

A comparative study on the professional competence of music teachers

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Abstract: Researchers have yet to identify any other activity that impacts child cognitive development to the same extent or in the same manner as music and arts education [1], highlighting the intrinsic value of music education. While the professional competence of music teachers exerts a direct influence on the quality of music education provided to children and adolescents, this competence remains inadequately defined within the Mongolian context. Consequently, there is a lack of standardized evaluation methodologies, criteria, and performance indicators. This article aims to define the professional competence of music teachers by exploring its underlying concepts, theoretical frameworks, structures, and assessment methodologies. By conducting a comparative analysis of international research findings, this study identifies and synthesizes the scope of professional competence, alongside the criteria and indicators essential for evaluating teacher proficiency. It was observed that a critical need exists for a more precise definition of the core components of music teacher competence.

Keywords: Professional competence of music teachers, Comparative research, Quality of music education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, humanity has highly valued the essence, function, and pedagogical impact of music education, regarding it as a vital instrument for human development and cultivation. The professional role of the music teacher is paramount in fulfilling this essential developmental need. As an educational specialist, the teacher serves as an instructional facilitator who guides students' learning and development, manages pedagogical interactions, and organizes the learning environment [2].

A fundamental issue within teacher education programs is the systematic mastery of professional knowledge and subject-specific skills, facilitating the acquisition of these competencies among students, and the continuous evaluation and refinement of instructional practices as necessary.

The historical significance of music's aesthetic and educational impact has been recognized and documented by humanity since antiquity. In Ancient Greece, music was regarded as a "teacher of the soul," based on the belief that specific types of music could foster essential virtues such as wisdom, courage, and perseverance. This perspective on music as a transformative force continued through the centuries. For instance, the 18th-century composer George Frideric Handel famously stated, "I should be sorry if I only

entertained them. I wished to make them better." Similarly, Ludwig van Beethoven viewed music as a vital instrument for ethical and aesthetic education, embedding profound moral ideals within his compositions.

"Through music, individuals awaken a sense of grandeur and beauty, not only in the world around them but also within themselves." The objectives of music and aesthetic education, as well as the artistic and creative development of children and adolescents, must be addressed by specialized and comprehensively educated music teachers. As D.B. Kabalevsky emphasized: "If we aim for the comprehensive and harmonious development of students, we must first focus on the comprehensive and harmonious development of their teachers". [3] While the role of music education has always been considered important within the Mongolian educational system, the inconsistent understanding and support for the essence of music and arts education among teachers and school administrators, coupled with the use of varying criteria to evaluate music teachers' professional skills and competencies, are significantly impacting the overall effectiveness of music education. Therefore, there is a pressing need to conduct research on the professional competence of music teachers and to develop a more effective methodology and criteria for defining these competencies.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

A music teacher is a cultural ambassador and specialist capable of contributing to social development, educational achievement, and cultural evolution, thereby influencing social well-being through music. [4]

The work of a music teacher is characterized by its multifaceted nature. Specifically, they perform numerous roles, such as: engaging students in interesting discussions about music, its forms, and genres; teaching songs and leading choral singing; and organizing lessons at a high professional level. Furthermore, they must skillfully accompany songs on a musical instrument, perform the musical works recommended in the curriculum with technical proficiency, explain theoretical knowledge in a clear and engaging manner, and organize various forms of extracurricular musical activities. [5]

A music teacher should possess:

- High aesthetic and moral culture (Communicative and speech etiquette, professional image, social standing, reputation, and personal integrity)
- A conscious pedagogical approach (Mastery of teaching tact and instructional methods)
- Professional passion and interest (A commitment to continuous professional development, staying updated with scientific advancements, and a deep respect for the profession)
- Love and respect for children
- Understanding of societal and political culture
- Knowledge of psychology and child physiology
- Mastery of music education content and methodology
- Broad knowledge of other art forms [6]

In the 1920s, Boris Vladimirovich Asafyev defined the essential qualities of a music teacher as follows: *"A music teacher in a general education school must be more than just a 'specialist' in a specific branch of music; they must also be a music theorist, a choral conductor, a music historian, and a music ethnographer. Furthermore, they must be a skilled instrumentalist, always prepared to direct students' attention in the necessary direction."* [3]

The unique nature of an arts teacher's work lies in addressing pedagogical objectives through various art forms. The profession of a music teacher is not only distinctive in its essence but also carries significant social importance. Only a music teacher can cultivate the musical culture of every child. They introduce the rising generation to national and global musical heritage, while developing their artistic and aesthetic sensibilities, creative thinking, imagination, and intuition.

The professional activity of a music teacher is multifaceted in terms of both content and organization. Specifically, it involves: engaging students with interesting and captivating discussions about art, its forms, and genres; mastering musical works, performing them at a high professional level, and organizing instructional lessons; accompanying songs on

a musical instrument and skillfully performing the musical works designated for listening in the curriculum; delivering theoretical knowledge in a clear and engaging manner; and effectively organizing various types of extracurricular activities. [7]

Based on modern research in educational psychology, the most critical aspects of a music teacher's work are defined as follows:

1. Research (analyzing musical and other artistic works; studying the experiences of colleagues and students, analyzing one's own work; and studying scientific and methodological literature for practical application);
2. Planning (planning and distributing the educational process, including knowledge transfer, skill formation, and the musical and creative development of students);
3. Constructing (structuring lessons and extracurricular musical activities);
4. Communicating (establishing relationships with students based on respect and trust; gaining authority among them);
5. Organizing (effectively implementing educational and developmental goals and tasks in practice).[7]

The profession of a music teacher represents an inseparable union of pedagogy and musical art, requiring a broad range of both general pedagogical and specialized artistic skills. [3]

Recognizing that this professional activity is uniquely situated at the intersection of pedagogy and musical art, researchers have defined the music teacher's proficiency from both perspectives. For instance, in her research, Khaibullina [8] defined the professional activity of a music teacher as follows:

Table 1. Professional Activity of a Music Teacher

Type of Activity	Content of Activity	
	Pedagogical	Musical and Educational
	- Implementing teaching and educational activities in general education schools, educational institutions, and centers for supplementary education (including school-based supplementary education for children and adolescents); - Directing music groups and ensembles within educational institutions, supplementary education centers, and general education schools; - Performing and implementing methodological work; - Educating students through musical art and fostering their general personal culture; - Ensuring continuous professional self-improvement and personal development.	- Implementing various forms of lecture-concert activities (including musical performance); - Promoting musical art through media outlets (print media, radio, television, and the internet); - Introducing national and regional musical traditions to a broader audience; - Utilizing musical instrument skills to organize music-related leisure activities, extracurricular programs, and out-of-school activities for children.

[8]

The musical and pedagogical talents of a music teacher represent a synthesis of personal attributes that enable the achievement of high results in students' musical education and development. These include musical ear, a sense of rhythm, musical memory, the capacity for emotional response to music, artistic imagination, and musical thinking. [7]

Ultimately, the work of a music teacher is a unique, complex, and multifaceted profession.

Competence is a comprehensive concept that represents the synthesis of a teacher's theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and personally significant professional qualities [9]. The Educational Dictionary defines "complex competence" as a qualitative indicator of human development that comprehensively expresses an individual's acquired knowledge, skills, experience, established attitudes, behaviors, and ethics. It refers to the state of having multifaceted knowledge and experience in performing tasks within a specific field—a unity of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful execution. Furthermore, it encompasses the mastery of knowledge, skills, habits, and labor culture that a learner must possess to meet the professional requirements set by employers in a work environment; it is one of the key indicators of a

teacher's professional development [2]. Competence expresses the ability to properly perform a task within a certain period, which serves as an essential condition for the respective job and responsibilities [10].

A teacher's complex competence refers to the unity of professional knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes required for teaching [11]. Globally, teacher competence, which is discussed as the ultimate outcome of teacher education, is classified into three categories: personal, professional, and social competence [12]. The concept of "professional competence" characterizes a teacher's professional proficiency by expressing a unified theoretical and practical readiness to organize pedagogical activities [7].

Table No. 2. Definitions of Teacher Competence by Various Researchers

Definitions of Teacher Competence	
Mitina L.M.	Professional competence includes "knowledge, skills, habits, as well as the methods and techniques for implementing them in activities."
Simonov P.V.	Competence is not understood merely as the mastery of knowledge, but rather as a state of readiness to solve problems through professional proficiency (217).
Lukyanova M.I.	A teacher's pedagogical competence is "a set of specific personal characteristics that ensure a high level of professional readiness for pedagogical activity and the ability to communicate effectively with students during the educational process" (143).
Kuzmina N.V.	Professional and pedagogical competence is a complex of a teacher's pedagogical skills, which includes the ability to structure scientific and practical knowledge in a specific way for the purpose of optimally solving pedagogical problems (132).

[7]

Analyzing the definitions above, it is evident that the recurring concepts of "knowledge, skills, and attitudes" form the fundamental basis of teacher competence. Furthermore, professional readiness, experience, and communication emerge as critical indicators in defining this competence.

While some researchers define competence in terms of task performance ability, others view it through the lens of knowledge, skills, and methods for successful professional implementation. Another group extends this definition to include not only knowledge and skills but also individual personality traits and ethics.

A thematic analysis of the various definitions of "competence" allows for the following sub-classifications:

- Cognitive: Understanding and knowledge.
- Operational: Skills, habits, and methodological techniques.
- Personal: Attitudes, ethics, and individual qualities.
- Professional: Readiness and the ability to work effectively.
- Social and Communicative: Communication skills and the ability to work with students.

Based on these definitions and scholarly perspectives, teacher competence is ultimately defined as a synthesis of knowledge, skills, attitudes, personal characteristics, professional performance, and readiness.

Regarding the definition of a music teacher's professional competence, it is categorized as follows:

Professional Competence:

- Professional knowledge and skills;
- Professional didactic knowledge and skills;
- Knowledge and skills regarding students and learning;
- Teaching aptitude and skills;
- Development of professional ethics;
- Curriculum development skills;
- Research skills and the ability to create new knowledge [12].

Professional Competence:

1. Integrated knowledge and understanding of pedagogy, psychology, and didactics (patterns of human development, growth, and socialization; educational theory, concepts, and policies and their implementation; legal environment; standards and curriculum; learning; instruction, teaching, assessment, and schooling);
2. Professional Skills: (researching and analyzing; learning; creating a conducive environment; integrating with the content of other subjects; planning and organizing activities, evaluating based on evidence, and presenting results; guiding and advising the learning process; recognizing, identifying, and correcting errors made during content study); [13]

Table No. 3. Scholars' Definitions of Pedagogical Competence

Author	Conceptual Definition
Andriadi I.P. (1999)	Pedagogical mastery is a personal quality reflecting theoretical and practical readiness for the creative application of knowledge and skills in professional activity, as well as an intellectual and moral readiness aimed at a creative understanding of socio-cultural values.
Baikova L.A. and Grebenkina L.K. (2000)	Pedagogical mastery is the highest level of teaching activity, manifested through the teacher's creativity, the art of teaching, education, and the continuous improvement of human development.
Grebenyuk O.S. and Rozhkov M.I. (1999)	Pedagogical mastery is a synthesis of personal and professional qualities that determine the results of the pedagogical process.

[14]

The success and results of music education depend on the combination of a music teacher's pedagogical skills and musical talent. A music teacher must possess the following abilities:

Proficiency in playing a musical instrument:

- Performing on an instrument;
- Providing musical accompaniment;
- Sight-reading sheet music;
- Transposing music.

Mastery of vocal and conducting skills:

- Knowledge of the intricate techniques of singing;
- Sight-singing melodies;
- Creating vocal harmonies for a melody;
- Transcribing melodies into notation;
- Hearing and writing down specific voices from chord progressions;
- Conducting compositions correctly and communicating the interpretation to children;
- Executing detailed conducting techniques. [6]

Table No. 4. A Music Teacher's Musical and Pedagogical Skills

A Music Teacher's Musical and Pedagogical Skills	
Knowledge and Skills	General culture, music-pedagogy, music theory, music psychology, and musical performance.
Abilities	Cognitive skills (excluding perceptive or receptive skills); motor skills (conducting gestures, movements for playing musical instruments); communication skills (excluding acting skills); and pedagogical skills.
Characteristics	Artistic expression, conducting and performance techniques, musicality, confidence in success, intuition, and pedagogical communication talent.
Orientation	Realizing the potential of music education, enlightening and educating children through music, loving both music and children, and valuing professional reputation.

Functions	Diagnostic, prognostic, organizational, communicative, planning, research, and constructive.
Skills (Opportunities)	Instructional/teaching skills, communicative, organizational, constructive, cognitive, prognostic, receptive, and observational skills; creative and expressive skills.

[14]

Music lessons consist of activities such as teaching songs, listening to music, and elements of ear training. Utilizing these activities comprehensively in a lesson requires extensive knowledge of music, performing skills, and consistent practical ear training. [6]

Within the framework of the teacher education program reform since 2014, the curriculum office and departments of the School Of Music Arts at the Mongolian National University Of Arts And Culture (MNUAC) have worked to redesign and implement programs, analyze results, and improve quality. To define learning outcomes effectively, surveys were conducted with students, graduates, employers, and teachers to reflect their feedback in program improvements. The core objective was to accurately reflect the essential and necessary skills for music teachers within the curriculum.

The program identified that music teachers at the pre-school and general education levels must specifically possess the following:

Music teachers for Pre-school and General Education shall:

1. Adherence to communication and ethical standards.
2. Ability to work in teams and maintain flexibility (versatility).
3. Extensive musical knowledge and comprehensive scientific knowledge.
4. Skills in singing, playing instruments, and conducting.
5. Knowledge and skills in psychology and pedagogical sciences.
6. Integration of comprehensive scientific knowledge.
7. Aesthetic education and the demonstration of creative thinking.
8. Proficiency in foreign languages, computers, and application software.

Due to the specific nature of the workplace, music teachers are required to meet several professional standards:

1. Passion for the profession, self-confidence, ability to handle high workloads, and responsibility.
2. Moral maturity and the habit of independent learning.
3. Ability to organize and lead diverse music education activities tailored to a child's age and mental characteristics.
4. Skills in analyzing, synthesizing, and presenting issues.
5. Understanding, creating, evaluating, and promoting national, classical, and modern art at an international standard.

The professional characteristics of a music teacher are defined by their complex, specialized, and comprehensive nature. Music teachers work with students aged 2-5, & 6-15, bearing the responsibility of guiding and developing them toward healthy growth, life skills, the cultivation of talent and intellect, and the mastery of learning techniques. [15]

The Teacher and Art Education program at the Mongolian National University Of Arts And Culture (MNUAC) underwent a curriculum reform in 2014, followed by an improved implementation in 2016, which was subsequently validated by the National Council for Education Accreditation. Throughout this period, it has been observed that the core content of the curriculum has remained relatively stable.

Based on the graduate profile, practical experimentation, and research findings, it was concluded that the curriculum formulation needs to shift toward competency-based outcomes. There is a specific requirement to prioritize the development of artistic sensitivity and perception over the mere acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

Among the various challenges surrounding music education, the criticism that "teachers lack sufficient skills" is one of the most prevalent and significant concerns.

The curriculum of the Teacher and Art Education program which serves as the operational manual for preparing skilled and competent graduates—incorporates the following course modules:

- Teacher Education
- Musical Science
- Choral and Conducting Skills

- Instrumental Performance Skills
- General Foundation Studies

The knowledge, skills, and personal maturity of graduates depend on how effectively and accurately the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are aligned. Furthermore, program learning outcomes may vary depending on the organization of instructional activities and students' learning styles. In their article titled "*Mongolian Students' Learning Style and Experimental Learning Outcomes*," researchers R. Namjildagva et al.[17] noted that "regardless of their field of study, Mongolian students preferred lessons and problems that are practical, real-world, and structured, with a focus on hands-on learning, laboratory exercises, and concrete facts" [17]. This underscores the necessity of integrating practical exercises, real-world workplace demands, and aligned coursework into the Music Teacher Education curriculum.[17]

The professional curriculum for music teachers was designed through the sequential stages of knowledge, skills, and professional performance, with a dedicated focus on maintaining the integration between different subjects and the connection between theory and practice. By analyzing and synthesizing over 300 learning objectives from approximately 60 core and professional courses within the Teacher and Music Education program of School Of Music Arts at the Mongolian National University Of Arts And Culture (MNUAC), a comprehensive list of general knowledge and skills to be mastered by graduates was established.

Table No. 5. Criteria and Indicators for Graduate Knowledge and Skills

Criteria and Indicators for Graduate Knowledge and Skills	
Knowledge	- Knowledge of music theory (reading and writing notation) - Knowledge of music history - Knowledge of musical analysis - Knowledge of educational and psychological sciences - Knowledge of music teaching methodology
Performance Skills	- Music notation and arrangement - Music processing and composition - Instrumental performance - Improvisation - Singing / Vocal performance - Dancing / Movement - Proficiency in music software - Choral and orchestral conducting
Teaching Skills	- Lesson planning and organization - Developing and selecting pedagogical methods - Assessment and evaluation - Student motivation and engagement - Supporting student development
Personal and Professional Skills	- Attitude and cultural awareness - Communication skills - Teacher ethics - Responsibility and leadership - Commitment to continuous development

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research involved selecting the criteria for evaluating music teacher competencies developed by researchers from Russia and Nigeria, as well as the list of knowledge and skills intended for students in the music education program at the Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture (MNUAC). A content analysis and comparative analysis were conducted on these selections. Through this process, the core content and specific characteristics of music teacher competencies were clarified.

A comparative study on the professional competence of music teachers

In her research on the comprehensive competencies of music teachers, researcher Levina defined the criteria and indicators for evaluating music teacher competency. These include:

Table No. 6. Criteria and indicators of teacher competence as defined by researcher Levina

№	Criteria	Indicator
1.	Value-oriented and motivational component	Aspiration to teach; developed interest in music and pedagogy; engagement in general and specialized subjects; desire to improve musical and teaching skills.
2.	Content-orientation component	Knowledge: Integration of methodological and theoretical knowledge; its systematic nature, cohesion, and integrity; depth, quality, and level of comprehension; ability to understand scientific terminology. Knowledge: Level of understanding; personal judgment; and the ability to support theoretical positions with personal examples.
3.	Operational component	Comprehensive nature of activities; mastery level of skills, techniques, and methodologies; ability to effectively apply knowledge to solve practical problems.
4.	Personal and creative component	Development level of integrative (unified, comprehensive) qualities: focus, self-reflection, and pedagogical/musical-pedagogical creativity.

Nigerian music educators and researchers Adeola Funmilayo Odunuga and Ekaette Clement Udok, in their presentation titled "Developing Professional Skills for the 21st Century Music Teacher" [16], defined teacher competency as follows:

Table No. 7. Components of Professional Skills for Music Teachers [16]

Cognitive Competence	Emotional Competence	Performance Skills	Pedagogical & Methodological Competence	Professional Competence
• Musical knowledge • Musical concepts • Musical creativity • Musical comprehension • Music notation	• Psychomotor response • Identification of song characteristics • Classification of song genres • Musical memory • Listening skills	• Instrumental performance, singing, and dancing • Melodic stability • Expressive ability • Rhythmic precision • Melodic precision • Articulation and expression • Movement response	• Teaching methodology • Clarity and projection of voice • Teacher's professional conduct • Encouragement and motivation • Use of musical notation on the board • Classroom management skills • Assessment techniques • Proficiency as a musician	• Discipline • Professional attire • Equitable and effective communication with students • Respect for individual differences • Initiative • Serving as a positive role model

The list of knowledge and skills defined based on the learning outcomes of the Music Teacher Education program at the School of Music Arts, Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture (MNUAC):

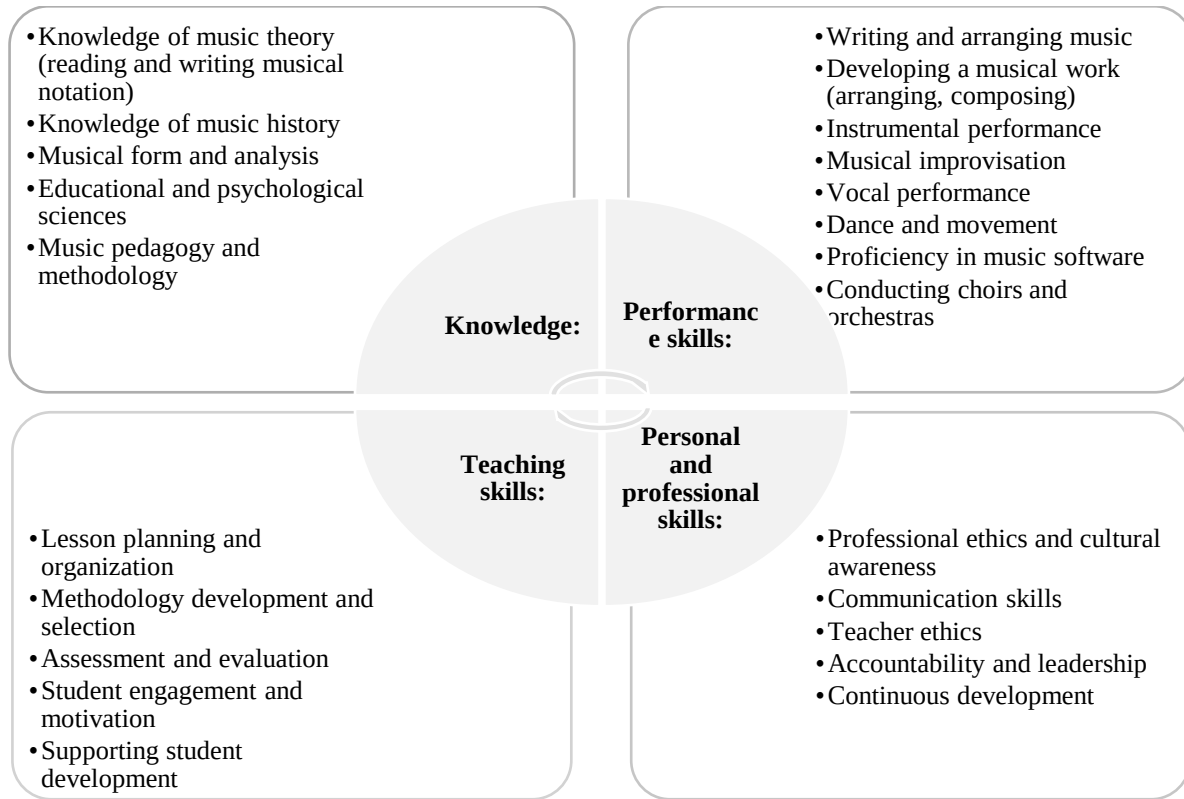


Figure No. 1. Music Teacher Competency Framework based on MNUAC Learning Outcomes

Because this study relies exclusively on the analysis of publicly available documents and educational curricula, formal ethics approval and informed consent were not required.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the theoretical research conducted through various literature sources, six criteria for music teacher professional competency were established, along with specific indicators to define each criterion.

Table No. 8. Criteria and Indicators for Music Teacher Professional Competency

Criteria	Indicators
Criterion 1: Professional attitude and internal motivation	• Aspirations for the teaching profession • Established professional values • Interest in musical development • Active engagement in teaching activities • Commitment to continuous self-development and skill enhancement • Positive attitude toward student development • Professional ethics and accountability

Criterion 2: Level and quality of professional knowledge	• Knowledge of music theory (reading and writing notation) and analysis • Understanding of music history, genres, and trends • Depth of musical concepts and comprehension • Foundational knowledge of education and psychology sciences • Knowledge of music pedagogy and teaching methodology • Ability to understand and apply musical and scientific terminology • Systematic and integrated mastery of knowledge
Criterion 3: Musical performance skills	• Proficiency in instrumental performance, singing, and dancing • Ability to write notation, arrange, and compose musical works • Precision in melody, rhythm, and expression • Level of mastery of musical instruments • Ability to use music technology and software • Skills in conducting choirs and orchestras
Criterion 4: Teaching organization and pedagogical methods	• Skills in lesson planning and organization • Ability to select and apply teaching methods and technologies • Methods for engaging and motivating students • Classroom management skills • Proficiency in vocal projection and verbal communication • Ability to use assessment techniques • Ability to adapt teaching to student characteristics
Criterion 5: Communication and collaboration	• Positive and effective communication skills with students • Ability to respect individual differences among students • Participation in collaborative work and teamwork • Communication culture and ethics • Serving as a positive role model for students
Criterion 6: Personal development and creativity	• Creative thinking and musical creativity • Self-cognitive abilities • Initiative and independence • Emotional regulation and management • Capacity for continuous growth • Leadership and accountability

5. CONCLUSION

A comprehensive review and analysis of scholarly works regarding the professional competency of music teachers were conducted. By analyzing and synthesizing existing criteria and indicators for music teacher competency, a specialized framework of criteria and indicators was developed to serve as the foundation for this research.

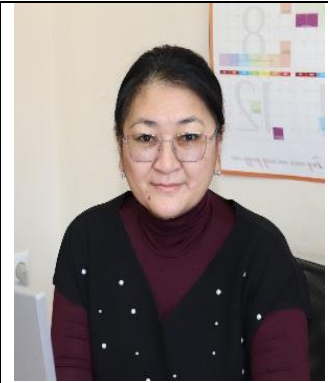
Moving forward, there is a necessity to utilize this developed framework to evaluate, test, and further refine the competency levels of music teachers. It is anticipated that this work will facilitate the effective development of music teachers' professional skills, contribute to the establishment of a comprehensive system for professional growth, and provide a significant contribution to the modernization of music teacher education programs.

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

1. First Author and Corresponding Author

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	Baasandulam Sukhbaatar is a Doctoral student at the Mongolian National University of Education. Her research specialization focuses on defining the scope and criteria of music teachers' professional competencies. This article is the outcome of her doctoral theoretical research conducted between January 2026 and April 2026. She conceptualized the study, conducted the comparative analysis, and drafted the manuscript.

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