

Performer's Role in Music Pedagogies: Creative Pathways for Music Education

Juriani Jamaludin, Siti Nur Hajarul Aswaad Shakeeb Arsalaan Bajunid*, & Nurulhamimi Abdul Rahman

Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1026EDU0439>

Received: 29 June 2026; Accepted: 04 July 2026; Published: 18 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformation of professional performers into music educators, with particular emphasis on the creative pedagogies they adopt in their teaching practices. While performers often enter education with advanced musical and artistic expertise, their transition into effective teaching requires rethinking identity, pedagogy, and classroom strategies. The objective of this research is to examine how performers adapt to their roles as educators, focusing on the challenges they face, the pedagogical approaches they employ, and the outcomes of their teaching practices. A qualitative research design was employed, involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine professional musicians who successfully transitioned into teaching roles. The study highlights the creative pedagogies developed by these performer-educators, as well as their teaching approaches and classroom management strategies. These include collaborative music-making, reflective listening, and adapting instruction to suit different student groups and levels of ability. Such practices provide aspiring music teachers with effective strategies to foster engagement, build confidence, and manage diverse classroom dynamics. The findings also emphasize the positive impact of creative pedagogy on learners, leading to enhanced musical growth, increased motivation, and deeper connections between students and the learning process. Overall, the research suggests that performers bring unique strengths to the classroom, particularly in creativity, expressiveness, and authenticity, yet they also face significant challenges in pedagogical adaptation. By integrating creative methods with formal teaching strategies, performer-educators can enrich the music learning experience, making it both engaging and transformative. This study provides valuable insights for music education programs, underscoring the importance of preparing aspiring music teachers to merge performance artistry with innovative pedagogical practices.

Keywords: performer-educators, music education, creative pedagogy, teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of music education has witnessed a growing intersection between professional performance and pedagogy. Many accomplished performers are now transitioning into educational roles, bringing with them a wealth of artistic expertise, interpretive depth, and practical musicianship. However, while these individuals possess strong artistic identities and technical mastery, the process of transforming into effective educators requires more than performance excellence. It demands a reconfiguration of pedagogical understanding, identity, and classroom practice (Gaunt, 2011; Hennessy, 2020). This transition often entails navigating new roles and expectations, as the focus shifts from personal artistic expression to facilitating others' musical growth.

The move from stage to classroom can be both enriching and challenging. Performer-educators often grapple with redefining their professional identities, adapting performance-based habits into teaching strategies, and learning to manage the complex social and emotional dynamics of the classroom. Unlike performing, which centers on self-expression and artistic output, teaching requires communicative clarity, empathy, and structured pedagogical thinking (Jorgensen, 2008). These shifts highlight the need for performer-educators to cultivate creative and student-centered approaches that bridge performance artistry with effective educational practice.

Creative pedagogy has thus emerged as a crucial element in this transformation. Rooted in experiential learning and innovation, creative pedagogies encourage students to engage actively in music-making, reflection, and collaborative exploration. For performers entering teaching, such approaches allow them to draw upon their artistic sensibilities while promoting meaningful and inclusive learning experiences. Methods such as collaborative ensemble work, reflective listening, improvisation, and adaptive instruction enable performer-educators to connect with diverse learners and foster intrinsic motivation (Burnard, 2012). By integrating these practices into music instruction, educators can enhance students' musical understanding while simultaneously nurturing creativity, confidence, and emotional engagement, all of which are fundamental components of holistic music education in the 21st century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Music has long served as a universal language, bridging cultures, generations, and emotions. It holds a vital place in education by nurturing creativity, discipline, and collaboration. Yet behind every accomplished musician stands a dedicated educator who has guided their growth. Beyond teaching musical techniques and theoretical knowledge, music teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' lifelong appreciation, understanding, and engagement with the art of music.

Music education is more than teaching notes and rhythms. It's about nurturing talent, shaping future industry leaders, and keeping music alive in schools and communities. As music continues to evolve, educators must keep up with new methodologies, technologies, and instructional approaches

Performer Identity and Transition to Education

The transition from professional performer to educator has become an important area of discussion within music education research. Many musicians enter teaching positions after years of professional performance experience, bringing with them strong artistic identities shaped by performance practice, discipline, and musical interpretation. However, the shift from performer to educator often requires a significant transformation in professional identity, pedagogical understanding, and classroom practice (Bennett, 2012).

Research suggests that performers typically develop their identity primarily through artistic mastery, technical expertise, and stage experience. According to Bennett (2012), professional musicians often define themselves through their performance careers, and this identity can remain dominant even after they enter educational roles. As a result, many performer-educators initially approach teaching by replicating the instructional methods they experienced as students, rather than applying formal pedagogical frameworks. This phenomenon reflects what Bennett describes as the persistence of the "performer identity" in educational contexts.

Recent scholarship further conceptualises teacher professional identity as a dynamic, evolving construct shaped by professional experiences, institutional contexts, and reflective practice rather than a fixed professional role (Beijaard, Koopman and Schellings 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant for performer-educators, whose professional identities continuously develop as they negotiate artistic expertise alongside pedagogical responsibilities. These insights provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how musicians reconstruct their professional identities when transitioning into educational settings.

Similarly, Gaunt (2008) highlights that many musicians who become educators receive extensive training in performance but relatively limited preparation in teaching methodologies. Consequently, they may struggle to balance their dual identities as performers and teachers. The transition often requires a shift from focusing on personal musical achievement to supporting students' musical growth, learning processes, and creative development.

Further studies emphasize that this transition involves not only acquiring pedagogical skills but also redefining professional purpose. Burnard (2012) argues that effective music educators integrate their artistic experience with reflective teaching practices. Performer-educators who successfully adapt to teaching roles tend to develop flexible pedagogies that encourage creativity, collaboration, and student-centered learning.

Overall, the literature indicates that the transition from performer to educator is a complex developmental process. While performers bring valuable artistic knowledge and authenticity to the classroom, effective teaching requires the integration of pedagogical competence, reflective practice, and an expanded professional identity that prioritizes student learning. Understanding this transition is therefore essential for preparing performer-educators who can effectively bridge the worlds of performance and education.

Creative Pedagogy in Music Education

Abramo and Reynolds' (2014) framework positions creativity as a core professional disposition for music teachers, highlighting traits such as responsiveness, flexibility, improvisation, and fluid identity. These qualities closely mirror the adaptations performers must make when transitioning into teaching roles. Although these creative dispositions are essential, little research has examined how they appear in real classroom practice, especially among performer-educators. The present study builds on this framework by investigating how performers apply creative pedagogical strategies such as collaborative music-making, reflective listening, and curriculum adaptation and how these approaches shape student engagement, motivation, and musical growth. This connection underscores creativity as a central driver in the identity transformation from performer to music educator.

Bylica and Bauman (2022) examine how music educators enacted pedagogical creativity during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by uncertainty and shifting educational priorities. The findings show that the pandemic created space for greater pedagogical experimentation, particularly as traditional pressures surrounding public performance were reduced and social-emotional learning became more central. Teachers frequently implemented creative practices to remain responsive to the needs and contexts of their students, suggesting that responsiveness is a key defining feature of pedagogical creativity. The study highlights how challenging contexts can catalyse innovative teaching, shifting educators' understandings of purpose and reinforcing creativity as an essential aspect of contemporary music education.

Recent research also highlights that arts-based pedagogy extends beyond creative classroom activities by positioning artistic practice itself as the primary vehicle for learning. Burnard, & Sorensen (2022) argue that creativity develops through authentic musical engagement, collaborative learning, improvisation, and reflective participation. These principles are particularly relevant for performer-educators because they enable professional performance practices to be translated into meaningful classroom experiences.

Green's (2002) research on informal learning demonstrates that peer-directed repertoire choices, listening-and-copying, and band-style rehearsals cultivate musical agency and motivation approaches many performer-educators intuitively bring to class. Within formal curricula, Orff-Schulwerk, Kodály, and Dalcroze methods translate creativity into structured classroom routines (movement, solfège, rhythm, and aurality), providing a pedagogical bridge from stage craft to lesson craft. Your participants' "mini-stage classroom" and live demonstration strategies echo these traditions and support embodied, dialogic learning. Similarly, contemporary perspectives on experiential learning emphasise that students develop deeper understanding when learning occurs through authentic musical experiences involving performance, reflection, experimentation, and collaboration rather than passive knowledge transmission (Morris, 2020). These theoretical perspectives provide an important lens for interpreting how performer-educators integrate live demonstrations, ensemble learning, and improvisation into their teaching practices.

Pedagogical Practices of Performer-Educators

Mat Yusoff et al. (2023) argue that effective music teaching is grounded in strong Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which requires teachers to integrate deep musical understanding with appropriate instructional strategies, student-centred approaches, and meaningful assessment practices. Tajetdinova (2021) further reinforces that music teaching in schools extends far beyond artistic skill; teachers must cultivate students' musical abilities, creativity, moral development, and appreciation for music through well-developed pedagogical and psychological knowledge. These perspectives emphasize that performer-educators must convert their performance expertise into structured pedagogical competence to fulfil the multifaceted demands of school music education.

Li Xiaojing (2024) contributes additional insights by examining how music teachers enact pedagogical practices in both whole-class and individual instruction using Kodály and Orff approaches. Her findings show that effective implementation requires teachers to create an integrated and supportive environment, view pupils as capable musicians, continuously update their knowledge and teaching skills, and engage in reflective practice. Li also highlights key operational differences between group and individual teaching: whole-class sessions rely on group social dynamics, differentiated instruction, and collective assessment, while individual lessons focus on efficiency, tailored objectives, and personalised feedback.

Taken together, these studies underscore that performer-educators must develop sophisticated and flexible pedagogical practices that align with diverse teaching contexts. The transition from performer to educator therefore requires mastery not only of musical performance but also of PCK, reflective practice, differentiated teaching, and the ability to adapt instruction across group and individual settings. These insights form a critical foundation for understanding how performers transform their professional skills into effective music teaching strategies.

Gaps in the Literature

Although previous studies have explored musician–teacher identity formation (Garnett, 2013; Triantafyllaki, 2010), creative pedagogy (Abramo & Reynolds, 2014; Bylica & Bauman, 2022), and pedagogical content knowledge in music education (Mat Yusoff et al., 2023), substantial gaps remain, particularly in understanding how professional performers translate their performance expertise into effective pedagogical practice. Much of the existing literature addresses identity shifts and creative dispositions at a conceptual level, yet offers limited insight into how these are enacted in daily teaching, curriculum design, classroom interactions, and assessment. While pedagogical approaches such as Kodály, Orff, and Dalcroze (Li, 2024) provide structured models for instruction, little research examines how performer-educators adapt, personalise, or hybridise these methods based on their performance backgrounds or artistic identities. Similarly, the literature offers minimal guidance on how performer-educators utilise technology, authentic assessment, or performative leadership to support student motivation and musical development.

A significant gap also exists within the Malaysian and wider Southeast Asian context. There is a lack of empirical research focusing specifically on professional musicians who transition into music educators, particularly regarding their creative pathways, pedagogical identities, and classroom practices. No published studies in Malaysia have examined the Performer’s Role in Music Pedagogies or documented how performance-trained musicians navigate the shift into formal teaching environments. Although international research acknowledges the potential benefits of performer-educators in enriching music learning, studies rarely explore the lived experiences of those who move directly from the professional performance world into educational roles. As a result, little is known about how they manage tensions between performance standards and institutional demands, how they reshape their identity as educators, or how they negotiate curriculum and assessment expectations.

To address these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to investigate how professional performers in Malaysia transform into music educators, with a specific emphasis on creative pedagogies. Guided by three interrelated research questions, the study examines: (1) the challenges performers encounter when reorienting their identity and teaching strategies; (2) the creative and adaptive pedagogical practices they employ, such as collaborative music-making, reflective listening, and curriculum adaptation; and (3) the resulting effects on student engagement, motivation, and musical growth.

By foregrounding the voices of nine professional musicians who have successfully transitioned into teaching, this study aims to deepen understanding of how creative pedagogical practices can bridge the gap between performance and education. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of preparing future music educators to integrate artistic expressiveness with innovative pedagogy, enabling them to create learning environments that are engaging, inclusive, and artistically rich.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore how professional musicians transition into music education and develop creative pedagogical practices. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for investigating complex professional experiences because it enables researchers to examine participants' meanings, interpretations, and contextual realities in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2024). A multiple-case study design was selected to facilitate comparisons across performer-educators from different musical backgrounds while preserving the richness of individual experiences (Yin, 2018). This design enabled the researchers to explore how participants reconstructed their professional identities, adapted their teaching approaches, and integrated creative pedagogies across diverse educational contexts.

Selection of Case Studies

Nine professional musicians who had successfully transitioned into educational roles participated in this study. Participants were selected using purposeful criterion sampling, a strategy appropriate for identifying information-rich cases that can provide detailed insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to possess at least five years of professional performance experience, currently teach in formal or informal music education settings and actively integrate performance-informed or creative pedagogical practices into their teaching.

To enhance the diversity of perspectives, participants represented different musical genres, including Western classical, jazz, contemporary commercial music, opera, and traditional Malay music, as well as various educational settings. Maximum variation sampling was incorporated within the criterion-based approach to capture diverse experiences of performer-educators while identifying common patterns across cases (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Data Collection Methods

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on the study objectives and literature relating to performer identity, creative pedagogy, experiential learning, and music teacher development. The interview guide was pilot-reviewed by two music education academics to improve question clarity and content relevance before data collection commenced. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews because this method provides flexibility while allowing participants to describe their lived experiences in detail (Brinkmann, 2022). Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through secure online platforms according to participants' availability. Field notes were recorded immediately after each interview to capture contextual observations and preliminary analytical reflections that complemented the interview transcripts. The interviews covered three main areas: Participants' professional performance backgrounds and motivations for transitioning into teaching, pedagogical approaches and creative strategies employed in the classroom and challenges faced during the transition and the perceived outcomes of their teaching practices. Each interview lasted between 60–90 minutes and was conducted either in person or via secure online platforms, depending on participants' availability.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). The analysis involved iterative coding, constant comparison across interview transcripts, and repeated refinement of emerging themes to ensure analytical coherence, credibility, and trustworthiness. Themes were reviewed and refined throughout the analytical process to ensure they accurately represented participants' experiences and addressed the study's research objectives. Initially, the interview transcripts and observational notes were read multiple times to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the data. This process of familiarization allowed the researcher to immerse in participants' experiences and begin identifying patterns relevant to the study's focus on performance-to-teaching transitions, creative pedagogy, and classroom outcomes. Subsequently, meaningful segments of text were systematically coded according to emerging patterns, capturing key insights related to the challenges, strategies, and pedagogical approaches of performer-educators. These codes were then examined and grouped into broader themes that reflected the study's research objectives. Examples of such themes included identity transformation, collaborative music-making, reflective listening, and adaptive instruction. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they

accurately represented participants' experiences and provided coherent, meaningful insights. Each theme was then clearly defined and connected to the research objectives, highlighting both the challenges faced and the creative strategies employed by performer-educators. Finally, the findings were synthesized and illustrated with direct quotations from participants, ensuring the authenticity, richness, and credibility of the data analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Participants' Professional and Educational Backgrounds.

Participant	Instrument	Genre Music	Years of Experience	Education	Current Identity	Motivation to Teach
1	Trumpet	Classical & Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM)	Not stated (active professional performer)	Classically trained performer	Performer & Educator	Teaching and performing coexist equally
2	Guitar, Composer, Arranger	Jazz, Contemporary, Composition	25 years	Mentored by local & international performers	Performer & Educator	Alignment with performance & composition
3	Gambus	Traditional Malay, Fusion, Sufi, Theatre	19 years	Diploma, Bachelor, Master (Music, UM)	Performer & Educator	Cultural preservation & mentoring younger generation
4	Drums/ Percussion	Popular/ Contemporary	21 years	Bachelor Degree	Performer & Educator	Responsibility to share experience with younger musicians
5	Percussion/ Composition	Pop, Experimental, Theatre, Percussion	17 years	University training, Workshops, Self-study	Performer & Educator	To give back & nurture next generation
6	Opera Singing (Mezzo-Soprano)	Opera, Classical, Musical Theatre, Popera	more than 25 years	Birmingham Conservatoire, Franz Liszt Academy	Performer & Educator	Ensure continuity of musical knowledge & heritage
7	Vocal (Pop/ Contemporary)	Pop, Contemporary, TV & Film	more than 20 years	Post Diploma in Teaching, UUM	Performer & Educator	Passion for education & giving back
8	Traditional Percussion (Gendang, Wayang Kulit)	Traditional Malay Music & Cultural Heritage	more than 25 years	Diploma, Bachelor, MA, PhD (in progress, UPSI)	Performer & Educator	Preserve Malay heritage & train new traditional music educators
9	Pianist,	Pop,	15 years	Bachelor of	Performer &	Education and

	Keyboardist Orchestra Tradisional Malaysia	Contemporary Traditional		Music Performance UiTM	Educator	stage performance need to be compliment each other so that the performer stay fit for every show
--	---	-----------------------------	--	------------------------------	----------	---

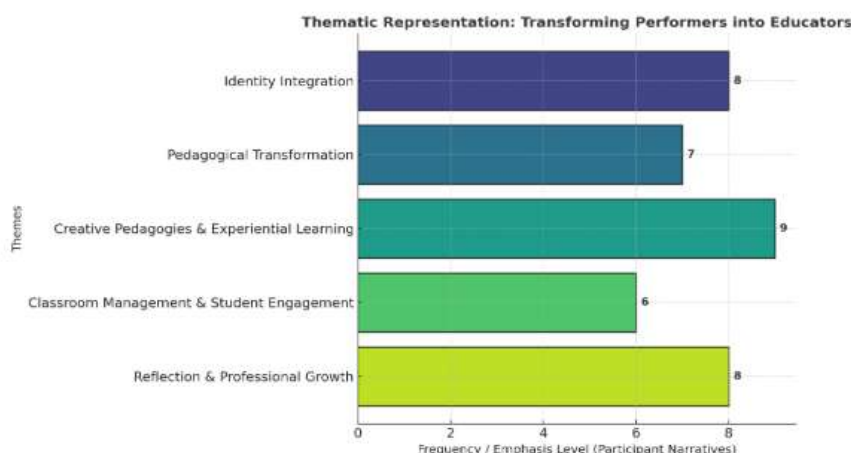
Table 1 presents the background and professional journey of nine participants who possess a dual professional identity, identifying themselves as both performers and educators. Their musical backgrounds are highly diverse, encompassing a wide range of styles including Western classical, jazz, opera, contemporary pop, and traditional Malay music. The participants' motivations for engaging in music education stem from a shared sense of purpose that extends beyond personal or professional advancement. Many are driven by a desire for cultural preservation, a commitment to nurturing and mentoring younger musicians, and a profound sense of responsibility to sustain Malaysia's artistic and musical heritage. Their educational backgrounds reveal a rich blend of learning traditions, combining formal academic and conservatory training with experiential and master-apprentice (*berguru*) systems. This integration reflects a holistic approach in which formal pedagogy intersects with traditional knowledge transmission, enabling these performer-educators to bridge the gap between artistic practice and educational innovation within Malaysia's evolving music landscape.

Thematic Representation: Transforming Performers into Educators

This study explored how professional musicians experience the transformation from performers to educators, emphasizing how their performance expertise shapes creative pedagogy, classroom innovation, and educational philosophy. Thematic analysis of eight professional musician-educators revealed six major themes:

- Identity Integration,
- Pedagogical Transformation,
- Creative Pedagogies and Experiential Learning,
- Classroom Management and Student Engagement
- Reflection and Professional Growth

Figure 1: Thematic Representation: Transforming Performers into Educators



Identity Integration – The Performer–Educator Duality

This result presents the qualitative findings from an investigation into the transformation of professional performers into music educators, focusing specifically on the creative pedagogical strategies employed by this specialized cohort. The study consisted of nine professional musician-educators (P1–P9) possessing extensive

performance careers, ranging from 17 to over 25 years, across diverse musical ecosystems, including classical, contemporary commercial music (CCM), jazz, and traditional Malay arts. The diversity of the participants (who come from instrumentalists of trumpet, guitar, drums/percussion, gambus, vocal and piano) suggests that the findings about creative pedagogy has relevance for different musical genres.

The analysis of the interview data revealed a complex interrelationship between professional identity, structural challenges, and innovative instructional practices. Instead of a strictly linear transition, the participants expressed this dual role capacity as having become part of their way of thinking how powerfully they approach curriculum design and student engagement.

Figure 2: Performer-Educator Identity Integration Model

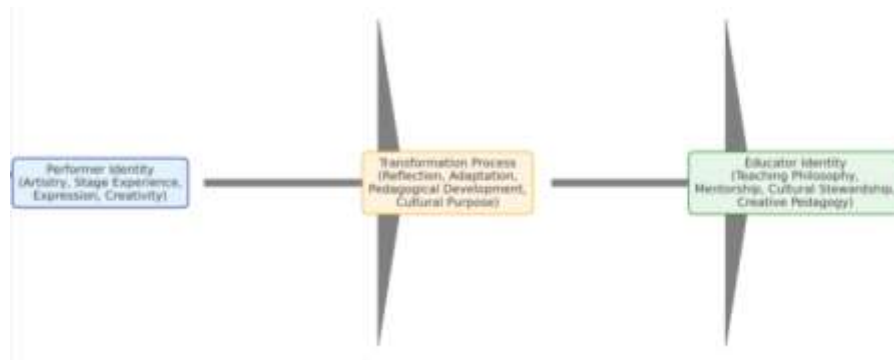


Figure 2 illustrates the transformation of professional performers into integrated performer–educators. The model presents the transformation as a developmental process that moves from artistic identity, through reflective transformation, toward pedagogical integration. In the early stage, participants strongly identify as performers, valuing artistry, stage experience, and creative freedom. As they enter the transformation phase, they begin to reinterpret their musical practice through reflection, adaptation, and the development of teaching philosophies. This period marks a shift from instinctive artistic performance to intentional, learner-centered pedagogy. Ultimately, these musicians achieve an integrated performer–educator identity in which teaching becomes an extension of performance. Rather than abandoning the stage, they bring the spirit of performance into the classroom, transforming it into a creative, interactive space for mentorship and cultural continuity. As several participants noted, performance and education “live within equilibrium,” reflecting a professional synthesis that unites creativity, pedagogy, and cultural purpose.

This integrated identity demonstrates that the boundaries between performer and educator are increasingly fluid. Through this process, musicians evolve into reflective practitioners who balance artistic excellence with educational innovation, ensuring the continuity of both artistic mastery and cultural heritage in Malaysia’s music education landscape.

All participants strongly identified as both performers and educators, describing these two identities as interdependent rather than separate.

Participant 1 stated the term “*MusiCator*” to symbolize the equilibrium between artistry and pedagogy.

“I never consider myself transits from performance to music education. They both live within – equilibrium.” (P1)

Similarly, Participant 3 reflected on this integration:

“The boundaries between performing, making, and educating have become fluid; they all serve the same purpose of sustaining and evolving cultural life.” (P3)

This statement illustrates the ontological integration of performer and educator identities, whereby teaching becomes a natural extension of artistic practice, and performing itself is understood as an educative act. Rather than perceiving teaching as a departure from or diminution of the prestige associated with professional

performance, participants viewed music education as a meaningful continuation of their artistic journey. Teaching provided opportunities to transmit tacit musical knowledge, mentor emerging musicians, and contribute to the preservation and development of musical traditions. Consequently, the conventional dichotomy between performer and teacher was replaced by a unified professional identity in which artistry and pedagogy mutually reinforced one another.

This finding aligns with contemporary perspectives on teacher professional identity, which conceptualise identity as a dynamic, context-dependent, and continuously evolving process shaped by professional experiences, critical reflection, and changing educational environments (Beijaard et al., 2023). Rather than abandoning their identities as performers, participants integrated their artistic expertise with pedagogical knowledge, resulting in the emergence of a hybrid performer–educator identity. Their narratives suggest that identity reconstruction was not solely the outcome of formal teacher education but was also fostered through authentic classroom experiences, sustained reflection, and ongoing engagement with students. This extends previous scholarship on musician identity by demonstrating that the transition from performer to educator is an iterative and experiential process in which artistic and pedagogical identities become increasingly interconnected over time.

Pedagogical Transformation

The theme of *Pedagogical Transformation* illustrates how professional musicians reconstruct their artistic expertise into pedagogical frameworks. Through reflection, adaptation, and experimentation, they learn to teach what was once intuitive. This process is not about replacing creativity with structure but about achieving pedagogical artistry the ability to teach with both precision and imagination

This transition reflects contemporary perspectives on reflective professional learning, where expertise develops through continuous reflection, adaptation, and experience rather than technical competence alone. The participants demonstrated an ongoing process of reconstructing their professional practice as they translated tacit performance knowledge into explicit pedagogical strategies, consistent with recent research on reflective teaching. Participant 5 summarized this transformation succinctly:

“The challenge was to adapt artistic knowledge into structured learning... In teaching, progress takes time.”

This statement reflects the reorientation from immediate artistic outcomes to long-term student growth. As performers, they were accustomed to rapid feedback applause, audience reaction, or the satisfaction of technical mastery. As educators, they needed to accept step-by-step growth and prioritize process over product.

This adjustment highlights what Conway (2011) describes as the **performer-to-teacher transition**, where musicians must reconceptualize their knowledge base to make tacit skills teachable. The shift involves moving from self-referential mastery to *pedagogical empathy*, the ability to view music learning from the student’s cognitive and emotional perspective.

Table 2: Challenges Along the Pedagogical Journey

Challenge	Description	Participant Feedbacks	Pedagogical Response
Time Constraints	Difficulty balancing performing and teaching workloads	<i>“I have to juggle between sticking to my plan or to improvise...”</i> (P4)	Translated rehearsal discipline into classroom structure
Curricular Rigidity	Restricted freedom due to institutional	<i>“As much as lessons are important, they can also</i>	Integrated creative tasks within formal syllabi

	requirements	<i>be a trap.” (P1)</i>	
Lack of Pedagogical Mentorship	Minimal formal training in teaching	<i>“Lesson planning was challenging at first, I had no idea where to start.” (P5)</i>	Learned through peer sharing and student feedback
Experiential Learning Growth	Learning to teach through reflection and practice	<i>“My growth was self-driven through collaboration and feedback.” (P3)</i>	Developed personalized pedagogical frameworks

The challenges faced by these musician-educators illuminate a powerful truth: pedagogical mastery emerges through experience, reflection, and adaptation not mere institutional instruction. Although initially constrained by time, rigid structures, and lack of mentorship, participants evolved into reflective practitioners who crafted their own creative teaching identities. Their transformation demonstrates resilience, adaptability, and the ability to merge artistic sensibility with educational logic. In essence, their stories confirm that teaching is learned in practice, refined through reflection, and sustained by passion.

Creative Pedagogies and Experiential Learning

All eight performer-educators described creativity and performance experience as the central bridge between their artistic and teaching identities. Rather than teaching music through lectures or theory alone, they brought the stage into the classroom through improvisation, ensemble work, live demonstration, reflection, and real-world industry simulation.

Participant 2 explained:

“Every class is a mini-stage where students experiment, perform, and learn in real time, turning theory into music.”

Similarly, participant 6 highlighted the incorporation of creativity and performance as core teaching principles, inspired by the Kodály philosophy of experiential learning:

“I incorporate creativity and performance by upholding the Kodály principle: ‘make your classroom like the stage you perform.’ As a performer-educator, I offer live demonstrations (singing, keyboard, and violin) during lessons like Western Arts Music History, giving students a direct, inspiring experience that surpasses listening via digital platforms like YouTube or Spotify.” (P6)

This approach demonstrates how live performance and modeling enhance students’ musical understanding, engagement, and expressive confidence. By transforming the classroom into a dynamic performance space, the participant fostered active participation through student-led teaching, collaborative presentations, and performance-based assessments.

Such strategies embody experiential and constructivist pedagogy, where students learn not only by observing but by *doing*—performing, creating, and reflecting on their artistic process. The result is a classroom culture that nurtures creative expression, critical listening, and interpretative independence, aligning with contemporary music education goals of artistry, authenticity, and holistic musicianship.

These findings are consistent with contemporary interpretations of experiential learning, which emphasize that meaningful learning occurs through cycles of authentic experience, reflection, experimentation, and application (Morris, 2020). Participants’ use of live demonstrations, collaborative music-making, improvisation, and reflective activities illustrates how experiential learning enables students to construct musical understanding through active participation rather than passive knowledge transmission.

These reflections highlight that pedagogy itself is performative. Tone, gesture, rhythm, facial expression, and physical movement become integral parts of communication. The teacher's body, voice, and presence serve as pedagogical instruments, while students become *co-performers* rather than passive listeners.

These findings also reinforce Burnard's (2022) view that arts-based pedagogy promotes creativity through authentic artistic experiences, collaboration, and learner-centred musical engagement. Rather than functioning solely as instructors, performer-educators created artistic learning environments in which students actively constructed musical meaning through performance and creative exploration.

This approach transforms the teacher-student relationship from hierarchical to collaborative. The educator models expressivity, presence, and emotional connection skills drawn directly from performance practice. Students observe, imitate, respond, and create, forming an interactive learning loop where teaching and performing merge.

Participant 5 described how creativity and performance practices shaped their teaching approach:

"I integrate creativity into teaching by encouraging students to explore improvisation, ensemble collaboration, and interpretative freedom. Drawing from my theatre and Sufi performance background, I often use storytelling and expressive movement to help students internalize rhythm and emotional depth." (P5)

This statement exemplifies how performer-educators draw upon their artistic backgrounds to make learning experiential and embodied. By merging storytelling, movement, and improvisation, Participant 5 reimaged music teaching as a creative dialogue between art and education, enabling students to connect emotion, expression, and performance in a holistic way.

Learning as Embodied and Experiential

Learning in this context is not merely cognitive but embodied. It involves physical awareness, emotional engagement, and sensory feedback. Students feel rhythm, move with phrasing, and express understanding through performance, not just verbal description. Participants consistently reimaged their classrooms as active performance spaces where learning happens through doing, performing, and reflecting. They used improvisation, ensemble collaboration, and peer feedback to foster creativity and critical listening. Lessons frequently simulated real-industry situations such as meeting tight deadlines, recording sessions, and ensemble rehearsals supported by technology and scaffolded learning tasks. Educators also adopted self-paced digital tools for independent skill building and designed holistic assessments that integrated technical mastery, musicality, reflection, and teamwork. Traditional musicians further bridged heritage with modern pedagogy through group practice and hybrid notation, nurturing both cultural continuity and creative growth.

Pedagogical Implications

By positioning teaching as a form of performance, these educators:

- Reinforced active learning, where students are *participants*, not observers.
- Integrated embodied cognition—movement, expression, and sound as gateways to musical understanding.
- Modeled musical professionalism, demonstrating how a musician thinks, feels, and behaves on stage.
- Built student confidence and stage readiness, enabling learners to rehearse musical and performative mindsets simultaneously.

Ultimately, music education becomes most powerful when students learn by performing, experimenting, and creating together transforming the classroom into a stage and the teacher into a co-performer guiding discovery through experience.

Classroom Management and Student Engagement

This theme illustrates how performer-educators transformed their stage leadership and performance experience into effective classroom management strategies that sustain discipline, motivation, and creativity. Rather than relying on authority or control, they cultivated environments where engagement became the foundation of discipline. Teaching was viewed as a performative act, an interactive process that balances energy, empathy, and collaboration, much like conducting an ensemble.

Participants explained that their stage presence and emotional awareness enabled them to command attention and maintain classroom flow. The same intuition used to read an audience on stage was applied in the classroom to sense students' energy, mood, and readiness to learn.

Participant 7 highlighted the importance of building confidence and sustaining motivation among students who struggle with self-belief or interest in music learning:

"I motivate students struggling with confidence by setting achievable goals, highlighting progress, and sharing inspirational stories from my own career, including my AF experience. I have no problem sharing or highlighting the failure that I had encountered at some points of my career as a case study." (P7)

This response reflects a mentorship-driven approach, where openness and storytelling become key pedagogical tools. By sharing both achievements and failures, the educator humanizes the learning process, showing students that setbacks are natural steps in artistic growth. Such reflective mentorship nurtures resilience and self-efficacy, helping learners see progress as a journey rather than a comparison.

Similarly, Participant 4 emphasized that active participation minimizes distraction and enhances focus:

"When students are performing, there's no space for distraction. They're absorbed." (P4)

These perspectives reveal that performer-educators maintain order not through enforcement but through purposeful engagement. When students are actively creating, performing, and reflecting, they become intrinsically motivated and take ownership of their learning. In this way, classroom management evolves into a form of artistry—anchored in empathy, presence, and authentic connection—where discipline emerges naturally through participation and inspiration.

This learner-centred approach aligns with recent studies suggesting that student engagement, autonomy, and collaborative participation contribute significantly to sustained motivation and positive classroom climates within music education (Bylica & Bauman, 2022).

Participant 6, a vocal coach, described a constructive and reflective approach to classroom management:

"Instead of telling them off, I redirect them. I say, 'Show me how you'd fix that phrasing,' and suddenly they focus again." (P6)

Her strategy highlights a shift from punishment to redirection and self-correction—encouraging students to think critically and take responsibility for improvement. This approach fosters emotional safety and aligns with constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978), where understanding is built through active exploration and reflection.

Participant 3 summarized this learner-centered philosophy:

“I want my students to own their learning. Once they feel responsible for the music, discipline comes naturally.” (P3)

His statement reinforces the idea that ownership leads to self-regulation. When students perceive learning as personally meaningful, discipline and motivation emerge naturally. Through these strategies, performer-educators redefined classroom management as artistry, using tone, timing, and presence to guide rather than control. Their classrooms resembled musical ensembles, where each learner’s contribution maintained balance and harmony. Emotional intelligence and mutual respect replaced rigid enforcement, transforming discipline into a shared responsibility between teacher and student.

Overall, this theme shows that effective classroom management and student engagement are inseparable. When the classroom becomes a collaborative, performative space, alive with creativity, empathy, and purposeful activity, discipline arises naturally, and learning becomes both joyful and self-sustaining.

Reflection and Professional Growth

Table 3: The Cycle of Reflection and Professional Growth

Stage of Reflection	Focus of Growth	Learning Process / Outcome	Illustrative Participant Quote
Self-Reflection	Awareness of teaching strengths, challenges, and emotions	Performer-educators examine how their stage experience informs teaching practice	<i>“Teaching is not a lesser form of artistry—it is a deeper one.” (P3)</i>
Collaborative Reflection	Learning from peers and students	Feedback, discussion, and shared experiences deepen teaching methods	<i>“My students teach me as much as I teach them.” (P7)</i>
Transformative Reflection	Integration of artistry and pedagogy	Teaching reshapes artistic identity and leads to a new sense of purpose	<i>“Performing and teaching feed each other.” (P6)</i>
Professional Renewal	Lifelong learning and adaptability	Continuous workshops, self-study, and innovation sustain career growth	<i>“The moment you stop learning, your class becomes static.” (P4)</i>
Emotional Maturity	Patience, empathy, humility	Reflection enhances understanding of learners’ needs and human connection	<i>“As a performer I focused on perfection; as a teacher, I focus on people.” (P6)</i>

This table illustrates that reflection serves as the core mechanism for transformation among performer-educators. Through reflective practice, participants developed deeper pedagogical awareness, emotional intelligence, and professional maturity. Their journey unfolds across five interconnected stages, forming a continuous cycle of growth.

1. **Self-Reflection** — Participants began by examining their teaching strengths, challenges, and emotions. This introspection helped them recognize how their performance experience shaped their classroom practice and identity as educators.
2. **Collaborative Reflection** — Reflection extended beyond the self, as participants learned through peer dialogue, teamwork, and student feedback. This stage emphasized learning as a shared and relational process.
3. **Transformative Reflection** — Reflection evolved into transformation when participants integrated their artistic and pedagogical selves. Teaching and performing became mutually reinforcing, reshaping their understanding of artistry and education.
4. **Professional Renewal** — Continuous learning emerged as a hallmark of reflective growth. Participants sought new knowledge through workshops, innovation, and experimentation, ensuring ongoing professional relevance and adaptability.
5. **Emotional Maturity** — Reflection nurtured patience, empathy, and humility. Participants shifted focus from perfection to people, realizing that effective teaching stems from compassion and emotional connection.

Overall, reflection is not a linear process but a cyclical and lifelong practice that deepens both artistic and educational identity. Through reflective engagement, performer-educators continuously move between self-awareness, action, and renewal. Learning not only *how* to teach but *why* they teach. This reflective journey transforms them into adaptive, empathetic, and self-renewing professionals, capable of evolving alongside their students and the ever-changing landscape of music education. As they reflect, they become more attuned to students' needs, more confident in their pedagogy, and more creative in their approach to learning. Reflection also serves as the link between performance and pedagogy. By analyzing their own artistic processes and classroom experiences, teachers develop a deeper sense of authenticity and purpose in their teaching. This authenticity fosters student trust, engagement, and motivation, creating classrooms that mirror the vitality of performance itself. Ultimately, reflection empowers performer-educators to embody the principles of Education 5.0 integrating creativity, emotional intelligence, and lifelong learning. It nurtures a professional identity that is dynamic, human-centered, and transformative, enabling educators to inspire not just musical competence but also confidence, self-expression, and joy in their students.

DISCUSSIONS

This study explored how professional performers transition into music educators and how their performance experiences influence their teaching practices. The findings indicate that the transition from performer to educator involves a process of identity adjustment, pedagogical development, and reflective learning. While participants initially identified strongly as performers, they gradually integrated their artistic experience into their roles as educators. This supports the view that musicians often maintain their performer identity even when they enter teaching roles, as highlighted by Bennett (2012). Rather than abandoning performance, participants described teaching as an extension of their artistic practice.

The findings also show that performers face challenges when translating their tacit musical knowledge into structured teaching methods. Many participants reported limited formal training in pedagogy, which required them to learn teaching strategies through experience, reflection, and interaction with students. This observation aligns with the work of Gaunt (2008), who notes that professional musicians often receive extensive performance training but less preparation in teaching methodologies. As a result, performer-educators must adapt their artistic expertise into pedagogical approaches that support student learning.

Another important finding is the role of creative pedagogy in connecting performance experience with classroom teaching. Participants frequently used strategies such as collaborative music-making, improvisation, live demonstrations, and reflective listening. These approaches encourage active student participation and experiential learning, which are essential in music education. Similar ideas are discussed by Burnard (2012), who emphasizes that creativity plays a central role in meaningful music learning. By incorporating performance-based experiences into teaching, performer-educators create engaging learning environments that support both technical skills and artistic expression.

The study also highlights how performance experience contributes to classroom engagement and leadership. Participants explained that their stage experience helped them manage classroom dynamics, communicate musical ideas effectively, and motivate students. By encouraging participation and collaboration, they were able to maintain student focus and create a positive learning atmosphere. This finding suggests that performance skills such as communication, confidence, and audience awareness can be valuable assets in teaching contexts.

Finally, reflective practice was identified as an important factor in the professional growth of performer-educators. Participants described learning from their teaching experiences, student feedback, and collaboration with colleagues. Through reflection, they were able to refine their teaching strategies and develop a more balanced identity as both performers and educators. This supports the idea that effective teaching evolves through continuous reflection and professional development.

Overall, the findings suggest that professional performers bring unique strengths to music education, particularly in creativity, expressiveness, and real-world musical experience. However, successful transition into teaching requires the integration of performance expertise with pedagogical knowledge and reflective practice. By combining these elements, performer-educators can create meaningful and engaging learning experiences that support students' musical development.

Beyond documenting the experiences of performer-educators, this study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how performer identity, experiential learning, and arts-based pedagogy intersect to shape creative teaching practices. The findings suggest that the transition from performer to educator is not simply a career change but an ongoing process of professional identity reconstruction supported by reflective practice, collaborative learning, and creative pedagogical innovation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of performer-educators; however, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the participant pool consisted of only nine professional musicians within the Malaysian music education context. While appropriate for qualitative inquiry, the findings are intended to provide depth rather than statistical generalizability. Future studies involving larger and more diverse samples across different educational institutions and cultural contexts would strengthen the transferability of the findings.

Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported interview data. Although participants offered rich descriptions of their teaching experiences, future research should incorporate additional data sources such as classroom observations and student interviews to provide methodological triangulation and a more comprehensive understanding of creative pedagogical practices. Including students' perspectives would also enable researchers to evaluate how performer-informed teaching approaches influence student engagement, creativity, and learning outcomes from multiple viewpoints.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all participants, particularly the professional musicians who generously shared their time, expertise, and experiences for the purposes of this study. Their willingness to participate and openness in contributing valuable insights were essential to the success of this research. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), for their

unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the research process. Their assistance greatly facilitated the completion of this work.

REFERENCES

1. Abramo, J., & Reynolds, A. (2014). Pedagogical creativity as a framework for music teacher education. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 24(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083714549266>
2. Bennett, D. (2012). *Musician profile 1: Trying things out*. In D. Bennett (Ed) *Life in the real world: How to make graduates employable*. Champaign, IL Common Ground Publishing.
3. Beijaard, D., Koopman, M., Schellings, G. (2023). Reframing Teacher Professional Identity and Learning. In: Menter, I. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16193-3_28
4. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 15(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2022.2129597>
5. Brinkmann, S. (2022). *Qualitative interviewing* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
6. Burnard, P. (2012). *Musical Creativities in Practice*. United Kingdom: OUP Oxford.
7. Burnard, P., & Sorensen, N. (2022). Making silence matter: Rethinking performance creativity as a catalysing space for sounding oneself in music education. In *The Routledge companion to creativities in music education* (pp. 429-440). Routledge.
8. Bylica, K., & Bauman, T. (2022). Pedagogical creativity in music education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Music Education Research*, 24(3), 328–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2022.2047283>
9. Conway, C. (2011). *Experiences of beginning music teachers: Strategies for mentoring*. Oxford University Press.
10. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
11. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum Press.
12. Garnett, L. (2013). Performance and pedagogy: Developing professional identities of musician-teachers. *Music Education Research*, 15(3), 315–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2013.788780>
13. Gaunt, H. (2008). One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: The perceptions of instrumental and vocal teachers. *Psychology of Music*, 36(2), 215–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607080827>
14. Gaunt, H. (2011). Understanding the one-to-one relationship in instrumental/vocal tuition in higher education: Comparing student and teacher perceptions. *British Journal of Music Education*, 28(2), 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505171100005X>
15. Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. Ashgate Publishing.
16. Hargreaves, D. J., & North, A. C. (2001). *The social psychology of music*. Oxford University Press.
17. Hennessy, S. (2020). Approaches to increasing the competence and confidence of student teachers to teach music in primary schools. *Education* 3–13, 45(6), 689–700. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2016.1157046>
18. Jamaludin, J. (2019). *Development and validation of a musical creativity module for lower primary school children in Malaysia* (Doctoral dissertation). Universiti Sains Malaysia.
19. Jorgensen, E. R. (2008). *The art of teaching music*. Indiana University Press.
20. Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
21. Li, X. (2024). Pedagogical practices in music education using Kodály and Orff approaches. *International Journal of Music Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761424123456>
22. Mat Yusoff, M., Abdullah, N., & Rahman, N. (2023). Pedagogical content knowledge in music education: Implications for music teacher training. *International Journal of Music Education*, 41(2), 210–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614221123456>
23. Morris, T. H. (2020). Experiential learning: A systematic review and revision of Kolb's model. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 28(8), 1064–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1570279>

24. Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
25. Piaget, J. (1973). *To understand is to invent: The future of education*. Grossman.
26. Sawyer, R. K. (2011). *Explaining creativity: The science of human innovation* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
27. Tajetdinova, D. (2021). Pedagogical competencies in school music education. *International Journal of Music Pedagogy*, 12(1), 45–58.
28. Triantafyllaki, A. (2010). Performance teachers' identity and professional knowledge in advanced music teaching. *Music Education Research*, 12(1), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800903568254>
29. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
30. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.