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Children's experiences of emergent diverse learning needs in the instrumental music studio

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ABSTRACT

Background

When children commence instrumental music tuition, diversity in their learning processes can emerge. Diverse learning needs refers to the range of challenges that can impact predictable learning processes and require additional support to facilitate successful development. However, children's experiences in instrumental learning, including how diverse needs can present and be appropriately managed, are rarely examined in music education research. This study aims to address this gap in the research literature.

Research Questions

1. How do diverse learning needs in seven-year-old children emerge in the instrumental music studio and affect continued engagement?
2. How can children's diverse learning needs be appropriately supported by teachers?

Summary of Content

A longitudinal, qualitative investigation of seven-year-old children's lived experience of cello skill development was undertaken. Unexpectedly, half of the child participants encountered diverse learning needs that extended beyond individual difference and presented extra challenges for musical development. Diverse needs included dyslexia, motor skill deficit, learning processing disorders, attention and focus issues, persistent anxiety, and intrusive synaesthesia. This study investigated, in fine-grained detail, the children's experiences of emergent diverse learning needs, including how needs were identified, managed and accommodated by the children, teacher and parent. Findings indicated that the children's diverse learning needs were idiosyncratic, and that their investment and self-perception in musical development, together with pragmatic, practical support and emotional guidance from the teacher and parent contributed to longer-term engagement.

Significance

This study, conducted by the teacher as researcher, provided the rare opportunity to investigate children's experiences of emergent learning diversity in the instrumental music studio. This offers a unique contribution to the literature with important pedagogical implications for teaching practice and further research.