**Chapter 20**

**The assessment of classroom music in the lower secondary school: The English experience**

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The case of assessment in classroom music in the lower secondary school is an interesting one when viewed through the lenses of the topics of this current book, namely those of the philosophical and qualitative. There are many lessons to be drawn from this English experience, which makes this more than a simple discussion of regional issues, into one which has ramifications for the consideration of assessment in generalist class music in many jurisdictions, wherever in the world such educational activity is taking place. To begin to describe why this is the case, we first need to understand the form and nature of classroom music education in England.

 Music education in England in the lower secondary school (for pupils aged 11-14 years) has been a compulsory subject in the state-mandated National Curriculum, and has had to be taught and learned by all pupils in maintained (state) secondary schools. This stage of education in the lower secondary school is known as *Key Stage 3* (KS3) in the local usage. What counts as a state school has become much broader in recent years, with the introduction of what are locally termed academies and free schools; academies being schools set up independent of local governmental control, and often grouped in autonomous multi-academy trusts (MATs), with free schools being in many ways similar to the charter schools movement in the United States, where interested parties can set up and run schools. Both of these school types receive central government funding, but neither are compelled to the follow the National Curriculum, which is compulsory in other state schools. In practice, the vast majority of all state-funded schools in England *do* follow the National Curriculum, even if in a diluted or arms-length form.

 Important for an international audience to understand, and quite unlike the situation which exists in many other countries, is that in England there is a school inspection body, which operates at arms-length from the government, known as the Office for Standards in Education, or *Ofsted.* Ofsted inspects schools on behalf of the government, and publically reports its findings(Cullingford, 1999). Ofsted inspects and reports on schools under four headings:

* Achievement of pupils
* Quality of teaching
* Behaviour and safety of pupils
* Leadership and management

Using these four headings, a grade for “overall effectiveness” is then produced, in which Ofsted uses a four-point grading system:

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement

Grade 4 Inadequate (Ofsted, n.d.)

 Again, for an international audience, teacher and school leader fear of Ofsted inspections cannot be overemphasized. There have even been cases of head teachers committing suicide after a poor Ofsted report (see Guardian, 2015). Indeed, such are the systemic requirements that many school management teams spend much of their learning strategy planning time asking the question, “would Ofsted like this?” rather than the more context-specific, and possibly useful, “would this be good for the learners in our school?”.

**Music education in the National Curriculum**

Music teaching and learning according to the National Curriculum (NC) in England takes the form of a generalist music education, which is organized around three main aspects, these are listening, performing, and composing (Finney, 2011; Pitts, 2000). Once again, for an international audience, these need some form of explanation. Performing is not usually instrument-specific, in the sense of an extended series of lessons on an orchestral or band instrument, although it can be. What normally occurs is that performing takes place using classroom instruments, such as tuned or untuned percussion, as well as keyboards, guitars, ukuleles, and such like. Some schools offer classroom band lessons, and some use “musical futures” (Green, 2008; musicalfutures.org) lessons where all children learn using popular styles. This breadth of provision is similarly matched by the composing strand. This is not composing using staff notation, although it can be, it is composing directly into sound, can include song-writing, experimental music, or any style and form which the teacher deems appropriate. Listening is concomitantly eclectic. There is no specified repertoire in the NC, no styles and genres are delineated, instead learners are required to:

 build on their previous knowledge and skills through performing, composing and listening. They should develop their vocal and/or instrumental fluency, accuracy and expressiveness; and understand musical structures, styles, genres and traditions, identifying the expressive use of musical dimensions. They should listen with increasing discrimination and awareness to inform their practice as musicians. They should use technologies appropriately and appreciate and understand a wide range of musical contexts and styles. (DfE, 2013)

 Alongside the NC there was also an assessment regime that consisted of a series of *level statements,* which were statutory for all schools until the requirement was removed in 2014*.* As was standard for all NC subjects on the school curriculum, there were eight of these level statements, plus one for what was termed *excellent performance* (N.B. not in the musical sense, but performance in terms of learner attainment), with the requirement that by end of the lower secondary school, normally at age 14, pupils would be awarded one of these level statements to summarize and summate their attainment. The typical expectation for the average 14-year old pupil at this stage was to attain level 5, the statement for which reads:

 Pupils identify and explore musical devices and how music reflects time, place and culture. They perform significant parts from memory and from notations, with awareness of their own contribution such as leading others, taking a solo part or providing rhythmic support. They improvise melodic and rhythmic material within given structures, use a variety of notations, and compose music for different occasions using appropriate musical devices. They analyse and compare musical features. They evaluate how venue, occasion and purpose affect the way music is created, performed, and heard. They refine and improve their work. (QCA, 2007, p. 186)

 With the content-light curriculum discussed above, it follows that specifying assessment topics is going to be problematic, and so it can be clearly seen that the level 5 statement (and the others are similar in construction) is holistic in nature, and encompasses attainment in the three areas of composing, listening, and performing. What this meant in practice is that teachers employed these statements in a “best-fit” fashion (Fautley, 2010, 2012), weighing up judgments about what aspects of an individual pupil’s work they would be taking into account in order to award them their final level statement at the end of the course (Sainsbury & Sizmur, 1998).

 This all sounds relatively uncontentious, if somewhat nebulous in application. This is indeed the case, and what happened as a result is an interesting case-study in manipulation and interference.

**The use of assessment levels in the National Curriculum**

The level statements, as exemplified in the level 5 statement above, were, as we have seen, originally intended to be used once only, at the end of a specific period of study in music (Bray, 2002). However, what came to be standard procedure was for schools to employ these levels far more frequently, initially termly, and then latterly almost on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Indeed, so prevalent was the use of these levels that they were expected to be known and used by all of the pupils in their various subjects at all times throughout their schooling. However, what schools found was that the levels themselves were far too coarse-grained to be of much use in demonstrating these smaller degrees of progress. In order to address this problem, what many schools did was to subdivide the level statements into smaller units. Although there was no nationally-established protocol for this procedure, by means of what Bruner (1996) might have referred to as a “folk-pedagogy,” the custom and practice became widespread of schools subdividing these into three levels, normally labelled a-c, where a grade a represented secure attainment, b meant that the standard had been appropriately met, and c meant that the level had only just about been achieved.

 Given that the level statements are holistic, and somewhat non-specific in terms of content requirements, the upshot was that these subdivided levels became increasingly idiosyncratic, and varied significantly from school to school. Some schools rewrote the level statements in such a way as to be quite far removed from the original intention. Indeed, Ofsted (2009) commented on this when it was observed that:

 In one lesson seen, for example, students were told: “Level 3: clap a 3 beat ostinato; Level 4: maintain a 4 bar ostinato; Level 5: compose an ostinato.” This demonstrated a significant misunderstanding of the expectations inherent in the level descriptions. (p. 31)

Ofsted (2009) also reported on the use of subdivided levels, observing that they

 did not take account of the National Curriculum guidance about progress within levels being seen in terms of increasing confidence, ownership and independence and so they ended up being based on arbitrary degrees of competence in separate and specific components of music. (p. 32)

 With Ofsted being so pejorative about the use of these levels, it seems remarkable that their use persisted, and yet it did.

 With these rewritten level statements in place, different in each school, the ready comparison of pupil attainment from one school to another became increasingly difficult, if not impossible in some cases, as not only had the level statements been reduced and distorted so as to become unrecognisable from the original intentionality, but they had also been subjected to tailoring to match specific projects. In other words, subdivided level statements for a performing piece of work, as in the case of the ostinato-based assessment Ofsted observed above, could be very different for a keyboard unit of work, where statements could be found, such as this observed in one school:

 Level 3: play melody with one finger;

 Level 4: play melody with two fingers;

 Level 5: play melody with more than two fingers. (*personal observation*)

 This duplicates the issues observed by Ofsted, but places the level statements into a completely different sphere of reference. Contrast “play with more than two fingers” or “maintain a 4 bar ostinato,” with the holistic complexity of the level 5 statement cited above, and the *reductio ad absurdum* nature of many of these home-made rewritten level statements can be clearly observed (Fowler, 2008).

 Indeed, so problematic did the use of subdivided level statements become that the chief Ofsted inspector for music was moved to write that

 using levels and sub levels to try to prove pupils’ ongoing progress in music doesn’t work, as Ofsted has pointed out many times. It is usually superficial, time wasting and neither reliable nor valid. It is most certainly not any kind of “Ofsted requirement.” To be absolutely clear, our inspectors do not expect to see it. There are no, and never were, sub levels in music anyway, for good reason. (Hammerton, 2014)

 This, again, is important for the thematic focus of this current book, as qualitative assessment in music education classes has been the norm for many years, but—and this is a big caveat—this has gone hand-in-hand with the placing of numerical values onto these qualitative judgments once they had been made. This creates a number of issues:

1. It implies a positivist, quantitative stance that is at odds with the often qualitative assessment data gathering techniques employed.
2. These pseudo-positivist conversions are then taken to be both valid *and* reliable, and treated accordingly.
3. The pseudo-positivist conversions are then used to “track” progress made by children and young people, in ways which may not always be appropriate, or valid.

In order to discuss further why these things might matter, we need to consider the ways in which assessment of musical endeavour actually takes place “on the ground,” as it were, in the music classroom in the English secondary school.

**Classroom practices and philosophies**

We have already seen how music is taught in a generalist way in England. In the 2007 iteration of the National Curriculum, this was noted about the nature and purpose of music education:

 Music education encourages active involvement in different forms of music-making, both individual and communal, helping to develop a sense of group identity and togetherness. Music can influence students’ development in and out of the academy by fostering personal development and maturity, creating a sense of achievement and self- worth, and increasing their ability to work with others in a group context.

 Music learning develops students’ critical skills: their ability to listen, to appreciate a wide variety of music, and to make judgements about musical quality. It also increases self-discipline, creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment. (QCA, 2007 p.179)

These are the values that lie behind classroom music in England. The types of knowledge that this approach espouses were delineated by Philpott (2016):

Knowledge about music: This might be referred to as factual knowledge, that is, factual knowledge about composers, about style, about theory, about musical concepts.

Knowledge how: how to play an instrument, how to distinguish between sounds, perceptual know-how (e.g. to recognize a drone), knowing how to present a piece to an audience, knowing how to read and write music, knowing how to make music sound in a particular way.

Knowledge of music: by direct acquaintance. (after Philpott, 2016, p. 33-34)

These types of knowledge are notrooted in a single musical instrument performance modality, neither are they specified by ensemble type, such as band or orchestra. They are not defined by style and genre, no specific composers, performers, works or pieces of music are mentioned in the National Curriculum documentation. Neither are pedagogies, or pedagogic traditions suggested, so, for example, it is entirely possible to construct schemes of work based on the music of Queen, or of William Byrd; of stylistic types ranging from Pavans and Galliards, to thrash metal guitar. Some schools concentrate heavily on composing music, some on performing, while others prefer to focus on listening and historical knowledge. But what they all have in common is that the three pillars of musical knowledge-types—of listening, composing, and performing—will all, to a greater or lesser degree admittedly, be taught in some quantity nonetheless. This breadth in ranges of approach is left to the discretion of the individual teacher and management team, should they wish to be involved, in each school separately.

 By way of illustration, the range of subjects taught in the lower secondary school to pupils between 11-14 years of age can be seen in the “Top Thirty” music curriculum topics taught in London schools, as described in a 2016 report. These were:

 Latin American Music; Medieval Music; Minimalism; Keyboard skills; Renaissance Music; Form and Structure; Ground Bass; Instruments of the orchestra; Samba; Graphic score; Hip Hop; Musical Futures; Adverts; Stomp; African Drumming; Viennese Waltz; Programme Music; Pop and Rock; Ukulele; Reggae and Caribbean; Singing; Pitch, Scales, Modes; Indian Music; Song-writing; Music Tech; Jazz; Film Music; Music Concrete; Gamelan; Blues. (Fautley, 2016, p. 25)

 This list of topics (and remember these were only the top thirty topics) shows the breadth, range, and scope of curricular areas covered. From this breadth, it is reasonable to assume that no single item-response pencil-and-paper based assessment could hope to cover all of the work done by all these pupils.

 In a similar vein, philosophical decisions regarding approaches to content and pedagogy can vary hugely between schools. For example, many schools follow Elliott’s (1995) notion of a praxial music education, and their curricula consist of approaches which could be recognized as following Elliott’s (1995) four typologies:

* + Music is a human endeavor
	+ Music is never a matter of musical works alone
	+ Making music includes moving, dancing, worshipping, as well as musicing and listening
	+ Musical sounds can be made for a variety of purposes and functions across cultures (p. 129)

These two philosophical approaches, those outlined by Philpott and Elliott, are important to the ways in which music is taught and learned, and, importantly for our present discussions, assessed. What this variety means is that there is no simple and straightforward progression to be observed across what might be considered as otherwise unitary music curriculum constructs such as performing, instead there are always many other things going on at the same time. One of the ramifications of this is that teachers are not only the architects of their own curriculum content, they are also architects of the style, form, range, approach, utility, and substance of any assessments that they produce. Certainly there will be specific school requirements in terms of frequency and reporting arrangements, but the substance of any assessment undertaken will be at the will (some might say whim!) of the individual classroom teacher.

**Formative assessment in the English context**

Given this complexity, it useful at this juncture to outline the types of assessment activity undertaken by teachers in the classroom, and describe and discuss what takes place during such assessments. Highly significant in the English context, and differing substantially in many ways from American understandings of the term, is the notion of *formative assessment*, also known as assessment for learning, or AfL. In the English usage, following the work of the Assessment Reform Group (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, Assessment Reform Group, 2002) and Black and Wiliam (Black, 1993, 1995; Black et al., 2003a, 2003b; Black & Wiliam, 1998), the term formative assessment is used to mean

* observing pupils – this includes listening to how they describe their work and their reasoning;
* questioning, using open questions, phrased to invite pupils to explore their ideas and reasoning;
* setting tasks in a way which requires pupils to use certain skills or apply ideas;
* asking pupils to communicate their thinking through drawings, artifacts, actions, role play, concept mapping, as well as writing;
* discussing words and how they are being used. (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, p. 8)

 This situates AfL at the heart of the teaching and learning process, and it is this usage, which is understood by teachers of all subjects in England. It does, however, put this meaning at odds somewhat with the understanding of formative assessment in other jurisdictions, particularly the United States, as Dylan Wiliam (2004) observes

 In the United States, the term “formative assessment” is often used to describe assessments that are used to provide information on the likely performance of students on state-mandated tests—a usage that might better be described as “early-warning summative.” In other contexts it is used to describe any feedback given to students, no matter what use is made of it, such as telling students which items they got correct and incorrect (sometimes called “knowledge of results”). These kinds of usages suggest that the distinction between “formative” and “summative” applies to the assessments themselves, but since the same assessment can be used both formatively and summatively, it follows that these terms cannot describe assessment themselves, but are really describing the use to which the resulting outcomes are put. (p. 4)

Wiliam makes an important distinction here, in that it is not so much that assessment typologies are different, but the uses to which the resultant assessment is put. This is a point to which we shall return later. In England, the use of formative assessment according to this understanding is well embedded in classroom practice. Indeed, in national governmentally produced training materials for teachers of all subjects, it was a music lesson that was chosen to show formative assessment in action (DfES, 2002).

**Summative assessment in the English context**

In contrast with the situation regarding formative assessment, summative assessment in music is characterized in the English nomenclature as being *teacher assessment*, often abbreviated as TA. It is important for an international audience to note that this does *not* mean assessment or evaluation *of* teachers, but instead refers to assessment activities undertaken *by* teachers to generate assessment data on the learners in their charge. There are no widespread externally set assessments, tasks, or tests, for music in the lower secondary school. In this regard, teachers design all summative assessment activity concerned for their own use only. Neither is there very much by way of inter-school standardization or moderation, again it is left to the discretion of individual schools to manage this aspect of their work. Although we lack in-depth national research data on this, we do know anecdotally and from small-scale research (*inter alia* Fautley & Savage, 2011; Soundhub, n.d.; Hampshire, n.d.) that the majority of teacher summative assessment undertaken in the lower secondary school music lesson is criterion referenced. Usually this involves a range of criterion statements against which pupil learning outcomes are marked and graded. Such criterion statements take a variety of forms. Sometimes they are statements against which teachers can assess attainment, for example:

* Experiment with voice, sounds, technology and instruments in creative ways and to explore new techniques.
* Maintain a strong sense of pulse and recognize when going out of time.
* Demonstrate increasing confidence, expression, skill and level of musicality through taking different roles in performance and rehearsal.
* Maintain an independent part in a group when singing or playing.
* Use a variety of musical devices, timbres, textures, techniques etc. when creating and making music. (Daubney & Fautley, 2014, p. 7)

Assessment criterion statements such as these are normally intended to be graded using a three or a five-point scale. Scoring is achieved by allocating a numeric grading to each level, summating grades from a series of such assessments being used to provide an overall score.

 Another common form of assessment criterion statement commonly met is the “I can” version, where pupils situate themselves upon a scale, sometimes with help and prompting from the teacher. An example of this sort of “I can” statement would be these, cited by Ofsted (2012c):

 Level 3.6: I can decide how I am going to use the elements of music in my composition;

 Level 4.0: I can compose appropriate music that accompanies my story;

 Level 4.2: I can use the elements of music when composing to create an effect;

 Level 4.4: I can compose short ideas to represent different parts;

 Level 5.0: I can use more than one element at the same time to create an effect. (p. 37)

There are a number of things to note about these exemplar criterion statements:

1. They provide a numeric outcome based upon a qualitative grading decision made by the teacher, and/or the pupil;
2. The grade awarded is treated as being statistically sound;
3. The scored outcome is then used as a summative grade for tracking and monitoring purposes.

These three observations isomorphically map onto the three issues described earlier in this chapter:

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| It implies a positivist, quantitative stance that is at odds with the often qualitative assessment data gathering techniques employed. | They provide a numeric outcome based upon a qualitative grading decision made by the teacher, and/or the pupil |
| These pseudo-positivist conversions are then taken to be both valid and reliable, and treated accordingly. | The grade awarded is treated as being statistically sound |
| Said pseudo-positivist conversions are then used to ‘track’ progress made by children and young people, in ways which may not be appropriate. | The scored outcome is then used as a summative grade for tracking and monitoring purposes |

However, the English assessment context is not alone in this. After all, in music we are well used to taking qualitative judgements and turning them into scored grades, and we then work with the scoring alone. This, however, is a different order of problem, in that we are not clear on either reliability or validity of the grades awarded. At this point it would be useful to bear in mind the observation made by Caroline Gipps (1994) that “assessment is not an exact science, and we must stop presenting it as such” (p. 167).

**Attainment and progression**

What is of potentially greater interest than the issues of pseudo-positive assessment discussed above, which are likely to be common across a range of international contexts and practices, is that a highly significant qualitative shift in assessment practice has taken place in the English context of school music lessons, this being the move from considering the assessment of *attainment* to the assessment of *progress*. These are two significant words in the English assessment lexicon, and we need to fully understand what is meant by them. Whatever assessment, marking, and grading system is being employed, the terminology used is that these will be assessments of *attainment*. Attainment has a very specific meaning in the English context of marks, grades, or levels, which a pupil has been awarded in terms of results from assessments. Contrast this with *achievement*, which includes an element of progress. Ofsted (2012b) normally use these words in a very precise way, and look at “…pupils’ academic achievement over time, taking attainment and progress into account” (p. 8); with judgments about achievement being based on:

 Pupils’ attainment in relation to national standards and compared to all schools, based on data over the last three years, noting particularly any evidence of performance significantly above or below national averages, and inspection evidence of current pupils’ attainment (Ofsted, 2012a, p. 6)

 Progress can be thought of in simple terms as the speed at which pupils transition through whatever attainment grading system is being employed. The term “rapid progress” contains a speed judgment within it, as does its opposite, “slow progress.” In 2014, Ofsted wrote to all schools in England, saying that they would be looking closely at pupil work in order to determine what *progress* the pupils had been making. This links back to an earlier utterance on this subject, where Ofsted (2012b) had said that they would be:

 Observing learning over time…scrutiny of pupils’ work, with particular attention given to…pupils’ effort and success in completing their work and the progress they make over a period of time. (p. 35)

 What this means in schools is that progress has become a major focus of attention for music teachers. School leadership teams (SLTs) have, in many cases, become focussed on being able to *prove* that progress has taken place should the Ofsted inspector call. In order to try to demonstrate that progress is being made, and at the right speed, many schools have invested time and money into complicated attainment tracking systems, known as “flightpaths,” which show progression, often represented on a graph as a series of straight lines for different cohorts of pupils. Each of these flightpaths is usually ability based, in the sense that their trajectories are derived from pupil attainment scores in mathematics and English.

 This close focus of attention onto progress means that teachers have, in many cases, become overly concerns with matters of speed of attainment. What tends not to happen so much is that progress is conceptualized as operating on two separate axes simultaneously, those of *breadth* and *depth*, and so what tends to happen is that it is breadth of curriculum coverage which receives the greatest attention, often, it must be said, at the expense of depth. The way that this finds its outworking in school curriculum materials is that many lower secondary school schemes of work resemble what might be thought of as a “Cook’s tour” of aspects of world music, along with key milestones from Western Art music, and selected other genres. The way that these are normally organized tends to be that each topic area is scheduled to be taught for half a term, which amounts to about six weeks. This means that in the average Key Stage 3 course lasting for three academic years, eighteen such topics could be taught. Constructing a learning programme of any eighteen topics from the list of the top thirty given earlier shows that any such music curriculum would be, at the very least, eclectic.

 There is, however, a further complication that needs to be investigated here, and that is that the flightpath charts normally show linear progress. This means that assessment grades given to pupils need to constantly be an improvement over previous ones, as otherwise the teacher will be deemed to be failing their pupils. This places an artificially distorting element into qualitative assessment, as the effect of these diktats from SLTs means that pupils can *only* be given a mark, grade, or level which is higher than their previous ones, whatever the topic, and whatever the engagement and attainment of the learners. This has the unforeseen consequence of placing unwarranted constraints upon curriculum design, as what this means in practice is that teachers need to plan their individual programs of study so that topics which have the potential to be less engaging are placed nearer the beginning of the course, so that dips in attainment—and therefore dips in progress—do not occur. Clearly, from any meaningful view of assessment this is nonsense. Pupils cannot attain in a linearly higher manner in topics, whatever the flightpath says. This means that in a school with a highly engaging unit on, say, song-writing, followed by a potentially less engaging unit on the Viennese waltz, to choose two from the London top thirty list above, the teacher *cannot* give any pupils a lower attainment grade for the latter, as their professionalism may well be called into question.

 The joint effect of a relentless focus on attainment at all costs to please what schools think of as the requirements of Ofsted—although Ofsted (2016) published a document describing many such activities as myths—allied to the strictures of purchased attainment and progress tracking software packages, have had the net result that assessment of attainment in England at KS3 can be thought of as being neither particularly reliable or valid. Indeed, its sole purpose seems to be geared towards the avoidance of undesirable consequences; this is rather like medical staff being more concerned to avoid litigation that to treat the patient! Assessments made under these circumstances cannot be thought of as true assessment of pupil attainment; instead, it has become a paper exercise whose main purpose is compliance to what has come to be called the performativity agenda. Performativity, as Ball (2003) observes:

 is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change—based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of “quality,” or “moments” of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgment …Typically, at least in the UK, these struggles are currently highly individualized as teachers, as ethical subjects, find their values challenged or displaced by the terrors of performativity. (p. 216)

 Assessment of attainment and assessment of progress have become, in the English music classrooms, sites of “terror,” as teachers struggle, on the one hand, to teach logical and developmental programmes of study, and, on the other, to fulfil the complex demands of an accountability regime which does not recognize the unique nature of music as a mode of knowing and being, but instead constrains it to fit onto a linear trajectory of constant improvement.

**Conclusions**

One of the key roles of summative assessment, not just in music, but in any discipline, ought to be that it provides useful and informative material for learners and teachers. As Harlen (2007) observes: “There are two main purposes for assessing students: to inform decisions about learning experiences and to report on what has been achieved” (p. 15).

 It will be immediately apparent from this albeit brief discussion of assessment practices in English music classes that neither of these functions are likely to be adequately fulfilled by contemporary customs and practices. Instead, the relentless pursuit of progression data—which, when examined closely, turns out to be no such thing—prevents any meaningful discussion of either attainment or progress to be made. The notion of having to “prove” progression against a straight line drawn by statistical software that has no basis in the sonic art of music has prevented classroom music teachers being able to make any form of sensibly differentiated judgments about the progress that their pupils have *really* been making music while musicing. It does not help inform either the teacher or the learner as to what steps they need to take next in developing learning. Instead we have the situation where formative and summative uses and purposes of assessment have become increasingly detached from each other, such that many teachers are now relying more heavily on their own formative assessment judgments which they make as the class is in progress to help, as Harlen (2007) observed above, “inform decisions about learning experiences” (p. 15). Teachers increasingly see the provision of summative assessment grades as something, which the performativity juggernaut requires, but which contains no real meaning for them or their pupils.

 There are clearly lessons for an international audience to be drawn from these English experiences, to do with the real philosophical purposes of assessment in music education not being drowned out by the needs for ever-increasing accountability measures, and for qualitative assessment techniques to be truly assessments of *quality*—quality of music making, quality of musical learning, and quality of musicianship, rather than being simply numbers which are used to create a large stick with which to beat teachers. Sadly, with what the Finnish education writer Pasi Sahlberg (2014) has called GERM, the global educational reform movement, these issues are likely to spread across continents:

 GERM assumes that external performance standards, describing what teachers should teach and what students should do and learn, lead to better learning for all. (p. 150)

 It is to be hoped that music educators, and their associated administration regimes around the world, will wake up to these issues before it becomes too late for action. Music education already occupies a precarious position in many jurisdictions. It would be sad for its inherent creativity to be stifled by the requirements of statisticians and management consultants, rather than having had a chance to flourish, and to make a very real difference to the lives of children and young people, who we know are touched by what music as a subject and a practice has to offer them in their lives.

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