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What is quality in music education?
How is it recognised?
How do we develop it?
What does a quality music education look and sound like?

In this talk, Jonathan will explore these questions and give examples of a range of approaches drawn from across the north-west of England. He will also outline some of the potential threats to quality music education as a result of current educational policies and their implementation.

Video

Teaching's popular nowadays. Everyone, it seems, is keen to teach.

High flying students, from Russell Group universities, are paid vast sums via Teach First to teach for a couple of years before pursuing their proper careers in banking, consultancy or the civil service.

Ex-military personnel are to be fast tracked into teaching – via the Troops into Teachers Scheme – with, at best, a third of an undergraduate degree and QTS.

But I'm interested in exploring with you, today, what it means to teach well. What does 'quality' in music education look like? By this, I don't necessarily mean quality in terms of what your pupils do. I mean quality in what you, as a teacher, do.

But you could ask yourself at this point whether the two are linked? I'll be coming back to that.

Firstly, though, here's another famous person who wants to learn to teach …

Video

Michael Gove emphasises bravery, commitment and dedication as core attributes of a successful teacher.

I'm not sure that starting a lesson by talking about yourself is a quality approach?

If you want to see how he got on, the video is easily findable on You Tube.

But what about teaching music? What constitutes a quality approach to music teaching?

I'd like to start with the most important concept that has framed our work in preparing young music teachers, for the classroom and instrumental settings, over the last 12 years at MMU.

It's quite simple – 3 words.

Teach Music Musically

What does this mean? We go back to Keith Swanwick and his three core principles that you can read in his book *Teaching Music Musically*.

Firstly,

<u>As Teachers we must care for Music as Discourse</u>

Our job as teachers is bring music from the background into the foreground.

Swanwick says:

Whenever music sounds, whoever makes it and however simple or complex the resources and techniques may be, the music teacher is receptive and alert, is really listening and expects students to do the same.

A key question in your teaching is – is 'this' really musical? Whatever 'this' is.

There must be a strong sense of musical intention linked to educational purposes:

- Skills used for musical ends;
- Factual knowledge informs emerging musical understanding;
- Musical history seen through the doors and windows of particular musical encounters.

The second strand of teaching music musically is that …

<u>As teachers we must care for the Musical Discourse of our Students</u>

We don't introduce students to music. They bring a wealth of knowledge into our classroom.

Discourse is not a monologue. We engage our students in dialogue and musical conversations. So, a quality approach to teaching music musically must:

- Engages student's curiosity through nurturing and encouraging musical explorations, not by imposing your own viewpoint or shutting down purposeful musical enquiry;
- Builds student's competence through sensitively sequenced programmes of study. Teachers do know about music and how students learn. It is legitimate to plan and not leave things to chance!
- Encourages positive emulation of musical role models.

The third strand of Swanwick's model is …

<u>Developing Musical Fluency above anything else</u>

Here, Swanwick draws on the metaphor of language, and how learning a language fluently has many similarities with learning to be musically fluent.

He does not mean musical literacy. Musical fluency, he argues, takes precedence over musical literacy.

Children should be taught, he says, to listen and articulate before they then read and write.

These three principles help us think about the *quality* of music education, rather than the *what* of music education.

There are many resonances here with OFSTED's recent work on music being the target language of music teaching. By this, they mean that teachers should use …

Musical sound as the dominant language of musical teaching and learning by:

- *Ensuring that lesson planning includes a strong focus on the teacher's musical preparation as well as defining lesson structures and procedures*
- *Establishing musical sound as the 'target language' of teaching and learning, with talking and writing about music supporting, rather than driving, the development of pupils' musical understanding*
- *Developing and refining teachers' listening and musical modelling skills, so that they can more accurately interpret and respond to pupils' music- making and show more effectively how to improve the musical quality of their work.*

It's good to see OFSTED catching up with established ideas in the music education literature. But their model of thinking about this is weak compared to many other writers and thinkers in this area.

Everything I have said so far is about an individual music teacher's pedagogy. But, increasingly today, a quality music education builds into a network of musical

experiences and expertise from a range of teachers, other adults and organisations. This is central to the work of the Love Music Trust.

They'll be some familiar faces in this video:

Video

The end of that video reminded me of other key elements in a quality music education. Enjoyment, celebration and sharing of achievement.

This reminds me of Robin Alexander's account of Douglas Brown, his teacher of English (and much more besides) at the Perse School in Cambridge (during the 1950s).

Quote from *Essays on Pedagogy*

Who you are, as a musician and a person, are as important as anything else in developing a quality approach to music education.

Briefly then, what are the threats to a quality music education of this type?

Threats to Music Education

1. National Curriculum Reforms

New NC is a mere shadow of its former self.

As Chair of the DfE Expert Panel, music teachers, like those of every other subject group, are very angry about the decimation of the National Curriculum and the overt political interference from Ministers in the construction of a new one.

2. EBacc Accountability Reforms

The EBacc devasted provision of the arts across our secondary schools.

The accountability measures within the EBacc have not been withdrawn and this is still a threat to music education at Key Stage 4.

3. Changes in Initial Teacher Education

Reduction in the number of music teachers being trained from over 1000 to under 400 in 3 years. At a time of rising roles - why?

Within primary education, music education training is severely limited to a few hours in a typical programme.

Many HEI PGCE music education closing, threatens the coherent provision of subject teachers across the UK as a whole. Schools Direct, a new model for school-centred ITE, is failing to recruit enough teachers across the board.

There is no system for documenting the choices that schools make, and whether we are going to have a broad and balanced future workforce for music education.

4. The Future of Music Education Hubs

Speaking as a member of the strategy board for the Greater Manchester Music Hub, and as a trustee of the Love Music Trust in Cheshire East, I am worried about future funding for music education hubs after 2015. Already being cut by 10% each year.

The patchiness identified by Darren Henley in his 2010 report is not being improved by uncertainties in the system and wider threats to music education through carelessly handed political reforms to school structures, funding and teacher education.

Schools are in the best place to provide a comprehensive, systematic and developmental music education for all our young people.

Conclusion

Tom's is a young guitarist. He didn't enjoy his guitar lessons and became unmotivated, ultimately ceasing to take lessons. The 'failure' (in his words) of his guitar teacher led him to find alternatives, to reject that teacher's pedagogical approach completely, and utilise the potential of the Internet as a social, collaborative learning environment. In previous generations, perhaps, Tom would have given up playing the guitar. Today, he is highly proficient guitarist.

However, would he have learnt more, and perhaps become a more expert guitarist, if he had the benefit of both?

Arendt, much more eloquently, puts it like this:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we [adults and/or teachers] decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our

> world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (Arendt 1961, p.196)

Arendt's words are as relevant today as they were in 1961.

Teachers have to make decisions on behalf of their pupils and to make these decisions based on their care for them as children.

Central to Arendt's thesis is the notion that teachers have access to knowledge and ideas which their pupils do not have.

They also know something about the best way to introduce these things.

But, also notice that she suggests that there are things that are, as yet, unforeseen by children and teachers. Neither group can predict the futures that these children will face, the new jobs and opportunities it might contain, or the types of practical skills or understanding they will need to succeed.

However, we do know that we can prepare children for those future tasks through a careful exemplification and study of the world in its fullness as it is today. Pupils are best prepared for their future lives by teachers who educate them to understand the world that today.

In Frank Furedi's words, 'there is a need to preserve the past for the sake of the new' (Furedi 2009, p.42).

These ideas are a cautionary note for all teachers and policy makers. They both have a solemn responsibility to ensure that every child in their care has access to a high quality music education.

The obligations of ensuring that provision requires a degree of seriousness that should never be forgotten.

Music education matters. Every child has the right to receive a high quality music education.

Schools are best placed to provide this.

I'd like to close with a question. Does quality music teaching always result in quality music learning?

Musically engages and empowers young people and moves them to a different place. Does quality teaching always result in quality learning?

Perhaps some of you have heard about an experiment that Joshua Bell, the famous American violinist, conducted in 2007 when he donned a baseball cap and played as an incognito busker at the Metro subway station in Washington, D.C. The experiment was videotaped on hidden camera:

Video

Of the 1,097 people who passed by, only seven stopped to listen to him, and only one recognized him. For his nearly 45-minute performance, Bell collected $32.17 from 27 passers-by (excluding $20 from the passer-by who recognized him). The night before, he earned considerably more playing the same repertoire at a concert.

As *The Guardian* reported:

Bell's busking experience proves the pervasive philistinism of a society that has lost its soul along with its ability to take time out and just listen, and reveals the decrepitude of our taste and discrimination to a nadir when we can't even recognise beauty when it's there, right in front of our faces.

Or is it? You could use this as a stick to beat western society, but the exercise actually proves the power of context to create perceptions of artistic quality and even the artistic experience per se. Would you appreciate or even notice a Turner watercolour if it was stuffed in the corner of a restaurant you were eating in? Or stop to watch a great Godard movie if it came on one of those screens in Piccadilly Circus? And if you didn't, does that make those experiences anything less than great art?

Concerts are turned into unforgettable experiences by a communal act of listening, the magical and illusory creation of an oasis of silence in which the music can speak. That's why concert halls are designed to make us silent, to force our attention on to the stage, the performer. And we're quiet for bad performers just as we are for legendary ones, for a mediocre performance by a third-rate orchestra or for a titanic interpretation by the Vienna Phil - just as we're islands of grumpiness and get-me-out-of-here-ness when we're on the tube. The surprise, to be honest, is that anyone at all stopped to listen to Joshua Bell at L'Enfant Plaza that Friday morning. I'm not sure I would stop to hear Nigel Kennedy, say, playing at the bottom of the Leicester Square escalators in the middle of the Friday morning commute. Would you?

Like musical performance, teaching always takes place in particular context. There are a whole host of other factors, beyond the actions, words and sounds that any one individual teacher – however skilful – might make.

Learning itself is complex. The learning that results from a quality teaching might not appear immediately. It might surface years later.

What counts as ‘quality’ in music teaching is equally difficult to define and appreciate. But I hope this afternoon has given you a few pointers.

Thank you for listening.