



Teach Through Music *What we have learned*

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Introduction

Teach Through Music is a year-long, fully subsidised professional development programme for KS3 music teachers in London schools (state and independent), supported by the London Schools Excellence Fund. Led by Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, with a partnership of world-class music education organisations, Teach Through Music sets out to create a Centre of Excellence for KS3 music teaching in London. It draws upon the expertise of teachers, the Higher Education community and cultural organisations. Teach Through Music is designed to complement the busy lives of teachers. It offers choice and flexibility, allowing teachers to select training which best meets their needs, and those of their school. (www.teachthroughmusic.org.uk)

This document summarises professional learning that has resulted from independent evaluation of the Teach Through Music (TTM) programme.

As the extract cited above says, TTM was a continuing professional development (CPD) programme for KS3 music teachers in London which was in operation during the academic year 2014-15. It was developed and delivered by a newly formed partnership of organisations, led by Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, with Sound Connections, Barbican, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Trinity College London and University of Greenwich.

The provision of a CPD programme on this scale is highly unusual, and there have been a number of aspects of delivery and organisation which are worthy of commentary. This is the rationale for this document.

Background – The place and role of subject specific CPD

There has not been a great deal of subject-specific CPD in music education in recent years. It is fairly safe to say that the CPD that has taken place, has been focussed on matters of curriculum and delivery. For example, there have been CPD programmes associated with the National Curriculum, especially when it was introduced, as well as when changes were made to it. There are courses run at least annually by examination boards for teachers concerned with examination specifications at GCSE and A level.

The last time KS3 was the central focus of attention for wide scale CPD was probably the then Key Stage 3 strategy which began in 1997:

The National Strategies were delivered by a national team of experts and a regional field force that worked with and supported local authorities in providing training and support to schools and settings. Local authorities (LAs) in turn were funded to employ some 2000 consultants to help to deliver the National Strategies' training locally. (DfE, 2011 p.2)

But even the KS3 strategy was frequently delivered by a 'cascade' model, so by the time it reached classroom practitioners it was often somewhat diluted in both content and impact.

CPD across the country has been undertaken in recent years by the Musical Futures programme. Musical Futures is "... a movement to reshape music education driven by teachers for teachers. At its heart is a set of pedagogies that bring non-formal teaching and informal learning approaches into more formal contexts, in an attempt to provide engaging, sustainable and relevant music making activities for all young people" (Musical Futures Website). This means that Musical Futures has a specific focus, purpose and intention, which stands in contrast to the broader brushstroke approach adopted by TTM. This is not to decry or be in any way pejorative about Musical Futures, simply to observe that it not the same as the CPD offered by TTM.

Other music specific CPD has been offered by commercial organisations, who, it can be assumed, run courses which they hope will be of widespread interest, as they have a financial interest in so doing. With the demise of Local Authority music advisers, regional music hubs are increasingly taking on a CPD role, and some universities are also offering accredited and non-accredited CPD as part of their outreach portfolios. Many music organisations, orchestras, community music groups, also offer CPD for teachers, often related to their core activities, which tend to be performance based in many cases.

What all this means is that the programme offered by TTM, although confined to London in terms of geographical specificity, nonetheless offer one of, if not the most significant broad-based subject-specific music CPD programmes in the professional lifetimes of most teachers now in-post.

Lack of teacher take-up

Against a background of the patchy picture of provision described in the previous section, TTM represented a coherent and structured approach to CPD. However, it did not reach its full target audience, and neither did the other music-specific offer operating at the same time, Peer-to-Peer, organised by Music Mark. In both of these cases there are number of reasons why participant take up was not high. It is problematic to establish why people do *not* do something, as clearly they are not there to ask them. But from research with different cohorts of stakeholders in TTM it would seem to be the case that we can highlight the following as being of significant concern:

1. Teachers unwilling to commit to much over and above the 'day job'
 - i. The pressures of performativity and the audit culture meaning teachers not feeling able to take on additionality
 - ii. The pressure of improving examination results and KS3 results meaning that some teachers are reluctant to do anything else
 - iii. Teachers being told their primary allegiance is to the school, and this is where they should stay
 - iv. The pressures of extra-curricular music making meaning that some teachers are reluctant to take on anything that might mean missing rehearsals
 - v. The feeling that some teachers have that they are near breaking point, and can cope with nothing more
2. Schools being unwilling to release teachers, both in the short term and the longer term
 - i. Some SLTs not seeing the value of subject-specific CPD
 - ii. Some SLTs seeming to believe that their own CPD programmes should be more than adequate by themselves
 - iii. Some schools being reluctant to take on potential extra cover costs
3. Some teachers having a general feeling of insecurity, and not wanting to admit to not being good at everything
4. Conversely, some teachers feeling they are already good practitioners, and have no need of subject specific CPD
5. Some teachers being so isolated professionally that they did not even know that TTM (and/or Peer-to-Peer) were taking place
6. NQTs being reluctant to do anything extra in their first year of teaching 'just in case'
7. Teachers are concerned to be away from schools, as they are from small departments, and are worried about what will happen whilst they are away from school to their expensive equipment etc.
8. CPD is simply not seen as a priority, or worth engaging with

This list shows a range of complex, inter-related issues, which are likely to affect teacher take-up of all forms of CPD offered now, and in the future. There are some significant obstacles to be overcome here, especially in terms of attitudinal responses on the part of individual teachers, and, significantly, of school leadership teams (SLTs). In many ways this finding echoes the 2008 findings of a TDA report which observed "[b]oth school-level conditions and teacher perceptions serve as barriers to CPD participation" (Pedder et al., 2008 p.19)19. These aspects will need to be addressed by new, developing, and ongoing CPD offers.

Effective CPD for Music Teachers

Relevance

One of the issues with CPD provision is in disentangling issues of what teachers *want*, with what they *need*. Commercial companies will normally default to offering teachers what they want, as this is where their income will flow from. It is harder to persuade teachers to buy into (figuratively

and financially) CPD which they need. This is an issue for the whole education system, all across the profession, to have to address.

What this means is that *relevance* needs to be built in from the get-go, so that teachers can understand why some aspects of CPD may be of use to them. In TTM there was much commendation of the fact that CPD was being provided by people who were both experts in their field, *and* understand the day-to-day reality of life in a KS3 comprehensive school classroom. Music education can be seen as a 'broad church', and sometimes there can seem to be only limited understanding and applicability between its various sub-components. It is vital for understanding and appropriateness that these various specificities are both recognised and understood. In TTM one of the many comments made by participants concerned the relevance of the programme.

"I've really enjoyed the bit of TTM I've done, it feels like it was made just for me".

Making CPD relevant for teachers does mean that the people providing it need to be aware, and experienced in these issues. Teachers are very good at working out the application of new ideas to their own contexts, but these do need to be rooted in a recognisable ontology for them. This is not to say that CPD (in London, at least) should only be delivered by those who currently teach in inner-city KS3 schools, but that people delivering CPD should have an awareness of what this entails; in other words, "[t]he skills and knowledge required by facilitators of professional development are particularly key" (Teacher Development Trust, 2015b p.24). TTM would echo this sentiment. What this means is that time and care needs to be devoted to the selection and implementation of appropriate CPD.

Subject Knowledge and PCK (pedagogical content knowledge)

What TTM has also learned is that CPD for music teachers needs to contain elements which are concerned with the development of both subject knowledge, as well as that which Shulman (1986) referred to as *pedagogical content knowledge*, (PCK). This means that teachers need CPD in the areas of both *what* to teach, and, importantly *how* to teach it. The former can be provided by external experts, the latter needs to be addressed by those with classroom experience of translating musical knowledge so that it can be accessed and delivered using suitable pedagogies.

The importance of not simply running "tips for teachers" is vital if professional learning is to be taken forwards. We learned from TTM that teachers want and need both subject knowledge and PCK components as part of their CPD. These may or may not be delivered – or deliverable at the same time, but they are important.

Focus on pupil learning

CPD for teachers needs to address both their professional learning, *and* deal with ways that this can be put into action in the classroom. Whilst there is a strong case to be made for developing subject knowledge, it is relevance to teaching and learning in the classroom which will make the biggest difference. Whatever CPD is being implemented, we learned from the things teachers said in TTM that this is what they wanted. Comments such as "I can't wait to try this out with my year 8s" were not uncommon. We also heard anecdotes of other non-TTM CPD that teachers had attended, such as "it was all well and good, but it had nothing to do with the kids I teach, so I didn't see the point of it". This is important, as disengaged teachers will not maximise their learning opportunities.

Timescales

Developing teaching and learning is not a quick fix, and the longitudinal nature of TTM over one year was actually felt by participants to not be long enough. Compared with the single event CPD which tends to be common in educational settings this is an interesting finding. What it means is that to be really effective, CPD needs to take place over an extended timescale. For example, during TTM one of the short courses involved the 'Listen, Imagine, Compose' (LIC) project work. This entailed teachers working on a classroom based task over a period of some weeks. In addition, session leaders from LIC held individual discussions with participating teachers during this. As a result, what the teachers reported was that their engagement with materials, content, theories, concepts, constructs, and pedagogies, all developed over the time that the project was running.

This accords with findings of the teacher development trust, who noted that

The evidence also points to steps schools and teachers can take to ensure that, given the inevitable logistical constraints, there are structured arrangements in school to follow up learning from CPD programmes through sustained and iterative experimenting with and refining new approaches in the light of learning with and through pupils' responses. (Teacher Development Trust, 2015a p.12)

Their recommendation was that:

CPD opportunities related to pedagogy is accompanied by time for teachers to contextualise this for specific subjects and groups of pupils. (Teacher Development Trust, 2015a p.13)

From the work done by TTM, it would seem that serious thought needs to be given to longitudinal CPD. Short term quick-fix or one-shot approaches, valuable though they might be, are no substitute for prolonged engagement.

Planning CPD

Without wishing in any way to disparage commercial CPD providers, when a market exists, it is unsurprising that marketisation follows. This can mean that for commercial purposes, *wants* are prioritised (monetised, in effect) over *needs*. TTM was planned carefully, with the express view of addressing both wants and needs. Indeed, one of the constructed objectives of TTM was to endeavour to try to turn wants into needs. Here, it is the needs of pupils, teachers, and schools which form the basis of preliminary needs analysis. This can be different from organisations who may, however inadvertently, put their own wants before the needs of the learners.

TTM was planned as an integrated programme to include one-shot, short-term, and long-term CPD. This was designed purposefully to develop teaching and learning, as well as take teachers on a professional journey. One of the important learning outcomes from the planning of TTM is that teachers need space and time to develop ideas and put them into practice in their own classrooms. One of the facets of this was that of the role of Fellows, to which we now turn.

Critical Friends (a.k.a. Fellows or mentors)

The place of critical friends, known as *Fellows* in TTM nomenclature, but also referred to as mentors elsewhere, is an important one for CPD. These are not necessarily experts *per se*, but can be colleagues from other schools. The main things about them is that they are doing, or have done, similar jobs to the teachers enrolled on the CPD programme in question.

In TTM the use of Fellows was not as extensive as it could have been, but nonetheless was still a significantly important experiential feature for all those concerned. This is because reflection in and of itself is difficult to undertake personally, if there is no external stimulus with which to interact. The place of the critical friend fulfils this requirement. We know that the line of least resistance can be the easiest, and so having someone to talk to helps overcome this.

If, as was outlined above, a focus on pupil learning is deemed an important aspect of CPD, then teachers need a way of recording how they have changed teaching and learning, and of reflecting on the differences that have been made. Whilst this can be accomplished through the use of, say, personal journals, the experiences of the TTM teachers was that the Fellow played a significant and important role in helping develop this. Not only did they act as a stimulus, but they also offered encouragement and support when times were tough, and helped celebrate when things went well. The use of critical friends can therefore be seen as a significant piece of learning from TTM, and is recommended for duplication in future CPD projects.

Conclusions

This document has outlined the professional and organisational learning about CPD that has taken place during the course of the Teach Through Music Programme in London. There are some significant messages for those intending to plan, operate, and deliver CPD to music teachers, as well as transferable learning for those involved in other subjects areas.

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