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Title:

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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the role of the Early Childhood Music Practitioner:

What was lost, what was gained and what next?

Glossary:

Early Childhood Music Practitioner = ECMP

Early Childhood Music Education = ECME

Early Childhood Education = ECE

European Early Childhood Research Association = EECERA

British Educational Research Association = BERA

QP 1-53 : Questionnaire Participant 1-53

IA, IB (Interviewee A, Interviewee B)

Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic¹ on Early Childhood Music practitioners (ECMPs) and their practice. It describes how ECMPs encountered and responded to the many challenges during this ever-changing situation, as they explored and developed strategies to continue their work with music, children and families. Data was collected through an online questionnaire (n=53) and a semi-structured interview (n=2) from ECMPs, who had worked through the times of the crisis.

The literature reviewed provided insights into a *pre-pandemic* rationale of Early Childhood Music Education, as well as the impact of the *ongoing pandemic* on education across the world. Very recent articles focussed on the Covid-19 phenomenon, directly relevant to the ECME field. They described the multi-faceted impact not only on children and families, but also on educators themselves. Potential losses and gains, as well as the impact on the future, could be identified through the data relating to the research question. Many negative, but also several surprisingly positive outcomes emerged as a consequence of the crisis.

¹ Spring 2020- Summer 2021

The challenges were manifold. Initially, a main concern for ECMPs was the abrupt, forced change to online teaching, as digital technology from home to home became the only option. When trying to interact with young children across a screen, approaches had to be adapted, as playful music making was difficult and singing together almost impossible. The loss of spontaneous person-to person contact, so essential to early childhood education (Formosinho, 2021), needed to be replaced with creative alternatives.

As time passed and lockdowns came and went, ECMPs became mindful of their own wellbeing. For some, loss of employment, social deficit and anxieties about personal and family health took their toll. Determination, creativity and adaptability helped them find solutions.

Over the time of the pandemic, concerns were emerging about children's lack of educational access, social contact and physical activity. In response, arts-based pedagogies - music making, movement and storytelling - would be central in 'enabling children to express their inner emotions and process feelings to communicate their experiences during the pandemic'(Bertram & Pascal, 2021:3). The impact of emerging socio-economic inequalities, the domestic stresses amongst many young children and families would all need to be taken into account. A pedagogical model - sitting within the overlap of education, care and therapy - was proposed.

In addition, ECMPs discovered some positive aspects and outcomes of the crisis. The use of digital technology during lockdowns proved to be beneficial in a variety of ways. A key insight into online teaching was the critical role played by parents. Paradoxically, the research data showed that online teaching actually intensified mutual collaboration and partnership. The lockdowns also provided fresh opportunities for ECMPs to develop a better life/work balance. Networking with colleagues proved to be a lifeline for many and sometimes resulted in new creative projects and collaborations. ECMPs benefitted from online access to seminars and workshops, which inspired further study, research and the creation of new resources.

Strengthened and empowered by a deeper sense of belonging to a dedicated, professional body, ECMPs can now hope that their work will be recognised, not only within ECME, but also by policy makers and funding bodies. Their contribution to a wider discussion and exploration is awaited with anticipation.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Early Childhood Music Practitioner, online teaching, parent collaboration, social ECMP networks, overlap between education-care-therapy

1. Introduction

This research study investigated the role of ECMPs and their practice in the light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. After the onset in Spring 2020 and the initial shock and disbelief of how to cope and continue with any meaningful ECME² work, a stream of creative, inventive responses from ECMPs followed. Many attempted to make the best out of a difficult situation by continuing different forms of ECME, firstly as provision and support for children and families and secondly, as ongoing income for themselves. For many, this meant teaching online.

The research study raised the question of what was lost, what was gained and how future practice might look after the pandemic. Through this investigation it became clear that ECMP's existing competencies had to be complemented by new skills relating to the new context. The personal impact of the crisis on practitioners themselves warranted exploration.

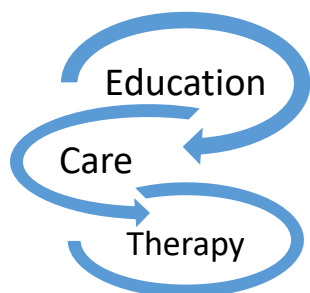
At this point the researcher's background of ECME and Music Therapy needs explanation, as it has undeniably influenced and shaped the research. Although the remit and professional tasks of a music therapist are distinct from the role and aims of the ECMP, the power of music is essential to both and the overlap is considerable. Music therapy sits in a psychological and medical framework and works within a specific rationale, using improvisational, child-led music making as a tool to achieve results more akin to counselling and psychotherapy. ECME works from an educational point of view, trying to help students grow in skills and knowledge and to awaken the creative artist. In the overlap sit common aims, such as enhancement of communication skills (both non-verbal and verbal), interaction and relationship, musical and creative expression, emotional self-awareness and resilience. All promote social, physical and cognitive development, secure and positive attachment - particularly when working with both young children and their parents. The shared experience of 'musicking'³ together (Small, 1998) often works within the overlap of education and therapy, evoking the same emotional reactions and psychological responses. Within the educational practice of ECME it is not appropriate to enter any therapeutic, analytical territory. However, inherent in music making are powerful, complex, inter-relational dynamics, which cannot be ignored and should be taken into account. This approach assumes commitment to regular attendance of the same

² ECME refers here to children aged 0-5, often with parents and carers involvement

³ 'musicking' is a new English term developed by Small in 1998 (possibly derived from 'musizieren' in German?)

group over time, rather than a more open-ended, one-off workshop model. It would involve close collaboration with parents.

Fig. 1



It is in the light of education as a triad of care, therapy and learning, that choices from the available literature were made and reviewed. It was through this particular lens that the researcher was looking at the data.

It could be argued that most music making is a healing activity. In the educational model - when well-structured and appropriate for the participants - it encourages psychological, physical and social well-being, formation of identity and emotional regulation (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2018:2). When careful learner-centred pedagogy (Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018:9) and pedagogical sensitivity, thoughtfulness and empathy (van Manen, 2008:41) is applied, educational aims are all overlapping with aims in music therapeutic practice.

Within the educational context of ECM practice and this study, the role of the ECMP is to share music with others. It offers a chance for social experience which supports and promotes creativity and the cultivation of the self and the world around us (Krueger, 2010:1). This remit of education and care is supported in the statutory framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017:7) under 'Personal, Social and Emotional Development'. The process of music making can be promoted as a means towards the development of human values (Small, 1998:9; Elliott & Silverman, 2015:7). With the focus on these aims in their pedagogical approach, ECMPs can potentially offer most powerful experiences and outcomes, especially in the area of attachment, relationship building and emotional regulation. Through their work with groups, they can arguably reach and support a wide number of children and parents.

Significant to this study was the consideration of the role of the ECMPs when trying to achieve the above-mentioned goals. Thoughtful, pedagogical sensitivity and empathy (van Manen 2008:41) could arguably only be achieved through keen self-awareness and careful observation of the dynamics between ECMP and participants. Within the teaching-learning process of any group involved, the presence of the educator would be significant and their personal well-being influential within this dynamic. It was therefore important to find out how ECMPs managed to keep their creative spark and energy alive. Attending to their own emotional and physical wellbeing was paramount in maintaining their professional and reflective practice.

The study was keen to find out how the pandemic and its restrictions not only hindered educational and caring processes, but also inspired new, unexpected, positive outcomes, which might inform how the rationale of ECME might develop in the future. Whilst a general craving for a return to pre-pandemic normality was understandable, the multi-faceted impact of the pandemic may well have led to fresh insights and outcomes. New, creative ways of working emerged, affirming the role of ECMPs and deepening the meaning of their practice.

'a vital opportunity for early years' researchers, educators and policy makers to consider how their methodologies, pedagogic philosophy, pedagogic approaches and policies might adapt and respond to children's particular needs for expression of voice and emotion at this time'
(Bertram & Pascal, A2021:3)

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The study reviewed peer-reviewed literature, which could shed light onto the role of the ECMPs and their practice in the context of the phenomenological event of the COVID-19 pandemic. It used scholarly articles from the field of Education, Music Education, Psychology and Music Therapy. Some seminal texts formed a theoretical framework in which this Masters dissertation could sit.

The literature review was organised under two parts in a thematic and analytical approach. The first part drew on relevant, existing literature (Mukherji & Albon, 2018:47), in order to provide a theoretical framework for a rationale of the ECMP in pre-pandemic times. Seminal texts helped to define key features of ECM practice and the role of the ECMP. The review briefly considered articles

describing the transforming phenomenon of digital technology into homes and education, as the application during the pandemic crisis and its challenges to ECME became so apparent.

Part two reviewed literature, which explored and shared realities in the context of education and educators during the Covid-19 pandemic (Bertram and Pascal, A2021). Articles provided examples from international sources, addressing educational, health and socio-economic issues, arisen through the unexpected phenomenon of the crisis. They presented some conjectural speculations on how the ECME field might look in a post-pandemic future, when considering the needs children and families presented as a consequence of the crisis. This and the normalised use of digital technology might have indicated a potential reconsideration of pedagogical aims for ECME, as 'the growing crystal of the phenomenon of the pandemic changes the nature of reality' (Mukherji, 2018:33).

Due to the phenomenological framing of this study, the review had to rely on sufficient, contextual, relevant, academic knowledge of articles (Mukherji, 2018:46). Not all texts could speak directly to the research question, but, for credibility's sake and in order to gain sufficient trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004:68), information had to be drawn from wider, related sources. The concept of transferability could be employed, where 'findings of one study could be applied to another situation' (Shenton, 2004:69), i.e., conveying information about the impact of the pandemic on general ECE and the role of ECMPs. As only scarce peer-reviewed research existed at the time of writing about the specific topic, it is hoped that this study may be able to contribute to a new, growing knowledge-generation.

2.2. Part 1: ECME in pre-pandemic times

2.2.1. Theoretical frameworks: Guiding principles of pre-pandemic pedagogical frameworks for ECME

Part one of the review drew on relevant, **pre-pandemic sources** of literature in order to ground the study in a clear pre-pandemic rationale (Mukherji & Albon, 2018:47). It discusses theoretical, pedagogical principles on which the rationale for ECMP's face-to-face practice is grounded. The chosen texts were emphasising the value of playful music making as relational interaction and communication and emphasised benefits towards emotional, cognitive, social development and well-being. Influenced by the researcher's background in ECME and Music therapy, as mentioned in

the introduction of this study, skills and qualities required for the role of an ECMP were looked at through that lens, in particular with a view to the near post-pandemic future.

The reviewed literature chose examples which are based on the assumption of physical proximity and emphasises the importance of relational interaction, communication between educator and student, claimed as 'the cornerstone of early childhood education' (Formosinho, 2021:13,4). The value of close and immediate companionship of person to person contact and the direct and imminent presence with 'the other' was highlighted by Stern, who coined the term *vitality affect* (1985:50). He argued that through communication and close interaction, partners find meaning through 'experiences of movement, force, time, space and intention'(1985:5). Together with Vygotsky's concept of '*zone of proximal development*', which claims that learning and development happens indeed between all participants present in playful interaction with each other(Vygotsky,1978:86), both models can arguably inform and underpin a theoretical framework of ECM practice. The process of musical activities and young children's playful interaction with others are therefore powerful and deeply meaningful.

Several other texts referred to the power of interactive music making in direct, relational companionship, engaging social drives and shared, affective processes (Overy & Molnar, 2009:490; Biesta, 2013: 1-9; Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018:6). Understanding that both the practitioner, the children, and any other people present, are *all* part of this interactive process, will help to define the practice of the ECMPs and highlight the essentially democratic nature of their music making with young children.

'Our engagement with music is always reciprocal and interactive....When we do things with music, we are engaged in the work of creating and cultivating the self, as well as creating and cultivating a shared world that we inhabit with others' (Krueger, 2010:1).

Findings in neuroscientific research supported this further by claiming that music making has the power to affect and engage neural systems, which support and engage social drives and shared affective processes (Overy & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009:490); this could suggest the intrinsic value of music education as a relational process. Presenting the argument of the 'shared experience' in their neuroimaging research, the two researchers maintained that the mirror neuron system plays a significant role in human communication and empathy. In the 'Shared Affective Motion Experience' (SAME) model presented, they revealed that different aspects of musical processing recruit almost all regions of the brain, unlike any other stimulus or cognitive processes. They stated that music is clearly not just a passive, auditory stimulus, but an engaging, multisensory, social activity, always created through some bodily motion (singing, clapping, hitting, blowing, plucking, tapping, marching,

dancing), inviting listeners to move (Overy & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009:489). Looking at concrete instances such as these reinforced the notion of how deeply movement and music making are interrelated (Krueger, 2020:6).

Echoing this notion, Small created the verb 'musicking' to define the action of music making as taking part, whether performing, listening, rehearsing, practicing or even dancing' (1998:2). As mentioned before, the word may well have been derived from the German expression 'musizieren', representing the same idea. The experiences of both performers and the listeners, Small argued, were all in the musicking process together, in 'an encounter between human beings, in a shared experience' (1998:9). In ECME this would often involve groups of children, parents, siblings, grandparents, child minders and/or staff. The word 'musicking' as a non-verbal, musical and gestural form of communication could bring a heightened state of awareness to all present. Although the music itself was the true leader, the role of the educator was to sensitively support this truly human process through listening, observing, holding and leading everyone involved into this experience of connectivity and expressiveness (Small, 1998:10). Overy & Molnar added that imitation, synchronisation and reaction to each other through movement and music often happened in the presence of others and contributed to a powerful social learning experience.

'A final, key aspect of the SAME model is the idea that music can convey a sense of agency—a sense of the presence of another person, their actions and their affective state. This in fact may be at the core of musical experience—not the nature of the acoustic signal per se, or the ability to perform complex motor skills, but the sense of human interaction (Overy & Molnar, 2009:494).

Insights such as the above could inform and affirm ECM practice when aiming to reach cognitive, physical, social and cultural goals (DfE, EYFS, 2017; 2021). It was significant to this study to investigate how feasible it was to make music *together* during the pandemic, with all the positive outcomes described above, while being locked in the home and separated through a screen. Considering how important these aspects of development are, it could be argued that a very important aspect of ECME could have been lost when this interactive model was no longer able to form the core of ECM practice. But it could also be argued that to shift the dynamic of 'shared experience' onto parent/sibling and child is appropriate. Thus the ECMP at the other side of the screen is set free to encourage and facilitate, rather than being directly part of the moment.

Further significant guiding principles could be gained from the theory of communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009), which has long informed the practice not only of music educators, but also of music therapists. Both could ground their practice in that research in order to understand the

significance of early interactions between the young child and his/her parent as a very first musical expression. When placing the practice of ECME into the overlap between education, care and therapy, as proposed in this study, it could arguably be modelled on the early interactions with the mother, parent or caregiver. The caring, therapeutic, psychological aspect of this might be presented as laying foundations towards healthy and secure attachment and strengthening emotions of social resilience (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2002:4; 2018:2). The new born baby - a person with intelligence and sociable impulses - can communicate and express feelings and interests through the voice and gestures right from birth (Brazelton, 1979:79). Baby and caregiver 'come alive' in the sounds they make together by respecting the young child as a communicant, collaborative artist and thinker in the early mother-father-infant interaction (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018:6).

"The function of music is to enhance in some way the quality of individual experience and human relationships; its structures are reflections of patterns of human relations, and the value of a piece of music as music is inseparable from its value as an expression of human experience" (Blacking 1995:31, cited by Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018:2)

As a consequence, it could be claimed that the ECMP is therefore not only taking on the role as a music teacher or as an instructor of musical skills, but a guide and encourager of human values and relations.

Having the privilege of being part of early, potentially first musical experiences with young children, sensitive, differentiated, empathetic, pedagogical skills of the ECMP would seem essential. The role of the ECMP is challenged beyond that of an instructor or teacher, but a partner who 'opens doors to the whole complex world of music' (Huhtinen-Hildén&Pitt,2018:6). Referring to my previous masters research study (Burrell, 2020) about 'the efficient and reflective ECMP', it was helpful to be reminded of Korthagen's theoretical 'Onion model' (2003:80). The layers of the onion visualise motivation, beliefs and pedagogical skills, in order to identify the hallmarks of any passionate educator, including the ECMP. The core, presented as the 'mission' of the educator (Korthagen, 2003:80) would show a desire to encourage young children to ultimately live a meaningful and fulfilling life, enhanced by the expressive art of music. In a learner-centred approach (Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt 2018:6, 134), teaching is not a way of simply giving controlled instructions and passing on knowledge and skills, but a creative process of learning through interaction between learner and teacher. The task of the educator, proposed by Bruner (1984:1) would be to provide a framework or 'scaffold', wherein the child can develop skills and values through playful, musical exploration, thus enhancing their creative and critical thinking and development of self within our shared world (Krueger, 2010:1).

Defining competencies of an effective teacher and the notion of pedagogical sensitivity and thoughtfulness (van Manen, 2008:25) provided foundational information about psychological aspects of the role. To nurture the child's 'inner artist' towards a holistic, musical identity would require special skills. This would be especially relevant in this time of the pandemic, when considering the teaching of children, who might have experienced adverse conditions at home. In the atmosphere of general insecurity and apprehension, the empathetic, caring aspect of the teacher's role would have to come to the fore.

The child's innate body vitality of communicative musicality can be encouraged and strengthened through sensitive, respectful, playful, culturally informed teaching (Ingold, 2018, cited by Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018:2).

Put simply, the task would be to encourage children's confidence and desire to engage with music at an early age. However, when attempting to nurture a young, impressionable child's artistic and musical development, it would be paramount to acknowledge the power an ECMP has over a child's musical experience (Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018:134). Psychological and high emotional aspects of music making calls the teacher to apply the pedagogical sensitivity and empathy, as van Manen proposed (2008:25).

'The young child's innate musicality and creativity 'may wither under the weight of enforced discipline for the sake of conforming to pre-existing cultural rules without attention to the initiative and pleasure of the learner's own music-making' (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018:2)

Relevant to this study could be the concern that online teaching could drive educators to regress into a model of 'schoolification' (Formosinho, 2021:6), a more traditional form of teaching. For ECME this would often imply adult-led teaching, towards understanding and acquiring music skills, with much verbal instruction and less actual music making (Greenhalgh, 2016:17). Limiting music education as a path to theoretical knowledge and technical know-how (Bowman, 2012:31) would arguably entail the neglect of intuitive, embodied, musicality of the child. The debate in ECME is ongoing.

2.2.2. Digital technology and young children

This part of the study asks the question of how possible it is to achieve intense interaction and make accurate observations of facial, gestural and vocal expression through a screen. It could be suggested that interaction and communication are compromised. While the consequences of the increased use of technology with very young children during the pandemic would need further research, it seemed appropriate here to briefly discuss the notion that the digital world was already

very much part of most young children's lives before the crisis. Indeed, the process of communication involving a screen was not at all strange to them and hence could have eased and normalised the process of online teaching.

'As is typical of contemporary domestic life in the UK, technologies are interwoven into the fabric of home life....children not so much live with technologies, as live in a technologised environment. (Young & Wu, 2019:10).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all screen-based activities came into sharp focus for all ages, propelling the phenomenon forward. Digital technology rapidly emerged as a prominent part of educational processes and is arguably here to stay. Long before the pandemic, Campbell & Lum (2007:319) maintained that young children were frequently handling and using digital technology in their everyday lives. This gave them easy access to a vast amount of information, including music. ECMPs needed to acknowledge that children's first encounters and experiences of music were happening in their homes, in their world and their culture. In reality, their musical identity and musical sensibilities are formed in this context. The challenge for ECMPs was to embrace this phenomenon and adapt practice to creatively include and consider all beneficial possibilities. A revision of concepts of musical development, design of educational practices and appropriate inclusion of digital devices in music education might be called for (Young & Wu, 2019:13).

This study asked about the ways ECMPs achieved playful music making with young children, even when the immediacy of face-to-face interaction and responsiveness (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2018:2; Small, 1998:9) had to be simulated through a screen (Formosinho, 2021:13; Barnett, 2021:9). This reality was unexpectedly brought forward by circumstances of the pandemic and was investigated in the next part of this review.

2.3. Part 2: ECME in pandemic times

In part two literary sources were reviewed, concerning the impact of the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic on educators across the world. Since the outbreak in Spring 2020, several international, educational research projects raised issues directly relevant to the situation of ECMPs (Shenton, 2004:69,70) and therefore to this study.

2.3.1. The emerging gap between socio-economic groups of families

Considering that the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is ongoing, the prediction may be realistic that its effects on young children and vulnerable families would be felt for several years to come (Benner, 2021:1).

There is a large and concerning gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils (EEF, B 2021, EECERA Journal, 2021).

In several findings in the literature it was suggested, that the pandemic had highlighted a fragmented, early childhood education system (Barnett et al, 2021:1; Bertram&Pascal, A2021:1) across national boundaries. They predicted that existing patterns of vulnerability and under-achievement amongst underprivileged children would continue and become more prominent (Pascal et al, 2021:2).

Accompanying mental health issues caused by the pandemic crisis would likely be grave (Bertram & Pascal, A2021:3). Some articles relating to the first lockdown already pointed out the 'gross inequalities, hierarchies of power and inequitable access to resources, whether they be financial, practical or knowledge based' (Campos, 2021:10; Reich, 2020:12). It was suggested that this was true for many families in Great Britain (EEF, 2021:1). While some children managed to keep up regular attendance at school and nursery (Pascal, 2020:1; Youth Music, 2021:3), others were absent for months, without access to high quality learning opportunities and playful, cultural, social interaction (Pascal, 2020:3).

Of interest to this study was the pre-pandemic research by Kuhfeld (2020:550), indicating a minimal loss of achievement on average in children under five during summer holidays. This seemed to emphasise young children's undeniable resilience to adversity. It was suggested that family members played a crucial role in nurturing resilience in early childhood. Resilience-or the ability to bounce back from adverse life events (Masten, 2014, cited in Mantovani, 2021:3), strongly depended on parents, siblings, other children, educators and health care practitioners (Mantovani, 2021:3). In contrast to the many threats to achievement and development as a consequence of the pandemic, many children enjoyed increased parental and sibling presence in the home during lockdown; their development would have been propelled forward in a very positive experience (Pascal, 2020:1). Irrespective of socio-economic background, children's 'privilege' would be determined by the quality time that adults would spend with them.

Reflections in several articles expressed the need to seize the opportunity to find new ways of working as 'a chance for a social experience' or even a 'revolution'(Flores, 2020:1; Campos, 2021:18;

Bertram & Pascal, 2021:8), by 'supporting, promoting, creating and cultivating of the self and the world around us' (Krueger, 2010:1). Barnett called on educators - including ECMPs - to rethink their roles and adapt them to the current conditions (2021:9). Bertram & Pascal challenged us about

'how we might move ahead to better address the global challenges of inequality'(A2021:8).

Considering that the financial support to many ECME projects was either suspended or ended during the crisis, reaching less advantaged children through music making would have been made difficult for ECMPs. Arguably music making for their children would not have been a priority for people who were threatened with job loss and bringing food on their table. As the already wide gap caused by socio-economic circumstances markedly and rapidly expanded during the pandemic (Bertram & Pascal, A2021), music making was likely to slip further down the list of priorities in Government policies. In attempting to close or at least narrow the gap, ECMPs could make a positive contribution by seeking to offer their skills to children and families who could easily miss out.

2.3.2. Global, educational research findings of during the pandemic

The next paragraph discusses the accounts of several recent research articles describing the pandemic situation educators were faced with across the world. Arguably counterintuitive to ECM's practice, the need for remote teaching through digital devices emerged almost overnight. Educators, including ECMPs, across the world, trained to teach face-to-face, closely interacting with children, were now challenged to teach or learn without a direct human contact and interaction, but via digital equipment and over the internet (Campos, 2021:6). They depended heavily on the support of parents and caregivers to help to facilitate the process (Atilas, 2021:11). Neither paediatricians, nor the National Curriculum Guidelines had approved, nor recommended increased use of digital devices in education (Campos, 2021:5,6,9; Barnett, 2021:9). ECEs in Latin America (Campos, 2021:10; Atilas et al., 2021:7) and Indonesia (Yuliejantiningih et al., 2020:5) were facing additional difficulties. 91% of teachers in Brazil had no prior experience of teaching with remote learning technology and lacked appropriate digital equipment or access to the internet, especially in more remote areas. Many similar issues were discussed when investigating the situation in Great Britain, where most teachers, including ECMPs, arguably had access to digital technology, but many, initially at least, did not have the skills to use it (Bertram & Pascal, A2021:7). The few ECMPs still teaching face-to-face in schools had to adapt their practice to government restrictions and guidelines, which were often changing and confusing, especially for freelance educators. Having to cope with the pressure of online teaching, many educators returned to the well-known and less risky pedagogic format they

knew from old. Some professional teachers in moments of crisis and uncertainty reverted to the traditional, adult-led, transmissive mode of teaching, Formosinho defined as 'schoolification' (2021:6.1). Others, tried to adapt some participatory praxis to the new situation. As the data of this study later showed, many ECMPs developed creative ways for online teaching, in order to engage, not only the children, but also their parents and carers, in interactive music making.

'Respondents generally displayed confidence and a sense of self-efficacy in relation to how they had coped with the COVID-19 emergency, despite the many difficulties encountered during the lockdown'(Mantovani, 2021:1)

2.3.3. Well-being and mental health of children and families

The next part of this review will highlight the emerging concern for young children's wellbeing and mental health. In view of the predicted Covid-19 related anxieties affecting the everyday life young children, it seems crucial to reflect on how the wellbeing and mental health of this coming generation of children (as well as staff) could be addressed (Howes et al, 2020; Pascal et al, 2020). Understanding those needs for pandemic and post-pandemic times seems particularly significant in the context of this study and should arguably help to define and inspire the role of ECMPs.

For some children the increased parental and sibling presence in the home during lockdown was a positive experience and benefited their development on many fronts. For others, potentially traumatic experiences such as death in the family, fear of illness, malnutrition, lack of physical proximity, increased violence and abuse, inability to play outdoors and with friends, as well as increased screen time would have been detrimental (Bertram & Pascal, A2021:2; Mochida, 2021:2). Research from Japan, which focused on the impact of children having to stay at home, described psychological and physical stresses experienced by children, due to over-anxious parenting, neglect, domestic violence or abuse (Mochida, 2021:7).

In the future, when meeting children again face-to-face, attentive, sensitive and empathetic adults (van Manen, 2008:25) would be needed to respond to the need of the various, often hidden, stress induced symptoms children would display and take care of their physical, emotional and social well-being (Formosinho, 2021:6.5; Barnett, 2021:10). It could be argued that as a consequence of the pandemic, educators, including ECMPs, would find themselves in the role of a therapist. The expressive arts and music making might be able to play a crucial role in giving children a voice to express their particular needs and emotions (Krueger, 2020:2).

'to express these 'inner world' insights about their COVID experiences eg. offering new play spaces and resources, photo/picture prompts, puppets, music making, craft work, dance and movement – always following children's leads' (Bertram & Pascal, A2021:5)

As a strategy, O' Keeffe et al suggested that in order to support young children's resilience, play - including musical play- would take an important place in pedagogical strategies (2021:2;7). They quoted Elkin as saying: 'Play has been described as 'nature's way of dealing with stress for children' (Elkind 1981:197, cited by O'Keeffe, 2021:2). A UNICEF report recommends that 'play provides a sense of normality and routine', distracting from the turmoil around them(2018:8). Bertram & Pascal advocate the use of stories, music and dance, to give children a chance to 'relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences with the wider world and to see a connection between them' (Froebel 1887, cited in B2021:4). It could be suggested that the playful musical interactions at the core of ECM practice would be ideal to enrich and distract from children's psychological turmoil. Musical, interactive use of stories and themes, culturally appropriate and sensitively applied, could play a major part in meeting the needs of children's wellbeing and mental health during and after the pandemic crisis. The ECMPs role would be to provide a safe and secure environment, while respecting, listening, observing, supporting, mirroring and responding to the children's sharing of emotions and experiences through musical interactions.

2.3.4. ECMPs and parent collaborations

The next part of the review will emphasise the significance of collaborations between educators and parents/care givers, a topic later emerging as a relevant, significant finding for this study and potentially the future rationale of ECME. The literature, as described in part one (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018), although not directly describing an ECME situation, seemed relevant in highlighting that playful interactions between child and parent help to strengthen children's emotional regulation and resilience, especially during adverse life events, such as encountered during the pandemic.

'The dynamic in the family and the relationship between family members play a crucial role in nurturing 'resilience' in early childhood' (Mantovani, 2021:3).

In the online teaching situation and relevant also in the context of ECME and musical interactions, parental engagement in the home might have been transformed (Atiles, 2021:8). Parents and siblings had become the main play-partners (Atiles, 2021:9), arguably a prime example for

Vygotsky's model of 'zone of proximal development', where 'development happens in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978:86) under adult guidance.

'The role of the educator of young children needs a seminal connection and interaction with the family' (Formosinho et al., 2021:3,1).

It could be suggested that ECMPs, digitally entering family homes and making music, not only with the one child, but often with whole families, might have been able to inspire increased music making in the home. Becoming more aware of the family's cultural background, this could have encouraged them to collaborate through culturally appropriate music and materials (Formosinho et al., 2021: 3,1).

2.3.5. Wellbeing of ECMPs

Having to teach through a screen, handling technology, finding appropriate space and equipment, showing home interiors and having insights into their students' homes, all contributed to teachers', including ECMPs', stress (Pascal, 2021:9; Soldatelli, 2020, cited by Campos, 2021:6,11). In addition, a fundamental sense of loss of their own efficacy and professional identity could have caused over-work and burnout (YM, 2020:9, Reich,2020:2). Worries about family safety, home education, potential grief and lack of social contacts (Reich, 2020:3) could weigh heavily on ECMPs themselves. Anxieties and uncertainties about future work opportunities would have added to this stress, including the return to face-to-face work (Campos, 2021:11; Atilas, 2021:3). Overcoming adversities such as these and coping with the online teaching conditions would put great demands on ECMP's own resilience and determination. However, in the role of 'therapists' in their work, it could be suggested that their own experiences could have increased their empathy and understanding of children's predicaments and empower and motivate them in their practice. Their capacity to find self-care and support would have been essential.

2.3.6. ECME in the future

The research of this study included questions about ECMP's future. Reports stated that the freelance music workforce had been hit significantly throughout the pandemic situation, with many contracts reduced or cut (Youth Music:6, Pascal, 2020:9). Despite describing the crisis as a time full of 'sadness', the cited teacher also had 'a sense of professional competence and efficacy' (Reich, 2020:9). Despite the many obstacles, positive outcomes emerged, too.

‘There are five obstacles in online teaching: the ability of teachers, the ability of parents, economic capability, facility constraints, and pedagogical constraints.

There are four benefits of online learning: convenience, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and time flexibility’ (Layne et al., 2013, cited by Yuliejantiningasih et al.2020:5)

The need for training of educators on new digital techniques of teaching was raised by O’Keeffe: ‘This unprecedented situation worldwide has placed all sectors as apprentices’ (2021: 9). Educators need training to manage their own stress and balance, their multiple roles and responsibilities (Atiles, 2021:13). ECMPs, too, will need mentors, who have the wisdom to support and encourage, train and collaborate in the times ahead. It could be hoped that co-mentoring between colleagues could become an option.

2.3.7. Recommendations

As the phenomenon of the pandemic is still with us, gains and losses for ECMPs can still only be predictive. Understandably, few concrete solutions were presented in the literature, as the impact and consequences are still raw and perceived as ‘largely damaging and negative’ (Reich, 2020:19).

Looking forward to the future, it was proposed that the crisis offers time for reflection and strategic planning and for educators to rethink their role as carers and educators and prepare attitudes towards change (Youth Music :6; Atiles, 2021:13). This would apply to ECME, too. An opportunity to strengthen social solidarity, to share knowledge and experiences and a time for creative resistance was proposed ‘to set new priorities for care and education policies’ when dealing with children (Campos, 2021:18) and overall engagement of families (Barnett, 2021:8).

‘It will be essential that we continue to listen to educators and understand the complexity of their lives and work during the pandemic’ (Reich, 2020:20).

3. Research design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the face of the ECME field for many practitioners, whose focus would normally be on face-to-face practice. This type of practice occurs through musical interaction,

communication and relationship, not only between the young children and the early childhood music practitioner (ECMP), but within the social matrix of children, parents and staff (in schools and nurseries). Part 1 of the Literature review gave insights into the rationale and values of such activities, while Part 2 presented the research about the challenges educators are facing since Spring 2020 in various parts of the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic could be described as 'a phenomenon under scrutiny' (Shenton, 2004:69), confronting and challenging the practice of all ECMPs. This study, in the context of ECME, focusses on this phenomenon, in an attempt to document how the pandemic has affected the lives of practitioners in a variety of different contexts (Bertram & Pascal, 2021, A:8) and from multiple perspectives (EECERA, Ethical code). As the timeframe of this research was limited⁴, the ongoing crisis (Tracy, 2010:840) could only represent this phenomenon of ever-changing reality as true at a certain point in time⁴ (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, cited in Mukherji, 2018:33). The study tried to reveal the effects of the pandemic likely to continue to influence ECME practice and the role of the ECMP in the future (Bertram & Pascal, 2021; Campos, 2021; Reich, 2020). Rooted in a praxeological worldview, the investigation endeavoured to gain practice-based, authentic and reliable data (Bertram & Pascal, 2012:2; Mukherji, 2018:199) from ECMPs who had been practising during the pandemic across England and Scotland. They would be in a strong position to give insights into the research question of what was lost, what was gained and what was going to be influential for the future.

Of interest was how ECMPs responded to the sudden demand of the various new Government regulations for their ECE settings or in their private enterprises. Although some teaching in schools could still happen face-to-face, the majority of ECMPs had a precipitous move onto digital platforms. A variety of innovative online teaching methods have been explored and are still emerging (Formosinho, 2021:6:1). It was most relevant to find out how they perceived the impact of online teaching on an interactive, child-centred approach.

In addition, ECMPs were asked how they could meet children's needs, generated by the various circumstances of the pandemic crisis, as leaders and carers of music making with young children and their families. Significant was the question, how they themselves coped with the impact of the crisis and applied selfcare. The pressure they must have been experiencing would influence their

⁴ This study relates to the period of the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020-June 2021

responses and professional approaches to the situation. Last but not least, they were challenged to express how they saw their role as advocates and visionaries of this emerging profession.

The methodological position of this study demands a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm, using three methods of data collection. The framework is based on a constructivist notion, viewing knowledge and reality as a social construct, where the researcher brings her own past professional experiences, (as both a music therapist and ECMP) to the research process in this descriptive, narrative enquiry (Elliott & Silverman, 2013, cited in Mukherji, 2018:80). It includes some numeric data, to enhance and augment the hopefully rich qualitative data and to add validity and reliability (Mukherji, 2018:80, 100).

3.2. Triangulation: Questionnaire, Interview and Literature Review

Triangulation, intended to provide rigour and trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004:68), was achieved through the reviewing of relevant literature, together with a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The online questionnaire, described in more details under 'Methods', intended to reach a wide audience and to gain plentiful data from a diverse, national ECME workforce. It preceded individual interviews, which provided more in-depth data with individual narratives of personal journeys and experiences of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. These accounts, directly grounded in the reality of ECME practice, intended to answer the research question by critical analysis and interpretation of sufficient data.

The analysis of peer-reviewed and seminal texts in the literature formed a theoretical framework, within which the rationale of ECM practice and the role of the ECMP in times before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic could be defined. In part one, texts were chosen, which describe and define the pre-pandemic role and practice of an ECMP, affirming values and educational goals. Through these insights into pre-pandemic practice, it was possible to better understand the challenges ECMPs faced to provide continuation and to uphold their professional standards, rationales and the strategies they developed in response to the pandemic. Literature was also chosen to highlight and endorse the value of ECM practice towards the psychological and emotional child development and wellbeing. Described in the introduction of this study, this angle was of particular interest, as the personal approach of the researcher had extensive experience in working in the overlap of music education, care and music therapy.

Part two of the Literature Review richly informed the main focus of the discussion around the title of this study about 'the role of the Early Childhood Music Practitioner in times of the Covid -19 pandemic'. Very recent⁵ peer- reviewed articles gave an insight into the impact of the pandemic onto a more global ECE community, helping to gauge the position of a current, British status quo. They were written at the height of the pandemic and described each specific national situation, based on educational research over very recent times. Insights were predicting the future needs of children, families and educators and helpful in framing questions in the context of ECME in Great Britain. The review included some articles concerning the development of digital technology and its impact, for younger children and ECME.

Through the use of triangulation, it is acknowledged that multiple perspectives added to the picture of this investigation and showed evidence of trustworthiness. The impact of the pandemic on the practice and role of ECMPs was investigated from two angles through questionnaires and interviews. Their complementary methods of quantitative and qualitative investigation were combined to compensate for each method's limitations (Robson, 2003:69; Mukherji, 2018:281; Shenton,2004:65; Aubrey et al, 2000, cited in Mukherji, 2018:100, 280).

In an attempt to link theory to practice in this study, ECMPs were offered the opportunity to describe the impact on their individual, pedagogical framework and how they managed to translate it during the pandemic. The research conducted last year, as part of this Masters study, investigated the qualities of an efficient, reflective educator. Findings then suggested that ECMPs are continuously challenged to reflect on their practice and respond quickly and knowledgeably to any given situation, regardless of external national or international crisis. In order for ECM practice to continue to be meaningful, relevant and appropriate during the pandemic, attributes like adaptability, flexibility, resilience and creative inventiveness were unexpectedly brought to the test, offering an opportunity to assess if the previous insights were realistic and applicable. Not only music skills and educational competencies of ECMPs would be tested and challenged by the new situation, but convictions and core values (Korthagen, 2003).

3.3. Method: Questionnaire and Interviews

In this next section, the research design is outlined, explaining how data were gathered, analysed and documented. Ethical considerations are also presented. Potential strengths and limitations of the various data collection methods selected are addressed.

⁵ (Spring 2020- Jan 2021)

All investigations were desk-based due to the restrictions of Covid-19 pandemic. In both questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, the questions were designed to elicit practice-based data towards trustworthy results from findings (EECERA, Ethical Code:4). They were aimed at ECMPs from contrasting, geographical areas, gender, age and work settings in several areas of Great Britain to ensure a broad representative sample of the ECME community and to generalise findings. To answer my research questions, ECMPs were asked how they dealt with the impact of the pandemic and coped with the many hindrances in continuing meaningful practice. They were invited to reflect on their adopted, new skills, adapted practice and how these experiences would shape their future practice.

Questionnaires were presented on 'google form', thereby offering anonymity for all participants and a useful tool for the collection of factual data through both qualitative and quantitative question types. A mixture of linear and multi-choice questions helped the conversion and analysis of data and comparison in visual graphs. Clear, quantitative answers could give validity and set the context, in which open questions in both questionnaires and the following interviews could be grounded (Shenton, 2004:64; Mukherji, 2018:103), thus employing the strengths of one method to overcome the limitations of the other. Through the analysis of the data, responses in questionnaires could be identified in themes to be investigated further in the interviews. These quantitative questions were chosen for ease to respondents and to give factual information about personal background and work settings, pre-pandemic pedagogical rationales, use of digital technology and factual information about changes made during the pandemic. However, as they were limiting the effectiveness for differentiated, personal answers of belief and attitude (Robson, 1993:228; Mukherji, 2018:269), some open, questions gave participants a chance to share more nuanced differentiation of thoughts, ideas and opinions (Mukherji, 2018:240), which could be explored further in semi-structured interviews. Open questions intended to bring increased credibility to the study through in-depth richness of narrative and 'thick description of the phenomenon' (Shenton, 2004:69).

In the interview phase of the research, conducted on the digital platform 'zoom', five main open questions were presented (see appendix) to enable a spontaneous and free-flowing narrative (Mukherji, 2018:243). Further questions could refine the data and be asked when needed. Through the analysed questionnaire data, themes and issues had arisen, so questions for the interview could be designed to gain more in-depth information. Contributions concerning personal well-being and professional needs of the ECMPs themselves demanded sensitive handling, bringing to light some

ethical issues, discussed in the following paragraph. A pilot with peers for both questionnaire and interviews offered a helpful trial run for testing the clarity of questions and building of confidence in technical aspects and timing. Regular contact with the researcher's peer learning group was valuable to exchange ideas and for mutual support (Mukherji, 2018:254).

3.4. Ethical issues

This desk-based research was designed with methods that could be applied through online media. It involved only professional adults, i.e., ECMPs, therefore consent was easily obtained for both questionnaires and interviews. All ethical procedure protocols, such as confidentiality, anonymity and storing of data according to BERA and EECERA guidelines, were observed and rights of withdrawal and timekeeping explained to participants by letter. All data and personal information were recorded on digital, password protected devices (personal laptop and mobile phone) and stored on the BCU one drive (password protected), in line with the professional BERA and EECERA guidelines.

Questionnaire participants were recruited in two-fold manner: some personal professional contacts were approached by email, with no coercion, emphasising that participation was voluntary and would be anonymous. Alongside this, gatekeepers, i.e., Heads of music educational organisations were approached to distribute questionnaires to their workforce. This third-party approach was intended to minimise the bias in selection, helping to make indirect contact with a wide base of participants from the professional ECME field within a variety of age, gender, ethnicity, ECME pedagogy and work settings.

The potential bias in recruiting interviewees was unavoidable, as the specific selection aimed to get three candidates from contrasting geographical areas, different age groups and gender. Attempts were made to include three ECMP with different ECME practices and work settings: 1) freelance private practice, 2) ECMP in Music Conservatoire, 3) ECMP in Community settings. Care was taken in keeping the bias to a minimum by choosing candidates not previously known to me. Diversity of gender was difficult to achieve as desired, as the ECME workforce to date is predominantly white and female, with some commendable exceptions. The interview was also piloted with a peer (Mukherji, 2018:254), which would provide a welcome practice run, helping the researcher to identify and rehearse the most effective interview strategy, namely to allow the interviewee to talk freely and to only interject to gain more in-depth information.

The opportunity for ECMPs to reflect and articulate experiences through both questionnaire and interview processes was intended to not only profit this research, but to bring benefits to ECMPs' own development. The articulation and sharing of experiences might have helped to encourage confidence and self-esteem and to reflect on implications for their future practice, regardless of the outcome of their situation during the pandemic. Arguably, participants choosing not to participate in the questionnaire had not succeeded in continuing their work during the pandemic; due to the anonymity of the process the researcher would not have any control over this fact. Moral principles underpinning the project (Mukherji, 2018:107) included fair and sensitive treatment of all participants, including the acknowledgment of 'the rights of others to hold different values, attitudes and opinions than my own' (EECERA code:2). Reflecting together during sensitively led interviews gave a sense that the power was shared and equal, thus avoiding any stress and preventing any invasion of privacy of the participant (EECERA Code: 6; Mukherji, 2018:243).

Admitting that my own experience and knowledge may unavoidably cause me to analyse and interpret the data from a biased viewpoint, I held this in mind as I sought to establish an open and neutral position in the hope of keeping this to a minimum. As a retired practitioner since before the pandemic, I had no personal experience of the challenges faced during that time, which enabled a more neutral stance. My specific interest in the overlap of education, care and therapy was hoping to add to the depth of the research, based on my experience in this field of work, but it was not to define or influence any judgement in the analysis of the data.

3.5. Timetable for research

18 Jan 2021	Proposal submission with Annotations
5 Feb	Ethics form submission
Feb	Read and make notes for Literature Review
March	Plan and prepare questionnaires Submit Literature Review Draft (15 Mar)
Early Apr	Pilot questionnaires with peers
Early Apr	Recruitment to the questionnaire study Send letters and questionnaires. Deadline: 30 April Send draft Research design and Methodology Draft (12 Apr)
Early May – throughout May	Select and approach 3 interviewees Analyse data from questionnaires and write questions for interviews

Early June	Pilot interviews with peers
Mid- June	Online Interviews
June	Analyse data from interviews and combine with qualitative data from questionnaire
July	Write up: Literature Review Research Design & Methodology Investigation Discussion, interpretation of data
Aug	Introduction Conclusion Abstract Complete References list Gather attachments for appendix Front page, Index
Sept 6th	Submit

3.6. Link to google form questionnaire: (see copy of questionnaire in appendix)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf5G4AiAC3u0Q938R-GYC4zQZ1SndKnoCTeAIT1uEAA8Qzg/viewform?usp=sf_link

4. Investigation

In this part, a short report will be presented on how the process of collecting data over the time of two months unfolded. The overall willingness of ECMPs to participate in the study was generous; participants were eager to share information and explain what they had experienced during the long and trying time of the pandemic. The responses were extensive and gave comprehensive answers towards the research question in defining gains and losses and recommendations for the future.

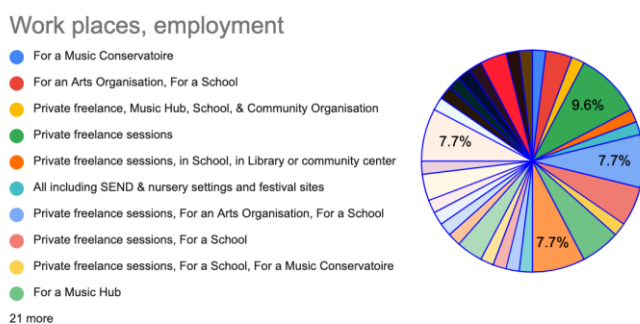
After questionnaires were sent out by gatekeepers as planned (using their data bank of trainees); additional invitations were also sent by email from the researcher's personal data bank. The respectable number of fifty-three responses, all via google form, could arguably achieve a certain trustworthiness in the analysis.

For the interviews, three ECMPs were invited to participate, two female ECMPs, one from London and known to me, another practitioner from the North of England, unknown to me. A third, male ECMP from the Midlands, also unknown to me, had initially agreed to be interviewed, but later failed to respond. Extensive data gained from the questionnaire and the two interviews provided arguably sufficient information towards trustworthy result. The interview was also piloted with a peer, which gave the researcher confidence, many good ideas and great practice. Sadly the rich data from that pilot interview could not be included.

Data from questionnaires and interviews were collated and themed under the same relevant topics and relevant to the research question. As described in the research design, the categories of questions were initially presented around four themes. Unable to foresee the volume and content of qualitative answers and to keep clarity in the analysis, findings were eventually discussed under the six themes.

Critically reflecting on the questionnaire, strengths and limitations of the methods used to collect data became clear. Some qualitative, open-ended questions harvested rich answers. For multi-choice answers, google-form proved a convenient platform to use, showing tendencies by visualising results in linear graphs and pie charts. Many respondents seem to relish sharing their experiences in further detail in qualitative answers under 'other', resulting in a high number of individual, very similar, but slightly diverse answers. Graphs appeared in too many details and were therefore difficult to read.

The figure below shows an example of this: Fig. 2



General tendencies were difficult to identify in this pie chart. It could be suggested that it visualised at least the typically diverse combination of freelance work. An improved chart showing only general tendencies can be seen on page 29, using only the main, quantified answers of this topic.

The answer to the problem might have been to omit the option of 'other' and ask participants in further, open-ended questions to share their thoughts.

Interviewees were encouraged to describe both positive and negative aspects of their teaching experience during the pandemic in free flow, including adaptations and changes made to their rationale and practice. The two interviews presented a stark contrasting ECME world, one representing specialised music education in a Junior London Conservatoire, mostly involving parents and children of middle-class background, the other working in a community of more diverse socio-economic background. Although their accounts described very different scenarios, many communalities could be detected: by coincidence and unknown to me, both ECMPs happen to have a background in dance; neither had specific ECME training, but both had much experience in working within the field of work. One worked mostly with Nursery aged children, the other with babies, toddlers and parents. Both were used to working as part of a team; one felt inspired and supported by colleagues, while the other, having been made redundant and now a lone worker, sorely missed the support of the team. As hoped, rich and in-depth data was gained from their detailed, personal and honest accounts of their experiences during the crisis. As both had previously answered the questionnaire, their perceptions were also included in the numerated answers.

With hindsight it might have been helpful to start with interviews and follow with questionnaires. This might have helped to identify relevant questions which could speak to the research question more directly. Information about the professional background of ECMPs for example was not directly relevant to the question, although helpful to gauge the participant group involved in this study. As proposed in the introduction and in congruence with the findings in the literature review, it might have been preferable and more relevant to put more focus on the ECMP within the triad of care, therapy and learning. As part of the triangulation, the chosen literature had stirred my particular interest and potential angle. The focus of the questions could have centred on the question how ECMPs were going to contribute to the care of physical, emotional and social well-being of children, following impact of the pandemic (Formosinho,2021; Barnett,2021; Bertram &Pascal, B2021; Mochida, 2021; Krueger, 2020) and take the role of the attentive, sensitive and responsive adult (van Manen, 2008:25). Although discussed by some, the question on how ECMPs could meet the needs of the children through music making during and after the crisis was not as

fully understood, nor answered as hoped. However, ECMP's more general perception of gains and losses of their pandemic experiences emerged and gave arguably satisfactory information for the discussion. The process of describing and sharing experiences might hopefully have offered ECMPs to feel heard and respected, helping them to process issues, which had arisen during the difficult times (Reich, 2020:9, Campos, 2021:4).

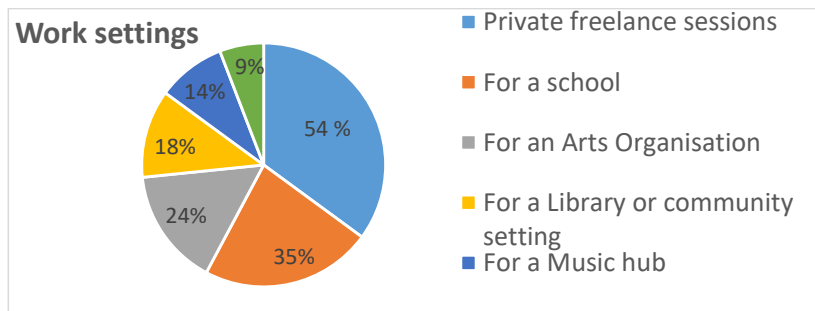
'Continuing to listen to educators and understand the complexity of their lives and work during the pandemic will be essential to mounting an effective response in the near term and to building more robust, resilient systems in the long term' (Reich, 2021:20).

5. Discussion and interpretation of results

5.1. Professional background, experience and workplace of participants

The first part considers findings concerning professional background, experience and workplace of participants of questionnaires and interviews. This information seemed relevant in order to place the data in context of the professional body of ECME. A majority of respondents had extensive experience of ECM practice, as well as multiple professional qualifications (78% with some specific ECME, PGCEs and Early Years Education, several with Masters degrees) from a very wide body of institutions and organisations indicating high levels of criticality and reflective practice. Pedagogical approaches were used in combination of several influences, with a dominant 44% mentioning Kodály. Other preferred pedagogies included Dalcroze, Colourstrings, Orff. Only one respondent of the questionnaire had no qualifications at all. IA, musically highly trained, had no specific training for ECME, while her recent PGCE qualification in performance teaching brought many additional, relevant insights into group teaching and collaborative learning. IB, with a community musician background, acquired ECME training through extensive practical observations and collaborations, workshops and now online seminars. The wide range of both the professional qualification and approaches, including those with none, seemed to reflect that the profession is still very wide-ranging and unregulated, although with a well-qualified majority.

Findings described the situation of work settings for participating ECMPs in Great Britain in pre-pandemic times, using the modest survey of this study. The majority (54%) are involved in freelance, private sessions; their freelance workload is often combined with part-time employment. Many teach in schools and nurseries, some for Arts organisations (Orchestras, Concert venues, Theatres, Choir), some in the community (Children Centres, Libraries, Festivals) and surprisingly few for Music Hubs. Four ECMPs now work in Forest schools. Figure 3 shows the main tendencies only.



The two interviewees gave more detailed data: IA is specifically employed as a Dalcroze specialist in a London Music Conservatoire (Junior Department), as well as in two private schools. IB was employed full time by a major Art Organisation in the North of England, working in a team of community musicians; the crisis of the pandemic made the whole team redundant. As the team no longer exists, the ECMP is currently re- building a bank of freelance work.

5.2. The initial impact of the pandemic and the challenges of using online technology

In Spring 2020, when confronted with the onset of the pandemic crisis, most ECMPs worked in several settings. Each setting demanded a different response to the crisis and ECMPs had to react fast and often unprepared. 26% chose not to teach online at all, while 61% started online interactive groups, a big group (45%) in combination with remaining in face-to-face teaching. For the latter - due to all the restrictions - adaptations had to be made to work with small groups, with no singing and limited use of props and instruments. During the summer and autumn and into the winter of 2020, teaching outdoors was encouraged. Of significance might be the group of four ECMPs who worked in Forest schools. This proved such a success, that all four involved are planning to continue in the future. For two ECMPs work ceased altogether, while for a few, work in schools and nurseries was cancelled until further notice.

A majority of ECMPs had to swiftly turn to online teaching for their private and employed work. In an initial flurry of interactive online, private sessions, many ECMPs (61%) managed to at least partially secure some continuity for the children and their own income. These online sessions proved very popular, especially during the first lockdown in Spring 2020, in some cases accessed by large numbers, with a core of participants from previous face-to-face sessions being joined by a wider online community, even from the other side of the world.

As the crisis progressed, it proved to be a wise and flexible strategy to change and adapt tactics, offering a combination of approaches, adding pre-recorded sessions, recorded, interactive sessions and short videos with songs and stories. In a pattern followed by several ECMPs, demand for online interactive sessions decreased over the summer 2020; 31.5 % adapted to pre-recorded sessions, discussed later in this chapter. Working in a Music Conservatoire, IA was initially challenged to adapt the teaching to Covid-safe practice, only to be asked to shift to online teaching the very next week.

5.3.Digital technology applied in online teaching

In the next part of this analysis, the challenge of using technology when teaching online is discussed. At the outset of online teaching, ECMPs were unprepared and often unsupported to teach online. Some admitted to having the right equipment, but lacking the technical know-how. Most (66%) agreed that teaching got easier as they gained more experience.

'Once I got over the initial concerns and challenges of moving online, I enjoyed tackling the new way of working. I had to find new topics and ways of delivery and I enjoyed the 'shake up' (QP12)

Problems mentioned by many were unstable internet connection, noise cancellation and time delay when singing. IB described her actual fear of using technology. Only much encouragement from the ECMP facebook colleagues eventually persuaded her to try with the partner's support and consequently successfully teach online.

'My technical skills are very poor, but one of the things our online work has taught me is that it is possible to work beyond your abilities if you are part of a team' (QP15).

A significant eighty-one percent used the platform Zoom for online teaching, others made use of Microsoft Team, You Tube, Facebook live and others. Eighteen percent stated that teaching interactive sessions online was easy and problem free. The four ECMPs teaching in Forest schools did not have to tackle the technical problems, as all activities happened outdoors.

Significantly, the majority of the participating ECMPs had satisfying access to digital technology and internet and overall used it successfully. All round, answers were surprisingly positive, considering the stressful circumstances. It could be that only those who still managed to work and were feeling positive would actually want to participate in the questionnaire. The main challenges for many were

listed as teaching from home when having to find a suitable space, having to purchase digital equipment, combining teaching and home-schooling their own children, as well as sharing technology and space with the home-working partners and children. A few felt 'embarrassment of exposing my home to the public'.

'I was very conscious of the background and what the participant could see behind me so sorting out my office into a studio was essential' (QP7).

However, it was positive that online ECME could be accessed by many families in Britain. By contrast, in Latin America and Indonesia (Redondo,2020, cited in Campos,2021; Atilas, 2021; Yuliejantingsih et al., 2020) even online general education was only accessible to a small minority. Likewise, socio-economic climate for many families in Great Britain did often not allow access to education either, due to lack of digital equipment and access to the internet (EEF, 2021:1; Triggles, 2021). It could therefore be suggested that ECM sessions were mainly available to a certain socio-economic group, leaving out families, who might have particularly benefitted, due to their lack of other opportunities.

The workload for ECMPs during the pandemic time increased for some, as planning had to '*adapt the activities and resources, evaluation process and delivery of materials*' (QP9). Many agreed, due to the safe hygiene procedures, face-to-face teaching became more intense and time consuming. For others, cancelled work meant that the workload decreased.

5.4. Teaching online and interactive engagement with children

This part of the discussion will describe data concerning the experiences around teaching online. Data about interacting with children through a screen was described by a majority as 'difficult, but I found ways to interact with the children'. Some (18%) found the changes easy, while 28% did not teach online.

'My teaching happens through and via the relation'... being 'out of the relation' with children felt wrong and uncomfortable' (QP47).

'I find online teaching easy and enjoyable; it works well for me. I have to be more of a performer than a teacher during online teaching' (QP36).

For both teaching online and remaining face-to-face, the challenge for ECMPs was to apply the appropriate musical competencies and find suitable and musically rich materials.

'My musical skills became useless on an online platform' (QP7).

Government regulations restricted certain activities, e.g. singing – very much at the heart of many ECMP’s pedagogy- was not allowed in face-to-face sessions and difficult online, too, due to distortion and time delay.

The main concern of online teaching centred around the quality of engagement and interaction with children, as facial expressions and gestures were not possible to read across screens. Spontaneous play was difficult. Attention to individual children’s ideas took up much time, at the risk of losing the engagement of others. While some children chose not to engage through the screen, some focussed better online than in person. To keep children engaged, some used a lot of new materials, others familiar routines and repetition, making links with pre- pandemic sessions. Expectations by the teacher had to be lowered; shorter sessions and slowed down pace were needed for most. In contrast, sessions IB delivered lasted a whole hour, dedicating much time to introductions of individual parents and children and ‘by creating an easy atmosphere’. The time taken seemed to pay off in the commitment of parents to engage and return every week; music making became a less important part (IB).

‘Especially first-time mothers with ‘pandemic babies’ needed the attention as much as the children during these difficult times’ (IB).

A majority of ECMPs described that teaching had to become more adult-led. Having to be static when being used to move around and be amongst the children proved difficult. Over time, ECMPs (51%) found ways to interact with children, described as ‘playfully using the screen ‘as a friend’. Innovative hide and re-appear games, props and sounds, songs, body percussion and rhythm games were invented and shared between colleagues, adapted for teaching online. Sessions including a lot of movement, helped to prevent children from continuously staring at the screen.

Several mentioned the creative, but time-consuming ritual of children finding their own props and sounds in the home, however, well worth waiting for. Asking participants to mute themselves during songs eliminated problems with time-lag, but also limited the shared experience. QP17 changed her teaching completely, trying a more listening based format, with improvisation and visually- inspired meditation.

‘I had to adapt the activities and resources used, evaluation process and delivery of materials’ (QP32)

As pre-recorded sessions proved to be popular with parents, they became a prominent feature of ECME during the ongoing crisis of the pandemic. They provided an outlet for ECMPs who were able to use their work and skillset and secure at least some income. Pre-recorded sessions were controversial amongst respondents, described as 'hard to do'. Acting skills were needed. The performing ECMP was able to come to the fore, using instruments to play and sing to the children. But the usual sense of freedom in the intimate, interactive process of music making with ECMPs was no longer possible. Having based their role as ECMPs on relationship and interactions, they were now 'performers' to a relatively unknown audience.

'There was a loss of immediacy and spontaneity, but I had to just kind of run with it and imagine responses' (QP11)

Pre-recorded sessions offered online could be uncomfortable, feeling you could be scrutinised by parents, employers and general public (IA); it could also encourage children 'to perform for the camera'. In addition, safeguarding boundaries could be crossed by exposing children in this way. It could be suggested that the pressure of online teaching could have led to a regression of teaching style, akin to what Formosinho had described as 'schoolification' (ECE, 2021, Reich, 2020), a more traditional model of adult-led instruction, rather than learner-centred collaboration. The benefit of recordings of interactive sessions to assess and reflect on their own practice was mentioned by some ECMPs. Many chose not to record sessions at all.

5.5. The benefits of the collaboration with parents

The intensified collaboration between ECMPs and parents/carers was addressed by many ECMPs and emerged as significant data. The online situation seemed to alter and promote the role of the parent in the room and with it the role and intentions of the ECMPs. The emphasis had shifted, rather than between ECMP and children, arguably more appropriately to the dynamic between child(ren) and parent, leaving ECMPs as facilitators of that process. Making music with children, parents, carers and often whole families altered the role and intentions of many ECMPs, bringing a new challenge, demanding flexibility, adaptability and arguably influencing future ECME rationale. While working with whole families, the importance of the engagement of the parents was emphasised, as a 'catalyst' to bring the activity to life with and for the child'.

'My role was to give families ideas of activities they might like to share at home together' (QP13).

'The task of the ECMP was to bring the adult on board, in order to engage with the child'(QP11).

'Parents were instrumental in facilitating the online situation to 'create some dynamic and energy' (QP7).

The ECMP's role would need sensitive leadership skills, in order to inspire and normalise parents-child music making. Less prominent, but no less important, the role and input of the ECMP would facilitate and lead the music making for whole families, who could share this powerful experience in their homes. Empowering parents to explore playful, non-verbal communication with their child/ren through music making, could suggest a powerful contribution to positive child-parent/caregiver relationship and in turn positive attachment. Echoing the theoretical concept of 'shared experience (Krueger, 2020; Molnar-Szakacs, 2009; Small, 1998; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018:2), connection and relationships would be strengthened amongst all participants. The increased contact with parents online also offered an opportunity to inform them about the rationale of activities. Through this, parents would gain better understanding, while relationships were strengthened and feed-back encouraged.

'I was supporting parent's interactions with their infants and babies and offering information about purpose and function' (QP11)

The statement of one ECMP about her 'determination to keep parents as partners in the music journey of their children in the future (QP13), could signify a major shift in ECME.

5.6. The impact on ECMP's lives and their persistence

This part of the discussion describes how ECMPs kept up their creative spirits and passion for their work. Reflecting back to the characteristics of a reflective, effective ECMP in my previous study, flexibility, adaptability, inventiveness and devotion to their work were put to the test during the extraordinary times of the pandemic. Through the ups and downs of lockdowns and times of eased restrictions, it was understandable that low points in motivation would occur. For some ECMPs, times of lockdown and self- isolation was very difficult.

'it was a disaster for me' (QP1)

For others, lockdowns offered an opportunity to experiment with a new life-work balance, to reflect on their work, to study and create. Self-care was achieved through pursuing creative activities, unrelated to teaching, mostly away from the screen. Many enjoyed taking exercise in the fresh air, Yoga, Pilates, jogging and mindfulness and making music for themselves, even learning a new

instrument. Some sang in online choirs and/or listened to music and concerts online. *'Avoiding music completely, only to 'submerge myself completely in music'* described the dilemma and confusion the lockdown brought for many.

'I needed something to distract me from worrying how I was ever going to be able to return to work as I knew it' (QP12).

However, it became clear that the attitudes of the majority of ECMPs helped them to find solutions through resourcefulness, determination, resilience and passion for their profession.

'It (online teaching) helped me to realise that I could adapt and work 'successfully', and - whilst the online sessions were not ideal- there were things that would work and unforeseen positives could be drawn from this enforced reinventing of what we do' (QP6).

A major encouragement was the increased online support amongst colleagues, through individual, small group and wider group discussions on various online platforms. The ECME Facebook group was mentioned ten times, not only for sharing of resources and ideas, but of joys and woes in online teaching. Several described it as 'a lifeline' during the isolating times.

'Connection with other teachers, who experience the same. Peer sharing has been invaluable, so rich' (QP21).

'The support of the face book group of ECMPs caused me to 'grab the bull by the horns and eventually teach online' (IB).

'Knowing there were people out there supporting me when I hit creative walls made a huge difference and kept me going. I really needed those 'safe spaces'(IA).

Online seminars were another positive, new initiative and hopefully here to stay. IA, as well as taking part in hugely helpful debriefing and planning sessions with colleagues, made use of international training and weekly online contact with a national network. IB had taken part in thirty-seven such seminars and training sessions, offered by fifteen different music educational organisations, some specific to ECME, others for community musicians.

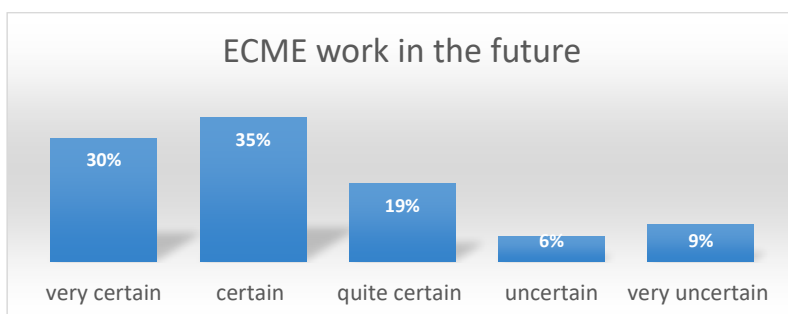
'an essential boost to keeping the creative spirits up and help to reflect on recent trends in research and practice'(IB).

One ECMP found nothing very helpful, feeling completely isolated from peers and probably not returning to live interactive sessions. This might suggest that the pandemic affected different personalities in very different ways, depending on social, economic and health circumstances.

Through different events, IA and IB both felt empowered, one through standing up as a group of colleagues against unreasonable and impractical demands from the employer, the other by overcoming the fear of use of technology, with the online help of colleagues and practical help of his/her partner.

ECMPs had to try to sustain some income by combining different forms of teaching. A few contracted ECMPs were furloughed or received government grants. Two ECMPs lost their income completely, while many had to cope with great reductions. IB had worked at the same art institution for fifteen years, was furloughed for two months and then made redundant; this caused heartache and financial hardship and was described as 'shocking and devastating'. IA was fortunate to have contracted work in several institutions; work there continued throughout, but was fraught with sudden changes, challenges and uncertainties. The figure below shows how ECMP perceived their chances of work in the future.

Fig.4



With a mixture of excitement and apprehension, empowerment and exhaustion, 60% of ECMPs returned to face-to-face teaching in April 2021. It would 'never be the same as before'. Nobody planned to continue with online teaching only, but to reach a wider audience, most freelance ECMPs would offer both online and face-to-face teaching. Four ECMPs stayed with teaching in 'wild settings', offering music sessions as part of Forest School; others were hoping to develop their work in outdoor spaces with nurseries and infant departments. Plans for the future included training and research, mentoring, supporting and inspiring others, writing and offering training themselves.

5.7. ECMP's reflections and recommendations on the future

In this last part of the analysis, changes to future teaching as a consequence of the pandemic experience are discussed. Having referred to the overlap between ECME and Music Therapy earlier, ECMP's reflections on the future were of particular interest to this study. Many ECMPs showed awareness that they were going to encounter children with a wide range of needs and demands and that 'vulnerable and stressed children, and their parents, would need a lot of additional support' through lack of social, physical and cognitive development (Bertram&Pascal, 2021; Reich, 2020; Campos, 2021; Mantovani, 2021; Mochida, 2021; Pascal, 2021). ECMPs' awareness would be paramount in recognising that challenging behaviour of children might be caused by hidden anxieties, caused by e.g. traumatic experiences, grief, social deprivation, inappropriate parenting styles (Mochida, 2020) or altered hygiene routines in schools. Children displaying distress and difficult behaviour would need to be treated with empathy and understanding (Mochida, 2021:8; van Manen, 2008). Bertram&Pascal suggested that the pandemic would challenge educators

'to help children to relate to their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences with the wider world and to see a connection between them' (citing Froebel, 1887, B2021:4).

Arts-based pedagogies, like music making and storytelling would be well suited to enable children to communicate their emotions and process these feelings non-verbally. By acknowledging children's potential emotional and psychological needs caused by stress and anxiety, ECMPs proposed several strategies for future teaching, e.g. returning to familiar routines, allowing space for spontaneous, expressive movement, providing a safe, calm space, a playful, child-centred approach and musical storytelling. Many respondents recommended that singing together was their priority.

'the fight against the de-humanisation of human beings without the arts' (QP5).

The above quote expresses what ECMPs might want to fight for, as financial cuts are threatening the profession.

For ECMPs themselves, lockdowns offered an opportunity to experiment with a new life-work balance, to reflect on their work, to study and create. A few voices referred to 'the vital importance of the role of ECME and the role of music in society needing to be valued' (QP15), not only within ECE, but governing and funding bodies. Strengthened by a new sense of connection to a professional body of music educators and empowered by their collective determination and enthusiasm for their

work, it could be claimed that many ECMPs have gained a common focus to place their profession in a recognised, accepted position.

6. Conclusion

Through the research undertaken, it proved possible to address the questions that this study had raised. The impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on the role of the ECMPs was illuminated through significant findings. It became clear to the researcher what had been lost, what had been gained and what opportunities the future might hold. Considering the crisis is ongoing, although now abating, many predictions for the future must remain speculative. Although this study was able to collect some significant findings for ECME, many aspects of the phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic in education will no doubt need to be investigated further (Bertram & Pascal, A2021) as this extraordinary time is documented. The real consequences and aftereffects for education and ECME will become clearer and easier to assess when we have eventually recovered from the raw and powerful impact (Shenton,2004:65) of the pandemic. Further investigation will help in understanding what has been learned through this phenomenon, as policy makers and professional bodies prepare for similar crises in the future.

6.1. Implications for future

Going forward, ECMPs can be encouraged and inspired by the dialogue between educators and academics in what Bertram & Pascal referred to as 'the surge for new opportunities and development of new strategies'(2021:8). ECME will need to find a united voice as a professional body in order to have an effective voice in these discussions and to receive recognition and validation.

'They (ECMPs) can get involved in the discussion across the global, educational world and offer their unique role through the arts and music to address the many arising well-being and development needs of young children' (Krueger, 2010:1).

While getting involved on a more global educational platform, there may also be a need to defend the status of the ECME profession in Great Britain. As part of the consequences of the pandemic, financial cuts in education could endanger many regular and future job opportunities for ECMPs, at the very point when their skills and approaches are so relevant and needed. There will always be opportunities for ECMPs to work with the more privileged children. But more than ever, they will also be challenged to bridge inequalities of access and provide the creative, artistic and musical

input every young child deserves. ECME programme delivery will need financial sustainability and strong leadership (Bertram & Pascal, A2021). To make this happen it is up to the ECME professionals to articulate the powerful impact their work can have in educating, caring and healing. Informed practice - backed up by trustworthy research- will convince educational policy makers, heads of schools and arts-organisations, charitable bodies and above all parents of the merits and values of ECME. The body of professionals, as well as individual ambassadors have much work to do. It is hoped that this study will be contributing to the process.

The proposed rationale in this study, of bringing together education, care and therapy, suggests possible future developments in ECME. The researcher describes it below under 'gains'.

6.2. The losses

In summary, losses were easy to predict and identify. Pandemic times remain difficult and challenging for ECMPs. The experience was described with words such as 'mourning', 'loss' and 'sadness'(Reich, 2020:9), affecting self-esteem and professional confidence. The psychological impact of the pandemic restrictions on ECMPs themselves seemed to cover a spectrum from devastation to new found purpose of life. Many ECMPs were distressed by the loss of work opportunities, income and motivation. Some experienced loneliness, depression and illness. Exhaustion was common, due to all the stress of constant change and uncertainty, demanding extra effort and work. Understandably, some ECMPs abandoned ship. Online teaching was never going to match the face-to-face teaching and learning environment ECMPs were familiar with and so crucial to spontaneous, vibrant interaction and child-led play. Essential and organic shared experiences through vocal and movement activities were restricted (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018; Overy & Molnar, 2009; Small, 1998), arguably reducing and altering outcomes normally claimed by ECME. But even with the constantly changing landscape and new regulations, demanding endless adaptability and flexibility, many ECMPs were determined to find solutions and continued teaching. For now, they could only offer the compromised version in online sessions. To find the motivation and drive to offer sessions with joy, enthusiasm and inspiration was a tall order for many, although many succeeded in bringing stimulating, exciting, joyful 'musicking' times into many family homes, via and despite the screens.

6.3. The gains

Significant gains also emerged. Many ECMPs found time for peaceful, studious reflection and improved life/work balance. To refer to Korthagen's model (2003), which presents the core value of a reflective educator, ECMP's resourcefulness, determination, commitment and passion for their

work was apparent. Many competencies, also referred to as 'tools', were added to the 'toolbox'. The regular use of digital technology developed hesitant users into confident experts. Although online teaching could be trying due to interruptions and distance, it became normalised practice and no longer a threat. Flexible, appropriate solutions were explored and developed, in order to use the screen creatively 'as a friend' and to engage children in musicking. Innovative approaches were discovered and applied; new resources were created; new song materials were written. Through online seminars and workshops, horizons widened and new ways of working were considered. While some doors closed, new ones opened.

Pre-recorded sessions - in pre-pandemic times probably rejected as 'unsuitable' and akin to watching TV - proved to be a valid alternative and was welcomed by children and parents. The popular demand seemed to prove that parents treasured having repeated access to sessions whenever it suited them. Many ECMPs, initially trained as musicians, now had an opportunity to use their skills as performers. Home spaces were transformed into studios. Although never replacing the spontaneity of face-to-face musicking, pre-recorded sessions have emerged as a new, popular form of ECME, likely here to stay.

Another unexpected, positive outcome was the strengthened collaboration with parents. When teaching moved online, the role of parents/carers was discovered to be crucial. Many ECMPs had worked with parents and babies before, but in the new situation, while teaching from home to home, parents, grandparents and carers were present for sessions with often mixed age groups, including older children. The focus of interactive relationship and musicking was now on child/parent/sibling, giving rise to a new dynamic in sessions and bringing a new dimension into ECME practice. It became apparent that many parents were now more engaged, often commenting on the positive outcomes for their child and families, sending in film clips and photos of music making. This has encouraged many ECMPs to carry this forward into their future practice. A more intense and purposeful partnership with parents could influence and change ECM rationale and practice in the future.

ECMPs acknowledged that there was an important overlap between education and care. This resonated with the researcher's proposed approach of working in the overlap of education, care and therapy. The psychological impact on children and families will be manifold, as expressed by so many texts in the reviewed literature (Bertram & Pascal, 2021:1; Reich, 2020:9; Campos, 2021:4). This will demand understanding and awareness of how to feed and nurture emotional and psychological child development. Should this fresh approach prove to be affirmed and welcomed in

times to come, there would be implications for an ECME rationale. Training, observation and information could help ECMPs to gain confidence and expertise and increase their work opportunities. By 'scaffolding' music making and movement activities, which specifically help to express emotions and enhance social interaction and communication, ECMPs could share wonderful, creative experiences with children.

Another significant finding centred around the benefits of linking into online ECME networks. During the pandemic, a majority of ECMPs became part of now flourishing, social media links. Daily exchanges provided support and encouragement between participants. Extensive, lively online debates took place. In this unexpected way, the links could facilitate a co-mentoring network, especially for lone workers spread around more remote areas. Through the building of trust and lasting relationships with colleagues, the professional body of ECME will be strengthened and potentially unified for the next generation of ECMPs.

Alongside many isolated ECMPs, otherwise disadvantaged by geographical distances and financial restrictions were able to access various online seminars and workshops, offered by many organisations. Taking the chance to research and train during the lockdown benefited many to keep up with current issues and research. Some ECMPs are planning to offer training and mentoring themselves; the high professional standards apparent in the findings could indicate excellent results. Their sharing of knowledge and expertise in new online and face-to-face exchanges could benefit not only younger, less experienced ECMPs, but the whole ECME community. The pandemic phenomenon has brought unforeseen and welcome opportunities for promising new collaborations within the vibrant new online ECME community.

Together, dreams can be dreamed and made reality. Joint voices have power in advocating the role of ECMPs and music in society, made politically visible and recognised by government and funders alike.

'exploring and sharing of our realities and raising of consciousness about how we might move ahead with more intelligence, wisdom, solidarity and social ethic (Bertram & Pascal, 2021:1).

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15 Must-Follow Teaching Strategies: *From Harnessing the power of Digital curriculum in the blended learning classroom from 'Live Tiles' (online with The Intranet for Schools – Mosaic K-12*