Popular music meta-pedagogy in music teacher education

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In this chapter we discuss issues surrounding the training of secondary school classroom music teachers in England and share some findings from a small-scale action research project. In order to prepare beginning music teachers to teach music lessons which have value and are meaningful to a broad range of young people, it is important to include pedagogies for popular music as part of initial teacher education. International modalities for initial teacher education differ significantly between jurisdictions, but however they are conceived, Shulman's (1986) notion of *pedagogic content knowledge* features as an important element. Pedagogical content knowledge for popular music is a relative newcomer to the toolkit of the classroom music teacher despite the importance of popular music to young people and the broader community outside schools. Popular music deserves separate consideration from other types of musical stylistic learning, in particular because it has no long history of pedagogy (Mantie, 2013), and expertise can be gained without formal musical tuition (Green, 2002, 2008).

Popular music in initial teacher education

We have known for some time now that beginning music teachers come into their teacher training from a variety of routes. There is a wide variety of music degree programmes, and within this variety there is also considerable variance in the depth and breadth of music curricular content. In some cases, students approaching initial teacher education may have experienced trajectories which have not included significant amounts of either academic study or professional practice with regards to popular music; neither, in many cases, will graduates of these programmes have undertaken significant study in composing or arranging

in popular music styles and genres. As Hargreaves, Welch, Purves and Marshall (2005, p. 1) observe:

> Many secondary music specialist teachers have been trained within the Western Classical tradition, in which music-making is dominated by a "professional performance" career model based largely in conservatoires and university music departments, and this may be inappropriate for the demands of the secondary school classroom.

In their study of initial teacher education, Finney and Philpott invoke Bourdieu's notion of habitus, aligning this with the prioritizing of certain types of musical knowledge linked to a subversion of some popular styles and genres of music:

> Music graduates arrive for initial teacher education having acquired habitus where an awareness of the informal moment in musical learning can lie "buried", even for those who have learned as a stereotypical "informal" pop musician! Our system of music education (and wider education and culture) has the potential to subvert the informal, a consequence of which is that what counts as musical knowledge, learning and pedagogy for the musicians who embark on teacher education programmes can often be defined in terms of the formal moment.
>
> *(Finney & Philpott, 2010, p. 10)*

However, alongside such beginning music teachers, there are also a significant number who have undertaken study which has included, or been focused on, aspects of popular music. In her study of music initial teacher education, Kokotsaki (2010) found that 20% of students had *not* come from degree programmes which could be considered as being primarily based in a Western classical tradition: a small, but significant minority.

Whatever their background, the reality of the contemporary secondary school music classroom is that all beginning music teachers need to be able to function pedagogically with a secure understanding of popular music and associated music technology. A key question that underpins the work of university-based tutors in initial teacher education is posited by Russell and Loughran (2007, p. 14), namely: "How do you develop and enact your pedagogy of teacher education?" In teaching novice teachers how to teach, or 'enact their pedagogy', a key notion is that of *meta-pedagogy*, which we take to mean the process through which beginning music teachers learn about pedagogical content knowledge. This is the way in which Finney and Philpott (2010, p. 7) use the term when they talk of "the pedagogy for learning pedagogy".

As teacher educators we want to enable beginning music teachers to develop an understanding of how and what to teach so that they can function in a variety of school settings. The aim is not to restrict beginning music teachers' experiences to 'what works for us'. An issue here is how students recognize and develop their own perceptions of popular music pedagogy, particularly in terms of pedagogical

content knowledge, "the ways of representing and formulating the subject to make it comprehensible to others" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9), as this is central to discussion of meta-pedagogy.

In most higher education-based teacher-training programmes in the United Kingdom, a period of learning away from schools is followed by a practicum, a teaching practice experience in the classroom. Once beginning music teachers begin to function as novice teachers, their main focus tends to be upon their own personal classroom performance, where they are concerned with reproducing the "idiosyncratic and contextual factors" (Bronkhorst, Meijer, Koster & Vermunt, 2011, p. 1122) of a school setting. At this stage beginning music teachers are apparently functioning as teachers; indeed, many see this as a sort of extended role play activity, but while operating at this functioning and reproductive stage many beginning music teachers are not yet able to recognize how their teaching impacts upon learning. Working away from schools enables beginning music teachers to explore in a secure environment many of the pedagogic issues they will encounter for real in the practicum. This means that they are able to experience what Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008, p. 83) define as an "authentic pedagogy" which "emphasises higher order thinking, in other words, the construction of meaning through conversation and the development of a depth of knowledge that has value beyond the classroom".

Popular music education or informal learning

Much of the recent work on popular music in education has focused on what is often termed *informal learning.* Indeed, an axiological approach including popular music in the context of informal learning has underpinned a significant amount of music education research and subsequent school approaches in England (Green, 2008) and elsewhere (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010) in the past decade. Based upon her investigations into how popular musicians learn (Green, 2002), Green has achieved significant impact on music education at Key Stage 3 (in the UK this covers the first three years of secondary school, for pupils aged 11 to 14). In the UK, Key Stage 3 is the principal concern of beginning music teachers studying Secondary Music Education since it will normally form the majority of their teaching in schools. Therefore, a meta-pedagogy for popular music needs to enable these students to develop their pedagogical content knowledge in the context of Key Stage 3 classroom music education, particularly in terms of how they "bring non-formal teaching and informal learning approaches into the more formal context of schools" (Musical Futures, 2014). The five key principles of informal learning that underpin the Musical Futures project (from Green, 2008) are:

1   Pupils work with music that they choose for themselves, often music that they like, enjoy and identify with;
2   Pupils primarily work aurally, by listening and copying;
3   Pupils work alongside friends, in groups that they choose for themselves;

4   Skills and knowledge tend to be assimilated haphazardly, starting with whole, real-world pieces of music;

5   There is an integration of listening, performing, improvising and composing throughout the learning process, with an emphasis on personal creativity.

These principles of informal learning are important and can form an initial framework for a meta-pedagogy that reflects what has been happening in schools:

• Students choose their learning groups (principle 3);
• Students share the music they listen to (principles 1 and 4);
• Students create their own arrangement of existing music chosen from the music they have shared (principle 2),
• These arrangements are created through performance-based listening and copying (principles 1, 2 and 4),
• From this initial arrangement students then choose a musical device that featured in their arrangement (such as a chord sequence, melodic fragment or bass riff) to initiate some composing (principle 5).

However, as Folkestad observes:

> Having established that learning, and the learning situation, can be both formal and informal, it is important to clarify that this is not the case with teaching: teaching can never be carried out using "informal teaching methods".
>
> *(Folkestad, 2006, p. 142)*

This is an important point, as there is not an automatic linkage between popular music and informal learning. Simply because some programmes of popular music learning employ informal learning strategies in schools does not mean that all popular music learning has to be this way. Hodkinson, Colley and Malcolm (2003) identify informal learning as an unstructured process lacking overt assessment, with no certification, no time constraints, no predetermined learning objectives, no specified curriculum with the focus on everyday practice and non-elite knowledge where learning is decided on and initiated by the learner. This can provide an initial stimulus for learning, but there is a danger that if there is little or no form of intervention, learning becomes unfocused, lacking appropriate challenge, and that the hegemonic valorization of certain types of music, including certain types of popular music, can be reinforced. This can result in students becoming disengaged, and some might even regard the process as meaningless, particularly if they feel they are outside that valorization process (Wright, 2008). Folkestad (2006, p. 143) identifies that:

> Formal–informal should not be regarded as a dichotomy, but rather as the two poles of a continuum, and that in most learning situations, both these aspects of learning are in various degrees present and interacting in the learning process.

Distributed and situated learning in communities

One approach to mitigate against learning that lacks challenge might be some form of intervention by a teacher. However, the motivation engendered by an active engagement in learning by pupils cannot be ignored. In effect, a balance between teaching and learning needs to be attained, especially between the formal moment where the content is decided by the teacher, and the informal moment where the content is chosen by the pupil. Professional judgements that teachers make with regard to this balancing act centre on their perceptions of pedagogy. Pedagogy and meta-pedagogy can be seen as forms of social discourse, where teachers and learners are part of learning communities, and where knowledge is actively co-constructed. Learning communities provide the capacity for taking risks, which are necessary to promote change (Vescio et al., 2008, p. 84).

Placing beginning music teachers in learning communities presents the possibility of challenging preconceived ideas about teaching based upon their own experiences in education. It is important that students share their reservoirs of experience in terms of personal musical enculturation, but if learning communities are created that include a balanced mix of musical experiences then there is the potential to challenge Bourdieu's notions of personal habitus, and simultaneously promote the potential for social equality. To address this, beginning music teachers can be placed as though along a continuum, both as novices and experts in different areas of music and musicianship, helping to encourage mutual learning readiness. Yang and Liu provide a clear summary of the importance of learning communities where student teachers can engage in discourse with teacher educators in a non-threatening manner. They help to develop "collegiality and cooperative problem solving, promoting the growth of reflective discourse" (2004, p. 735). Yang and Liu also observe that student teachers' "participation in a knowledge-building community has been envisaged to facilitate the development of subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge" (2004, p. 735).

If the beginning music teachers become part of a learning community their learning about pedagogical content knowledge can be conceptualized as being distributed. Distributed cognition (Salomon, 1993) takes into account how individuals interact with their environment and the objects or artefacts within their environments, how groups of individuals in learning communities interact and communicate in an organized way, and how the products of earlier cognitive processes change the nature of later cognitive tasks. Salomon characterizes distributed cognition in real-life problem-solving situations where people appear to think in conjunction or in partnership with others and with the help of culturally provided tools and implements: "the thinking of these individuals might be considered to entail not just solo cognitive activities but distributed ones" (Salomon, 1993, p. xiii). Distributed cognition is apparent when music is performed in a group, where musicians fulfil different musical roles.

Salomon (1993) warns against assuming that distributed cognition can replace individual cognition. He also identifies (along with Pea in the same publication) that cognitive "off-loading" can occur when people interact with "powerful tools"

(such as a computer) or with others who are more competent, resulting in them unloading their "cognitive burden onto a tool or human partners" (Salomon, 1993, p. 132). This can result in blocking development or can "even de-skill" (Salomon, 1993, p. 135). Ideally, distributed cognition should "promote or scaffold, rather than limit, the cultivation of individual competences" (Salomon, 1993, p. 135). It is important, therefore, to encourage students to share their thinking about music, particularly their own performing and composing. Meta-pedagogy for popular music enables students to go beyond reflection-in-action and encourages a more reflexive response through reflection-on-action (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013). Points of critical reflection to promote reflexivity occur before, during and after performing and composing through the use of a virtual learning environment.

By providing opportunities for students to explore domain-specific learning situations and then critically reflect upon them, meta-pedagogy for popular music is creating what Barab and Duffy would call "practice fields", a metaphor for meaningful situated learning where:

1 students should do domain-related activities, not just learn about them;
2 students need to take ownership of the inquiry;
3 coaching and modelling of thinking skills is needed;
4 students should be provided with explicit opportunity for reflection;
5 dilemmas are ill-structured and complex;
6 learners must be supported to engage with the authentic complexity of the task, rather than simplifying the dilemma with unrealistic problems;
7 students work in teams to address contextualised problems(Barab & Duffy, 2000, pp. 25–55).

Priorities for popular music meta-pedagogy

The meta-pedagogy described in this chapter for popular music challenges dominant discourses in music education (evidenced by the National Plan for Music Education in England: DfE/DCMS, 2011), which tend to centre on a performance modality with the associated skills of reading and playing music. Here, a perception of musical literacy that is built on Western classical stave notation is replaced by one outlined by Kwami (1998) which focuses on internalization and improvisation, meaning the priority for learning becomes sound, rather than notation, as dominant musical discourse. Internalization and improvisation support a range of practical music-making activities that are "authentic and educational" (Finney, 2007, p. 12).

Experimenting with and exploring new musical ideas through performance-based improvisations, where learners take ownership of their learning, underpins a powerful form of music education and reflects a process that is central to the creation of popular music. In a meta-pedagogy for popular music the creative potential of improvisation should be reinforced by encouraging students to recognize links between improvisation and internalization as part of a composing process. Progression from performing arising from improvisation to compositional internalization moves internalization away from being based upon remembering and recalling

musical ideas created by other people, as part of a process of musical encultura-tion, to becoming the memorizing or capture of new musical ideas that have been improvised. This is a process identified by Burnard (2000, p. 21), who suggests viewing, improvising and composing being on an overlapping continuum, from separated to indistinguishable. Green alludes to this improvisation-to-composition process when she talks about "original . . . changeable" and "memorised" improvi-sations (Green, 2002, p. 42) in the context of popular music.

The process of improvisation to composition can be supported through the use of music technology where more complex improvisations can be captured instantly through the use of recording. A university setting can provide opportunities for students to explore different perceptions of music learning environments, includ-ing those that link to contemporary methods of performing and composing music through the use of music technology. This approach is particularly important in the context of popular music where music technology is an embedded feature. Music technology provides a bridge between traditional, given approaches towards instru-mental technique, and a more open and creative approach towards how we use sound sources as part of a composing process. All beginning music teachers can explore how technology provides opportunities to enhance and extend the range of sounds available, beginning from their own instrumental expertise. Therefore, the need to record and manipulate live sounds using music technology is an important aspect of this meta-pedagogy, providing the potential to explore more complex ideas and dilemmas. It is important to acknowledge that support to engage with music technology exists within the student body, and it is a question of enabling access to that knowledge rather than university tutors modelling a limited perspective.

Through use of music technology in a studio setting (group rehearsal rooms in the university equipped with music technology), with opportunities for a group of musicians to use a variety of sound sources, musical learning is situated in an appropri-ate popular music context. Such situated learning provides the opportunity to bring together different types of musical knowledge and enables beginning music teachers to engage in authentic complexity of performing and composing popular music.

In this meta-pedagogy, performing and composing are supported by explora-tion of existing music to scaffold the creative process. Students are asked to analyze their own musical preferences prior to any composing in order to provide a cul-tural reference point and to define the musical framework that will then be used to underpin their composing. Through a managed process of analyzing existing music, which is then responded to through composing, students are encouraged to think in ways that are both unique to music and connected to the culturally rich and diverse world in which we live. Students sharing music they listen to can be engaging and motivating, but they need to explain why they have chosen a particular piece of music, in order to encourage musical analysis. Comments need to focus on encouraging students to think musically and use sophisticated musical vocabulary. This process of musical analysis can be enhanced when students are encouraged to take ownership of their music and create covers and even mash-ups that provide "pleasurable forms of critique, folding musical analysis into musical experience" (Marshall, 2011, p. 307). Meta-pedagogy for popular music values

the rich sources of knowledge that can be mined from active engagement in re-arranging and combining existing music. These activities are enhanced because of their authenticity in the context of popular music (Ruthmann, 2012).

After creating covers and mash-ups, an initial composing task can reflect the early stages of Key Stage 3 music education based on establishing the "vernacular" (Swanwick & Tillman, 1986). However, in order to enable students to develop a sense of musical progression, a final composing stage is used to extend these initial musical ideas into a more significant and complex, but authentic, musical structure, such as composing a song. This enables students to engage with the "speculative" and even "idiomatic" (Swanwick & Tillman, 1986) stages of progression, associated with the latter stages of Key Stage 3 music education. By actively engaging (physically, emotionally and cognitively) with a range of musical knowledge, through the setting of a composing challenge, the aim is to promote a greater depth of musical understanding.

Challenge occurs through engaging with tasks but also through sharing and subsequent peer assessment. This sharing occurs when the final covers, mash-ups and composing are uploaded and commented upon through a virtual learning environment. However, this process also needs to be carefully managed in order to avoid the natural predisposition of students to offer phatic praise rather than engage in critical reflection and reflexivity. An example of how this can be managed is to encourage students to initially reflect on their own learning journeys and to identify the significant landmarks or "critical incidents" (Tripp, 1993) on those journeys. This autoethnographic approach can help students to become more empathetic towards their colleagues when providing feedback. Through the use of musical analysis that employs increasingly sophisticated musical language, rather than emotive language that seeks to valorize certain types of music, a community of learning where knowledge is actively co-constructed is enhanced.

Popular music meta-pedagogy in practice

Russell and Loughran (2007) assert that teacher education must go far beyond the transmission of information about teaching. Learning to teach is a complex and personal process. Beginning teachers need opportunities to reflect upon and critically evaluate their own experiences; they need to find their own teacher identities and reflect upon their own development as learners. Russell and Loughran identify personal and professional risks that are involved in reflecting upon one's own personal and professional practice, and stress the need for beginning teachers to articulate issues about their work under safe conditions and with trusted colleagues:

> in doing so, [beginning] teachers gain confidence and develop deeper understandings of what they do and why, which helps them to uncover assumptions about teaching and learning that then inform their practice.
>
> *(Russell & Loughran, 2007, p. 5)*

At Birmingham City University beginning music teachers' own meaningful active learning was enacted in order to promote their learning about popular music

pedagogical content knowledge. Favourable environments, with mutually constituted spaces free from externally determined agendas of compliance or assessment, and independent of any particular school context, were provided so that beginning music teachers could take responsibility for their own learning in collaboration with their colleagues. Beginning music teachers were seen as learners, and at different times had opportunities to become teachers, experts and critical friends. University tutors took background roles, defining tasks and initiating the learning process but avoiding overt interventions so as not to be seen simply as the experts with all the answers.

The beginning music teachers' responses to meta-pedagogy reflect the ups and downs of engaging with a challenging learning process. Finney and Philpott (2010, p. 12) identify two possible outcomes for the beginning music teachers exposed to this form of meta-pedagogy:

1   those who find a 'dissonance' with the implications of this way of working and who do not break or morph their habitus;
2   those who work through a productive dissonance and adapt their habitus (on a continuum from epiphany to gradual change).

Some responses from beginning music teachers reflect the first outcome:

> I found it very frustrating and felt like I wanted a teacher to come and help us decide how to move forward. Most of the time I felt completely up against a brick wall and that I needed help.

However, the same beginning music teacher identified that this experience had helped her to learn about teaching:

> I think now I have learnt the importance of scaffolding and when I teach I'll try and be really observant to see if a group is struggling or a pupil in a group is struggling and try and help.

The majority of beginning music teachers worked through a productive dissonance, and adapted:

> There was a moment in each of the tasks where everything clicked: in the first task it was when we stumbled across exactly the right synth sound, the third was where the lyrics suddenly fell into place. There was one moment each week when this happened and that's the part I'll remember the most.

There were some notable changes in opinion which suggest the transformative nature of this type of meta-pedagogy:

> I will never look with the same eyes at the process of creating music. My group have inspired me to try new things out at school and use music technology more actively within music education.

> It made me realise that whatever you do with the pupils at school, you have to make sure that they are doing something musical, playing music is really important. Music is such a creative subject, there is no point in getting bogged down in the history or techniques of instruments, when actually the most important part of music is being creative with it.

A key theme that kept being emphasized was the importance of meaning-oriented learning in a community of practice:

> They made sense to do and were meaningful as personally I feel that some group members (including myself) may have been too "bogged down" in historical context of music through our degrees to actually sit back and play music. So it was meaningful to get back to actually being musical and composing (which is a skill I haven't really looked at in a long while).
>
> Each member of the group brought different skills and it was great learning how other people compose. I can see that they helped me learn and appreciate something new in a safe and comfortable setting.
>
> I think one of the qualities of being a good teacher is being able to work well in a team. These sessions helped develop our collaborative skills and brought the whole group closer together. This was a great experience, plenty of meaning.

Conclusion

The notion of meta-pedagogy is an important one when considering ways in which popular music education can be fostered in schools by the next generation of classroom music teachers. This chapter has examined ways in which new entrants to the teaching profession can be helped along their own pathways from novitiate to expert in terms of both their theoretical knowledge and their enacted pedagogies. We have explored how Shulman's notion of pedagogic content knowledge can be seen to be significant in this regard. We have also shone a light onto the ways in which the new teachers' own pedagogy can be developed by the pedagogies of those involved in training and educating them, hence *meta-pedagogy*.

We have discussed how key tenets of historical orthodoxy need re-engineering when considering this topic. The place of Western Art music and the role of Western classical stave notation are two central areas in this which serve, unwittingly, to delimit the ways in which some new entrants both conceptualize and, importantly, put into action their views of what counts as music for young people in schools. There will, inevitably, be those for whom this can be seen as 'selling out' to the demands of a consumer-driven popular culture which should not be the property of education. But this argument, a hegemonic one based on notions of cultural supremacy, does not recognize the importance of engaging with, and in the true sense *educating* the young people of today. The place of the music teacher as cultural gatekeeper is a problematic one to justify, and this chapter has explored several issues as to why that is the case.

A further argument, if one were needed, as to the importance of music education is to be found in the notion of education for progression. A key thrust of contemporary thinking about teaching and learning is that education is well-served by beginning at the point where the child or young person is, and then moving along to the nearly related, before venturing off the beaten track. This involves purposeful learning that is meant to be challenging but clearly delineated and achievable for the young people involved: "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking" (Dewey, 1916, p. 181).

In this chapter, theoretical and situated philosophies for popular music education have been described alongside practical aspects of organization and operation. This has been done purposefully, as we are constantly working with the shifting sands of public opinion, and political interference (certainly in the UK!) with ways in which teachers are trained and prepared for their teaching careers in schools. Theoretical location therefore becomes as significant as the practical, as uninformed onlookers are always able to fall back on personal experiences, which are often generationally dated. Music education can become a political football in this regard, and so this chapter has endeavoured to locate and situate rationales for these meta-pedagogies.

Pedagogies and meta-pedagogies for popular music as described in this chapter are designed to open up, not restrict; they enable, not disable; and they facilitate learning the knowledge, skills and understanding required for thoughtful engagement with creative activity in the 21st century for all our young people.

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