



Reconceptualising Creativity in Primary Music Education: An Integrated Sociocultural–Componential Framework

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Abstract: Creativity has become a central goal in contemporary music education, yet existing theoretical approaches often provide partial explanations of how creativity develops in authentic classroom contexts (Sawyer, 2012; Burnard, 2013). Sociocultural Theory foregrounds social interaction, mediation, and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), while Amabile’s Componential Model emphasises individual cognitive processes and intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1996). However, when applied independently, both frameworks reveal conceptual blind spots, particularly in resource-constrained and culturally embedded educational settings (Glăveanu, 2014; Lubart et al., 2019). This conceptual paper proposes an integrated theoretical framework that synthesises Sociocultural Theory and the Componential Model to better explain creativity development in primary school music education. Two conceptual extensions are advanced: (1) teacher and learner agency under resource constraints and (2) cultural belonging as a motivational force. Drawing on illustrative pedagogical scenarios from primary music classrooms in China, the paper demonstrates how the integrated framework offers stronger explanatory power than single-theory approaches. The paper concludes by discussing the theoretical contribution of this integration, its relevance for localising Western creativity theories, and directions for future empirical research.

Keywords: creativity, music education, sociocultural theory, componential model, cultural belonging, resource constraints

I. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is widely recognised as a core educational objective in the twenty-first century, particularly in arts education where creative expression, innovation, and cultural meaning-making are fundamental (Robinson, 2011; Burnard & Colucci-Gray, 2020). In music education, creativity is not limited to composition or

improvisation but encompasses learners’ ability to explore, reinterpret, and transform musical ideas within specific social and cultural contexts (Burnard, 2012; Barrett, 2019). Despite growing scholarly attention, theoretical explanations of creativity in classroom-based music education remain fragmented and often discipline-bound.

Two influential theoretical traditions dominate creativity research in education. The first is Sociocultural Theory, rooted in Vygotsky’s work, which conceptualises creativity as a socially mediated process shaped by interaction, cultural tools, and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). The second is Amabile’s Componential Model of creativity, which explains creative performance through the interaction of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1983, 1996). While both frameworks have generated valuable insights, their independent application has limitations when explaining creativity development in real-world classrooms, especially in contexts characterised by uneven resources and strong cultural traditions (Glăveanu, 2014; Sawyer, 2018).

This paper argues that a single-theory approach is insufficient to capture the complex interplay between social mediation, individual agency, motivation, and cultural identity in primary school music education. It therefore proposes an integrated conceptual framework that synthesises Sociocultural Theory and the Componential Model. By extending both theories through the lenses of agency under constraint and cultural belonging, the paper seeks to reconceptualise creativity in a way that is theoretically robust and contextually sensitive.

II. LIMITATIONS OF SINGLE-THEORY APPROACHES TO CREATIVITY

2.1 Sociocultural Theory and Its Explanatory Boundaries



Sociocultural Theory emphasises that learning and creativity emerge through social interaction, mediation, and the use of cultural tools within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). In music education, this perspective has been particularly influential in explaining collaborative composition, guided improvisation, and teacher scaffolding (Burnard, 2012; Barrett, 2019). It highlights how learners internalise musical concepts through participation in culturally meaningful practices.

However, when applied to primary school music education in resource-limited settings, Sociocultural Theory reveals important conceptual gaps. While it explains how teachers scaffold learning using available tools, it pays limited attention to agency under constraint—that is, how teachers and learners actively redesign pedagogical practices when conventional resources are unavailable (Glăveanu, 2014; Craft, 2005). In classrooms where instruments, digital tools, or specialist facilities are scarce, creativity often emerges from adaptive strategies rather than from structured scaffolding alone. Sociocultural Theory does not sufficiently theorise this proactive, agentic dimension of creative teaching and learning.

2.2 Blind Spots in the Componential Model of Creativity

Amabile's Componential Model conceptualises creativity as the result of interactions among domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1983, 1996). This framework has been widely applied in educational research to explain individual differences in creative performance and the role of motivation in sustaining creative engagement (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010).

Despite its strengths, the Componential Model has been critiqued for underplaying the sociocultural foundations of motivation (Glăveanu, 2014; Lubart et al., 2019). In culturally rich educational contexts, learners' motivation to engage in creative tasks is often deeply tied to cultural identity, familiarity, and a sense of belonging (Gay, 2018). When music education draws on local musical traditions, dialects, or symbolic practices, learners' intrinsic motivation may be shaped not only by personal interest but also by cultural resonance. The Componential Model does not explicitly theorise cultural belonging as a motivational factor, limiting its explanatory power in culturally embedded learning environments.

III. TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED SOCIOCULTURAL–COMPONENTIAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Rationale for Theoretical Integration

The limitations identified above suggest that creativity in primary school music education cannot be fully explained through either sociocultural mediation or individual motivation alone. Instead, creativity emerges from the dynamic interaction between social context, cultural tools, individual agency, and motivational processes (Sawyer, 2012; Glăveanu, 2014). Integrating Sociocultural Theory and the Componential Model allows for a more holistic conceptualisation of creativity that accounts for both social mediation and individual psychological mechanisms.

3.2 Conceptual Extensions

This paper proposes two conceptual extensions that strengthen the integrated framework.

First, agency under resource constraints extends Sociocultural Theory by foregrounding the active role of teachers and learners in reconfiguring available materials, spaces, and cultural practices to support creative activity. Creativity is viewed not merely as participation within given structures, but as adaptive problem-solving under constraint (Craft, 2005; Sawyer, 2018).

Second, cultural belonging as motivational force extends the Componential Model by recognising cultural familiarity, identity, and symbolic meaning as sources of intrinsic motivation. Engagement in creative music tasks is enhanced when learners perceive cultural relevance and personal connection, aligning with culturally sustaining and culturally responsive pedagogical perspectives (Gay, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017).

3.3 Integrated Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, the integrated framework positions creativity as an outcome of interactions among sociocultural mediation (scaffolding, tools, interaction), individual agency and cognitive processes, culturally grounded intrinsic motivation, and contextual constraints. This integrated perspective provides a basis for understanding creativity as both socially situated and individually enacted, particularly in primary school music education.



IV. ILLUSTRATIVE PEDAGOGICAL SCENARIOS

To clarify the explanatory value of the integrated framework, this section presents illustrative pedagogical scenarios from primary music education contexts. These scenarios are not presented as empirical evidence but as conceptual illustrations of how the framework operates in practice.

In resource-constrained rural classrooms, teachers often employ everyday objects, body percussion, and local rhymes as substitutes for conventional instruments. Through adaptive scaffolding and culturally familiar materials, learners engage creatively despite limited resources. Here, sociocultural mediation explains collaborative learning, while agency under constraint explains innovative task design.

In urban classrooms with access to basic digital tools, teachers may integrate traditional musical symbols with technology-based composition tasks. Learners' motivation is sustained through cultural identification, while domain-relevant skills are enhanced through digital simulation. The integrated framework explains both skill development and sustained creative engagement.

V. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION AND LOCALISATION VALUE

The proposed framework contributes to creativity research in three key ways. First, it extends Sociocultural Theory by explicitly theorising agency in conditions of material limitation. Second, it enriches the Componential Model by embedding cultural belonging within motivational processes. Third, it demonstrates how Western creativity theories can be meaningfully localised to non-Western educational contexts without losing theoretical rigour.

By foregrounding culture and constraint, the framework aligns with broader educational goals of culturally sustaining pedagogy and equitable creativity development. While grounded in music education, the framework has potential applicability across arts and creative subjects.

VI. CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This conceptual paper has argued for the integration of Sociocultural Theory and the Componential Model to reconceptualise creativity in primary school music education. By addressing the limitations of single-theory approaches, the proposed framework offers a more comprehensive

explanation of how creativity emerges through social interaction, individual agency, cultural motivation, and contextual constraint.

The framework contributes to creativity research by extending sociocultural perspectives to include agency under constraint and enriching componential accounts of motivation through cultural belonging. Future research should empirically test the framework across diverse educational settings using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods designs (Lubart et al., 2019; Sawyer, 2018). Such studies would further validate the framework and refine its constructs, contributing to a more context-sensitive and theoretically grounded understanding of creativity in education.

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