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Editorial: A Framework for Positive Music Education

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Introduction

Communities worldwide are facing a range of adverse circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, inequality, oppression, violence, discrimination and global unrest. Consequently, there is an increasing need for people to develop their capacity to deal with challenges, be resilient and persevere if we are to flourish. Positive psychology and the therapeutic qualities of music education hold the potential to provide unique opportunities to promote solidarity by recognizing differences and strengths within various educational contexts, thereby strengthening communities.

Positive psychology and music education are both well-established fields. However, the intersection and dialogue between positive psychology and music education are underdeveloped (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022). In this special edition, the authors explore the interconnectedness between these two disciplines. In this editorial, we propose a framework, generated from the articles for this special edition, for advancing positive music education (PME).

The notion of ‘positive education’ was first proposed by Seligman and his associates in 2009. They argue that “more well-being is synergistic with better learning” (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 294). To account for this higher level of synergy, Seligman et al. (2009) divide positive psychology into three areas: positive emotions, engagement, and meaning. They explain that positive emotions promote creative and holistic learning, and—given that positive psychology combats depression—it should be taught in schools. Eloff (2013) clarifies that there is a natural connection between the ideas in positive psychology and the fundamental educational principle of emphasizing strengths and capabilities. She argues that positive approaches can, therefore, potentially assist learners in addressing severe challenges in education.

Positive music education has been advanced as a new interdisciplinary approach (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022). Although there have not been many studies in the field of positive music education, the approach has been explored in Finnish comprehensive schools. Olander and Saarikallio (2022) built a model of positive music education and grit. They explain that “received love, trust, hope, and shared love” (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022, p. 103) promote well-being and flourishing. Positive instruction has also been explored in the context of music studios. Patston and Waters (2015) offer “the Positive Instruction in Music Studios” (PIMS) model that guides teachers through four key positive psychology processes that can be used in a music lesson: positive priming, strengths spotting, positive pause, and process praise” (p. 1). Although some positive psychology constructs such as gratitude (Bernabé-Valero et al., 2019), humility (Coppola, 2022), and spirituality (Boyce-Tillman, 2007; Van der Merwe & Habron, 2015) have been explored in music education, there is still surprisingly little dialogue between music education and positive psychology (Olander & Saarikallio, 2022).

Even though there has been a lot of support for positive psychology, there has also recently been serious criticism of the field. In a systematic literature review, Van Zyl et al. (2023) state that scholarly work in the field of positive psychology lacked thorough conceptual analysis, proper research methodologies, sufficient evidence for its claims, and originality. Furthermore, they hold that positive psychology has adopted a neo-liberal ideology and is basically a capitalistic venture. However, we argue that this criticism is mainly relevant to the first wave of positive psychology that emerged between 1998/2000 – 2010 (Wissing, 2022). We avoid the pitfalls indicated in the criticisms mentioned above, since the articles in this

special edition manifest the characteristic features of the third wave in positive psychology (Wissing, 2022), namely, they are multidisciplinary (Kruger et al., 2024), focus on various international contexts (Khoo et al., 2023), define aspects related to positive education that go beyond the individual (Silverman, 2023), expand methodologies (Cupido & Olivier, 2024), and use rigorous qualitative approaches (Jerling, 2023).

Although the authors and we have made every attempt to avoid the pitfalls of the first wave of positive psychology, one might still ask why music education would benefit from the application of positive psychology. The authors in this special edition argue that positive psychology approaches in music education contexts facilitate ways of dealing with a number of challenges: academic workload, competitive music environments (Bernhard II, 2023), conflicts and miscommunication (Cupido & Olivier, 2024), the aftermath of COVID-19 (Jerling, 2023), developing teaching identities and adjusting to changes (Bernhard II, 2023), stress and mental health challenges (Bernhard II, 2023), unhealthy work relationships (Cupido & Olivier, 2024), the vulnerability of students (Habron-James, 2024), and work stress (Cupido & Olivier, 2024).

This special edition is written for music educators working in diverse contexts and cultures. Participants and audiences in the various studies include music lecturers (Wentink, 2024), Foundation Phase (K-3) music teachers (Kruger et al., 2024), studio piano teachers (Khoo et al., 2023), performing musicians (Oosthuizen, 2024), singer-teachers (Cupido & Olivier, 2024), self-employed music teachers (Jerling, 2023), Dalcroze students and teachers (Habron-James, 2024), and music education majors (Bernhard II, 2023). Understanding how to create positive music education practices might enable music educators to promote not only meaningful learning but also flourishing.

With that in mind, the purpose of this integrative review is to provide a framework that explains the processes at work in positive music education, as described in this special edition. The research question that guided our inquiry is: What are the antecedents, attributes and outcomes of positive music education, as described in this special edition on *Positive Psychology and Music Education*?

For this editorial, we undertook an integrative literature review. “The integrative literature review is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesises representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated” (Torraco, 2005, p. 356). We included all nine special edition articles in one heuristic unit in ATLAS.ti 23. Both guest editors analyzed all nine articles thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and compared and interrogated their respective copy bundles to collaboratively generate a framework for positive music education. To arrive at a framework,

we analyzed the antecedents necessary for PME to occur, the attributes of PME, and the outcomes of PME practices. We also include the elements that inhibit PME.

A Framework for PME

Data analysis for this integrative literature review revealed a framework for PME defined by specific attributes describing the nature and outcomes of PME, as well as the eight antecedents necessary for creating music education environments that foster PME.

The Attributes of Positive Music Education

Several attributes define PME. It is strengths-based (Habron-James, 2024; Jerling, 2023; Khoo et al., 2023; Oosthuizen, 2024) and inclusive by nature and relates to learners' lifeworlds by integrating their social and spiritual experiences, values, virtues and strengths within a safe and welcoming environment (Khoo et al., 2023; Kruger et al., 2024; Oosthuizen, 2024). PME further requires that music education be holistic. Therefore, PME promotes whole-person (Haron-James, 2024) and holistic musical development (Wentink, 2024). It is important to acknowledge that PME is also defined by musicking experiences that are active, creative and aesthetic, since meaningful experiences should be interesting and allow opportunities for individual expression (Wentink, 2024). Other important attributes of PME are that it is motivating because of its active, engaging and interesting nature (Habron-James, 2024; Wentink, 2024); it is enjoyable (Wentink, 2024) and fosters a sense of accomplishment (Habron-James, 2024). The data analysis revealed that PME is meaningful and transformative as it is relationship-rich (Habron-James, 2024; Silverman, 2023; Wentink, 2024), provides opportunities to share and experience individual and collective happiness, as well as meaningful musicking experiences that ultimately promote well-being and individual and collective flourishing (Cupido & Olivier, 2024; Habron-James, 2024; Silverman, 2023).

The Outcomes of Positive Music Education Practices

The ultimate outcome of PME is that it promotes flourishing because of its nature (attributes) and through the antecedents contributing to PME (Figure 1). The nature of the musicking activities associated with PME can positively influence physical health (Jerling, 2023), since PME is characterized by safe, welcoming spaces where teachers and learners actively engage in musicking activities, foster positive relationships and experience positive emotions (Figure 1). Since PME is relationship-rich, it also promotes social and communal well-being, which is supported by collective fulfilment (Silverman, 2023), common humanity (Oosthuizen, 2024) and connected selves (Kruger et al., 2024), a sense of belonging (Habron-James, 2024), collective happiness (Silverman, 2023), and community and social cohesion (Habron-James, 2024).

On an individual level, PME fosters motivation for self-improvement (Oosthuizen, 2024), which in turn supports musical flourishing through musical learning (Wentink, 2024), breakthroughs in skillfulness, enhanced musicianship (Habron-James, 2024) and professional flourishing (Bernhard II, 2023). Finally, PME contributes to personal flourishing as it alleviates stress and anxiety (Oosthuizen, 2024), fosters musicking experiences where participants feel good (Habron-James, 2024) and can express themselves (Silverman, 2023), promotes coping and resilience (Jerling, 2023), contributes to personal growth and empowerment (Cupido & Olivier, 2024) and gives hope (Jerling, 2023; Silverman, 2023).

Antecedents for Positive Music Education

We decided to expand on the antecedents for PME that emerged from the special edition articles, since this will help music educators know which music-related events or incidents must occur or be in place for PME to occur and reach the intended outcomes (Walker & Avant, 2019). The concepts in this framework are interrelated (Figure 1).

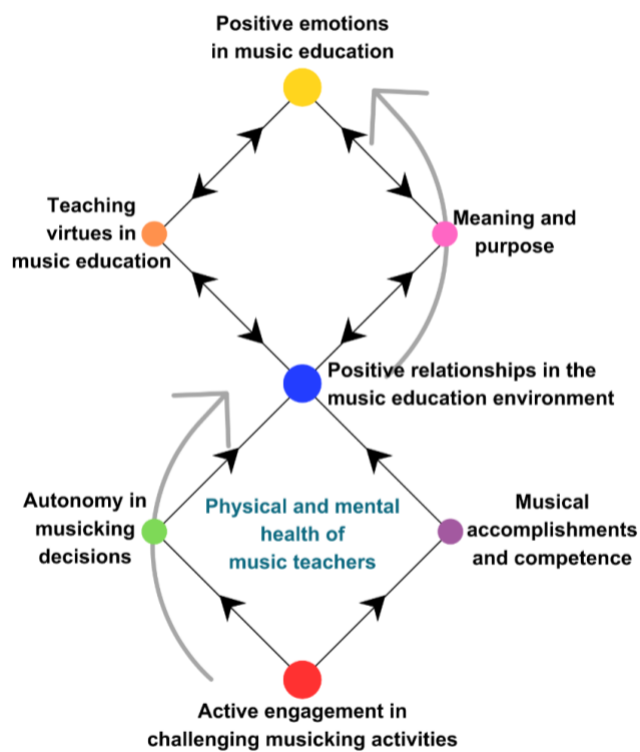


Figure 1. The antecedents for positive music education.

The eight antecedents for PME (Figure 1) that emerged during the data analysis revealed that **music teachers' physical and mental health** are integral to creating environments where PME can be fostered. **Active engagement in challenging, yet achievable, musicking activities** is a catalyst for PME since engagement in these types of musicking activities promotes the antecedents for the emergence of PME and will contribute to meaningful learning and flourishing. Furthermore, PME requires learners and teachers to experience and develop **autonomy in musicking-related decisions**, and **musical accomplishment and competence**. In addition to active engagement in challenging musicking activities as a catalyst for PME, fostering **positive relationships in the music education environment** is at the center of PME. Data analysis revealed that learners and teachers can build positive relationships through music education if they actively engage in challenging activities within safe spaces that promote autonomy, accomplishment and competence, ultimately creating opportunities for collaborative learning and meaningful connection. These positive relationships play an integral role in promoting well-being. Furthermore, PME is promoted when music education **promotes shared virtues** and aligns with teachers' and learners' **meaning and purpose** in life. Finally, the most important antecedent for PME, which is implicit in all the preceding antecedents, is **positive emotions**. This implies that the antecedents for PME do not emerge in a linear sequence, but are instead all intrinsically linked. Through fostering PME, these antecedents are continuously further enhanced to promote increased well-being and flourishing.

Physical and Mental Health of Music Teachers

Music teachers must be physically and mentally healthy (Bernhard II, 2023; Jerling, 2023). Healthy lifestyle habits including sound nutrition, enough sleep, enough physical movement and access to mental health counselling (Bernhard II, 2023), or therapy such as music and imagery sessions (Jerling, 2023) are prerequisites for effective PME. Cupido and Olivier (2024) explain that the physical and mental health of music teachers influence not only their own well-being but also the quality of their teaching. Active engagement in musicking activities, such as communal dance (Kruger et al., 2024), movement (Wentink, 2024) and Dalcroze (Habron-James, 2024), can contribute to the physical and mental health of music teachers and students.

Active Engagement in Challenging Musicking Activities

As mentioned above, the catalyst for PME is active engagement in challenging musicking activities (Bernhard II, 2023). It is essential, however, that the challenge does not exceed students' abilities, or else it can create anxiety. When ability and challenge meet, flow experiences occur (Habron-James, 2024), which can evoke intense pleasure and relaxed concentration (Cupido & Olivier, 2024). Therefore, for PME to take place, teachers must scaffold achievable goals (Khoo et al., 2023). These achievable active music activities, which

take place between self and others (Silverman, 2023), must be interesting (Wentink, 2024) and engage all the senses (Habron-James, 2024).

To ensure PME, music teachers need to create safe musicking spaces (Wentink, 2024) by encouraging learners to practice self-compassion during performances and rehearsals (Oosthuizen, 2024). During active engagement in music listening, participants should experience “a safe space to show and experience challenging emotions without feeling judged” (Jerling, 2023, p. 19). Safe music-making spaces are also created when students can choose which activities and musical styles they want to engage in during musicking (Wentink, 2024).

Autonomy in Musicking Decisions

Another antecedent for PME is student and teacher autonomy (Cupido & Olivier, 2024; Khoo et al., 2023; and Wentink, 2024). Therefore, students want to have a say in their repertoire choices (Bernhard II, 2023; Khoo et al., 2023; Silverman, 2023; Wentink, 2024). Furthermore, taking ownership of their own learning increases their well-being (Habron-James, 2024; Khoo et al., 2023; Silverman, 2023; Wentink, 2024). Similarly, teachers flourish in environments that support their autonomous behavior (Cupido & Olivier, 2024). Data analysis revealed that students and teachers are more likely to engage in musical activities aligned with their interests. The more they engage, the greater the opportunity to develop their competencies. Therefore, satisfying the need for autonomy in music-making decisions supports the development of musical and pedagogical competence.

Musical Accomplishments and Competence

Musical competence engenders a sense of self-confidence in musical abilities (Wentink, 2024). According to Habron-James (2024), experiences of accomplishment in Dalcroze activities can lead to self-confidence among musicians. In other words, accomplishment promotes competence. Khoo et al. (2023) specify that the accomplishment of technical fluency enhances a sense of competence. These musical accomplishments should be celebrated (Bernhard II, 2023; Wentink, 2024). However, it is not only accomplishments but also parents' encouragement that can develop students' sense of competence in their musical abilities (Khoo et al., 2023).

Habron-James (2024) explains that negative valence is not necessarily associated with negative outcomes. Instead, negative valence can lead to positive outcomes such as promoting personal growth, connection, improving musicianship and ensemble playing. Therefore, when teachers create safe performing spaces (Khoo et al., 2023), the negative experiences can lead to growth. In these instances, teachers should remind students to be kind to themselves and remember that mistakes are part of being human and developing as a musician (Oosthuizen,

2024). A sound cooperative learning environment can also provide safe opportunities for improvisation, where less successful moments are met with laughter (Wentink, 2024). Such non-judgmental social learning opportunities not only expand competence but also enhance positive relationships.

Positive Relationships in the Music Education Environment

Another antecedent for PME is positive relationships in the music education environment. Habron-James (2024) explains that we benefit from social interactions while musicking. Opportunities for engaging and supporting others in music education can be created through ensemble playing (Khoo et al., 2023) and creating heterogeneous groups to promote social interactions that might not otherwise occur when doing musicking-related group work (Bernhard II, 2023). Positive relationship with others is preceded by self-discovery (Cupido & Olivier, 2024; Habron-James, 2024), self-awareness (Habron-James, 2024; Kruger et al., 2024), self-care (Jerling, 2023), self-management (Bernhard II, 2023) and self-acceptance (Cupido & Olivier, 2024; Oosthuizen, 2024). A healthier relationship with oneself, therefore, also improves relationships with others (Oosthuizen, 2024).

Silverman (2023) states that “we are better off being open to ethical joy, being kinder, being more caring, and creating a more care-filled compassionate, equitable world” (p. 10). Wentink (2024) explains that students’ relatedness is influenced by whether they experience their teachers as respecting, liking and valuing them. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Silverman, 2023), taking students’ differences into account (Bernhard II, 2023), and valuing indigenous knowledge (Kruger et al., 2024) are possible ways to make students feel valued and respected.

Non-verbal communication in the Dalcroze class, when students give and receive energy through the socially interactive music and movement activities, can also help to build positive relationships (Habron-James, 2024). Furthermore, positive relationships are cultivated when we learn what motivates others. When we understand others better, we can resolve conflict more easily and develop empathy for one another (Cupido & Olivier, 2024). Music educators should, therefore, make the shift from focusing on individual happiness to promoting collective happiness (Silverman, 2023). Consequently, connected selves are a requirement for effective PME. Having connected selves means that people have not only material possessions but also “family and friends, all situated in a caring, moral universe” (Kruger et al., 2024, p. 17). Additionally, learning about values stimulates harmonious relationships (Kruger et al., 2024).

Teaching Virtues in Music Education

For PME to occur, music education needs to be value-imbued education. Many values and norms can be taught through musical storytelling, such as “hospitality, generosity, self-denial,

self-sacrifice, humility, respect, bravery, diligence, friendship, cooperation, obedience and honesty” (Kruger et al., 2024, p. 10). Democratic classrooms, where power is shared, foster connectedness (Silvermann, 2023) and can accordingly lead to PME. Cooperative classrooms are an example of democratic classrooms, and cooperative learning teaches the important virtue of valuing others’ viewpoints and musical ideas, especially when they are quite different than one’s own (Wentink, 2024).

It is also paramount for PME that inducing happiness is a key aim of music education. Happiness and musical learning and achievement are not separate or mutually exclusive features, as some might assume, but rather mutually inclusive (Silverman, 2023). When teachers are true to their ethical values, they progress towards nurturing happiness and flourishing (Silverman, 2023). As Silverman (2023) states, “People achieve eudaimonia when living for the betterment of oneself and one’s community” (p. 3).

Meaning and Purpose

Another antecedent for PME is that music teachers should be passionate about their calling, which was evident among the music teachers in Jerling’s (2023) study. When music teachers feel that teaching music aligns with their purpose in life, they transmit this passion and conviction to their students (Cupido & Olivier, 2024). For instance, “Dalcroze teachers tell us that their engagement with the method gives their lives meaning and purpose” (Habron-James, 2024, p. 10).

Similarly, students learn better when what they learn aligns with their career goals, interests, and purpose in life. Therefore, recognizing students’ character strengths supports their music career trajectories. It is also helpful for students to be reminded of their career or personal goals (Bernhard II, 2023). For PME to take place, students need to be content with their musical identity (Habron-James, 2024; Silverman, 2023). Students might also find curricula that support their interaction and positive relationships with people more meaningful (Bernhard II, 2023), since positive relationships evoke positive emotions (Habron-James, 2024).

Positive Emotions in Music Education

The most important antecedent for PME is positive emotional experiences in music education contexts. This special edition highlights in particular the ways to promote positive emotions. Bernhard II (2023) and Jerling (2023) explain that deep listening promotes mindfulness and enhances positive emotions. The Dalcroze approach also provides opportunities for mindfulness and positive emotions when participants are present in the moment to the extent that they feel they become the music (Habron-James, 2024). In addition, overcoming challenges in the Dalcroze class can also lead to positive emotions (Habron-James, 2024). The

positive emotion of acceptance leads to self-compassion. Self-compassion also entails mindfulness during music performances and can reduce stress by changing negative thoughts into positive impulses and, hence, evoking positive emotions (Oosthuizen, 2024). Furthermore, Bernhard II (2023) states that gratitude practices can positively influence mood. Positive emotions can also be generated by reflecting on successful performances, lessons, and rehearsals (Bernhard II, 2023) and from reinforcement from parents and teachers (Khoo et al., 2023). Self-expression is also deeply joyful (Habron-James, 2024; Wentink, 2024), and joy is enhanced when shared (Silverman, 2023).

Positive emotions are important because they broaden-and-build the scope of attention, cognition and action (Fredrickson, 1998), and build durable physical, intellectual and social resources (Fredrickson, 2004). Positive emotions, such as feeling acknowledged by teachers or parents, improve creativity (Habron-James, 2024). Students who participate in Dalcroze activities sometimes experience epiphany and wonder which are often associated with positive experiences and personal transformations. Positive emotions also motivate students to engage in active, challenging musicking activities. Therefore, there is a feedback loop since positive emotions enhance the preceding antecedents (Figure 1).

Factors that Could Inhibit PME

Although the framework for PME and the articles in this special edition all endorse the importance of PME, we also deem it necessary to identify aspects that could inhibit PME and should be avoided. For PME to occur, it is paramount that teachers avoid abusive approaches and environments where learners experience undue pressure or threats, or where too much control is exercised by teachers (Khoo et al., 2023). Therefore, if PME is to be fostered, music educators need to reconsider a results-oriented approach as well as an excessive workload and the nature of competition (Bernhard II, 2023; Khoo et al., 2023; Silverman, 2023), and instead focus on goals that are set in collaboration with their learners. Bernhard II (2023) further argues that the often-competitive music environment can be mitigated if we encourage students to celebrate success appropriately while supporting them in coping with and negotiating setbacks in a healthy manner. Similarly, it is important that the challenges do not exceed abilities in musicking activities (Wentink, 2024) if students are to experience success, a sense of accomplishment and intrinsic motivation.

Other factors inhibiting PME are power imbalances and teachers being uncomfortable with the music that their learners relate to, as this could influence the way that teachers connect with their learners (Wentink, 2024). Wentink (2024) proposes that improvisation could give the learners the opportunity to make music in the styles that they prefer. She also writes that by sharing their creations, a sense of relatedness is fostered within the music education context. Communication (Cupido & Olivier, 2024) and accommodating different perspectives

are other factors that need to be considered for PME to be effective. Cupido and Olivier (2024) suggest using enneagrams to get to know each other better and promote compassionate communication. Bernhard II (2023) writes that, in contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation could lead to increased stress and decreased flourishing, consequently not promoting PME. Avoiding competitions by encouraging students to participate in concerts and festivals could support intrinsic motivation while prioritizing a process over product approach (Bernhard II, 2023). Furthermore, a lack of autonomy and competence and social isolation will inhibit PME (Bernhard II, 2023; Habron-James, 2024; Jerling, 2023; Khoo et al., 2023). Wentink (2024) explains how creative work fostered autonomy and competence among students while cooperative learning opportunities improved relatedness. Finally, mental health challenges (Cupido & Olivier, 2024; Jerling, 2023), trauma (Habron-James, 2024), ill health (Bernhard II, 2023) and self-criticism (Oosthuizen, 2024) are factors inhibiting PME. Oosthuizen (2024) suggests practicing self-kindness, mindfulness and an awareness of shared humanity to promote self-compassion. Some factors inhibiting PME, such as mental health challenges, trauma and ill health, are sometimes unavoidable. Therefore, in these instances, learners will need more support to engage in musicking with a PME approach.

Conclusion

An awareness of the factors that could inhibit PME, together with knowledge of the antecedents that promote PME, the attributes and outcomes of PME, provides insight into how PME can be effectively practiced and what pitfalls need to be avoided in the process. The framework for PME explained in this editorial highlight the attributes that define the nature of PME, the outcomes of PME and the antecedents needed for PME (Figure 1), ultimately aligning with principles associated with the third wave of positive psychology (Wissing, 2022). This special edition emphasizes the value of PME in promoting well-being as well as individual and collective flourishing.

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