



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Improvisation in music education: empirical evidence, classroom practice, and teacher preparation

Hua, C.

Citation

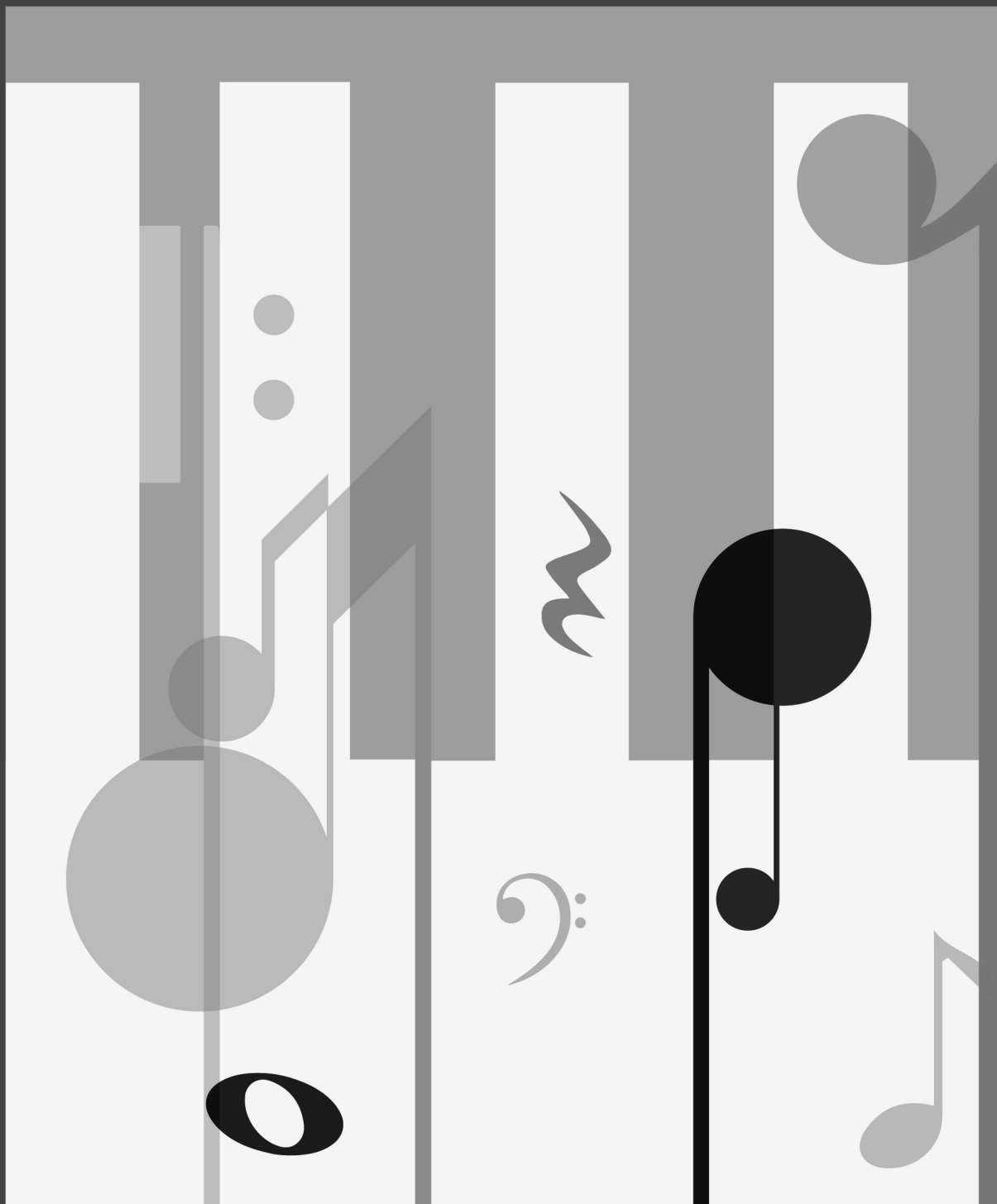
Hua, C. (2026, July 9). *Improvisation in music education: empirical evidence, classroom practice, and teacher preparation*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4307792>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4307792>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Curriculum Vitae

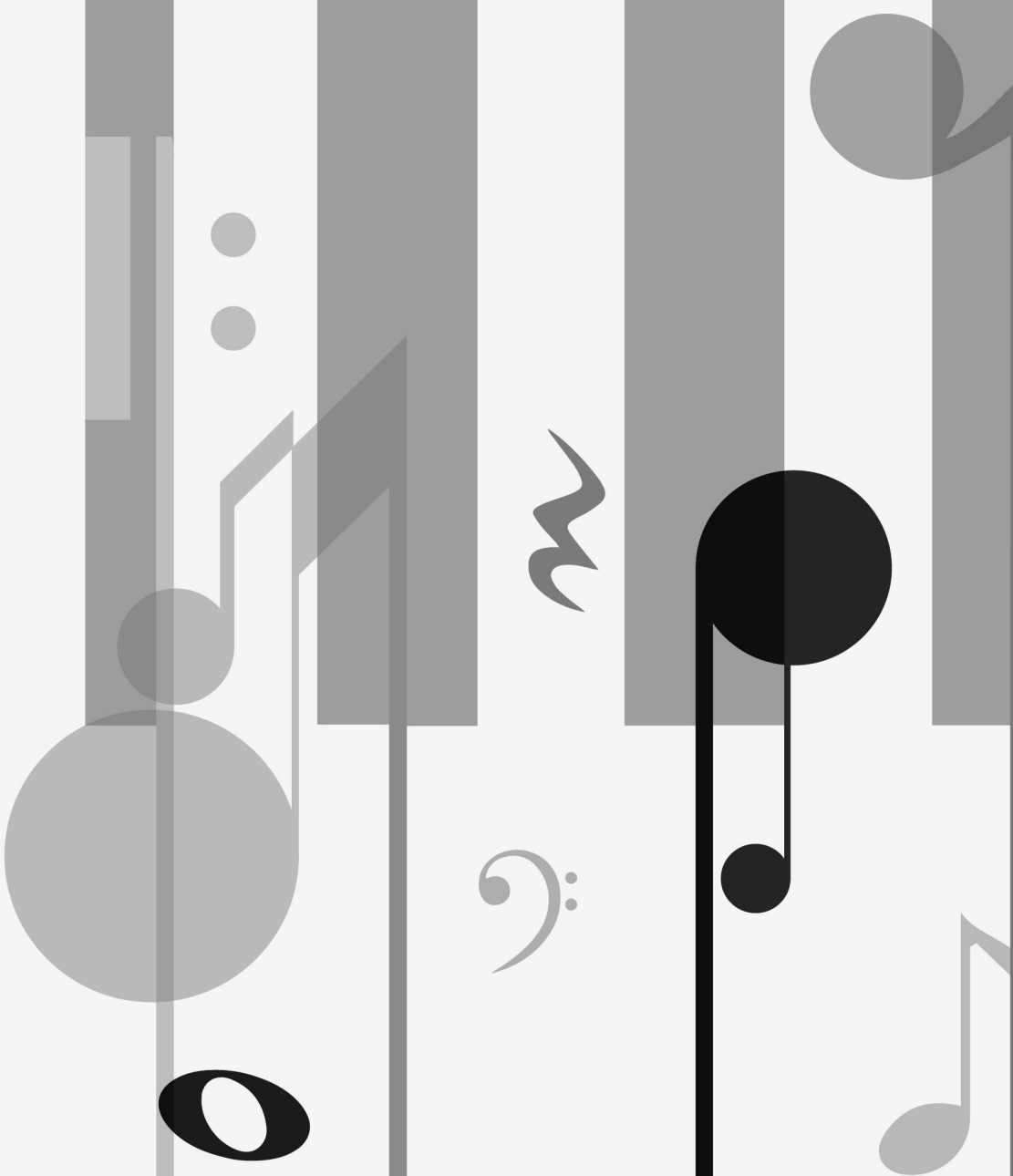
Curriculum Vitae

Cheng Hua was born on August 31, 1997, in JiangXi, China. She completed her high school at Fuzhou No. 1 High School, Jiangxi, before beginning her Bachelor's studies in 2017 at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Hungary. There, she studied Musical Creative Arts and Musicology, specializing in General Studies in Music, and obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2020.

In 2020, she continued her studies at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague in the Netherlands, where she completed a Master of Music degree in Music Education in 2022. During her Master's studies, she developed a research interest in improvisation in music education, which later became the foundation of her PhD research.

In September 2022, Cheng began her PhD trajectory at ICLON, Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching, where her research focused on improvisation in music education, teacher preparation, and classroom practice. Her Bachelor's studies and PhD trajectory were supported by the China Scholarship Council. During her PhD trajectory, she attended courses provided by the Dutch Interuniversity Centre for Educational Research (ICO). She also participated in the Orff International Summer Course at the Mozarteum University Salzburg – Orff Institute in 2023, further developing her interests in creative activities in music education.

Throughout her PhD trajectory, Cheng actively presented her research at international conferences, including the International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference and the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) Conference. In addition to her research activities, she has been a member of the National Female Choir of the Netherlands and serves on the Scientific Committee of the International Conference of Dalcroze Studies (ICDS).



Publications & presentations

Publications and presentations

Peer-reviewed scientific publications

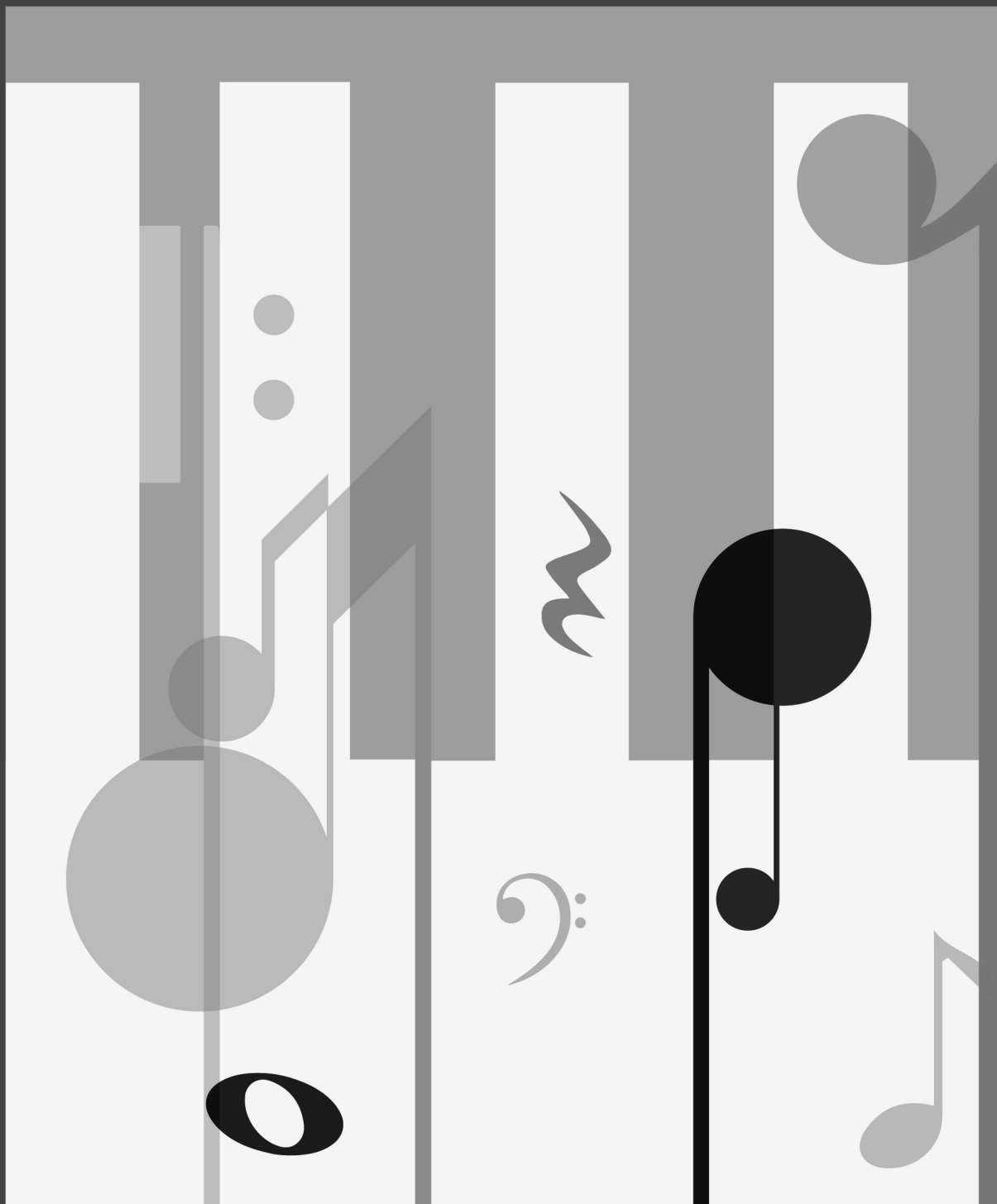
- Hua, C.**, Admiraal, W., Nieuwmeijer, C., & van der Rijst, R. (2026). Perceived readiness to improvise and to lead improvisation activities: A mixed-methods study on attitudes and self-efficacy in music teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 181(October), 105689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2026.105689>
- Hua, C.**, Admiraal, W., Nieuwmeijer, C., & van der Rijst, R. (2026). Unpacking musical improvisation: Implementation and evaluation by primary music teachers in the Netherlands. *British Journal of Music Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051726100916>
- He, H., Chen, S, & **Hua, C.** (2025). Adaptive or maladaptive music-listening coping strategy: How does neuroticism use music after experiencing a romantic relationship breakup? *PLoS One*, 20(8), e0331373. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0331373>

Manuscripts submitted for publication

- Hua, C.**, Admiraal, W., Nieuwmeijer, C., & van der Rijst, R. (Under review). Improvisation in music education: A systematic mapping of activities and learning outcomes.
- Hua, C.**, Admiraal, W., Nieuwmeijer, C., & van der Rijst, R. (Under review). Understanding teachers' intention to implement improvisation in the classroom: A multi-group study of pre-service and in-service music teachers.

Academic conferences and activities (selected)

- 2026 *Perceived readiness to improvise and to lead improvisation activities: A mixed-methods study of attitudes and self-efficacy in music teacher education.* Paper presentation, 37th International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference, Montréal, Canada.
- 2026 *Improvisation in music education: A systematic mapping of activities and learning outcomes.* Short paper presentation, 37th International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference, Montréal, Canada.
- 2025 *Unpacking musical improvisation: Implementation and evaluation by primary music teachers.* Round table, ICO Open Graduate Spring School, Blankenberge, Belgium.
- 2024 *Improvisation in higher music education: Pre-service music teachers' preparation and perspective.* Paper presentation, 36th International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference, Helsinki, Finland.
- 2024 *Can you improvise, can you teach? A mixed-methods study on attitudes and self-efficacy in music teacher education.* Paper presentation, 31st European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) Conference, Dublin, Ireland.
- 2023 *Orff International Summer Course 2023.* Attended, Mozarteum University Salzburg – Orff Institute, Salzburg, Austria.
- 2023 *Case studies in primary music teachers' implementation and evaluation of improvisation.* Poster presentation, 30th European Association for School music (EAS) / 9th International Society for Music Education (ISME) European Regional Conference, Lyon, France.
- 2023 *Unpacking musical improvisation: Implementation and evaluation by primary music teachers.* Pitch presentation, Crossing Bridge Symposium 2023 – A Sense of Freedom, Den Haag, The Netherlands.
- 2022 *5th International Conference of Dalcroze Studies.* Attended, online.



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

When I unexpectedly managed to schedule my defence in July, I felt excited, anxious, and a little overwhelmed all at once. As I write these acknowledgements, I am beginning to realise that this journey is truly coming to an end. Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance, kindness, and support of many people, to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors:

Roeland, I truly appreciate your patience and professionalism. Whenever I knocked on your office door, even when you were very busy, you always took the time to answer all my questions patiently. Your prompt replies, whether about academic work or administrative matters, always made me feel very supported. You gave me a lot of space to explore, and you always supported my decisions. I learned a lot from the way you guided me through this process.

Wilfried, I was always amazed by how quickly you replied and how detailed and constructive your feedback was. You consistently respected my decisions and encouraged me to explore my own ideas, which helped me grow into a more independent researcher. Since you have been working in Norway since the beginning of my PhD, I have always looked forward to the times when we could meet in person, and I still do. I am very grateful for your humour, your sharp academic input, and your continuous encouragement.

I also feel very lucky to have met Christiane at the EAS 2023 conference in Lyon. Thank you for helping me to ground my thinking about improvisation in music education practice. Your connections with music educators and teachers in the Netherlands were specifically helpful during data collection and interpretation.

Thank you all for your trust, patience, and support throughout this journey. Whenever I felt lost, anxious, or stuck in endless rounds of revisions, your advice and encouragement always helped me find direction again. I feel incredibly grateful that I had three such wonderful supervisors. In fact, whenever people ask me what matters most for a positive PhD experience, my answer is always the same: good supervisors.

To all my colleagues at ICLON, thank you for the many fun activities and for the warm welcome. The conversations I had with you and the help you offered me, both academically and personally, enriched my experience in Leiden. My thanks go especially to Ben, Catur, Els, Inge, Ieke, Jean-Michel, Karel, Linyuan, Luyao, Marga, Tessa, Xu, Yujia, and Yuzhi. I am also grateful to

Xiaomei for answering my thousands of questions on data analysis. Luxi, I have truly enjoyed all of our conversations, both about research and life, and I want to thank you for all your support, encouragement, and companionship.

I would also like to give special thanks to all the participants in my studies, and to everyone who helped me contact participants during data collection. Without your participation and support, and willingness to share your thoughts about music, teaching, and improvisation, I could not have completed this dissertation.

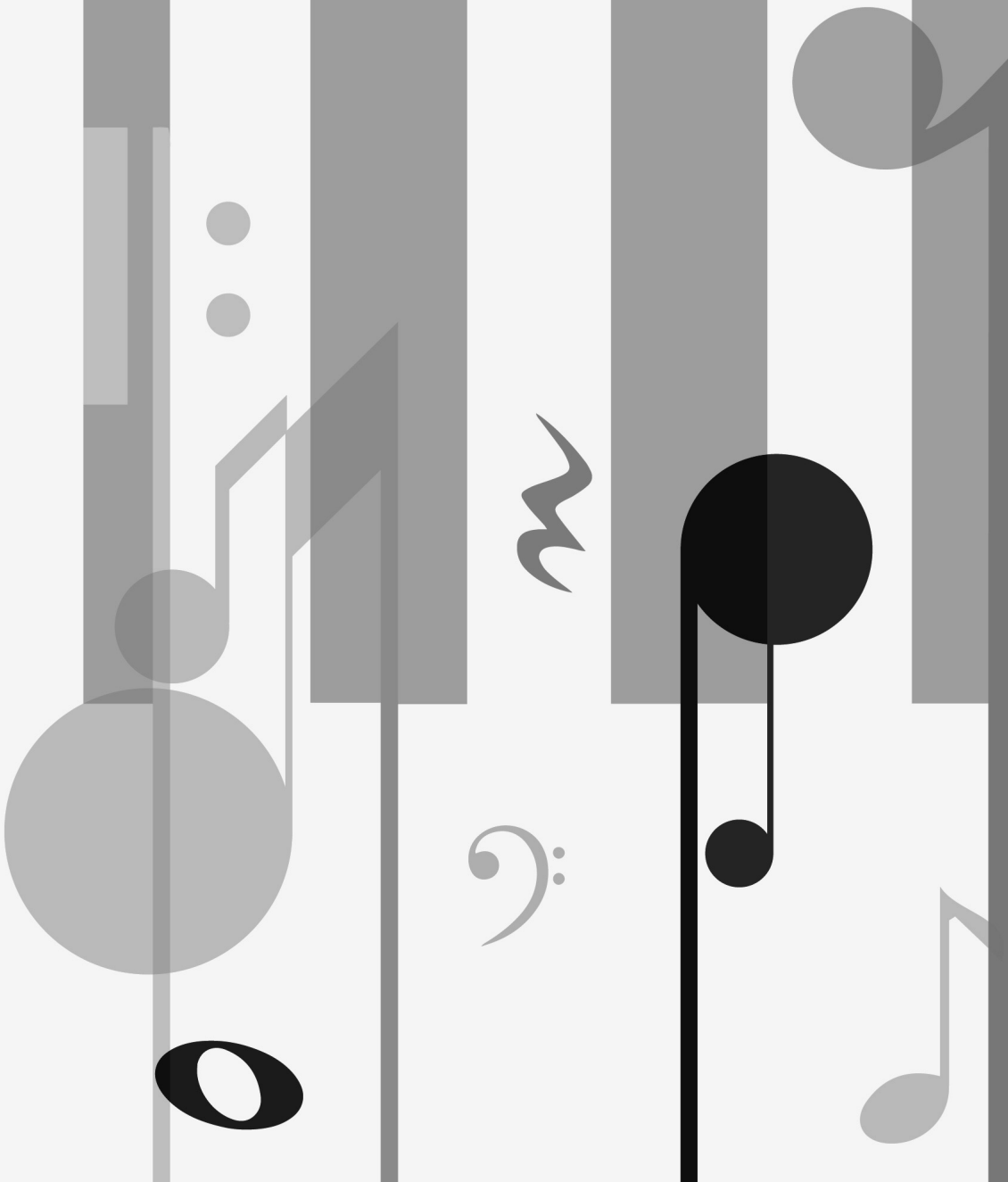
I am also deeply grateful to my former teachers. Katalin Körtvési, during my bachelor's studies in Hungary, your three-year Kokas pedagogy classes introduced me to improvisation and inspired many of the ideas that I continued to explore later. I would also like to thank my bachelor's vocal teacher and thesis supervisor, Renáta Darázs, for introducing me to academic work for the first time, guiding me through my first research project, and for your warmth and kindness. Finally, my master's supervisor, Daniel Salbert, thank you for discussing and developing this topic with me and for supporting me in continuing this research.

I sincerely thank all my friends whom I met in the Netherlands for their companionship and support during my PhD journey. I am especially grateful to my climbing friends, Ziqi Deng, Dr. Yujie Li, Shizhi Li, Xiufang Wu, Rui Yang, and especially Yinan Zhang, with whom I also greatly enjoyed discussing knitting. My thanks also go to Tianrui Li, Yiyang Li, and Shuang Xia. I am also very grateful to my ICO sisters, Wenjun Cai, Dr. Xingshi Gao, and Weiwei Liu. I would also like to thank my friends who are far away in China or other countries: Dr. Shu Chen, Dr. Jin Ding, Dr. Yu Gu, Dr. Hanwei He, Yaqi Liu, Zhenwei Xiang, Ya Yang, Xiaoxian Zhao, Enru Zhong, and especially Siyi Zhang. Your academic and emotional support, together with all the laughter we shared, means so much to me. Both studying abroad and doing a PhD are not always easy, but because of all of you, this journey became much warmer.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Lihua Wan and Yingquan Hua. Thank you for your unconditional love, which allowed me to stand on your shoulders and explore the depth and breadth of life, seeing a broader world. Finally, I want to thank myself for the countless days and nights of hard work, for my unwavering pursuit of knowledge, and for my perseverance in the face of difficulties during the past nine years of study in Europe.

Cheng Hua
Den Haag, May 2026

A



ICLON PhD Publication Series



ICLON PhD Dissertation Series

Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching ICLON PhD Dissertation Series

- Hoeflaak, A. (1994). *Decoderen en interpreteren: een onderzoek naar het gebruik van strategieën bij het beluisteren van Franse nieuwsteksten.*
- Verhoeven, P. (1997). *Tekstbegrip in het onderwijs klassieke talen.*
- Meijer, P.C. (1999). *Teachers' practical knowledge: Teaching reading comprehension in secondary education.*
- Zanting, A. (2001). *Mining the mentor's mind: The elicitation of mentor teachers' practical knowledge by prospective teachers.*
- Uhlenbeck, A.M. (2002). *The development of an assessment procedure for beginning teachers of English as a foreign language.*
- Oolbekkink-Marchand, H.W. (2006). *Teachers' perspectives on self-regulated learning: An exploratory study in secondary and university education.*
- Henze-Rietveld, F.A. (2006). *Science teachers' knowledge development in the context of educational innovation.*
- Mansvelder-Longayroux, D.D. (2006). *The learning portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection by student teachers.*
- Meirink, J.A. (2007). *Individual teacher learning in a context of collaboration in teams.*
- Nijveldt, M.J. (2008). *Validity in teacher assessment: An exploration of the judgement processes of assessors.*
- Bakker, M.E.J. (2008). *Design and evaluation of video portfolios: Reliability, generalizability, and validity of an authentic performance assessment for teachers.*
- Oonk, W. (2009). *Theory-enriched practical knowledge in mathematics teacher education.*
- Visser-Wijnveen, G.J. (2009). *The research-teaching nexus in the humanities: Variations among academics.*
- Van der Rijst, R.M. (2009). *The research-teaching nexus in the sciences: Scientific research dispositions and teaching practice.*
- Platteel, T.L. (2010). *Knowledge development of secondary school L1 teachers on concept-context rich education in an action-research setting.*
- Kessels, C.C. (2010). *The influence of induction programs on beginning teachers' well-being and professional development.*

- Min-Leliveld, M.J. (2011). *Supporting medical teachers' learning: Redesigning a program using characteristics of effective instructional development.*
- Dobber, M. (2011). *Collaboration in groups during teacher education.*
- Wongsopawiro, D. (2012). *Examining science teachers pedagogical content knowledge in the context of a professional development program.*
- Belo, N.A.H. (2013). *Engaging students in the study of physics: An investigation of physics teachers' belief systems about teaching and learning physics.*
- De Jong, R.J. (2013). *Student teachers' practical knowledge, discipline strategies, and the teacher-class relationship.*
- Verberg, C.P.M. (2013). *The characteristics of a negotiated assessment procedure to promote teacher learning.*
- Van Kan, C.A. (2013). *Teachers' interpretations of their classroom interactions in terms of their pupils' best interest: A perspective from continental European pedagogy.*
- Dam, M. (2014). *Making educational reforms practical for teachers: Using a modular, success-oriented approach to make a context-based educational reform practical for implementation in Dutch biology education.*
- Hu, Y. (2014). *The role of research in university teaching: A comparison of Chinese and Dutch teachers.*
- Vink, C.C. (2014). *Mapping for meaning: Using concept maps to integrate clinical and basic sciences in medical education.*
- De Hei, M.S.A. (2016). *Collaborative learning in higher education: design, implementation and evaluation of group learning activities.*
- Louws, M.L. (2016). *Professional learning: what teachers want to learn.*
- Moses, I. (2017). *Student-teachers' commitment to teaching.*
- Veldman, I.M.J. (2017). *Stay or leave? Veteran teachers' relationships with students and job satisfaction.*
- Chen, D. (2017). *Intercultural identities of English language teachers: An exploration in China and the Netherlands.*
- Vereijken, M.W.C. (2018). *Student engagement in research in medical education.*
- Stollman, S.H.M. (2018). *Differentiated instruction in practice: A teacher perspective.*
- Day, I.N.Z. (2018). *Intermediate assessment in higher education.*
- Huisman, B.A. (2018). *Peer feedback on academic writing.*
- Tran, T.T.Q. (2018). *Cultural differences in Vietnam: Differences in work-related values between Western and Vietnamese culture and cultural awareness at higher education.*
- Van Ginkel, G.V.M. (2018). *Making mentoring match: Mentor teachers' practical knowledge of adaptive mentoring.*
- Wieringa, N. (2019). *Teacher knowledge and lesson design: Understanding and supporting biology teachers' decision-making while designing context-based lessons.*

- Vossen, T.E. (2019). *Research and design in STEM education: What do students and teachers think about the connection?*
- Van Kampen, E. (2019). *What's CLIL about bilingual education? A window on content and language integrated learning pedagogies.*
- Den Ouden, J.A.J. (2020). *Zachtjes schudden aan de boom: Een onderzoek naar rationales en kernpraktijken van eerstegraads docenten Godsdienst/Levensbeschouwing gericht op de levensbeschouwelijke identiteitsontwikkeling van hun leerlingen.*
- Vogelzang, J. (2020). *Scrum in secondary chemistry education: A methodology to support teachers and to scaffold students.*
- Kop, P.M.G.M. (2020). *Graphing formulas by hand to promote symbol sense: Becoming friends with algebraic formulas.*
- Lamers-Reeuwijk, A.M. (2020). *Teaching and professional development in transnational education in Oman.*
- De Vrind, E. (2020). *The SpeakTeach method: Towards self-regulated learning of speaking skills in foreign languages in secondary schools: an adaptive and practical approach.*
- De Jong, L.A.H. (2021). *Teacher professional learning and collaboration in secondary schools.*
- Zhang, X. (2021). *Teachers' teaching and learning motivation in China.*
- Wang, J. (2021). *Technology integration in education: Policy plans, teacher practices, and student outcomes.*
- Guo, P. (2021). *Online project-based higher education: Student collaboration and outcomes.*
- Jin, X. (2021). *Peer feedback in teacher professional development.*
- Keijzer-Groot, R. (2021). *Vocational identity of at-risk youth: Tailoring to support career chances.*
- Rumiantsev, T. (2022). *Collaborative learning in conservatoire education: Catalyst for innovation.*
- Galikyan, I. (2022). *Learner–learner interaction in digital learning environments: What and how are we measuring?*
- De Boer, E. (2022). *Towards an ecological approach to teacher professional development: How preservice biology teachers direct their learning routes in authentic classroom settings.*
- Kroneman, M. (2022). *Peer education as an opportunity for practicing respect for sexual and gender diversity.*
- Le, T.T.T. (2022). *Towards a democratic school: Experience and viewpoints of stakeholders in Vietnamese secondary schools.*
- Zhou, N. (2023). *Professional learning of vocational teachers in the context of work placement.*
- Smit, B.H.J. (2023). *Dimensions of student participation: Participatory action research in a teacher education context.*
- Baas, M.A.A. (2023). *Open to all, not known to all: Sustaining practices with open educational resources in higher education.*

- Den Otter, M.-J. (2023). *Bridging the gap between macro and micro: Enhancing students' chemical reasoning. How to use demonstration experiments effectively for the teaching and learning of structure-property reasoning.*
- Theeuwes-De Bock, B.C. (2024). *Culturally responsive teaching in Dutch multicultural secondary schools.*
- Lai, Y. (2024). *Self-directed language learning: Using mobile technology in higher education.*
- Wang, L. (2025). *Design for engagement in blended learning: Insights, practices, and challenges.*
- Kusters, M.C.J. (2025). *Understanding teacher agency in universities: Why and how lecturers shape and navigate university teaching practices.*
- Liu, X. (2025). *Maintaining self while adapting: Chinese foreign language teachers' identity development in an intercultural context.*
- Zweeris, K. (2025). *Teaching, curriculum and purposes of education: Connecting theory and practice*
- Wurth, J.G.R. (2025). *Towards better L1-oral language education: Perspectives on good quality oral language teaching and the role of feedback.*
- Snijder-Schoots, A.J.M. (2026). *In de klas met kompas: Student agency als leidinggevend principe in het voortgezet onderwijs*
- Wei, X. (2026). *Assessment and learning engagement in massive open online courses.*
- Hua, C. (2026). *Improvisation in music education: Empirical evidence, classroom practice, and teacher preparation.*