however, may encode confusion rather than support memory.

Rhythm instruction begins not with abstract terminology related to meter, but with a physically experienced pulse. Rhymes provide readily available rhythmic material. Speech rhythm, body percussion, echo patterns, ostinati, and stop-and-go activities are useful techniques. Rhythm exercises can quickly turn into competitions in which the student who plays most loudly is perceived as performing “better.” The teacher’s first task is therefore to establish the distinction between loudness and maintaining a steady pulse.

Instruments, Listening, Improvisation, and Narrative

In the school classroom, the definition of an instrument can be broad. Any object capable of producing sound can be used as an instrument, even if it was not intentionally designed as one (Sedef & Canan, 2013). Dewey (1938) and Papert (1980) provide a theoretical basis for the role of action and tangible products in learning. The criteria, however, should be clear: an instrument should be capable of producing at least two different sounds, should be playable by hand, and should not become merely a decorative object. When conventional instruments are used, posture, short patterns, and melody should not be demanded simultaneously at the outset. The distribution of instruments is one of the most management-sensitive moments of a music lesson.

Listening is often neglected because, from the outside, it may appear that “nothing is being done.” Yet listening is a prerequisite for both audiation and rehearsal discipline. Without a specific task, listening becomes mere waiting. Improvisation does not mean “do whatever you want”; it means making choices within a limited set of musical materials. Asking students with little or no musical repertoire to improvise is comparable to asking them to speak without having anything from which to draw (Vygotsky, 2004). Storytelling, meanwhile, is not merely an embellishment confined to preschool education but an instructional tool for establishing context (Batur, 2020). Teachers recognize the value of stories but lack the resources and competence needed to use them systematically. One task of undergraduate teacher education is to develop this competence. A story in primary school, a brief program note in secondary school, or the story behind a choral piece can serve the same function: placing a musical concept within a meaningful context.

Classroom and Ensemble Management

Classroom management is the establishment of the conditions necessary for learning to occur. In music education, this order differs from that of a silent classroom organized around fixed seating. The lesson itself produces sound. It involves

movement. Instruments and materials change hands and locations. A rule such as “everyone in their place and no talking” may be useful during one part of a lesson; if extended to the entire lesson, however, the music itself comes to a halt. Major risks include confusing noise with learning, losing control during the circulation of materials, safety concerns during movement, uncertainty about who enters and when, and the teacher losing an effective instructional voice while simultaneously using the voice as a musical model. Management does not eliminate these risks; it keeps them within the boundaries of the learning process.

A well-managed music lesson can often be recognized by its routines before its content. If entry, taking and returning instruments, listening posture, the signal for silence, and dismissal follow a consistent pattern each week, students know what to expect. Routine does not mean monotony; it reduces the need to make the same procedural decisions repeatedly. Transitions are among the moments when music lessons are most likely to lose coherence. A brief closure, a signal for silence, and one clear instruction for the next task are more effective than a lengthy explanation. The teacher’s hands, breathing, and eye contact should precede verbal instruction whenever possible. A teacher who speaks continuously can overwhelm students’ listening with the teacher’s own voice.

Rehearsal is a specialized form of instruction. Its purpose is to bring a musical work toward a shared ensemble sound. Rehearsal time can be divided into warm-up, work on difficult passages, integration of parts, musical decision-making, and closure. A rehearsal that consists only of repeatedly performing a piece from beginning to end reinforces errors rather than resolving them. In choral management, gesture, breathing, and eye contact function as instructions; a choir managed primarily through verbal explanation becomes little more than a classroom that happens to sing. A difficult part within a weaker ensemble also becomes a management issue because, when students lose their place, they may begin playing their instruments without musical direction. Attempting to fit four separate components into a single forty-minute lesson is difficult. Addressing one concept through several representations is more effective than superficially covering four different concepts (Sweller, 1988).

Some undesirable behavior is not misbehavior but a response to uncertainty. When students do not know what they are expected to do, they begin to handle or experiment with their instruments. Clear tasks, concise instructions, and visible cues should therefore precede punitive language. The teacher’s voice serves simultaneously as a musical model and a management tool. Speaking loudly at all times narrows the group’s dynamic range and encourages students to respond at a similarly elevated volume. Başer (2004) emphasize the relationship between music, satisfaction, and self-confidence. Management should therefore be structured enough to preserve the conditions for learning and musical satisfaction, yet flexible enough not to suppress creativity. This balance cannot be prescribed once and for all; it must be re-established with each group.

Integrated Lesson Design: The SSPI Framework

Storytelling, song, play, and instrument design are not four separate methods that can simply substitute for one another; rather, they represent four successive and mutually reinforcing phases of the same learning process. This framework is referred to here as the Story–Song–Play–Instrument (SSPI) Framework. The proposition has two dimensions. Sequence: organizing the components in a deliberate sequence is expected to be more effective than arranging them randomly. Integration: when the four components are used together, their combined effect is expected to be greater than the sum of their effects when used separately. This second proposition has not yet been sufficiently tested empirically; the present article provides a theoretical rationale for it.

Table 1. Functional Differentiation of the SSPI Components

Component	Function in Learning	Predominant Domain	Guiding Question
Story / context	Establishes meaning and context	Cognitive, linguistic	What is happening?
Song	Encodes meaning in memory	Linguistic, affective	How is it sung?
Play / movement	Transfers meaning to the body and group	Psychomotor, social	How is it experienced?
Instrument / production	Transforms meaning into a tangible product	Psychomotor, cognitive	How is it produced?

In a lesson based solely on verbal explanation, students may construct meaning but do not experience it bodily. In a lesson based solely on play, bodily experience is present, but the contextual framework may be missing. The same gap

appears in a different form at the university level: a methods course taught only through slides may not transfer effectively to teaching practicum, while a practicum lesson consisting solely of having students sing songs may remain pedagogically unjustified.

The rationale for sequencing is grounded in cognitive load (Sweller, 1988), degrees of concreteness, and motivation. When context is established first, the subsequent melody, movement, and object can be processed not as unrelated new elements but as parts of an existing schema. Narrative operates initially at the level of mental representation; song gives it an auditory form; play embodies it; and the instrument makes it materially tangible. Bruner's modes of representation provide support for this sequence from another direction: learners develop understanding by translating symbolic representations into action. Narrative stimulates curiosity; song encourages participation; play provides an outlet for energy; and production fosters a sense of ownership (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Custodero, 2005). The sequence is flexible. A lesson may return from play to narrative, for example. What matters is that the semantic connection among the components is maintained.

Table 2. Flow of an Integrated Lesson

Stage	Content	Primary Function	Teacher's Role
Preparation	Attention, prior knowledge, environment	Management	Organizer
Presentation 1	Context (narrative, listening, example)	Instruction	Model
Presentation 2	Song / rhythm / basic pattern	Instruction	Model and accompanist
Practice 1	Movement, play, rehearsal	Instruction + management	Facilitator
Practice 2	Instrument, improvisation, production	Instruction	Questioning guide
Assessment	Presentation, feedback, observation	Management	Observer

The teacher's role shifts across these stages: more prominent during narrative and progressively less directive during production. Management ensures that this shift in responsibility does not lead to the disorganization of the group. When learning outcomes are formulated, an outcome addressing the integration of the lesson as a whole is needed in addition to outcomes associated with individual techniques. "Performs the melody at the correct tempo" and "establishes the relationship among song, movement, and instrumental performance" do not represent the same achievement. If the second type of outcome is absent, the lesson risks becoming merely a succession of disconnected activities.

Observation and performance constitute the core of assessment, particularly with younger learners. Integration and participation in management routines—such as responding to the signal for silence and following transition instructions—should be treated as separate assessment criteria.

In undergraduate music teacher education, the SSPI Framework should be addressed not simply as a preschool activity model but as an exercise in lesson design. The pre-service teacher selects a learning outcome, establishes its context, connects it to a song or rhythm technique, plans a movement or rehearsal phase, and defines a production or assessment outcome. The same template can be adapted to a choir rehearsal: the background or narrative of the work, focused work on a difficult phrase, stage positioning and movement, and small-group rehearsal can be organized within the same integrated structure.

Limitations

The framework requires considerable preparation. Establishing semantic coherence across all four components demands more time than implementing ready-made activities. Time constraints also constitute a practical limitation. Moreover, one component may become disproportionately dominant: play may turn into mere entertainment, while instrument design may be reduced to a craft activity. Empirical validation of the framework is therefore still required.

Four gaps are evident in the Turkish literature. Integration: few studies have systematically examined the combined effects of storytelling, song, play, and instruments. Resources: there is no established archive of stories and songs systematically aligned with specific learning outcomes (Arıcı & Bayındır, 2015). Teacher competence: preschool teachers may have insufficient musical preparation, while music teachers may lack adequate preparation in early childhood education (Şen, 2016). Assessment: there is no validated standardized observation instrument designed to

assess an integrated sequence encompassing these components. At the university level, a fifth gap concerns the limited availability of Turkish-language textbooks that address instruction and management within the same framework.

Five directions for future research can be proposed. Experimental testing: the effectiveness of programs based on an integrated sequence could be examined through pretest–posttest control-group designs. The same content could be implemented as separate activities in the control group, allowing the specific contribution of integration to be examined. Longitudinal investigation: the transfer of language and auditory skills could be monitored across the transition from preschool to primary education. Assessment instrument development: priority should be given to developing an observation scale encompassing three developmental domains, integration, and participation in management routines. Cultural diversification: the musical counterparts and possibilities of the Turkish storytelling tradition could be systematically examined. Teacher education: action research could investigate how storytelling, simple melodic adaptation, and rehearsal management can be incorporated into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

Conclusion

Instructional techniques and classroom and ensemble management are two interconnected dimensions of the same educational task in undergraduate music teacher education. The methodological dimension in Uçan's definition becomes visible in the classroom through both instructional technique and management. Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze strengthen different components of the proposed framework, but none alone is sufficient to provide either integrated lesson design or effective management. Instructional techniques may be learned separately, but they must be connected in practice.

In preschool education, this sequence takes the form of the **Story–Song–Play–Instrument (SSPI) Framework**; in choir and general music education, the same principle is reconstructed through different materials and practices. Management is not an accessory to instruction but a condition for its effective implementation. Planning therefore requires learning outcomes both at the level of individual components and at the level of the integrated whole. Assessment is primarily based on observation and performance.

The framework is not presented as a finalized model but as a theoretical proposal awaiting empirical examination. Its validity will depend on its implementation and systematic testing across different educational levels and contexts. Incorporating storytelling, simple melodic adaptation, and rehearsal management into undergraduate music teacher education programs, together with developing learning-outcome-aligned repertoire resources and observation instruments, represents a concrete requirement if the framework is to move beyond theoretical formulation and become applicable in educational practice.

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