



Perspectives of Irish Primary School Teachers Towards the Enablers and Barriers that Surround the Delivery of Inclusive Music Education to Learners who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing: An Exploratory Study

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Arts is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and have conformed to the regulations on the use and declaration of Generative AI, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. I hereby certify that no Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools have been used in the creation of the thesis.

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List of Publications and Presentations

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ASP	Additional Support Pathways
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CI	Cochlear Implant
CI _m	Cochlear Implant attending musical activities
CI _n	Cochlear Implant not attending musical activities
CODA	Child of Deaf Adults
DCU	Dublin City University
DE	Department of Education
DEY	Department of Education and Youth
EPSEN	Education for the Person with Special Educational Needs
GoI	Government of Ireland
HoH	Hard of Hearing
INTO	Irish National Teacher's Organisation
ISL	Irish Sign Language
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
REC	Research Ethics Committee
RQ	Research Question
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TA	Thematic Analysis
TED	Technology Entertainment Design
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VT	Visiting Teacher for the Deaf
WHO	World Health Organisation

Abstract

Perspectives of Irish Primary School Teachers Towards the Enablers and Barriers that Surround the Delivery of Inclusive Music Education to Learners who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing: An Exploratory Study

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Music has long been considered an audio-centric experience (Good et al., 2014) with many definitions of music, focusing on the concept of sound and hearing (Clifton, 1983). However, recent exploration of music education among researchers, considers the possibility of providing musical experiences through multiple senses, making music education more inclusive and accessible to learners who are deaf/HoH (Di Bona 2018; Nussbaum, 2012).

This exploratory research project aims to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers' experiences. Data was collected through the form of semi-structured interviews, with eleven primary school teachers across Ireland, who are currently working with or who have worked with children who are deaf/HoH. Analysis of the data using Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis, yielded significant results surrounding the effective implementation of multisensory methods of music education for the inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH. Similarly, the importance of building positive relationships between the student and the teacher and the effective organisation of the classroom was revealed as an enabler of inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

This research also identified a number of notable challenges which pertain to the inclusivity of music education for children who are deaf/HoH, with the confidence of the child to engage in music activities presenting as the most significant challenge. It is hoped that the findings presented in this research will be of value to all teachers engaged in the teaching of pupils who are deaf/HoH and to curriculum developers.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Music has long been considered an audio-centric experience (Good et al., 2014) with many definitions of music, focusing on the concept of sound and hearing (Clifton, 1983). Recently however, there has been a shift towards a multi-modal ideology of how music may be perceived (Schraer-Joiner & Chen, 2009; Good et al., 2014; Silvestri et al., 2018; Sutela, 2024). Similarly, inclusive education ideology has evolved over recent decades, shaped by international policy such as the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1994) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989). In order to meet inclusive imperatives for all children to access, participate in and benefit from education (Ainscow, 2020), all children must experience a broad and balanced curriculum. The aim of this study is to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/Hard of Hearing (HoH) and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities. This chapter will introduce the study, provide an impetus and purpose for the research, identify the objectives of the study and discuss the researcher's positionality. Following this, the research design will be discussed and finally, an outline of the study will be provided.

1.2 Impetus for the Research Study

While completing the Bachelor of Education degree in Dublin City University (DCU), the author completed a number of professional placements in various educational settings. During this time, the author encountered a learner who was deaf/HoH who was being taught in a mainstream classroom. Considering the needs of this child in lesson planning led the author to contemplate how musical activities may be adapted to ensure the effective inclusion of this child. The Irish primary school curriculum has experienced little evolution over the past century, with just two major reworks to the curriculum since 1971. The National

Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published a revised curriculum in 1999 which aimed to promote enjoyment and foster the development of self-esteem and self-confidence through musical exploration (Department of Education and Science, 1999). Similarly, the new Primary Curriculum Framework (Department of Education [DoE], 2023, p.4) features parallel aims, however now with a holistic approach, viewing arts education as a means for children to “express themselves creatively and meaningfully”. With the development of this new curriculum, it is necessary to consider how children who are deaf/HoH are currently being included in musical activities in the classroom and to develop a curriculum that provides inclusive education for all children. Having experienced the challenges in including this child in musical activities and recognising the shortcomings or disjunction in the curricular ambition, the need for a research study such as this became apparent.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers’ experiences.

1.4 Objectives

Through completing this research, educator’s perspectives on the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH will be explored and the enablers and barriers that are present which assist or hinder the effective teaching of music to these children will be identified. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- Analyse the literature to learn how music education has changed for pupils who are deaf/HoH, to identify how music is being taught to learners who are deaf/HoH internationally and to understand the benefits of music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

- Engage in semi-structured interviews with eleven teachers in mainstream primary schools across Ireland to answer the research questions posed.
- Analyse the data gathered using an analytic framework devised to identify the enablers and barriers towards inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH with a view to learning about how to better include these children in musical activities at primary school level.

1.5 Positionality

Music has long played a central role in my life, both personally and in my career as a primary school teacher. My interest in the concept of inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH developed following an experience during my studies in the Bachelor of Education degree at DCU. While on teaching practice I encountered a child who used a Cochlear Implant (CI) and faced the challenge of adapting my music lessons to ensure this child was included in the lessons. My interest was furthered whilst undertaking a specialist subject entitled "Socially Inclusive Music Education". Here, I had the opportunity to engage in a final year action research project which explored inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH. As a qualified teacher I have not yet knowingly encountered a learner who is deaf/HoH in my class; however, my previous studies and experience as a teacher provide an 'insider-outsider' element to this research. Merton (1972) identifies the insider position as having knowledge or access to the research area that an outsider must obtain, whilst the outsider position features a detachment from the group in question. The position of insider requires the researcher to step back in order to gain a new perspective and to be open to new phenomena, which Labree (2002) titles as distancing. As my own position remains that of 'insider-outsider', the method of bracketing (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was used throughout this research project, to ensure I remain reflective of the research findings.

1.6 Defining the Terms Deaf/HoH

When engaging in research surrounding children who are deaf/HoH it is imperative to begin by defining the term '*deaf*'. There is a notable difference between the definition used by the Deaf community and the medical definition of deafness, which is described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a profound hearing loss, implying little to no hearing (WHO, 2023). The word is distinguished by spelling, receiving a capital 'D' to identify a community who communicate through sign language, as opposed to the word 'deaf' receiving a lowercase 'd', identifying the medical definition of deafness (Mathews, 2017). The World Federation of the Deaf identifies that although the term 'Deaf' acknowledges people as part of a community, it should not be assumed that a person is culturally Deaf. Using the term 'deaf' with a lowercase 'd', reflects greater acceptance of people who are deaf (Napier & Leeson, 2016).

The entire section on deafness and hearing loss on the WHO website focuses on the worldwide disability it causes. It states that over 34 million children worldwide require rehabilitation to address their 'disabling' hearing loss and estimates that by 2050, one in ten people worldwide will have 'disabling' hearing loss (WHO, 2023). The WHO defines disabling hearing loss as "hearing loss greater than 35 decibels in the better hearing ear" (WHO, 2023). As discussed by Valente (2011), this view of deafness and hearing loss as a disability can be extremely damaging to members of the Deaf community. It promotes the marginalisation of members of the Deaf Community and establishes significant barriers in many different areas including education (Valente, 2011). The focus of this research project is directed towards the inclusivity of music education for children who are Deaf/HoH and the enablers and barriers that pertain to this dimension of curricular experience. Specifically, the intention is not to focus on the disability caused by deafness and hearing loss *per se*, but rather to explore how music education can be experienced in an accessible and enjoyable manner by members of the Deaf community. For the purpose of this study, therefore, the

term Deaf/HoH will be used, so as to include all learners who are Deaf/HoH, regardless of their positionality in the Deaf community.

1.7 Inclusive Education

In order to understand the inclusiveness of music education for children who are deaf/HoH, it is first important to understand what is meant by inclusive education. In the past, inclusive education was viewed as a way to educate children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream educational settings, alongside their peers. However, more recent research on inclusive education takes account of how accessible learning experiences are for all children and asserts that it is the responsibility of educational school communities and the education system to provide quality education for all (Department of Education and Youth [DEY], 2024).

Notwithstanding policy ambitions, Ainscow (2020) recognises inclusive education as an on-going challenge faced by education systems internationally. The initial proposal to turn towards mainstream schools to educate all children regardless of their level of SEN was first given a global imperative through the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The key message within the statement is the importance of the development of a diverse range of inclusive educational practices within schools, rather than an integration of children with SEN into mainstream school settings (Ainscow, 2007).

Since the publication of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the concept of inclusive education has seen significant uptake and development. For example, in 2016, UNESCO published a framework which highlights the importance of inclusive education as the foundation for quality education. This framework provides detailed approaches to ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all learners by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016).

Research conducted by Ainscow (2020) details a framework for inclusive education, underpinned by three domains, access to education, participation in education and benefit

from education. In the following section, each of these areas are discussed with recommendations on how best to ensure children with SEN are attaining these goals.

1. Access to Education

A number of suggestions are made in relation to access to education for children with SEN. It is recommended that schools employ inclusive strategies in order to best include these children, rather than simply integrating these children into mainstream schools without sufficient methodological changes - a strategy also promoted in The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Similarly, involving key stakeholders is recommended in order to allow these children to effectively access education. Finally, in order to promote access to education for children with SEN, it is suggested that changes are required amongst policy makers before any significant practical change can be made.

2. Participation in Education

Espinoza et al., (2020) proposes the idea of participation in education as a person's active involvement in socially vital activities, learning in a shared capacity, whilst also developing educational skills. The idea of participation is coupled with a person's educational dignity, signifying the importance of one's sense of value within education (Espinoza et al., 2020). One particular suggestion for better participation in education for children with SEN, is the development of collaborative learning from schools and educators (Ainscow, 2020). The idea of schools learning from each other and engaging in mutual support is promoted by Ainscow (2020) in order to ensure the successful participation of pupils with SEN in education.

3. Benefit from Education

It is important to recognise that access to and participation in education is meaningless without adequate learning and development taking place. Involving the wider community in promoting inclusive education is documented by Ainscow (2020) as promoting benefits for children with SEN in education, in the case of this research project, learners who are deaf/HoH. Ainscow documents the importance of building relationships between schools,

parents and other children in order to fully realise the benefits of inclusive education for children with SEN. This involves the community working together, recruiting the support of parents and children alike.

It is clear that appropriate goals have been set in place in order to strive for the most inclusive educational outcomes for all learners internationally (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2016). However, in order for these goals to be successful, it is imperative that sufficient support is provided for educational stakeholders. The idea of supporting effective inclusive education in the Irish context will be discussed in Chapter Two.

1.8 Research Design

The data of interest gathered for this study was of a qualitative nature, requiring qualitative approaches as it represented multiple views of reality. The most simplistic definition of qualitative research is that it uses words as a form of data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A qualitative research approach was chosen to conduct this research project as the research questions deal with the perspectives of educators on the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH. The most effective way to gather this data was through conducting semi-structured interviews, a flexible method of data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Patton, 2002; Robson, 2016). The data collection method was approved by the DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC) (REC reference: DCU/2024/009) and data was collected over the course of two months through both face-to-face interviews and interviews conducted via the Zoom Video Communications platform. Data was then analysed with the assistance of the online NVivo platform. Themes were identified through the indicative interview schedule which was devised prior to conducting interviews and data was analysed using an analytic framework developed through consulting relevant literature. Due to the short timespan for data collection, the sample size of this research project is small, with only eleven interviews conducted.

1.9 Overview of Thesis

This thesis is presented in six chapters. In the introduction, Chapter One, the rationale, objectives and impetus for this project are set out, along with a discussion surrounding the positionality of the researcher and the research design employed. Chapter Two, offers a review and analysis of the literature surrounding music education for children who are deaf/HoH. In this chapter, inclusive educational practices for children with SEN are also explored. Both historical and contemporary methods of music education are discussed, alongside the benefit that music education provides for children who are deaf/HoH. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, describing the research process, including details of the data collection methods and analytical framework used. Chapter Four documents the findings of the data analysis, within a thematic presentation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that is set within Ainscow's (2020) inclusive educational framework. This analysis focuses on the experiences of access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH, their participation in music education and their benefit from music education. Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings outlined in Chapter Four in the context of literature presented in Chapter Two and seeks to answer the research questions posed. Chapter Six concludes the thesis, providing a summary of the key points of the research study and finally, indicating future contributions for policy and practice within the realm of music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research topic, providing a background to the project and identifying the aims of the research. Additionally, the research design and methods employed to conduct the research were outlined. The next chapter will examine and discuss the extant literature on inclusion of learners who are deaf/HoH within music education and activities within the Irish education system, identifying both historical and contemporary methods of music education for this group and recognising general methods that may prove beneficial to them.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There is a large body of research to suggest that music education may be beneficial for children who are deaf/HoH, personally, socially and academically (Chen et al., 2010; Good et al., 2017; Rapport et al., 2022; Rochette et al., 2014). The majority of the research indicates that, historically, music was utilised with such learners as an auditory trainer in educational settings, to improve speech and language of children who are deaf/HoH, which, in turn contributed to the decline in the use of sign language (Broderick & Duggan, 1996; Schraer-Joiner, 2014). While music seems to have had benefits for children who are deaf/HoH socially, emotionally and academically, it is important to consider whether this musical instruction provides intrinsic enjoyment for the children concerned. In this chapter, the literature surrounding music for children who are deaf/HoH will be explored. Firstly, there will be an exploration of the inclusiveness of the Irish education system for children with SEN, with a specific emphasis on young learners who are deaf/HoH. Both historical and contemporary approaches to music education for children who are deaf/HoH will then be examined, and shifts in practice and the use of various pedagogical activities and methodologies will be discussed. Finally, there will be a discussion surrounding the benefit associated with the inclusion of music in the lives of children who are deaf/HoH, socially, emotionally and/or academically.

2.2 Inclusion in the Irish Education System

Ireland has seen much evolution in relation to the inclusiveness of the education system since the late 1900s (Department of Education & Skills, 2017; Kenny et al., 2020). A major milestone in this evolution was the publication of the 1993 Special Education Review Committee (SERC) Report (DoE, 1993) which emphasised the integration of children with SEN into mainstream education. The concept of an inclusive education system was then further accelerated by the publication of The Education Act of 1998 (Government of Ireland [GoI], 1998), which, in line with the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) emphasised

inclusivity and equality of access to education, based on the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989). This legislation recognised the right of all children with SEN to an education in an inclusive environment in a mainstream setting (Gol, 1998). In order to support the implementation of the act, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act was published in 2004. This Act was created to set out statutory responsibilities of stakeholders, statutory powers to children with SEN and their parents/care-givers, and to provide guidelines to educational stakeholders on how best to include children with SEN in mainstream classrooms, wherever possible, (Gol, 2004) while still recognising the need for a continuum of provision (Department of Education and Skills, 2017).

Although these changes in legislation were timely, there is research to suggest that we are yet to see effective implementation of the legislation (Day & Prunty, 2015). It was hoped that this shift in thinking would see a decline in educational segregation in Ireland and an increase in the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream education (Kenny et al., 2020). However, research suggests that a multitude of barriers remain in place which prevent the inclusion of children with SEN in Ireland. Research from Day and Prunty (2015) documents “the provision of appropriate support”, “student behaviour difficulties” and “language barriers and different cultural views” (p.244) as significant barriers to inclusive education.

In 2022, the Government of Ireland began the process of reviewing the EPSEN Act, with the aim of ensuring the provision of adequate support by the state for children with SEN, in line with international human rights standards (DEY, 2022). Similar to the findings of Day and Prunty (2015), a response to the review of the EPSEN Act submitted by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) also highlighted the lack of funding and resources as a barrier to inclusive education alongside the need for continuous professional development for teachers in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream classes (INTO, 2023). The review of the EPSEN Act was completed in 2025 and a report was published detailing recommendations across sixteen domains including inclusive education, language use and support planning for children. This report suggested enhanced professional learning

for qualified teachers and a roadmap to outline effective inclusive education (DEY, 2025). A need for more support and guidance surrounding inclusive education was also identified to ensure that all students are supported and are taught in an educational setting that meets their specific needs (Day & Prunty, 2015; DEY, 2025; INTO, 2023). While differentiation has long been used as a strategy to include children with SEN in classroom learning, more recent literature suggests a shift in perspective, recognising the environment as the barrier, rather than the student (National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2019). At the heart of this approach is an emphasis on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (NCSE, 2025). This framework has the potential to support a highly inclusive educational provision, and recognises the need for multiple strategies for learning. It also considers how accommodations made for one student, may benefit all students (NCSE, 2025). In order for inclusive frameworks and practices to be successfully adopted and deployed in mainstream Irish classrooms, however, teachers must first understand them and be prepared to use them effectively in today's diverse classrooms during their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) (Flood & Banks, 2021).

The Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023) aligns with the ideas of previous policies, outlined above, surrounding inclusive education. Similarly to The Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004), this new curriculum aims to provide equity of opportunity in education for all learners. The curriculum describes its aim for inclusive education, providing a safe environment for children with diverse learning dispositions to develop and grow together, enriching the learning experience through their individuality and diversity (DoE, 2023). Within the Framework, significant emphasis is placed on the development of relationships between the children and the teacher, and the impact that positive relationships have on the quality and effectiveness of the teaching and learning. A specific emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher in building such positive relationships, taking responsibility for the content being taught, and paying careful attention to the teaching and learning strategies and the pace of learning (DoE, 2023). It is apparent that research highlights the

importance of close teacher-pupil relationships. For the purpose of this research study, it may be of interest to identify teachers' perspectives towards the importance of interpersonal relationships with learners who are deaf/HoH and the teacher.

Another key element of the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023) is the importance of partnerships for effective teaching and learning. The curriculum documents the importance, not only of close collaborative interaction between teachers and children, but also with their family and the wider community, in order to establish a safe and nurturing environment for learner growth (DoE, 2023). Such an environment can only be achieved through the provision of appropriate resources, such as those discussed above (Day & Prunty, 2015; DE, 2023; DEY, 2025; INTO, 2023). Although it is apparent that Ireland has made notable progress in relation to inclusive education, it is clear that without the appropriate supports, primary schools continue to struggle to implement the guidelines provided in the policy and curricular documents cited above.

2.3 Music Education vs. Musical Activities

The Irish Music Curriculum (Department of Education and Science, 1999) acknowledged music as an art form and encouraged the provision of ample opportunities for its expression. Its guidance was highly structured, with a focus on music instruction and the development of musical awareness and the knowledge of concepts, e.g. rhythm, pitch, dynamics. In contrast, the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023) has moved towards promoting holistic learning with the teaching of music encouraged through an integrated approach within, across, and in tandem with other aspects of the curriculum; where music is embedded within the arts (DoE, 2023).

The aim of this new curriculum, as detailed in the Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification (NCCA, 2024), is to ensure creativity and expression are placed at the forefront (DoE, 2023). This is similar to the thinking of music sociologist, Tia DeNora (2000), who encourages less focus on music as a subject to be studied and knowledge to be obtained and greater focus on music as an activity experienced by all of society in their everyday

lives. In keeping with this sociological underpinning, for this research study, reference will be made to the musical experiences of children who are deaf/HoH as both musical activities and music education. Using both terms ensures that the research participants are provided with scope to discuss extracurricular, socially-oriented activities such as Christmas shows and graduations, whilst also providing insights on the experiences of children who are deaf/HoH with the music curriculum.

2.4 The Teaching of Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH Historically

2.4.1 Ireland

While this research sets out to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers' experiences. While research surrounding music education for children who are deaf/HoH in Ireland is limited, with little exploration of the subject in historical or contemporary literature; some examples of previous practice that are available suggest that music education was carried out in one of the first Deaf schools in Ireland; St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls (Broderick & Duggan, 1996) with the introduction of sound perception training reported to be beneficial for both speech development and lip reading.

Further research by Ferguson & Henshaw (2015) reveals that auditory training, to improve listening skills and speech understanding, became part of St. Mary's School curriculum in the 1950s and the first music teacher was employed in the school in the 1960s (Ferguson & Henshaw, 2015). The research also includes an image showcasing a pupil playing a blow organ indicating that music was an active element of life at the school. The authors also note that there is a strong relationship between the inclusion of musical instruction for the improvement of breathing techniques in order to develop more intelligible speech (Broderick & Duggan, 1996). Given this evidence, one might consider whether the primary purpose for

including music in the school was for therapeutic purposes, general music education or broader enjoyment.

As well as the introduction of music and sound perception at St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, dance was incorporated into the curriculum in the 1950s, with children being encouraged to listen to sounds and distinguish whether they were loud or quiet (Broderick & Duggan, 1996). A reflection by a former Principal of St. Mary's School indicates how dance had expanded and enriched the pupils culturally, allowing them to engage in performances of different theatrical shows such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Broderick & Duggan, 1996).

A strong connection between the use of music instruction to improve oral and aural skills appears to have formed in the school from Broderick and Duggan's (1996) documentation. A reflection from a past pupil and teacher at St. Marys identifies the strict ban on sign language that was put in place for children enrolled at the school. It is important to consider the impact this may have had on children who were deaf/HoH at that time. However, as Mathews (2017) outlines, a pedagogical debate between the philosophies of manualism and oralism surrounding the education of children who are deaf/HoH has spanned centuries (Mathews, 2017). 'Oralism', a pedagogy whereby children who are deaf/HoH are educated through spoken language, often as a means of integration into mainstream education, was frequently accompanied by the oppression of sign language. Crean (1997) identified oralism as a preparation for "the integration of children who are deaf/HoH into the hearing world by training him or her to talk" (Crean, 1997, p. 96). On the other hand, 'Manualism' allows for the adaptation of teaching to incorporate sign language. Itard, a physician from France, posed a controversial idea; that the success of children who are deaf/HoH rested on their ability to develop speech. This concept brought with it a negative connotation surrounding the use of sign language (Mathews, 2017). It is evident that the 'no signing' policy in St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls and the use of music as an aural and oral trainer, contributed to the decline of sign language in this school.

Although it can be observed that music was used as a therapeutic pedagogy, the introduction of dance provided some level of enjoyment within the arts for pupils who are deaf/HoH at this time, allowing them to feel included in social and creative activities in the community. This positive exposure to arts education highlights the social and emotional benefits which are associated with the inclusion of the arts in education (Birkenshaw, 1965; McDermott, 1971) and indicates that learners who are deaf/HoH can still be included in the enjoyment of music.

2.4.2 Internationally

Turning towards music education for children who are deaf/HoH internationally, the research is more plentiful. Schraer-Joiner (2014) discusses the work of Itard, with a young boy named Victor (the Wild boy of Aveyron) during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, who was not deaf/HoH, but without speech. One of the main areas of teaching that Itard employed with this boy, was in music, aiming to develop his oral and aural skills, as well as his capacity for enjoyment and social interaction (Solomon, 1980). Although only minimal development was seen in the child's social and language skills, Itard's work was viewed as a model for approaches that would be developed in later years (Schraer-Joiner, 2014).

Similarly, the work of Turner and Bartlett had a lasting impact on the teaching of music to children who are deaf/HoH. Their approach to the education of pupils who are deaf/HoH was to ensure musical enjoyment (Darrow & Heller, 1985) foregrounding musical concepts such as rhythm and pitch. Solomon (1980) details how this was incorporated into the school curriculum as a subject called 'rhythms' through which speech and language development was aided. In an 1848 article, Turner challenged the idea that music could not be perceived by those deemed deaf/HoH and asserted that such areas of learning could be developed in them (Darrow & Heller, 1985). The idea that music is solely an auditory experience is a misconception which researchers are still striving to dispel today (Good, et al., 2014; Schraer-Joiner, 2009).

Using the achievements of an American woman, Avery, who had become deaf/HoH at the age of eighteen months, Turner described her skill when playing the piano and her acquiring of folk songs as supports to his claim (Darrow & Heller, 1985). This early account of music instruction for children who are deaf/HoH centres around enjoyment, in contrast to many papers which focus on music for the improvement of communication skills such as speech and language development (Abdi et al., 2001; Birkenshaw, 1965; McDermott, 1971).

All of this suggests that there are two dominant discourses surrounding music education for the deaf/HoH:

- a) Music as a creative pursuit that should be enjoyable for children who are deaf/HoH (Darrow & Heller, 1985; Solomon, 1980) and
- b) Music as a rehabilitation tool to improve listening and speaking skills in children who are deaf/HoH (Birkenshaw, 1965; McDermott, 1971).

Although there are ample benefits associated with the use of music to improve social and emotional skills and cognitive development for children who are deaf/HoH (Abdi et al., 2001; Birkenshaw, 1965; McDermott, 1971), it is also important to consider music as an art form to be enjoyed and as more than just an auditory experience (Good et al., 2014; Schraer-Joiner, 2009). For the purpose of this research study, it may be beneficial to consider whether the teacher views music as a methodological tool for learners who are deaf/HoH for the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills or whether music is viewed as a creative pursuit for enjoyment.

2.5 Contemporary Music Education for the Deaf/HoH Internationally

The concept of music education for children who are deaf/HoH has seen much evolution in recent decades. As we have seen, one significant development is the assumption that *all* people who are deaf/HoH cannot perceive any sound (Schraer-Joiner, 2009). This misconception has been shown to have a negative impact on the musical opportunities available to children who are deaf/HoH and has led to a significant lack of access to music education for the deaf/HoH in the past (National Deaf Children's Society [NDCS], 2024;

Schraer-Joiner, 2014). This shift in mindset has had a positive effect towards music education for the deaf/HoH, with many researchers focusing on a multi-modal approach to music education (Silvestri et al., 2018).

2.5.1 Multi-modal Approaches

Although the concept of multi-modal approaches to musical activities has been briefly documented in historic literature, with music research arguing that music can be felt through the whole body (Darrow & Heller, 1985; Fortuna, 2017), this approach is still something of a phenomenon within modern music education, with traditional views leaning towards an audio-centric perspective (Fortuna, 2017; Good, et al., 2014; Viola, et al., 2023). Although music is often still considered an art form to be enjoyed by people who are hearing, it can also be viewed as a multi-sensory experience; an art form which provides learners who are both hearing and deaf/HoH, experiences that amount to much more than simply sound within musical space. It can become the basis for experiences of shared culture, connectivity, and emotional meaning (Nussbaum, 2012). It allows for expression through imagination, movement and emotion (Di Bona 2018; Nussbaum, 2012). Therefore, music education and musical experiences should be provided in a way that reflects these perspectives and creates opportunities for these experiences.

As early as the 17th century, the concept of music being experienced by the whole body has been documented, with French philosopher, De Marandé, likening a harsh sound impacting the body to that of thunder striking a house (Fortuna, 2017). A recent publication by the Society for Education, Music and Psychology, explores the hierarchy of the senses in music education and introduces the embodied approach, placing emphasis on music being created and expressed through the use of the body, including movement (Sutela, 2024). The results, similar to those of Fortuna (2017), Good et al., (2014) and Viola et al., (2023) already presented, suggest that people who are deaf/HoH can enjoy music through different modalities, including touch, movement and vision. The discussion below outlines a range of aural, visual and kinaesthetic methods of musical engagement and education. Neuroscience

backs up the use of a multi-modal approach with the theory of compensatory plasticity, meaning that the effect of deafness enhances the acuity of the other senses (Good, et al., 2014). In addition, these authors recognise that due to this compensatory plasticity, the deaf brain may have a unique sensory experience of music. Hallam and Himonides (2022) agree, outlining many instances of the positive impact of music on people who are deaf/HoH and suggest that they should receive the same musical opportunities as that of a hearing person. It is clear that multisensory approaches are effective in including children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. While the research by Fortuna (2017), Good et al., (2014) and Viola et al., (2023) suggests that a multi-modal approach is being employed internationally, little is known about the employment of these strategies in the Irish context.

2.5.2 Visual Approaches

Another possibility for providing or responding to musical experiences using a multisensory approach is the inclusion of visual elements. A number of researchers and activists who are deaf/HoH discuss the use of Irish Sign Language (ISL) to provide additional modes of expression to song and song singing. In a recent publication, Mangaoang (2024) engages in discussion with an ISL interpreter and performer, Coogan. During this interview, Coogan discusses the rise of 'signed-song' which involves the dual use of singing and signing and links this increase as an outcome of the popularity of video sharing platforms such as '©Youtube' (Mangaoang, 2024, p.18). An in-depth explanation is provided of the process of interpreting a piece of music in ISL, detailing the importance of translating each utterance and including movement to ensure the audience feels a connection to the piece. This provides one way to ensure that children who are deaf/HoH can have equitable access to musical experiences. It also provides some helpful anecdotes of the interpreter's own experiences as a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA), including one relating to how the lack of ISL interpretation on the iconic '*Late Late Toy Show*¹', a Christmas tradition for families across

¹ <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2024/1129/1483714-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-late-late-toy-show-2024/>

Ireland, deprived her from this experience with her own family as a child. This discussion provided insight into the importance of the wider social impact of providing children who are deaf/HoH with opportunities to engage in broadly accessed musical experiences, through the integration of ISL.

2.5.3 Physical Approaches

Another insight into the importance of a multisensory approach to musical activities for children who are deaf/HoH is described by Deaf artist and sign language interpreter, Galloway Gallego, during a 2018 TEDMED Talk. The presenter discusses the impact that music has had on her life and how it provoked memories from her childhood, which supported claims by both Di Bona (2018) and Nussbaum (2012) that music should be explored through an embodied approach. In this talk, she outlines how music interpretation through sign language offered underwhelming emotion during music performances compared to her experience as a hearing person. This prompted Galloway Gallego to create a more visual approach to American Sign Language, using movement, which allows people who are deaf/HoH to enjoy music in a fuller and more unique way (Galloway Gallego, 2018). Such initiatives provide clear examples of the potential impact that multisensory approaches can have on the experience of music for children who are deaf/HoH.

This area is further explored by Hatch (2021) who explored the concept of performing without sound during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, teachers were required to teach music classes in a socially distant setting without the use of instruments or singing. Hatch (2021) discusses how movement was introduced into her lessons to express musical dynamics, while sign language was used successfully to replace singing. Although the children involved in this study were not deaf/HoH, these initiatives suggest how these methodologies might be applied to the education of learners who are deaf/HoH and reinforce the idea that sound is not the sole medium through which the teaching and experience of music can occur.

Each of the contemporary methods of music education discussed above support the idea that music should be an accessible experience for children who are deaf/HoH (Galloway Gallego, 2018; Good et al., 2014; Hatch, 2021; Kim, 2015; Mangaoang, 2024; Silvestri et al., 2018; Sutela, 2024). The anecdotes provided, document how engagement in and with music can be presented in a multisensory experience, which can be uniquely accessed and enjoyed as an art form by all learners, including those who are deaf/HoH (Silvestri et al., 2018; Sutela, 2024).

2.6 Benefits of Music Education for Children who are Deaf/HoH

There is a range of research to suggest that engagement in music education and musical activities can have significant benefits for children who are deaf/HoH, including the development of a sense of speech prosody, the ability to recognise emphasis and stress in vocal tone (Good et al., 2017), and speech and language skills that can be learned through rhythm instruction (Darrow, 1985). In the following sections, the benefits associated with music education for children who are deaf/HoH will be discussed and the value of incorporating multisensory approaches to this will be outlined.

2.6.1 Speech Prosody

Although cochlear implantation is developing the auditory speech perception of children who are deaf/HoH, with increasing effectiveness (Ertmer & Mellon, 2001), children who use a CI do not attain the phonetic cues that are available to non-hearing children. This often results in varied acquisition of speech and language skills across CI users, partly due to the limits of spectral and temporal acoustic detail provided by CIs (Geers et al., 2003). The decreased ability to recognise, comprehend and regulate emotions can have a significant negative impact on the quality of life of a child with a CI (Schorr et al., 2009). The development of this ability amongst learners who are deaf/HoH, known as speech prosody, was the subject of a study by Good et al., (2017). The study involved two separate groups of nine children between the age of six and fifteen who use a CI. One study group received individual piano lessons for six months and the control group received six months of painting lessons. The

emotional speech prosody of each child was measured prior to the lessons commencing, during the lessons and concluding the lessons by playing them each a series of audio-visual recordings expressing different emotions, while asking them to assess the emotion conveyed. The results showed a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-training prosody perception in the music group, whilst there was no statistically significant difference in the control group (Good et al., 2017). These results suggest that music lessons improve speech prosody in children with CI, which in turn would likely lead to an overall improvement in the quality of life, allowing them to attain tonal cues.

Similarly, research conducted by Torppa et al., (2014b), discusses the importance of prosody and the development of phonological awareness for speech acquisition. The study focuses on stress perception in early implanted children and the benefits of musical activity for children with a CI in the development of speech. The results displayed greater performance in prosodic activities for the children with a CI attending musical activities (CI_m), compared to children with a CI not attending musical activities (CI_n). Similarly in the sentence stress perception test, the CI_m and normal hearing groups achieved equivalent performance results, compared to the CI_n group who displayed a poorer performance.

Torppa et al., (2014a) also identified the cognitive advantages of the use of singing for children who are deaf/HoH. The results highlighted an improvement in neural discrimination and attention. Both sets of results support the work of Good et al., (2017), who suggested that exposure to music improved the development of speech prosody perception², auditory discrimination³ and auditory working memory⁴ of CI children.

² The ability to understand the meaning of speech through vocal tone.

³ The ability to distinguish between general sounds.

⁴ The system of the brain that temporarily stores sounds for a short period of time.

2.6.2 Cognitive Development

Similarly to Torppa et al., (2014b) research, Rochette et al., (2014), compared the effect of weekly music lessons on auditory perception⁵, auditory cognition⁶ and phonetic discrimination⁷ in a group of 14 profoundly deaf/HoH children, relative to a control group of another 14 profoundly deaf/HoH children, who did not receive weekly music lessons. The results showed a statistically significant increase in scores for auditory scene analysis⁸, phonetic discrimination and auditory working memory in the children who received music lessons, compared to the control group, signifying that music lessons may be an effective method of rehabilitation for children who are deaf/HoH. Similarly, research conducted by Chen et al., (2010), found that musical training played a significant role in the perception of pitch for children who are prelingually deaf/HoH with cochlear implants and highlighted the improvement of the ability to discriminate sounds in children who are deaf/HoH with cochlear implants who receive musical training (Chen et al., 2010). It is evident that the inclusion of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH can significantly aid the development of cognitive skills, however it is unclear whether teachers view music education as an opportunity for this development in primary school classrooms across Ireland.

2.6.3 Social and Emotional Benefits

There is robust research in both historical and contemporary literature to suggest that music education benefits the social, emotional growth and cultural participation of children who are deaf/HoH (McDermott, 1971; NDCS, 2020; Walczyk, 1993). Many children who are deaf/HoH can face social difficulties throughout their schooling due to a number of factors: barriers of communication with peers (Burdett, 2012), social isolation (Patel et al., 2021), negative social attitudes and lack of access to assistive technologies and language (NDCS,

⁵ The process of the brain detecting sounds.

⁶ How the brain processes and makes sense of sounds.

⁷ The ability to recognise differences between phonemes.

⁸ The brain's process of understanding a mixed sound environment.

2021). In general, it is asserted that music education impacts the social development of a child, with Broh (2002) noting that children who engaged in music lessons spoke more with parents and teachers. In addition, Croom (2015) identified feelings of belonging felt by children with disabilities who took part in musical opportunities such as ensemble groups. For children who are deaf/HoH, in particular, it has been shown that involvement in activities such as musical experiences has improved their self-esteem (Borowiec et al., 2019) and for the purpose of this research study it will be of interest to identify teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish context in this regard.

Research conducted by Schraer-Joiner and Chen (2009) investigating the musical experience of pre-school children who used a CI indicated that the length of time the child has experience with the use of a CI positively impacts the musical ability of the child. Child A, who had been implanted the longest, displayed the most confident and independent singing of the three children. Similarly, the use of the drum to experiment with dynamics and temporal changes was observed. Child A was seen to be capable of perceiving and integrating these changes to their drum playing. Ultimately the findings of this research indicate that all children have the capacity to develop their musical, social and emotional skills regardless of their level of hearing. Schraer-Joiner and Chen (2009) highlight the importance of understanding the abilities of the implant user for the differentiation of music lessons, while not underestimating the musical potential of all children. Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand the hearing abilities of the learners in their classroom in order to provide effective music education. Understanding students challenges in learning will be of importance to this study and will be explored further through consideration of the research questions posed.

2.7 Conclusion

Research has shown there have been many changes to inclusive education in Ireland in the last 30 years, some of which have been stimulated by the introduction of legislation such as The Education Act (Gol, 1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004). Although this move to a more

inclusive education system is recommended, it can be seen that provisions have not been put in place to accommodate these changes and there are many gaps present pertaining to the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream school (Day & Prunty, 2015). Within the education of deaf/HoH people, a number of changes regarding teaching methodologies both generally and within music education have been seen. The introduction of the concept of music as more than solely an audio-centric experience has widened the opportunities for children who are deaf/HoH to be included in music education. Research from Good et al., (2014), Silvestri (2021) and Sutela, (2024), suggests that this can be enhanced through multisensory music methodologies such as the use of rhythm, body percussion and movement and the use of sign song to accompany singing.

The decline in the use of sign language in educational settings across Ireland may have been supported by the introduction of oral methodologies (Breen, 2007). Although music instruction may have aided this oral methodology through the introduction of sound perception and auditory training to improve speech and language in children who are deaf/HoH, in contemporary research, music is viewed as an art form to be enjoyed by all children (Galloway Gallego, 2018; Kim, 2015). The benefits to music education, although still focusing on improving speech and language, can also be integrated with multisensory music approaches which will allow children who are deaf/HoH to not only participate and develop through music education but also enjoy their experiences of music and feel included in these music lessons alongside their hearing peers.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers' experiences. This literature review provided valuable insights into societal views towards music for learners who are deaf/HoH, the benefits associated with including music in their education and

pedagogical approaches surrounding the inclusion of these learners in musical activities, all of which aided in the development of the Research Questions (RQ) seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Developing The Research Questions

Themes Emerging from Literature	Research Question
<p>Importance of Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of personal/emotional and social skills and cultural participation and development. 	<p>RQ #1: What are the opinions of teachers, on the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH?</p>
<p>Inclusive Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires commitment. • Three domains of inclusion: access, participation and benefit. • Learning together with hearing peers. • Importance of building relationships. 	<p>RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities?</p>
<p>Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was good/dispensable about music education in previous practice. • Including both music education and musical activities will provide a broader scope for teachers to discuss. • Universal Design for Learning – multiple strategies for learning. 	
<p>Teaching of Deaf/HoH Historically and Contemporary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oralism/manualism • Enjoyment of music or music as an auditory trainer. • Music considered solely an auditory experience. • Embodied experience in which people can participate in unique ways 	
<p>Teaching Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they limit or enable practice? • Research suggests implementation of multi-modal approaches e.g., visual 	<p>RQ #3: What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?</p> <p>RQ #4: What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?</p>

The analysis of the literature surrounding inclusive education, historical and contemporary methods of music education and the benefits/value of music education for children who are deaf/HoH guided the author in developing the RQs. A further RQ entitled RQ #5, documented in the following chapter, was developed at a later stage of the research process

in order to assist the author in considering the future of music education for students who are deaf/HoH.

The following chapter details the methodology employed to conduct this research project. It outlines the research design, discussing the positionality of the research and the research paradigm. Following this, the data collection methods and sampling strategy are discussed in detail. The chapter discusses the data analysis process and the analytical framework is presented. Finally, limitations to the study are highlighted and the ethical considerations are identified.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers' experiences. Using the responses of mainstream primary school teachers who have experience teaching learners who are deaf/HoH, gathered through semi-structured interviews, the following RQs will be answered:

- RQ #1: What are the opinions of teachers, on the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH?
- RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities?
- RQ #3: What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?
- RQ #4: What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?
- RQ #5: What can we learn from these insights about how to better include learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?

This chapter will discuss the research design chosen to conduct this project, alongside the process for recruiting research participants and the method for data collection. It will identify the data analysis methods used following the data collection process and detail how these will be presented in the findings. Following this there will be a discussion surrounding the ethical considerations and limitations associated with this study, concluding with a synopsis of the main points highlighted within this chapter.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm outlines the lens through which the researcher views the world (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and this is of particular importance in qualitative research, through which people's experiences are explored. Grix (2004) likens the ontological view of a piece of research as the foundations of a building. It refers to the researcher's belief of how something can be known (Jacquette, 2002). Without this, it is impossible to understand how meaning has been extracted from the data collected throughout the research process. The ontological view of relativism was applied in this instance as it considers that what is true for each person differs based on their experience and perspectives of society (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Epistemology is concerned with how a person gains knowledge and what they believe to be true (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The choice to employ the paradigm of interpretivism for this research project was based on Rehman and Alharthis' (2016) use of the word 'subjective' to describe the epistemological view of interpretivism, trying to see the world through the eyes of another (Fossey et al., 2002). As this project centres around the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the enablers and barriers of inclusive music for children who are deaf/HoH, it was essential to utilise this paradigm, as this approach allows us to explore the phenomena directly through the medium it relates to (Hennink al., 2010; Sarantakos, 2017). Dissimilar to a positivist view, through which one reality is thought to be true (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016) and unlike a pragmatic approach, through which change is sought, rather than merely an observation of the world (Goldkuhl, 2012), an interpretivist view will allow the researcher to search for answers through experiences of the person and interpret the data in many ways (Geertz, 1973).

In order to answer the research questions posed, the researcher looked to the real-life experiences of primary school teachers, searching for answers to their views of the enablers and barriers pertaining to inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH. Taking an interpretive epistemological stance, whilst employing the ontological view of relativism,

has allowed the researcher to remain open-minded when analysing data gathered through the interviewing of teachers and has ensured that meaning has been created through the experience of the person (Sprake & Palmer, 2022).

3.3 Research Design

There are a number of contrasting qualities between qualitative and quantitative research which are essential to consider prior to choosing the most appropriate research method for a research project. A qualitative research approach is described as holistic and flexible, providing opportunity for unanticipated ideas to be expressed by participants (Robson, 2011), and for the project to evolve based on these changes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This type of research provides rich data, with in-depth detail and consideration of the participants' real-life experiences and perspectives (Robson, 2011). Quantitative research, on the other hand, focuses heavily on numbers, often features a detachment from the person and the data analysis process tends to be quicker (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The choice to pursue a qualitative research path for this project was largely determined by the study's research questions, which focused on the participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.3.1 Positionality

In qualitative research, researcher bias can often become a significant challenge which must be considered throughout the research process. Reflexivity was employed in this case to combat researcher bias; a strategy which allows the researcher to reflect on their role as a researcher within the project and to identify any potential bias they may exhibit during the entirety of the research process (Robson, 2011). Becoming a reflexive researcher requires a conscious effort to examine one's self-beliefs and opinions, and to remain open to the subjectivity of knowledge, particularly throughout the data analysis process, allowing for unanticipated outcomes and opinions (Berger, 2015). Importantly, Berger (2015) notes three significant ways in which the position of the researcher may affect the research: 1). The field of research, whereby participants may be less likely to respond openly to questioning if they feel that the researcher may be more experienced in the research area; 2). The relationship

between researcher/participant, with the positionality of the researcher affecting the rapport that may be developed; and 3). The background that the researcher possesses in this area, which will determine their beliefs and opinions about the topic. Acknowledging that the researcher's view or belief may differ from that of the participant will increase the credibility and validity of the research itself (Berger, 2015). In research where there is an absence of reflexivity, there is a possibility that unexpected results, which are different to what was expected by the researcher, may be ignored or go unnoticed (Russell & Kelly, 2002). The researcher bias and methods which were employed to combat this will be discussed throughout this chapter as they arise.

3.3.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews for the purpose of this research project. The audio recording tool on the Zoom Video Communications platform was utilised to record the semi-structured interviews, some of which were conducted in a face-to-face setting and some via Zoom. The recording tool was used for the purpose of transcription and to provide the interviewee with the researcher's full attention throughout. It is essential to note that these interviews were conducted during the first term of the academic year, with a number of interviews carried out during the month of December. In turn, this allowed scope for the participants to discuss extra-curricular seasonal events which take place across schools during this time, i.e., Christmas carol services and Christmas plays. Through the transcribing process, the researcher became familiar with the data set whilst listening to each interview multiple times to ensure accurate transcription.

A recurring theme throughout this research project was the interpretivist and relativist stance relating to the epistemological and ontological lens. The importance of providing scope for emerging, unanticipated themes to be discovered through the fieldwork process is a significant feature of qualitative research, revolving around the experience of the human participant. Therefore, the choice to undertake semi-structured interviews in order to answer the research questions seemed an obvious one, with the flexible nature of these interviews

providing this scope for unanticipated themes to emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This particular form of interview style offers an adaptability through which the participants may lead the conversation through the incorporation of open-ended questions and prompts and probes (Patton, 2002). Although it is necessary to form a list of indicative questions prior to the interview, the flexible nature allows for modification of the wording of the question based on the direction of each interview (Robson, 2011).

A pilot interview was conducted prior to commencing the interview process. A pilot interview is often viewed as a means to 'test out' the practicality of the interview design (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010). The use of a pilot interview in this instance acted as a means to improve the questions presented and provide an opportunity for the researcher to practise the skill of interviewing (Majid et al., 2017). It has also been documented in recent studies that piloting can increase the validity and improve the overall research results. Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne (2010, p. 361) note the benefits of piloting in research; these include: "Gaining general feedback on clarity, appropriateness"; "Developing and testing adequacy of research instruments"; and "Gaining feedback on length/timing/coverage/ease of completion".

Through conducting an initial pilot interview for this research study, the issue of timing stood out. The researcher noticed that they had rushed through the questioning stage and often found themselves speaking over the participant. Robson (2011, p.274) documents "listening more than you speak" as one significant piece of advice for researchers conducting semi-structured interviews and similarly promotes the inclusion of straightforward and clear questions being posed to the participants. Providing clarity and eliminating cues which influence the participants' response in any way were also highlighted as necessary for proper conduct of semi-structured interviews (Robson, 2011). However, the most significant area of consideration prior to conducting interviews was the development of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, a concept which the researcher had not considered prior to conducting the initial pilot interview. It has been documented that building rapport is essential

to ensure that participants feel they can trust the researcher, allowing them to openly express their opinions in a non-judgemental environment (Berger, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The consideration of researcher bias arose during the data collection stage, in the form of the relationship between the researcher and participant. In many qualitative research projects there tends to be some form of relationship between the researcher and the participants (Robson, 2011). In the case of this study, both the researcher and the participants were primary school teachers. Although this can prove beneficial in some cases, with both parties finding common ground, there is also a possibility for researcher bias. It is essential as a researcher to note the differences and similarities between the researcher and the interviewees in terms of experience in the particular research area and note these throughout (Dodgson, 2019). In this case, it was apparent that the participants had more experience working with children who are deaf/HoH, than the researcher. It was also essential that preconceived ideas regarding the interview answers were eradicated in order to remain open-minded to new phenomena (Buetow, 2019). Similarly, It is essential to consider the power dynamics associated with research interviewing. The close relationship between the interviewer and interviewee has been seen to cause a manipulation of information provided by the participant and needs to be considered by the researcher (Kvale, 2006). Kvale (2006) notes the perspective of the interviewer ruling the interview as a significant power of dominance. To avoid this power struggle during the fieldwork process, the interviews acted as a conversation between both the researcher and the interviewee, allowing the participants to be open in expressing their opinions and sharing their experiences.

Although semi-structured interviews provide a flexible approach through which the alteration of interview questions within each individual interview is allowed, it is still essential to formulate an interview guide to ensure that an answer to the research questions is achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2013). One aspect of interviewing, which was considered while developing

an interview guide, was the inclusion of probing, which is detailed by Given (2008) as requesting more information about an answer provided by an interviewee. The use of probes, particularly in semi-structured interviews, is essential to extract more notable discussion from the interviewee and to ensure that an answer to the research question can be reached during the data analysis stage (Robinson, 2023). Simply put, probes are utilised to receive more information from the participant about a particular topic. The technique requires a skilled researcher to listen to the participant and determine whether more information is required to answer the research question (Given, 2008). A popular form of probing used in qualitative analysis is Gorden's (1987) Six step probing technique: 1). Silent Probe, providing a pause of silence to encourage the participant to elaborate further; 2). Encouragement Probe, including short phrases to prompt further information to be divulged; 3). Elaboration Probe, simply asking the participant to provide more information; 4). Clarification Probe, the interviewer asking the participant for clarity on a particular topic; 5). Recapitulation Probe, returning to the beginning of a piece of information, hoping to receive more information the second time around; 6). Reflective Probe, repeating what the participant has said. The use of multiple variations of probing were applied to this study throughout the interview process by further questioning the participant on certain themes. As well as ensuring that an interview schedule is structured and probing is included, there are also a number of questions to avoid when conducting interviews: 1). Long questions; 2). Double-barrelled questions; 3). Questions involving jargon; 4). Biased questions (Robson, 2011, p.275). The use of open-ended questions provides flexibility, allowing for the participants' perspective and experiences to guide the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Throughout the interview process, many open-ended questions were included in order to gain the insights of the teachers. It became apparent that these questions were essential in order to gain significant findings, unique to each teachers' experience.

3.3.3 Sampling Strategy

When considering a sampling strategy for use in qualitative research, Rapley (2013) highlights the importance of ensuring appropriate time is given to deciding which strategy to implement. He notes that in many qualitative research designs, interviewing is utilised and this often takes the form of small groups of people with close interactions and therefore the method of sampling must be considered to ensure that the research questions can be answered appropriately (Rapley, 2013). Purposeful sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed for the purpose of this research study. Purposeful sampling involves choosing participant's based on their relevancy to the study, where participants cannot be chosen at random (Robson, 2011). More specifically, typical-case sampling, a method of purposeful sampling, was applied to allow the researcher to choose participants based on their relevant experience and understanding of teaching music to children who are deaf/HoH (Robson, 2011).

Using professional and personal contacts within the teaching community, both the researcher and research supervisors contacted educators teaching children who are deaf/HoH in mainstream classrooms, which ensured that both relevance to the study and experience teaching music was achieved within the sample group.

Data saturation was a strategy employed to determine the sample size of the semi-structured interviews. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this as the achievement of answers to the research question prior to the completion of interviews across the entire sample size, while Morse (1995) identifies data saturation as a point in time where no new information may be drawn from additional data. As there is no set rule for the number of interviews which must be conducted in order to achieve an answer to a research question, data saturation is a helpful tool in deciding when an interview process should be concluded (Morse, 1995).

Typically, the broader the topic, the more interviews will need to be conducted, as opposed to a more focused topic which will require less participants (Morse, 2000). Although Morse indicates the importance of frequency of information for the purpose of analytic coding, it is

essential to understand at which point new information has concluded. Morse (2000, p.3) identifies a number of factors which should be considered when identifying data saturation: “the scope of the study”, “the quality of the data” and “the nature of the topic”. In the case of this study, familiarisation of the data began with the transcription of each interview and informally making connections or recognising differences in the data set. Utilising this strategy ensured that this stage of the research was flexible and assisted in concluding the interview process on recognition of data saturation.

3.3.4 Research Setting and Participants

During the fieldwork stage, data collection took place in the participants’ schools and via Zoom where this was not possible. Allowing for fieldwork to be conducted through both mediums ensured that the researcher could learn from both the participant and the environment in which they teach and establish a wide variety of participants through expanding the geographical area. It was essential for the researcher to factor in experience in teaching children who are deaf/HoH when initiating the recruitment process and therefore participants were chosen based on the level of involvement they had in the teaching of music to these pupils. The experience of each participant varied in relation to the number of years working as a qualified primary school teacher, the amount of time engaged in teaching children who are deaf/HoH and the experience and confidence of the teacher in the general teaching of music. The study involved exploring the teachers’ perspectives towards the enablers and barriers related to the teaching of music to children who are deaf/HoH whilst also gaining their opinions on the inclusion of music in the education of these children. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes in length and the researcher ensured ample time was provided before the commencement of each interview in order to engage in discussion with each of the participants, to determine the participants understanding of the research, to answer questions posed by the participants and to build a rapport with the interviewee, thus allowing the interviewer an insight into the interviewees’ world view, which as discussed

above is an essential aspect of becoming a reflexive researcher (Berger, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Kvale, 2006).

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

3.4.1 Transcripts

Throughout the data collection process, it was decided to record and transcribe the semi-structured interviews. A transcript is needed for the data analysis process; however, it is essential to understand that the transcription is an interpretation of the original interview experience. Although providing excellent insights into an interview, the transcript often lacks cues such as facial expression or body language (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Therefore, a notation system may be used to indicate these; an example is provided by Braun and Clarke (2013) in which they state that many qualitative researchers will use an ellipsis '...' to indicate a hesitation or silence. In order to ensure that participants sound natural and less robotic when reading the transcripts, slang and informal language was included in the transcribing process (DeVault, 1990). For the purpose of this project, interviews were recorded using Zoom Video Communications, utilising the audio recording platform for the recording of in-person interviews and the audio-visual recording platform for the recording of online interviews. Once this had been completed, the interviews were transcribed using the automatic Zoom transcribing tool. Although the interviews were automatically transcribed, the choice was made to manually transcribe each interview again, to ensure accuracy, allowing for the inclusion of pauses, cut off speech and underlining words for emphasis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.4.2 Generating Themes and Initial Coding

Conducting semi-structured interviews required a list of flexible questions (See Appendix A) to be drawn up prior to commencing the fieldwork. These questions acted as themes for discussion within the research (McGrath et al., 2019). The teachers who participated in the

interviews were given pseudonyms so as to comply with the conditions of the ethical approval from the DCU REC (REC Reference: DCUREC/2024/009); See Appendix B).

3.4.3 Thematic Analysis

The choice to utilise thematic analysis (TA) was based on a number of significant factors. Braun and Clarke (2022) describe TA as a flexible approach to data analysis which acts as a tool rather than a framework for the researcher. The data gathered in this research project was of a deductive nature as themes were established through creating an indicative interview schedule prior to commencing interviews. The use of Braun & Clarke's (2006) Six Step TA was conducted and is detailed in Table 2 below, following by the specific application of this process to the current research project.

Table 2: Braun & Clarke's (2006) Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
Phase 1: Familiarisation with data	Familiarisation with the data through transcription, reading and re-reading of the data. At this stage, the researcher should engage in note taking.
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Initial coding of any interesting features of the data across the entire data set.
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Identifying similarities within coding, gathering similar data together.
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Checking that themes work in relation to codes.
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	The researcher should begin to generate names for each code, gaining a sense of the story to be told.
Phase 6: Producing the report	In the final phase of analysis, the researcher relates the analysis back to the research question and literature.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the dataset

As the data was gathered through interactions between the researcher and the participants, a level of familiarity with the dataset begun, prior to conducting analysis (Braun & Clarke,

2006). The importance of becoming immersed in the data is described as essential by Braun and Clarke (2006) and in order to do so, the researcher transcribed each semi-structured interview, ensuring familiarity with both transcripts and audio recordings. As qualitative research is an ever-evolving process, notes were made about non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions and changes to tone of voice, engaging in data analysis from the beginning of the interview process (Lareau, 2021). Through familiarisation with the data, the researcher felt confident engaging in the coding process.

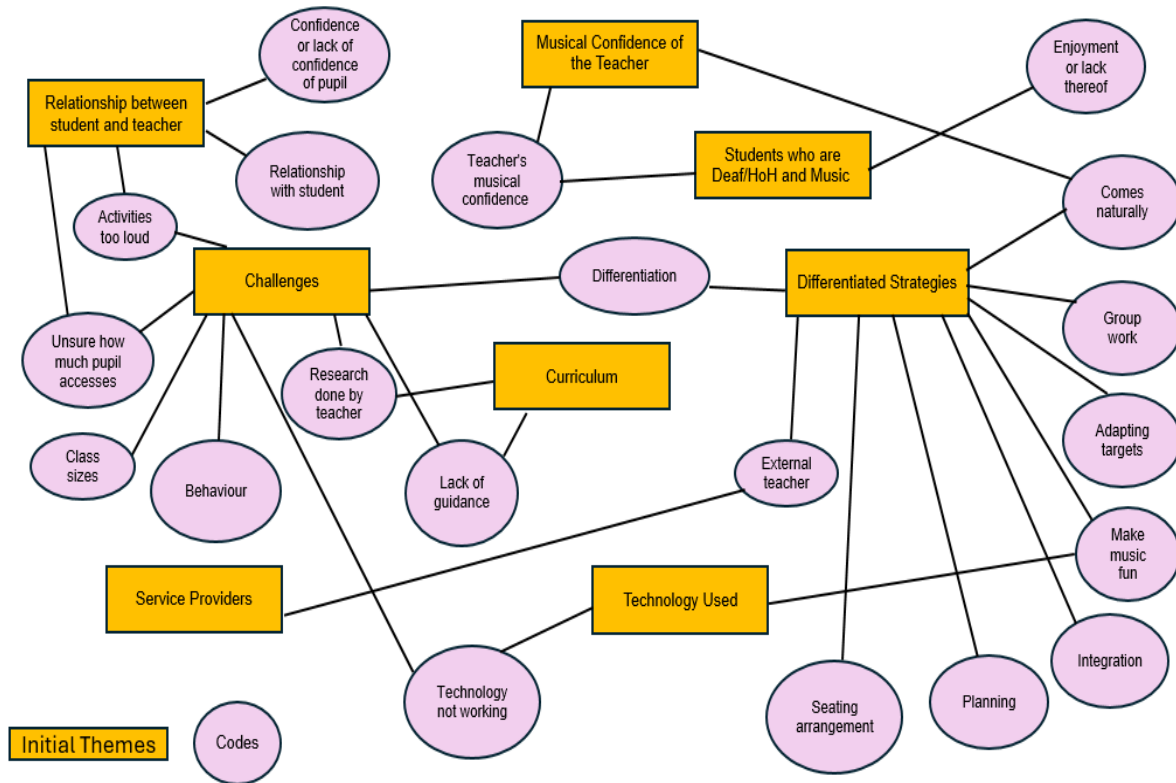
Phase 2: Generating initial codes

At this stage of the analysis process, interesting features of the data were identified, with the researcher becoming familiar with the meaning behind the participants answers (Lareau, 2021). The online coding platform, NVivo, was used to assist in grouping the data into specific codes. Each data set was examined more than once to ensure rigour within the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which in turn generated the initial codes.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

As deductive coding TA was conducted for this research project and the analysis process had been emergent (Lareau, 2021), the broader themes had been generated during the formation of the indicative interview schedule. This allowed the researcher to take time to consider the similarities between the initial codes and identify where they fit within the themes. This stage of data analysis also allows the researcher to take a step back to reflect on the data gathered and identify common themes and trends (Lareau, 2021). In order to do this, an analysis map was created, which made connections between the codes and identified which themes they relate to (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and can be seen below:

Figure 1: Thematic Map



Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase of TA, the themes were considered in relation to the research questions posed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was then conducted again, as qualitative research is considered emergent and evolving (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lareau, 2021). This process is essential to ensure that no significant data was missed during the initial coding.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The initial themes created during the formulation of the indicative interview schedule were further expanded using the codes created through TA to develop more narrative themes which reflect the significant aspects of each theme. The development of these themes can be seen in Table 3 below. One initial theme, '*Relationship Between Teacher and Student*' was divided into four subsequent themes, to allow each aspect to be discussed separately.

Table 3: Final Themes

Initial theme	Final theme
Relationship Between Teacher and Student	The Ability to Enable Quality Interpersonal Relationships
Relationship Between Teacher and Student	The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships
Relationship Between Teacher and Student	The Ability to Create Inclusive Environments
Relationship Between Teacher and Student	Appreciation of the Personal Challenges of Learners
Musical Confidence of Teacher	Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher
Is Music Being Taught	How Often Music is Being Taught
Technology Used	Technology Available and used to Teach Children who are Deaf/HoH
Service Providers	Range of Service Providers/Stakeholders Involved in the Teaching of Children who are Deaf/HoH
Differentiation	Differentiated Strategies to Teach Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH
Curriculum	Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum
Deaf Students and Music	Children who are Deaf/HoHs' Experience of Musical Activities/Enjoyment of Musical Activities
Challenges	Challenges in Teaching Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH

Phase six: Producing the report

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe this stage of data analysis as a process whereby the findings are written in a clear, concise way, providing evidence for the themes that have been created. The findings of this analysis are supported by the developed analytic framework, supported by Ainscow (2020), which will be discussed below and are presented in the following chapter.

3.4.4 Analytic Framework

The themes generated during the TA process were considered according to three areas that were formulated through examining Ainscow's (2020) paper on inclusive practices. Through

the exploration of Ainscow’s (2020) research, an analytic framework was developed which allowed for data examination according to three domains: (i). Access to music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH; (ii). Participation in music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH; (iii). Benefit from music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH. The development of this framework can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Development of the Analytic Framework

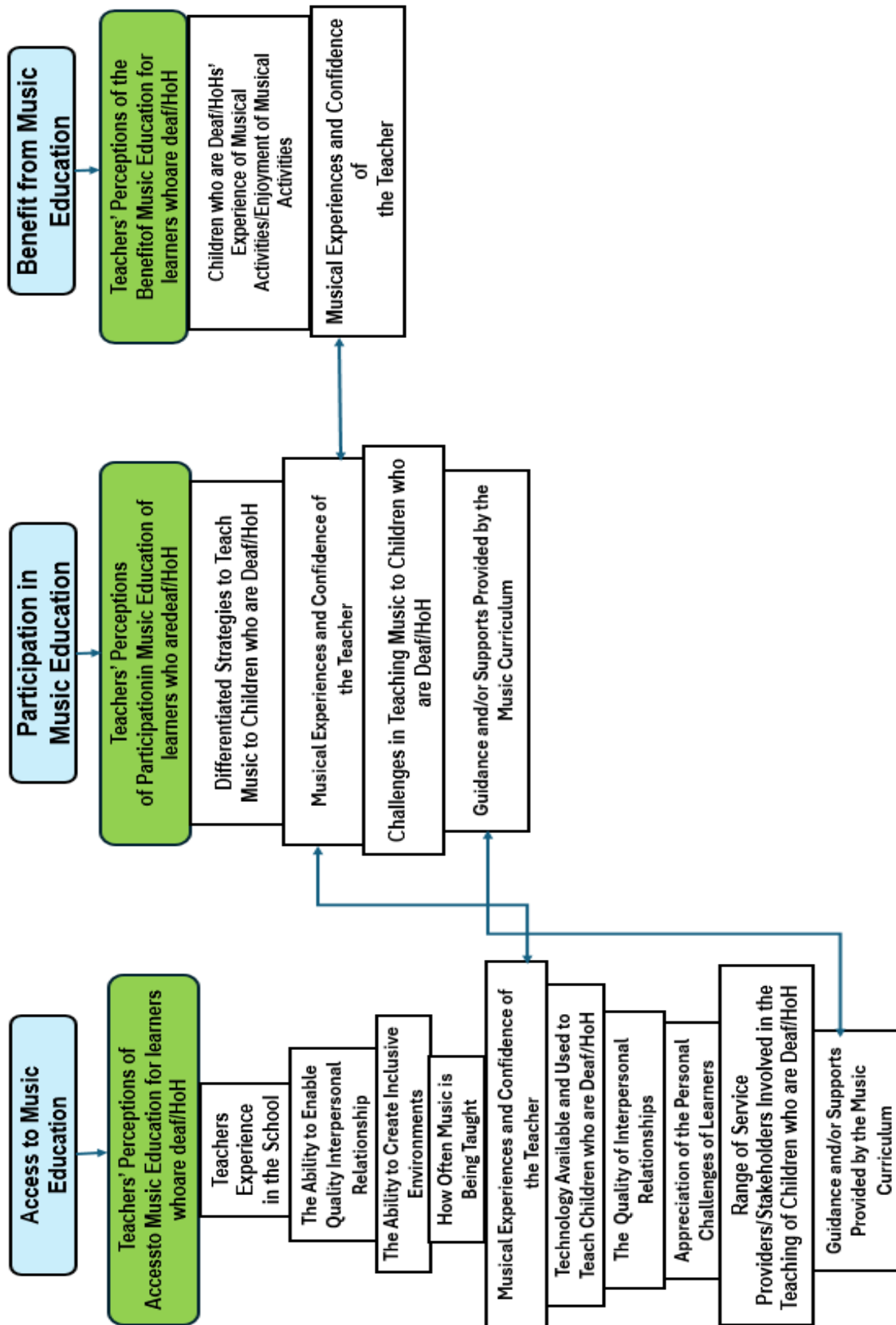
	Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences (Ainscow, 2020)	Analytic Framework
Access to music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH	An Inclusive Inquiry Framework ⁹ was utilised in which three teachers worked together to identify ways in which these children can be included in education. The teachers worked with children to gain their insights, altering the lesson with each new suggestion. This in turn, would provide these children with better access to inclusive education.	Use of teachers’ perspectives and experiences to identify barriers and enablers currently in place which pertain to access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoHs.
Participation in music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH	Ainscow (2020) discusses working with stakeholders who will support educational change that will allow for inclusive educational settings.	Considering the themes created through TA, this research aims to identify the enablers and barriers which impact participation in music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. This research aims to identify how these children are participating in music education. What are teachers, therapists, visiting teachers for the deaf/HoH, parents etc. doing to enable these children to participate in musical activities?
Benefit from music education /musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH	Working towards schools collaborating with each other as a means to develop inclusive societies and ensure all schools have an inclusive reputation.	Aim to identify the teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH, through this, gaining a broad outlook on how these children are benefiting from music education.

The final themes, which were previously outlined in Table 3, were then considered in terms of the three domains associated with the analytic framework. These themes were

⁹ A framework which involves discussion between students and teachers surrounding teaching and learning, inclusive practices and learning from differences.

categorised into each domain with a number of themes being situated within multiple domains. A visual representation of this is provided in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Locating Themes within Each Domain



3.5 Ethical Considerations

Full ethical approval was granted for this research study by the DCU REC (REC Reference: DCUREC/2024/009; See Appendix B). Within the application to the REC, possible ethical issues were pre-empted and documented. The ethical issues outlined below were considered.

3.5.1. Sample Selection

Given the relatively small sample size of teachers engaged in the interview process, there is potential for selection bias to occur. The use of purposeful sampling allowed the participants to be chosen based on their relevant experience and understanding of the topic (Robson, 2011). This aimed to mitigate this issue, allowing the participants to be selected based on their relevance to the research. However, Robson (2011) also identifies a number of limitations involved in the use of typical-case sampling. This method of sampling, although leading to in-depth exploration of the research questions posed, can lead to a lack of variation in results. In order to mitigate this risk, the use of reflexivity, a strategy which allows the researcher to reflect on their own biases, experiences and opinions which may influence the findings of the research (Robson, 2011), is essential to employ in order to reflect on the researcher's own opinions of the phenomenon being studied and to ensure that the findings are diverse.

3.5.2. Informed Consent

One of the most significant ethical considerations at the forefront of this research was obtaining informed consent from participants who engaged in semi-structured interviews and protecting their identity within written findings. In order to ensure informed consent, prior to commencing the interview, each participant was provided with an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix C). Information was provided to the participants and the relevant stakeholders i.e. principals and participating teachers, using a Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix D). Before the commencement of each interview, it was the responsibility of

the researcher to ensure that each participant was aware of the voluntary nature of their involvement in the study and their right to withdraw at any time was documented on the Participant Information Sheet (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018). The standard of honesty outlined as a commitment of the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland was achieved within this research through ensuring that interviews were interpreted correctly and that all information regarding the research study aim and methodology were communicated to each participant (Irish Universities Association, 2019).

3.5.3. Data Protection

Each interview carried out during this research study was recorded using the Zoom Video Communications audio recording feature on a password protected laptop. This data was then transferred to a DCU password protected Google Drive where it was stored and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. Participants were informed that data would be destroyed following the completion of this research project as set out in the DCU Personal Data Retention Policy that students must “retain personal data in identifiable form only for such period as is necessary in relation to the purpose for which the data are processed” (DCU, 2018, ‘Retention Principles’ section).

3.5.4. Anonymity

Anonymity is an essential aspect of qualitative research and should be considered when conducting research involving human participants. This extends beyond anonymising a participant’s name, ensuring their privacy is protected (Robson, 2011). In order to protect participants' identity in this research project, each teacher was provided with a pseudonym so as to comply with the conditions of the ethical approval from the DCU REC (REC Reference: DCUREC/2024/009); See Appendix B).

3.6 Limitations

A number of limitations arise when conducting semi-structured interview in order to gather qualitative data. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews and the possibility for questions to veer away from the main aims of the project and thus deliver a wide variation in results, can lead to difficulty in the analysis of data (Robson, 2011). This was mitigated by utilising typical-case sampling, which allowed the researcher to recruit participants who held the relevant experience required to answer the questions posed, while also recruiting teachers who held a wide range of experience, as seen in the Participant Demographic (See Table 5).

The possibility of interviewer bias, which can lead to the researcher's own opinion influencing the probes and prompts during the interview is also a cause for consideration (Robson, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2013) emphasise the use of reflexivity, also discussed above, to mitigate this bias. This ensured that continuous reflection of the researcher's position within the research project was conducted and ensured that the opinions and experiences of the researcher did not influence the findings.

Another limitation to the study is the small sample size, of eleven participants. The timescale for this research project allowed for eleven interviews to be conducted, however this small sample limits the generalisability of the findings. The use of typical-case sampling was therefore employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings (Patton, 2002).

3.7 Conclusion

Qualitative research was favoured over quantitative research for the purpose of this research project, as it has allowed the researcher to consider the perspectives of the research participants at the centre of the research when aiming to answer the RQs posed.

Semi-structured interviews acted as a data collection method which ensured that the participants' perspectives were gathered through the flexible nature of the interview format.

Purposeful sampling was essential for the recruitment process within this research project to ensure that participants possessed the relevant experience of teaching of children who are

deaf/HoH, particularly within music education, while also allowing for variation in the level of experience held by each participant to ensure that data is varied and results are as accurate and relevant as possible. Although the use of semi-structured interviews provided scope for the participants to direct the conversation, limitations such as interview bias may often lead to inaccurate or biased results. Through engaging in reflexivity as a researcher, the possibility of wording bias was eliminated. The following chapter will outline the data analysis in more detail and present the findings achieved through the interview process.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings of the research are presented, derived from semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven qualified primary school teachers over a period of two months with the aim of exploring the perspectives of the teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities. Using the responses of mainstream Irish primary school teachers who have experience in teaching learners who are deaf/HoH, to identify the enablers and barriers towards their inclusion in musical activities, the following RQs will be answered:

- RQ #1: What are the opinions of teachers, on the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH?
- RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities?
- RQ #3: What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?
- RQ #4: What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?
- RQ #5: What can we learn from these insights about how to better include learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?

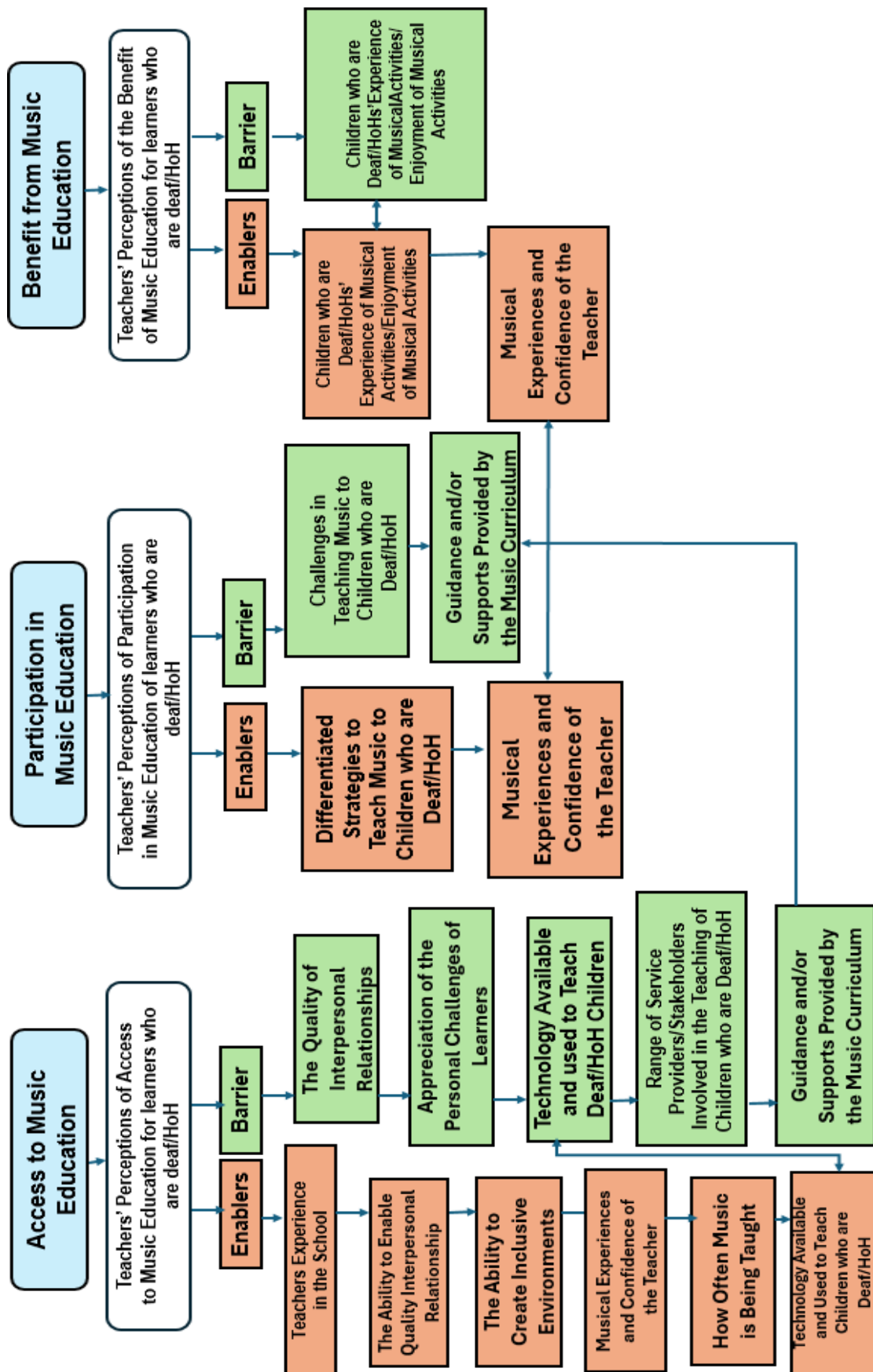
This chapter offers analysis on teachers' perceptions regarding RQ #1: *What are the opinions of teachers on the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH?*

Following this, the experiences of children who are deaf/HoH during musical activities are explored using a framework developed based on Aincow's (2020) research on international

experiences of inclusive education. This framework guided the development of an interview schedule that focused on distinctive themes, which were then analysed further through the data coding phase. The findings below are presented according to three domains: (i). Access to music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH; (ii). Participation in music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH; (iii). Benefits from music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH. In order to offer a more detailed analysis, teachers' perceptions of the enablers/barriers in each of these areas are also presented.

As well as using this deductive approach, the researcher was keen to find a methodological approach that allowed the meaning of individual responses to emerge in an aggregated way. The voices of teachers were faithfully and objectively represented. Methodologically, this involved deploying TA and using the themes that emerged from this process to inform discussion of each of the above areas. Some themes for example, teacher experience, relationship building and use of technology, will affect multiple domains i.e., access, participation and benefit. Figure 3 below, visually represents how each theme fit into each domain and identifies whether this theme acts as an enabler or a barrier towards inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH.

Figure 3: Identifying Themes as Enablers/Barriers of Inclusive Music Education



Throughout the findings, the aspects of teachers' professional, organisational, contextual and situational contexts will be discussed in order to effectively interpret their experiences and perceptions of the enablers and barriers towards inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH. Professional contexts refer to the teaching qualifications and experience possessed by a particular respondent, while organisational contexts pertain to how each individual school organises music learning. Contextual aspects of pedagogy include the set-up of music teaching for each individual child and whether an external music teacher is employed. Finally, the situational context refers to factors pertaining to each child who is deaf/HoH, e.g., their apparent attitude, motivation, persistence, as well as their ability to participate in and enjoy music education and musical activities.

4.2 RQ #1: Teachers' Opinions of the Value of Music Education/Musical Activities in the Education of Learners who are Deaf/HoH

When asked about the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, many of the teachers indicated that they felt music is an important element which should be included in their education. A number of teachers described music as being 'everywhere' and that children who are deaf/HoH could not escape it:

Ms. Healy: "listening skills as well, it's something like every person needs to know for kind of later life and school life, and it's not something really we can escape."

This appeared to be the perception of many teachers, indicating that music is an essential aspect of everyday life, with children exposed to music across social media platforms, on the radio and on the television:

Ms. McMahon: "There's music on, you know, and all the TV shows that they're watching, all the jingles, all the theme tunes, you know, Christmas carols. Generally, most children you meet...will love music in some sort of way."

Both Ms. Healy and Ms. Doherty expanded on this idea and indicated that they have experienced music developing their children's social skills and providing them with the opportunity to improve listening skills. Ms. Doherty describes her school's use of music to enhance the ability of the children to follow directions and tidy up:

Ms. Doherty: "it's great for getting them to follow directions, getting them to get themselves organised, to clean up, to listen."

Ms. Murphy approached this question with empathy, indicating that every child is entitled to the same opportunities in education. This teacher insisted that each child is entitled to equal access to the curriculum and indicates that deafness should not alter their access to musical activities:

Ms. Murphy: "I feel that you know every child is entitled to access the same level...of education. And it's important that they have an equitable experience."

A number of teachers implied that music can provide emotional value to both the child who is deaf/HoH and the community around them. Mr. Flynn had indicated from the outset of the interview that he did not describe himself as musical and it was implied that he did not particularly enjoy teaching music:

Mr. Flynn: "So we're on the back of the carol service now and that was four weeks straight, every day teaching music so...definitely giving them a bit of a break now...And I'm happy to give them that break [laughs]".

However, by the end of the interview, Mr. Flynn indicated that he had engaged in a period of reflection, acknowledging the importance of musical activities for this child's social and emotional development. He appeared to appreciate that music is a passion for this particular child and the child appeared to engage more in conversation when exposed to regular musical activities:

Mr. Flynn: *“even just doing this interview makes me think, maybe it is something...he uses it as a way of communication with us...So perhaps it is sort of a medium through which they [children who are deaf/HoH] can communicate better.”*

This teacher also appeared to have experienced an emotional response to listening to the children singing at the Christmas carol service. He hoped to teach music in his classroom more regularly, having watched the children perform together:

Mr. Flynn: *“It was so nice, the Carol service was like, special.”*

Ms. Farrell appeared to have a similar response to that of Mr. Flynn. When asked about her opinion on the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, she indicated that music is a stimulus for emotion. This teacher described music as an essential aspect of education for children who are deaf/HoH, acting as a means of enjoyment and inclusion:

Ms. Farrell: *“The enjoyment of it, the inclusion. Music moves people, you know...It's not just what you hear. It's like an energisation of how you feel, you know...And music makes you feel different things. And for children who have ehm difficulty with hearing and this child in particular, it's not just that they're deaf, there is so much emotion that's associated with it as well. So it's a great way to channel that emotion. I feel, for this particular child, I've seen it. How it channels them, and how that emotion really affects them in their whole school day.”*

An impactful insight came from Ms. O' Toole, who had over ten years of experience teaching music to children who are deaf/HoH. In her own school, the staff had spent time training in ISL and had devised a method of teaching this to the children as a means to include the children who are deaf/HoH in their school. The school used integration of ISL through music, with Ms. O'Toole leading the choir. This began as a small Christmas production, with the children including ISL in one of the songs they performed. The teacher described the pride felt by the children who are deaf/HoH in including their method of communication in their

school performance. Ms. O'Toole went on to describe the impact the inclusion of ISL in their music lessons had, not only on the children who are deaf/HoH, but also on the hearing children in the school. During an airing of the *'Late Late Toy Show'*, an ISL interpreter was employed to translate the show. The teacher provided insights into the excitement and 'buzz' experienced in the school the following day, with all children feeling pride in having been one step ahead of the 'Toy Show':

Ms. O'Toole: *"they were so buzzed about that because they were always like, we've been doing this for two years, you know... the toy shows catching up with us [laughs]."*

Similar to the responses provided by Mr. Flynn and Ms. Farrell, Ms. O'Toole also alluded to the emotional benefits that the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH can have. Ms. O'Toole also provided insights into the feelings of the parents of the children who are deaf/HoH on the inclusion of ISL in their school. There appeared to be a reluctance from the parents initially to have ISL taught in the school. Ms. O'Toole indicated that this was because they did not want the focus to be on their child. However, having witnessed the performance and experienced the first-hand emotion, the parents praised the teaching staff, detailing the immense impact that this experience had on their child's confidence:

Ms. O'Toole: *"the parents of those children with cochlear implants came back and said, you know, you've really done something positive here, because now ISL isn't seen as "oh, something we've to learn" or you know, "we're doing this because I can't hear", it was just, you know, part of their school experience. So I think, yeah, it had a really positive impact on those kids yeah."*

The teachers' perspectives of the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH can be considered extremely positive. The predominant findings indicate that teachers feel music has ample social and emotional benefits for both children and the community surrounding them, contributing to an atmosphere of inclusivity and joy within the

school. Similarly, the inclusion of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH was described as increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

4.3 Domain #1: Access to Music Education/Musical Activities

The first area for consideration in analysing the data gathered from the interviews was access to music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoHs. This draws on Ainscow's (2020) paper in which international frameworks on inclusive education were analysed to consider what can be learned from past educational practices and how current practices can become more inclusive. The following themes were seen to contribute to and in some cases act as a barrier towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH: (i). Teachers' Experience in the School; (ii). The Ability to Enable Quality Interpersonal Relationships; (iii). The Ability to Create Inclusive Environments; (iii). How Often Music is Being Taught; (iv). Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher; (v). Technology Available and Used to Teach Learners who are Deaf/HoH; (vi). The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships; (vii). Appreciation of the Personal Challenges of the Learner; (viii). Range of Service Providers/Stakeholders Involved in the Teaching of Children who are Deaf/HoH and (ix). Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum. Each of these themes will be explored further below.

4.3.1 RQ #2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to Access to Music Education/Musical Activities

Teachers' perceptions of the experiences of access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH, indicated that these children were accessing musical activities in a similar way to their peers. When asked about how the experience of music education for a child who is deaf/HoH would differ from that of a child who is hearing, one teacher indicated that this would depend on the ethos in the school and whether music was an area that was fostered and nurtured:

Ms. O'Toole: *"I think it totally depends on the school to be honest, because you could find schools that are, you know, really into music, and really push music, and then you'll have schools where you know it's the dreaded subject, and nobody wants to do it and they don't do it, you know."*

When asked about the importance of including music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, Ms. Murphy expressed that every child should have access to the same opportunities in education, regardless of whether they were deaf/HoH or hearing:

Ms. Murphy: *"it's important that they have an equitable experience...Like, just because he has a hearing impairment doesn't make him any less entitled to access the curriculum to the full extent that it's given to us. So I think what we have to do as teachers and as educators is, put those things in place to facilitate that."*

The most insightful responses regarding teachers' perceptions of the children's access to music education arose when the teachers spoke about their children who are deaf/HoH being taught collectively, alongside their hearing peers. Ms. O'Toole suggested that the experience of the children who are deaf/HoH in regard to access to music education should not differ from that of their hearing peers, with the teacher emphasising that her children who are deaf/HoH and hearing children were all taught using similar methodologies, in the same setting:

Ms. O'Toole: *"there was nothing different as to how we taught the deaf students as to how we taught the hearing students."*

It is apparent from the data gathered throughout the interviews that teachers believed that their children who are deaf/HoH were accessing musical activities in a similar way to their hearing peers.

4.3.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers' views Towards the Enablers of Access to Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Teachers' Experience in the School**

Throughout the course of the interviews conducted, insights were gained from teachers with a wide variety of experience. Information on the professional, organisational, contextual and situational contexts of teachers' experiences of music and education for children who are deaf/HoH are important considerations in the framing, analysis and interpretation of data for the current study. Table 5 below, illustrates the demographic information of the participating teachers including, years of teaching experience, musical experience as indicated by the participant themselves, the type of school and the teacher role.

Table 5: Participant Demographic¹⁰

Name	Gender	Years Qualified	Musical Experience	School	Teacher Role
Ms. O' Toole	Female	10+ years	Musical	Co-Educational Rural	Special Education Teacher
Ms. Healy	Female	6 years	Not Musical	Co-Educational	3rd Class Mainstream Teacher
Ms. Campbell	Female	7 years	Not Musical	Co-Educational	Career Break
Ms. Murphy	Female	4 years	Not Musical	Co-Educational	5th Class Mainstream Teacher
Ms. Doherty	Female	2 years	Musical	Co-Educational	2nd Class Mainstream Teacher
Ms. McMahon	Female	7 years	Musical	Co-Educational Gaelscoil ¹¹	Senior Infant Mainstream Teacher
Ms. O'Brien	Female	10+ years	Not Musical	Co-Educational	5th/6th Class Multigrade Mainstream Teacher
Mr. Flynn	Male	4 years	Not Musical	Boys National School	3rd Class Mainstream Teacher
Ms. Smyth	Female	5 years	Not Musical	Co-Educational	Career Break
Ms. O'Connor	Female	5 years	Not Musical	Girls National School DEIS	Special Education Teacher
Ms. Farrell	Female	Newly Qualified	Musical	Co-Educational	3rd/4th Class Multigrade Mainstream Teacher

As seen in Table 5 above, Ms. O'Toole had been working in her school for over 10 years and had been appointed Assistant Principal for SET and music, providing the teacher with a passion for combining inclusive education and music. Ms. O'Toole also identified her role in

¹⁰ All names are pseudonyms, assigned to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

¹¹ A school where teaching is provided through the medium of the Irish language.

the school, working with classes during special events such as the sacraments ¹²and Christmas carol services. Another teacher who had just qualified at the time of the interview, exuded an enthusiasm, particularly for music education and alluded to her excitement to be out in the 'teaching world'. Based on the answers the participants provided, it appeared that their experience working as a qualified teacher did not impact the children's access to music education. Here it can be seen that Ms. O'Toole who had over ten years of experience and Ms. Farrell, who had only qualified as a teacher three months prior to the interview, were both exceptionally passionate about providing music education to all of their children and therefore the length of experience of the teacher did not appear to improve or hinder access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

- **The Ability to Enable Quality Interpersonal Relationships**

As expected, the number of years the teacher had been qualified had an impact on the level of experience they had working with a child who is deaf/HoH. Ms. O'Toole, who had over 10 years of experience working as a qualified teacher, mentioned working with children who are deaf/HoH on more than five different occasions throughout her career. Similarly Ms. O'Brien discussed her four years of experience working with a child who is deaf/HoH over the course of her career. This data can be seen in Table 6 below.

¹² A Catholic religious ceremony such as the ceremony of Confirmation.

Table 6: Years of Experience Working with a Learner who is Deaf/HoH

Name	Years of Experience	Number of Deaf Students Teacher Has Worked With
Ms. Campbell	2 years	2
Ms. Doherty	< 1 year	1
Ms. Farrell	< 1 year	1
Mr. Flynn	< 1 year	1
Ms. Healy	< 1 year	1
Ms. McMahon	1 year	2
Ms. Murphy	< 1 year	1
Ms. O' Toole	> 5 years	4
Ms. O'Brien	4 years	1
Ms. O'Connor	3 years	2
Ms. Smyth	< 1 year	1

One teacher, Ms. O'Brien taught a child who is deaf/HoH over two extended time periods, working with them in junior and senior infants and then again in 5th and 6th class. This level of familiarity and understanding of the child can be seen as an enabler of inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH. The knowledge and understanding of the teacher towards the children's challenges in gaining access to music education provides an example of the teacher understanding the environmental and personal needs and challenges of the child who is deaf/HoH.

- **The Ability to Create Inclusive Environments**

During the interview, Ms. O'Brien described the benefits that teaching the child more than once (in this case, for two 2-year periods) had for both herself and the child in building a close relationship. Examples of this relationship can be seen in sensitivity to individual needs when Ms. O'Brien discusses the child feeling comfortable to confide in the teacher when the lesson got too noisy and the child needed a break:

Ms. O'Brien: *"If there's noise going on in the classroom, she will need to be taken out...So she does come to me when she needs that."*

Similarly she described the importance of building a relationship in order to provide security and comfort in the children's learning environment, allowing them to openly ask for instructions to be repeated if they have been missed or misunderstood:

Ms. O'Brien: *"And I think, even just building up a relationship with those kids as well, that if they are unsure about something or they didn't quite catch it, you know, that they're okay to say, could you play that for me again."*

This knowledge of the child described by Ms. O'Brien indicated a safe environment had been created for the child, with the teacher acknowledging that the child can become overwhelmed and therefore sensory breaks are provided. This ensured that the child could be included in musical activities to the fullest of their capabilities, acting as an enabler towards the child's access to music education.

Likewise, Ms. Doherty expressed an understanding of her pupil when identifying that the child responds best during music lessons when she can see the teacher; *"she responds better when she can see me"*. This suggests a knowledge of the learner and the capacity to adjust the teaching context to the child's environmental challenges. Each of these teachers appear to express a sensitivity and understanding of the environmental difficulties that their child who is deaf/HoH faces. The teachers' constant monitoring of these challenges is part of their efforts to create an inclusive experience of music education for their pupils.

- **How Often Music is Being Taught**

All of the teachers with the exception of those in Special Education roles and on career break are currently teaching music to their class on a regular basis. As these interviews were conducted between October and December many schools were preparing for Christmas plays and carol services and therefore many teachers mentioned an increase in musical activities and lessons at this time:

Ms. Healy: *“we have been [doing music] it’s on our timetable, and just about two to three times a week. And now that we’re coming up to Christmas shows and kind of carol services, it’s kind of picked up.”*

Mr. Flynn: *“A little bit, yeah. So we’re on the back of the carol service now and that was four weeks straight every day, teaching music so.”*

Two of the teachers interviewed also discussed the use of external music teachers or other teachers within the school as a way to ensure music is being taught and to assist them in their teaching of music:

Ms. O’Brien: *“So I teach the curriculum. But we would have another teacher who does choir...And if there’s any instruments [being taught] during the year we might get teachers in for that as well.”*

Ms. Farrell: *“We actually have an external teacher who’s coming into our class, and she’s been teaching ukulele since the start of the school year...So the children have been learning ukulele since September.”*

It was seen that music was often being integrated into other aspects of the school environment. For example, Ms. O’Toole discussed using music as a means of engagement during Seachtain na Gaeilge¹³, while Ms. Farrell indicated that her class use music to create songs related to mathematical concepts in order to make lessons more interesting and fun:

Ms. O’Toole: *“we’ve done things for Seachtain na Gaeilge ehm we’ve taken songs and done them as Gaeilge¹⁴ [in Irish] as well, ehm and that whole thing of translating”*

Ms. Farrell: *“At the start of the year we were making songs. What was the song we made? It was about money. So we were making a money song.”*

¹³ Directly translated to ‘a week of Irish’: A time used to focus on, practice and celebrate the Irish language and Irish culture across schools in Ireland.

¹⁴ The Irish language.

Although how often music is being taught in each school varied from teacher to teacher, it was a common trend across all teachers interviewed, that musical activities were being integrated into other aspects of the school environment. The examples provided make it evident that the teachers rarely referred to music as a methodology or as a subject to be taught as part of the primary school curriculum but rather as an activity to be enjoyed by all children. This can be viewed as an enabler towards access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH, as they ensured that their pupils were provided with the opportunity to participate alongside their peers in these musical activities.

- **Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher**

Although not asked directly during the interviews, most teachers alluded to their musical experience, describing themselves as either musical or not musical. This is documented in Table 5 above. Ms. O'Toole, Ms. McMahon, Ms. Doherty and Ms. Farrell all described themselves as finding enjoyment in musical experiences, which echoes DeNora's (2000) concept of music as a construct of the embodied self. These teachers also indicated feeling confident in their ability to teach music to their class, whilst the seven remaining teachers felt that their abilities lay in other curricular areas such as P.E. or visual arts education. There appeared to be a connotation from many participants that music is related to 'giftedness', something prefigured, rather than something that one can learn and although the musical ability of the participants was not questioned throughout the interviews, it was often referred to informally as seen below:

Ms. Murphy: *"I wouldn't say I'm like very musically gifted myself so I couldn't really bring in the instrument to play away [laughs]."*

Ms. McMahon: *"Well I come from a musical background...I think it just brings so much joy."*

Ms. Smyth: *“Yeah. And sometimes I feel bad like, should I be doing extra or more? Ehm but I don't know. Music isn't my strongest point when it comes to teaching [laughs].”*

Ms. O'Connor: *“I like to say music isn't my strong point, so it's probably one of the subjects that gets left a little bit behind by me. I'm more of an arty person.”*

Teachers who appeared more confident in their teaching of music or who described themselves as musical often spoke about music as more than just a school subject, with reference to music as a hobby. One teacher alluded to the fact that he does not particularly enjoy teaching music through his description of the preparation that took place ahead of the school's Christmas carol service. Through his comment, we can assume that he is conceptualising music as performance based, rather than pedagogically oriented:

Mr. Flynn: *definitely giving them a bit of a break, now...And I'm happy to give them that break.”*

Mr. Flynn indicated a sense of relief to have finished the music practice, raising an eyebrow and relaxing into his chair; however, although this teacher felt apprehensive about teaching music to his class and describes how he feels he should be teaching it more, stating, *“I always kick myself for not teaching it more. Because kids should be singing”*, he indicated his enjoyment in watching the carol service and feels his pupil who is deaf/HoH, experience benefit from participating in these events.

One teacher in particular appeared passionate about including music in the education of young children and seemed to understand that children's access to music education relied on the confidence they felt in participating in musical activities, which often depended on the child's personal skillset. This teacher also identified the willingness of the educators to provide music education to their children as a factor which impacts a child's access to music education. This teacher discussed her own experience in her school, describing the enthusiasm displayed by her principal towards introducing ISL to the school and how willing

her staff were to get on board with musical events, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and normalising of music in the school environment. This mirrors Ainscow's (2020) view on involving stakeholders in the education of children with SEN. Ainscow (2020) discusses the importance of collaboration between stakeholders in order to improve the teaching and learning in schools. This concept of collaborative practice in music education was researched by Barrett and Zhukov (2024) and results suggested that music education becomes more accessible when schools engage in collaborative practice through teacher mentoring, fostering both an inclusive teaching and learning environment.

Although a number of other teachers would not describe themselves as musical, discussion during the interviews indicated that they were still able to appreciate the importance of incorporating music in their pupil's education. Although not explicitly stated, both Ms. Healy and Ms. McMahon indicated that music plays a significant role in the sociocultural worlds of young people and should be included as part of the education of children who are deaf/HoH. This echoes DeNora's (2000) concept of music shaping the social self:

Ms. Healy: "I think you know just kind of the technology driven world we're in, you know there's music being played constantly in videos and just kind of any sort of kind of music around."

Ms. McMahon: "There is music on, you know, and all the TV shows that they're watching, all the jingles, all the theme tunes, you know, Christmas carols."

The views of these teachers align with that of Ainscow (2020) in which schools that are characterised as inclusive display a respect for difference but also towards providing equal opportunities for learning to all children. This opinion is suggested across all of the interviews, from both teachers who view themselves as musical and those who do not.

One particular aspect that had an impact on the musical confidence of the teacher was the use of the online music programme DabbleDoo¹⁵. Across many of the interviews, teachers

¹⁵ <https://dabbledoo.com/>

discussed this programme as an asset in their classroom and identified ways in which this enhanced children's teaching and learning. Ms. McMahon discussed the fact that her school did not use the programme at the time she taught a child who is deaf/HoH and acknowledged that the programme would have been helpful in providing alternative methods of teaching and identified the possibility of connecting the microphone to the online programme, which would have enhanced the teaching provided to this child in particular. Many of teachers who did not describe themselves as musical spoke highly of DabbleDoo, identifying its positive impact on their teaching of music to all of their children:

Ms. O'Toole: "we did introduce the DabbleDoo programme a few years ago, and we found that brilliant."

Ms. O'Brien: "then we use visuals as well...So that comes onto the board...we use DabbleDoo Music...We use that."

Ms. O'Connor: "you know DabbleDoo?...And things like that where they're really interactive games."

As expected the musical experiences and confidences of each teacher varied greatly. Many teachers who appeared more apprehensive about teaching music, described creative ways of including musical activities in their day-to-day teaching, such as using online programmes and videos. It is clear that the confidence of the teacher in delivering music lessons to their children acts as an enabler towards inclusive music education. However, for teachers who felt more apprehensive or less confident in teaching music, it was observed that their creativity in sourcing alternative methods for delivering music lessons, including online programmes, also acted as an enabler for inclusive music education and can be observed as enhancing access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

- **Technology Available and Used to Teach Learners who are Deaf/HoH**

As expected, all of the teachers interviewed used technology in their classrooms in some form. For many teachers, the use of technology seemed to act as an enabler towards their

pupil's access to music education. When asked about the use of the microphone system when teaching a child who is deaf/HoH, Ms. O'Brien noted that for her pupil the system was a benefit, *"Definitely, yeah, definitely helps her."* Here the teacher describes how it improves the child's focus and concentration. Similarly Mr. Flynn notes that it was a benefit to his pupil, describing the portable element of the device as an additional asset to the child as it can be used by any teacher around the school:

Mr. Flynn: *"So this can go around the school with him. So when he goes up to learning support, the learning support teacher takes that...On the yard, the SNA [Special Needs Assistant] takes it."*

Ms. O'Connor, who appeared to have done ample research on the microphone system, described multiple uses for the device, outlining its use in group settings and the benefits she found in using the handheld microphone:

Ms. O'Connor: *"Then there's actually loads of cool things you can do with it...you can put it down on the table and change to small group so everyone in the group can hear, and then you also have the handheld microphone."*

In the instance of this child, it is apparent that the microphone system boasts a number of roles. This is clear from Ms. O'Connor's description of the child's reaction to an external music teacher using this microphone during a music lesson:

Ms. O'Connor: *"she doesn't want just anybody wearing that...it's like "don't give it to her, don't give it to her!"*

Pedagogically, the device appears vital for the child's learning, however materially, although merely an electronic device, it signifies a mode of learning and engagement that goes beyond the device itself. It can be viewed through three lenses, an extension of the child's sense of self, a tool to extend the student's learning possibilities and a bridge to development.

From the initial conversation around the use of technology in the classroom, it can be seen as solely an enabler towards access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH; however, as the teachers became more comfortable discussing challenges they faced in their classroom, it became apparent that the use of technological devices in the classroom often posed challenges that created barriers for their children who are deaf/HoH. These barriers will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.3.3 Barriers

RQ #4: Teachers' views Towards the Barriers of Access to Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships**

As discussed above, the knowledge and understanding of the teacher towards the challenges faced by the child in gaining access to music education is extremely important for the effectiveness of inclusive music education. Many of the teachers interviewed identified their understanding of the personal challenges of their pupil who is deaf/HoH and how they act as a barrier towards their access to music education.

- **Appreciation of the Personal Challenges of Learners**

An example of the teacher understanding the personal challenges experienced by the child who is deaf/HoH can be seen in Ms. O'Connor's interview in which she describes having taught the same child who is deaf/HoH on three separate occasions. Ms. O'Connor portrays a positive relationship with her students, acknowledging that the students need to feel comfortable with the teachers or stakeholders they are working with. The quote below is an example of the student feeling apprehensive towards allowing an external music teacher to use the microphone. It is apparent that the teacher and student share a close relationship, with the teacher understanding the student's apprehension and the importance of providing instruction and explanation to the child:

Ms. O'Connor: *"Because, you know, you would have to try and ask the person to wear the system as well so she could hear. But then, like it also all comes down to relationship and bond like, she doesn't want just anybody wearing that...So like generally, if I did ever get her in [external music teacher], it was those times where I could sit with her, and I could explain...You know, it all comes back to like not wanting to make a fool of herself and not, you know, being embarrassed."*

Once again, this key insight acknowledges the strong teacher-student relationality, with the teacher understanding the needs of the child who is deaf/HoH (DEY, 2023) and acknowledges the significance of the role of the microphone as more than an electronic device.

Many teachers described the benefits gained by the students when a positive relationship was formed between themselves and the student, with students feeling comfortable to ask the teacher to repeat instructions or ask a question *"It is really important that you kind of almost gain their trust, you know, or that they feel comfortable to ask you a question, and that you create that atmosphere in the classroom as well"* (Ms. O'Toole). Ms. Healy recognised her student's need for reassurance, mentioning:

Ms. Healy: *"He can get quite panicked, so I think that also links in with why he kind of comes up out of his chair. I feel like he thinks he's missed something sometimes, ehm, but then informally as well sometimes he just wants reassurance."*

Although the other teachers interviewed did not directly discuss their relationship with their pupil who is deaf/HoH, it was apparent that their understanding of the child was key to providing effective teaching. Ms. Healy made note of the fact that her student can become panicked if an instruction is missed and will often look for reassurance. Similarly to Ms. O'Brien's student, Ms. Healy has noted the lack of inhibition expressed by her student in coming up to her desk and asking her to repeat instructions. Another example of positive relationship building can be seen in Ms. Campbell's discussion around connecting the microphone to the student's speaker each day, covering her mouth and saying sounds which

the student would have to repeat in order to ensure the system was working correctly. The teacher noted with laughter that the student would often nod her head, pretending the system was connected and the teacher would have to repeat the sounds again, until she was certain the system was running smoothly. Again, this teacher noted her student's ability to inform her when sounds were too loud or too quiet:

Ms. Campbell: *"she was very good at telling me, even like if I was speaking to someone else, if it was like too loud or something."*

Another insight was provided by Ms. McMahon in which she described the advice given to her by the Visiting Teacher for the deaf/HoH (VT). The VT identified a blockage of ear wax in the student's hearing aid and described the issues that this may cause the child if not cleaned out. The VT was able to show the teacher how to do this and Ms. McMahon described the benefits this had for the child and alluded to this quick encounter each day further developing the relationship between the teacher and the student:

Ms. McMahon: *"It was two minutes...we'd a quick chat in the morning...quick clean them out [hearing aids] and then off he went...You know, it was nothing really to me...but to him it was massive."*

Each of the teachers mentioned above appear to have an understanding of the personal challenges regularly faced by their pupils who are deaf/HoH which may lead to exclusion from musical activities. Their relationship with the child has allowed them to develop an understanding of these challenges and ensure that their access to inclusive music education is not effected.

Comments made towards the importance of gaining insights into the students and understanding their needs indicates that a strong and positive relationship will provide access to music education for pupils who are deaf/HoH. This echoes the underpinning rationale behind the Primary Curriculum Framework (DEY, 2023), in which an emphasis is placed on the importance of partnerships for effective teaching and learning. This

relationship builds trust, which in turn can generate a willingness to participate. This was observed in the instance of Ms. O'Connor's example above, where the student was apprehensive to participate when the external music teacher began teaching the lesson and the student refused for the teacher to wear the microphone system. Ms. O'Connor displayed an understanding towards the student's needs and linked the apprehension from the student to the lack of relationship. These examples describe the formation of a solid relationship between the student and the teacher as a central element to the effectiveness of access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. The quality of the interpersonal relationship between the children who are deaf/HoH and the teacher appears to have a clear impact on their access to music education, in each case, the more familiar both teacher and student were with one another, the more effective their teaching appeared to be.

- **Technology Available and Used to Teach Children who are Deaf/HoH**

As discussed above, the teachers interviewed utilised a range of microphone systems to assist their teaching of their pupils who are deaf/HoH, particularly the Roger System¹⁶ (Phonak, 2013). For some students this connected directly to their hearing aids or cochlear implant, while for others it amplified the noise in the room. Although the use of technology in the classroom can be seen as an asset to children who are deaf/HoH, a number of challenges were identified which created a barrier towards the students' access to music education. For example, two teachers acknowledged the need to continuously check the battery levels in the system to ensure that it was working correctly:

Ms. Campbell: *"And I used to have to like change the batteries in that sometimes."*

Ms. McMahon: *"we would frequently, ehm you know have to change the batteries and things like that."*

A concept discussed multiple times throughout the interviews was that the strategies and resources put in place for children who are deaf/HoH are often of benefit to the hearing

¹⁶ <https://www.phonak.com/en-int/hearing-devices/microphones>

students in the classroom as well, which echoes Aincscow (2020) concept of the normalisation of differentiated practices to include all students. In this instance a number of teachers alluded to the fact that the microphone system used to assist children who are deaf/HoH was seen to improve the concentration of many of their hearing students:

Ms. Murphy: *“that differentiation is helping them too...It's not specifically for them, but there's benefit for them to it.”*

Across each of the interviews, many teachers discussed their use of technology in the form of the interactive whiteboard, using this resource to display images, write instructions and play videos. The use of these strategies, which will be discussed in further detail at a later stage, seemed to provide effective engagement and delivery of the music lessons. Ms. Murphy also detailed a barrier towards access to music education for her children who are deaf/HoH when the school experienced internet difficulties:

Ms. Murphy: *“I suppose if I was teaching music, and I'm just trying to think of like, if the whiteboard was gone...and there was no Internet and I didn't have access to the online resources...Yeah that would definitely throw a spanner into the works a little bit. I suppose then I'd have to, yeah, I suppose I'd have to change the way I was presenting it.”*

It was apparent from the outset of each interview that all of the teachers relied heavily on the use of technology in their classrooms, from the use of the microphone system to ensure their children who are deaf/HoH could hear them speak, to the use of the interactive whiteboard to include visual elements in their lessons to engage all of their learners. It was observed that using technology in the classroom provided both enablers and barriers towards access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH. It can be seen that devices such as the microphone system and the interactive whiteboard provided additional support for the teachers and children who are deaf/HoH; however, at times it caused challenges when the teacher faced issues with internet connectivity or when the microphone device had not been charged. Therefore, it would appear that the visual dimension of learning, which will be

discussed later in this chapter as a multi-modal strategy for teaching music, plays a crucial part in compensating for reduced hearing. Although not articulated by the teachers, it is clear that their approaches align with aspects of the UDL framework (NCSE, 2025), however using their own intuition and understanding of their student as guidance.

- **Range of Service Providers/Stakeholders Involved in the Teaching of Children who are Deaf/HoH**

When asked about the involvement of service providers or stakeholders in the teaching of children who are deaf/HoH, it became apparent that this was an essential factor of their effective access to music education. A number of teachers mentioned their experience with the VT, some acknowledging it as a positive and beneficial interaction, while others found their encounter quite rushed and some only had a vague recollection of meeting the VT. Ms. O'Toole mentioned how beneficial the VT had been to the school, providing tips and advice, similarly to Ms. Campbell who noted two visits she had received during the year that she taught a child who is deaf/HoH. Another teacher, Ms. O'Brien, mentioned a long history of communication with the VT, discussing many visits they had made to the school in previous years.

In comparison, Ms. Murphy had experienced a very brief visit from the VT, appearing disappointed to have missed the opportunity to ask specific questions tailored to that student:

Ms. Murphy: *"I felt a bit frazzled. I didn't feel that I had sufficient time to, like, formulate questions to ask her."*

Ms. Murphy did note however that the general advice provided by the VT was helpful and she expressed an understanding that if given ample time to prepare, a meeting with the VT could be of great benefit. Ms. McMahon mentioned that although she had not had direct interaction with the VT, she had received guidance from both of her pupils' hearing specialists. She expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to sit in on a meeting with her

students' team and parents and described this experience as having provided her with specific understanding of both students' level of hearing loss and particular areas of struggle in terms of phonetic awareness in literacy:

Ms. McMahon: *"then she talked me through the results, so exactly where the children were and obviously both of them, were completely different."*

Mr. Flynn described his encounter with the VT as 'good' and mentioned that they had been helpful in identifying particular technical issues, for example that the student's microphone and speaker was not working properly. The teacher noted that the VT had discussed returning to the school with a new microphone system and the teacher was hopeful that this would happen in the coming months. However, the VT did not seem to provide any guidance towards music education for children who are deaf/HoH and when asked specifically about this Ms. O'Brien noted that the advice provided by the VT was always directed towards general education:

Ms. O'Brien: *"It was generic. Ehm she did come in and see the room, and made sure that the environment...was suitable, where she was sitting, and she checked the, the microphone system and everything...Ehm so yeah, so it was, it was kind of more general."*

Although many of the teachers described their encounter with the VT as positive, it can be seen that working with the VT did not have a direct impact on access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH as the advice and guidance provided by the VT was described as general and appeared to focus on organisational aspects of teaching such as seating arrangements and the use of technology, rather than practical or pedagogical strategies.

The experience of working with the parents and previous teachers emerged as a significant finding when participants were asked about their collaboration with stakeholders in the teaching of music to children who are deaf/HoH. Identifying practical strategies for the parents at home was mentioned a number of times, with teachers feeling that it was

important to collaborate with parents. Ms. Murphy discussed the atmosphere of collaboration in her school and how she had gained support from teachers who had previously taught the child who is deaf/HoH in her class, particularly through their sharing of strategies and resources that had previously been effective. Similarly, Ms. McMahon and Ms. Smyth mentioned the importance of building strong relationships with parents in the community, emphasising the disjunction between home and school in terms of availability of resources, and implementation of effective strategies that can improve the student's experience in the classroom:

Ms. McMahon: *"they go home, and they probably don't have microphones...and speakers you know. So we have the luxury in here that we do have the technology that we can use to support their learning. But they're doing a good bit of learning at home too."*

Ms. Smyth: *"see what the parents have to say about what their experiences are in the past, and what works well for them in terms of getting the most out of their music lessons, and all of the lessons."*

Although collaborating with parents and staff members was not described as having a direct impact on access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH, it can be observed that this collaboration between stakeholders provided the teacher with a deepened understanding of their students' needs.

A number of the teachers interviewed discussed the importance of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) in teaching children who are deaf/HoH. Ms. Campbell noted the SNA's role in ensuring that the child was focused, and on task, while also highlighting the difficulties faced because the SNA had a strong accent that the child often found difficult to understand. Although this created a barrier for the student, Ms. Campbell also suggested that this provided the student with a constructive challenge in terms of concentration. Another teacher, Ms. McMahon and Ms. Smyth also noted the benefits her student had gained from the addition of an SNA in the classroom, similarly improving concentration and following

instruction; however, in other schools where the educational needs in the classroom were significantly higher, the SNA was seen to be supporting multiple children and the support was not specifically for the children who are deaf/HoH:

Ms. Doherty: *“that SNA would be looking after different children.”*

Ms. Farrell: *“So our SNA is constantly working with a couple of students in the class, including the child who's deaf.”*

For some teachers, the multitude of needs within the classroom and school environment meant that the children who are deaf/HoH often did not have access to the support of an SNA during musical activities. The support of the SNA described above enhances the concentration of children who are deaf/HoH and provides repetition of instructions. The lack of this support which appears to be caused the high volume of additional needs within classrooms across Ireland (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023) can be viewed as a barrier towards access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH and will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

- **Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum**

Many teachers alluded to the lack of resources and guidance available to teachers to provide inclusive music education to children who are deaf/HoH in mainstream primary schools:

Ms. Campbell: *“I think there is a huge lack of resources, even like when I was learning, when I was studying to be a teacher like we didn't do a huge amount at all on children with hearing impairments.”*

Some teachers discussed the lack of time allocated to this topic during their initial teacher education and indicated that any resources or methods they have developed, have been explored through their own research outside of school hours:

Ms. Campbell: *“So it's more down to the teachers themselves ehm differentiating it for students and making it accessible to them.”*

Ms. Murphy: *“I felt that, like anything, any kind of differentiation I'm doing is all my own self-taught.”*

Ms. O'Brien: *“I would have had to do a lot of research myself as well.”*

The teachers who did their own research online indicated that there are some useful resources which can be used during musical activities in the classroom; however, these often require time and experimentation, with some teachers indicating that time is limited and often this process is not feasible. It is evident that this created a barrier for these teachers in facilitating their children who are deaf/HoH to access musical activities:

Ms. Murphy: *“But you know I have so much going on, on a day to day basis...I cannot be sitting down looking at the guidelines of every single curriculum.”*

For Ms. Doherty, a teacher working in a Gaelscoil, the lack of resources and guidance was further amplified. For this teacher, finding resources as *Gaeilge* was already highlighted as a difficulty and finding resources to support a deaf/HoH student in the teaching of music was even more difficult:

Ms. Doherty: *“I know it's different for me, because I work in a Gaelscoil so I find it difficult to get resources in Irish, anyway.”*

All of the teachers interviewed discussed the lack of guidance provided by the music curriculum guidelines which acted as a barrier towards access to musical activities for children who are deaf/HoH. A number of teachers indicated the need for a clear and concise list of guidelines that might support a teacher in providing effective music education to children who are deaf/HoH:

Ms. Doherty: *“I think there's definitely room for more help and for more guidelines.”*

Ms. O'Brien: *“I'd say if there is a new music curriculum coming, it is an area that could be...further developed.”*

It is clear that each of the teachers interviewed felt strongly about the difficulties they faced in gaining sufficient and appropriate resources to assist in their teaching of musical activities to children who are deaf/HoH. It is apparent that for teachers working in a Gaelscoil, this barrier is even more profound as the teacher failed to find any support within the curriculum or supporting documents to assist them in providing music education to their children who are deaf/HoH.

4.4 Domain #2: Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities

The second area for consideration which was developed as part of the analytical framework was participation in music education of learners who are deaf/HoH. Through this consideration, the researcher sought to discover how these students are learning through music and the following themes emerged as part of the interview schedule: (i). Differentiated Strategies to Teach Music to children who are Deaf/HoH; (ii). Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher; (iii). Challenges in Teaching Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH; (vi). Guidance or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum. Below the findings will be discussed in detail, firstly outlining the enablers towards the participation in music education of children who are deaf/HoH and following this, identifying any barriers that were discussed, that limited the students participation in musical activities.

4.4.1 RQ #2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities

When asked about their perceptions of the experience of children who are deaf/HoH in relation to participation in music education, many of the teachers noted that differentiation was not necessary for their children who are deaf/HoH during music lessons:

Mr. Flynn: *"I haven't really had to, no."*

However, as the interview progressed, many of the teachers began discussing methods they use to include children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities and the teachers appeared to be informally differentiating. For Mr. Flynn, it became apparent that he incorporated small

changes within his musical activities to ensure that his child who is deaf/HoH was participating. In the example provided below, the teacher accommodates the student sitting at the front of the group, allowing the student to spend time observing the musical instruments as these were described as an interest of the child. The teacher had not acknowledged his own clear efforts to differentiate in order to ensure this student was participating in the Christmas carol service, an important aspect of the whole school ethos:

Mr. Flynn: *“Ehm so for the Carol service he, he barely sang. He sat up the front and he was just looking at the instruments the whole time and he loved it.”*

Another perception that teachers had about the students' participation in music education was that a lot of the differentiation they put in place also benefited their hearing students. For example, a number of teachers described the benefits that using visual aids in their teaching of music to children who are deaf/HoH, had for all pupils in the class. It appeared that these visual aids, that were provided in the form of videos on the whiteboard or displaying song lyrics around the room, provided an extra layer of comfort and seemed to improve overall focus for all of the students in the classroom:

Ms. Murphy: *“You know if I'm like song singing, I'll have everything up on the board...Like, I'll have either a printout in front of the kids...or there'll be something up on the board...for them to look at. It's not just completely focused on the audio....Because a lot of my kids, you know, are visual learners as well...So I find that it helps.”*

Ms. Doherty: *“Eh I would try and use visual aids as much as I can, even just for other children as well.”*

Considering the teachers' perceptions of the childrens' participation in music education, it is apparent that many teachers are clearly differentiating and are unaware of the impact this has on their learners who are deaf/HoH participation in musical. It was obvious that although some teachers did not directly describe their differentiation efforts, the natural or informal

differentiation is having a direct positive impact on their pupil's participation. For teachers who acknowledged the differentiation they implemented in their classrooms, they indicated that these strategies had a positive effect on their hearing pupils' participation in musical activities, as well.

4.4.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers views Towards the Enablers of Participation in Music

Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Differentiated Strategies to Teach Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH**

Each teacher, when questioned about differentiated teaching of music for children who are deaf/HoH, indicated that their pupils who are deaf/HoH were taught in the same setting as their hearing peers, *"we learned it all together"* (Ms. O'Brien). This acknowledges a significant movement of educators towards inclusive educational environments. An important aspect of Ainscow's (2020) paper on inclusive education practices is the understanding that schools should aim to reform their teaching methodologies to embrace differences and viewing diversity *"not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning"* (Ainscow, 2020, p.12). This is supported by the UDL guidelines, suggesting three principles through which education should be provided; 1. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement, 2. Provide Multiple Means of Representation, 3. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (NCSE, 2025). Across many of the interviews conducted, teachers identified multiple means of differentiation or modifications which were being put in place for their children who are deaf/HoH and these were in fact of benefit to their hearing students. For example, one teacher discussed her use of the microphone and amplifying system, amusingly personifying the system, providing a sense of comfortability with its use:

Ms. Murphy: *"So all day, every day we have the microphone ...his name is Roger. We call him Roger."*

Ms. Murphy noted that using the microphone system was of benefit to all of the students in her class, as well as her child who is deaf/HoH, indicating that a simple adaptation of teaching style can not only ensure that her child who is deaf/HoH can be educated in a setting with their hearing peers, but this adaptation was also an asset for the rest of her students:

Ms. Murphy: *“Like that microphone!...I don't know what I'm gonna do without it...It's a godsend...It honestly is amazing...For him, for all of them...And for my classroom management as well.”*

Similarly for Ms. Doherty, it was acknowledged that her hearing pupils benefited from the use of visual aids that had been implemented for her child who is deaf/HoH:

Ms. Doherty: *“I would try and use visual aids as much as I can, even just for other children as well...I find it helps other children, and not just that one child.”*

A common factor across some of the interviews was the teacher's sense of informal differentiation. Many teachers indicated that a lot of their teaching strategies did not require adaptations in terms of music education:

Ms. O'Toole: *“We didn't alter it to teach the non-hearing or the deaf pupils. We actually just taught them all the same way, and they all had no problem learning the same way.”*

Ms. Doherty: *“there's not a whole lot of things that I have to do particularly differently.”*

Mr. Flynn: *“I haven't really had to, no. I suppose I wanted to play by ear at the start and see how we get on with it.”*

However, it became apparent as the interview progressed that these teachers were actually differentiating and often did not realise:

Ms. O'Toole: *"we would use a good bit of like prep work with videos before we go into any sort of composing or anything like that, you know the pitch of the note, or like that they can, you know obviously, it's a bit more challenging."*

Ms. Doherty: *"Even outside of music lessons she's better when she can see me...So I will always make sure that she can see me, no matter what we are doing."*

Mr. Flynn: *"He just comes up to the top and he does get a good bit out of it then...Ehm for things like song singing I suppose we adapt our aims... for the class it might be to sing the chorus in a day. Whereas for him it might be to get one of the lines"*.

This adaptation of resources and methodologies can be seen across the teaching styles of each teacher taking part in this project and once again derives from the relationship and understanding the teacher had towards their student and the student's needs.

- **Adaptations and Modifications**

The following are some of the modifications and adaptations made to accommodate these students in music lessons in terms of organisation, teaching methodologies and resources, which benefited the participation of learners who are deaf/HoHs in music education.

- **Seating Plan**

Many teachers acknowledged the importance of seating arrangements in the classroom as a factor that impacted the student's concentration and participation across all lessons, but particularly in music lessons. Ms. Healy had observed that her student benefited from being seated at *"the front of the room and kind of at an angle so that he [the pupil] can see when people are coming behind him"*. She mentioned that she had tried positioning her student towards the back of the room but this caused anxiety for the student when somebody arrived into the classroom without being able to see them. This further supports the notion that building trust and understanding of the students is a key factor in providing them with a safe environment in the first instance, as a core dimension of effective teaching. Another teacher

mentioned the advice they had received from the VT. It was noted that the student would benefit from sitting in a position where they could see the teacher, *“even though she can hear, she does still rely on looking at my lips as well”* (Ms. Campbell). Both Ms. Murphy and Ms. Doherty described their use of flexible seating, allowing space for the child to face the teacher when necessary but also turn to engage in group work during learning activities:

Ms. Murphy: *“I try to have him situated so that he's facing [the teacher]...but also, he can turn if he needs to speak to somebody else.”*

Ms. McMahon mentioned that when using the microphone system, the seating arrangement was not as much of a consideration; however, during music lessons she had observed that effective participation from the students occurred when they were seated closer to her. She described bringing the children to the front of the room and allowing them to observe her *“facial expressions”*, her *“mouth”* and her *“movements”*. Similarly, Mr. Flynn noticed that his student benefited from moving to the front of the room for music lessons. Ms. O'Connor noted the importance of seating her child who is deaf/HoH away from the window, identifying the distraction this can cause due to outside noise pollution such as traffic and birds:

Ms. O'Connor: *“You wouldn't think of it as much, but it's usually because of the noise outside the window.”*

Another interesting consideration was provided by Ms. Smyth, who noted that the seating plan was not a significant factor of her lesson. She mentioned altering her students' seating arrangement every month and appeared to want her student to have a similar experience to that of her peers. She described seating her student in different positions around the room and adjusting the volume on the speaker to accommodate this change. She also described the need for movement during music lessons as an essential factor and ensures her student has the opportunity to participate in these activities:

Ms. Smyth: *“Ehm but then, when it comes to music, I'd often just have them up in the front, anyway, or moving around or in different groups. Ehm so I would just keep that*

in mind. But it wasn't like a main factor to my lesson...It was just something in the back of my head."

The insights provided by the teachers indicated that the seating arrangement impacted the participation of the learners who are deaf/HoH in music education, with many teachers finding that seating the student in a position where they could see the teacher, engage with peers and participate in movement which is often associated with musical activities, benefitted their participation in music education.

- **Adapting Learning Outcomes**

Of the eleven interviews, only three participants mentioned the differentiation of learning outcomes as having an impact towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. These teachers acknowledged the need to alter their targets for that student to ensure that they could participate alongside their peers. Mr. Flynn noted the importance of ensuring that the child is enjoying the lesson above all else:

Mr. Flynn: *"I suppose it's just about adapting what you're expecting from that child and if you're seeing them having fun, then that's the main thing, really."*

Similarly Ms. O'Connor and Ms. Farrell both mentioned considering the learning outcomes put in place for the child who is deaf/HoH, with both teachers acknowledging the possibility of needing to alter the lesson as they go:

Ms. O'Connor: *"maybe they might need to do it for half the time, or they might need to do it for, you know a smaller amount of the time, because there's just too much."*

Ms. Farrell: *"You could really repeat the whole day, but there might be a blink of an eye that could be so different. And it's coming around that again and seeing what to do next time."*

It appears that some teachers find benefit from formally adapting the learning outcomes of music lessons for their children who are deaf/HoH, while other teachers find that adapting these outcomes is unnecessary, and does not benefit their participation in musical activities

as they appear to engage similarly to their hearing peers. . This suggests that inclusion of deaf/HoH in practice is malleable, that is afforded by a range of teaching strategies, technologies and sensitivities, that are adapted to the person in the particular place, and at a particular point in time, according to the professional judgement of the teacher.

- **Multisensory Approaches**

A number of the teachers interviewed mentioned the importance of utilising multisensory approaches in order to enhance the participation of their children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. For many teachers this came in the form of the online music programme, DabbleDoo, which was previously discussed. Of the eleven teachers interviewed, eight discussed their use of the online programme, with many teachers considering it to be an asset to their teaching. As discussed previously, this resource was described as adding confidence to the teachers' teaching of musical activities in some cases, while others felt it was utilised most efficiently when aspects of the programme were used in conjunction with their own teaching styles:

Ms. Murphy: *"So I kind of pick and choose what I want to do from there"*.

Similarly, the teachers discussed the use of the interactive whiteboard as a means of including visual aids in their teaching of music, particularly for displaying lyrics and videos which often engaged not only children who are deaf/HoH, but many of their hearing students too. A number of teachers described their use of videos from platforms such as ©Youtube, which often brought more engagement to the lesson as this was of particular interest to many of the pupils. Including this visual approach, alongside the use of audio, is a clear implementation of the UDL framework, providing multiple means of representation, which as mentioned previously is one of the three key principles of the UDL framework, aiming to support and enhance inclusive education for students with SEN, ensuring that more than one teaching strategy is utilised within a lesson (NCSE, 2025).

The use of non-verbal cues such as hand movements or gestures was mentioned by Ms. Healy, as she describes using ‘thumbs up’ or ‘thumbs down’ as a means of further engaging her child who is deaf/HoH. For Ms. McMahon, the importance of the student’s ability to see her facial expressions, mouth and movements was highlighted. One interesting approach was discussed by Ms. Farrell, in her use of an online platform called Music Lab. This website allowed the children to design a picture, upload it to the website that then generate sounds. This provided multiple means of action and expression as part of the UDL framework (NCSE, 2025), including a sound element, a visual representation and a tactile experience, for her student:

Ms. Farrell: *“the kids will come up and they’ll just draw a picture. So at the moment it would be like a Christmas picture. They’ll come up and draw pictures, on the board, and then you click play sound, and it goes through the direction in which you drew the picture, making all the different sounds.”*

Ms. Campbell noted her use of physical movement as a strategy to teach music to her child who is deaf/HoH, acknowledging the fact that her junior infant students needed the physical expelling of energy as a way to connect with the music. Mr. Flynn noted that, for his student, physical movement to music came naturally as a response:

Mr. Flynn: *“So the hands would start shaking. That’s when you know he’s really excited”*.

This incorporation of movement into musical activities ensures that the UDL framework (NCSE, 2025) is being implemented. Similarly in Ms. O’Connor’s classroom, movement through music is being included through the form of dance. She states that her student is *“mainly more the dancer of the group.”* This student in particular had an opposition to engaging in music lessons, but seemed to feel more comfortable working with her friends, responding to music through movement. Ms. Farrell mentioned the development of a musical garden in their school, describing how often her child who is deaf/HoH would use this space during break time:

Ms. Farrell: *“and every single day you, you would see this particular child going across, making the music, making so much noise [laughs]. But even if it doesn't sound like traditional music, its sound and combinations of sound that make music so.”*

Ms. O'Toole detailed the schools inclusion of ISL as a means of including children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities but also as a differentiated form of music education to all of the students in the school. She described the student's performance of a classic Christmas song during a school Christmas carol service, where the students sang and signed in a call and response format, describing the emotions experienced in seeing students who would typically be *“on the outside, actually being front and centre of stage”*, (Ms. O'Toole). It was evident throughout the interviews that providing multiple means of action and expression have clear benefits towards the participation of children who are Deaf/HoH in music education.

- **Peer Collaboration**

Many of the teachers noticed an improvement in the participation of their children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities through peer collaboration. There appeared to be a higher level of pupil engagement when this strategy was used. Some teachers highlighted the ability of the students to rely on one another for instructions, often feeling more comfortable asking their peers to repeat the information rather than asking the teacher again. Ms. Smyth mentioned the opportunity for her student to copy her peers during performances when they were placed in groups, while Ms. Farrell acknowledged the higher chance of students following instructions when working in small groups:

Ms. Farrell: *“Some students might not hear it, but you know that one in six, someone in that group of six will hear it...will be able to explain it to the rest.”*

However, Ms. O'Brien discussed the downside that can often arise with group work. She described the high noise volume that comes with peer collaboration as a barrier for her child

who is deaf/HoH. This teacher noted that her student will often need a break from the classroom when the noise levels become too high and this can lead to her missing opportunities for participating in musical activities. Here it can be seen that depending on the child and the classroom environment, group work can also act as a barrier towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education.

For many teachers, the importance of incorporating group work into their music lessons was prompted by the need to create less pressurised learning spaces for their students, *“Performing in groups gives them that bit of confidence because they can you know, depend on their friends around them.”* (Ms. McMahon). Ms. Doherty described the improvement this methodology provides for the students in her class, particularly her child who is deaf/HoH. In order to facilitate group work, a number of teachers discussed utilising the microphone system as a means to support this practice. Both Ms. Campbell and Ms. O’Connor described placing the system in the middle of the table and setting it to group mode. This provided additional support to the child who is deaf/HoH, facilitating group work as a method of teaching.

These differentiated strategies for teaching music to children who are deaf/HoH can be seen as creative and multi-sensory in application. It is clear from the information highlighted above, that many of the teachers felt that their own research and knowledge played a significant role in the effective implementation of musical activities for children who are deaf/HoH. It is apparent from the analysis of the data gathered that differentiation such as seating arrangements and multisensory activities can act as an enabler towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education.

- **Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher**

The musical experiences and confidence of the teacher had a direct link to how the children who are deaf/HoH participated in music education. It can be observed that for teachers who feel confident in teaching music in their classroom, many engaging methodologies are being utilised which can be linked back to the UDL framework, in which providing multiple means

of engagement is seen as an essential aspect to inclusive education (NCSE, 2025) and can be observed as an enabler towards participation in music education for children who are deaf/HoH:

Ms. McMahon: *“Like I love music, and I have my own guitar and I usually whip it out and we’ve access to like musical instruments here in school as well”.*

However for teachers who view themselves as “not musical”, many engaging resources and methodologies are also being included in their music lessons, as many of these teachers found alternative ways to provide their students with effective music education:

Ms. Murphy: *“But, like, you know, there’s ways around that you can find videos of people performing.”*

This once again, links directly to the UDL framework. through which multiple means of representation can facilitate effective inclusive education (NCSE, 2025) and this was observed throughout the interviews conducted during this project. It can be seen that whether the teacher possesses a confidence in teaching music or they exhibit a lack of confidence with the subject, the methodologies they implement, act as an enabler towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities.

4.4.3 Barriers

RQ #4: Teachers’ views Towards Barriers of Participation in Music

Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Challenges in Teaching Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH**

Throughout the interviews, a number of significant challenges were identified towards the teaching of music to children who are deaf/HoH. It became apparent that each child who is deaf/HoH is different and will experience unique levels of confidence, motivation and enjoyment towards music education. Ms. O’ Toole mentioned that she had observed a wariness from some of her children who are deaf/HoH to participate in musical activities,

often appearing reluctant to begin. Similarly for Ms. Healy, a reluctance to participate had been observed and she also noted how the pupil who is deaf/HoH allowed other students to take the lead. However, both teachers acknowledged that after some time and with appropriate strategies in place, these students began to participate and appeared to enjoy engaging in musical activities. As seen in the discussion above regarding differentiation of musical activities, these teachers were required to utilise aspects of the UDL including providing the students with multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expression (NCSE, 2025) and it is clear that this was achieved by many of the teachers interviewed:

Ms. O'Toole: *"once they feel confident and they feel supported, they'll throw themselves in."*

This challenge appeared to reside in the student's level of confidence towards music and also the self-consciousness they expressed towards their deafness. Ms. Campbell noticed a lack of confidence in one of her pupils who is deaf/HoH, describing the self-consciousness brought about by the presence of a speech impairment in her junior infant student. Interestingly for this teacher, she compared this experience to a previous experience with another child who is deaf/HoH, in which one student exudes more confidence than the other and seemed to participate more freely in musical activities. This self-consciousness appeared more prevalent in music lessons than other subjects according to Ms. Campbell:

Ms. Campbell: *"But she was, I think, a bit more self-conscious which, in comparison to other subject areas she wouldn't have experienced as much."*

Ms. Healy and Ms. McMahon also noticed that their students would often sit on the outskirts of the group, appearing quiet and not contributing during singing lessons, which they observed as a lack of confidence. Ms. McMahon however, had the experience of teaching two children who are deaf/HoH in the one class and noticed a difference in their level of confidence when it came to performing:

Ms. McMahon: *“So one of the children, he [was] again, full of confidence and he threw himself into it. The other child didn't necessarily participate you know, in the group performances, or, you know, in front of other classes or parents or things like that”.*

Ms. O'Connor had a similar experience to Ms. McMahon, having engaged with two children who are deaf/HoH in her school. Highlighting that no two students will be the same, she noted a difference in the students' enthusiasm to participate in musical activities and acknowledged the difficulty of getting the student involved when they express a dislike towards music:

Ms. O'Connor: *“I know she loved music, and she would just take part in everything, you know, just with a little bit of extra help...whereas my child had a serious hatred for music and everything surrounding music, be it singing or music games. Ehm she just didn't want to take part in it.”*

For Mr. Flynn, he had observed his student's love for music and described it as a passion for him, which is a stark contrast to the experience that Ms. O'Connor had with her student. It can clearly be seen that each student is different and providing opportunities for students to become engaged and enthusiastic about musical activities can be seen as a significant challenge.

Another notable challenge was keeping the students engaged throughout musical activities.

Ms. Healy noted that her child who is deaf/HoH would often become distracted if there is a lot of activity in the classroom and this can be difficult for her to monitor. Similarly, Ms.

McMahon described concentration as a challenge for one of her learners, acknowledging the difficulties he experienced in following instructions. Interestingly for Ms. Doherty, she noticed that her pupil who is deaf/HoH can become distracted if she cannot see the teacher. Ms.

Doherty did note, however, that this student will often move herself if she is finding it difficult to see the teacher, perhaps a sign of maturity as this student was in second class, in comparison to Ms. McMahon's student, who was in senior infants at the time.

Another significant challenge that was identified by a number of teachers, was the difficulty in finding the correct balance of noise in the classroom. Ms. O'Connor acknowledged the frustration that her student often felt when the class became too busy, describing how the sounds become amplified for her:

Ms. O'Connor: *"this particular class was a very busy, loud class. So it's just all of that amplified. You can understand how it gets frustrating."*

Similarly, Ms. O'Brien found that her student would require sensory breaks following an extremely noisy lesson in the classroom. For Ms. McMahon, it was finding the correct balance of noise in the classroom that proved difficult:

Ms. McMahon: *"Like children in the class would hear, you know, put on music and like even just something as simple as volume levels...that you'd be trying not to have it too loud to disrupt all the classes...And then, you'd to be mindful of the two children in class that mightn't necessarily hear it."*

A difficulty faced by Ms. Smyth came in the form of communication difficulties. Her student who had a number of complex needs often found it difficult to communicate with her teachers. Ms. Smyth identified understanding how the student is perceiving the lesson as a challenge:

Ms. Smyth: *"So the little girl in my class had a lot of communication difficulties. So even if you would try and ask like how she was getting on, or what she was gaining from the lesson, it would be very hard for her to communicate that to us."*

Mr. Flynn also described communication as a challenge towards effective teaching of his child who is deaf/HoH; however, he acknowledged that because music was a passion for his student, he would often use musical activities as a means of expression, with the student being observed humming a tune and often being drawn to music playing in other classrooms:

Mr. Flynn: *"even just doing this interview makes me think, maybe it is something he uses as a way of communication with us...So perhaps it is sort of a medium through which they can communicate better."*

It is apparent that there are a number of challenges associated with the teaching of musical activities to children who are deaf/HoH. Although these barriers can be overcome in many instances, it is the role of the teacher to experiment with ways to combat these challenges and provide effective and attainable musical activities for children who are deaf/HoH.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that these teachers were utilising aspects of the UDL framework (NCSE, 2025) which in turn often led to an increase in the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities.

- **Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum**

Another barrier towards the participation of learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities that was implied throughout the interviews, was the time-consuming task of developing effective musical activities that would include children who are deaf/HoH in music education. For many of the teachers who struggled with teaching music, they alluded to the time and effort that was required to research and implement alternative methods for teaching music to their children who are deaf/HoH. Many of the teachers interviewed described the lack of support and guidance they associated with the music curriculum and implied that this acted as a barrier to the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education:

Ms. Campbell: *"I do think that there's not like a lot of supports for teachers at all. It's very much down to like your own research ehm your own techniques, that it's a lot of trial and error with what works and what doesn't work."*

Ms. Murphy: *"Yeah, like I have had to go and find my own. To be honest with you, like I feel like the music curriculum leaves a lot to be desired."*

Ms. Doherty: *"I work in a Gaelscoil so I find it difficult to get resources in Irish, anyway...Ehm and yeah, I mean I have looked online and I haven't really found*

much to be honest. Ehm especially, I don't think I found anything in Irish. Ehm so, yeah, I would say there isn't."

Ms. McMahon: *"I didn't really find it that much in the curriculum to be honest."*

Ms. O'Brien: *"Ehm I have looked up, there is very brief ehm guidelines, but I would have had to do a lot of research myself as well."*

It is apparent from the evidence above that many of the teachers described a lack of guidance from the music curriculum towards including children who are deaf/HoH in music education and it can be seen that teachers appear frustrated with the time consuming task of researching inventive methods to effectively include their children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. This lack of guidance provided by the music curriculum acts as a significant barrier towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education and requires teachers to engage in consistent research to develop alternative methodologies and resources for their children who are deaf/HoH in order for them to participate in musical activities effectively.

4.5 Domain #3: Benefit from Music Education/Musical Activities

The final area for consideration which was developed as part of the analytical framework was the benefit of music education for children who are deaf/HoH. This provided scope for the researcher to consider how children who are deaf/HoH are benefiting from music education through the perspectives of the primary school teacher. The following themes, which will be discussed below, related to the benefit of music education for children who are deaf/HoH; (i). Children who are Deaf/HoHs' Experience of Musical Activities/Enjoyment of Musical Activities; (ii). The Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher.

4.5.1 RQ #2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to the Benefit from Music Education/Musical Activities

Although teachers were not directly asked about their perceptions of the benefits of music education for children who are deaf/HoH, a number of teachers voluntarily provided insights

on this subject. A number of teachers indicated that musical activities provided opportunities for the students to develop social skills. One teacher in particular identified the possibility for students to find commonalities to discuss with their peers in relation to mainstream music:

Ms. O'Toole: *"they're able to listen to music and say, "oh, that's Lady Gaga", or "that's someone". They then have a platform to talk to their peers, you know."*

This teacher acknowledged that developing an awareness of music and building on musical skills can provide students with the opportunity to build relationships and indicated that this can prevent isolation as they become older and more self-conscious. This was noted by many of the teachers who described group work as a factor of their music lessons and this appeared to have a significant impact on the benefit they received from the musical activities. A number of teachers noted that the students follow directions from their hearing peers, leaning on them during class performances and finding enjoyment in working with their friends:

Ms. Smyth: *"Again because they were in groups, it was easy for that child to kind of copy what their friends in their group were doing rather than them being on the spot, and being asked to do something on their own"*

Ms. Farrell: *"getting the children to perform in smaller groups ahead of schedule was really beneficial for them, because sometimes transitions like my translation could be lost in the classroom...And for the child who is deaf, it actually was giving her the opportunity to kind of ask the questions, practice it before being thrown on the spot."*

The perceptions of the teachers interviewed towards the benefit of music education for children who are deaf/HoH appear positive, with many teachers alluding to the benefit that the collaborative nature of musical activities has for these students. Similarly, teachers indicated that providing students with accessible musical activities allows them to build relationships, providing them with an understanding of the mainstream aspect of music and

creating an opening for children who are deaf/HoH to engage in conversation with hearing peers.

4.5.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers' views Towards the Enablers of the Benefit from Music

Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Children who are Deaf/HoHs's Experience/Enjoyment of Musical Activities**

In order to explore how children who are deaf/HoH were experiencing musical activities in the mainstream primary school classroom to identify the benefit it may have, their experience and level of enjoyment were explored through the perspective of the teacher. Ms. O'Toole described in detail her students' experience of performing song singing and ISL at their annual school concerts. The teacher discussed how each student, deaf/HoH and hearing, learned in the same environment, with hearing students learning sign language, and described the emotions experienced by the community in watching the performances. Ms. O'Toole's school used an external tutor to teach ISL to the students in the school and the teacher explained the sense of pride all of the students expressed when they began to see ISL being used in social media. An example of this was when the students first saw an ISL interpreter on the '*Late Late Toy Show*', in 2019. This show is a much-loved tradition amongst households across Ireland at Christmas time. Ms. O'Toole explained the 'buzz' around the school following the show, as the students discussed the fact that they had been using sign language way before the '*Late Late Toy Show*':

Ms. O'Toole: *"they started to see it on likes of the [Late, Late] Toy Show...And they were so buzzed about that because they were always like, we've been doing this for two years, you know...the toy shows catching up with us [laughs]."*

Ms. O'Toole further explained how this allowed the students in her school to see ISL as more than just a subject they learn in school and began to observe it being used as a form of communication. Ms. O'Toole described a sense of togetherness brought about by

incorporating ISL into their song singing in this school, providing an inclusive strategy for musical activities for the children who are deaf/HoH, providing them with a sense of belonging, all the while encouraging the hearing students to feel proud to have learned a new form of communication:

Ms. O'Toole: "I think that, like the hearing kids also feel proud of it, and it just becomes everybody's piece of work as opposed to we're doing this because we have pupils with a hearing aid."

It is apparent from engaging in discussion with Ms. O'Toole, that including ISL in their musical activities was seen as a positive by the students in their wider community. This led to teachers finding it easier to include this in their own classrooms and it appeared to become normalised within the school environment. This integration of ISL with musical activities was observed as a clear social benefit to children who are deaf/HoH and ensured that they felt included within their community.

One finding which arose during Mr. Flynn's interview was the idea that for his student music was used as a means of communication. This teacher described how the student would often struggle with communication difficulties, however when music was involved, the child appeared engaged and happy. Mr. Flynn provided a description of this student being drawn to different classrooms around the school where music was being played:

Mr. Flynn: "when he's walking down the corridor if he hears music in a classroom, he'll instantly respond and try to go into that classroom."

Similarly for Ms. Farrell's child who is deaf/HoH, music appeared to be a significant passion of theirs. This pupil was described as always humming a tune, both in the classroom and outside during break times:

Ms. Farrell: "And for this particular child, it's nearly like music is a solace for them, that they have that little comfort in music like they sing to themselves the whole time, they're dancing around and singing and humming, and even when they're working,

the child is humming to [themselves] the whole time to the point that, like other students are like, 'stop humming'."

It appeared that for this student, music provided a sense of collaboration and inclusion within their classroom, acting as a means for this particular child to be included with their peers. Similarly, Ms. O'Toole discussed the benefits she has found towards including her children who are deaf/HoH in music education, identifying how it can provide them with opportunities to talk to their peers about mainstream trends, such as popular artists:

Ms. O'Toole: "So I think if you can give them a platform where they can tap into something the same as their peers ehm you're doing something positive for them, because you're giving them an outlet to, you know, have connection and have stimulation, I suppose, and to have just interaction."

Ms. Campbell and Ms. O'Brien both also identified that children enjoy collaborating with their peers and describe musical activities as a setting in which this can occur for students:

Ms. Campbell: "children love any activities more when it's like collaborating with their friends."

Ms. O'Brien: "Yeah, I definitely think that they, for enjoyment wise, they will concentrate more if they're chatting with their friends and giving off ideas."

Ms. O'Connor discussed that although her student did not enjoy engaging in musical activities, she did not want her to miss out on opportunities to participate in these events with her peers. She provided advice that may be helpful to teachers to engage these students in musical activities through utilising the UDL framework and providing multiple means of engagement (NCSE, 2025):

Ms. O'Connor: "But I definitely think with those kids that aren't interested in it, you have to find those things that motivate them and maybe do the songs that they like, and just to get them into it. But then I think also don't force them."

These benefits for children who are deaf/HoH surrounding a sense of belonging and togetherness with their peers can be viewed as a significant finding of the inclusion of musical activities in their education. Similarly, the emotional and communicative aspects described by the teachers are of significance and were seen by the teachers to enhance the students' mood and the effectiveness of their learning in music education.

- **Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher**

The confidence of the teacher in teaching music was observed as a significant benefit to the inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH in music education. Although it might be assumed that the more experienced music teacher would provide more inclusive musical activities to their students, it was observed that teachers who viewed themselves as 'musical' and teachers who described themselves as "not musical" both implemented inclusive musical practices into their classrooms. For the 'musical teacher', seen in Table 5 above, inclusive musical activities were provided in the form of incorporating a musical instrument that they were proficient in playing in the classroom or utilising their singing voice:

Ms. McMahon: *"I have my own guitar and I usually whip it out."*

Ms. Farrell: *"And like I'd sing in the classroom the whole day all day, every day."*

For teachers who described themselves as "not musical", they appeared to provide multiple means of representation, including the use of visual elements in their lessons:

Ms. O'Toole: *"we did introduce the DabbleDoo programme... that has given confidence to the teachers, who maybe don't have a musical background or feel nervous around it, to go in and teach a music lesson effectively."*

Ms. O'Brien: *"because I myself, am not that musical...So I find DabbleDoo great...for explaining the concepts. And you know the demonstrations of the instruments."*

It can be observed that for teachers who felt confident and those who were apprehensive about teaching music in their classroom, the digital musical platform provided multiple alternative methods of music education for their students. For teachers who described

themselves as musical, their own talents and skills were utilised to provide multisensory approaches to music education, while teachers who described themselves as “not musical” engaged in research to find accessible online programmes and resources to include their children who are deaf/HoH in music education. This suggests that children who are deaf/HoH benefit from engaging with both teachers who are confident in teaching music and those who are not when participating in musical activities. Both teachers can be seen to provide creative and alternative methods of teaching music to their children who are deaf/HoH, generated through either prior knowledge or through research.

4.5.3 Barriers

RQ #3: Teachers’ views Towards the Barriers of the Benefit from Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Children who are Deaf/HoHs’s Experience/Enjoyment of Musical Activities**

Previously, the experience of children who are deaf/HoH towards musical activities was discussed as an enabler towards the benefit of music education; however, it was indicated by a number of teachers that their experience of musical activities may also act as a barrier towards the benefit musical activities may have. For Ms. O’Brien’s learner who is deaf/HoH, it was apparent that the student enjoyed participating in musical activities, particularly when this involved group work. However, the teacher indicated that at times the activities can become too noisy for the student and a sensory break is then required:

Ms. O’Brien: “like music lessons do generally include background [noise]...when they’re working in groups and stuff. So [they] would need a bit of a break to get the most out of it as well.”

It can be seen that although the student has a passion for music and enjoys engaging in music lessons, this noise can often become a barrier to their effective inclusion in these activities. Ms. O’Connor described a similar scenario for her student, in which the student finds it difficult to concentrate on tasks when the room becomes noisy:

Ms. O'Connor: *"Like even today they were watching a movie next door, and the child had to come into my room because...they can't even follow a movie, because there's all these other things happening around the room and then they're trying to get into the movie and they actually wouldn't even enjoy that".*

For this student, the negative experience associated with sound and noise appears to have led to a dislike towards musical activities, with Ms. O'Connor indicating that the student dislikes every aspect of music education when asked about it. The teacher associates this with the fear of embarrassment with the student not being able to hear how they sound:

Ms. O'Connor: *"But I think it all came back to that like not being able to understand and being afraid she was going to embarrass herself."*

From the findings discussed above, it appears that the experience of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities has an impact on the benefits they gain from its inclusion in their education. For students who had a negative experience with these activities, a fear of embarrassment may be associated and this can be seen as a barrier towards the benefits which may be gained from engaging in musical activities.

4.6 Conclusion

In order to clearly see the relationship between the themes generated from the literature view, the RQs and how these relate to the findings presented above, Table 1 has been reconstructed and is presented as Table 7 below:

Table 7: Relating The Findings to The Research Questions

Themes Emerging from Literature	Research Question	Findings from Research													
Importance of Music: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of personal/emotional and social skills and cultural participation and development. 	RQ #1: What are the opinions of Teachers, on the value of music in education of learners who are deaf/HoH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers viewed music as an aspect of everyday life, identifying the enjoyment it can bring. Some teachers discussed the links music provide to broader culture. Development of social skills, opportunity to improve listening skills/follow directions Teachers discussed the importance of each child gaining equal access to the curriculum. Discussed the benefits music has on the social and emotional development of the learner. 													
Inclusive Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires commitment. Three domains of inclusion: access, participation and benefit. Learning together with hearing peers. Importance of building relationships. 	RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access - indicated that children who are deaf/HoH were accessing musical activities in a similar way to their peers Participation – teachers indicated they didn't need to differentiate activities; however, it became apparent that they were doing so informally. Benefit – benefitted the children socially and emotionally. 													
Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was good / dispensable about music education in previous practice. Including both music education and musical activities will provide a broader scope for teachers to discuss. Universal Design for Learning – multiple strategies for learning. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear lack of guidance from music curriculum. Teachers discussed music as both a curricular subject and also as an extra-curricular. Clear that teachers are providing multiple strategies for learning, both formally and informally. 													
Teaching of Deaf/HoH Historically and Contemporary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oralism / manualism Enjoyment of music or music as an auditory trainer. Music considered solely an auditory experience. Embodied experience in which people can participate in unique ways 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The therapeutic element of music education, which was practised historically, was not seen as an opportunity for individualised instruction for the development of skills such as oral language. It appears teachers are designing lessons for children without SEN and finding ways to include children with SEN. No individualised objectives for learners who are deaf/HoH. 													
Teaching Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the limit or enable practice? Research suggests the implementation of multi-modal approaches e.g., visual. 	RQ #3: What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context? RQ #4: What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?	Three domains: Access, Participation, Benefits <table border="1" data-bbox="839 1350 1576 1933"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="839 1350 1225 1384">Access Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1225 1350 1576 1384">Access Barriers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="839 1384 1225 1563"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers experience in the school Interpersonal relationships Inclusive environments How often music is taught Technology </td> <td data-bbox="1225 1384 1576 1630"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of interpersonal relationship Appreciation of challenges of learner Technology available Range of stakeholders Guidance from music curriculum </td> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="839 1563 1225 1597">Participation Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1225 1630 1576 1664">Participation Barriers</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="839 1597 1225 1731"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated strategies Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher </td> <td data-bbox="1225 1664 1576 1776"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in teaching music Guidance from music curriculum </td> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="839 1731 1225 1765">Benefit Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1225 1798 1576 1832">Benefit Barriers</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="839 1765 1225 1933"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher </td> <td data-bbox="1225 1832 1576 1933"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Access Enablers	Access Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers experience in the school Interpersonal relationships Inclusive environments How often music is taught Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of interpersonal relationship Appreciation of challenges of learner Technology available Range of stakeholders Guidance from music curriculum 	Participation Enablers	Participation Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated strategies Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in teaching music Guidance from music curriculum 	Benefit Enablers	Benefit Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH
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This chapter offered an analysis on the key findings derived from semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven primary school teachers across Ireland to answer the posed research questions. Firstly, teachers' perceptions of the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH were analysed. Following this, the experiences of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities through the perspective of the teacher were analysed using Aincow's (2020) framework. These experiences were explored through three domains - access, participation and benefit. This was explored in conjunction with teachers' perspectives of the enablers and barriers towards the inclusivity of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities, through each domain.

The students' access to music education was determined by the development of a relationship between the teacher and the student. This was also impacted by the level of experience the teacher had with children who are deaf/HoH and also their confidence in teaching music in their classroom. Similarly the technology available to the teachers in their classroom significantly impacted the level of access the students had to music education. For some teachers, technology was one of the most significant resources available to them in their classroom, while others found fault in the devices, requiring more planning and preparation in the instance the device may fail. Interestingly for the teacher, a particular barrier towards the students' access to music education was the lack of guidance provided by the music curriculum and the support directly available to the teacher. The students' participation in musical activities was impacted by differentiated strategies employed by the teacher and the challenges presented in each individual classroom. Finally the benefits from the inclusion of musical activities were identified as providing an alternative means of communication for children who are deaf/HoH and benefiting their emotional development. Similarly, the children who are deaf/HoHs benefited from engaging with teachers who were both confident and apprehensive in teaching music as this provided them with a variety of methodologies which ensured that they had access to effective inclusive music education.

The following chapter aims to discuss the findings of the analysis conducted in greater detail, discussing the implications for future research and addressing RQ #5 - *What can we learn from these insights about how to better include children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?* Each domain - access, participation and benefit, will be discussed systematically, identifying the insights gained about the teachers' perspectives towards the enablers and barriers of music education for learners who are deaf/HoH.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research project set out to explore the barriers towards and the enablers of, inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH through the experiences and perspectives of the teacher. Chapter Four presented the findings of the data. This chapter further discusses the literature surrounding inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, along with the findings presented in Chapter Four, to generate a discussion surrounding teacher's opinions of the value of music education/musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH, teacher's perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities and what these experiences tell us about the enablers and barriers of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. This discussion is presented below.

5.2 RQ #1: Teachers' Opinions of the Value of Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

When asked about the value of including music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, many teachers indicated that music should be included in their school experience due to the significant role music plays in society. This perception was observed across teachers who viewed themselves as musical and those who viewed themselves as "not musical" (See Table 5). The sociological perspective of music aligns with existing literature in which music is positioned as an everyday art form which shapes people's lives (DeNora, 2000). This attitude appeared to be paralleled by the participants who identified the prominent feature music plays in everyday life through social media apps such as @TikTok, with a number of teachers emphasising the relationships which may be formed between peers, using music as a foundation.

It was discussed that musical activities benefitted the social and emotional development of children who are deaf/HoH, particularly during extracurricular activities, such as Christmas

shows and carol services, with teachers indicating that their children who are deaf/HoH participated alongside their hearing peers. Although not the dominant use of music, it is noted in literature as far back as the 1800s that educators used music for the purpose of enjoyment for children who are deaf/HoH. This was documented in St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, with the authors describing their school shows as a means for children who were deaf/HoH to participate in experiences previously limited to their hearing peers (Broderick & Duggan, 1996; Darrow & Heller, 1985). A similar experience was referred to in Ms. O'Toole's description of her school's Christmas carol service in which all students in the school signed and sang to the song '*Do You Hear What I Hear*'. This methodological approach for inclusive music education allowed the children who are deaf/HoH to feel included. Similarly, Ms. O'Toole identified a feeling of pride felt by all pupils within the school when witnessing ISL being used in mainstream media, such as the '*Late Late Toy Show*'. The importance of cultural representations of inclusivity were discussed by ISL interpreter, Coogan, who identified the impact that the introduction of an ISL interpreter on the '*Late Late Toy Show*' would have on families who are deaf/HoH across Ireland (Mangaoang, 2024).

Although it is evident that teachers viewed music education as a means of enhancing the social development of learners who are deaf/HoH, supporting the view of music researcher DeNora (2000), it also became clear that teachers did not view music as a methodology for developing cross curricular objectives, for example in language development or literacy skills. This contrasts both historical and modern literature which indicated that music was used as a tool to enhance the development of speech (Broderick & Duggan, 1996) and has benefits for cognitive development in areas such as speech prosody perception and auditory cognition (Good et al ., 2017; Torppa et al., 2014b). This shows that the way teachers view the music curriculum and teaching learners who are deaf/HoH affects how they approach their teaching of music and acts as a barrier to these students benefiting fully from musical activities.

5.3 Domain #1: Access to Music Education/Musical Activities

This section discusses the teachers' perceptions of the enablers and barriers pertaining to access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH in mainstream primary school classrooms, outlining what these experiences and perceptions reveal about access to music education for these students'. This section draws on themes in relation to access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH and identifies these as either enablers or barriers, and in some cases as both: (i). Teachers' Experience in the School; (ii). The Ability to Enable Quality Interpersonal Relationships; (iii). The Ability to Create Inclusive Environments; (iii). How Often Music is Being Taught; (iv). Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher; (v). Technology Available and Used to Teach Learners who are Deaf/HoH; (vi). The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships; (vii). Appreciation of the Personal Challenges of the Learner; (viii). Range of Service Providers/Stakeholders Involved in the Teaching of Children who are Deaf/HoH and (ix). Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum.

5.3.1 RQ #2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to Access to Music Education/Musical Activities

Teachers' perceptions of access to music education for their learners who are deaf/HoH indicated that children who are deaf/HoH were accessing musical activities in a similar way to their hearing peers. Many of the teachers interviewed discussed the concept of equitable access to education indicating that children who are deaf/HoH should have the opportunity to access the same level of education as their hearing peers. This perception aligns with the recommendations proposed in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The Statement suggests that children with SEN should be integrated into mainstream classrooms, with sufficient support in place to provide them with the equitable access to education. However it should be noted that although these teachers implied that their children who are deaf/HoH were being included in musical activities in a similar setting to their hearing peers, at a later stage, when teachers were asked about the support and resources provided by the music curriculum and stakeholders involved in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, the

insights provided by these teachers indicated a different perception. The significant lack of resources described within the current music curriculum and the lack of SNA allocation within schools have a direct impact on the effective implementation of inclusive education for children with SEN and is an issue that will be discussed later in this chapter (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023).

5.3.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers' views Towards the Enablers of Access to Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Teachers Experience in the School**

Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews, it was considered that the teachers' experiences in the school or their level of experience working with a child who is deaf/HoH would impact their ability to provide these students with access to music education.

However, it became apparent through discussions with each teacher that their level of experience had little to no effect on access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. The examples provided in the previous chapter illustrate the case of a teacher with over ten years of experience and a newly qualified teacher, with both teachers appearing enthusiastic about introducing inclusive practices for their children who are deaf/HoH to ensure equitable access to music education.

- **The Ability to Enable Quality Interpersonal Relationships**

In discussing the teachers' experiences of the enablers towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, the ability to enable quality interpersonal relationships was a significant finding. Although in many cases the idea of building strong relationships with the student was not explicitly stated by the teachers, it became apparent throughout the interviews that all of the participants had formed strong connections with their children who are deaf/HoH and expressed an understanding of their needs and abilities. This concept is an underpinning principle of the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) in which Partnership

is emphasised as a significant factor in providing effective inclusive education for all children, particularly children with SEN. Although not explicitly stated, it can be seen that teachers' experiences indicate that strong interpersonal relationships enable access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH.

- **The Ability to Create Inclusive Environments**

Some of the teachers interviewed discussed the importance of creating inclusive environments within their classrooms, further understanding the needs of their students. A number of the teachers indicated that their students felt safe and comfortable asking for sensory breaks or for instructions to be repeated more than once. This feeling of security, which was fulfilled once again by the relationship built between the students and the teachers, had a significant impact on access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, with the teachers describing that the children could engage in lessons and take a break when needed. One of the aims of the EPSEN Act (2004) is the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms. It is noted that this can only be achieved if appropriate provisions are put in place by stakeholders involved in the education of these children. It can be seen that the children who are deaf/HoH being taught by the participants of this research study were being included in their classrooms, with teachers ensuring that sensory breaks were provided for the children. Creating this inclusive environment acted as a clear enabler towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH.

- **How Often Music is Being Taught**

All of the teachers, with the exception of those in Special Education roles and on career break are currently teaching music to their class on a regular basis. As mentioned previously, these interviews were conducted during the first term of the academic year, with a number of interviews taking place during the Christmas period. This allowed scope for participants to discuss seasonal extra-curricular events such as Christmas carol services. Many participants discussed the playful and multisensory strategies used to include their children who are deaf/HoH in these activities, which was a key principle of the Music

Curriculum (Gol, 1999) and now through expansive research and further guidelines on inclusive education (Ainscow, 2020; DEY, 2025), a concept which underpins the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2024), emphasising music as both a school subject and artform for all students to study and enjoy. In discussing these extracurricular activities, it became apparent that the teachers viewed music as an activity to be enjoyed by children who are deaf/HoH. This perspective considers music as a feature of everyday life, which impacts social experience (DeNora, 2000), as opposed to a school subject to be taught. This concept of music as a social process also supports contemporary research which suggests that music is more than an audio centric experience and can be enjoyed by people who are deaf/HoH (DeNora, 2000; Galloway Gallego, 2018; Good et al., 2014; Hatch, 2021; Kim, 2015; Mangaoang, 2024; Sutela, 2024; Silvestri et al., 2018). The attitudes surrounding inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH, expressed by the participants, appear to revolve around the importance of music as a social process, with students who are deaf/HoH developing relationships with their peers and engaging in cultural traditions, i.e., Christmas carol services in primary school.

- **Technology Used to Teach Deaf/HoH Children**

There is ample research to suggest that visual approaches to musical experiences can provide better access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH (Galloway Gallego, 2018; Hatch, 2021; Mangaoang, 2024) and the use of technology is crucial in this regard. Many of the teachers interviewed identified technology as a significant enabler towards inclusive access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH, drawing specific attention to the use of the interactive whiteboard to provide lyrics to songs and to incorporate videos into their lessons. Similarly the use of a radio aid was a significant enabler towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, with all of the participants discussing their experience with the use of this form of technology and the benefits it creates for children who are deaf/HoH.

5.3.3 Barriers

RQ #4: Teachers' views Towards the Barriers of Access to Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **The Quality of Interpersonal Relationships**

While interpersonal relationships act as an enabler towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, as outlined above, it is also important to consider how a child who is deaf/HoH may be affected when working with an unfamiliar teacher or an external provider. This was discussed by one of the teachers who had described the importance of gaining their students' trust and building solid relationships at the beginning of the year. An anecdote was provided, describing the distress faced by a child who is deaf/HoH when the external music teacher needed to use the microphone which amplified the sound registered through the student's cochlear implant, during the lesson. The student appeared frustrated and refused to participate in the lesson. It was clear that the lack of trust between the child and the external teacher created a barrier towards the student's access to music education. This provides an insight into the importance of interpersonal relationship between the pupil and teacher in order to enhance the student's access to music education.

- **Appreciation of the Personal Challenges of Learners**

This concept of building interpersonal relationships with children who are deaf/HoH was further explored through discussion around the need for the teacher to understand the challenges faced by children who are deaf/HoH as learners. Once again, the concept of relationship building with the pupil was discussed as a possible enabler towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. A number of participants mentioned the importance of pre-empting possible measures which may need to be taken, in order to ensure that these children are effectively accessing music education, i.e., charging the microphone prior to the child arriving to school. Similarly, a number of participants acknowledged the barrier that can be created towards their access to music education when effective understanding of the child's personal challenges is not developed. The ability to build these relationships is an essential aspect of the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023),

in which knowledge of the student is documented as essential to ensure effective educational experiences are provided. The lack of such prior knowledge of the student can create a barrier towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH. An example of this was discussed by a teacher during the interviews in which an external teacher was employed to teach music who did not possess a prior knowledge of the student's needs and therefore, a barrier towards inclusive music education was created.

- **Technology Available and used to Teach Children who are Deaf/HoH**

As already discussed, it is apparent that access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH can be enhanced through the use of technology such as the interactive whiteboard or the use of a radio aid, which provides a multisensory methodology (Sutela, 2024). However, it was acknowledged by a number of participants that this technology can also present a barrier towards their access to inclusive music education, as the technology provided is not always reliable.

- **Range of Service Providers/Stakeholders Involved in the Teaching of Children who are Deaf/HoH**

One effective strategy towards inclusive education for children who are deaf/HoH discussed by many of the participants was the significant role played by service providers and stakeholders involved in their education. For the purpose of this discussion, key stakeholders included the teacher, SNA, SET and parents of the children who are deaf/HoH, while service providers included, Speech and Language Therapists and the VT. Although it may be considered that the involvement and support of these stakeholders and service providers would act as an enabler towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH, discussions with the research participants revealed that oftentimes stakeholders, such as SNAs, are not being utilised efficiently due to the large number of students presenting with additional needs in Irish primary schools in comparison to the number of SNAs employed in these schools. Similarly, participants acknowledged that they are facing difficulty in securing appointments and resources from service providers, such as the VT.

Notable comments were made by multiple teachers when discussing the service providers used by children who are deaf/HoH, indicating that they provided invaluable guidance to both the teachers and students. However, it is clear that the resources are limited and time with these providers is often restricted or difficult to obtain. Similar results were obtained from the INTO review (2023) of the effective implementation of the EPSEN Act in primary schools across Ireland. Here, teachers indicated that the lack of resources and funding provided to schools created significant barriers towards the effective inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream primary school classrooms. Results gathered from the teachers participating in this study indicated that the VT, who provides invaluable guidance on the inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH, often visited the schools unannounced, leaving the teachers unprepared to ask questions directly related to their children who are deaf/HoH and for many of the teachers interviewed, they were yet to receive a visit from the VT at the time the interview was conducted. In terms of SNA access, many of the participants noted that the children who are deaf/HoH were entitled to access to an SNA within the school. However, with many additional needs present in these primary schools, as indicated by the research participants, it was noted that this SNA access was not always directly available to the children who are deaf/HoH and was usually only available during core subject teaching time. The significant barrier created by the lack of appropriate resources was also documented in research conducted by Day & Prunty (2015) in which results signified that the lack of appropriate provision of essential resources was impacting the effectiveness of the guidelines provided in the EPSEN Act and that many students with SEN were yet to be successfully included in mainstream education.

- **Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum**

Teachers described a lack of support provided by the Music Curriculum (GoI, 1999) across many of the interviews conducted. Although it is important to note that many advances in policy towards inclusive education, such as the EPSEN Act (2004), followed the Music Curriculum, the key point remains that there are no centralised resources for teaching music

to children who are deaf/HoH. In many cases this caused a significant barrier towards access to music education for children who are deaf/HoH in mainstream classrooms, with teachers indicating the necessity for specific guidelines related to the inclusion of these children in music education. It was highlighted that the responsibility of engaging in research and the challenge of devising unique, inclusive practices for music lessons was left to the teachers, outside of teaching time. Many teachers identified this lack of guidance within the Music Curriculum (GoI, 1999) as a barrier towards access to music education for learners who are deaf/HoH.

It is hoped that with the publication of the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023), new guidelines may be introduced in response to the needs of Irish primary school teachers in relation to the teaching of students with SEN, particularly children who are deaf/HoH. The Draft Arts Education Specification (NCCA, 2024) published by the Department of Education and Youth, provides a rationale for the introduction of the new curriculum framework, claiming that arts education provides opportunity for students to express themselves creatively, and states that arts education is for all children. A key aspect to this new Draft Arts Education Specification (NCCA, 2024) is the idea that all children have unique strengths which should be nurtured throughout their schooling. One support strategy the document recommends is the introduction of Additional Support Pathways (ASP) for children with SEN. This allows teachers to pre-empt and address challenges that children with SEN may face when tackling each learning outcome in the curriculum. Although this does not directly apply to children who are deaf/HoH, it may act as an initial enabler towards inclusive music education for these students, which may be further developed with time.

5.4 Domain #2: Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities

This section pertains to teachers' perceptions and experiences towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education. This section will discuss the second area for consideration which was developed as part of the analytical framework i.e., the participation of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education. The following themes emerged as part of

the interview schedule: (i). Differentiated Strategies to Teach Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH; (ii). Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher; (iii). Challenges in Teaching Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH; (vi). Guidance or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum. Below the research findings are discussed in detail, firstly outlining the enablers towards the students' participation in music education and following this, identifying any barriers that were discussed that limited the children's participation in musical activities. Through discussing the insights gained from the primary school teachers, RQ #3 and RQ #4, will be answered, i.e., understanding what these experiences reveal about the enablers, resources and supports available for inclusive music education in the Irish mainstream primary school context and the barriers or challenges that inhibit inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH.

5.4.1 RQ #2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities

When asked about their perception of the students' participation in music education, teachers indicated that their experiences were similar to that of their hearing peers and that little differentiation was needed to effectively include these students in their music lessons. However it became apparent that although these teachers did not view themselves to be differentiating, many strong differentiation strategies were being utilised, particularly multisensory methodologies such as the use of visual resources and the incorporation of ISL. Such practice supports contemporary research which suggests that society is moving away from the view that music can only be enjoyed aurally (Silvestri et al., 2018).

5.4.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers' views Towards the Enablers of Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Differentiated Strategies to Teach Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH**

A significant enabler towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities arose from the teachers ability to provide differentiated teaching strategies to teach these students. It was apparent throughout the interviews that the teachers had an understanding of the importance of utilising inclusive practices and teachers identified many methods of differentiation both formally and informally throughout the interviews. The teachers appeared to utilise the UDL, providing multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expression (NCSE, 2025). This ensured that the children who are deaf/HoH could participate in music lessons to the best of their capabilities. These differentiation strategies range from altering the seating arrangement in the classroom to allow effective visibility of the teacher, to employing multisensory approaches to allow these students to respond to music in alternative ways. These differentiated strategies for music instruction ensure that music can be accessed by children who are deaf/HoH, and that music can be experienced and enjoyed beyond the audio-centric element perceived by society (Silvestri et al., 2018; Sutela, 2024).

Another differentiated strategy employed by many of the teachers interviewed was the use of peer collaboration to effectively include children who are deaf/HoH in music education. Social isolation is viewed by many contemporary researchers as a significant barrier to the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in education (Burdett, 2012; Patel, 2021) and the idea of incorporating peer collaboration into the education of children who are deaf/HoH can therefore be viewed as an enabler towards their inclusion in music education.

- **Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher**

The musical experiences and confidence of the teacher acted as a clear enabler towards the participation of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education. Prior to engaging in the interviews, it was theorised that more confident teachers of music would provide more inclusive musical activities to their students. However, this was not the case in practice. For the teachers who were experienced in music teaching and had a passion for including music in their classrooms, the activities and lessons they provided often followed a multisensory

approach, which is a teaching strategy that provides more inclusive education (Di Bona 2018; Nussbaum, 2012). These teachers utilised instruments and included extracurricular musical activities in their classrooms. However, teachers who described themselves as “not musical” and who appeared less confident in their teaching of music, often engaged in in-depth research, acquiring more inclusive practices for their teaching of music, with a focus on integration across different subject areas, which is also a key element of the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023). Therefore, both experienced music teachers and teachers who may lack confidence in teaching music, all provide enabling strategies towards the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education.

5.4.3 Barriers

RQ #4: Teachers’ views Towards Barriers of Participation in Music Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Challenges in Teaching Music to Children who are Deaf/HoH**

There were a number of challenges identified by the research participants in relation to the teaching of music to students who are deaf/HoH. One particular challenge was the fact that every child who is deaf/HoH will experience music differently. For a number of the students, the teacher acknowledged their apprehension towards participating in musical activities for fear of embarrassment, while others appeared more confident and had a passion for performing. As outlined in the literature, engaging in musical activities has an impact on the level of self-confidence expressed by children who are deaf/HoH (Borowiec et al., 2019) and engaging in ensemble activities creates a sense of community and belonging (Croom, 2015) which further enhances their level of self-esteem. Therefore, although there were significant challenges recognised by many of the participants in relation to the participation of children who are deaf/HoH in music education, there is scope to eliminate these barriers when effective resources and opportunities are put in place for these students.

- **Guidance and/or Supports Provided by the Music Curriculum**

All of the teachers interviewed indicated that the current music curriculum (Department of Education and Science, 1999) does not provide guidance towards the inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH in music lessons and acts as a barrier towards the participation of these children in music education. A number of teachers highlighted the need for specific guidelines to assist the teacher in providing more effective strategies for inclusion in music education and a number of teachers discussed their hope for this with the publication of the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023).

5.5 Domain #3: Benefit from Music Education/Musical Activities

The final area for consideration was the teachers' perceptions and experiences of the benefit for children who are deaf/HoH from music education. The following themes, which are discussed below, relate to how children who are deaf/HoH benefit from music education; (i). Children who are Deaf/HoHs' Experience of Musical Activities/Enjoyment of Musical Activities; (ii). The Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher. Here, the teachers' perceptions about the benefits of music education for children who are deaf/HoH are answered, whilst also identifying the enablers and barriers experienced by the teachers in relation to children who are deaf/HoH obtaining benefits from engaging in music education.

5.5.1 RQ #2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Experience of Learners who are Deaf/HoH in Relation to the Benefit of Music Education/Musical Activities

Although teachers were not directly asked about their perceptions of the benefit of music education for children who are deaf/HoH, a number of teachers voluntarily provided insights on this subject matter. It was the teachers' perception that music can provide numerous benefits for both social and emotional development, which strongly supports contemporary research (NDCS, 2021; Schraer-Joiner & Chen, 2009). This was evident in their description of the progress made by their learners who are deaf/HoH in working with their peers through music lessons and through the enjoyment they appeared to express in many instances.

5.5.2 Enablers

RQ #3: Teachers' views Towards the Enablers of the Benefit from Music

Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **The Experience of Children who are Deaf/HoH in Musical Activities/Enjoyment of Musical Activities**

When asked about the benefits of including children who are deaf/HoH in music education, it became apparent that many of the participants had experienced significant developments, both socially and emotionally for their children who are deaf/HoH when they were provided with access and had the opportunity to engage in equitable music education. Many of the teachers discussed the social benefits provided to these students when engaging in extracurricular activities such as the Christmas show. Although one teacher described her students' dislike for music and performing, it was clear that when provided with the chance to perform alongside her friend, she appeared confident, happy and had the opportunity to collaborate with her hearing peers. There is a significant possibility for children who are deaf/HoH to experience social isolation (Patel, 2021) and it is therefore imperative that they receive the opportunity to participate in these extracurricular activities in a way that is accessible to them.

Similarly, another teacher discussed her deaf/HoH students' experience with musical activities when ISL was integrated into the teaching of music. Here, the children who are deaf/HoH felt included in the musical activity and experienced a sense of belonging within their school community, which is a known outcome for children who are deaf/HoH participating in ensemble groups (Croom, 2015). This experience, for these students in this particular school, was further expanded when ISL interpreters began to emerge on social media platforms, providing the students with a link to culturally traditional experiences such as the *'Late Late Toy Show'* on RTÉ. It is essential, therefore, that children who are deaf/HoH are exposed to musical experiences which provide them with opportunities to

collaborate with their hearing peers in order for them to receive the benefits provided by their inclusion in music education.

- **Musical Experiences and Confidence of the Teacher**

Similarly to the discussion generated above, it is evident that there are many benefits which can be gained from the musical experiences and confidence of the teacher in providing inclusive music education to children who are deaf/HoH. Both experienced and novice music educators described effective methods of including their children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities through the use of multi-modal strategies including visual aids and collaboration with peers, all of which has proven to be beneficial within contemporary research (Barrett & Zhukov, 2024; Good et al., 2014; Fortuna, 2017; Sutela, 2024).

Discussions revealed that both educators who were hesitant to provide music education and those who were confident, employed creative and effective teaching strategies. Although the more confident teacher appeared able to provide these strategies with greater ease, many of those teachers who described themselves as “not musical” spent significant time researching creative, inclusive pedagogies.

5.5.3 Barriers

RQ #3: Teachers views Towards the Barriers of the Benefit from Music

Education/Musical Activities for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

- **Deaf/HoH Students Experience of Musical Activities/Enjoyment of Musical Activities**

Although there are clear enablers towards the benefits that can be gained through inclusion in music education for children who are deaf/HoH, this may also be hindered by the children’s own experience or opinion of music. A number of teachers indicated that their children who are deaf/HoH expressed a severe dislike towards musical activities and would refuse to participate, with the teachers noting that this may be related to the students self-confidence. Once again, the importance of the relationship between teacher and student

became apparent here, with teachers acknowledging their students' needs and understanding why they refused to participate. Although it is clear that there are many benefits associated with inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH, such as cognitive development (Chen et al., 2010; Rochette et al., 2014) and social and emotional benefits (Broh, 2002; Croom, 2015; NDCS, 2020; McDermott, 1971; Walczyk, 1993), the teachers' perceptions indicate that the students' own relationship towards music is a crucial element to understanding their experience of music.

5.6 Conclusion

The findings of this research project were discussed in depth in this chapter indicate that there are both significant enablers and barriers pertaining to inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH. The ability to form interpersonal relationships and develop an understanding of the needs of the child who is deaf/HoH was outlined as a significant enabler towards inclusive music education, alongside the effective differentiation of activities, with a large emphasis on multisensory approaches. Contrastingly, the child's own attitude towards music was documented as a barrier towards inclusive music education, with a need for the teacher to provide fun and engaging activities and persevere to find an effective method of inclusion for each individual child.

It was identified that both the teacher who viewed themselves as musical and those who did not (See Table 5), strived to employ creative, inclusive practices to ensure their children who are deaf/HoH had access to musical activities. However, this was hindered by the lack of guidance provided by the current Music Curriculum (Department of Education and Science, 1999) and the lack of support from the Department of Education and Youth, in terms of providing additional resources, including funding and staffing.

The following chapter will conclude the study, answering each of the research questions succinctly. This chapter will also identify recommendations for both policy and practice and outline the limitations to the study. It is also of importance to consider what we can learn from the finding discussed above. Through the discussion generated above, RQ #5 was

developed, which will be answered in Chapter Six: *What can we learn from these insights about how to better include learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?* A visual representation of this can be seen in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Evolution of Research Question #5

Themes Emerging from Literature	Research Question	Findings from Research												
Importance of Music: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of personal/emotional and social skills and cultural participation and development. 	RQ #1: What are the opinions of Teachers, on the value of music in education of learners who are deaf/HoH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers viewed music as an aspect of everyday life, identifying the enjoyment it can bring. Some teachers discussed the links music provide to broader culture. Development of social skills, opportunity to improve listening skills/follow directions Teachers discussed the importance of each child gaining equal access to the curriculum. Discussed the benefits music has on the social and emotional development of the learner. 												
Inclusive Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires commitment. Three domains of inclusion: access, participation and benefit. Learning together with hearing peers. Importance of relationships. 	RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access - indicated that children who are deaf/HoH were accessing musical activities in a similar way to their peers Participation – teachers indicated they didn't need to differentiate activities; however, it became apparent that they were doing so informally. Benefit – benefitted the children socially and emotionally. 												
Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was good / dispensable about music education in previous practice. Including both music education and musical activities will provide a broader scope for teachers to discuss. Universal Design for Learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear lack of guidance from music curriculum. Teachers discussed music as both a curricular subject and also, as an extra-curricular. Clear that teachers are providing multiple strategies for learning, both formally and informally. 												
Teaching of Deaf/HoH Historically and Contemporary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oralism / manualism Enjoyment of music or music as an auditory trainer. Music considered solely an auditory experience. Embodied experience in which people can participate uniquely. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The therapeutic element of music education, which was practised historically, was not seen as an opportunity for individualised instruction for the development of skills such as oral language. It appears teachers are designing lessons for children without SEN and finding ways to include children with SEN. No individualised objectives for learners who are deaf/HoH. 												
Teaching Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the limit or enable practice? Research suggests the implementation of multi-modal approaches e.g., visual. 	RQ #3: What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context? RQ #4: What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?	Three domains: access, participation, benefit <table border="1" data-bbox="799 1339 1578 1910"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="799 1339 1209 1361">Access Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1209 1339 1578 1361">Access Barriers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="799 1361 1209 1541"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers experience in the school Interpersonal relationships Inclusive environments How often music is taught Technology </td> <td data-bbox="1209 1361 1578 1585"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of interpersonal relationship Appreciation of challenges of learner Technology available Range of stakeholders Guidance from music curriculum </td> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="799 1552 1209 1574">Participation Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1209 1619 1578 1641">Participation Barriers</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="799 1574 1209 1686"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated strategies Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher </td> <td data-bbox="1209 1641 1578 1753"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in teaching music Guidance from music curriculum </td> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="799 1720 1209 1742">Benefit Enablers</th> <th data-bbox="1209 1787 1578 1809">Benefit Barriers</th> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="799 1742 1209 1910"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher </td> <td data-bbox="1209 1809 1578 1910"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Access Enablers	Access Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers experience in the school Interpersonal relationships Inclusive environments How often music is taught Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of interpersonal relationship Appreciation of challenges of learner Technology available Range of stakeholders Guidance from music curriculum 	Participation Enablers	Participation Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated strategies Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in teaching music Guidance from music curriculum 	Benefit Enablers	Benefit Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH Musical experiences/confidence of the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience/enjoyment of music for the child who is deaf/HoH
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	RQ #5: What can we learn from these insights about how to better include learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?													

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research study by summarising the key points and discussing its contribution towards inclusive education by exploring the implications the research has on policy and practice. This chapter will also revisit the limitations of the study and consider possibilities for future research. The aims of this research were as follows:

- Analyse the literature available to recognise how music education has changed for pupils who are deaf/HoH, to identify how music is being taught to learners who are deaf/HoH internationally and to understand the benefits of music education for children who are deaf/HoH.
- Engage in semi-structured interviews with eleven teachers in mainstream primary schools across Ireland to answer the research questions posed.
- Analyse the data gathered using an analytic framework devised to identify the enablers and barriers towards inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH with a view to learning from these about how to better include children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities at primary school level.

6.2 Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers towards the value of music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH and to identify the enablers and barriers towards including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities through gaining insights from the teachers' experiences.

Below, a summarised answer to each of these research questions is provided.

6.2.1 RQ #1

What are the opinions of teachers, on the value of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH?

All of the research participants indicated that they found value in including music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH. Many of the participants identified the social role music plays in the lives of children, emphasising its ability to facilitate the formation of relationships between peers. This concept is underpinned by DeNora's (2000) understanding of music in society, positioning it as an everyday artform which shapes people's daily lives. It was apparent that participants found benefits from including musical activities in the education of their children who are deaf/HoH, particularly for their social and emotional development within extracurricular activities. This was evident through the reaction of the children to their involvement in these activities and the emotive responses offered by the participants.

Although the participants appeared to value music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH for the development of social and emotional skills, it was also apparent that the teachers did not view music as a methodology for developing cross curricular objectives in subjects such as literacy for the development of language skills. It is evident through the literature explored that both historically and in modern research, music benefits the development of cognitive skills such as auditory cognition and speech prosody perception in learners who are deaf/HoH (Good et al., 2017; Torrpa, 2014a). This will be discussed further when answering RQ #5, in considering what we can learn from this.

6.2.2 RQ #2

RQ #2: What are teachers' perceptions of the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education/musical activities?

Many of the research participants indicated that children who are deaf/HoH are accessing musical activities similarly to their hearing peers in their mainstream classrooms. This was due to the teachers utilising similar strategies, such as the use of digital resources, to include *all* students in their class. However, it became evident that there were notable issues present pertaining to the significant lack of resources faced by primary schools today. This included an absence of specific guidance from the current Music Curriculum (Department of

Education and Science, 1999) surrounding the inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH in music lessons and the lack of SNA access due to the demand of SEN within the school. Although progress has been made in terms of inclusive practices provided through policy such as The EPSEN Act (Gol, 2004), it is apparent that inclusive practices cannot be successfully implemented without the introduction of more supportive and practical resources (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023).

6.2.3 RQ #3

What do these experiences tell us about the enablers, resources and support available for inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?

Although it is apparent that the lack of support and guidance available to teachers is hindering the effective inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities in mainstream primary schools across Ireland, it is evident that teachers are also identifying methods and practical resources that enable children who are deaf/HoH to gain access to, participate in and benefit from musical activities. These strategies include the enabling of quality interpersonal relationships, as emphasised in the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) and improving inclusive environments through the incorporation of additional SNA access, providing sensory breaks to students and ensuring differentiated strategies are employed. Many of the participants discussed the use of multisensory strategies, such as the incorporation of visual aids in the classroom. This is supported by literature, which indicates that including visual approaches to music education for children who are deaf/HoH will improve access and participation in musical activities (Galloway Gallego, 2018; Hatch, 2021; Mangaoang, 2024). It is documented throughout the literature that children who are deaf/HoH are at risk of social isolation (Patel, 2021) and it has become clear that facilitating their participation in musical activities encourages their ability to formulate relationships (Croom, 2015; DeNora, 2000).

6.2.4 RQ #4

What do these experiences tell us about the barriers/challenges of inclusive music education for learners who are deaf/HoH in the Irish mainstream primary school context?

Contrasting to the enablers of inclusive music education discussed above, the findings of this research also indicated the presence of barriers pertaining to the effective inclusion of children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. One significant barrier was the students' individual experience and attitude towards music. Each participant discussed their child's emotional response towards musical activities and it was evident that each student differed. This was particularly apparent through discussions with teachers who had experience teaching multiple children who are deaf/HoH. Another significant barrier arose through the lack of interpersonal relationships between students and teachers. This was more notable when external music teachers were employed to provide musical activities to the children, leading to a lack of time to formulate meaningful connection. This affiliation is deemed essential within the Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023) and is pivotal in creating safe environments and providing inclusive practices for children who are deaf/HoH in music education.

6.2.5 RQ #5

What can we learn from these insights about how to better include learners who are deaf/HoH in musical activities?

It is fundamental to consider what we can learn from the insights gained which will allow educators to better include children who are deaf/HoH in musical activities. A significant element to inclusive education has been discussed as formulating meaningful, interpersonal relationships. Music is often conceptualised as a social tool which plays a role in everyday life, fostering relationships (Croom, 2015; DeNora, 2000) and therefore including music within the primary school classroom may facilitate the growth of relationship between not only the child who is deaf/HoH and their hearing peers, but also between the child and the

teacher. It is therefore essential that, regardless of the child's response to musical activities, the teacher should strive to promote and include inclusive practices for musical activities and withstand the challenges which may be present, to provide fun and inclusive music education.

Finally, it is apparent that primary school teachers find value in including music in the education of children who are deaf/HoH, regardless of the teachers experience or confidence in teaching music; however, it is evident that there is a need for specific guidance on inclusive practices for children who are deaf/HoH and that the exposure to additional resources such as the VT and SNA access is essential (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023).

It is also apparent that, although teachers value the inclusion of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH for the benefit of social development, mainstream class teachers seem to view it as a subject into which these learners have to be differentiated for and as a vehicle for social inclusion, but not as a methodology for developing cross curricular objectives in subjects such as literacy, for the development of language skills or auditory cognition (Good et al., 2017; Torrpa, 2014a). Therefore, the way in which teachers view the music curriculum and the teaching of music to learners who are deaf/HoH affects how they approach the teaching of music and can act as a barrier towards them benefiting fully from musical activities. With adequate training during ITE and continuous professional development training for practising teachers, the affordances of musical activities could be used to teach subjects such as literacy or skills such as language development in more inclusive ways.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations associated with this study. Firstly, the small sample size limits the generalisability of the findings. The timeline for this research project allowed for semi-structured interviews to be conducted over a period of three months and therefore only eleven teachers were recruited to participate. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings, typical-case sampling was employed (Patton, 2002), recruiting

participants who held the relevant experience required to answer the questions posed, whilst also recruiting teachers who held a wide range of experience, as seen in the Participant Demographic (See Table 5).

Similarly, the flexibility of the semi-structured interviews, although providing scope for the inclusion of strategies such as probing (Given, 2008), can provide a narrowness in research findings due to the smaller sample size employed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In this instance a sample size of eleven primary school teachers was employed. This was mitigated through the inclusion of interview strategies such as probing, prompting phrases and repetition of the participants' answers.

Once again, the possibility of interviewer bias may impact the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews (Robson, 2011). This was alleviated by employing reflexivity throughout both the interview and the data analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2013), ensuring that the researcher's opinions did not influence the research findings.

6.4 Implications for the Future of Music Education for Learners who are Deaf/HoH

Literature has proven that times have changed significantly in relation to the experience of learners who are deaf/HoH in education (Broderick & Duggan, 1996; Crean, 1997). It has become evident through this research that these learners are now engaging in music education alongside their hearing peers, in a more positive setting than has been documented in the past; however, it is evident that there is tension between the ideals and the reality, with the practical implementation of inclusive education being hindered by the provision of supports such as funding and SNA access (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023). This was further supported by the responses of teachers engaged in this research study, who appeared passionate about including learners who are deaf/HoH in music education, but detailed the reality of the lack of supports as a barrier to effective inclusive education. Therefore, the concept of inclusive education may need to be reconsidered from the

responsibility of the teacher to that of the school community and education system alike (DEY, 2024).

It is important, therefore, to consider why society views inclusive education as a construct only attainable by the attitude or abilities of the teacher towards enforcing an inclusive pedagogical approach. The literature discussed previously outlines that although the Irish education system has seen significant movement towards an inclusive perspective (DEY, 2023; Gol, 2004), it is the practical elements such as a lack of funding, which create barriers to inclusive education. Consequently, the construction of an inclusive education system should be considered the responsibility of all of society, rather than just that of the teacher.

6.5 Recommendations for Policy

With the publication of The Primary Curriculum Framework (DoE, 2023), an emphasis has been placed on inclusive education for all learners. It is essential to consider how this is applied to musical activities. The review of The EPSEN Act (Gol, 2004) began in 2021, aiming to identify barriers to the effective implementation of guidelines within the act. One significant barrier identified was the absence of effective resources and staff (Day & Prunty, 2015; INTO, 2023).

With the review of The EPSEN Act (Gol, 2004) being published by the Department of Education and Youth in 2025, it is hoped that inclusive practices can be further implemented and enhanced across Irish primary schools through the recommendations provided. These include, but are not limited to, developing a roadmap for an inclusive education system and reviewing schools access to resources including funding, staffing and equipment (DEY, 2025). One particular recommendation is the introduction of professional development for teachers on inclusive educational practices (DEY, 2025). This is essential in order for the recommendations included in the EPSEN Act review to be effectively employed in schools.

As mentioned throughout this research, utilising methods of inclusive practice, such as the UDL framework, are essential to provide inclusive environments for student learning (NCSE,

2025). It has been observed through research that student teachers are not being equipped with the tools necessary to effectively educate the changing profile of students in Irish primary school classrooms (Flood & Banks, 2021). Therefore, it is recommended that ITE courses offer enhanced training surrounding inclusive practices such as the UDL.

6.6 Recommendations for Practice

It has become evident through the completion of this research that many primary school teachers identify themselves as either musical or not musical, as seen in Table 5. DeNora (2000) identifies that people use music for a multitude of reasons in everyday life, such as mood enhancement or for background noise. Whether a participant of this study described themselves as musical or not musical, it is expected that music plays a role in their lives in some form. It has become evident throughout the interview process that teachers consider music as an essential curriculum subject, but also a social element which can form and mould relationships for young students (Croom, 2015; DeNora, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary that all children are exposed to musical activities in their education, including children who are deaf/HoH.

The use of a multisensory approach to teaching music is an effective method of inclusion in musical activities (Silvestri et al., 2018; Sutela, 2024) and was discussed as an integral aspect of integrating children who are deaf/HoH into musical activities throughout the data collection process. A number of strategies were utilised by the participants of this research study, which may be employed by all teachers engaged in the teaching of children who are deaf/HoH. Using online music programmes such as DabbleDoo, provide both aural and visual elements to music lessons which positively impacted access to and participation in musical activities for learners who are deaf/HoH. Teachers should also be encouraged to ensure visibility for children who are deaf/HoH within the classroom, altering seating arrangements and moving around the room to assist the child.

Similarly, the importance of interpersonal relationships and building both trust and rapport with children who are deaf/HoH played a significant role in the daily teaching of all research

participants. Therefore, in order to provide inclusive and accessible musical lessons to children who are deaf/HoH, teachers should strive to understand the needs of their pupils and build trust as they embark on their teaching and learning journey together (DoE, 2023).

6.7 Recommendations for Research

Considering the small scope of this research study, it may be of benefit to conduct this research with a larger sample size. Similarly, as this research explored the experiences of learners who are deaf/HoH in music education through the medium of the teacher, it may be of interest to consider further research surrounding these experiences through the lens of the children themselves.

It is evident that teachers value the inclusion of music in the education of learners who are deaf/HoH in order to include them in cultural aspects of the school and for social development; however, this research has highlighted that teachers do not view music as a methodology for developing cross curricular objectives such as language development in literacy. Therefore, it is fitting to suggest that research into teachers' use of music as a methodological tool for integration may be needed in order to establish teachers' understanding of the use of music in the development of cognitive skills.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the key findings of this research project by answering the research questions posed. Limitations to the study were presented and recommendations for both practice and policy were discussed in order to provide effective inclusive music education for children who are deaf/HoH in mainstream Irish primary school classrooms.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: Indicative Interview Schedule

Appendix B: Research Ethics Committee Approval

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interviews

Background teaching deaf students

1. How long have you been working as a qualified teacher?
2. Are you currently teaching music to your class? (*if not, do you observe? Participate in other ways? This information probably need to be verified in advance*)
3. Do you have both deaf and hearing students in your class?
4. How long have you been working with this deaf student/students?
5. Insofar as you are aware, How many deaf students are in your class are deaf/HoH?

Philosophies / Methodologies / Strategies

6. Do you use any forms of technology (e.g. FM system) to teach the deaf student in your class?
7. What strategies do you use to engage **all** students in learning music?
8. If you have both deaf and hearing students in your class, do you differentiate your music lessons to include the deaf student/s? If so, how.
9. What methodologies/accommodations/resources are you using to teach music to the deaf student/s that are different in your class?
10. Do you think the musical experience of deaf children is similar or different to that of their hearing peers? Why? Why not?
11. Do you believe that your deaf students enjoy participating in music lessons? What evidence do you have of this?
12. Do you think music is important in the education of deaf students? If so why/ why not?
13. What (pedagogic, organisational, personal?) challenges arise when teaching music to the deaf child in your class?

Collaborative teaching/Partnership/Shared responsibility

14. Do you work with any other service providers or stakeholders to deliver your music lessons to your deaf students?
15. Do you think the current primary music curriculum offers sufficient guidance/latitude/opportunity for you include learners who are deaf/HoH
16. If you had a key message for other teachers who were thinking about teaching music to learners who are deaf/HoH what would it be?

Appendix B: Research Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Georgia Goodall
School of Arts Education and Movement

5th June 2024

REC Reference: DCUREC/2024/099 (Expedited Review)

Proposal Title: Inclusive Music Education for Deaf Students

Applicant(s): Georgia Goodall, Dr Regina Murphy, Dr Elizabeth Mathews

Dear Colleague(s),

Thank you for your application to DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Further to its review by the committee and resting on the assumption of information accuracy and completeness, DCU REC is pleased to issue ethical approval for this research project. Please include reference to this approval in all materials used to recruit research participants.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the research project to which this ethical approval refers is carried out as specifically described in the application form. Should modifications to the research project be required at a later stage, researchers must submit a research amendment application form to REC for approval, prior to the implementation of modifications.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that any other DCU compliance requirements relevant to the research project, such as those related to data protection, insurance, health and safety, or legal issues, are fully met in advance of initiating the project.

As part of DCU REC's ongoing monitoring process, a research progress report may be required. DCU REC will request this report from the PI as appropriate.

DCU REC wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Melrona Kirrane
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

*Note: Please retain this approval letter for future publication purposes.
Research students should include this letter as a thesis appendix.*



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Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Research Study Title

A research project entitled, Inclusive Music Education for Deaf Students, conducted in Dublin City University by Masters by Research student, Georgia Goodall and supervised by Dr. Elizabeth Mathews, Associate Professor with the School of Inclusive and Special Education, Dr. Regina Murphy, Associate Professor with the School of Arts Education and Movement and Dr. Eamonn McCauley Associate Professor with the School of Inclusive and Special Education.

Clarification of the purpose of the research

This research is being conducted in order to identify the perspectives and attitudes of educators in relation to the inclusion of music in the education of deaf students and to identify the strategies being used to teach music to deaf students in Ireland. To participate in this project, you will be asked to take part in an interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your data will be anonymised in the transcription process. However, due to the number of teachers engaged in teaching deaf students in Ireland, there is a risk that the participants may be identifiable.

The data controller for this study is Dublin City University. Your name and email address, and whether you are deaf or hearing, will be collected as part of this study. Your name and email address will be used for the purposes of contacting you only. Your hearing status will be collected to allow for comparison of experiences between deaf and hearing teachers.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

<i>I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)</i>	Yes/No
<i>I understand the information provided</i>	Yes/No
<i>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study</i>	Yes/No
<i>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions</i>	Yes/No
<i>I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped</i>	Yes/No

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

I understand that my interview will be audio recorded on a password protected mobile phone, that the recording will be transferred immediately after the interview to an encrypted and password protected laptop. The interview will be transcribed, during which the data will be anonymised (removing your name and school details). However, given the small number of teachers of the deaf in Ireland, there is still a risk that I may be identifiable from this research. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

Data will be retained until the completion of the study in Autumn 2025, after which all electronic data will be deleted and expunged.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

Introductory Statement

Thank you for expressing an interest in our research project entitled, 'Inclusive Music Education for Deaf Students'. This research is being conducted in Dublin City University by research student Georgia Goodall (MA) and supervised by Dr. Elizabeth Mathews, Associate Professor with the School of Inclusive and Special Education and Dr. Regina Murphy, Associate Professor with the School of Arts Education and Movement.

What is this research about?

This research project focuses on the inclusiveness of music education for deaf students in Ireland, aiming to identify the perspectives and attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of music in the education of deaf students and to identify contemporary methods of teaching music to deaf students.

Why is this research being conducted?

There is a large body of research to suggest that music education may be beneficial for deaf students, however historically there have been negative connotations associated with the inclusion of music in the education of deaf children. This research is being conducted in order to identify the barriers and enablers pertaining to the inclusion of music in the education of deaf students and to identify the strategies being used to teach music to deaf students in Ireland.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You are being invited to participate in this research project because of your involvement in the teaching of music to deaf students. Participants are being recruited based on their experience as qualified school teachers engaged in the teaching of deaf students.

What will happen if you decide to take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this research you will engage in a one-hour interview conducted by the researcher which will be audio recorded and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. You will be asked a number of questions surrounding your perspectives on the teaching of music to deaf students and the methodologies you are currently implementing.

How will your data be used?

Data will be stored on a password protected, encrypted laptop for the duration of the research project. This data will be in the form of both audio recordings and interview transcriptions. On completion of the research project the data will be destroyed in line with DCU Data Retention Policy. The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher in order to support the analysis of the interviews which will be conducted as part of the researcher's thematic analysis. In the case you communicate through Irish Sign Language, an interpreter will be provided.

As a participant it is your right to lodge a complaint concerning the use of personal data in line with the Irish Data Protection Commission. You also have the right to access your own personal data and will be provided with the findings of the project once completed. The outcomes of the data gathered will be documented within the final thesis. Throughout the course of the research and upon completion, the researcher hopes to present findings at academic conferences and to publish work in relevant peer-reviewed journals.

How will your privacy be protected (including any legal limits to confidentiality)?

Data will be stored on a password protected, encrypted laptop and in order to protect the identity of the participants pseudonyms will be utilised. Please note that confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

The aim of this research is to identify the perspectives of teachers in relation to the inclusion of music in the education of deaf students and to identify methodologies that are currently being used to teach music to deaf students. If you decide to participate in this project you may have the opportunity to reflect on your own perspectives of music in the education of deaf children and identify methodologies for teaching music education that you are currently implementing while also considering aspects you may wish to develop further.

What are the risks of taking part in this study?

Due to the number of teachers engaged in the teaching of deaf students in Ireland, there is a risk that participants may be identifiable. In order to minimise this risk, your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Can you change your mind at any stage and withdraw from this study?

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at Any stage, up to the point of publication. Data will be stored on a password protected, encrypted laptop and all data will be destroyed on completion of the project. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

How will you find out what happens with this project?

On completion of this research project you will be provided with a copy of the final thesis.