

Marino Institute of Education

***Exploratory Investigation into Parental Perceptions of Learning through
Participation in an Early Childhood Music Class: A Qualitative Case Study***

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work.

Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly.

This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution.

This work was done under the guidance of Dr. Karin Bacon at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin.

I agree that the library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

Joan McGreal

4th June 2019

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Abstract

The holistic nature of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is widely acknowledged, where an integrated curriculum framework is implemented in many settings to facilitate the emergence of learning dispositions. EC literature highlights the importance of music as a natural conduit to support children's learning, evidenced by advancements in socio-emotional development, language, cognitive and motor skills (Kim & Kemple, 2011; Taggart, Alvarez & Schubert, 2011; Menzer, 2015; Costa-Giomi, 2015). This case study explores the possible learning benefits of participation in an EC music class with a responsive caregiver, thus reflecting the important relationships essential to facilitate a young child's development. The analysis of learning was centred on a particular music class where parents and children engage together on a weekly basis. The literature pertaining to parental engagement informed by Attachment theory was examined. Additionally, the separate elements of musical contributions attributable to our holistic view of the child in both cognitive and social domains were investigated. A qualitative methodology was employed, where the data was generated from focus group engagements of participating parents, aligned with the Vygotskian hypothesis of the essential role of learning through engagement with others, which frames this research. The data analysis identified significant cohesion on the importance of music as a conduit to learning, particularly in language and social skills. The findings highlight the significance of the adult/child dyad in responsive engagement to facilitate learning. The different elements of music presented transference to other domains of learning, thus highlighting the importance of their inclusion in a holistic programme of EC education.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Study

The aim of this exploratory research project is to investigate parental perceptions of their child's learning within the specific context of an Early Childhood (EC) music class. In this context, parents share and scaffold a myriad of learning opportunities through class participation on a weekly basis. This research examines the cognitive and social benefits of working in partnership through the medium of music, where anecdotally, over many years observing young children's engagement through music, I support Weinberger and McKenna who state "this musical curiosity ...represents a natural channel of communication, expression and cognition" (1998, p.38).

EC literature highlights the importance of music as a natural conduit to support children's learning, suggested by Parlakian and Lerner (2010) to promote "growth in the various developmental domains" evidenced in socio-emotional development, motor and cognitive skills and linguistic advancements which is congruent with my reflective observations in weekly practice (p.14). Through these observations, I would concur with Reynolds and Burton (2017) who position music as "a natural, developmental domain, central to the individualistic growth of the young child" (p.145). This musical context, facilitated by the learning partnership of the parent/child dyad, provides the opportunity to investigate the presence of learning as suggested by Eysench (1976), "Sometimes we have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something" (p.9). Eysench's view encapsulates the aim of this research, to explore the perceived learning benefits from participation in an EC music class, framed by the research question directed to the participating parents: *What do you*

perceive are the learning benefits to your child from participation in an EC music class?

Harris, Golinkoff and Pasek (2010) underscore the essential nature of the parents' role at these early stages, acknowledging their position as the primary educators of children, and identifying the home as a critical site of pedagogy. This is developed further, suggesting that responsive parenting is one of the strongest predictors of children's later language, cognitive and social skills. This responsiveness has provided the avenue for parents to participate in EC music, where their perceptions of learning benefits for their child will be explored.

The decision to focus on parents in this research is determined by the developmental stage of the children (Cooper and Cardany 2011), positioning parents' perceptions and interpretations of learning as a requisite part of this study. This view is supported by Rauscher (2000) who underscores the position of parents to "interpret children's music behaviours and learning outcomes" (p.49). Therefore, understanding that the parent is a partner in learning, positions a partnership of "intensive co-participation" (O'Hagin, 2007, p.197). The intrinsic role of the parents is grounded in the topic being investigated, as advocated by Rubin and Rubin (1995), "for a topic to be appropriate for... research, it must be grounded in the lives of the conversational partners," (p.48). Specifically, in the context of music education, Reynolds and Burton (2017) encourage reflection on "the empowering cycles of dyadic, reciprocal, cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of social musical interaction" (p.147). At this exploratory stage, this study is aligned with Charmaz (2006), who suggests a broad question "What's going on here?" (p.20).

1.2 Personal Motivation

Working as a primary school teacher for many years, my involvement in informal parent/child singing groups led to the development of more structured classes, and thus evolved an approach to learning through the medium of music, centred on the parent/child relationship. The classes attempt to facilitate a myriad of learning opportunities in language and listening, co-operation, movement, sharing and exploration, and essentially, fun and enjoyment. Therefore, I concur with Flick (2006) who states the “The researcher’s personal biographies and their social contexts” provide the origin of the research question (p.106). This is corroborated by Creswell (2009) who positions the researcher’s personal experience as an influential factor in their research choice. This research begins with an area of interest that has been on-going for twelve years, where I have witnessed advancements in young children’s learning, confidence, socialisation and language, and felt compelled “to dig deeper, find out more and get to the details of social interactions” (Mueller, File, Stremmel & Wisneski, 2016, p.50). This research begins with “an intellectual curiosity if not a passion for” this process (Janesick, 2000, p.382). My interest has provided the opportunity to investigate the literature, exploring the theories behind the evidence witnessed in my practice, driven by curiosity which Woods (1986) suggests should be a “burning force” in the investigations of participants’ views, stories and perceptions (p.410).

This research primarily focuses on the perceived learning benefits from participation in EC music, being mindful, that the content driving this research is “Music” itself. Bond (2012) acknowledges how other skills can receive great benefit from music education but this should not supersede using music for music’s sake, corroborated by Perret and Fox (2006) who state “music...does not need to justify its existence, it should be learned and appreciated for its own sake” (p.173). The musical experience provides the focus for this study, in partnership with the responsive bonding engagement between parent and child.

The two distinct elements of the parent's role, and the separate components which combine to form our understanding of the term music, provided the catalyst for question development. Through the employment of a qualitative design and the organisation of focus groups as a research tool, the data were generated through parental engagement. The duality of music itself, and the parent/child partnership under investigation here, is aligned with Ilari's hypothesis of the true meaning of EC music, which she claims is related to "bonding, interacting, learning, belonging and enjoyment" (2011, p.209).

1.3 Relevance of Study

Qi (2012) claims that teaching and parenting in early childhood are inseparable, and supports the development of rich parent/child relationships through engagement in the learning process. Through investigation of parental perceptions, it is hoped the findings can be applicable to EC settings, where responsive engagements between children and their caregivers reflect the essential bonding experiences between parent and child. Levinowitz (1998) has identified how success in ECE, and educational programmes in general, can be attributed to the partnership between the young child and his or her significant others. "Forming collaborations among the adults who care for our nation's youngest children and understanding the learning processes specific to early childhood will foster music abilities and contribute significantly to the overall growth and development of the child" (p.18).

The importance of these collaborations has been recognised in the policy documents from the Primary school curriculum (NCCA, 1999a); *Aistear*, the EC curriculum framework (NCCA, 2009a) and the National Parents Council (2010). Additionally, Melhuish (2010) corroborates the significance of learning partnerships, stating that family involvements in EC programmes create gains in children's development. This research examines the duality

of partnership between parents, and music specifically, and the possibility that music can be a powerful tool of communication between EC settings and the home environment.

Much of the research to date in this field has focused on how music can affect separate domains of learning, specifically pertaining to advancements in literacy, where instrumental education has been highlighted. Exploration of the literature has identified a deficit in a much broader based research, positioning this study as significant as it endeavours to provide insights into the benefits of music education more widely, which reflects the understanding of holistic education in early childhood. The research explores the many facets inherent in the term “music” through parent/child partnership in learning. Borg and Gall (1989) state that “much can be learned from human subjects simply by asking for their perceptions” (p.386). As parents reflect on their child’s learning, “the particulars of an occurrence in a social setting ...may then lead to new and more sophisticated understandings” (Mueller et al., 2016, p.35).

1.4 Overview of Dissertation

This introductory chapter has outlined the background to the research, the personal motivation inherent in the choice of study, and the significance of partnership in EC education. Music as a medium to support learning has been identified, where further investigation will be explored in the literature and the research process. Chapter two explores the literature pertaining to both parents and music. The role of parents as partners in learning is investigated in conjunction with the concept of music itself, encompassing the distinct elements of singing, movement, listening and music making. Each element is framed by the contributions attributable to our holistic view of the child in both cognitive and social domains. Chapter three presents the methodology utilised for data generation,

exploring the justification for a qualitative design, where focus group discussions were employed. Awareness of the researcher's positionality, and the ethical considerations framing the process are highlighted in this chapter. The process of data analysis is explored in detail, ensuring the employment of validity and reliability checks which provide evidence of the findings presented in the next chapter. Chapter four provides an exposition and analysis of the findings from the research process. These findings are presented in themes garnered from the data generation process and congruent with the themes from the literature. The possible learning benefits attributed to music are viewed within the multi-factorial position of engagement and learning in a language-rich social environment, facilitating social and cognitive advancements. Chapter five provides a summary of the findings, suggesting recommendations of their potential value in EC education. Limitations and challenges inherent in the research are outlined, concluding with the researcher's reflection of this personal journey.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the literature presenting the cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of music education in the early years. Inherent in the research is the role of parents to scaffold their child's development, thus positioning parental perceptions at the core of this study.

The literature enquires into the parallel trajectory of music and language, positioning parental engagement as a catalyst to learning. The role of language is explored, and its significance critiqued for a child's development. Children participate in music through singing, movement, musical play, composing and listening, and are representative of the the parents' musical engagements with their children which are explored in this research.

The structure of the chapter evolves from the role of parents to the themes inherent in music as follows:

- Parents: partners in learning
- Singing
- Music Making
- Movement
- Listening to Music

- Music and Language
- Music for enjoyment

Inherent in much of the literature, are the additional benefits that music can bring to a child's life, specifically pertaining to emotional knowledge and social development. The research also suggests the role of exposure to music for the aesthetic pleasure of music alone, as suggested by Perret and Fox (2006) "Music as an art form is a pinnacle of human culture and achievement. As such, it does not need to justify its existence. It should be learned and appreciated for its own sake" (p.173).

2.2 Parents: Partners in learning

2.2.1 Attachment

Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) present the infant with having an innate capacity for intersubjectivity, facilitating active participation in communicative interactions with parents and caregivers. The significance of this engagement is underscored by Reynolds and Burton (2017) and The Centre on the Developing Child (2016), claiming that these early interactions are integral to healthy child development, stating that "their absence is a serious threat to a child's development and well-being." In their meta-analysis of adult-shared musical memories in childhood, Franco, Chew and Swaine (2017) identified how personal musical interactions continually aroused feelings of security and belonging. Hornbach (2005) suggests that the routine inherent in the structure of a class "may contribute to a child's comfort and may elicit joy" (p.24). Rogers and Sharapan (1991), corroborate this view, suggesting that "continuity and familiar routines and traditions can go a long way in providing security" (p.12). Van der Linde (1999) and Menzer (2015) suggest that it is the social interactions inherent in these activities which promote togetherness. Rudd (2010), supported by Ilari and Gluschkof (2011) synthesise these

views, claiming, “a sense of belonging is essential for well-being and shared musical experiences may well nurture it” (p.688).

This reciprocal communicative engagement is reflective of Bowlby’s Attachment theory (1989) and the work of Mary Ainsworth (1978) who position the quality of these early engagements as pivotal in the child’s development of sense of self. Additionally, Bowlby suggests, the quality of these relationships provides the internal working model for all future relationships, representing a cognitive framework, comprising mental representations for understanding the world, the self as valuable and others as being trustworthy. A child’s attachment experiences may have significant impact on their behaviour, learning and development throughout life. EC music classes may provide a vehicle to support parent/child attachment where Hornbach (2011) suggests, warm positive relationships facilitate the development of trust and competence in the young child. This competence enables the child to explore independently, and thus begins their journey of learning, as stated by Bredekamp (1987) “The trusted adult becomes the secure base from which the mobile infant or toddler explores the environment” (p.5).

Particular attachment styles have been associated with parenting styles as defined by Baumrind (1971). Each parenting style is identified by both the emotional impact it has on a child’s life and the level of control exerted. Acceptance and involvement in a child’s life, level of control exerted to develop mature behaviour, and a sufficient level of autonomy provided to enhance independence are all known to contribute to the quality of attachment which develops through this parenting process. McPherson (2009) makes claims that parental involvement in particular activities is significant. He has shown a correlation between parental participation in EC music classes and parents’ increased interest in their child. Stefansen and Aarseth (2011) state that these shared activities represent experiences of “enriching intimacy” where the parent’s focused attention on the child enhances this

shared activity (as cited in Savage, 2015, p.135). Additionally, McPherson asserts that participation in shared activities has far-reaching benefits, stating “parental practices have been shown to have a direct influence on children’s educational achievement outcomes (2009, p.93).

Vincent and Ball (2007) consider these enriching experiences between parent and child as “fun with a purpose” (as cited in Kenway & Bullen, 2001, p.82) and are reflective of Vygotsky’s philosophy of learning through social interactions. “Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment” (1978, p.90). These interactions between parent and child facilitate scaffolding in learning opportunities as underscored by Vygotsky “what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone” (1978, p.85). The essential nature of the parents’ role at these early stages has been acknowledged as cited earlier, but specifically in the context of music education, Reynolds and Burton (2017) underscore “the empowering cycles of dyadic, reciprocal, cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of social musical interaction” (p.147).

2.2.2 A Conversational Duet

Dissanayake (2009) situates the reciprocal interactions between parent and child of; taking turns, mirroring, imitation of facial expressions and vocalisations as the possible origins of musicality. Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2015) interpret these responsive engagements as a “conversational duet” which demonstrate fluid interactions and shared attention, representative of quality communication between parent and child (p.1082).

The literature proposes that this capacity for intersubjectivity is contingent upon the infants' auditory discriminatory skills which are evidenced by their ability to recognise their mother's voice (De Casper and Fifer, 1980), and discern their own mother tongue (Moon, Cooper, & Fifer, 1993; Kuhl, 2004). These skills position music as an integral part of a child's biological endowment by presenting evidence of competency in perception and cognitive processing of the basic elements of music, exhibited in personal song compositions and the isolation of melodic phrases from larger pieces of music (Moorhead, 1977; Trehub, Bull, & Thorpe, 1984). Therefore, our perception of the infant is not merely as a passive listener, but Trehub (2006), critiquing this evidence suggests, the infant is a *musical connoisseur* participating in the surrounding musical environment (p.30). This view is open to interpretation but Weinberger (1998) presents evidence across cultures of parental communication and musical baby-talk, supported by Harp (1988) who has identified that a child's language "naturally has rhythm and melody" (p.454). As learning partners in this musical process, adults often intuitively use a modified version of normal speech when talking to infants. Papousek and Hwang (1991) state that infant-directed speech or "motherese" is characterised by singing and speaking to children with "elongated words and syllables, or blending music and language elements at a higher pitch and level than their normal speaking voice" (Kuebel, 2017, p.4) , which Trehub (2006) proposes is preferred by infants, who are therefore more attentive to it. This attentiveness is corroborated by Gudmundsdottir (2017), who asserts that "smiling, body language, and positive vocalisations indicate their enthusiasm and preferences" (p.10). These music-based behaviours are presented as optimal strategies of engagement with young children, where "motherese" can be presented as "songese", facilitating greater enjoyment and attention than other modes of communication (Gudmundsdottir, 2017; Longhi, 2009,

p.195). These musical encounters between parent and child are central to EC musical practice, thus suggesting the presence of optimal strategies for engagement.

Stremmel (2012) suggests that these inter-subjective engagements provide opportunities for real learning. This is confirmed by Stephen (2010) who asserts that engagement “with others drives learning, and at its nucleus is the process of dialogue and interaction” (p.21). Taggart, Alvarez, & Schubert (2011) and Valerio, Gruber, & Stockman. (2011) have analysed quality interactions between parent and child, comprising eye contact, smiling with facial expressions, presenting evidence of more frequency during music-based engagements than language-based interactions alone. These findings lead to our understanding of the significance of engaging interactions which are facilitated by participation in an EC music programme.

Mackinley (2009) proposes that through musical interactions “Music becomes mothering” (p.718). Qi (2012) asserts that teaching and parenting in early childhood are inseparable, supporting the development of rich parent/child relationships through engagement in the learning process which is evident throughout these EC music classes. The literature has identified how parents as partners in learning can be present with their child without acceleration in a naturally responsive engagement where, “Nature has provided a perfect fit between the parents desire to communicate with the child, and the child’s ability to soak this information up” (Kuhl, 1999, as cited in Bruer, 1999, p.8).

2.2.3 Parents: A language Support System

Bruner (1983) underscored the role of parents in supporting a child’s language development through social interaction. By sensitively attuning to their child’s intentions and elaborating on the interactions, a parent is implicitly facilitating a child’s language

development which Bruner identified as a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS). Bruer (1999) supports Bruner's hypothesis on language development through responsive parent/child interactions by stating "Children show significantly better cognitive and language development when they are cared for by adults who engage with them in frequent, affectionate, responsive interactions" (p.191).

This view is supported by the debate on critical periods for language development, specifically in the context of grammar acquisition. Newport (1990), corroborated by Marvin and Wright (1997) and Savage (2015), highlight the necessity of early exposure to language to facilitate normal grammar proficiency, positioning parent\child engagements as paramount. The role of parents to support their child's development is widely acknowledged and inherent in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory within the child's micro-system, represented by the child's participation in the home environment (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017). Vincent, Rollock, Ball and Gillborn (2013) encapsulate these family engagements by asserting that "the home becomes a site of pedagogy" (p.430).

2.3 Singing

"There is no finer form of expression than singing together, and when begun at a very early age, it enhances the sense of belonging and well-being; physical, spiritual and intellectual" (Yehudi Menuhin, as cited in Vajda, 1974, p.iii).

Acker, Nyland, Deans, & Ferris (2012) have positioned singing as the most popular form of music for young children, evidenced by children's enjoyment and attention during this musical experience. The literature highlights the benefits to language, cognitive and socio-emotional growth facilitated by singing (Murphey, 1992; Vockovic, 2006 & Griffee, 1992). In EC music, the opportunities for parents and caregivers to sing with their children

have been acknowledged to be extremely beneficial. As they sing together, feelings of connective engagement are evident (Elias, 2009), “a feeling of being at one with the other participants within that experience” (Wills, 2011, p.40). The primary instrument of the voice appears to follow the natural evolution from the child’s ability to hear the human voice inside the womb, where the voice can be acknowledged as the first linguistic tool of communication (Flohr & Trevarthen, 2008; Flohr & Persellin, 2011). Therefore, music and singing appear to follow the natural trajectory of human communication (March 2015).

2.3.1 Singing facilitating language: Repetition and Rhythm

Morehouse (2013) defines a song as “an auditory structure consisting of repetitive patterns that children encounter in their social environment” (p.85). It is these repetitive word patterns, essential characteristics of song, that appear to facilitate the development of oral language skills. The literature has identified how repeated exposure to vocabulary is required to enhance word learning, (Neuman 2011, & Harris et al., 2010), and it is this frequency which is strongly evident in the repetitive nature of patterns in singing. Hansen and Milligan (2012) assert that the prevalence of rhyme and alliteration in singing facilitate the emergence of phonological skills. They also address the significance of rhyme in song, which is natural and easily assimilated by children, thus representing a fundamental step in the process of phonological awareness. Hansen and Milligan advocate that the rhythmic quality of songs present invaluable experience of syllabic segmentation, facilitated by the exaggeration of smaller sounds of language in the singing process.

Kirkland and Patterson (2005) suggest the implementation of language rituals and routines in classroom settings, encapsulated by Spitz (2003) as “the comforting balm of ritual and repetition,” where singing can be positioned at the very heart of the school experience

(p.16). Where singing can facilitate language development, the classroom environment can become the secure haven “in which words are not only noticed and appreciated but also savoured and celebrated” (Kucan, 2012, p.361). This celebration of language through song appears to encompass our understanding of how children learn (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Custodero, 1998, & Harris et al., 2010). The catchy melodies of song can capture a child’s interest. Repetition, inherent in song patterns appear to aid memory and vocabulary growth, and the enjoyable experience of singing together can facilitate a child being more receptive to learning. Telesco (2010) asserts the recursive process of learning is facilitated by the enjoyment of the musical activity and the emotional connection inherent through this experience, where she states “it takes many repetitions to learn something, and paying attention and being emotionally involved play a significant role” (p.14). Critiquing this evidence suggests the presence of learning through parent/child engagement in the music process, where repeated exposure to a language-based musical repertoire is framed by the enjoyment of the musical activity.

2.3.2 Improvised Singing

Davies (1994) suggests that children’s use of improvised singing runs parallel to a child’s use of language in play, where they are free from linguistic constraints. Through singing, children investigate language imaginatively in a way rarely attempted in speech. Similar to acculturation in language, the child now develops musical language and freely articulates song phrases from their repertoire of songs. These song phrases become the vocalisations evidenced in improvisational play (Young, 2002: Whiteman, 2001) where Barrett (2009) suggests by their spontaneity, they act as a conduit to creative thinking. The spontaneous singing can be sung with a purpose related to the activity the child is involved in, with the

singing secondary in nature or providing an accompaniment (Bjorkvold, 1992). This interaction of musical language and play is reflective of Vygotsky's concept of *private speech* where the child becomes the narrator of their own environment, developing an awareness of their own thoughts and an ability to regulate their behaviour (Whitebread, 2012).

2.4 Music Making

“The depth of concentration, mirrored in the uninhibited curiosity and confidence of childhood, the loss of self-consciousness enables the discovery of another facet of oneself, free from physical limitations and perceived judgements” (Custodero, 2002, p.5).

2.4.1 Music Making: A Cognitive Process

Jones (2005) makes claims that music-making is the area of music that engages the brain most fully. In EC music, the most basic percussion instruments require fine motor control, and when accompanied by music, the child is required to align their music-making to their perception of sound. This co-ordination of tasks, Jones suggests, is “as complicated a task as a young brain will encounter” (p.41). Sergent's research (1993), corroborated by Bengtsson, Csikszentmihalyi, & Ullen, (2007), facilitated by brain imaging techniques, appear to demonstrate activation of multiple brain regions when students were actively engaged in musical performance. This physiological evidence positions the music student through listening and performing as “the fusion of doing and perceiving” (Custodero, 1998, p.4). This *fusion* would indicate that significant challenges are involved, which necessitate complete attention and engagement in the task, demonstrating a level of concentration optimising opportunities for learning and thus supporting Jones hypothesis on the significance of music-making.

Music-making necessitates repetitive auditory patterns which Spector and Maurer (2009) suggest are aligned with a child's ability to accommodate and assimilate new information. This is inherent in Piaget's stages of cognitive development where he states that the child learns by repetitive patterns of impact on the environment (1970). Morehouse (2013) corroborates this hypothesis stating, "Piaget's constructivist principles aptly apply, as children make music, they construct meaning" (p.85). Piaget espoused the significance of a child's progression from imitation to internalisation of events (Ginsburg & Opper 1988). Jones asserts that this progression is evident in a child's music-making, which positions this activity in early childhood as developmentally significant for young children, suggesting "the stimulus of music, from without and within, trains and orders the child's mind" (p.44). Custodero (2002) corroborates these findings, demonstrating how children transform teacher-derived material to their own skill level, which she suggests is essential for their sense of autonomy in learning, "from an imitated model, to become a source of original thought, the child demonstrates his depth of understanding (p.7). Steen (2007) and Jossey- Bass (2008) posit the discovery of mirror neurons as accelerating factors in this learning process. From imitation of others to independent performance, these neurons provide the mechanism for children to initiate learning from modelling parents' and peers' behaviours, which is inherent in communal music engagements.

2.4.2 Music Making as Play

When children freely explore musical materials, they begin a journey of experimentation into the basic elements of music; dynamics, pitch and tempo. Birkenshaw-Fleming (1997) evidenced this progression to developing patterns and seeing connections, whereby facilitating the development of independent-musical dispositions. Levinowitz (1999)

suggests that the manipulation of simple musical instruments follows that natural trajectory of a child's bodily movement, stating "real musical instruments, like tools, can become...amplifications of the body's ability to be musically expressive" (p.18).

Morehouse (2013) asserts that the use of percussion instruments strengthens the child's connection to the structure inherent in the music, comparing this musical engagement to the use of toys facilitating play. Active learning, through engagement with others and materials is cited as the nucleus of development and learning (French, 2007). Active learning is aligned to a child's personal interests through primary experiences with their immediate environment where "meaningful knowledge building occurs in the context of self-motivated participation in authentic activities" (Hedges & Cullen, 2012, p.925). This *self-motivation*, facilitated by positivity in the learning environment enhances children's competences and "dispositions" to learn (Wood & Atfield, 2005). Heath and Heath (2007) suggest that through exploration, children are searching for understanding, motivated by novelty and the gaps in their learning which promotes curiosity. This independent play has been recognised as a powerful learning medium (Whitebread, 2015), demonstrating creativity, perseverance, and positive attitudes to learning. The literature has identified the essential nature of these features for the development of learning dispositions which are central to our contemporary view of EC education (Katz, 1995; Aistear, NCCA, 2009).

Moorhead and Pond (1978) investigated one of the earliest qualitative studies of children exploring music, spanning from 1937-1958. In this study, the children freely played instruments of many cultures, creating songs, dances and stories, while interacting with each other. Bhagwan (2009) asserts that "musical play is complex and transformative, as it nurtures the highest levels of creativity" (p.229). Sir Ken Robinson (2006), leader in educational and industrial reform highlighted the need for cultivating creativity:

Picasso once said that all children are born artists. The trick is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately: We don't grow into creativity; we grow out of it. Or rather we get educated out of it. Creativity now, is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.

By facilitating creative musical experiences, creativity is stimulated, which Maxim (1989) suggests, enables creative thinking, posited as “an invaluable cognitive vehicle which allows children to stimulate each other's ideas and thoughts (p.236).

2.4.3 Agency in Music Making

Custodero (2002) supports child-initiated musical engagements, claiming that they encompass “the creative nature of music-making which draws on the childhood sense of self as an agent of possibility” (p.3). When the child, acting as a musical agent, takes control, McCombs (1991) suggests, the child is displaying an “inherent motivation to learn” (p.6). This sense of agency, she suggests, allows the child to assume control of their actions and facilitates better and more meaningful learning, which is reflective of a contemporary view of the child “as an agentic partner in the learning and emotional interactions they experience” (Stephen, 2010, p.2). This autonomy in the learning environment is corroborated by Shernoff et al., (2003) and Deci (1995) and evidenced by higher levels of engagement in the learning process, providing opportunities to influence the quality of the learning engagement, thus eliciting greater levels of motivation.

Establishing a child's agency in music-making is supported by Custodero (2002), acknowledging that “taking intellectual ownership of musical materials by transforming them into something individually meaningful provides both aesthetic delight and a means

to learning” (p.7). This freedom of exploration through music-making may not be melodic or rhythmically perfect for the listening adult, but Morehouse (2013) highlights that for the child it is “the authenticity of music-making experiences” that is significant (p.84). Jones (2005) reminds us that as each child is encouraged to draw and paint may not be the next Monet or Picasso, so each child should be encouraged to compose freely and improvise through musical engagements.

2.5 Movement

“Children’s future happiness depends on a rich movement life” (Laban, 1963, p.7).

Movement represents a natural and enjoyable exposition for many children. Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1997) claim that it is through movement that children first relate to music. This natural tendency to move, the movement theorist, Laban called *flow*, representing the movement of a flowing stream (Laban, 1971, p.55). The significance of movement is critiqued by the neurologist Frank Wilson (1985) who states, “the mind does not come into being or grow without bodily movement” (p.39). As children play and explore their bodily responses through movement, Bartel (2007) suggests, “it is not possible to conceive of disembodied play as they learn through their bodies” (p.29).

2.5.1 Cognitive and non-cognitive Benefits of Movement

The literature has identified that physical movement is linked to improved cognition, acknowledging that movement can have a positive effect on learning (Scudder et al., 2014; Lengel & Kuczala, 2010). Flohr and Persellin (2008) have identified that the dualistic view of the mind and body being separate entities has been replaced by the concept of the body

and mind working “in tight reciprocal coordination in the generation of movements and consciousness” which would appear to support the evidence of the symbiotic nature of movement and cognition (p.14-15).

Gilbert (2002) underscores the social and collaborative benefits of movement. As children move in their own personal spaces, they appear to develop respect for others by the utilisation of shared spaces. Yim and Ebbeck (2009) present moving and dancing as children’s musical activity of preference which appears to contradict previous evidence presented by Acker et al. (2012) where singing was positioned to the forefront of a child’s musical preference. These different views appear to emphasise the significance of personal responses to musical choices.

Tortora (2006) highlights the joy and communicative experiences evidenced in musical movement “Children can reveal their experience through their non-verbal movement repertoire... for the pleasure and joy of moving” (pps.376 & 412). The significant association between gross motor control and musical movement was analysed by Ulrich (2000). Substantial improvement in gross motor development was evidenced in a music-integrated movement programme compared with free-playing children.

In a very small-scale study conducted by Hefer, Weintraub, & Cohen (2009), three babies displayed “an astonishingly synchronised cyclical hand motion during Mozart’s music” (p.775). Jones (2005) states it is the brain’s individual responses to music which causes the variances and further suggests, “a child’s brain learns how to process the sounds that meet his ear through repeated exposure” (p.41). These early gestures illustrate the child’s natural tendencies to respond to music with physical movement, where Zentner and Eerola (2010) have evidenced infants awareness of the beat in the music as they present a corresponding physical movement to the changing tempo of the music. Hannaford (1995) declares,

“Movement, a natural process of life, is now understood to be essential to learning, creative thought and high-level formal reasoning. It is time ...to realise that something this simple and natural can be the source of miracles” (1995, p.214).

2.6 Listening to Music

“Music can arouse the unknown and mysterious within the consciousness of the listener and has an inner spirituality with the potential for transformation” (Stewart, 1987, p.30).

2.6.1 *Actively Listening to Music*

Marshall (1999) presents a distinction between a child passively hearing a piece of music and a child actively listening to a piece of music. This is corroborated by Jones (2005) who asserts that the differences between hearing and actively listening “cannot be emphasised enough” (p.44). Active listening demands attentive focus on the sounds inherent in the music, constructing meaning from the presented sounds, which in turn engages the brain sufficiently to order itself. Custodero (2002) asserts “Focused engagement with the temporal art of music requires more attention, thereby providing a means to a deeper level of concentration” (p.5). Jones (2005) suggests that active listening “unites diverse parts of the brain” which facilitates the brain to operate like a “music-processing device” (p.42). This is evidenced in the brain’s ability to detect and analyse positions of sounds (Jourdain, 1997). Benzon (2001) proposes that the very act of processing the diverse sounds into something the brain can understand, positions the music as a conduit for “training the brain, to order itself, to think spatially, temporally and formally” (p.190). These particular claims, aligning music to the brain, may be open to interpretation but would appear to run parallel to the recognised internal process required for language acquisition, in the extraction of sound patterns from the environment.

Willis (1991) asserts that the brain processes “parts and wholes simultaneously” which can be acknowledged as the heart of intellectual capacity (p.3). This view, initially presented by Hart (1983), supports the hypothesis that the brain is designed to process the confusion in our world and manages this task by “the extraction from confusion of meaningful patterns” (p.76).

Jones cautions against complete acceptance of these statements asserting that the brain’s response to music varies from individual to individual, despite efforts to highlight one style of music over another or to put “one composer on a pedestal” (2005, p.43). Begbie (2000) supports this view and underscores the particular genre of music to which the child may be particularly attentive, and it is this music that can “make something happen” (p.129).

The level of investigation required to research the area of music and the brain more extensively, exploring the scientific and technological advancements in this complex area, extends beyond the time and depth parameters of this study.

2.6.2 Emotion engagement with music

The literature suggests that emotions are positioned as the major factor in our choice to listen to music, suggesting that music can become “the tool to activate, change, empower and alleviate emotions” (Gurgen, 2016, p.238). Begbie’s hypothesis on the particularity of music is significant in the emotional responses which children display, encapsulated by Lamont and Eerola (2011) “one person’s choice, leaves another cold”, which is echoed in my professional practice (p.140). The literature suggests that familiarity and repetition may facilitate emotional responses to music, “Enculturation to a particular culture’s music is a developmental process in which associations and regularities are internalised through repeated exposure” (Swaminathan and Schellenberg, 2015, p.190). This is supported by

Laukka and Quick (2013), who state that developmental factors influence emotional perceptions and responses, thus positioning the role of learning and exposure to music as significant. In contrast, Hunter, Schellenberg and Stalinski (2011) suggest that the connection between familiarity and emotional response to music is not simplistic, moving away from a linear connection to attribute other factors. The literature suggests that emotional responses are multi-factorial, presenting previous engagement before a pleasurable response can be experienced (Schubert, Hargreaves and North, 2014), listener's age and context (Liljestrom, Juslin and Vastfjall, 2013), and evaluative associations with previous events which have evoked either positive or negative emotions (Juslin and Vastfall, 2008).

Hunter et al., (2011) have presented evidence that young children can easily identify high arousal emotions such as happiness and fear in music, and interestingly, this correlates to children's personal musical preferences, showing greater interest in music expressing high-arousal emotions. Acknowledging the complexity in our understanding of responses to music, Sleigh and McElroy (2014) suggest that music can be a significant catalyst to moderate emotional states, lowering arousal states to more optimal levels in stressful situations (Swaminathan and Schellenberg, 2015). These emotional benefits appear to be further enhanced when the listening repertoire includes the listener's preferred genre of music (Walworth, 2003). These emotion-regulatory factors have been researched further by Laukka and Quick (2013) and Lonsdale and North (2011), to include mood enhancement, relaxation, distraction and improvement to motivation. In the context of this study, the research by Liljestrom et al. (2013) is particularly significant where they suggest that listening to music *with* someone is associated with more intense and positive emotional responses, thus underscoring the social context of musical engagement inherent in an EC music programme.

2.6.3 Listening to Music: An avenue to literacy

Frith (1985) has identified a significant stage in learning to read which is facilitated by music education. This critical stage in the emergent reading process has been acknowledged as the association between the visual parts of words (graphemes) and their spoken sounds (phonemes). The research suggests that music enhances this sounding-out process, facilitating the development of phonological awareness (Wiggins, 2007). Vocabulary size and phonological awareness have been confirmed as the two established predictors of literacy abilities in early childhood (NICHD, 2000; Snow 2006; NELP, 2008; and Shanahan and Lonigan, 2012). “The degree to which emergent readers are aware of the individual sounds in spoken words...has been shown to be a better predictor of reading success than intelligence, parents’ educational background, visual or auditory perception, memory or even eyesight” (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte 1994, as cited in Cecil, 2003, p. 57). This sensitivity to sound, identified as phonological awareness, pertains particularly to the musical element of pitch, identified by high and low sounds. The neuroscientist, Aniruddh Patel (2008) critiques its importance by stating “pitch-related abilities in children predict phonological skills in language” (p.78-79). Hansen and Milligan (2012) claim that music is a “formidable avenue” for the development of crucial auditory skills needed for successful reading (p.75), which appears to be congruent with the literature on the importance of listening to music.

2.6.4 Benefits of Listening to Music

Telesco (2010) has identified how listening to music and comprehension for reading follow a parallel trajectory, acknowledging that musical phrases do not all have the same prominence in a piece of music. Similarly, in reading, differentiating the main ideas from the supporting text is essential for complete understanding. Therefore, through listening to music, children may gain “valuable insights into contextual understanding and hierarchical structure and a sense of form, a comprehension of the whole and its parts” (p.11).

Similarly, Sims, Cecconi-Roberts and Keast (2011) have identified a correlation between listening to music and reading, although they identified a deficit in this practice as it is not regarded as “play, does not develop social skills, and is not manipulative in the usual sense (p.137). They suggest “immersion in print leads to valuing books and eventually to language literacy, perhaps immersion in music leads to emerging aesthetic responses and eventual musical literacy” (p.123).

Singer (2008) suggests that actively listening to music has the additional benefit of encouraging “reflective processing” through the provision of opportunities for verbal feedback (p.55). This is supported by Hansen and Milligan (2012) and Poole (2018) who claim that comprehension strategies can be developed as children are encouraged to articulate non-verbal events. Thus, higher-level thinking is required in the application of language to thought, where the child can move beyond the invitation to talk, to engagement in analytic talk, incorporating strategies for predicting, imagining and analysis of melody (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Nurturing children’s curiosity through listening activities can facilitate “a powerful catalyst for human discovery and learning” (Arnone & Small, 2013, p.134). Orr (2004) suggests that the time allocated for wondering and reflection, facilitated by listening to music, is significant, stating “the sense of wonder is fragile, once crushed, it rarely blossoms again” (p.24).

Thus, a myriad of skills may be developed through what may have been perceived as simply listening to music. Hansen and Milligan (2012) advocate that listening skills acquired through a music education programme are important for success in school and throughout life, crossing the boundaries of all domains, following a continuum from pleasure alone to critical analysis. Yet, Weinberger (1998) argues against the justification of music in the curriculum for its extra-musical benefits alone. This view is supported by Custodero (2002) who reminds us of the pure aesthetic pleasure of listening to a piece of music where “the rhythmic harmonic or formal context has given a single sound a sense of the extraordinary” (p.5).

2.7 Music and Language

Hansen and Milligan (2012) consider language as the domain most comparable to music because both are organised temporally, and perceived aurally. Bergeson and Trehub (2006) suggest that even infants possess the necessary cognitive function to organise sounds into coherent units necessary for musical processing, thus highlighting the possible benefits to a young child of responsive engagement in musical experiences. Bigand (1995) and Patel (2003) have identified this convergence with music and language in the specific area of syntax, the organisational structure of language. Patel (2003) examines growing evidence from neuro imaging to support the “overlap in the processing of linguistic and musical syntax” (p.675). Chen-Hafteck (1997) has characterised the particular musical elements of pitch, rhythm, tempo and dynamics which are shared by both music and language. Gordon’s theory of EC musical development follows a similar trajectory with the acknowledged stages of language development, where acculturation, imitation and assimilation are evidenced (1997).

Chen-Hafteck (1997) suggests that the deeper connection between music and language comes from the essence of learning in a dyadic responsive relationship, evidenced in partnership by the perception of sound, early vocalisations, and emergence of speech. Papousek (1996) highlights the significant role played by parents in a child's early vocalisations where a trajectory of partnership is followed in both music and language development.

2.7.1 Music and Language in School

From early language and musical engagements, children begin to understand the conversational nature of language. These dialogical engagements are cited as the critical context for learning, enhancing thinking processes, thus consolidating the position of language as a "tool of thought" (Bruner, 1983, as cited in Whitebread, 2015, p.4; N.C.C.A., 2011). According to Bruner (1983), children begin to understand and negotiate differing viewpoints through conversational narrative which is perceived as monumental in terms of human development. The relationship between a child's enhanced vocabulary size and positive dispositional behaviours is significant, impacting on a child's ability to manage within the education system and therefore contribute positively to their overall development (Whitebread, 2012). Children with communication difficulties are considered disadvantaged within the education system which presupposes the use of language (Dockrel & Lindsay, 1998). Evidence suggests that these language difficulties can often develop into behavioural problems, caused by a child's frustration and inability to express their needs and engage in the social conversation of language (NLT, 2005). Children's early communication skills are regarded as the single best predictor of future cognitive skills and school performance (Rosetti, 1996; Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2012;

Zevenbergen, Whitehurst and Zevenbergen, 2003). The literature underscores the relationship between spoken language and reading, acknowledging the position of competent oral language skills as critical for later reading success (Kraus et al., 2009, Magruder et al., 2013). This partnership of skills between oral language, reading and also writing is represented by Britton (1970) who suggests “reading and writing float on a sea of talk” (p.164).

The literature indicates that dialogical musical experiences are a significant medium to support emergent language development where the addition of music can facilitate certain children who experience difficulties with strictly verbal learning environments, thus ensuring the benefits of growth in oral language being available to all (Strickland, 2001). This is corroborated by Harste (1994) “real growth occurs when learners, unable to articulate themselves in one sign system, may clarify meaning in another” thus embracing the concept of transmediation (p.1226-1227). Thus, music and language can become powerful tools of communication, positioned in responsive dialogical engagements.

2.7.2 Language focused musical activities

Bolduc (2008) has identified how music can promote the development of linguistic skills, specifically in the areas of auditory perception and phonological memory. Here, one is reminded to be cautious of the general term *music*, exemplified by Bond (2012) who suggests that music activities can be purposefully implemented to run parallel with the natural classroom literacy programme. Activities such as songs for language skills, lyric composition and describing music for writing activities can promote language growth (Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Salmon, 2010). Levinowitz (2011) underscores an enriched musical environment to facilitate language development where the concepts of “rhyming,

phonemic awareness, patterning, repetition, sequencing and prediction” inherent in a varied song repertoire, represent the building blocks of literacy (p.235). These specific language-focused activities corroborate our critical evaluation of the term music, by not simply accepting that one thing affects another, but as Jourdain (1997) concludes “the right music in the right context can help the right person increase his scores on certain tests” (p.190). Contextual and personal factors engaging with a particular genre of music must be understood.

2.8 Social Development through Music

Research supports the importance of music as a social development tool, facilitating the development of interdependent relationships and co-operation skills (Kim & Kemple, 2011). Morehouse (2013) has evidenced sharing amongst even very young children who “voluntarily relinquish instruments to others” (p.86). These sharing practices are corroborated by Kirschner and Tomasello (2010) claiming that small group musical activities promote more pro-social behaviour than social activities without music. The emotional and social development of the child is an intrinsic element in EC settings, reflective of our view of holistic education, supported by longitudinal research which found a correlation between early years social competence and future wellness (O’Kane, 2015). Frey and Stutzer’s critique of group music sessions (2002) evidenced positive interpersonal relationships, which they suggest promote happiness.

Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec (1994) suggest that music encourages effective functioning for a common purpose. Snyder (1997) supports this view stating that music is the one discipline “where communal and collaborative effort is essential and rewarded (p.168). Though Snyder’s position may be open to interpretation, Tuohill (2012) supports

collaborative engagements, claiming that children's learning is enriched by exposure to others' ideas, gaining new understandings of themselves as learners, the learning process and the concepts being explored. Jones (2005) synthesises these views, presenting music as a "wonderful method for achieving social cohesion" where the "aesthetic and emotional power of music is dependent on a shared experience" (Jones, 2005, p.45).

2.9 Music for Pleasure

Cooper and Cardany (2011) have identified all the benefits of participation in EC music stating, "The evaluation of a music programme for young children must not be confined to music learning outcomes because of the holistic nature of a young child's learning" (p.96). The many non-cognitive benefits from involvement in musical activities have been referenced throughout the separate sections of this chapter. Suthers and Niland (2007) emphasise the element of *enjoyment* in musical experiences,

... music is valuable in early childhood because of the enjoyment it provides for young children... because of the interplay between aesthetic appreciation of the sounds of music, social interaction with significant adults and peers in music making, exploration of music through the use of their bodies and senses, and the opportunity for playful responses (p.21).

The enjoyable elements of music are corroborated by Tafuri (2008) who acknowledges the value of music which includes interest, enjoyment, engagement, playfulness and choice which are particularly relevant for young children and reflect our contemporary philosophy of EC Education. Burton and Taggart (2011) present Braun and Broch's neuro evidence

(2008) which supports a scientific understanding of learning and enjoyment through the release of the hormones serotonin and dopamine which are associated with the positive feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. This evidence is supported by Evers & Suhr (2000) and Menon and Levitin (2005) who have identified hormonal level changes as a result of involvement in musical activities.

Dewey (1934) acknowledged the symbiotic relationship of enjoyment and learning and thus, the intrinsically rewarding nature inherent in the activity, represented by “the pleasurable activity of the journey itself” (p.5). Custodero (2002) raises questions about our understanding of “enjoyment” and thus supports Dewey by emphasising the role of learning in enjoyment as “Enjoyment connotes a greater depth of experience as it results from being sufficiently challenged, physically, expressively and cognitively” (p.7). This level of engagement and enjoyment is inherent in Csikszentmihajli’s construct of *flow* (1990) where optimal enjoyment is evidenced in “engagement in tasks whose challenges invite a person’s best efforts” (Custodero, 2002, p.4). Whalen (1997) supports the concept of flow evident in positive engagement through musical activities by asserting that music “is a quintessential flow activity” (p.7, as cited in Custodero, 2002). Rathunde (1988) and Custodero (2002) underscore the role of parents to facilitate these “flow” activities, suggesting that the challenge-skill dynamic is imperative for the child’s enjoyment, evidenced by more focus to the task, facilitated by appropriate challenges.

The benefits to emotional well-being are supported by Neelly (2001) and found to have a positive impact on enjoyment of learning (Moravcik, 2000). Wills (2011) asserts “Music is able to raise self-esteem and promote well-being for the transformation of our children” (p.37). Brooks (1990) suggests that self-esteem as “the single greatest predictor of success in school” (as cited in Snyder, 1997, p.168), positioning musical involvement as significant. Snyder (1997) proposes that “music may be one of the few intelligences where

success is achieved in early years. Through music, the student learns the process of learning, and can then apply that understanding to other less accessible disciplines” (p.168).

2.10 Conclusion

This review of literature has presented a wealth of evidence pertaining to the impact of music on a young child’s development. The relationships within the home environment, reflective of Attachment theory and parenting styles can be evidenced throughout musical interactions. The major themes explored in this chapter were aligned with the parental experiences of musical engagements, thus framing the broad research question being investigated here. From extensive scoping of the literature, additional themes emerged relevant to the research question, thus providing a frame of reference for the development of sub-themes which are explored through question development in the next chapter (pp 43-44). From the literature claiming a partnership in language and music development, parental perceptions on the correlation between language and engagement with music became significant. Additionally, social development and emotional engagement with music emerged strongly which necessitated parental reflection on these areas. Music-making became a broader area facilitating reflection on the significance of musical play within this context, where toys and instruments are utilised as tools of play. Though the different elements of music were explored separately, the themes of enjoyment and pleasure are inherent in the broader term of music and are integrated throughout the separate themes. From a broad exploratory question investigating parent perceptions on the learning benefits from participation in EC music, a greater depth has emerged to facilitate a deeper understanding of EC learning through music, which became apparent in the parental engagements explored in the focus group methodology which follows.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate parental perceptions of learning benefits for their child through participation in an EC music class. From this broad exploratory theme, sub-questions were formulated following extensive analysis of the literature. Parental experiences of musical engagement with their child position their role as significant in this process, in partnership with the different components inherent in the term music, identified as singing, listening, musical play, and movement. Significantly, the role of language and learning emerged from the distinct musical elements, in addition to the non-cognitive elements of musical engagement, which are positioned within the research discourse. Therefore, the partnership of parent and child, the possible learning benefits perceived through this engagement are framed by the musical experience itself, providing the context for this research. The rationale for the particular methods to investigate these themes is explained in this chapter, pertaining to the approach and data generation strategies. The strict guidelines of data analysis, ensuring validity and reliability are presented, in parallel with the ethical considerations framing this research. This data analysis facilitates interpretation of the content, enabling themes to emerge and subsequent conclusions to be formulated.

3.2 Context

This research explores parental perceptions of their child's learning within the specific context of a parent/child music class. Parents attend these EC music classes in a suburban setting within a local sports club on a weekly basis, and participate fully with their child throughout the class. Though inherent in the classes are the musical elements of tempo, dynamics and pitch represented through song, movement, use of resources and percussion instruments, the learning opportunities extend to language and listening, gross and fine motor skills, sharing and exploration, fun and enjoyment. Each class is of one hour's duration, where the weekly attendance comprises of eight parents with their child. The classes are divided by age, the younger children aged one to two (Appendix A), and older children from two and a half to four years of age (Appendix B), and for the purpose of this research the parents of both classes were invited to participate.

The location of the data generation was the same site where the parents and children attend classes, (*fig. 1*) ensuring familiarity for the participants and aligned with Denscombe's principles of ethical research where the interests of the participants are protected (2007). Additionally, Cooper and Schindler (2001) and Gillham (2000) advocate the use of an appropriate environment for data collection to alleviate any possibility of exerting influence over the participants.



Fig. 1: Site of Data Generation with “Teddy” and collection of photographs

“Teddy”, used at the beginning of each class and familiar to all the parents, was positioned at the location, representing a “cherished item” as advocated by Creswell (2007, p.181). Walker (1993) suggests the use of photographs, citing the American photographer John Collier who has identified “the can-opener effect,” presenting the capacity of photographs to initiate conversation between participants. A collection of photographs, portraying instruments and resources used in the classes was therefore displayed as Walker posits “the power of the photo to engage thought, extend the imagination...” (p.73). The researcher was aware, as Flick (2006) posits, that a photograph is not just “a reproduction of reality” (p.240). Rose (2007) supports this view stating “visual images are never innocent. They are wrapped up in many layers of meaning and interpretation” (p.26). Considering these views, the photographs were displayed “to invoke, prompt, promote discussion, reflections, comments, observations and memories” (Banks, 2007, p.63). (Appendix C) These photographs proved useful, especially when parents were reflecting on previous material used earlier in the term.

3.3 Philosophical Paradigm

Social Constructivism is the philosophical world view which frames this study. Aligned with this paradigm, Creswell (2007) states, the research addresses the construction of meaning through the processes of interaction among participants. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) assert that personal knowledge is constructed through lived experiences and interaction with other members of society. They acknowledge that engagement with the research participants is essential to ensure that the data we generate is reflective of the participants’ reality. Awareness of participants’ reality positions a relativist ontology as

defined by Guba (1990), “Realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based and dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them.” (p.27)

Lincoln et al. (2011) state that our epistemology is dependent upon our life experiences which is inherent in the knowledge we bring to the research process and the data generated by the participants. Adhering to a qualitative methodology, they state that the production of rich data is obtained by “interpreting how the subjects perceive and interact within a social context” which is inherent in this research through parents’ perceptions of their child’s learning. Crotty (1998) has identified the requisite elements in constructivist methodology including, understanding of context, using open-ended questions, researcher’s identity influencing interpretation of data, and knowledge generated from interaction, which is essential to Vygotsky’s theory of learning. Crotty has encapsulated the constructivist paradigm stating,

All knowledge and therefore all reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their worlds, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (1998, p.42)

3.4 Research Design: Qualitative

“Qualitative data are the results of interaction between the researcher and subject” (Richards, 2015, p.2). This research generated qualitative data, drawing upon “specific, unique, idiographic accounts” (Maxwell, 2005 p. 82), and placing “social interaction and social processes at the centre” (Strauss, 1990, p.6). This is inherent in the Vygotskian philosophy of learning through interaction and engagement which frames this study, positioning qualitative data as essential to our understanding of parental perceptions of

learning. This research design facilitated probing of “issues that lie beneath the surface of the presenting behaviours and actions” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.219). This probing facilitated “thick descriptions” of the interactions in this context (Geertz, 1973, p.6), represented as “the complexity of situations” requiring inclusion of detailed data on meanings and participant interpretations (Cohen et al., (2000, p.17).

The detail involved in this process, resulting in the collection of a large corpus of qualitative data, is acknowledged as a major limitation on the design where “records you hold in your hand moments ago expand to a massive body of complexity that would knock you over,” (Richards, 2015, p.3). Acknowledging this time-consuming limitation, nevertheless, the generation of qualitative data, ensured a holistic interpretation of parent/child engagement and representative of human knowledge as presented by Campbell (1975), “qualitative common-sense knowing...is all we have. It is the only route to knowledge - noisy, fallible and biased though it be,” (pp.179,191).

3.5 Research Approach: Case Study

“A case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project.” (Simons, 2009, p.21)

Stake (1995) states, “the case is given ...we are interested in it... because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case” (p.3), which encapsulates my work with parents and children, and thus positions this approach as significant as it endeavours to explore parental perceptions of learning within the specific context of an EC music class. The suitability of this context for a case study is supported by Fenno (1986), Thomas (2013), and Cohen and Manion (1989) who assert that the researcher should be in a position to “probe deeply and to analyse intensively the

multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit” (p.125). Stake identifies the case as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case” (p.xi), acknowledged by Geertz (1973) as “the delicacy of its distinction” (p.25). This distinctiveness, inherent in the analysis of an EC music class, is represented by Denscombe (2007) as a “spotlight on one instance”, facilitating “in-depth study” of “relationships and processes”, all attributes inherent in this specific musical context (p.44).

This case study aims to build knowledge from “multiple realities” (Berger and Luckman, 1979, p.21), as the case is explored from the perspective of different parents to gain a richer, balanced picture of the process, identified by Foucault (1981) as a “polyhedron of intelligibility” (as cited in Thomas, 2013, p.594).

3.5.1 Limitations of a case study

The differing perspectives outlined have led to criticisms of this strategy as identified by Woodside (2010) stating, “the variability in multiple-person interpretations of verbal data in thick descriptions” is presented as a “telling weakness” (p.65). Andersen and Arsenault (1998) present this variability as a factor contributing to lack of reliability in a case study. Additionally, the researcher’s intimate connection with the case may be presented as a limitation to the strategy. However, Simons (2009) asserts that, “the subjectivity of the researcher is an inevitable part of the frame ...appropriately monitored and disciplined is essential in understanding and interpreting the case,” (p.24).

An additional limitation has been acknowledged by the perceived lack of generalisation from the case and therefore questioning “the usefulness of the findings” (Simons, 2009, p.24). In contrast, Mueller et al., (2016) suggest that “generalisability” is antithetical to qualitative research, thus positioning “particularity” at the heart of this research. Simons

argues in support of “particularisation” of the case which aims “to present a rich portrayal of a single setting...establish the value of the case, adding to knowledge of a specific topic” (p.24). This exploratory case study of an EC music class is not requested to perform a “heroic role” as suggested by Seawright and Gerring (2008) but rather represents a particular music class whereby “studying the particulars of an occurrence in a social setting... leads to new and more sophisticated understandings and different interpretations of what is going on” (Mueller et al., 2016, p.35).

3.6 Research Instruments: Interviews and focus groups

“Conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p.102).

3.6.1 Interviews

Lather and Pierre (2013) present interviews as one of “the privileged face to face methods of data collection in humanist qualitative inquiry” (p.630), supported by Cohen et al., (2000) acknowledging “the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production” (p.409). Exploring parental perceptions of their child’s learning is aligned with Denscombe’s justification for interviews, when we “need to gain insights into ...people’s opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences” and the “value of contact with key players in the field who can give privileged information” (2007, p.174-175). Gillham (2000) states that this facility for data production, represented by “the richness and vividness of the material it turns up” is “the overpoweringly positive feature of the interview” (p.10),

Parental involvement is intrinsic to the EC music programme and this involvement is supported by Oppenheim (1992), where “participants become more involved therefore

more motivated in interviews”, thus matching the research instrument to the integrity of the learning process being investigated (p.81). Woods (1986) has identified trust as an essential attribute of the interviewer, whereby feelings of togetherness are evident in the “joint pursuit of a common mission” (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p.401). This concept of trust and togetherness is evident in the learning partnerships present in the music classes, and the timing of the research ensured the participants had attended the class for a full term, before reflecting on the benefits for their child.

3.6.2 Focus Groups

Norris (1997) suggests the necessity “To think of a social process that might keep research honest and fair and enhance its quality” (p.174), and not merely employ a methodology where the researcher could appear to be guilty of the “Law of the instrument” (Kaplan, 1964, p.28). To maintain this level of honesty, and advocated by Weick (1979) to “consider other solutions...more complex alternatives” (p.261), the individual interviews were exchanged for focus groups, relying on interaction within the group, providing opportunities to re-visit the data and explore in-depth perceptions (Morgan, 1988). The focus groups enabled data to be collected where “similar, complementary, or comparable assumptions about what can legitimately constitute knowledge of evidence” were discussed (Mason, 2002, p.36). Gillham (2000) asserts the value of this interaction which is reflective of the Vygotskian theory of learning through engagement, where he states, “It is only in discussion that people can work out and express what they feel or believe... leading to genuine discovery,” (p.52). Therefore, the research tool reflects the learning engagement present throughout the classes.

By employing focus groups as a research instrument, the qualities of interview interactions were evident, while positioning the researcher at a slight distance from the participants, thus minimising “response effects” as outlined by Borg (1981, p.174). Reflecting on the researcher’s role, Verschuren (2003) alerts to the possibility of the researcher’s personality affecting the research, and consequently, a focus group discussion was engaged as an instrument to detract from these issues. Economy of time, which is paramount to parents of young children, and the production of large amounts of data within a short period of time, have been identified as the strengths of focus groups (Cohen et al., 2000). Stutchbury and Fox (2009) advocate that methodological considerations must be supported by ethical analysis as evidenced here, where the interests of the participants are protected.

3.6.3 Participant Selection

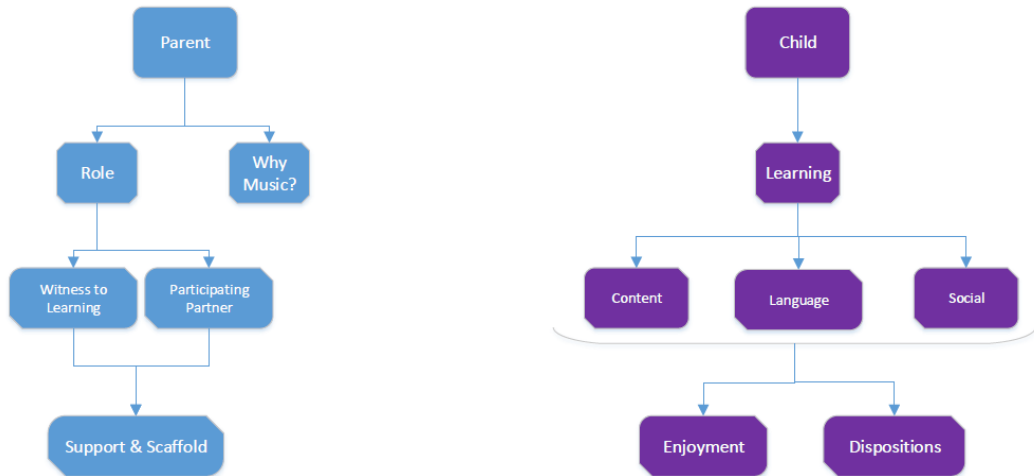
The participant parents represented a purposive sampling, and as members of an existing group they had a “ready-made interest” in the area of investigation (Denscombe, 2007, p.183). The literature suggests that parents therefore have been identified as “good informants” for this research through the tripartite function of “their knowledge and experience of the issue being addressed”, capability “to reflect on that knowledge and experience” and the practical function of time and willingness to be involved in the process (Morse, 1994, p.228).

Weekly classes facilitated communication, involving parents in preliminary discourse of the project, who were then formally invited to participate. Redpath (2007) acknowledges that this advanced notice provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on their thoughts in preparation for the research discussion. The research participants were divided into three focus groups, representative of *Mini-focus groups* used regularly in small scale

social research (Denscombe, 2007). Discussion with the parents resulted in the choice of suggested dates and times, and these choices determined the composition of the three groups (Appendix D). This choice for parents is advocated by Johnson (1984) who reminds that “all social researchers are to some extent mendicants, since they are seeking a free gift of time and information from those who are the subject of the study” and it is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to facilitate the participants, while maintaining the integrity of the research (p.11). Over-recruiting was inherent in the invitation to all parents, thus facilitating a percentage of non-participation as recommended by Morgan (1988).

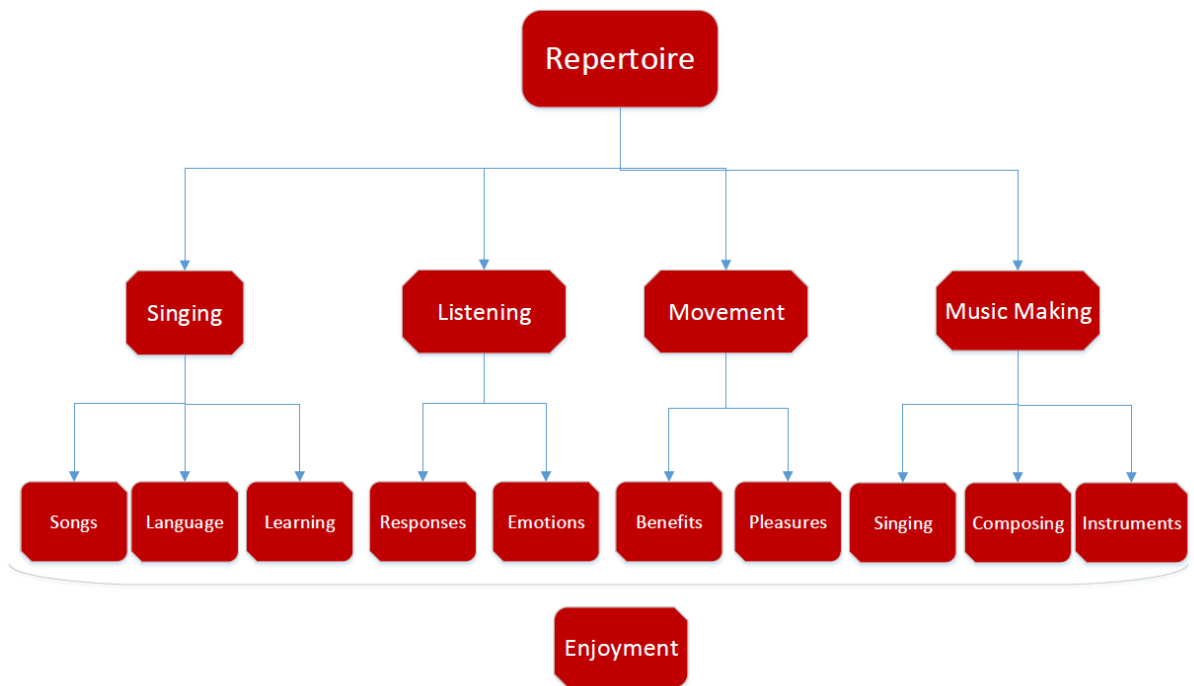
3.6.4 Question Development

Acknowledging that a focus group is a useful tool for data collection, Doucet and Mauthner (1998) urge caution about simplifying this research process. To facilitate this process, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend careful planning of all interview stages which began with the development of a “Tree and Branch” interview framework as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995) through careful selection of topics framed by the literature and the research question, providing a guided structure to the question development process.



* suggested by: Rubin & Rubin 1995

Fig. 2: Tree and Branch Interview Framework: **Parent and Child**



* Suggested By; Rubin & Rubin 1995

Fig. 3: Tree and Branch Interview Framework: **Repertoire**

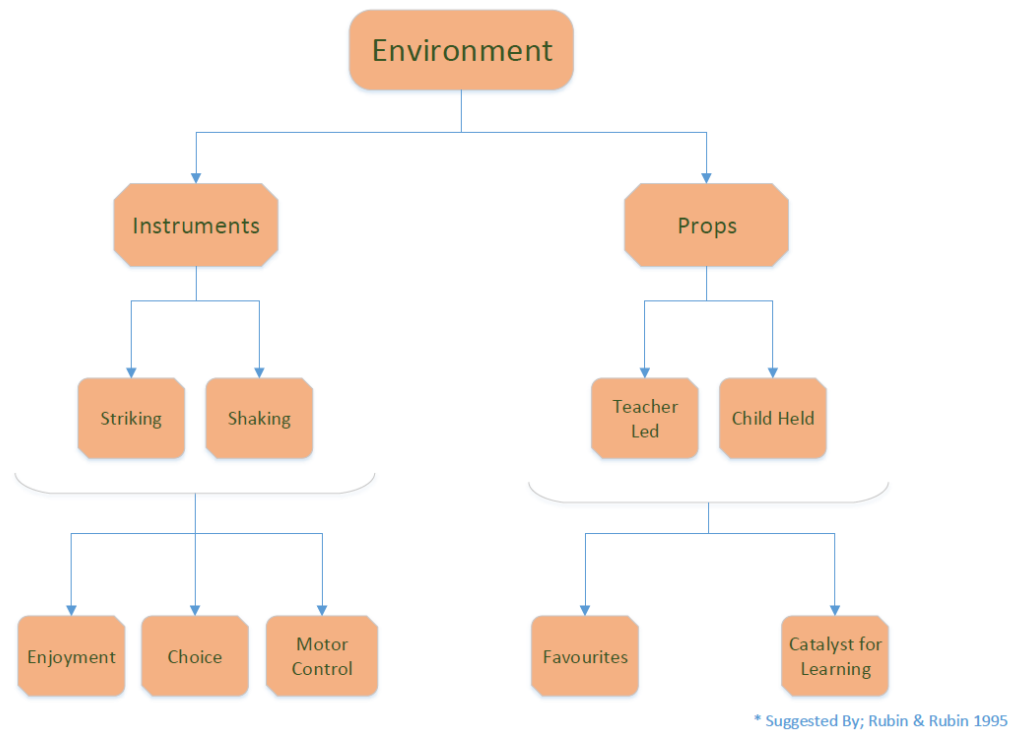


Fig. 4: Tree and Branch Interview Framework: Musical Environment

“Progressive question trialling” was implemented to ensure order and logic to the process (Gillham, 2000, p.41). The opening questions were significant where “initial questions get to the core of the subject... and deal with matters that the interviewee almost certainly knows about and feel good about” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p.131). The use of “open-ended” questions as advocated by Kerlinger (1970) and supported by Cohen et al. (2000), ensured flexibility, participant involvement and the development of in-depth data which Cohen et al. suggests “encourage co-operation and help establish rapport” (p.416). These exploratory style questions are, “in essence heuristic, giving freedom to the participant which encourages candour, richness, depth, authenticity, and honesty about experiences,” (Oppenheim, 1992, p.65).

Indirect questions were used, as advised by Tuckman (1972), to encourage more open responses, supported by Cohen et al. (2000) where “non-specific questions may lead circuitously to the desired information but with less alarm by the respondents” (p.417).

This strategy incorporates the ethical aspect of question development as Adams (2008) reminds us “working with ethics involves realising that we do not know how others will respond to or interpret our work” (p.178).

Probes were utilised in the focus groups to “...get interviewees ...to expand on their response” (Gillham, p.46). Additionally, these probes facilitated the researcher by “addressing richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.420). The researcher was mindful about the overuse of probes as suggested by Fowler (2009) as they may provide the opportunity for bias to enter the discussion. Our understanding of bias is supported by Gavron (1966) who states that “It is difficult to see how bias can be avoided completely, but awareness of the problem, plus constant self-control can help” (as cited in Bell, 1993, p.95).

3.6.5 Piloting the focus group

Piloting the focus group acted as a “reality test” for the researcher (Gillham, 2000, p.55). Issues of length, overlapping topics and question order were analysed as suggested by Schratz (1993) and Denscombe (2007), ensuring the development of questions which “function as lenses to capture the nuances of the lives, experiences and perspectives of others” (Agee, 2009, p.446). This was pertinent to the questions about the parent’s own role, which I had originally left to the end of the discussion, allowing the main themes of music to flow consecutively. A change of question order was essential to ensure time was given to facilitate greater discussion on their role as essential partners in this process. It was apparent that many of the questions produced individualistic responses, and consequently, awareness of this facilitated the development of probes for future investigations. Piloting the process also ensured that ethical issues were considered, where reflection on the focus group schedule could “ensure that questions are unobtrusive”

(Simons, 2009, p.99). The clarification of these issues through piloting, Gillham (2000) asserts, also assisted the interviewee, stating “a properly developed and piloted interview helps interviewees to organise themselves” (p.54). Therefore, thorough preparation facilitated the smoother running of the data generation, enhancing participation by the parents, which was evident during the discussions. (Appendix E)

3.6.6 Instrument limitations

Richards (2015) has identified the limitations to the focus group process where researchers can be “unaware of the extraordinary challenges behind creating and ethically conducting an interview” (p.46). These challenges ranged from my positionality inherent in this process (Huber and Clandenin 2002), to the organisation of agreed dates and times to suit a group of busy parents, to the management of the volume of data (Swain, 2006). Through careful planning, awareness of bias, and fully participating in the experience with the parents, it is hoped that these challenges and limitations were resolved.

3.7 Additional Data Generation tools

3.7.1 Video-recording

To facilitate analysis of the parental engagement, Redpath (2007) advocates observation, used here through video-recording of the focus groups, as a strategy to discover “The rich, but perhaps hidden and potentially deeply significant implications of fleetingly articulated observations” (p.61), while freeing the interviewer “to concentrate on the social interpersonal nature of the interview process”, which is at the heart of qualitative research (Simons, 2000, p.52). In addition to the audio recording device used widely in qualitative

research, Mishler (1986) supports the use of video-recording, underscoring the essential contextual factors, and the visual and non-verbal aspects of communication. Erikson (1992) suggests videoing to facilitate against researcher bias as it “can overcome the partialness of the observer’s view of a single event” by facilitating multiple viewings (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000. p.470). Simons (2009) asserts that an “interview privileges the articulate”, thus ensuring, by its use, that ethically, all participants are considered (p.55). Flick (2009) has identified difficulties of such observations, including the reactivity of the participants being observed, and the validity of constructs as the researcher endeavours to interpret non-verbal gestures. Despite these concerns, the use of video recording was extremely beneficial, especially when transcribing parents’ understanding of their children’s involvement, which was often presented through non-verbal gestures.

3.7.2 Post-focus group communication

The positive engagement evident in the focus group discussion led to an additional data collection source when parents had the opportunity to review and reflect on their “considered articulations” and contacted me via email with additional observations about the learning benefits for their child (Redpath, 2007, p.64). Borgatti (2002) suggests that this continuation of the narrative, provides the opportunity to re-evaluate the information, thus adhering to the joint process of collection and analysis of data.

3.7.3 Field Notes

Collection and analysis of data was facilitated by the use of field notes as advocated by Richards, (2015) who states, field notes are “your personal, private record of wild ideas

and possible leads...and...is always linked to the data it relates to” (p.92). Thus, these field notes are aligned with Maxwell’s concept of validity in being both descriptive and interpretive in their function (1992), represented by Richards (2015) as “metadata” (p.39) and corroborated by Cohen et al., (2000) as “legitimate secondary data” (p.554). These field notes provided a “bread crumb trail” of the researcher’s reflexivity through the process of reading and coding (Mueller et al., 2016, p.69). These practices are aligned with Merriam’s view that collection and analysis of data should be a parallel practice (1998), and thus supports Gibbs (2007) who asserts, “Writing is thinking” (p.25).

3.8 Data Analysis

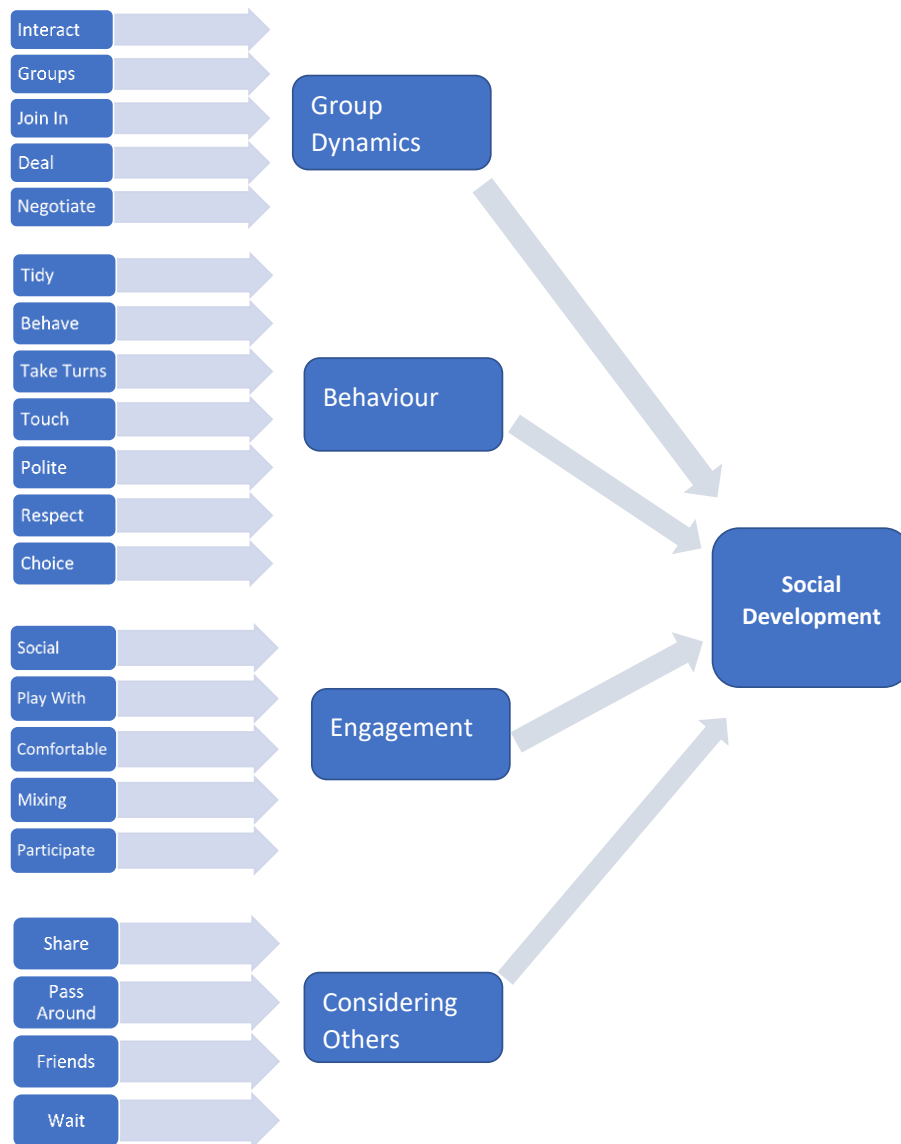
“A reflective, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualised data” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.427). A wide-angle lens was used in the reading and rereading of the data as recommended by Parlett and Hamilton (1976) and corroborated by Hycner (1985) “for a sense of the whole” (p.281). Multiple readings of the data as advocated by Creswell (2009), Tesch (1990), Redpath (2007), Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), and Merriam (1988) facilitated interpretation, where the researcher endeavoured to “sustain an open attitude and readiness to accept any new avenues that may be illuminated” as advocated by King (2014), and supported by Hycner through the term “bracketing” by “suspending as much as possible the researcher’s meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed” (p.281). Reflection on the data was significant, as suggested by Brenner, Brown and Canter (1985) and aligned with Hycner’s position on content analysis, presented as “a crystallisation and condensation of what the participant has said” (p.282).

3.8.1 Coding

“A word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2013, p.3).

Tesch (1990), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest the use of an open-coding process , as opposed to pre-ordinate coding, to “pull together a wealth of material into some order and structure” and to remain faithful to the data (Cohen et al., 2000, p.559) and this process was employed in the data analysis. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that coding “encourages hearing the *meaning* in the data...and forces you to look at each detail, each quote, to see what it adds to your understanding (p.240, 251). This coding practice represented a duality of purpose through the simultaneous “processes of induction and deduction” as presented by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.111). By exploratory and inductive coding, individual words were identified as “in vivo” descriptive codes, taken directly from the participants’ statements (Cope, 2010, p.283). “Substantive statements” were also identified, as advocated by Gillham (2000) to provide context (p.65) (Appendix G). Through the use of codes, the data should appear “systematic and verifiable” (Mayring, 2004, p.267).

Organisation of data was further facilitated by implementing Spradley’s (1979) concept of *domain analysis*, (fig. 5) where “substantive statements” and descriptive codes were initially classified in categories as suggested by Gillham (p.65), and further clustered to form a domain, represented as “a symbolic category that includes other categories (Spradley, 1979. p.100). Richards (2015) suggests that these categories can represent “the growing conceptual structure” of the project which became evident when a frequency analysis was implemented (p.189).



*Fig. 5: Domain Analysis (Spradley, 1979): From Coding to Categories:
Theme – Social Development*

A numerical frequency of individual codes was utilised, as advocated by Cohen et al. (2000), Miles and Huberman (1994), Gonzales et al., (2008), and Anderson and Arsenaault (1998), involving examination of the context through the full statements to identify the emerging themes (Appendix H). This statistical analysis highlighted frequencies which facilitated the identification of themes congruent with the literature and the results are

displayed in graph form in Chapter 4. Miles and Huberman (1994) and Gillham (2000) advocate the use of graphic display of data to summarise these numerical findings.

3.8.2 Triangulation

These strategies were striving for verisimilitude and through analysis of video-recording, with field notes, and additional data from parents' emails, triangulation can be evidenced (Mueller et al., 2016). Triangulation therefore was used as a strategy to improve accuracy and corroborate findings (Denscombe, 2007), through the comparison and combination of different sources of evidence as recommended by Roberts-Homes (2005), Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) and Cohen et al., (2000).

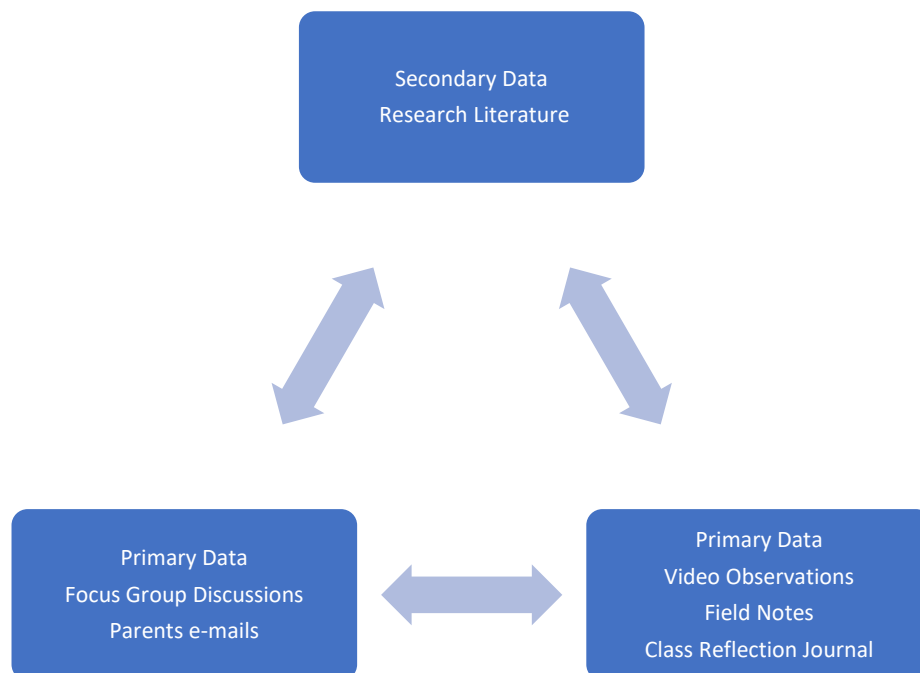


Fig. 6: Triangulation Methodology Utilised

The concept of trustworthiness is demonstrated by providing evidence of an audit trail referred to by Yin (2009) as “a chain of evidence” where every step of the case study can be verified (p.41). Through the use of multimodal methods, Le Compte and Preissle (1993) suggest, the researcher takes on the mantle of a “methodological omnivore”, thus verifying Yin’s “chain of evidence”.

3.8.3 Validity

Through rigorous data analysis, validity and credibility were upheld, though Norris (1997) would suggest that “Validity enhancing practices do not ensure that research is accurate” (p.175). Due to the relationship between researcher and context, this research may be considered as “Backyard research”, therefore due consideration was taken to ensure that the data was not being generated selectively in “a circular argument” (Yin, 2009, p.72). Data collection and analysis are reported in detail involving “thick descriptions” of the interactions within this context to increase the accuracy of the findings (Geertz, 1973 p.6). *Constant comparisons* were made as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and supported by Cohen et al. (2000) to conform or contradict emerging themes and to keep focus on the emerging data. This back and forth “iterative” process as identified by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p.251) was facilitated by adhering to transcription conventions, advocating careful display of data, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984); Hycner (1985); Cohen et al. (2000); and Gillham (2000) (Appendix F).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

“Inquiries into other people’s lives are always an exercise in ethics” (Agee, 2009, p.440).

3.9.1 Researcher Positionality

“All research, from its conception through to the production of data, its interpretation and dissemination reflects a partisanship which derives from the social identity and values of the researcher” (Troyna, 1995, p.403). Working as a teacher with the research participants presented ethical issues which encouraged reflection on choice of instrument for data generation, validation strategies and my identity as a researcher. These choices aimed to “meet emotional needs, respect preferences, and preserve dignity of the research process” (Cartwright, 2007, p.138). This is aligned with Flinders’ philosophy of relational ethics where “attachments and regard for others are to the forefront of ethical research (1992, p.106). Working together can be reflected in the “rapport and relationships” in evidence (Maxwell, 2005, p.83), identified by Merriam (2009) as “interdependency” between the research participants, which “may bring about changes in both parties’ behaviours” (p.127). These behavioural changes have been presented by Borg (1981) as *response effects*, as previously cited.

In this context, my identity is significant, as suggested by Huber and Clandenin (2002) and Sikes (2006), “How we feel about who and what we are, and how others see us is bound to be significant” (p.107). Sikes develops this positionality by suggesting that insider research “Is inherently sensitive and therefore potentially dodgy!” (2006, p.110). This position is questioned by Flyvberg (2006) who suggests the benefits of such an intimate connection to the research as “The advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied” (p.236). Bell (1993) advocates that honesty in all areas of the research acts as a mediating factor against bias. *Relational ethics*, involving

establishing trust, building good relationships and respecting autonomy are of paramount importance in the research process. I feel these relationships were established before the process began, and timing of the research was significant to allow trust to have developed between research partners, as confirmed by Flinders (1992) “ethical goals should be confirmed above all else by a caring attitude towards others” (p.106).

3.9.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent was gained by signed letter. Through the early distribution of the letter of consent for information purposes, and general discussion about the research, the parents were informed about the process (Appendix I). Shaw et al. (2011) advocate that “consent to participate can only be meaningful if provided on an informed basis (p.27), thus avoiding deception as asserted by Denscombe (2007). A small group of parents in the research has children of a significant developmental stage to require consent, validating their contribution as research partners. This request is in compliance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the child, requiring that children who are capable of forming their own views be granted the right to express them. These parents spoke to their children about the music classes, facilitated by Murdoch’s ECG, (Emotion, Cognition, Growth) assessment framework (2015), inquiring how they feel about the classes, what they learn and what else they would like to do, and explaining how their ideas would be discussed with the other participating parents.

The contents of the letter were explained before the focus groups, revisiting the purpose and ethical issues of the research, posited by Cooper and Schindler (2001) as the “rules of the game,” and again after the meetings as suggested by Denscombe (2007). Inherent

in the letter of consent was the freedom for the participants to withdraw from the process at any time as highlighted by Bazzul (2017), “Freedom is necessary for ethics” (p.996).

3.9.3 Confidentiality: Participants and Data

The participants’ rights to privacy are inherent in the Deontological considerations outlined in Seedhouses’s ethical grid (1998) (Appendix J) where telling the truth to participants and keeping promises of confidentiality are paramount. Throughout the transcription of data, procedures to ensure confidentiality were followed, as espoused by Cohen et al. (2000). Pseudonyms were used and all geographical details were omitted as a further measure to protect the privacy of the participants. The privacy of data was protected by using the data for the specific purposes of research only. The data will be kept only for as long as is required for examination purposes and password protected with access by researcher only, as outlined by the ethical guidelines of the Marino Institute of Education.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings related to parental perceptions of the learning benefits for their child through participation in an EC music class. The data were generated from the discussion process of three focus groups, exploring the broad research question of learning benefits in general, and the deeper exploration of sub-questions which emerged from analysis of the literature and subsequent question development (Appendix E). Through a rigorous coding process, utilising numerical and contextual frequency, five main themes emerged. The themes are presented in graphic form, illustrating the results of the frequency analysis as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Gillham (2000).

- Parent's Role: Partners in Learning
- Singing: An avenue for language and learning
- Social Development
- Movement and Listening
- Music Making Resources

4.2 Parent's Role: Partners in Learning

As parents reflected on their role within the class, the opportunity to spend quality time with their child is represented by the significant references to *bonding* ($n=109$) throughout the data. From this trusting partnership, the parents perceived their children growing in confidence. The parents scaffolded their child's learning in both cognitive and social domains, representing a partnership in learning as evidenced in the literature (p.10).

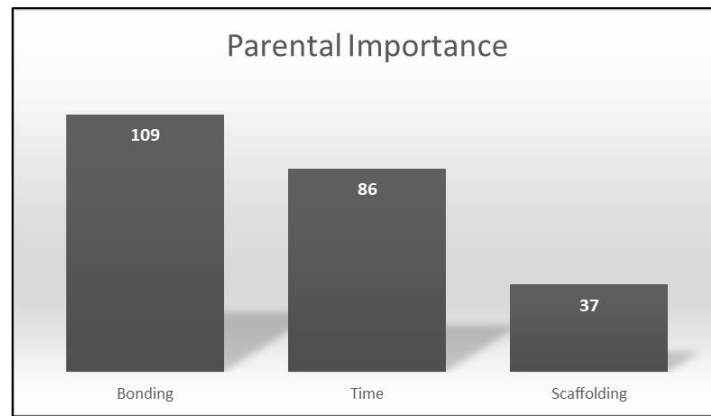


Fig. 7: Parental Perceptions of their role in an EC music class

4.2.1 A Bonding Experience

The music class provided a vehicle to facilitate a special bonding experience as expressed by Marie, “The bonding experience with Bea, that hour a week with her, that undivided attention was really special.” Anne also valued this experience, “it’s our special time, which is harder to get, and I wouldn’t give it up for the world.” This special bond resonated with Caroline who attends with her grandson Cian, “I think it will form a special bond between Cian and Nana because he won’t always live with us.” The parents developed these ideas by providing examples where there were experiences of “enriching intimacy” as illustrated by Marie, “I lost my inhibitions to sing, you get involved, you sing with your child and it’s just such a lovely bonding experience.”

These interactions, highlighted earlier by Taggart et al. (2011) and Valerio et al. (2011), were illustrated by a piece of music which was particularly significant for the parents. During *Morning Mood* by Grieg, the parents lift their children up to represent greeting the sun and beginning a new day. Elaine said, “it’s a real bonding experience, you’re both enjoying it.” Marie developed this idea “their little faces and they’re up so high and you’d see them.” This empirical evidence is congruent with the literature identifying greater frequency of quality parent/child engagement in musical interactions. These reflections on

sharing experiences of enriching intimacy are rooted in Attachment theory and responsive parenting, reflecting the literature on shared musical experiences arousing feelings of belonging, security and togetherness as highlighted earlier (p.8). Liljestrom et al. (2013) have underscored the social nature of these shared musical experiences, advocating that listening to music *with* someone is associated with more intense and positive emotional responses.

These positive feelings extended from the parent/child relationship to other parents in the class, as presented by Julie, “everyone is invested in how every child is getting on...it’s like you wanted everyone to be happy.” Julie’s view is reflected in the literature advocating that the social interactions inherent in these musical engagements promote togetherness (Van der Linde, 1999, & Menzer, 2015). Creating this community of learners extended to other family members as represented by Deirdre, “it just brings a connection to the family, Bella could start singing a song and my others could pick it up and start singing with her.” The social nature of a group experience is congruent with the literature where music is presented as a “wonderful method for achieving social cohesion” (Jones, 2005, p.45).

4.2.2 Growing in Confidence

Regularity of attendance, engaging in an increasingly familiar repertoire with a responsive caregiver, facilitated growth in confidence, reflecting the literature by Rogers and Sharapan (1991) positioning continuity and familiarity inherent in the classes as essential to provide security for young children. Mary spoke about her son Senan, “Being there every week, watching all the other children, gaining the confidence, yes, **I (Senan) can** actually go over and pick out my little thing, my teddy bear or whatever.” Julie developed

this idea as she spoke about how the class partnership of parent and teacher can scaffold a child's development "the encouragement for Alan to join in, it gave him confidence in himself, because he trusted both you and I, and he was able to take those first individual steps."

Confidence in a communal setting is illustrated by Amy "even confidence in dealing with other children, being able to coax them in a gentle way, it's instilling confidence in them." Inherent in the development of the child's confidence is the position of the adult caregiver engaging responsively, presented by Bredekamp as "the trusted adult," identified as the "secure base from which the toddler explores the environment" (p.5). The position of the trusted adult is significant in relation to one family attending the class. One of the mums has been very ill and the family has endeavoured to maintain a routine for the little girl where extended family members have attended the classes with Emer. My class diary shows the significance of regularity and the trusting relationship for the young child as Emer wavered from non-participation to partial engagement depending on the familiar engagement of the participating adult (Appendix M).

4.2.3 Scaffolding Learning

The parents discussed how their participation scaffolded learning in both cognitive and social domains. Deirdre explains, "you encourage them ... it gives them confidence to do it themselves...Mummy is doing it, so I can do it." By working in partnership, Deirdre has scaffolded the experience for Bella to sing independently. Mel supports this view by suggesting this partnership "accelerates the learning", which Marie suggested happens when "you focus on your child." Stephen (2010) confirms this focus on the child,

evidenced in the musical engagement between the parent and child, “drives learning and at its nucleus is the process of dialogue and interaction” (p.21).

The concept of intersubjectivity is illustrated when the parents show their child respect for the musical process by engaging at their level as articulated by Anne. “the class was important to Sally, it meant a lot to her, and it wouldn’t have been the same if I had just left her there.” Through participation with their child, the parents are facilitating learning as the literature has addressed earlier (pp.9-10). This view is corroborated by Stremmel (2012) stating that these inter-subjective engagements provide opportunities for real learning.

The parent’s way of participation is articulated by Caroline “I think when Cian sees me so positive about it, that influences them enormously and then they see it’s an enjoyable thing.” Amy explains her role, pertaining to emotion regulation, emphasising how factors from home influence her son’s behaviour. “Peter has a temper... and he has a brother with special needs. The only way he can physically compete... is shouting at him. He needs this class, he needs to play with other kids appropriately, he can be grabby, he doesn’t like to share.” During the classes Amy has shown great sensitivity to Peter’s needs, scaffolding his learning until she feels he can accomplish tasks independently, and transition to the next part of the class.

The parents identified areas where their role scaffolded their child’s social development specifically, illustrated by Anne as she explained how her role helps her daughter Avril to behave appropriately in a group, developing an awareness of others and their needs. “Our role is to say no, you can’t behave like that, you do need to let that child speak, and not stand in front of that child, they’re all little things but they build up their behaviour and how to deal with other people and how to **be ...**”

The parents have grown familiar with the repertoire and could identify occasions of learning outside the class environment. Amy explains how the informal counting of farm animals has resonated with her son Peter. “If I’m asking how many peas he has eaten, he’ll start singing, *Peter has 1, Peter has 2 peas*, and trying this...” as she gestures a child struggling to hold up individual fingers for counting. Here Peter has taken the parents’ practices and made the learning his own, thus developing from the scaffolded experience in the class to independent learning, reflective of Piaget’s theory of learning from imitation, but also underscoring parent/child interactions as advocated by Vygotsky, as cited earlier (p.10).

Louise described a situation where her daughter Ellen reproduced evidence of the parents’ actions by repeating the rhyme recited in class as the younger children are busily feeding their teddies, “Ellen started going, *Pease porridge hot ...*, and during the class she’s there feeding the bear and you wouldn’t think she was watching us going around, and she did this with her hand (doing an opening-closing action like a castanet, mimicking the small instrument used to count out the beats for the porridge rhyme)... so it all goes in.” These two accounts are aligned with Tuohill (2012) who identified that the collaborative nature of these experiences enriches a child’s learning through exposure to others’ ideas, gaining new understandings of themselves as learners, the learning process and the concepts being explored, as illustrated by Peter and Ellen. The actions of others in an enriched learning environment facilitates learning and is inherent in Vygotsky’s hypothesis of social constructivism where “Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment.” (1978. p.90). These parental observations of their child’s learning, witnessed away from the class environment, also shed light on the literature pertaining to mirror neurons presented by Steen (2007) and Jossey-Bass (2008) as highlighted earlier (p.63).

4.3 Singing: An avenue for language and learning

The participants presented a broad spectrum of evidence pertaining to the cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of singing. The wealth of data in this area is aligned with the parents' involvement and familiarity with singing practices, and supported by the literature positioning singing as a favourite musical choice for children. The data is characterised by the widespread agreement on the benefits that singing brings to the development of *language* and how *learning* is facilitated by singing. The importance of emotion expression and regulation emerged from the data, demonstrating how singing can be a conduit to channel and defuse situations. As partners in learning, the parents revealed how songs learnt in the classes have become a natural and intrinsic part of their home lives.

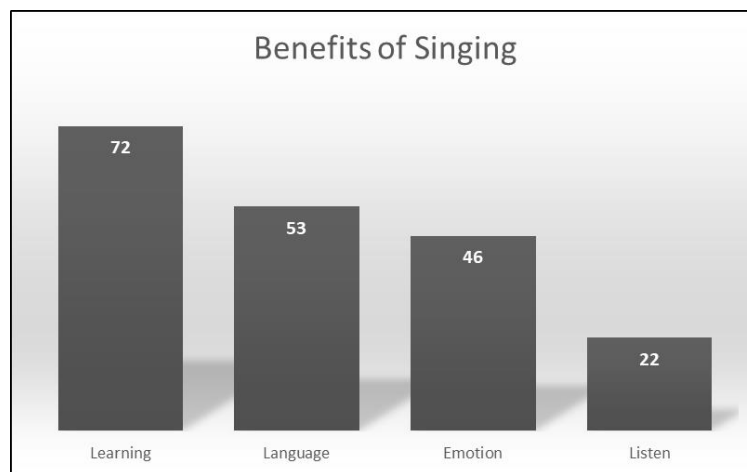


Fig. 8: Parental Perceptions of the Benefits of Singing

4.3.1 Building Vocabulary through Singing

Neuman (2011) and Harris et al. (2010) have identified how frequency is essential to build vocabulary, echoed here in the parents' views as they discussed the benefits of repeated singing. Anne said about her daughter, Sally "... her knowledge of words had always been up here (gesture indicating hand raised over her head), and it's literally down to a lot of years of singing with her." The importance of language is particularly significant, as Sally had speech difficulties where Anne explains, "part of her speech therapy was trying to get language out of her. We had a situation where she couldn't pronounce the letter "N" at the start...she could say *exoskeleton*, but she couldn't say *No!*" Anne is referring her to the specific vocabulary we used in our "Insect" song. Anne continued, "They were always amazed at her vocabulary" (referring to the speech therapist). Anne explained, "words that she could learn were a source of pride for her, and the fact that she could say something like *abdomen* or *exoskeleton*." This is congruent with the research advocating music as a significant medium to support children experiencing language difficulties (Strickland, 2001) where Harste (1994) states "real growth occurs when learners, unable to articulate themselves in one sign system, may clarify meaning in another," represented here by Sally's singing voice.

Elaine suggested, "by learning the vocabulary, they're increasing their self-confidence." This view is supported by Marie who stated, "for their vocabulary, it was amazing, they're learning their colours, they're learning to count, they're learning the names of all the animals." Mel corroborated Marie's views saying "the language in the songs was amazing, songs with a purpose, the words seem so important, and that's transferred to the kids, and they love the words then. It's a love of language". These views support Levinowitz (2011), who advocates an enriched musical environment to support language. Corroborated by Moyeda (2006) and Bond (2012) who suggest the implementation of musical activities to

enhance language skills. The familiarity and repetition in singing, situated in an enriched musical environment, facilitated advancements in these young children's vocabulary as presented by their parents.

4.3.2 Developing Language through Singing

The lyrics and content of songs provided an avenue to develop language as suggested by Amy, "it fosters conversation as well. Throw out a song and then you can talk about it... It starts off as singing and then develops into a conversation." This development of language supports our understanding of the critical role of dialogical engagement as a context for language learning (Bruner, 1983; NCCA, 2011). Deirdre also witnessed how the content of a song provides the opportunity to extend language. She is referring to a song about the heart which had resonated with her daughter, Bella who "was mesmerised by this whole feeling and she liked it." Deirdre is referring to the pumping action the children made with their fists, a simple open-close action to demonstrate the pumping heart. "I could see her thinking out the words. And we spoke about the heart then. So, you start if off and we can continue, so I think it's very good." Deirdre demonstrated her responsiveness to her child's invitation to language, giving language to her child's gestures, representative of intersubjectivity in the parent and child dyad. This evidence supports Bruner's hypothesis of parents representing a LASS for their child as highlighted earlier (p.12).

Acknowledging the child's attempts at language through song is presented by Amy, supporting Papousek (1996) who has highlighted the significant role played by parents in a child's vocalisations, following a trajectory of partnership in both music and language development. Here Amy is talking about the introductory song we use with the youngest

children, where the child's name is repeated throughout the song. So, in Evie's case we sing, "Mammy and Evie are singing a song, *ba, ba-ba, ba, ba-ba, ba*". As Amy explains,

It's getting her name into music. It elicited her getting into language as far as I'm concerned. Her first attempt at language. She knew it was Evie. She loves her name, anything to do with her name. So, you'd sing the song and she'd go *ba, ba-ba, ba!* So, before Dada, Mama, anybody, there was *ba, ba-ba, ba!*

These repeated, exaggerated syllables represent the rhythmic qualities which Hansen and Milligan (2012) and Morehouse (2013) have identified as the essential characteristics of song. Within the context of a bonding experience, this simple repetition provided the catalyst for Evie to begin her language journey, thus corroborating Chen-Hafteck's (1997) assertion that the deep connection between language and music is the dyadic responsive relationship.

4.3.3 Learning through singing

The parents displayed unanimity in their responses to the learning benefits from singing, referring to the *content* of the songs and represented by Deirdre "a song is a connection for learning." Caroline elaborates by stating "I can't believe the amount he's learning, it's the information that I'm astonished by." She provides an example of learning by her grandson Cian, "He told somebody the other day, that daffodils need rain and sun to grow, he got that in his music lesson and he's two and a half!" Caroline develops this to other topics "... the spider, the spinnerets. This baby telling you about spinnerets, I didn't know what a spinneret was!"



Fig. 9: Toy spiders displaying spinnerets on their undersides

Deirdre expanded on the learning she felt her daughter gained from the “Heart” song.

“There’s a connection with the world and with the song and with the language of it, and she’s actually learning so much about her own little body and how it works.”

The parents discussed their perception of learning through song, as Amy suggested, “it’s the rhythm, it just becomes easier to learn things... so it kind of soaks in.” The power of a song for learning content is also supported by Deirdre who said, “... you can teach the children about the body, about the heart, but I don’t think it goes in as much as when you hear a song. A song sticks in your head”. Mel suggests that it is the *topics* of the songs that “really capture them, really hook them, the spiders and the dinosaurs and jungles, and the first time they hear about them is through song.” Through these views our understanding of how children learn has been established, as presented by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Custodero (2002), and Harris et al., (2010), and highlighted earlier (pp.14-15). Telesco (2010) presents a tripartite rationale for learning which is facilitated by singing within the responsive partnership of a parent/caregiver and child dyad “it takes many repetitions to learn something, and paying attention, and being emotionally involved play a significant role” (p.12).

4.3.4 Songs: Facilitating Focus

As parents represent partners in learning, their knowledge of the repertoire proved valuable in family life as evidenced by Amy, “I find singing very calming with them... because the tunes are so familiar to them. It can often distract from a little tantrum, or focus on trying to do a task.” Amy’s view appears to support the concept of motherese or songese, by utilising music-based behaviours, which Longhi (2009) and Gudmundsdottir (2017) state are optimal strategies of engagement for young children, evidenced by greater enjoyment and attention. The incorporation of song into daily routines is suggested by Linda, “Even if it’s only dinner, we start singing, *Pass the plate around*” (referencing *Pass the basket round*, used in class). Amy supports the use of song during busy morning routines “when we’re trying to go to school, to move on... we’ll do the dinosaurs marching ... our whole family march to school.”

4.3.5 Singing and Emotion

The evidence of happiness and the power of singing to defuse emotional situations in young children generated very worthwhile data. Caroline, referring to her grandson Cian said, “he sings a lot more and it creates a happy feeling,” supporting the literature which highlights a person’s musical choice to engender intense emotional experiences (Liljestrom et al., 2013). Additionally, Frey and Stutzer (2002) propose that positive interpersonal relationships, evidenced in the group music session between Cian and his Granny, promote happiness.

Elaine supports the happiness attributed to singing, “I definitely think it makes her happy. Sophie had to take a daily tablet, and one of the ways I used to get her to take it was to sing ‘3 Tubby Snowmen’. It distracted her and it calmed her down.” The calming effects of

singing are portrayed effectively by Anne in these two vignettes.” I found singing calmed Sally a lot. When she was having a hard time or having a tantrum, I would start singing a song from the class, and she would suddenly come out of what she was *tantrumming* about, because she couldn’t bear not to sing.” Sally’s love of singing, which her mum feels was ignited in the music classes, proved invaluable as she explained,

When she was having difficulties in school, she would come out and she didn’t want to look at me, didn’t want to talk to me. We would walk in silence to the car. She would take a moment, and she would say what song she wanted from the class CD, and she would sing all the way home, and by the time we got home, *I had got my little girl back.*

These parental observations are reflective of the literature which ascribes powers of emotional regulation to music, facilitating distraction and moderation of high arousal states to more optimal levels in stressful situations as addressed earlier (pp.23-24).

Inherent in these interactions is the parent’s awareness of the child and contextual factors, congruent with the literature espousing a multi-faceted rationale to how emotion can be influenced by music. Deirdre’s account of her daughter’s relationship with spiders illustrates the power of a particular song to affect emotion. “Bella isn’t afraid of spiders now... I never thought a song would change her mind about how she feels about a spider...she wouldn’t go into the bathroom if she saw a spider there, and now she’s ... *Oh Hello, I wonder if he’s going to use his spinnerets?*”

These personal experiences indicate how particular songs can effectively be used to defuse situations and engage with children in a positive way. Rather than the general term *music*, this is aligned with Begbie’s hypothesis (2000), that it is the *particularity* of the music,

possibly being familiar to the child from frequent exposure, in addition to personal and contextual factors; it is this music that “can make something happen” (p.129).

4.3.6 Agency in Singing

The parents witnessed improvised singing at home, as the children took ownership of the class melodies, exploring language playfully through song, reflective of Vygotsky’s theory of *private speech*. Having developed a love of singing through the classes, Anne said her daughter Sally, “narrated her life in song as she walks around the place.” This spontaneous singing allowed Sally to investigate language imaginatively, thus supporting Harste’s concept of transmediation. This musical narration is supported by Marie who spoke about her daughter Lacey, “it’s like living in a musical, she’s making up songs. She just sings her heart out completely.”

Deirdre’s exposition about her daughter Bella supports Bruner’s hypothesis of language as a “tool of thought”, illustrating how Bella took the melody and the process of learning, and personalised it to her own situation. During the teaching of the song, the children’s suggestions for lyrics were assimilated into the instructional context, thus providing opportunities for learner’s contributions and honouring the child’s choices. (Appendix L)

Deirdre explained;

The sun was out last week, and Bella started singing *Put your bikini on* (original lyrics, “Put your coat on”) and this was amazing. Aine (referring to Bella’s younger sister (2) said *cosy, and make yourself cosy* (Aine using original song lyrics about getting dressed to go out on a **cold** day) and Bella went, *It doesn’t go Mum, it just doesn’t go, what can I say?* And I go, think of a word and Bella says, *makes me hot* and I reply okay, we’ll go with that.

This example displays Bella's engagement in a meta-cognitive process as she transformed class material to her own skill level, which Custodero asserts is essential for a child's autonomy in learning, reflecting the Piagetian principle of development from imitation to internalisation of learning as highlighted earlier (p.17).

4.4 Social Development

The music class provided many opportunities for the children to develop socially, thus supporting the literature positioning music as a social developmental tool (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Kim & Kemple, 2011; Morehouse, 2013). This is illustrated by Anne, "those group interactions are important, taking turns, listening to the other child, waiting for a teddy, to learn how to be in a group." This is supported by Marie who said, "it's helping them learn the social interaction as well, mixing with children of her own age and trying to teach her to share." This evidence of sharing supports the literature pertaining to very young children (Morehouse, 2013), and developed by Frey and Stutzer (2002) providing evidence of the development of interpersonal relationships from group music classes.

Elaine echoed these views, "socially, they were learning to take turns, and if there was something we could only take one of." She continued "... it's great for the learning experience, cos they know, they may not get it this week, you know, delay gratification." These examples cross over to the domain of emotional regulation as the children are learning to deal with choice and disappointment, but the next example illustrated negotiation skills and collaboration far beyond the developmental stage of the children and reflects a community of social cohesion, as parents are invested in all the children's learning. Anne reminded us of another member of the class;

The one Dalmatian you have in that basket of animals and Niall particularly wanted this Dalmatian, and another girl had it, and instead of having a tantrum about it, he just walked over and whatever it was he said, and the way he did it, so clever and so polite. It was like bargaining and negotiation and it was gentle. It was unbelievable, but to learn in the tiny tots' class, no one was upset, it was wonderfully done.

Sharing of resources and instruments also provided another avenue for learning as told by Elaine “so they learn I’m not gonna run at that table and take everything off it, and they learn not to drop the shakers, to respect property.” Anne identified another opportunity for learning “The tidying up is brilliant!” She suggested that these learning moments of socialisation are part of a bigger picture as she said “that’s all part of being human and having to live around other humans. Respecting people’s things and respecting you know, people’s time... massive amounts of social learning.”

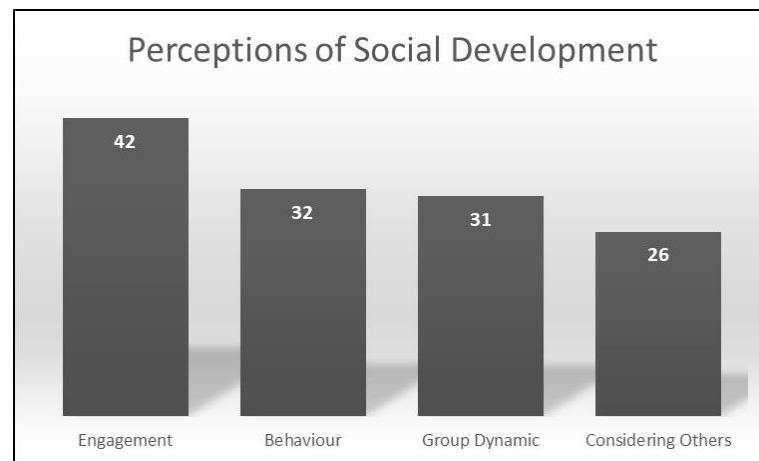


Fig. 10: Parental Perceptions of the social benefits.

The data indicated that the music classes provided an avenue to accelerate social development as presented by Kim and Kemple (2011) and Morehouse (2013), illustrated by co-operation skills and sharing practices. Social learning was developed through

collaborative engagements as echoed by Toohill (2012) who highlights children's learning is enriched through engagement with others.

4.5 Movement and Listening

The parents' views on movement were divided between the practical need for young children to move, and the learning benefits they observed. The importance of movement was stated by Marie "for the younger ones it's really important cos they can't sit still for too long, so it holds their attention." Elaine developed the learning benefits inherent in movement when she said, "it does help them to remember more, they kind of retain it more when they do the movement with it," which is corroborated in the literature espoused by Bartel (2007), "they learn through their bodies," (p.29). Mel explained the value of movement for her son Mark, "trying to interpret the movement with his body is all learning, appreciating the music is not just with your ears, you're doing something with it, channelling it, so your whole body is responding, not just listening, movement and the listening, they have to go hand in hand, really." Mel's view supports the literature advocating the cohesive nature of mind and body working together, illustrated by Flohr and Persellin (2008), cited previously (p.20).

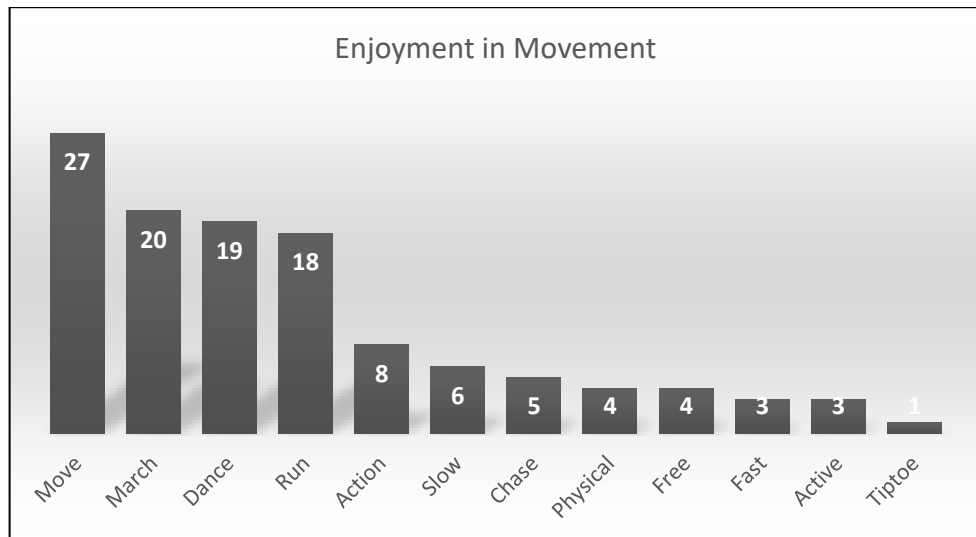


Fig. 11: Parental Perceptions of the benefits of musical movement

The parents identified how particular pieces of music elicited different responses, ranging from song to instrumental music, thus corroborating the duality of listening and movement for young children and underscoring Begbie’s hypothesis on the particularity of music impacting upon a child’s response to music as evidenced earlier (p.23). Mel explained how her son Mark responded to a song about dinosaurs, accompanied by marching movements, “it really electrified them, it was so exciting.” This marching movement is supported by Amy “once they’re singing AND moving, you know, feeling the impact of the floor, I think there’s a sensory feed-back...they get a kick out of it.”



Fig. 12: Collection of dinosaurs used as marching partners

The musical element of tempo resonated with Ted's granddaughter "it's the slow juxtaposed to the very fast." Ted is talking about an instrumental piece of music where the children tiptoe round a sleeping teddy, and, as the music gets faster, the children recognise the change in tempo and automatically begin to run. This engagement with listening demonstrates the concept of active listening as highlighted earlier (p.22). Amy developed the concept of tempo, "the relief, it's trying to contain themselves, they find it so hard, and then they're gone". Cara spoke about the attentiveness required by the children to differentiate the changing tempo in the music "the discipline for them, it was unreal, and I suppose they were able to release their energy and run around." This view of attentive listening was identified by Custodero (2002), stating "Focused engagement with the temporal art of music requires more attention, thereby providing a means to a deeper level of concentration" (p.5). Ted spoke about how he perceived the changing tempo effected his granddaughter's learning, "the tension building up to the crescendo... I can't wait, this holding back, the anticipation. It's a little like delaying gratification, you really want to run ...but..."



Fig. 13: Sleeping teddy to encourage tip-toe movement

From the guided listening experiences in the class, the parents spoke about the free movement to instrumental music which the children particularly enjoyed. Anne spoke about her daughter Sally “the movement helped her to have a positive association with what she was hearing, being able to move around, being more in control of what she was doing,” represented in the literature “of self as an agent of possibility,” (Custodero, 2002). Anne continued, “the music does something to her that she adores.” Mary explained how both the guided movement and free movement were of benefit to her son Senan, “Putting the mice to sleep under the leaves in the autumn, it was *powerful*.”



Fig. 14: Mice and autumn leaves for semi-structured movement

During this guided movement the children had complete freedom to move and as the music stopped, they created their own house of leaves for their mouse, thus providing opportunities for choice and agency. Complete freedom of movement was identified by Mary as another favourite of her son’s. Once again, resources were used, “dancing with the flowers, a waltz from a ballet.” In this situation, the children moved around freely to the music, where the large soft-toy flowers danced, swept the floor or even at times, became swords!



Fig. 15: Soft-toy dancing flowers: Free movement

Anne emphasised the need for movement for her daughter, “for Sally, those free movements worked for her, as sitting down was difficult for her, *freedom moments were very happy moments for her.*” Sally’s experience with movement is aligned with the literature stating “...something this simple and natural can be the source of miracles” (Hannaford, 1995, p.214).

Once again, we are reminded of the particularity of the music which draws responses from children. The data revealed individual responses, ignited by the music itself, the movement or the use of resources, where, as educators, we are reminded by Caine (1991), to be confident in chaos where real learning can be in evidence. The joy and freedom evidenced in the children’s movement supports Tortura (2006) where “children can reveal their experiences through their non-verbal movement repertoire ... for the pleasure and joy of moving” (pps. 376 & 412).

4.6 Music Making Resources

The concept of music-making centred on the parental experiences of the class environment, emphasising the use of *resources* to engage in the process. The musical environment contains developmentally appropriate manipulatives in the form of resources for songs and movement, and child-centred percussion instruments. The breadth of data generated in this area focusing on the child’s use of resources is aligned with the literature suggesting a myriad of learning opportunities inherent in music-making explorations. The findings reflect the parents’ awareness of the needs of the child, their requirements for engagement in learning, the significance of play, and the joy and freedom in exploration which is aligned with the literature as highlighted earlier (pp.16-18).

4.6.1 Facilitating Learning

The parents spoke about the role these resources played for their child. Cara said, “the more resources you have, the better it is for learning.” Being aware of the children’s ages, Cara continued, “when you have something physical to look at, ...it brings the song to life.” Ted felt the resources represented “a combination of music and imagery and tactile where it’s adding to all the inputs that inform their world.” This is supported by Amy who said, “their tiny little minds can’t conceptualise exactly what-so just to show it to them.”

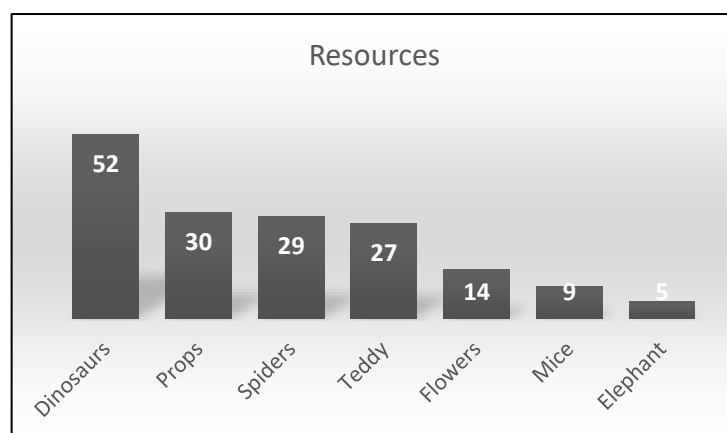


Fig. 16: Frequency of Parental References to Resources Used

4.6.2. *Teacher Resources for Music Making*

The teacher's use of a specific resource was significant, as explained by Caroline recounting how her grandson responded to a large toy elephant, "that was the first breakthrough with Cian, when you brought out *Elsie* and he started singing, and I looked down and said, oh my goodness, he's participating."



Fig. 17: "*Elsie*" the Elephant: A hook for Cian

A snail, used as a teaching resource provided the hook for Laura's daughter, Ellen, "Sheila, the snail, seeing the button, (referring to the large wooden button in the centre of the snail's spiral shell), and she says, *do you have buttons Mummy?*" This resource provides a stimulus for great curiosity in the class as the children gather to touch and explore, and observe the absence of legs. This resource provided an understanding for the very young children of the required movement to creep along *slowly*. Laura continued "and you turn it over *...no legs*".



Fig. 18: Soft-toy snail, spiral shell with button - a catalyst for curiosity

The significance of children's individuality is highlighted here, and the importance of knowing what really captures their interests, which is inherent in Orr's (2004) understanding of the position of wonder and curiosity for young children stating, "the sense of wonder is fragile, once crushed, it rarely blossoms again"(p.24). From a teacher-held resource, the children can take "intellectual ownership of musical materials by transforming them into something individually meaningful" which "provides both aesthetic delight and a means to learning," (Custodero, 2002, p.7).

4.6.3 Participant Resources for Music Making

Resources and instruments are available throughout the class as Elaine explained "... like toys for the kids, and it's all about fun, learning through play, so it's going in much easier, more natural." The concept of choice was significant for the children as illustrated by their parents' comments specifically referring to the basket of animals. Amy said, "the animals... definitely their favourite, cos there's a choice, they're all watching for the basket, and all ready to go."



Fig. 19: Basket of farm animals as participant resources

Elaine added, “the anticipation of it, what’s in this basket?” Elaine explained how choice was important when the parents were included also, “especially when they chose the hat for you.”



Fig. 20: Basket of Hats representing anticipation, choice, enjoyment and tidy up!

Even the tidying up was significant as explained by Caroline referring to another little boy in the class. She observed the learning benefits for Adam “tidying up helps them to participate at the very, very early stages. Adam’s a very quiet little boy, and the one thing

he does, he puts the things back with the other children.” She continued “they all have to get up and walk independently to the basket, and that’s the first level of participation because it’s easy to do and they can see other children doing it.” Amy developed this further by suggesting that familiarity of routine is significant “it’s routine as well, they know the routine, it’s time to move on.” The elements of choice, anticipation and developmentally appropriate materials represent significant factors for a young child’s engagement in learning, which the parents perceive are an important part of the class and beneficial to their perception of learning. These elements are aligned with the literature underscoring the concept of active learning, where engagement with others and materials is cited as the nucleus of development and learning (French,2007).

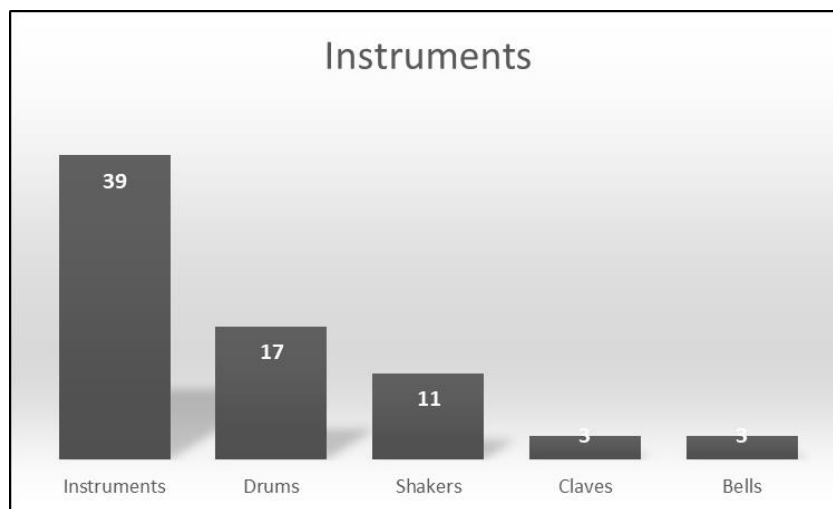


Fig. 21: Frequency of referencing instruments

4.6.4 Making Music with Percussion instruments

Anne explained the learning benefits for her daughter Anna using percussion instruments “it’s a whole sensory experience, because it’s sound and physicality and props and visual.” Anne’s perception is supported by Amy who said, “it’s all the sensory stimulation, you can feel the beat moving in it.” Marie explained how her daughter Bea loved the shakers, “it’s

just the noise, it's very physical, she's creating it and she was in control of that." This sense of agency in music making was identified by Deirdre as she reflected on her daughter's use of the claves. "Bella has sensory issues, in the car I can't have music on loud, but I'm surprised she's smashing those claves, and that's not annoying her... in music, it doesn't bother her."



Fig. 22: Claves-Striking percussion instrument

Deirdre's perception of Bella's engagement with the claves is corroborated by Custodero (2002) where "the depth of concentration mirrored in the uninhibited curiosity...enables the discovery of another facet of oneself" (p.5). Bella benefited greatly using the claves, but it was the fruit shakers which Caroline noticed were of benefit for her grandson. "It was the choice, the noise, the colours of them, and they're counting their bananas, he couldn't wait for the fruit basket to come out."



Fig. 23: Basket of Fruit Shakers

The music making with percussion instruments is aligned with the literature where Levinowitz (1998) suggests that the manipulation of simple musical instruments follows that natural trajectory of a child's bodily movement, stating "real musical instruments, like tools, can become...amplifications of the body's ability to be musically expressive." As children naturally respond to music, the use of these instruments represents the tools of play which Morehouse (2013) suggests enables a closer connection to the structure of the music, comparing this musical engagement to the use of dolls and toys facilitating play. Julie explained how her son Alan enjoyed the freedom to play with percussion instruments where "the children were given different musical instruments and left to their own devices, initially to work out how they were played, especially the *cabasa*." Julie explained why the cabasa piqued his curiosity "he was fascinated in watching it, the silvery beads going round, seeing where the beads were going."



Fig. 24: "Cabasa": A catalyst to discovery for Alan

The free exploration of instruments allows children time to assimilate when they are ready, as Caroline explained, "the rug with all the instruments, they all gallop in, even if they're reluctant at the door, they have great fun for ten minutes and they're listening to each other, it's wonderful." Caroline concluded "it's discovery." Curiosity with instruments was explained by Linda referring to simple wrist and ankle bells which are used for their teddy dance, "they could put bells on them as well, and the idea of putting an

instrument *on* them, *wearing an instrument.*” The benefits of free playing of musical instruments is congruent with the literature where Bhagwan (2009) asserts, “musical play is complex and transformative, as it nurtures the highest levels of creativity” (p.229).



Fig. 25: Class collection of percussion instruments – Free Play and Discovery

4.6.5 Musical resources for Creativity and Agency

Exploring resources allows children to be creative, and the final vignette shows creativity in action as the children choose to abandon their parents for their concluding cuddle as explained by Anne,

I’m thinking, I’m gonna have my snuggles now but ...they all take their teddies, and put them to hospital or whatever, and all of the children play together at the very end. Some of the shy children have now started to come over and have a look. The chat out of them and the talk about what’s going on with the teddies.

Caroline added “there was a big long line of teddies under the mat going to bed. All the children were at the one level. Cooperating together, it was lovely to see it, even though they were supposed to be sitting cuddling their teddies, they had a different perception.”

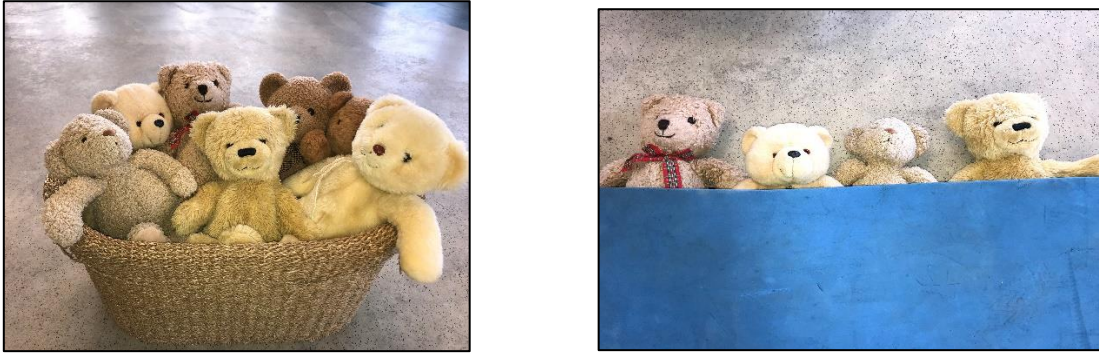


Fig. 26: “Teddies”- From Cuddles to creativity

In the closing section of the class, the children demonstrate agency and creativity which the literature suggests, facilitates creative thinking positioned as “an invaluable vehicle which allows children to stimulate each other’s ideas and thoughts” (Maxim, 1989, p.236). The interest, enjoyment, engagement, playfulness, and choice evidenced from the children through their musical play have been corroborated by Tafuri (2008) and reflect our contemporary philosophy of EC education.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This exploratory investigation focused on parental perceptions of learning as they engaged in discourse about the benefits to their child from participation in an EC music class. This study was framed by the main research question: *What do you perceive are the learning benefits to your child from participation in an EC music class?* The research journey evolved to explore the parents' role in the musical process, their perceptions on the separate elements of music, the importance of language through musical engagement, and the non-cognitive benefits perceived from partnership in musical experiences. This concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings from the data generated through focus group engagement. Five significant themes emerged from the data, acknowledging that overlapping ideas were evident. The limitations and challenges of the research process are identified. Recommendations and implications for consideration in wider EC settings are suggested. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection of this research journey.

5.2 Summary of Findings

- Parent's Role: Partners in Learning

The parents acknowledged the special time they shared with their child as a musical bonding experience, representing inter-subjective engagement. Their presence in the class as the trusted adult, facilitated their child growing in confidence, and, as a learning partner to scaffold the experience socially and cognitively. Their knowledge of the repertoire facilitated deeper learning through reinforcement of the material at home.

- Singing: An avenue to language and learning

The invaluable role of singing for children was presented, providing rich opportunities for language and learning where the child's curiosity was stimulated, and learning occurred through repetition, engagement and enjoyment. Individual preferences highlighted opportunities for inquiry, emotional knowledge, agency and creative thinking.

- Social development

The classes provided a multitude of opportunities for the children to develop socially. From the dynamics of a group working together, to developing an awareness of others' needs. Facilitated by music-making resources, and the routine inherent in the classes, the children learnt the social rules of working and playing together.

- Movement and listening

Individual responses were highlighted in the areas of movement and listening. The importance of movement for young children was identified and the absolute joy and freedom of the experience. The active engagement of listening developed discipline in a fun environment where the essential skill of listening for learning throughout life was introduced.

- Music Making Resources

A rich musical environment with developmentally appropriate resources provided the catalyst for participation and curiosity. Essential for the young child's stage of development, these resources facilitated choice, learning, language and wonder.

5.3 Limitations and Challenges

A qualitative methodology was employed in this investigation to gain a deeper understanding of parental perceptions pertaining to the possible benefits of participation in an EC music programme. By its very nature, qualitative research produces a large corpus of data, presenting a challenge to give sufficient voice to the parents, ensuring their views would be heard through the decontextualised data, represented by Bruner (1986) as the “subjective landscapes” of participants (p.29). This limitation is acknowledged in the research literature stating, “In the interest of practicality, it may not be possible to include everyone’s voice” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.238). Mueller et al., (2016) have identified this limitation as “the burden of the researcher” dealing with multiple perspectives whilst endeavouring to present verisimilitude in the findings (p.40).

As participant researcher acting as the “human instrument” throughout this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.187), the challenge was to remain open to the findings as they emerged from the data, a difficulty identified by Flyvbjerg (2006) where “a bias towards verification... to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions” may be evidenced in the employment of a case study (p.234). Additionally, this view has been identified by Francis Bacon (1853) asserting, “it is the peculiar perpetual error of the human understanding to be more moved and excited by affirmatives than negatives” (p.xlvi). Awareness of my researcher identity and possible bias, the challenge throughout was to remain disciplined and open to the integrity of the findings.

The research instrument used in this study presented organisational challenges, thus supporting Gillham’s assertion that there is “a great deal more to interviewing than simply asking questions” (2000, p.23). Inherent in the challenge was the employment of focus groups, where structuring times for a *group* of participants proved more difficult than

individual meetings. Constrained by, “our inherent epistemological and methodological limitations” (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton, 2006, p.52), nonetheless, the data from the focus groups is aligned with the Vygotsian hypothesis of the centrality of engagement for learning, inherent in the parent/child dyad explored in this research, and thus maintained the integrity of this study.

5.4 Implications and Recommendations

The research literature has identified the difficulty of generalisation from a particular case study, whilst presenting “Fuzzy” (Bassey, 1999, p.52), “Naturalistic” (Stake, 1995, p.165) and “Situated” (Elliott, 2008, as cited in Simons, 2009, p.162) generalisations as possible concepts to consider. Acknowledging the particularity of the context in this study, the following recommendations are suggested as possibilities for implementation within different contexts, where music can be available to a far wider group of children.

5.4.1 Recommendations for EC practice

- 1.** The data revealed the essential nature of the parent/child dyad to facilitate learning. Acknowledging the distinctiveness of this context, it remains a challenge to instil this responsive engagement in all EC settings. This study recommends that students in the field of EC education are made aware of the value of parental engagement.
- 2.** This study highlights the importance of partnership with parents, where we, as educators fully understand the children in our care, facilitated by an open policy of communication with parents. This study therefore recommends that EC

practitioners strive to maintain open communication with the parents and guardians of the children in their settings.

3. This study examined the parents' perceptions of learning benefits to their children from participation in an EC music programme. The data show unanimity to the learning advances in cognitive and social domains. Each distinct element of music produced findings which encompassed all learning domains, thus supporting our view of holistic education in EC settings. It had been acknowledged that teacher's beliefs impact upon classroom practice (McMullen, 1997; Vartuli, 1999; Schirmer, Casbon & Twiss, 1997) therefore, the findings suggest that students of EC education and EC practitioners be made aware of the significant benefits music can bring to a child's life:

- Enhance well-being, build self-esteem, engender feelings of enjoyment and belonging
- Facilitate linguistic advancement through engagement in a rich song repertoire
- Represents a learning developmental tool, facilitating emerging learning dispositions of engagement and concentration
- Encourage curiosity and agency through musical explorations
- Represent a powerful vehicle to accelerate social skills
- Create a community of learners through social engagement

The significant benefits from participation in an EC music programme garnered from the data in this study and addressed above, necessitate the inclusion of the additional recommendations for EC practice in particular, which are aligned with Jones' suggestion to incorporate music "anywhere, everywhere and as often as possible" (2005, p.45).

- To incorporate music as the ritual and routine of daily experience
- To create an enriched musical environment, encouraging exploration with varied resources and opportunities for movement.
- To be purposeful about musical choices in curriculum planning, choosing varied genres to facilitate language development, creative thinking and enjoyment.
- To share musical repertoire through technology with parents, creating partners in learning, inspiring deeper learning and creating joy.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Study

This case study has focused on a particular context, demonstrating evidence of learning from musical engagements. The significance of language and learning, and the development of learning dispositions through a planned music programme emerged significantly from this study. These findings demonstrate the requirement for a wider study on the benefits of music education within the context of an EC setting.

5.5 Personal Journey

This personal journey began over twelve years ago where I observed that something valuable was happening in an EC music class. As suggested by Maxwell (2005) these “tentative theories about phenomena” crystallised into an exploratory research study, giving voice to the parents and the children at the heart of the learning engagement. The parental observations of the benefits observed in their children facilitated the growth of reflective partners in learning, where even “microscopic details” shed light on the possibilities of learning (Geertz, 1973, p.10). This has facilitated an openness to further communication which has continued beyond the remit of the research, evidenced by the parents sharing of learning stories, and any initial reluctance on my part to request their

involvement in the research has been dissipated by their interest and enthusiasm in the process.

From the honesty of their rationale about the class; *any activity* to share with their child, they revealed a wealth of knowledge from observing the learning inherent in the musical interactions. The sharing of stories of their child's engagement with music during the classes, and particularly at home, was congruent with the literature, while attributing surprising empirical evidence to my tentative musings on what was actually going on, succinctly encapsulated by Caroline, "the learning that has come out of that class is unbelievable." Musical interactions at home are frequent occurrences where the class repertoire is personalised and incorporated naturally into home experiences, thus underscoring the value of partnership in learning and communication between settings.

From exposure to weekly classes, the children have exhibited surprisingly well-developed social skills which would highlight the benefits of daily exposure to musical engagement.

Inherent in the research was the tension of positionality, framed by the research question; is this research about the parents' perceptions of learning for their child, the benefits attributed to music, or is it music itself in its essence? The findings would suggest that each element is dependent upon the other, thus representing a trilogy of factors which possibly could "make something happen." Music itself, the positivity of sharing a musical experience with a responsive adult, or the significant benefits which the data have identified, this research offers "an invitation to try it and see if the same happens" (Bassey, 1999, p.52).

After many years of working in EC music education, this study acknowledges a child's fascination for music and the tremendous learning that can happen as a result. In conclusion, I concur with Avery (2002) who states, "I would come to know that teaching

begins with understanding, not getting the children to understand, but rather about my understanding of each one of them (as cited in Murdoch, 2015, p.134).

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Appendix A: Class Outline

Junior Class (Sample Spring Repertoire)

Repertoire	Concept	Resources		Description
		T	P	
Free play with percussion instruments	Exploration, discovery, play, exploring sounds. Investigating differences, shaking and striking instruments. Respect for property. Group interactions; Working in a group, taking turns, waiting, sharing, tidying-up		*	Introductory activity before the official class begins. Encourages engagement and participation through play, as rug of mixed percussion instruments is informally laid out, facilitating exchanges between parent and child and socially between parents
<i>Good morning</i> -song	Establishing a routine and ritual in the class			As song is sung, children wave at other members of the class
<i>We can see</i> (child's name) in our music class- Song	Identity, belonging. Name recognition. Awareness of others in the class. Taking turns. Making the connection with music. Using our voices to make music	*		Teddy is passed around the group as each child's name is sung and welcomed to the class. Teddy represents our first official class link with music as he wears a treble clef necklace  representing our engagement with music, encapsulated by our statement, "We make music when we sing"
<i>Mummy and</i> (child's name)-Song	Engagement, singing in partnership. Name recognition and identification Gentle Introduction to musical elements of tempo (fast and slow) and pitch (high and low) through the language used in the song			Parent or caregiver sing their own name and their child's name multiple times throughout this song representing their special partnership in the class. Music elements of tempo and pitch are matched by the actions of parent and child as the parent lifts up the child for high etc
<i>Teddy Bear, Teddy bear</i> (sung rhyme)	Developing the bond between parent and child created by the previous song. Matching language to actions			Familiar rhyme is used to encourage parent to fully engage with their child, facilitating arm and leg movements as required by the lyrics
<i>What shall we do?</i> (Melody from -What shall we do with the drunken sailor? - Song	Exploring language playfully. Making meaningful language connections Engaging in playful movements with their child			Parents encouraged to use language richly and playfully as they use a store of adjectives to describe their child, e.g. "What shall we do with <i>effervescent Ellie?</i> "
<i>Morning Mood</i> by Grieg- instrumental	Exploring listening Following the cadences in the music	*		A soft toy sun is used and raised up high to represent the sun waking up. Parents stand and lift up their child in response to the crescendos in

	Responding physically to the changes in the music Bonding between parent and child			the music. At end of the music, all children are almost touching the ceiling in a ritualistic experience of being together, and a new day represented by being together in their music class.
<i>You're shining on me</i> -Song	Singing together Matching lyrics to environmental events Language of prepositions; <i>up, behind</i> Matching movement to the pitch elements of the song	*		This song follows naturally from Grieg's <i>Morning</i> . The lyrics are determined by the conditions of the sky, very visible in the room full of windows, either... <i>you're shining on me from up in the sky</i> or... <i>from behind the clouds</i> (used on a cloudy day) Sun and cloud props used as required
<i>Follow Me</i> -Shadow song (M)	Exploration of shadows Echo singing -a device to learn a song Group movement activity Singing and moving together Matching movements to the sung lyrics Awareness of changing shadow sizes			Parents and children explore shadows through movement. Echo singing is a simple method of learning a song as the parents repeat the sung phrase. Group circle song, including the movements of walk, run and skip
<i>Dinosaur Song</i> (M)	Labelling and identification of dinosaurs Sharing and taking turns Responding to the beat in the marching movements Movement-Marching together as a group Choice	*	*	Children chose their dinosaur toy and march together, holding their dinosaur keeping time to the music
<i>Slowly, slowly</i> - Song (M)	Musical element of tempo Physical response to the music Curiosity. Exploring bodily movements	*		A fun introduction for the child's individual response to tempo. A soft toy snail is investigated (fully) and turned over to discover the absence of legs as opposed to the dinosaurs used previously. Children physically respond to the slow tempo of the music as they move slowly around the room
Running Mice -instrumental (M) <i>Minute waltz</i> : Chopin	Exploration of tempo Contrast from previous song Exploring shared spaces		*	Children choose a small soft toy mouse and respond to the fast music, by running freely around the room

	<p>Taking turns Awareness of others in a fast-paced shared space Bodily movement Freedom and enjoyment</p>			
<i>Clap hands-Song</i>	<p>Shared activity-singing together Clapping in time to the music Hand -eye co-ordination</p>			Simple song as parent and child return to sit down after short movement section. Song involves clapping and tickling, making the connection again between parent and child
<i>1,2,3 you and me-Song</i>	<p>Choice Taking turns Awareness of others Following the actions of the song Tidying up</p>		*	A large basket full of different styled hats is used. The children choose a hat for themselves and for their parent/care giver to use in this song
<i>In the mirror-Song</i>	<p>Identity Self-awareness Labelling facial features Taking turns Awareness of self in a group</p>	*		With hat retained from the previous song, a hand-held mirror is passed around for the children to see themselves as we sing the song, identifying the features of the face
<i>Two birds-Song</i>	<p>Identity, difference, colour Recognition Language and pattern Counting Language of time Active listening</p>	*		Soft toy birds with individual voice boxes are used to identify two different birds. The birds are investigated, describing their colours etc. and their different voices listened to carefully. The children hold up two fingers to represent the different birds as they prepare to sing the song
<i>The Robin Song</i>	<p>Choice Taking turns Respecting property Language of time Fine motor control</p>	*	*	Small soft-toy robins are used to give meaning to this song. Each child holds the robin for the duration of the song and responds to the lyrics as the robin sings up high in a tree (positioning the robin up high)
<i>Rosie-Song</i>	<p>Identity-Special names Animal identification differences Language of animal movements</p>	*		Four large toy animals are used: Rosie/cat; Humphrey/rabbit; Sophie/tortoise; Peter/Puppy Names are sung and particular animal movements explored and identified. Each animal

	Soh-me melodic motive introduced (names of animals)			name is sung specifically with a soh-me phrase using an echo technique.
Basket of farm animals-Instrumental- <i>Beethoven: Pastoral Symphony No.6</i>	Choice Numeracy Language, labelling, identification Exploring sounds Taking turns, sharing Awareness of others	*	*	As children choose a collection of farm animals from the basket, the instrumental music is played. In response to the large teacher-held animals, the children find a matching animal. These animals are named, their particular voice sounds made, and the children get involved in counting which children have the different animals.
<i>Farm animal songs</i>	Choice Identity Difference Movement Fine motor control	*	*	The children now use their individually chosen animals as we sing a song for each of the farm animals, focusing on the voice sounds of the different animals, and using the animals to bounce along to the farm... <i>I went to visit a farm one day ...</i>
<i>Yellow Daffodils-song</i>	Choice Sharing Movement Growth Language		*	A simple spring song using life-like individual artificial daffodils to provide focus. A swaying melody as the parents provide the weather actions for the daffodils to grow and lift their child to represent growth
Traveling to the playground <i>Instrumental</i> <i>William Tell Overture: Rossini</i>	Movement Connection Choice Tempo Fine motor control	*	*	Horse and rider presented as catalyst for the children to choose a tambourine and gallop on their parent's knees as we ride our way to the playground
<i>Swings and slides in the playground</i> (M) <i>Kinderzsenen: Robert Schumann</i>	Movement Imagination Bonding Pitch Listening			Parents and children move together with the music representing the swings and slides of the playground. Parents swing their child in their arms and for the slide, they pretend to climb up

				the ladder, step by step, before a wonderful downward swoop in time to the music.
<i>In the hall of the Mountain King: Grieg (M)</i>	Movement Tempo Difference/Contrast Imagination Togetherness	*		A sleeping teddy wrapped in a blanket is the focus for the tip-toeing movement. As the tempo of the music changes, the children naturally respond to the music and start running
<i>Time for Porridge (rhyme)</i>	Imagination Creativity Sharing Collaboration	*	*	As teddy is woken up, it is time for the children to give teddy his breakfast. A large bowl is used, with individual wooden spoons for all the children. As the children are feeding teddy, the parents march in 4/4 time to the porridge rhyme
<i>Here's my tummy (song)</i>	Connection Bonding Language			Parents reconnect with their child and rub their tummies representing a tummy full of porridge
<i>Teddy Dance (M) Instrumental</i>	Movement Exploration Listening		*	Children use wrist and ankle bells as they explore the room with stamping feet and swinging arms, representing Teddy out for a walk
<i>Waltzing Flowers (M) Waltz from the ballet Coppelia</i>	Free Movement Exploration Creativity Bonding Play Listening Gross motor control		*	Large soft toy flowers are used as the children dance freely around the room. Sometimes parents and children explore the waltzing music together in a hugging position, and at other times, the large flowers enable the children to move freely with confidence around the room.

<i>Percussion time</i> <i>Instrumental-mixed genres</i>	Choice Sharing Tempo Start and Stop Duration Pitch Dynamics Enjoyment Hand-eye co-ordination Fine motor control		*	A large basket of shakers is presented, and the children choose two shakers and enjoy using their instruments in time to the music. Various genres of music are used from Irish traditional to jazz and reggae. Two games are played which require listening to instruction: one requires the children to play their instrument, then stop following a stop hand sign; the other requires the children to play the shakers either softly or very loudly
Cuddle time <i>Divertimento in B Flat Major K, 287;</i> <i>Adagio: Mozart</i>	Bonding Listening to music Responding to musical dynamics Ritual /routine		*	As the class draws to a close, the children choose a teddy and cuddle with their parent
<i>Goodbye Song</i>	Ritual/Routine Awareness of others in group Identification belonging		*	As the children hold onto their teddy, the goodbye song is sung where each child's name is sung and other members of the class wave goodbye

Resources * T- held by teacher *only* as a catalyst to engage the children

*P – individual props or instruments held by the children and incorporated into the song or music for the duration of the piece

Appendix B: Intermediate Class Outline- Sample Spring Lesson

Repertoire	Concept	Resources		Description
		T	P	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free exploration of instruments • Good morning Song • “Teddy” 	As per Junior Class			
<i>Making Music Together-Song</i>	Singing together with joy Social cohesion Language development Ritual and Routine			Introductory song focusing on being together in a musical environment “Making music together is our joy...” “...we are bathed in wonderful sound.”
<i>Elsie the elephant-Song</i>	Identity Similarity and difference Singing together Introduction to solfa handsigns, me-ray-doh Introductory awareness to language of music Descending voice skills Co-ordinating hand and voice Awareness of others Universality of music -animals sing too! Language development	*		Use of a large soft-toy elephant as a catalyst to engage the children. Elsie is musical and she also knows the names of the actual singing notes- preliminary investigation into musical theory as the singing <i>sounds</i> are called <i>notes</i> and have special names and handsigns
<i>Jake the Snake -Song</i>	Identity Language Counting Hand-eye co-ordination Using instruments correctly Following the structure of a song Waiting Following instructions Respect for property	*	*	Extension of identification theme as the snake has a <i>name</i> . Two-tone wood blocks are used to count and beat out numbers, 1,2 used at the end of each phrase in the song Preliminary beating of instrument using the Beat and Stop game -as in junior class)
Exploration of sound <i>Kitchen utensils</i>	Exploration of Sound Curiosity		*	Exploration of sounds from kitchen utensils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mug and spoon

	<p>Awareness of resources in the environment Choice Hand-eye co-ordination Dynamics-loud and soft Similarities and differences Play Awareness of others Social cohesion</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair of wooden spoons • Brush and sieve • Pair of yogurt pots • Saucepan lids <p>Different sounds are explored, and the quality of their sound identified using the language of dynamics -e.g. brush and sieve -a very soft sound Using the different utensils separately and then together to form “Our Kitchen Orchestra”</p>
<p><i>March past of the Kitchen utensils (M)</i> <i>Vaughan Williams</i></p>	<p>Marching in time to the music Hand-eye co-ordination Listening to the structure of the piece of music Waiting -anticipation -discipline Moving in a group Awareness of others</p>		*	<p>Using their choice of kitchen utensil, the children march in time to the music. Built into the music is a loud crescendo played by the saucepan lids- familiarity with the music thorough repeated exposure, has enabled the children to anticipate this specific part and play loudly accordingly.</p>
<p><i>Midnight in the Kitchen-</i> <i>rhythmic chant</i></p>	<p>Using the voice-voice control Contrast Identity Taking turns Hand-eye co-ordination Language of pitch</p>	*	*	<p>Extension of kitchen theme, and in contrast to the loudness of the kitchen utensils, the children recite the simple rhyme beating to the pulse using claves. As the rhyme is being recited, the teacher beats out the pulse using a soft-toy mouse in the palm of her hand. Each recitation includes one child’s name “Midnight in the kitchen, quiet as a mouse, mustn’t wake up (child’s name, sleeping in the house...”</p>
<p><i>Bang-Bang, the claves go bang!</i> Song Exploration of <i>Dynamics</i> through song</p>	<p>Language of dynamics Hand eye-co-ordination Fine motor control Using instruments correctly Respect for property</p>	*	*	<p>Extension of claves, playing loudly and playing softly- Dinosaur as a catalyst for loud playing and mouse to signify the time to play quietly accompanied by a song</p>
<p><i>Spidey -Song</i></p>	<p>Environmental awareness Observation skills Curiosity Counting Language development Knowledge building</p>		*	<p>Extension from the quiet mouse to the explore other animals who move along <i>quietly</i>, Soft-toy spiders are used, and eight legs counted. Underbelly of each spider has six glued-on gems to represent spinnerets. The song has wonderful content, explaining the lifestyle of the spider, from tasting and</p>

	<p>Creating fun from a perceived threat</p> <p>Following the structure of a song with actions</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Taking turns</p> <p>Sharing</p> <p>Awareness of song structure- verse-chorus</p>			<p>smelling with his legs, to shooting out a web from spinnerets.</p> <p>Spidey is presented as a Superhero!</p>
<i>Monet- Song</i>	<p>Singing together</p> <p>Knowledge building</p> <p>Colour identification</p> <p>Exploration of primary colours through song</p> <p>Curiosity</p> <p>Imagination</p> <p>Language extension and conversation</p> <p>Creativity</p>	*	*	<p>From the blackness of the spiders to a song which begins “No Black today, not for Monet... but red, yellow and blue...”</p> <p>Artist’s palette and three large containers of paint, with just the primary colours are used as a hook to engage. Discussion about how other colours could be created-First presentation of this song, the children mix the colours, to create other colours</p>
<i>Heart -Song</i>	<p>Body Awareness</p> <p>Content knowledge</p> <p>Fine motor control</p> <p>Language development</p> <p>Property of living things</p> <p>Awareness of song structure-verse, chorus</p>	*		<p>Identifying red as a primary colour, and in conjunction with Valentine’s day where the children have witnessed the presence of decorated hearts in their immediate environment, this song has a strong knowledge content with a strong beat throughout (often sung after the beating of the claves -using the concept of the beating human heart</p>
<i>You have a look-Song</i> (Flowers theme)	<p>Awareness of the environment</p> <p>Flower identification</p> <p>Counting</p> <p>Taking turns</p> <p>Sharing</p>		*	<p>From the discussion about painting, the children often talk about what they like to pint.</p> <p>Flowers are most popular, and their presence influences the children’s choices due to the landscaping around the class site.</p> <p>This song is facilitated by the use of mixed variety artificial flowers, which are categorised by colour and type, eliciting language of numeracy and flower names</p>
Together we will garden(M)	<p>Imagination</p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Movement</p>		*	<p>From the flower’s song, discussion can lead to what other things can grow in a garden, leading to investigation of jobs that need to be done to facilitate growing.</p>

	Language of gardening Awareness of space Honouring other people's ideas			Small garden tools are used to accompany the actions representing the gardening jobs required
<i>The rain Forest-Song</i>	Environmental awareness Body percussion Responding to rhythmic patterns Language of trees Language development Matching arm movements to the lyrics of the song			From the gardening song, discussion can lead to trees growing. This song provides the opportunity for body percussion in the form of jungle drums on the knees, keeping in time to the introductory beat of the song
Fruit Shakers (percussion instruments)	Anticipation Taking turns Choice Sharing Numeracy Classification Exploring shape, size and texture Labelling and identification Language development Using instruments in time to the music Fine motor control Enjoyment through music		*	From the trees in the rain forest to other trees familiar to the children. Trees that grow fruit are represented by the fruit shakers , providing the opportunity to count, classify and identify the different fruits. Tropical instrumental music played aligned with some tropical fruit shakers used. The children shake up high and low as instructed and enjoy free shaking in time to the music
<i>Up we go-Song(M)</i>	Transition Pitch Bodily movements in response to the music Perspective Using the voice correctly Imagination		*	This song is used in transition to the main movement section of the class. Using small teddies , the children travel together across the sky in a hot air balloon, using their voices in a high pitch as they identify how small everything looks as they are up so high.

Irish Circle Dance(M) <i>Mason's Apron</i>	Movement in a group Responding to structure of music Interpersonal skills Social cohesion Enjoyment of communal movement Children participating with different adults apart from their own parents			Introductory dance to main movement section of the class. Simple circle dance, where the class moves in and out, claps and works together in a skipping circle in response to the music
<i>Magic train-</i> (Song)	Working together Arm movements in response to the music Imagination Listening to music Awareness of space Full body movement around the room			Children and adults climb aboard the magic train to take us to the Antarctic (or other places visited in other areas of the repertoire)
<i>The Penguin song</i>	Awareness of body movements Isolating body movements Structured movements Mirroring teacher movements Co-ordinating multiple isolations Learning left and right	*		A large soft-toy penguin is used for this song as the children follow the teacher's instructions for isolated movements of body parts. E.g. left arm, right arm, nod your head, stick out your tongue. The movements accumulate through the course of the song until the children are moving their full bodies in a fun comical way. This movement provides the rationale for our penguin dance, as our penguin is alone, and cannot huddle with other penguins to keep warm, hence the dance suffices to provide warmth for the lonely penguin.
<i>Slowly, Slowly and Running mice</i>	As per junior class Song and instrumental music exploring tempo	*	*	
<i>Waltz of the flowers</i>	Free movement as per Junior class			
<i>Shakers</i> <i>Free percussion</i>	Anticipation Choice Taking turns Exploration of dynamics Language of dynamics		*	As per the junior class, a large basket of shakers is used for the children to keep in time to the music and have fun. Games for listening, to encourage playing of the instruments and stopping the instruments are used

	Following instructions Following the beat in the music			
<i>In the Jungle-Song</i>	Imagination Language development Following the structure of a song Discipline Using instruments at correct times in the song Fine motor control Contrast	*		From the free use of the shakers to a more-structured use. A large soft-toy lion is used for this familiar song as the children engage with movement and percussion for the chorus. It requires great discipline on the part of the children, as we endeavour to sing out the verses of the song with actions, and only move and use instruments for the chorus
<i>Cuddle Time- instrumental "Divertimento" in B Flat Major K, 287; Adagio by Mozart</i>	As per Junior Class			
<i>Goodbye Song</i>	As per Junior class			

Appendix C: Collection of Photographs used during Data Collection



Shakers Collection



Striking Instruments



Teacher-held Animal Resources



Teacher & Participant Farm Animals



*Kitchen-inspired Percussion:
Exploration of Sound*



*Visual Exploration of Resources:
Monet Song*



*Participant resources for "Spidey"
Information song – "Spidey" the superhero*



Collection of Percussion Instruments

Appendix D: Focus Group Composition

Focus Group Composition

Focus Group #1, n=4

Participant's Name	Relationship	Child's Name	Age*	Comment
Mary	Mother	Senan	3	Older sibling had previously attended; Senan youngest in family
Dierdre	Mother	Beth Aine	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ 2	Older sibling had previously attended; Mother attends with 2 children
Julie	Mother	Alan	3	Younger sibling now attending; older sibling in school
Linda	Mother	Pamela	4	Two older siblings had previously attended; youngest now attending

Focus Group #2, n=4

Participant's Name	Relationship	Child's Name	Age	Comment
Ted	Grandad	Abbie	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	Only Grandchild; primary caregiver weekdays;
Cara	Mother	Tim	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	Older sibling had previously attended; Cara had attended with both children
Caroline	Grandmother	Cian	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	Co-parents Cian with Cian's mother who lives with them
Amy	Mother	Peter Evie	3 1	Attends with her two youngest children

Focus Group #3, n=5

Participant's Name	Relationship	Child's Name	Age	Comment
Elaine	Mother	Sophie	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	One older sibling had attended; Sophie youngest in family
Anne	Mother	Anna	3	Older sibling had attended and was referenced in the data
Mel	Mother	Mark	3	Youngest of four siblings who have all attended
Laura	Mother	Ellen	2	Youngest of two children
Marie	Mother	Bea	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	Youngest child; older sibling had attended and is referred to in the data

* age of child at data collection Feb 2019

Appendix E

Focus Group Questions - POST- PILOTING

1. Why: did you choose to bring your child to a **music** class? ... as opposed to a different activity -**why music in particular?**

2. Singing: We spend a large portion of the class singing together. How do you think your child **benefits** from singing with you?

- Do you think there is a connection between language and singing?
- Does your child have particularly **favourite** songs from the class? (follow-on)
- Can you explain **how** you know your child **shows** a song is a particular favourite?

3. Listening- the instrumental pieces: what responses do you notice in your child when the instrumental music is played? - Researcher names some examples of music used.

- Can you give examples of the **particular** pieces of music that your child particularly responds to?
- Why do you think they respond in that way?

4. Movement: Movement is interspersed throughout the class. How important do you think is the movement component of the class for your child?

5. Parent's role: What **role** do you think you have played in the class?

6. Resources for Music-making: We use a lot of props and instruments throughout the class.

- How **valuable** do you think they are for your child?

Some used **freely**, some with **specific music** or **songs**

- **Any particular favourites?** What behaviours do you notice with these props in particular?

7. Enjoyment: In which parts of the class do you really notice your child absorbed and really enjoying themselves?

8. Learning at home: Have you noticed any evidence of learning at home that you think is particularly influenced by the music classes? Can you give some **examples?**

9. Over-all Development: How do you think music helps with your child's development?

- Are there particular areas of the class that you feel are helpful to other areas of your child's development...**socially?**

NB: SUMMARISE WHAT HAS BEEN COVERED

10. Two final questions:

- Choose one overall standout benefit from participation in music
- Identify the part of the class your child likes best

Thank You Statement & reiterate elements from letter of consent

Appendix F: Transcription Sample – Data Display

1. **Amy:** absolutely, I find it very calming with them, I often use it with them
2. because the tunes are so familiar to them, everything in the music class, because
3. they're familiar, it can often distract from a little tantrum or focus on trying to do
4. a task, getting dressed, we've spoken about this, I'd often use it because it's so
5. familiar, and I have the two smallies with me in the mornings, the 3 of us can start
6. singing together to get ready
7. **R** ok
8. **A** so I just find it very calming for them
9. **Carmel:** Cillian doesn't particularly want to sing with me, when I start singing
10. with the tape, that Joan gave us and it's brilliant in the car em he tells me Nana
11. don't sing on your own and he sings, he doesn't necessarily want me to sing,
12. which is interesting, but he sings with his cousin, and the two of them belt out the
13. songs together, and I think first of all, it makes driving the both much more
14. enjoyable, but I think, what I notice with Cillian singing is the amount he's
15. actually learning. I mean he told somebody the other day, in my hearing that
16. daffodils need rain and sun to grow. And he said that in a conversation and I'm
17. there, he got that in his music lesson, you know.so he wouldn't be a sing along
18. person, he's two and a half but he sings himself but doesn't particularly want me
19. to sing with him. His mum sings with him cos she has a voice, you might
20. recognise that I really can't sing.
21. **Carmel** (continues) Anyway, I just know he loves, ..he sings a lot more and it'd
22. Happy, happy stuff, it creates a happy feeling and I can't believe the amount he'd
23. learning about nature and life in general

Appendix G: “In Vivo” Coding from “Substantive Statements”

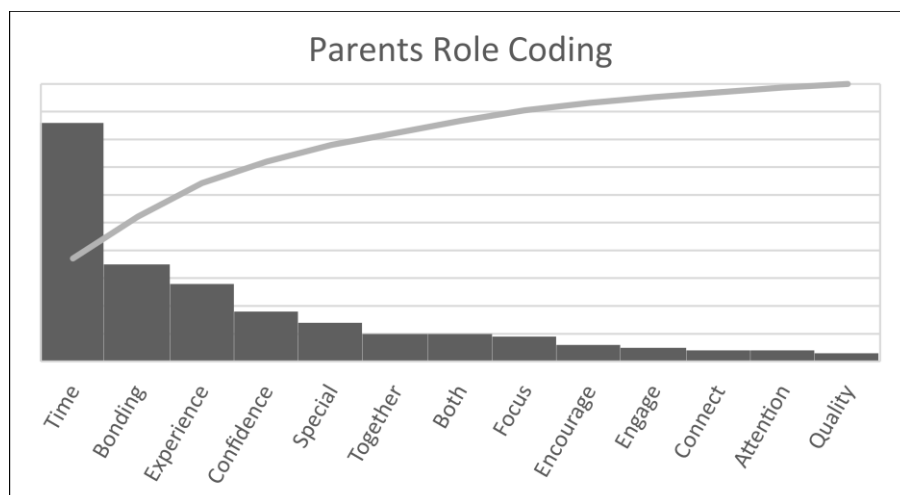
(Cope ,2010; Gillham, 2000)

Reflecting on Parent’s Role

Focus Group	Line Number	Substantive Statement
F3	114	It’s a real bonding experience. You’re both enjoying it
F3	18	We went together , so it was really nice.
F2	226	A safe person there, to come back to.
F1	156	Being there every week with him , gaining the confidence
F1	122	To encourage them, give them the confidence ...you can do it.
F2	212	It’s instilling confidence in them.
F2	210	Something that you can do together is an enjoyable thing
F2	214	Trying to get them a bit of confidence
F1	124	If you don’t do it , they’re not going to do it
F1	141	That element to encourage them to sing
F1	147	Confidence being with them , giving them support
F1	152	You’re there with them , gives them confidence
F3	347	You’re engaged
F3	348	You can’t fake it; you have to be present
F3	167	We’re all here together
F3	168	Proper quality time
F3	170	Just her and me
F3	173	Focus on your child
F3	210	I’ve done all that with her
F3	239	They’re learning through you
F3	243	It’s actually one-on-one with your child
F3	244	Us being there , it accelerates the learning
F3	333	It’s the quality time
F3	334	It’s our special time
F3	335	One on one , where I have been involved
F1	345	That individual attention

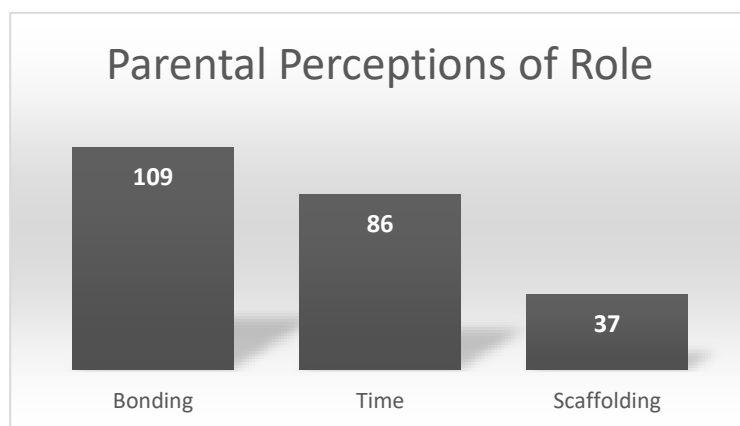
Appendix H: Example of Numerical Coding & Frequency Matrix – Parents Role

	Focus Group 1#	Focus Group 2#	Focus Group 3#	Focus Groups
Time	18	21	47	86
Bonding	2	13	20	35
Experience	1	7	20	28
Confidence	7	10	1	18
Special	2	3	9	14
Together	1	6	3	10
Both	1	5	4	10
Focus	2	5	2	9
Encourage	6	0	0	6
Engage	3	0	2	5
Connect	4	0	0	4
Attention	0	2	2	4
Quality	0	0	3	3



Bonding	109
Time	86
Scaffolding	37

Development of Categories



Appendix I, Letter of Information and Consent

Exploratory investigation into Parental Perceptions of learning through participation in an Early Childhood Music class

Research study as partial fulfilment of a Master in Education Studies specialising in Early Childhood Education, Marino Institute of Education and Trinity College, Dublin.

Dear parents/guardians,

I hope you are enjoying your time at XXXXX and sharing some special musical experiences with your child. As many of you are aware, these classes have been running for many years, where my interest has developed from the music inherent in the classes, to the learning benefits for your child. Having worked for many years as a primary school teacher, it is a privilege to facilitate these classes and witness the learning opportunities in evidence through your participation with your child. As parents and grandparents, you have provided the platform to enhance your child's development, and this is an area where I felt further exploration was required.

I am looking for your help in this area as partial fulfilment of my Master in Education Studies degree, specialising in Early Childhood Education. I appreciate that you are all busy with young children, but I would greatly value the opportunity to explore your views about your own child's learning. The research design requires that I gather your thoughts and views on what you feel are the learning benefits that you may witness throughout the classes, and in your own homes. I hope to organise three focus groups, where a group of participating parents who attend, these classes with their child, will reflect on, and discuss some questions that I will have prepared. Sample questions which parents may discuss together would be; *How do you think your child benefits from singing with you? Do you think there are any areas of the class that are particularly helpful to your child's development?*

Participation in this research will involve you taking part in one of these focus group discussions. The focus groups will be organised to suit your family commitments. It is envisaged that four or five parents will come together to form a focus group, with the discussion lasting an hour approximately. To facilitate the accurate collection of your ideas, these discussions will be videoed. Your identity and all the information you provide will be strictly anonymous, used for the purpose of the research only. The measures taken to protect your identity and safeguard the data are aligned with the ethical guidelines employed by The Marino Institute of Education, and Trinity College, Dublin.

The aim of this research is to explore your perceptions of learning within the unique environment of an early childhood music class, therefore. your participation in this research is essential to its successful completion.

If you have any concern or queries about this research, my supervisor, Dr. Karin Bacon can be contacted at Karin.Bacon@mie.ie. You are free to withdraw from the research process at any time by contacting me at jmcgrealmece16@momail.mie.ie

I will be delighted to share the findings of the research with you, and I look forward to your participation in this process. If you feel this is an area that interests you, and you have the time to commit to one focus group meeting, please sign below.

Parent's Signature

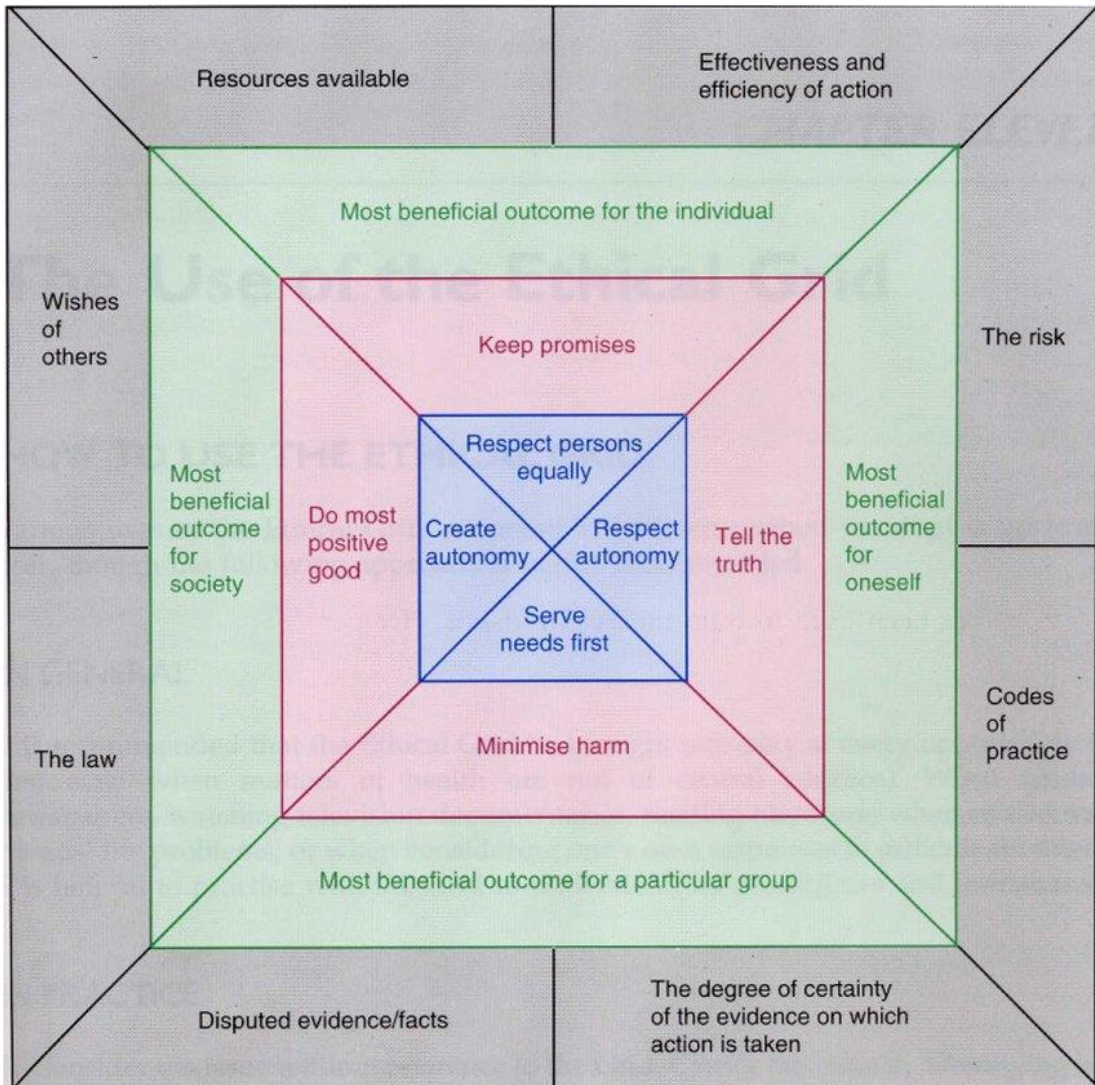
Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix J: Seedhouse's Ethical Grid

Seedhouse (1998)



Appendix K: Class Reflection Journal – Emer

Date	Class Reflection
6/12/'18	<p>Emer's mum is still in hospital and friends and family have visited from overseas to help with family life. A friend of her Mum's accompanied Emer to class today. She did not want to participate with striking the chime bar to introduce the class.</p> <p>Encouraged by the adult to participate, she took the adult's hand to accompany her to choose items from the various baskets. Very tentatively walked forward with the adult when choosing.</p> <p>Shy in class today as lots of different adults are arriving at different times at home to help out.</p>
28/1/'19	<p>Emer has established a good rapport with her minder who is a family friend and has now been coming to the class for a few weeks. She sang away and followed the actions of the songs while sitting on her minder's lap. She was happy to leave the security of her minder's lap and collect resources and even freely chose to help tidy away the baskets. 😊</p>
7/2/'19	<p>Granny accompanied Emer to class today. She has arrived from overseas to help the family while Emer's mum is still in hospital. Emer was very shy at the beginning of the class and really didn't want to participate. A slight step backwards for her as she really was building up a good rapport with her minder.</p>
14/2/'19	<p>Emer's dad accompanied her to class today. What a transformation! Emer smiled all the way through, and began the class so well by agreeing, when asked, if she would like to strike the chime bar to announce the start of singing. A major breakthrough as she has declined to do this every week. She was particularly radiant as we marched together in preparation for Saint Patrick's Day and beamed and sang with her dad throughout. She expressed sadness when the class was over, as her granny who had been watching the class, tried to carry her. She just wanted to stay with her dad. 😊😊😊</p>
28/2/'19	<p>Emer was accompanied to class today by her Mum with her new baby sister, and her minder. Mum and the new baby sat on the couch and observed the class while Emer participated with her minder. Although Emer did not initially want to participate in the class, by choosing not to strike the chime bar, she demonstrated great independence in other areas of the class. Her mum was watching her progress throughout and Emer appeared to want to show her Mum how well she was doing. After independently choosing her egg shakers from the basket, she changed her mind about the colour and left her minder's lap to freely choose a different colour, her favourite colour. She hopped up many times to tidy away the baskets with the other children.</p> <p>Significantly, she moved and swayed to the music on her minder's lap and appeared to be really involved with the repertoire. Was very happy today! 😊😊</p>

Appendix L: Additional Repertoire

Assimilating Children's suggestions into instructional content, engendering focused engagement

(Whalen, 1997: Custodero,2002)

Repertoire	Concept	Description
I went to the beach - Song (Seasonal)	Creative thinking, Imagination Language development Sequencing Memory Environmental awareness Fun Engagement	Initial discussion with the children about the possible treasures that can be found along the sand. The children's ideas are used to become the lyrical content of the song. Through discussion, additional adjectives are given to each item to align with the rhythmic quality in the melody. E.g. A <i>sparkly</i> stone, <i>Slimy</i> seaweed, A collection of treasures is built up and placed in a treasure bag, and the song develops with the children adding an additional treasure word with each verse. All the children's ideas can be incorporated as the song can be endless!
We're going on a picnic Song (Seasonal)	Imagination Creativity Language Development Memory Counting	Initial discussion involves talking about favourite picnic foods. Two foods at a time are used in this song. All the children's ideas are written on separate pieces of paper and two ideas are pulled out at a time for each verse and placed in the picnic basket.
Put your coat on - Song (Seasonal)	Critical thinking Choice Language Development Sequencing Body parts Contrast Location Gross motor control Movement	Initial discussion; winter clothes Reflecting weather influences on the class repertoire. What have the children worn to class? How do the particular clothes help them etc? The song builds up a list of warm clothes to wear to "keep yourself nice and cosy" Which clothes to wear and which body parts will be covered.
Hands can hold -Song	Fine motor control Choice Critical thinking Contrasting Sounds Hand Percussion Sequencing Rhythm pattern	Discussion about what sounds our hands can make -from clapping to rubbing Children experiment with different hand sounds and choices are incorporated into rhythm patterns after the explanatory song verse
Mountain song	Location Travel Height Exercise Requirements Imagination Creative Thinking Choice Sequencing Safety Language Development Gross motor control	Discussion about mountains around the world -usually ignited by a family day out by one of the children We discuss which mountain will be climbed, (in the song), where in the world the mountain is, and what mountaineering items are required, from clothes to food. We travel in our magic train to the chosen location and initially "Gaze" at the mountain, followed by a sequence of actions - Gaze, Climb, Walk, Run, Wave and dream
Three Bears- Rhythmic chant	Pitch Numeracy 1-1 correspondence Size Contrast Choice Language development Imagination Characterisation	We discuss various breakfast options Three breakfast choices are chosen per chant as the children ask each of the three bears in turn what they would like for breakfast. Three teddies of contrasting sizes are used with three matching bowls as visual props. When responding in character, the children change their voices to represent the different bears; low, medium-pitch and high voice.