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"We Never Got to Try That Experience of Total Chaos": Exploring Preservice Music Teachers' Agency in Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to investigate one single case of four preservice music teachers' (PMTs) in their teaching practicums, carried out as a part of a Norwegian general teacher education program. The main data sources were based on material from three focus group interviews and observations from the PMT's teaching practicums implemented at two practice schools for a total of five weeks. Emirbayer and Mische's triadic conception of agency provided the theoretical framework for the analysis, highlighting temporal orientations (past, present, and future) of the actions. The findings revealed how the temporal dimensions of agency gave nuanced understandings of the PMT's experiences of being supported (or limited) to make decisions and take actions in music teaching settings, either by the school-based mentors or themselves. The study underlines the importance of increased focus and inclusion of agency within teaching practicum contexts to prepare PMTs for future challenges.

Keywords

agency, general teacher education, instrumental case study, music teacher education, preservice music teachers, teaching practicum

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Practical teaching experience is an important part of teacher education with its overall aim of fostering preservice teachers' professional development (Ulvik et al., 2018). To consider what preservice teachers need to face future challenges, the concept of teacher agency has emerged in educational contexts, which refers to the capacity of a teacher to freely make decisions and act within the school structure (Powell, 2019; Priestley et al., 2015). Recently, Conway et al. (2019) advocated for developing preservice teachers' forward-thinking and agentic teacher identity. Their call was responded to by Tucker (2020), who provided a framework for supporting the development of preservice teacher agency by relating Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) concept to practical examples of agency in action (connected to past, present, and future actions). Still, research studies have revealed that preservice teachers' awareness of agency may not be sufficient (Tucker & Powell, 2021), resulting in a perceived lack of agency in their first years of teaching (Powell, 2019). Thus, a deeper understanding of the relationship between preservice teacher agency and educational structure is needed (Tucker, 2020), as well as increased awareness and inclusion of preservice teachers' agentic development, fostered through real-life situations within teaching practicum contexts (Espeland et al., 2019).

In previous research, Powell's (2019) study revealed that student teachers within ensemble music programs experienced a lack of agency because of structural constraints, both at a university level and by their cooperating teachers during student teaching. Espeland et al. (2019) found similar structural constraints, in terms of time limitations and unstable organizational structures. In addition, student teachers' abilities to reflect on action were inadequate. Thus, the researchers argued for a greater emphasis on past, present, and future dimensions in music teaching concerning agency and pedagogical improvisation. Other researchers have investigated how student teachers enacted agency and developed a teacher leadership stance within the spaces of pedagogical, personal, and social learning and growth during teaching practicum (Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2020). In addition, the relationship between student teachers' agency and teacher identity has been given significant attention in recent years, both within teaching practicum contexts (Cobb et al., 2018), and university settings (Onsrud et al., 2022; Powell & Parker, 2017; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). For example, Cobb et al.'s (2018) study demonstrated how preservice teachers with a strong sense of teacher identity employed deliberate actions, or agency, during teaching practicum. Supportive peer interactions are also seen as important facilitators of student teachers` agency (Juutilainen et al., 2018; Shin, 2019; Soini et al., 2015; Toom et al., 2017). Other researchers suggest that preservice teachers' agentic thinking can change over time in response to specific course assignments (Rathgeber & Mantie, 2019) and that values are implicit in agency within university settings (Tucker & Powell, 2021). However, as indicated, few research studies have investigated agentic issues regarding preservice teachers' actions and development within a music teaching practicum context.

In this article, I seek to address the challenge of preservice teachers' development and awareness of agency (Tucker & Powell, 2021) and respond to Espeland et al.'s (2019) call for investigating preservice teachers' agentic actions in relation to the past,

present, and future dimensions in music teaching within a teaching practicum context. I chose to conduct an instrumental case study (Stake, 1994) with one single case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) of four preservice teachers during their teaching practicums, carried out in their fourth and fifth year at a university in Norway. The university's 5-year master's degree program provides preservice teachers to choose music as an elective and master's subject in addition to compulsory subjects, such as pedagogy and mathematics. When entering the teaching profession, they are educated as general classroom teachers who are specialized in music. In this study, the preservice teachers chose music from Year 1 as an elective subject and their master's subject. Thus, as master's degree preservice teachers, they are referred to as preservice *music* teachers (PMTs).

To investigate PMTs' agentic actions, I ask the following key question:

> How do preservice music teachers experience the opportunities (or limitations) for agentic actions during the music teaching practicum?

Drawing on Tucker and Powell (2021), agency is conceptualized in the PMTs' ability to make decisions and to take action. To explore the various dimensions of the PMTs' agentic actions, Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) triadic conception of agency is employed as the theoretical framework for the analysis, highlighting temporal orientations (past, present, future) of action. In this article, the PMT's utterances are the main source to investigate their experiences of agency. However, as the PMT's experiences are lived within a teaching practicum context, their experiences also involve their relation to their school-based mentors. Thus, it is possible to gain more knowledge on what kind of agencies are supported (or constrained) within a teaching practicum context, involving the PMT's past experiences, present actions, and abilities to visualize themselves as future teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of agency has been debated within a range of different academic disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, and anthropology (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Priestley et al., 2015), resulting in a lack of clarity and various definition of the concept`s core meaning (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Notions of agency have been associated with terms such as will, purposiveness, choice, intentionality, or freedom (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), taking the initiative, and influencing one's life (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). A more radical view of agency has also been construed to combat educational inequalities and injustices (Stetsenko, 2019).

This study addresses PMT agency by using a temporal–relational framework of agency from the field of relational sociology (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Understanding agency through a temporal model, PMT's capacities to make decisions and take actions requires a focus on the dynamic interplay between past experiences, engagement with the present, and orientations toward the future. In addition, the temporal–relational approach may provide insight into the PMT's

awareness of various forms of agency, which seems to be a challenge for preservice teachers' agentic actions (Tucker & Powell, 2021). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe agency as:

> a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities), and "acted out" in the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects with contingencies of the moment). (p. 963)

Through these three dimensions, referred to as a chordal triad, actors engage with their world by drawing on past experiences and repertoires of knowledge (*iteration*), envisioning future actions (*projectivity*), and making decisions for action in the present (*practical evaluation*); (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The different temporal orientations of agency all play a role in the individual's various forms of action. Still, the degree to which they are oriented toward the past, the present, or the future varies.

The iterational element of agency refers to individual's "selective reactivation [. . .] of past patterns of thought and action" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). PMTs may exert iterative agency by drawing on learned pedagogical knowledge and competencies as they enter a music classroom and be able to switch their attention and communication style to respond to a variety of dilemmas within teaching practicum. *Projective agency* involves agentic action in which actors "construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 984). The projective element of agency may come into play when PMTs consider possible career paths, develop aspirations as future teachers, and reflect on necessary steps toward achieving their vision (Rathgeber & Mantie, 2019). Such aspirations can be short, medium, or long-term, and be extensive or limited in scope (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

The practical-evaluative element of agency responds to the demands and contingencies of the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), and relates to the PMTs' abilities to make decisions and take action in their day-to-day lives (Rathgeber & Mantie, 2019). Practical evaluation involves processes of problematization, characterization, and deliberation that result in decision and execution (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The process of practical evaluation may occur when PMTs relate a problematic situation to their prior experiences and further considers how to shape their past approach in the current setting (characterization). When a PMT takes action in the present with an attempt to shape the future (deliberation), the process of practical evaluation ends as they determine a plan (decision), and finally implement the plan in action (execution).

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporal–relational concept of agency informed the analysis of the PMTs' practicum experiences in this study. This framework allowed space to explore and illustrate the interaction between PMTs' agency and structures in perceptions of time and social relationships within a teaching practicum context (Tucker, 2020). Viewing agency in such terms also allowed to explore how the PMTs'

agentic development was enabled or constrained by the social relationship involving their school-based mentors during the teaching practicum.

Methodology

This study was designed as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1994), with the interest of examining the single case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) of one group including four preservice music teachers. The intent was to illustrate their experiences of agentic actions that were supported (or constrained) within a music teaching practicum context. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained, case studies can rely on multiple sources of information. Data sources in this study consisted of: (a) observations of three pre-practicum university-arranged meetings; (b) observations of one post-practicum university-arranged meeting; (c) PMTs' reflections notes on their expectations and personal developmental goals (12 documents in total); (d) three post-practicum focus group interviews with the PMTs (audio recording); (e) daily classroom observations (23 days in total); (f) observations of daily mentoring sessions (video/audio recording); (g) one video recorded field conversation (practice school 1); (h) end of practicum written reports and assessment (8 documents in total), and (i) reflexive field notes written by the researcher. Data were collected during the PMTs periods of teaching practicum in autumn 2020/spring 2021 (1 week + 2 weeks), and autumn 2021 (2 weeks).

Based on the study's aim to investigate the PMTs' experiences of making decisions and taking actions in music teaching settings, the main data sources in this article were based on material from three focus group interviews and observations (including the researcher's field notes). An additional data source was the PMTs' reflections notes, which included their personal development goals connected to their teaching practicums. I took on a role as a non-participant observer in classroom settings and during university-arranged meetings. A part of the observation data also consisted of the conversations that the PMTs had with their school-based mentors between lessons. Following an instrumental case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2018), I conducted three focus group interviews to investigate the preservice teacher's practicum experiences within the group. The focus group interviews that lasted approximately 2 hr and 30 min each took place just after the teaching practicum ended each semester. I invited the PMTs to a conversation through a non-governing interview style to bring out various points of view from their experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Being a researcher and group moderator during such an interview situation made it possible to present relevant topics to the study, and to bring up questions from observations and the PMTs' pre-practicum reflection notes. Thus, the collection of multiple data sources (focus group interviews, observations, and documents) triangulated information, provided validity to the findings, and supported the interpretation of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was carried out in accordance with Norwegian data protection regulation (NSD, 2022) and in line with the guidelines for research ethics (NESH, 2021). The participants, including the school-based and university-based mentors at both practice

schools, were informed about the study and signed a declaration of consent, accepting to be observed and interviewed. The data were anonymized, and quotes from the participants were translated from Norwegian to English.

The Case Context

The participants were three self-identified female PMTs and one male PMT aged between 23 and 24 years old, who were becoming teachers for 5th to 10th grade (teaching students at the age of 10–15 years old). They were given the opportunity to select a gender-neutral name for the article, and following the latter order, they are presented as Taylor, Ashton, Payton, and Dylan.

Since they were master's PMTs, the subject of music was a central part of their practical training. In Norway (and Scandinavia in general), popular music holds a strong position in primary and secondary schools (C. Christophersen & Gullberg, 2017; Dyndahl & Nielsen, 2014; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010; Sætre et al., 2016). The Norwegian curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools emphasizes developing student competencies through playing, singing, dancing, making music, and shaping and understanding various expressions (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019).

The PMTs' teaching practicums were conducted at two Norwegian practice schools, three weeks at one primary school for 1st to 7th grade (Year 4), and 2 weeks at one lower secondary school for 8th to 10th grade (Year 5). The teaching practicum at the first practice school lasted a week longer, providing rich data material and therefore had a more prominent place in the analysis. At Practice school 1, the PMTs' music lessons were conducted in a large music room with several instruments. The PMTs followed a male school-based mentor's timetable, which involved teaching music for the second to sixth grade (altogether 12 lessons of music in one week distributed among the four PMTs) and English teaching for the sixth grade. Each class consisted of approximately 20 to 30 students.

At Practice school 2, music lessons were carried out in a well-equipped music room and a regular classroom. The female school-based mentor's timetable included teaching 8th to 10th grade in subjects called "Scenic production" (an elective subject including musical activities) and music, as well as other compulsory subjects. Altogether, the PMTs had 12 lessons in 1 week (distributed among the four PMTs) with musical-related activities. Each class consisted of up to five parallel classes with approximately 20 students.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed within the framework of a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). At the beginning of the analysis, the research question guided the search for all examples that were relevant and highlighted as important for the PMTs, including the extended phrases and sentences from the interview transcriptions, observation data, and the documents (Saldaña, 2021). Next, I looked for how various

themes were similar or different and what kinds of relationships that existed between them, focusing on the PMT's experiences connected to the three dimensions within the temporal–relational framework (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Thus, data were themed categorically as an abductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018), starting from an empirical basis, and further analyzed combined with previous theory in the literature and the theoretical framework to discover patterns that led to understanding. Credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was enhanced by using verbatim quotes to support thematic interpretation.

Findings and Discussion

With the overall aim to investigate the PMT's agentic actions during their music teaching practicum, five themes were found to be most prominent in the analysis. These included the PMT`s agentic actions experienced as (a) *obstacles to making decisions related to musical activities*, (b) *being assistant teachers for music lessons*, (c) *being observers in music lessons*, (d) *supportive peer relations*, and (e) *making collaborative decisions and taking actions.* Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporal–relational framework guided the analysis with the potential to illuminate different temporal dimensions (iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative agency) of the PMT's agentic actions.

Obstacles to Making Decisions Related to Musical Activities

One of the most distinctive themes in the focus group interviews and during observations was how the PMTs experienced obstacles to making decisions related to musical activities. During the pre-practicum meeting at Practice school 1, I observed how the school-based mentor told the PMTs to do "whatever" they wanted in the music lessons. However, in the focus group interview, Dylan reported that: "He had a lot of opinions about how to set up the program for the lessons." In between lessons, the school-based mentor could also tell them to change what they had planned based on his desire for musical activities, as described by Ashton:

> We had 4th grade in a line dance. [. . .] It didn't go so well the first time. And then he says, "I expect you to replace the program for the next lesson." [. . .] Maybe we had figured out what we had to do to change it. We didn't get the opportunity to do that.

The constraints of agency to make their own decisions regarding musical activities that Ashton described, may indicate how the PMT's expectations for music teaching differed from the school-based mentors' expectations. For example, I observed how the school-based mentor talked about his desire to play in band, while the PMTs wanted to conduct various musical activities, such as singing games. During the teaching practicum, I observed how their different expectations led to frustration among the PMTs. Thus, having obstacles to drawing on past experiences in their music lessons

indicated how their opportunities to exert the iterative agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) were limited because of their school-based mentor's desire for musical activities.

However, having limitations to exert iterative agency concerning musical activities was described as a relief at Practice school 2. Prior to the practicum, the school-based mentor had already made decisions for the musical activities, including body percussion activities, theory-based assignments, and band playing. Still, the PMTs were given opportunities to do what they wanted, but due to the burden of university assignments, while participating in the teaching practicum, they decided to "choose the easy way out," as described in the focus group interview. For example, Dylan elaborated that they "did not have to make any effort" because the music lessons were already planned. Thus, the PMTs seemed to be aware of making limitations of their iterative agency by not making decisions regarding the musical activities. This also confirms previous research that PMTs do not always want to decide everything concerning their teaching practicum, but instead be recipients of "toolboxes" they see as useful to take with them into the future (Sætre, 2014).

Being Assistant Teachers for Music Lessons

In the first focus group interview, Payton talked about how they experienced being assistant teachers in music lessons at Practice school 1. I also observed situations where the school-based mentor repeatedly placed himself among students singing or playing various instruments without agreeing in advance. During such situations, he could take over the rehearsal while the PMTs assisted the students instead. However, it seemed that there was likely no conspiracy on his part to limit the PMT's spaces for agency. For example, I observed how he described his challenges of participating in the music lessons during conversations with the PMTs. Thus, the school-based mentor's constrained abilities to *act otherwise* (Powell, 2019) may result from his professional agency that hindered the PMTs from taking the lead in the music lessons.

In the focus group interview, the PMTs continued to talk about the school-based mentors' way of participating in music lessons, as Payton elaborated: "We never got to try that experience of total chaos." Furthermore, she described how she had written specifically in her reflection notes that "if an activity did not work, I had to be more creative. I felt like I never got to try: "Now this doesn't work. What do I have to do now?" On one hand, these statements indicate how the PMTs experienced being limited in exerting the process of practical-evaluative agency. Problematization occurred when the PMTs experienced how a musical activity did not fit into a certain setting. However, they were limited in going any further in the process and could not determine and implement a plan of action.

On the other hand, when the PMTs talked about being placed as assistant teachers repeatedly, did they choose to exert the iterative agency from the last music lesson and thereby stay in this position? It seemed like the PMT's iterative agency was concerned not only with past experiences connected to their developed repertoire and pedagogical knowledge (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) but also with situations connected to their

experiences as assistant teachers in the practicum. Still, in the focus group interview, the PMTs expressed being unable to act otherwise because they were concerned about not getting the practicum approved and, thereby, chose to stay in the assistant role.

Being Observers in Music Lessons

Findings revealed how the PMT's iterative agency could be displayed in various forms as described in the following when they experienced being observers in music lessons at practice school 2. In the focus group interview, they described feeling "extremely redundant" and looking "unprofessional" in teaching situations where they stood on the sideline. Yet, as I observed the PMTs in such music settings, I wondered why they expected the school-based mentor to tell them what to "look for." Why did they not take more agency by drawing on past experience and existing competence? In the focus group interview, Ashton described experiences of not being "given any demands at all," which was supported by Payton, who expected the school-based mentor to give them specific tasks for each lesson. Findings, thus, indicate how iterative agency may be displayed in various forms. Spaces for agency are not only concerned if individuals are promoted or limited by external factors such as the school-based mentors in this study. It also concerns the PMT's awareness of agency and how they depend on others to enact agency rather than take responsibility themselves. In the following, the PMT's capacities to enact agency were explored, where they highlighted supportive peer relations as a central facilitator for agency.

Supportive Peer Relations

The PMTs appreciated the supportive peer relations within the group throughout their fourth and fifth years, emphasizing a sense of security and being able to help each other out. For example, in the focus group interview, Taylor talked about how she sought help from her peers during a music lesson: "I think the group helped me a lot. I wasn't entirely comfortable teaching a song, something happened to my voice. Then I just asked Ashton." In addition, Ashton expressed: "I think one of the most positive things about being in the teaching practicum and a group is that you learn things from each other. Both new songs and new methods." Their descriptions of supportive peer interactions and seeing each other as resources also corroborate with previous studies indicating such factors as important facilitators of student teachers' agency (Juutilainen et al., 2018; Shin, 2019; Soini et al., 2015; Toom et al., 2017).

The PMTs mainly completed music teaching in pairs or group throughout their teaching practicums. In the focus group interview, I asked them to reflect on how their choice to carry out the teaching together could relate to their future music teacher role. Dylan described how he felt that the teaching situations were quite realistic. At the same time, he reflected upon how it "may give a wrong impression of how long things will take," referring to band situations where the four PMTs often taught together and had responsibility for one group of students each. Ashton mentioned the teaching

practicums' time limits as a reason for conducting lessons together, which also corroborates with previous studies that highlight time limitations as structural constraints for agency (Espeland et al., 2019). Still, the PMT's spaces for agency as they were constituted within the group and relied on each other to conduct music lessons indicated how their opportunities for agency were limited. Not taking individual actions to a larger degree may affect their abilities to envision themselves as future teachers doing future actions, that is, their projective agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Yet, as presented in the following, supportive peer relations also promoted the PMTs to make collaborative decisions and actions.

Making Collaborative Decisions and Taking Actions

At Practice school 1, I observed the PMTs during a break where they agreed to notify the school-based mentor about wanting to take leadership for the next lesson. As the school-based mentor entered the music classroom, Taylor approached him and said: "I would like to try having the leadership in the music lesson, and I will ask for help if I need it." In the focus group after the teaching practicum ended, she described how "that particular lesson went really well" since the school-based mentor stayed in the background. This collaborative decision strengthened their ability to take action and leadership in the music lesson. Furthermore, the PMTs developed their deliberative capacities as they critically evaluated and confronted the situational context by approaching the school-based mentor (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). As a result, the projective element of agency mixed with the present moment of practical-evaluative agency, as the PMTs acted in light of the broader aim to take leadership of their music lesson. Similar to Chaaban and Sawalhi (2020), the PMTs enacted agency as a part of their growth as teachers and developing a leadership stance. Moreover, the social and relational engagement between the PMTs and their school-based mentor in the specific context not only limited agency but also provoked the PMT's agentic actions.

Implications and Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this instrumental case study (Stake, 1994) was to investigate one single case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) of four PMTs' in their teaching practicums and explore various forms of agency seen through the theoretical lens of Emirbayer and Mische`s (1998) temporal–relational concept of agency. The research question that guided the inquiry was:

> Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do preservice music teachers experience the opportunities (or limitations) for agentic actions during the music teaching practicum?

Based on findings from this study, the article's theoretical framework and potential for exploring various PMT agentic actions are highlighted in the following. Finally,

implications for music teacher education and suggestions for future research are described.

By exploring the PMT's agentic actions through the temporal–relational framework (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), we have seen how they experienced obstacles in making decisions regarding musical activities. Furthermore, being placed as assistant teachers or observers by their school-based mentors, constrained them to draw on past experiences and developed repertoires (iterative agency), and to make decisions and take actions (practical-evaluative agency) during music lessons. At the same time, the PMTs iterated the assistant role as a result of being limited to *act otherwise* (Powell, 2019) because they were concerned about not having the teaching practicum approved as successful completion. In addition, by not using the opportunities to make decisions regarding musical activities, the PMTs prevented themselves from exerting their iterative agency. Instead of experiencing this as an obstacle, they experienced it as a relief. The PMT's spaces for agency constituted within the group also indicated that they limited their projective agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). On one hand, when the PMTs were limiting themselves to enact agency indicated that they are still in a learning process. This is consistent with Espeland et al.'s (2019) findings, which highlighted that preservice teachers aim to reach a more profound understanding of their development as teachers, and reflect on the temporal dimensions of teaching in action (Espeland et al., 2019). On the other hand, the PMTs constrained abilities to enact agency revealed that their awareness of agency seemed to be lacking. This corroborates with Tucker and Powell's study (2021) that revealed how PMTs lacking an awareness of agency appeared to be challenging for their agentic actions.

Findings in this study, however, illuminated the PMT's awareness of agency when they were capable of making collaborative decisions and taking actions, which was a result of their supportive peer relations. Interestingly, the limitations the PMTs experienced in exerting their practical-evaluative agency during music lessons seemed to be a promotion of their projective agency. This was seen when Taylor asked to take the leadership role in the music lesson. Moreover, the PMTs demonstrated abilities to employ deliberate actions through the practical-evaluative agency, indicating that they had an increased awareness of agency, and an evolving teacher identity (Cobb et al., 2018).

Based on explorations of the PMTs' experiences in this thematic analysis, Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporal–relational concept of agency can reveal important implications for teacher educators within the field of music teacher education. To increase PMTs' awareness of agency within a teaching practicum context, teacher educators functioning as mentors are responsible for facilitating spaces for their past experiences (iterative agency), and their capacities in making decisions and taking actions during music teaching settings (practical-evaluative agency). Furthermore, facilitating such agentic actions during teaching practicum is needed to support the PMT's abilities to envision themselves as future teachers (projective agency). Findings in this study indicated how the school-based mentors supported PMT's agentic actions to some degree, in terms of facilitating spaces for teaching together and giving them opportunities to choose musical activities. Still, the school-based mentors' way of

exerting professional agency maintained the status quo rather than promoting the PMTs' decision-making and actions. Seen through the temporal–relational lens (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), the school-based mentors making decisions and taking actions on the PMT's behalf may also result from how they exerted their iterative agency. Consequently, the PMTs lack a forward-thinking and projective identity as future music teachers (Conway et al., 2019; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Thus, as Espeland et al. (2019) addressed, an increased focus on agency and the past, present, and future dimensions in music teaching, could fill a gap between these temporal dimensions and preservice music teachers` competence. To do so, the school-based mentors are responsible for fostering PMT reflection and develop a critical stance toward teaching that increases their perceptions of their own agency (Juntunen, 2014; Powell, 2019).

To assist and facilitate PMTs' agentic awareness and development through practicum experiences, Emirbayer and Mische`s (1998) temporal–relational concept of agency can be useful for music teacher educators and researchers interested in understanding, exploring, and supporting PMTs' enactment of agency. In this study, I investigated a single case of four master's PMTs during their music teaching practicums at a Norwegian general teacher education program. To develop preservice teachers' agency (Conway et al., 2019), research within various teaching practicum contexts is needed to confirm and challenge the findings. As Onsrud et al. (2022) suggested, having agency on the agenda throughout the entire educational program is needed. In line with their statement, I argue that agency should be in focus from the first year in practicum to increase the inclusion and awareness of agency for all stakeholders involved. Further research that investigates different perspectives preservice teachers and music teacher educators have around agentic skills seen as foundational for music teaching is suggested, with the potential to be explored from various theories of agency.

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