A Pedagogy for Continuation: Rethinking Instrumental Teaching after Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET)

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Abstract

The original *National Plan for Music Education* (DfE & DCMS, 2011) cemented whole class ensemble tuition (WCET) in state schools in England but was less prescriptive about how post-WCET pathways were to be provided. Concerns about short-lived continuation and preliminary levels of attainment among post-WCET learners soon emerged and are now supported by data (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018; ACE, 2024). This thesis addresses these concerns by asking how instrumental pedagogy can be adapted to better facilitate pupils' engagement and progress as they continue lessons after WCET. It draws on literature about traditional and alternative instrumental pedagogies and establishes John Dewey's educational ideals as a theoretical framework in order to propose a new pedagogy for continuation: 'Be a musician' (BeAM) prioritises pupil-led learning and musical experiences, i.e. *being* a musician in the instrumental lesson, rather than treating lessons as preparation for *becoming* a musician in the future. The second half of the thesis reports on an action research project in which I enacted BeAM with post-WCET learners in a small-group, primary school setting. I collected data from lesson footage, field notes, and focus groups, before analysing it thematically.

The thesis's key findings are that: using pupil-led pedagogy is an effective way to facilitate engagement among post-WCET learners; drawing a greater distinction between training and educating in instrumental teaching allows pupils' individual aspirations to be considered and for the progress they make to be recognised in new ways; adopting this Deweyan concept of progress permits pupils to demonstrate their 'growing power' through the ways in which they engage in instrumental lesson activities; and, pupil-led pedagogies are better positioned (than traditional approaches) to support agendas that aim to engage all children musically, such as the *National Plan for Music Education*. This research helps music hubs understand the specific needs of post-WCET learners and provides an evidence base for instrumental teachers. By redefining how engagement and progress are regarded in traditional musical contexts, the thesis also argues for a paradigm shift in music education at large.

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List of Abbreviations

ABRSM	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
ACE	Arts Council England
BeAM	'Be a musician' (pedagogy devised for this thesis's action research)
ESTA	European String Teachers Association
NPME	National Plan for Music Education (2011 and/or 2022, as specified)
WCET	Whole Class Ensemble Tuition
(a:b:c | d'e")	References to action research footage, e.g. (1:2:3 | 4'56") signifies Group 1, Cycle 2, Lesson 3 at time-stamp 4'56"; (F1:2) signifies the first meeting of the second focus group.

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determination and good humour to lesson activities that were new and could easily have seemed bewildering. Their honesty and candour brought the thesis to life.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and that I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or for other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Prologue

The research problem that this thesis addresses emerged from my professional experience as an instrumental music teacher and teacher trainer. As Leader for Progression for West Sussex Music, serving a county in the south-east of England, I attended weekly team meetings that helped us monitor how we were engaging young musicians across the county. During one such meeting in October 2018, a set of data was tabled, detailing the number of children who were currently learning a musical instrument because of their direct or indirect involvement with the Trust, whether in small-group or one-to-one instrumental lessons, by participating in a music ensemble at one of our local Music Centres, or because they had received a period of whole class ensemble tuition (WCET) in their schools, overseen by one of the Trust's many peripatetic teachers. The statistics were classified by age, instrument, and level of attainment—the latter two categories abiding by instrument-specific programmes of study that the Trust had devised in the 1990s to delineate the skills and knowledge pupils would gain across their different stages of learning, and which broadly aligned with the expectations of prominent exam boards such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

Although the data showed that WCET was established in many primary schools and that more schools were subscribing to WCET for the first time, it also revealed, alarmingly, that pupils' continuation beyond these First Access programmes fell significantly short of both our own expectations and, crucially, those of our funder, Arts Council England.[1] Even among children who were continuing to learn an

[1] Although these statistics are confidential to West Sussex Music and cannot be reproduced, I draw on publicly available data across the first two chapters, particularly in §1.2.2 and §2.1.1, where I also examine the circumstances that gave rise to First Access (previously, Wider Opportunities) programmes.

instrument with or through the Trust after their initial WCET experience, continuation was usually short-lived. Relatedly, very few children were surpassing what we deemed to be a preliminary level of attainment. As an upper-string teacher, my attention was drawn to three further facts: the violin remained one of the most popular instruments to be taught through WCET, yet its overall number of learners was in decline; a significant drop-off in the number of string players was occurring at Stage 3 of the programme of study, often coinciding with pupils moving to secondary school; and the viola, long considered an 'endangered' instrument, was being learned to what we regarded as an intermediate or advanced level of attainment by fewer than ten children across our large county.[2] It was apparent to us all that were these trends to continue, the prospects not only for upper-string specialists, but also for West Sussex's flagship orchestras—a traditional benchmark of teaching efficacy—would be dim.

The statistics were unquestionably bleak, but I wanted to understand their root causes. Over the following weeks and months, several questions sprang to mind: Why were children discontinuing their learning at such relatively early stages? What could be done to arrest or even reverse the decline, thereby improving long-term engagement and attainment? And which of the challenges that schools, families, and pupils were facing were in our power to help solve, anyway? As our weekly meetings reminded us, it was clear (and remains so) that these 'challenges' are many, and that they can be thought of as being either fundamental, operational, or a blend of the two. In the former category, for example, we knew we had to contend with: school and family budgets being significantly reduced, exacerbated by nearly a decade of austerity; and West Sussex's unusual shape and sprawl, with its several prominent towns and cities, but none located centrally.

[2] The scarcity of young violists, along with bassoonists, double bassists, and French horn players, to name but four endangered instruments, is an issue to which music organisations have responded in different ways, particularly since the turn of the century. West Sussex Music's approach was to waive loan charges for certain instruments and to arrange "conversion" projects in the hope of persuading pupils to learn these instruments and, in time, to fill vacancies in its local and county-wide music ensembles. Some tertiary-level organisations are now following suit, as they try to raise funds to subsidise tuition, buy instruments, and arrange promotional events (Royal Northern College of Music, 2023).

In the latter (operational) category, difficulties such as recruiting pupils in the first place, school timetabling, a perceived lack of commitment on the part of pupils and/or their families, and the pace of modern life seeming to allow little time for pupils to pursue instrumental learning 'seriously' enough, had long frustrated even my most sympathetic colleagues. I knew that each of these challenges was real in their different ways, but also that it would be wrong to take any of them at face value. I was determined not to fall back on clichéd notions, sometimes voiced by instrumental teaching colleagues, that children nowadays need instant gratification, that this mindset is supposedly incompatible with long-term devotion to their instrument, or that musical standards are inexorably falling. From a place of genuine concern for the future of instrumental teaching and learning in England, and optimism that I could investigate and even enact some solutions to improve continuation, the seeds of the current project were sown.

1.2. Music education for all?

The rest of this chapter expands on my research problem in the context of English music education policy developments this century (§1.2, a prelude to a much fuller Literature Review in Chapter 2), my positionality (§1.3), my research aims (§1.4), and the structure of the thesis (§1.5). The following section begins by discussing the place of music in the school curriculum and some of the key benefits that music-making brings children. It then charts efforts that have been made this century to ensure that all children have access to music education and begins to explain the challenges that implementing policies such as the first *National Plan for Music Education* (hereafter, NPME) have created (DfE & DCMS, 2011).

1.2.1. The importance of music education

A discrete body of literature has sought to confirm the egalitarian principle of music education for all, emphasising the capacity of *all* children to be musical and to benefit from music education (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe, 1999; Kemp & Mills,

2002; Gruhn, 2005). Beyond music's intrinsic value as a subject, different rationales have been offered for why music should play a permanent, significant role in education. Studies have evidenced the positive impact of musical interventions on specific cognitive skills (Schellenberg, 2012; Pitts, 2014; Pitts, 2017; Dumont, Syurina, Feron, & van Hooren, 2017) and on non-cognitive skills such as self-esteem, persistence, determination, and social cohesion (Józsa & Molnár, 2013; Hallam, 2015; Sun, 2022). Research has also explicitly linked the learning of musical instruments with improved academic outcomes (Hallam & Rogers, 2016; Janurik & Józsa, 2022).

More broadly, the power of music and the creative arts to improve health outcomes and well-being has motivated two further lines of enquiry: the first adding to growing calls for health services to prescribe active musical participation to help manage and treat illnesses across the lifespan (Särkämö, 2018; Fancourt & Finn, 2019; National Academy for Social Prescribing, 2021; Arts Council England, 2022); the second tasking researchers and organisations with plotting the world's post-pandemic cultural recovery (Jones, Abrams, & Lahiri, 2020; Williamon et al., 2022). In a similar vein, scholars are now less reticent than they once were about defending investment in music education and about acclaiming music's multifaceted contributions to the workforce and economy (Harris & Bruin, 2017; Fleet, 2023).

1.2.2. The place of music in the curriculum

Agreement that access to music education is the right of every child led to its inclusion in the National Curriculum in 1992, since when it has been part of the statutory school curriculum across Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 (DES, 1992; DfEE/QCA, 1999; DfE, 2013a; DfE, 2013b). Although use of the National Curriculum is no longer compulsory in academies (est. 2000) or in free schools (est. 2010), there remains an expectation from the Government, via the Department for Education and the Ofsted inspectorate (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), that all state-funded schools in England should provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

Nevertheless, concerns about the variable quality of and access to music provision are longstanding, and complaints that music education has become a ‘postcode lottery’ have only grown louder since wholesale reforms were implemented in the 2010s (Savage, 2021, p. 469). As I explore further at the start of the next chapter (§2.1, §2.1.2), the original NPME—a new version was published in 2022—endorsed the Henley Review by setting new targets for all children to be given the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and sing, to make music with others, and to develop their musical abilities (DfE & DCMS, 2011; Henley, 2011). Henley’s recommendations built on Wider Opportunities programmes that were first piloted in England in 2002 and which sought to address existing inequalities in music provision by offering all primary schoolchildren a period of free large-group tuition. The NPME also introduced new Music Education Hubs, mandating them to augment and support music teaching in schools.

In principle, more children than ever would be able to experience a unique blend of classroom music, instrumental, and vocal tuition, with input from professional musicians and excellent prospects for continuation. In practice, the processes of decentralisation and marketisation that the NPME set in motion caused huge upheaval (pedagogically and to teachers’ terms of employment), added to the air of fatalism that has long hung over the sector and, unfortunately, shows no sign of letting up (Bath et al., 2020; Boyle, 2020; McNally, 2022). At the time of writing, the number of music hubs is set to shrink by nearly two-thirds, with existing hubs obliged to merge and/or bid against each other to qualify as Hub Lead Organisations from September 2024. More broadly, the number of pupils taking GCSE and A-level Music in England continues to fall dramatically (-37.5% and -27% respectively between 2015 and 2023) (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2023),[3] and a class ceiling that excludes creative practitioners with working-class backgrounds from careers in the

[3] These patterns are a result of core academic subjects such as English, Maths, and Science being prioritised and, conversely, creative disciplines being marginalised. The reasons for this are largely political: STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are supported because they are regarded as the most productive areas in which the domestic workforce should be skilled, especially after Brexit. The extended abbreviation ‘STEAM’, adding the arts to this set of priorities, has yet to gain much traction beyond the academy (Harris & Bruin, 2017; Aguilera & Ortiz-Revilla, 2021). Music’s declining popularity as a subject is also causing predictable shortages in teacher recruitment (exacerbated by the decline carrying through to tertiary education) and fewer schools and colleges offering GCSE and A-level Music.

arts remains unsolved (Musicians' Union, 2018). Taken together, these stark circumstances help explain why music education is routinely described as being 'in dramatic decline' (Cooper, 2018, p. 4), 'in a perilous state' (Savage & Barnard, 2020, p. 3), or simply 'in crisis' (Daubney, Spruce, & Annetts, 2019, p. 2).

The situation I encountered and have described in West Sussex is replicated nationally: ten years after Wider Opportunities programmes were introduced, data confirmed that more children were being offered a first instrumental learning experience but that continuation after these programmes was limited (Ofsted, 2012). Six years later, ACE-commissioned research showed that over 700,000 children were learning to play a musical instrument through music hub provision (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018), yet reports of declining engagement and standards over the longer term continue to emerge (ACE, 2024). In the interim, the Music Commission (2017–19) was founded by the ABRSM, with support from ACE, to examine these trends. Although its report admirably identified themes that have long been neglected in instrumental tuition, such as the significance of pupil voice, inclusivity, (in)effective collaboration between schools and musical agencies, and precarious points of academic transition (e.g. between Key Stages 2 and 3, when most children move from primary to secondary school), it offered no further revelations nor, crucially, any concrete steps that hub leaders and teachers could test, much less enact (Music Commission, 2019; Henley & Barton, 2022).

Today, we remain at something of an impasse. Tellingly, the original and updated NPME have similar subtitles, 'the importance of music' and 'the power of music to change lives' respectively, as if to affirm and convey music's intrinsic and social values. As emotive and aspirational as these straplines are, they do not magically remove the barriers that still impede pupils' sustained instrumental learning. Nor can they conjure new learning opportunities for young musicians who *are* able to continue their learning after WCET, but whose needs are not met by traditional pedagogies, leading them to cease their learning. This task, ultimately, falls to music teachers willing to face the new reality of WCET/post-WCET learning and to accept that a compelling case exists to try new approaches to post-WCET learning in order to improve pupils' continuation *and* progression.

1.3. Positioning myself in the research

Since a period in my early twenties when I freelanced as an orchestral violinist, my career has been dedicated to teaching music. I am an upper-strings teacher, teacher trainer, and lecturer in music pedagogy, and have also taught classroom music. I have spent most of my career in the state sector, including at Leicestershire Arts (now Leicestershire Music), Hounslow Music Service, and West Sussex Music Trust, where, in addition to teaching, I managed 30 colleagues as Leader for Progression. This role led to my positions as Course Leader for the European String Teachers Association's (ESTA) PGCert qualification, for which I teach students about instrumental pedagogies and designing effective curricula, and my lectureship at the University of Southampton, whose MMus Music Education I oversee. I also maintain a small private teaching practice and work occasionally with the UK Music Masters charity, observing their string teachers in action and providing continuing professional development. The extent of my work with prospective, new, and experienced music teachers has reinforced the empathy and respect I feel for the instrumental teaching community. It has also given me a unique insight into the strengths and weaknesses of current teaching practices, including emerging national and international trends, and has made me realise how a stark disconnect between the worlds of research and practice is currently hampering our efforts to improve the status quo (for more on this problem, see §2.5.1).

When I was still a relatively new instrumental teacher, the introduction in the mid-2000s of what we would later call WCET prompted me (and all my colleagues) to dramatically rethink our styles of teaching, to manage the classroom in new ways, and to readjust our expectations and learning outcomes. I enjoyed the work tremendously and felt deep satisfaction when children I had taught in this new whole-class setting subsequently chose to continue their learning in small-group lessons I offered in their schools. However, I was also confronted with a challenge that could not have existed before WCET was introduced: teaching pupils who had participated in WCET was a markedly different experience to teaching pupils who had started to learn the violin via a more traditional route, i.e. by simply choosing to do so, independently of WCET.

It was quickly apparent that many post-WCET pupils were arriving to their small-group instrumental lessons with radically different expectations about what they would be like and about what they hoped to achieve during them. My expectations and those of my pupils often collided, whether around routines such as pupils taking their instruments home and practising regularly, or around pedagogical issues such as note-reading, the brisker lesson pace (compared with WCET), and, most surprisingly to me, the greater opportunities for individual feedback that small-group lessons tend to allow, but which were sometimes causing post-WCET pupils to feel frustrated, put upon, or even embarrassed. Despite my efforts at the time to initiate these pupils in the customs of the traditional small-group lesson format through which they were now learning, many of them seemed content to keep playing (only) at their existing level of performance, or, worse, began to disengage from the idea of playing the violin altogether.

Writing this Introduction as my doctoral studies near completion, I now understand that my approach to post-WCET teaching was moulding pupils into an assumed model of pedagogy—a course of action that was earnest, avoiding the easy option of lowering musical standards, but also oblivious to the fact that putting these pupils on a traditional path to musical success might do them a greater disservice. Similarly, when the original NPME was implemented, I believed that any alternative pedagogical approach would risk defeating the Plan's purpose: to give all children, irrespective of their backgrounds, the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to make music with others. This 'opportunity' would need, we supposed, to be an excellent or superior product in order to evidence its high quality—at least insofar as musical quality is defined traditionally and, in the minds of most instrumental teachers, instinctively.

I wanted great things for my pupils and believed both in them and in the idea that all children should be able to achieve a high standard if their teaching is well-suited to them. My frustrations, however, led me to ask two further questions. Should our instincts as instrumental teachers be followed or, perhaps, sometimes refuted? And despite the undeniable existential implications of the NPME (as discussed further in §2.1), which prioritised musical and pedagogical 'products' and so discouraged

change, what other option was there if continuation was to be improved? A sequence of entries I made in a reflective journal,[4] before this project's aims were clearly defined or its fieldwork was planned articulates the dilemma I was facing and how my own consideration of it gradually evolved:

> My work with continuation groups [i.e. post-WCET pupils] is the least satisfying part of my week because it doesn't fit with my ideals of expected progress. I want to inspire children to practise and prepare between lessons, but they don't consider this necessary unless there's a performance on the horizon. Each week we cover similar ground. They've forgotten what they did seven days ago. What can I do to improve the situation? Perhaps I need to make videos that they can watch at home. Visuals might better support written instructions, which can be easily misunderstood. (February 26th, 2020)

Three months earlier, I had written:

> Very few instruments in school again for my groups (all left at home and pupils know they can borrow a school instrument). No practice done, except by Skye (whose Mum used to play the cello). (November 20th, 2019)

> Two instruments in school today (of eight). Violin is always on Wednesday, the same day as PE. They've signed up for the lessons (and in some cases paid for them) so why can't they get organised? Do they care at all about playing the violin or am I wasting all my time and energy? (November 27th, 2019)

> I've fallen into the trap of delivering an unmusical lesson to Skye's group (which I loathe when observing other teachers) and we're all feeling fed up with the outcome, which is that after 30 minutes everyone leaves their last lesson of term unable to play 'Silent night' well enough to be recognised by others. I've been attempting to go phrase by phrase by ear,

[4] I kept this journal as soon as my doctoral studies began in late 2019, using it to record my ideas and informal responses to readings, talks, and teaching. Field notes became one of three methods to collect data more formally during my fieldwork, as I describe in Chapter 4. These notes succeeded the journal, whose final entry was made in early 2022.

> singing finger patterns as no-one is confident reading notation independently (except Skye). They're using their knowledge of how the piece should sound to help but it's too hard for them without some home practice to reinforce learning. Half of the children are distracted (in a group of six). Two children put their bows down the back of the radiator and one is looking at some artwork on the wall rather than trying to get it better. So annoying! Other children are trying to practise in the lesson because they haven't done so at home, despite us agreeing they'd do so last week. <u>Practice expectations need rethinking!</u> (December 4th, 2019)

> I overheard a conversation with Kaylee telling Ruby that she goes to bed in her school uniform at night so that she can be ready for school on time in the morning. 'It is always mad in the morning in our house.' I need to remember that the violin isn't always the top priority. Practising doesn't even feature on the agenda […] Shinichi Suzuki tells learners, '<u>Practise only as many times as you have breakfast.</u>' That doesn't really work here. There's a disjunct between the factors required for success and the reality of the situation. Does it really mean that if you can't practice as often as you eat breakfast, you can't have success? (January 15th, 2020)

During this period of self-reflection, I was naturally more alert to signs from elsewhere in the profession (e.g. speaking with fellow teachers, attending ESTA's conferences) that instrumental pedagogies were ripe for change, but also that no tangible solutions were being proposed, much less enacted. I became simultaneously anxious about the musical value system I had prized for so long and alive to how my own teaching was inadvertently acting as a disincentive to the sustained and meaningful engagement with music that I hoped my pupils would achieve, and which seemed to underlie the NPME.

1.4. Research aims

To better understand why the number of children continuing to learn musical instruments is declining,[5] the principal focus of this thesis is post-WCET continuation, by which I mean the period of learning that immediately follows WCET. As the next chapter will show, existing literature about WCET does not address the consequences of its distinct and still relatively new mode of teaching for pupils' longer-term instrumental learning, i.e. beyond WCET. This is surprising given how firmly established WCET now is in state primary schools—a commitment which the refreshed NPME renewed.

The central aim of this thesis will be to:

- design and test a new pedagogy that better addresses the needs of post-WCET learners.

It will be necessary to:

- examine how traditional pedagogies may be impeding continuation;
- and collate existing data about WCET-related teaching and learning, identifying potential gaps in the data that may need to be filled.

To meet and supplement these aims, I also plan to:

- design and conduct an action research project (through which to design and test a new pedagogy, etc.);
- and align the new pedagogy with the 'music education for all' agenda of the NPME.

Addressing these aims in full will embrace many different perspectives, from understanding the expectations of post-WCET learners to critiquing traditional and alternative teaching philosophies and practices. As a teacher and teacher trainer with

[5] This claim is further substantiated in §2.1.5.

substantial experience of the original NPME, I will also reflect on my own teaching practices and those of colleagues I have observed over the years.

The discrete notion of a post-WCET pedagogy (or continuation pedagogies) does not currently exist either in instrumental teaching or in its literature. This thesis will address that shortfall, arguing that continuation pedagogies must be distinguished from traditional approaches if continuation is to improve. It will call for new approaches (and test one such approach) that demonstrate awareness of their unique, post-WCET context and which can be more responsive to the needs of pupils whose prior experience of instrumental learning is, historically speaking, so unconventional.

1.5. How this thesis is structured

Having set the scene for this thesis and explained my motivation for beginning it, the following chapter provides a comprehensive review of its literature. The chapter falls into five sections, beginning with WCET itself (e.g. its backdrop and reception, the extent of existing research into it, and its contested implications for continuation and progress) before broader (and more celebrated) pedagogical methods are introduced. By identifying an underlying master-apprentice model in such methods (e.g. Suzuki, Colourstrings, Rolland), this second section critiques how technical training and teacher-led, corrective pedagogies stand in stark contrast with the progressive ideals of pupil-centred learning. I also examine how instrumental teaching overlooks or even misconstrues such ideals, in part because a dominant investment model of teaching (discussed in §2.2.9) and learning tends to prioritise not the pupil learning in the present, but the musician they will become in the future.

This theme is prolonged in the next section, which maps and critiques several existing programmes intended to promote social justice (e.g. El Sistema and its many progenies, Gallions Music Trust, UK Music Masters). This section furthers the case for designing and testing new pedagogical approaches, rather than recycling traditional pedagogies whose effectiveness in these contexts is now known to have

been limited or, worse, counterproductive. In the penultimate section, I therefore seek out and chronicle studies and proposals, such as Lucy Green's informal pedagogies and Robert Duke and James Byo's persuasive arguments, that I argue could help solve some of the problems I have outlined (Green, 2008; Duke & Byo, 2019). Chapter 2 is capped by a summary of these practical and scholarly problems, arriving at the thesis's central research question: How can instrumental pedagogy be adapted to better facilitate pupils' engagement and progress as they continue lessons after WCET?

With this question established, the next chapter details a discrete theoretical framework through which it can be answered. The principal focus of the chapter is the arguments of the progressive educationalist John Dewey (1859–1952), whose influence over mainstream education, *but not instrumental teaching*, has been wide-ranging. As instrumental teaching currently fails to be pupil-led, at least in the authentic meaning of the term, the chapter draws a direct line between Dewey's socially reforming aspirations and the practical shortfalls of the NPME. It becomes desirable, then, not only to plan instrumental lessons through a Deweyan lens, but also to outline a new pedagogical approach, which I name 'Be a musician' (hereafter, BeAM). The remainder of the chapter explains how this approach has the potential to improve engagement and progression for pupils who continue their instrumental learning after WCET.

My own experience as a practitioner-researcher, coupled with Dewey's arguments in favour of active learning, made action research a logical method for this thesis. Chapter 4 expands on this rationale and describes the design of a suitable action research project that I carried out over four months in 2021. The chapter continues by outlining the project's specific approach to sampling, data collection and analysis, and measures I took to ensure that the data was trustworthy. It also explains my decision to use both deductive and inductive thematic analysis and describes the six-step process I followed (after Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke) of identifying codes, themes, and sub-themes that can then be interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The penultimate section of the chapter addresses the project's ethical considerations (i.e. working with children in a school setting), including steps I took to pre-empt

concerns. To draw the chapter to a close, I acknowledge the potential limitations of action research and of my specific project (e.g. subjectivity, sample size) and how careful planning helped mitigate such limitations.

The second half of the thesis presents its empirical work. Chapters 5–8 follow similar structures: first, presenting and interpreting data derived from footage, field notes, and focus groups; second, discussing the significance of the data and my findings in relation to selected literature introduced earlier in the thesis. Chapter 5 addresses a key theme from the data: pupil-led learning. It examines how participants responded to BeAM's pupil-led strategies, taking their intended learning foci in turn: leading and following; musical communication; creating music; and collaborating with others. Detailing five ways in which pupil-led learning can be seen to have improved engagement leads to discussion of the implications of these findings for instrumental teaching more generally, including how the role of the teacher is affected by the changes that BeAM makes.

Chapter 6 addresses another key theme from the data: progress. It does so against the backdrop of Dewey's arguments, especially on 'growing power', which it uses as a lens through which pupils' musical progress can be identified in new ways (Dewey, 1897, p. 15). This connection is exemplified across several instances of musical progress and pupil behaviour that BeAM stimulated: exploring new instrumental techniques and modes of musical expression; how pupils were musically present in their lessons; the use of physical gestures to communicate and improvise; and the ability of pupils to appraise their own playing. The second half of the chapter considers the consequences of reconceptualising musical progress for curriculum design, assessment, attitudes and approaches to instrumental group teaching, and the role of reflection.

Whereas the findings of Chapters 5–6 stem from a deductive approach to data analysis, Chapter 7 examines three themes I was able to identify inductively: how pupils perceived, and enjoyed, activities and pieces that they described repeatedly as 'easy'; the significance pupils attached to performing music; and pupils' advice for teachers planning instrumental lessons in the future, including the recommendation

that pupils' voices be heard and centred. The implications and intersection of these themes inform the final part of the chapter, which begins by discussing how pupils' experiences of WCET conditions their expectations of what it is to learn a musical instrument. Supported by these circumstances, the data, and Dewey's arguments, I defend the value of 'easy' activities and pieces and show that an unhurried pace of post-WCET learning marks another beneficial departure from traditional pedagogy. Finally, I argue that the chapter's themes, taken together, pose a challenge to teachers to reframe performance opportunities, which BeAM's successors should preserve rather than omit.

A counterbalance to Chapters 5–7, Chapter 8 employs a negative case analysis to highlight exceptions in my data and to discuss their wider significance. It posits two of the project's participants as distinct types of post-WCET learner, whose learning profiles are described in the first half of the chapter. The chapter acknowledges that the ways in which different pedagogical approaches serve different 'ideal' types of pupils is a complicating factor for BeAM and for instrumental group teaching at large. Indeed, this dilemma is the subject of the second half of the chapter, which finds that care should be taken not to simplify Dewey's message by treating all post-WCET pupils as though they are the same. BeAM is defended in this light for seeking to democratise, not police, pupils' participation. It therefore remains a necessary alternative to a dominant model of instrumental teaching that continues to equate fulfilment with excellence, prioritising a small minority of young musicians and impeding continuation.

The Conclusion revisits the research aims before detailing four key findings. It also summarises the contributions the thesis makes to existing knowledge and examines the wider implications of rethinking post-WCET teaching for hub leaders and, especially, instrumental teachers open to rethinking their own teaching through a BeAM-like lens.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Unpacking Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET)

The circumstances in which Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET) emerged can be traced through a series of reports and policy documents.[6] The idea that all primary schoolchildren should be given the opportunity to play a musical instrument was a Labour Government proposal contained in the white paper *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001). The initiative was implemented during the same decade: a collaborative *Music Manifesto* was launched in 2004, initially by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, then by an independent, apolitical advocacy group chaired by Darren Henley, then Managing Director of Classic FM (DCSF & DCMS, 2008). The first and last of the manifesto's five aims, 'to provide every young person with first access to a range of music experiences' and 'to improve the support structures for young people making music', gave impetus to the Wider Opportunities programme. Known on the ground as 'Wider Opps', the programme delivered whole-class instrumental and vocal teaching, usually by Local Education Authority (LEA) music services, to primary schoolchildren between 2005 and 2011.[7]

Two further reports published during the Coalition Government's first full year in office fuelled more radical transformations in English music education in the 2010s.

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[6] This first section of this chapter draws on academic research where possible, noting that there is a limited amount of academic research on WCET and especially post-WCET continuation. It also draws heavily on grey literature such as the white paper and report cited later in this paragraph, and on commentary from non-academic experts. For more on this distinction, see §2.5.

[7] To clarify the genealogy of English music education: LEA music services were established between the 1950s and 1970s, initially to provide free instrumental and vocal lessons in schools and to run music centres where further tuition took place beyond school hours, for example choirs, orchestras, symphonic wind bands, and, more recently, popular music ensembles (Cleave & Dust, 1989). Reductions in state funding in the 1980s served to limit this provision as well as the subsidies music services were once able to offer.

Henley's report *Music Education in England: A Review* highlighted the variable quality and quantity of music education, citing its patchiness nationally and locally (Henley, 2011). Endorsing Henley's recommendations, *The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education* quickly followed (DfE & DCMS, 2011; hereafter, NPME).

Its most profound effect was the introduction of Music Education Hubs, which were intended to support and further develop music teaching in schools so that more children could experience a blend of classroom teaching, instrumental, and vocal tuition, with input from professional musicians (Ofsted, 2013; Widdison & Hanley, 2014). Like the *Music Manifesto*, this new educational structure encouraged partnerships between different organisations, including schools, arts organisations, and community and voluntary organisations, with the key difference that most LEA music services became the Lead Partner of their new hub, after bidding for the right to become so.

123 such hubs were formed in 2012.[8] This process of decentralisation affected Music Services in different ways. For example, West Sussex Music Service became a charitable Trust, while its neighbouring Hampshire Music Service retained LEA status. But all hubs were now required to demonstrate their compliance with NPME criteria to Arts Council England (ACE), to whom the Government assigned the responsibility to distribute funds. Henley had recommended that all Key Stage 2 children be given the opportunity to learn an instrument through whole-class ensemble tuition, ideally for a year but for a minimum of a term (Henley, 2011). The NPME duly made it a core requirement for all hubs to '[e]nsure that every child aged 5–18 has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument (other than voice) through whole-class ensemble teaching programmes for ideally a year (but for a minimum of a term) of weekly tuition on the same instrument' (DfE & DCMS, 2011, p. 11). Implementing the NPME therefore became the overriding priority for hubs, shaping their vision and day-to-day operations. The delivery of instrumental music education in English state schools, and with it the working lives of peripatetic teachers, had been redefined (Boyle, 2020; McNally, 2022; Underhill, 2022).

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[8] The political backdrop to the formation of hubs is discussed in §1.2.2.

Reception to the first NPME was mixed. Some voices, particularly hubs and professional musicians who also taught, largely welcomed the continued commitment to instrumental and vocal teaching via the ring-fencing of funding at a time of national austerity (Hallam & Hanke, 2012). Others were critical of the narrowness of the plan's vision in relation the range of modes of musical learning that it sought to promote and its apparent lack of interest in the creative and individualised aspects of musical experiences (Fautley, 2012; Spruce, 2013). While the concept of delivering group instrumental tuition in schools was familiar in principle, and precursor projects such as Sheila Nelson's in Tower Hamlets had been celebrated (Nelson, 1985), the pedagogical implications of delivering whole-class instrumental lessons by teachers used to offering individual and small-group lessons marked a dramatic shift in professional practices (Fautley, Coll & Henley, 2011). Government funding to help (re)train peripatetic teachers was forthcoming and is discussed further in §2.1.2. Nevertheless, to teachers whose formative learning would likely have been in a one-to-one setting, sustained over many years, and possibly offered without charge to their families, the prospect of now delivering whole-class lessons, 'ideally [for] a year (but for a minimum of a term)', appeared a very poor relation (DfE & DCMS, 2011, p. 14).

2.1.1. Evaluating WCET

Because hubs are required to supply ACE with statistics each autumn about their activities (e.g. the type and length of provision they offer, participation rates, demographic data), our understanding of WCET during the 2010s relies largely on this self-reporting. Efforts to interpret the data were led initially by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, in tandem with ACE), then by Birmingham City University (Sharp & Sims, 2014; Sharp, 2015; Sharp, & Rabiasz, 2016; Fautley & Whittaker, 2017/18/19). This relatively small body of report-based research still exceeds autonomous research into WCET, which is understandably hampered by a lack of access to ACE data: Anthony Anderson and Sarah Barton-Wales's study of parental attitudes to WCET is a notable example of the latter (Anderson & Barton-Wales, 2019).

Nevertheless, we can uncover clear WCET trends by drawing on both types of research. For example, year-on-year comparisons of the number of pupils participating in WCET programmes show a steady rise: hubs provided WCET to 679,337 pupils in Years 1–9 in 2017/18, an increase of 147,915 pupils in the period since 2012/13 (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018, p. 11), a trend which, a year earlier, Martin Fautley and Adam Whittaker had spotted and regarded as 'good news for our primary school population, and for musical progression as a whole' (Fautley & Whittaker, 2017, p. 45). We can also see that for many children, a first musical experience was the catalyst for longer-term instrumental learning: over a quarter of pupils who received WCET continued to learn a musical instrument through a hub in each of the five years data was collected (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018). The significance of this trend is underlined when we consider that many parents/carers would not have even entertained the prospect of arranging instrumental tuition for their children without WCET first being offered (Anderson & Barton-Wales, 2019, p. 276. Similarly, Fautley and Whittaker credit WCET for reaching disadvantaged pupils as well as those from a greater range of ethnic and social backgrounds (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018, p. 23).

The literature that has accrued around WCET has also helped to paint a rounded picture of different WCET scenarios, which have otherwise remained something of a hidden world, known only to instrumental teachers and the pupils themselves. WCET programmes are usually overseen by a visiting instrumental teacher, teaching whole-class lessons in primary schools (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2019). These lessons typically last between 45 minutes and one hour (Hallam, 2016, p. 5). Year 4 is the most popular point during Key Stage 2 at which WCET programmes are delivered, followed by Year 5 and Year 3 (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2019). Support for the lead instrumental teacher is typically requested by hubs, and is usually offered, either by the class teacher or one of their colleagues, or by a Teaching Assistant (Hallam, 2016, p. 19).

2.1.2. The benefits of an integrated approach to WCET

Although no mode of WCET delivery is prescribed, then, a consensus about the breadth and 'best practice' of musical activities such programmes are able to offer has gradually emerged. This understanding has been nurtured by training programmes, new repertoire and resources, and research. Those teachers tasked with delivering WCET know that they must adapt their teaching style to a whole-class environment, and some scholars have likewise identified the beginnings of a WCET-style pedagogy (e.g. Fautley, Kinsella &Whittaker, 2019), whose relevance to the current study is prevalent. After all, it is this pedagogy that generates expectations for WCET pupils not only about how learning an instrument feels and sounds, but also, crucially, about what continuing to learn an instrument after WCET might entail.

The idea that new (and, implicitly, best) practices would emerge in a whole-class setting in fact pre-dates WCET: the Wider Opportunities programme was originally intended to be 'part of an integrated, holistic musical approach' (Fautley, Coll & Henley, 2011, p. 1), which encouraged the development not only of traditional instrumental skills, but also of general musicianship, creativity, musical literacy, and so-called transferrable skills, for example confidence, collaboration, concentration, and self-esteem. WCET prolonged, and still prolongs, this holistic ethos. Music Mark (the successor to the Federation of Music Services) continues to upload resources that showcase what it considers to be best practices: activities employing a body stave (signing a melody by pointing to different parts of the body); playing rhythmic motifs with spoons; improvising call-and-response motifs; and more traditional activities such as learning to play pieces and to read notation (Music Mark, 2024).

Susan Hallam's 2016 report on WCET, also for Music Mark, makes a similar argument. Based on her observations of WCET programmes, Hallam notes how hubs tend to include composition and improvisation among their activities—the latter more so—and that learning by ear is a consistent feature (Hallam, 2016, p. 6). At the same time, the significance attached to reading notation was also apparent, even if some providers made it a clear priority, while others covered it only briefly, and using just a small range of notes. Regular group performances in assemblies and concerts were reported, and headteachers Hallam interviewed prized WCET's ability

to foster teamwork, resilience, peer support, and creativity.

WCET's integrated approach, then, is a recurring theme of its practices and its supporting literature: further publications for instrumental teachers, including handbooks still in circulation, endorse the point, including chapters that advise teachers about 'The art of teaching in groups', 'An integrated approach', and 'Integration: Setting the Scene' (Ley, 2004; Bunting, 2005; Spruce, 2011). Recognising that WCET would mark a significant change in the working practices of instrumental teachers, Trinity Guildhall (now known as Trinity College London) and the Open University were awarded Government funding to design CPD courses, with units such as 'What is musical learning?', 'Developing vocal work', and 'Lesson planning' offered free of charge to support whole-class instrumental delivery (Fautley, Coll & Henley, 2011).

WCET therefore represented a shift away from the sort of exclusively instrumental (that is, technical) skills that have dominated traditional modes of instrumental learning. This was necessary, and helpful, for several reasons. As Liz Stafford argues, the shift was as much pragmatic as it was ideological, as pupils had no say in the instrument that they would be learning through WCET. In the event that they were not especially keen to do so, or did not 'get on with the instrument', supplementary pitch and rhythm activities, sometimes incorporating movement and composing, would still allow them to develop their musical skills (Stafford, 2016, p. 4). Similarly, many children participating in the programme could not take their instruments home to practise, either because schools would not sanction it or because instruments were shared, restricting pupils' engagement to a once-weekly session. Hallam laments the fact that these imperfect circumstances will probably impair progress (as traditionally defined, at least), but understands that a rebalancing of technical and non-technical skills is a realistic response to the WCET environment, and praises what is being achieved in some instances given these circumstances (Hallam, 2016, p. 6).

This sense of pragmatism is closely aligned to discussion around inclusion: an integrated WCET approach is, by definition, more inclusive. Over the years, many

researchers have voiced their suspicions about music lessons that focus primarily on instrumental learning, not because it is to be discouraged, but because of the tendency to recognise as 'gifted' or 'talented' only those children who possess certain performing skills. (This issue, which is wrapped up with a broader debate about excellence and elitism, is one we will return to later in the chapter.) Carolyn Cooke, for example, advocates offering children a wider set of activities, thereby nurturing a wider set of abilities, including detailed listening skills, and, again, creative improvising and composing (Cooke, 2011).

Although Wider Opportunities programmes were not designed to replace the longstanding classroom music lesson, in practice many schools were content to fulfil their curricular obligations through the programme's weekly lesson, delivered not by a teacher employed by the school, but by a visiting music specialist (Stafford, 2016; Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2019). Recognising this trend, which was only continued by WCET, hubs began to market their ability to meet National Curriculum requirements, blending composing, performing, and listening in their WCET programmes to entice schools to participate (Stafford, 2016).

Discussion of WCET's pedagogical implications is rare, but Martin Fautley, Victoria Kinsella, and Adam Whittaker's latest analysis of WCET data did prompt them to identify two distinct approaches that teachers were taking: one that starts *with* the instrument; and another that takes place *via* the instrument (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2019, p. 248; emphasis added). In the former, developing instrumental proficiency is the catalyst for wider musical learning. One example I would offer from my own professional experience is pupils learning to read rhythms and to sing pitches as part of a scaffolding strategy for the pieces they are tasked with playing. In the latter approach, general musicianship takes centre stage, with instrumental work used to support broader aims. An example I would offer here is pupils creating a musical soundscape about the Tudors using voices and body percussion, while also being asked to add an ostinato line on their instruments. Both approaches pursue an integrated approach, albeit with a different emphasis: the former aligns more closely to instrumental teaching, the latter with a curriculum music lesson. At the same time, both models represent a significant departure from the traditional one-to-one

instrumental lesson, whose literature is reviewed later in this chapter.

2.1.3. The limitations of quantitative data collection

Concerns over a lack of *qualitative* data on WCET were raised as early as 2013, when Ofsted observed that although hubs were dutifully supplying ACE with a considerable range of statistics, this monitoring data was not yet sufficient to help gauge the quality of the work hubs were doing (Ofsted, 2013). A few years later, Fautley and Whittaker raised a related concern: that the way in which WCET was prioritising participation—a natural consequence of the NPME—was arguably deterring discussion of quality, whether by researchers or by the hubs themselves (Fautley & Whittaker, 2017). This was, in truth, apparent in Ofsted's 2013 report, *Music in Schools: What Hubs Must Do – The Challenging Conversation with Schools*, in which one hub was quoted admitting that they 'can meet all the Arts Council key performance indicators without doing anything about quality' (Ofsted, 2013, p. 19).

The problem still exists, despite detailed recommendations to solve it being made in the meantime—for example, that ACE should re-examine their approach, addressing this qualitative deficit and ensuring that any qualitative data they might go on to collect is rigorous and comparable between hubs (Savage & Barnard, 2020, p. 5). (The difficulty in doing so probably explains why it has not been attempted before.) Nor has the publication of a revised NPME, entitled *The Power of Music to Change Lives*, allayed these fears (DfE & DCMS, 2022). Responding to the document, Nigel Taylor (Music Mark) complained that 'quality [in WCET] might continue to be expressed by the number of participants' and called for a clear set of criteria to help define quality in music education (Taylor, 2022).

2.1.4. A mixed reception to WCET's delivery and effectiveness

Besides commissioned reports on and independent studies of WCET, we can also look to the accounts of organisations (including Ofsted, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Music Mark, and the Musicians' Union) that either work alongside or represent the views of music teachers. Doing so, it becomes apparent that while some teachers have embraced new ways of working, others complain that it seriously undermines their ambition to train the next generation of musicians. For example, Maureen Hanke (former leader of Norfolk Music Hub) quotes one teacher who regards whole-class tuition as a career highlight: 'My most rewarding experiences as a teacher of music for over 30 years have been delivering a well-planned wider opportunities programme' (Hanke, 2018, p. 7). Yet, another teacher believes that whole-class tuition has had a negative effect on traditional instrumental tuition: 'My most frustrating experience… has been meeting new pupils who have no enthusiasm to pursue instrumental tuition when it is offered because their wider opportunities experience has put them off' (Hanke, 2018, p. 7).

There is more agreement among teachers about how a lack of joined-up thinking undermines the relationship between whole-class ensemble tuition and other music lessons that pupils receive in school (Ofsted, 2012; Ofsted, 2013; Hanke, 2018). Ofsted tasked hubs with holding 'challenging conversations' with schools about the quality and connectedness of the other music provision (Ofsted, 2013, p. 5), and the phrase duly entered the lexicon of hub leaders. However, headteachers' understanding of the *quality* of music education varies between schools, as Ofsted also understood. Ofsted's appeal that 'performance and enjoyment are not enough' was a warning against complacency; specifically, the perception among school leaders, deliberately or inadvertently, that they could be satisfied with the quality of their schools' music provision as long as it was received positively by pupils, or that pupils were showing a desire, at some point during their learning process, to perform (Ofsted, 2013).

2.1.5. Contesting continuation and progress

This widespread unease about WCET's quality control is thematically linked to a more specific question arising from the programmes' literature: that of continuation and progress. Henley's report made clear that opportunities should exist for all pupils to continue their music learning beyond their initial free experience (Henley, 2011). This is why the original NPME made the availability and affordability of clear progression routes a core role for hubs to fulfil (DfE & DCMS, 2011). However, no further detail was provided by the plan to describe or advise on what constitutes successful continuation, nor even about how hubs were to approach the issue. Consequently, hubs faced the pressure of knowing that they were obliged to collate and share with ACE 'respectable' data and were therefore prone to implementing quick-fix solutions, for example offering schools free follow-on WCET to guarantee impressive, if artificial, continuation rates of 100%. This specific scenario is based on my own experience, but criticisms that continuation has not been considered sufficiently are shared by researchers and practitioners alike (Zeserson et al., 2014; Hallam & Burns, 2017; Music Mark, 2018; Hallam, 2019).

To help fill this void, Hallam described continuation as opportunities that 'provided a smooth transition from what was essentially a school-based classroom activity [WCET] to activities where the children were developing an identity as a musician with music as part of their social life' (Hallam, 2016, p. 8). Acknowledging that this remains 'a contentious and sensitive issue', she argued that it 'is possible to implement WCET in ways that lead to high standards of instrumental playing and high continuation rates' (p. 2), and that this can be achieved through ongoing whole-class tuition, large- or small-group tuition, individual tuition (offered by the hub or privately), membership of a hub ensemble, and/or independent learning (e.g. peer learning, internet learning).

Yet, 'high standards… and continuation rates' are a best-case scenario, not a norm. Continuation rates after initial WCET programmes are, in fact, low, with 29.28% of children continuing to learn in 2016/17, falling to 26.49% in 2017/18 (Fautley & Whittaker, 2018, p. 45). Longer-term statistics paint a similar picture: a third of children aged between 7 and 10 say they play an instrument, a figure that falls to one

in four still playing at the ages of 16–17 (Youth Music & Ipsos MORI, 2020). Given that children should be engaging with six years of music in the primary-level classroom and ideally one year of instrumental learning through WCET, these figures are regarded to be surprisingly low (Zeserson et al., 2014, p. 26).

We also know that opportunities for continuation are provided inconsistently across the country (Musicians' Union, 2017; Savage, 2018). In a survey conducted by the Incorporated Society of Musicians in the summer of 2018, over 35% of classroom teachers and headteachers reported the opportunity for every child to play in groups or ensembles was worse or much worse (ISM, 2018, p. 11). Acknowledging these problems, the new NPME promises a stronger focus on feedback from schools and on measuring 'how effective instrumental programmes have been at stimulating pupil interest in further musical/instrumental learning and how pupils have been supported to access further opportunities' (DfE & DCMS, 2022, p. 54).

By far the barrier to continuation cited most often is finances (Hume & Wells, 2014, Zeserson et al., 2014; Hallam, 2016; ISM, 2018; Savage & Barnard, 2020). Calls for families unable to afford post-WCET provision to be supported more generously have not been heeded and are undermined structurally because individual hubs, rather than the Government or ACE, are responsible for setting fees and thresholds for subsidies. Further local factors, such as the logistical and financial challenge for rural pupils to access county music centres, also impede continuation (Hallam, 2016; Fautley & Whittaker, 2017).

The only detailed proposals to improve this situation have been made not by Government, but by the Music Commission, a panel chaired by Sir Nicholas Kenyon and drawing on the insights of prominent performers, educators, and broadcasters (Music Commission, 2019). The commission proposed new financial support from three income streams: National Progression in Music Challenge Funds, which would need to be established; non-statutory and philanthropic financing for schools and their partners to test new approaches to supporting progression in music and to developing local and regional ensembles; and Music Premiums—a deliberate reference to the Coalition Government's 'pupil premium', which has existed to help

disadvantaged pupils in England and Wales since 2011—to support first access and progression (Music Commission, 2019). These ideas, while commendable, have not yet been adopted.

The fact that hubs and their partners are left to devise their own criteria for what qualifies as (and sometimes, alarmingly, who qualifies for) continuation is another consideration. This has been a problem ever since the Wider Opportunities programme was introduced—for example, educators lauding their schools' continuation opportunities (in this case, in a brass or steel pan band) for only those pupils deemed 'gifted and talented pupils' because they are regarded as having demonstrated sufficient 'aptitude and ability' (Presman, 2009, p. 41). A greater emphasis on the virtue of inclusivity means that these gatekeeping tendencies have receded in recent years, but they have not disappeared altogether. As recently as 2023, a film was produced by the ACE-funded Awards for Youngs Musicians advising organisations about how to equip teachers with the skills to spot 'talented' children among groups of first-access music-makers (AYM, 2023). Pedagogically, too, there is a risk that many teachers still approach WCET in too traditional a manner, as though whole-class teaching is no different to a one-to-one or small-group teaching, and that this has serious consequences for children's learning outcomes. The general absence of technology in music lessons (as noted in the same Music Commission report) is a symptom of this broader issue, and a clue that teaching methods themselves (i.e. not just finances, as stated above) are a barrier to continuation.

While there is general agreement that participation has been widened successfully by WCET, concerns over children's musical progress are also raised (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2017; Music Commission, 2019). Fautley, Kinsella and Whittaker, for example, highlight data proving that more children now participate in first musical experiences, yet fewer children ever exceed what the National Qualifications Frameworks define as 'entry' levels (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2017, p. 33). This is partly attributed to a decline in year-long programmes, which was once the most popular duration: the number of pupils receiving WCET for *less* than one term has increased from 24,892 to 35,340 (or ~42%) between 2013 and 2017 (Fautley &

Whittaker, 2018, p. 12). Comparable arguments, such as that 'hubs have led to more outcomes for children, not always better outcomes', fuel the debate about whether a supposed trade-off between attainment and participation is inevitable or, indeed, desirable (Hanke, 2018, p. 4).

2.1.6. What constitutes progress?

As with continuation, asking schools and hubs to do more to facilitate progress—a recent example is a call for them to establish clearer 'progression pathways' (Music Commission, 2019, p. 26)—is undermined by the lack of a clear definition of the term. Confusion is, in fact, longstanding and not confined to WCET. Fautley, Coll, and Henley even argue that the profession lacks a credible, widely accepted model of what musical learning and development entail (Fautley, Coll & Henley, 2011). They believe that this situation, coupled with an absence of (self-)critical awareness of why it is problematic, amount to what Jerome Bruner astutely labelled 'folk pedagogy', that is, the informal ways in which teachers and parents instruct children based on implicit assumptions about how learning occurs (Bruner, 1996, p. 44). Looking to improve matters, Fautley, Kinsella, and Whittaker draw a distinction between progress and progression in WCET, defining the former as 'to make progress, to get better at something, to have greater depth of understanding or breadth of experience', and the latter as 'to go from WCET to a school band (etc.), then to an area band, then a music centre band, and so on… [i.e.] to make progress… then avail oneself of progression *routes* available via the local hub.' (Fautley, Kinsella & Whittaker, 2019, p. 247; authors' emphasis).

Yet, there is also a dawning realisation that existing progression routes, even when they are available, are often unsuitable for many children. It is likely that the current prevalence of traditional, or 'narrow linear', progression routes may be skewing perceptions of musical progression—for example, routes that align predominantly with classical music and/or prioritise performance to the neglect of other musical skills (Music Commission, 2019). Similarly, the traditional offer from music services (and now hubs) to accelerate children's musical learning through individual and

small-group lessons and participation in ensembles, all geared towards passing graded examinations, is now understood to have drawbacks: Music Mark acknowledges that this brand of progression works well for some pupils but asks 'what about the rest?' (Music Mark, 2018, p. 8); and Awards for Young Musicians went so far as to brand the status quo a 'failure model' that pushes a small minority towards excellence and fulfilment, with the majority destined to fail (AYM, 2012, p. 5).

Music Mark's report, on *The Future of the National Plan for Music Education*, warns *against* assumptions that music education should lead to professional engagement in music, arguing that '[m]usical excellence takes many forms. It's not just about a pathway towards a career in music. It's about musically engaged adults as listeners, concert goers, musically enriched people' (Music Mark, 2018, p. 8). While its use of 'excellence' is itself a loaded term, the idea that professional expectations can be unhelpful, and even exclusory, is a helpful one. When the Music Commission asked 'how can we fundamentally retune our ambition for music learning by focusing on the need for progress and progression routes?' (Music Commission, 2019, p.2), they added to calls to rethink how progression in music is characterised. Again, flagging the need to recognise the achievements of learners *not* involved in the exam system, the commission endorsed a broader understanding of and approach to progress—for example, a learning environment in which a greater range of musical contexts and styles were legitimised, or in which increasing individuality and autonomy were validated as a signs of progress (Music Commission, 2019, p. 24).

2.2. Celebrated pedagogical methods and models

While it is evident from the literature reviewed so far that certain musical activities and modes of delivery are considered best practice when delivering WCET, there is a striking absence of an equivalent discussion in relation to continuation. Data shows that the most common way in which children continue learning after WCET is to take up a hub's offer of individual or small-group lessons, either in school or at a

local music centre and with subsidised instrument hire (Fautley & Whittaker, 2019). Yet, there is no research that critiques or documents how post-WCET pupils might best be taught, nor a hint that alternative approaches may be required. Rather, hubs, schools, and families tend to assume that pupils will simply progress to 'regular' lessons, underpinned by orthodox instrumental teaching pedagogies. The focus of this section is to examine these mainstream approaches, as they are practised in the UK, providing valuable context about the experiences of pupils who continue their instrumental journey after WCET.

Each instrumental family has established approaches to teaching different instruments. Likewise, a wide range of tutor and method books are well known in different parts of the instrumental teaching world. For the purposes of this study, I have focussed on string teaching, as the pupils who participated in my action research were all learning to play the violin, post-WCET, in small groups. String pedagogy has a particularly long and storied history, from the historical treatises of artist-teachers such as Leopold Mozart (Wolfgang Amadeus's father), Francesco Geminiani, and Louis Spohr, through Joseph Joachim, Leopold Auer, and Carl Flesch, to Ivan Galamian and Simon Fischer in more recent times (Knapik, 2014).

Nowadays, certain strings-centred pedagogies—long pre-dating the *National Plan*—are widely acclaimed. Three of the most popular are the Suzuki method, Colourstrings, and approaches to teaching based on the pedagogy of Paul Rolland. Writing for the European String Teachers Association (ESTA), Steve Bingham goes so far as to say that these 'form the backbone of teacher training and practice in [the UK] and indeed across the globe' (Bingham, 2018). Certainly, they are the methods of choice for many highly regarded teachers working for, say, junior conservatoires as well as well-known string programmes overseen by organisations such as UK Music Masters, Oasby Music Group, Gallions Music Trust, Big Noise, and In Harmony (based on El Sistema).[9]

[9] For example: the "First String Experience" at the Royal Academy of Music (London) and "Young Strings" at the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester) use Rolland pedagogy; UK Music Masters and Oasby Music Group employs a hybrid Suzuki model; Gallions Music Trust uses Colourstrings; and Big Noise blends all three methods with closely-linked Kodály and Dalcroze approaches.

Each of the three methods have also become institutionalised because of organisational efforts to promote them, for example by offering training events for teachers to learn from specialists and even gain accreditation: the British Suzuki Music Association (f. 1978) offers training at Levels 1–5, hosting regular courses across the UK; Colourstrings offers four phases of online and live training each year, usually overseen by its creator Géwa Szvilay; and Rolland's legacy is upheld by experts such as Joanna May and Joanne Erwin, for example by training teachers at the ESTA summer school in 2020 and 2022, including an optional Level 1 accreditation.

Of course, it is not the case that all string teachers subscribe exclusively to any one method or approach. It is true, nonetheless, that these programmes represent a gold standard to which many teachers aspire. As we shall see, magazines such as *Music Teacher*, *Classical Music*, *Arco* (for ESTA members), and *The Strad*, and even national newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Guardian*, publish articles featuring these methods and programmes (Sennett, 2008; Rumbelow, 2011). Also, as prominent teachers such as Sheila Nelson, Kathy and David Blackwell, Mary Cohen, Thomas Gregory, and Jessica O'Leary design and publish their own teaching materials, certain pedagogical traits inspired by or derived from these methods become further ingrained in new exercises and pieces. In turn, it seems likely that the approaches of many UK violin teachers are imbued, consciously or otherwise, with mainstream pedagogies.

Before we consider the significant implications of this situation for the experiences of post-WCET learners, I will first describe the genesis and defining characteristics of each of the three methods and approaches, then relate them to broader pedagogical models that underpin their delivery.

2.2.1. The Suzuki method

Created by Japanese educator Sinichi Suzuki (1898–1998) in the 1960s, the Suzuki method has had a profound effect on string pedagogy internationally. Its strongest advocates go as far as describing Suzuki as 'a kind of magician who… discovered the "philosophers' stone" of violin instruction' (Steinschaden & Zehetmair, 1982, p. 8). The reason for this outpouring of praise is the method's so-called mother-tongue approach, which enables children—specifically, young children—to acquire the skills to learn to play well. After observing families in Japan during the 1950s, Suzuki realised that if children could speak by the age of two by listening to and imitating a parent, then similar strategies could be harnessed to accelerate music learning (Suzuki, 1983, p. 9).

The unique method of learning Suzuki subsequently developed includes: learning to play from an early age, i.e. as young as 2–3 years old); practising each day; listening to recordings of 'perfect' versions of the music being learned; love and support being given by a 'home' teacher (specified as, typically, a parent); learning a body of carefully sequenced repertoire, which is reviewed as the child makes progress; and attending individual *and* group lessons each week. Progress is achieved initially through rote learning of aural, technical, and musical skills, guided by the teacher, with notation introduced only after this stage have been reached. Granting pupils multiple opportunities to perform these (memorised) pieces in individual and group situations is encouraged (Butz, 2019).

2.2.2. Colourstrings

Colourstrings was created by Hungarian brothers Géza (b. 1943) and Csaba Szilvay (b. 1941) after they settled in Finland in the 1970s and began teaching at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. It is described as 'a child-centred approach to music teaching', which has evolved from the holistic approach and methodical progression found in the (non-string-specific) Kodály method (Colourstrings, n.d.). Géza's ambition was to translate these elements into a violin tutor book, creating 'a constant equilibrium between the development of musical hearing, instrumental technique,

music theory and emotion' (Szilvay, 1977, p. 141). In common with the Suzuki method, Colourstrings encourages an early start to learning: music kindergarten classes begin as early as 18 months and focus on musicianship in an integrated manner, in which children move, clap, sing simple folk tunes (using solfège hand signs), which they will go on to play on their instruments. Unlike the Suzuki method, Colourstrings incorporates the reading of music from the start of the learning journey. Indeed, its stylised notation system is distinct, being intended to help young children to read and write music as soon as possible: the stave is simplified, progressing from just two lines to the usual five, and the four open violin strings are represented by colours and pictures (green bear, red daddy, blue mummy, yellow baby bird).

Parental involvement is embedded in the Colourstrings approach. Parents accompanying their children to Colourstrings centres—held after school or at the weekends—are expected to sit in on the musical activities the approach offers, including instrumental lessons, choirs, musicianship classes, and chamber music groups (summer camps and tours are also arranged). This demanding schedule can be difficult to sustain. One parent whose child attended a class with founder Géza Szvilay remarks that 'even though it gives a lot, it's still quite demanding' (Roms, 2015, p. 2), while new Colourstrings parent Helen Rumbelow reports how another parent whose children belonged to the programme for several years said: 'you're doing Colourstrings… goodbye to your life' (Rumbelow, 2011). Nevertheless, bold claims about the impact of Colourstrings are common, from it being hailed as 'ground-breaking pedagogical work' that represents 'an important chapter in the history of Finnish music education' (Aarnio, 2017), to an approach that 'changed the concept of music education' (Colourstrings, n.d.).

2.2.3. Paul Rolland

Another Hungarian musician, Paul Rolland (1911–78) is remembered best for his pedagogical work in the United States, where he spent most of his adult life. Rolland's principal interest was in helping musicians to be more ergonomic, that is,

in finding ways to promote movements free from the excessive tension he observed in emerging and established players alike. His research was initially scientific, drawing on knowledge from the teaching of dancing and sport, Gestalt theory, and principles from kinesiology and physiology (Kovacs, 2011). Honing a new method of teaching, Rolland developed highly refined physical actions, rethinking string players' co-ordination, timing, and practice habits. He labelled the idea 'total body action', further emphasising how musicians should put their whole bodies to best use as they develop their performance skills (Rolland & Mutschler, 1974, p. 32).

Rolland's most influential research took place at the University of Illinois in the late 1960s, when the US Office of Education funded a five-year project on string-teaching. The publication that emerged, *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* (1974, with Marla Mutschler), accompanied footage split into short videos, demonstrating various exercises and associated movements. Rolland pedagogy was later championed by Sheila Nelson (1936–2020), whose own Tower Hamlets String Teaching Project was funded by the Inner London Education Authority and was made the subject of a documentary by Thames TV (*Beginners Please* – Hodgson, 1987). More accessible than Rolland's publications, Nelson's popular tutor books, including *An Essential String Method (*1983) and *Right from the Start* (1984), arguably did more to promote Rolland's principles in the UK and are still used by some teachers today.

2.2.4. The master-apprentice model

For all their differences, the Suzuki method, the Colourstrings approach, and Rolland pedagogy each rely on, and perpetuate, a model that has long dominated instrumental teaching: the master-apprentice relationship pits the teacher as a role model willing and able to share their expertise with the apprentice, who aspires to learn the same skills by observing, imitating, and being guided by the master. Mastery and apprenticeship are historical ideals whose supremacy has only been contested since the twentieth century—and in instrumental teaching only this century, as will be discussed in §2.4.2. Kieran Egan and Natalia Gajdamaschko describe them as 'the

first, and most ancient, conception of the educator's task', being 'the most common in human cultures across the world and... almost the exclusive mode of instruction in hunter-gatherer societies' (Egan & Gajdamaschko, 2003, p. 83). As schools of technical education emerged, so a private master-apprentice relationship became fixed across various vocational and professional fields, including music (Burwell, 2013).

Several scholars have acknowledged how the model has become so firmly established as a default mode of delivery in instrumental teaching: Jean Callaghan describes traditional vocal teaching as 'an oral, master/apprentice process' (Callaghan, 1998, p. 25); and Roland S. Persson discusses how a 'master-apprenticeship relationship' underpins lessons 'in, but not limited to, a conservatory setting' (Persson, 2000, p. 25); and as Kim Burwell further argues, the lack of a meaningful explanation or discussion of the terms 'master' and 'apprentice' in specifically musical contexts points, ultimately, to their acceptance as the standard way to teach musical instruments (Burwell, 2013).

For these reasons, the effusive, uncritical praise that the Suzuki method, Colourstrings, and Rolland pedagogy are commonly given for their potential to prepare pupils to become expert musicians is not a surprise. Violinist and teacher, David Sanzone, for example, praises Colourstrings for producing successive generations of professional violinists (Sanzone, 2017, p. iv), simplistically adding that 'it would appear… that by means of Colourstrings, almost any child could potentially learn to play the violin to a professional level' (p. 3). Géza Szilvay likewise claimed that half of his Helsinki students became music professionals, while the other half became 'serious connoisseurs of music' (Szilvay, 1996, p. 54).

The continued celebration of these methods helps explain the ongoing prevalence of the master-apprentice model in instrumental teaching and currently diminishes the prospects of alternative approaches taking hold. This situation also reminds us that distinctions between training and educating—a theme of the next chapter—are not routinely made in the world of instrumental teaching, that the terms are used almost interchangeably, and that the compatibility of following what is essentially a training

model in a wider educational setting (such as WCET and post-WCET learning) is not currently questioned.

2.2.5. Developing skills, prioritising technique

A significant implication of the master-apprentice model is its preoccupation with specialist skills, which in musical terms manifests as the development of technical skills. This is why pedagogues such as Rolland set out their technical priorities so clearly in their instructional materials and from the earliest stages of learning—for example, 'good intonation, tonal beauty, standard technique, and [the] ability to read music well' (Rolland, 1947, p. 34). Recalling her lessons under Rolland, Susan Starrett describes how his technical ethos 'never sacrificed scales, arpeggios, technical drills, or etudes in any lesson in favor of literature. He was outstanding in providing the technique needed for solo repertoire before teaching a piece requiring such skills… He first built a solid foundation' (Starrett, 2016, p. 76).

Rolland (and Suzuki) advocate Brenda Brenner attaches similar importance to the systematic acquisition of foundational string technique, but with a subtly different emphasis: she alerts teachers to the pitfalls of either advancing children's technique too quickly or obsessing over the mastery of note-reading, which, she argues, often leads to remedial work being necessary later on (Brenner, 2010, p. 52). Brenner's influential colleague Mimi Zweig writes of Rolland's 'genius' in recognising that 'what we teach in the first lessons sets the stage for everything to come' (Zweig, 2011, p. 20), an approach to sound technical set-up that inspired her to prioritise 'establishing a healthy foundation' in her own pedagogic approach (Zweig, 2024).

Kateryna Zavalko likewise praises Colourstrings for its promotion of systematic technical mastery: 'From the first lesson, Colourstrings makes it possible to solve a complex problem—creating a foundation of quality instrumental technique' (Zavalko, 2013, p. 38). This is underpinned by Philippa Bunting's observations of teaching sessions in Helsinki, from which she notes the prominence of technical skills acquisition and, relatedly, a master-apprentice lineage in which teachers are

likely to inherit (not question) teaching techniques (Bunting, 2006, p. 17). While branding the delivery of Colourstrings and comparable approaches 'old-fashioned', she also concludes that 'perhaps old-fashioned methods are the best', given they appear to produce such excellent (technical) results (p. 17).

The prevalence of technique-centred pedagogy is not confined to celebrated teachers, but naturally influences string teachers keen to emulate their apparent success. These connections have been observed and studied, such that researchers have often highlighted how lesson time is often weighted towards technical content (Young, Burwell, & Pickup, 2003; Rostvall & West, 2003; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Hallam, 2010; Barton, 2020). It follows that teachers tend to spend a lot of time explaining and critiquing technical matters in lessons (Duke, 1999; Colprit, 2000; Daniel, 2008; Creech, 2012). Furthermore, this so-called teacher talk is often delivered through commands, or, as Elaine Colprit puts it, '"do it" statements' (Colprit, 2000, p. 212).

2.2.6. Corrective pedagogies

Colprit's observation points to a wider phenomenon: that teacher-directed modes of instrumental tuition tend to employ corrective strategies. Colprit highlights how performances during lessons are essentially edited by teachers, such that learning targets are determined by how and when performance errors by the student occur (Colprit, 2000, p. 217). The teacher's role is therefore reduced to being largely reactive. Colprit classifies the role as either giving approvals and disapprovals or interjecting with questions, whose frequency she measures as close to one for each *minute* of the lesson (0.83, 0.71, and 0.83 respectively). Drawing on a 2001 paper by Monika Nerland, Burwell compares an instrumental lesson to a simulation of a concert performance—the student effectively 'on a stage', the teacher the 'critical audience'—in which instruction is driven by the on-the-day product rather than by a more meaningful discussion about the student's preparation processes (Burwell, 2013).

Like Colprit, Jennifer Blackwell notes how often teachers pause lessons to correct mistakes and finds that younger pupils are interrupted more frequently than older students (Blackwell, 2020). Describing a prevalent ‘pedagogy of correction’, Anna Bull has recently called for less interventionist approaches to be explored, so that learners less able or willing to withstand personal critique may feel less alienated (Bull, 2022, p. 66). Another consequence of this argument would be its effect on a second form of correction: *physical* correction, or ‘pedagogical touch’, is routinely used in instrumental lessons that follow one or more of the traditional models we have outlined so far. Yet, the use by teachers of physical contact attracts considerable debate, with some teachers, researchers, and organisations such as the Musicians' Union recommending *zero* contact with pupils (Musicians' Union, 2011). ‘Never touch a student’ is one of two professional rules William D. Stufft advocated (the second is ‘be friendly but not familiar’), long before the sector was aware of abuses unfolding in certain specialist music schools and conservatoires (Stufft, 1997, p. 42).

Nevertheless, many celebrated teachers, including Szilvay, Rolland, and Zweig, incorporated—and continue to incorporate—physical contact in their pedagogy. Rolland is known to have used physical assistance (Foster, 1996), Zweig is seen physically assisting pupils to facilitate certain aspects of her teaching (Zweig, 2011; Zweig, 2024), and as Géza Szilvay wrote in his *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* that ‘mere verbal explanations, illustrations or showing by example are not sufficient when, e.g. establishing the hold of the violin and bow’ (Szilvay, 2018, p. 13). The argument that, ‘used well and appropriately, touch is simply part and parcel of good string pedagogy’, is commonplace at the elite level (Banney, n.d., p. 46). The fear that students' technical development will be slowed or even jeopardised by relying on verbal instruction alone is therefore still evident in instrumental tuition at large, despite the sector generally showing much greater awareness of safeguarding since the turn of the century.

2.2.7. Teachers at the centre of the instrumental lesson

We have already seen how a student's reliance on their teacher to guide, critique, and improve their progress puts the instrumental teacher on a pedestal. It is a fundamental (though usually unchallenged) fact that the teacher is at the 'centre' of instrumental lessons (Nerland & Hanken, 2002; Scott, 2012). One of a handful of researchers to examine the consequences of this situation is Andrea Creech, who identified the prominence of teacher-dependent features in a study of 23 hours of lessons involving 11 violin teachers and their pupils, aged 8–16 (Creech, 2012). Creech found that the largest amount of time was taken up by teacher talk (i.e. directing and diagnosing, as described above) and scaffolding (i.e. modelling, playing with pupils, hands-on practical help, accompaniment), which dwarfed pupil talk (i.e. agreeing and disagreeing, pupils contributing their own ideas or choosing what to play, self-assessment), which represented, on average, just 3% of each lesson.

This one-sidedness is typical of the master-apprentice relationship, as Marienne Uszler describes:

> Although the authoritarian position assumed by the master is open to question and criticism, notably by those who advocate learner-oriented teaching and by proponents of adult education, the presence of a master model is a powerful, universal motivating force. (Uszler, 1992, p. 584)

The questions to which Uszler alludes have grown louder in recent years, with some educationalists arguing that such an unequal dynamic not only jars with contemporary practices, but also feels uncomfortable to teachers themselves (Lebler, 2006; Scott, 2012; Silveira, 2013). Occasionally, calls have also been made to modernise assessment (e.g. through peer appraisal and self-assessment) and to rebalance training and education through new teaching approaches, e.g. fostering and valuing skills such as planning, distilling, meta-learning, being able to learn alone and with others (i.e. interdependence and collaboration), empathy, and imitation (Claxton, 2002; Lebler, 2006). Such approaches are discussed further in §2.4. Strikingly, this literature usually examines teaching in higher education, i.e. at

university and conservatoire level, rather than at the earlier, formative stages of learning.

At the same time, other researchers have approached the issue from a different starting point, for example that the authority or supremacy of teachers in the master-apprentice model is inevitable or even desirable. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger note that power relations characterise 'every concrete case' of apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 64), while for Nerland and Ingrid M. Hanken, authority is 'a crucial and productive resource in the teacher-student interaction' (Nerland & Hanken, 2002, p. 168). And as Burwell argues, 'dominant authority… is not only accepted, but also desired and even sought after among… students' (Burwell, 2013, p. 172).

It is undoubtedly true that advanced pupils can be inspired and reassured by their teacher's ability to solve their technical problems. However, it would be a mistake to assume that this approach is either a gold standard or that it should be emulated in all teaching scenarios (especially as the range of these scenarios is now much greater than before). In my experience of teaching pupils, especially those who do not naturally strive towards technical perfection, a one-sided power dynamic in lessons is a clear risk. Pupils taught traditionally are expected to graciously accept and learn from criticisms issued by their teachers and to follow detailed instructions without question. This can feel intimidating and pressuring, particularly to pupils unaccustomed to receiving such personalised attention in other areas of their education and lives. The possibility of creating a more balanced relationship, which aims to facilitate and support rather than dictate and critique, is a logical next step for this project.

2.2.8. (Mis)understanding pupil-centred learning

The inverse of the teacher-centred or -directed dynamic is, of course, pupil-centred learning. Yet, however well-established the term is in education studies in general, its use in instrumental education is highly unusual and, arguably, simply wrong. That

Colourstrings describes itself as ‘a *child centred* approach to music education’ (Colourstrings, n.d.; emphasis added), despite its master-apprentice context, betrays a very different understanding of the concept than is common in early years education more generally. Inspired by educationalists such as John Dewey (1859-1952), Maria Montessori (1870–1952), and Jean Piaget (1896–1980), early years practitioners would reasonably expect a ‘child-centred’ approach to include, say, self-directed learning via explorative play or other kinaesthetic tasks, with the teacher setting up and facilitating (but not dictating) open-ended activities that take shape according to a child’s interests and abilities. In Colourstrings, on the other hand, ‘child-centred’ appears to signify either the inclusion of songs with words that are expected to be attractive to young children, e.g. ‘Hey Beetle!’ and ‘Wonky Donkey’ in the first of three *Singing Rascals* (2015) books designed for pre-instrumental work, or the use of bear, bird, mummy, and daddy images to represent the open strings in *Violin ABC: Book A* (1984).

Many other popular string tutor books now take a similar approach and/or include musicianship games, musical puzzles, and quizzes that encourage teachers to include alternative, non-playing activities within their lessons. In music teaching, then, *pupil-centred* might be more accurately understood, at least according to current practice, as simply *child-friendly*, especially given the prevalence of master-apprentice delivery. Criticism of the status quo is notably rare. When Georgina Murphy Clifford proposed modernising recorder lessons, ditching tutor books in favour of asking children to suggest songs and tunes they would like to learn, her article in *Music Teacher* received short shrift from another recorder teacher (Murphy Clifford, 2020; Murray, 2020; Murphy Clifford, 2023).

Research into instrumental teaching *is* growing in relation to its practice in higher education and especially in conservatoires, but it is scarce or often instinctively rebuffed at pre-tertiary levels in the UK. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine why this is so in detail, significant factors include resistance to change on the part of some instrumental teachers, misunderstanding (or misapplication) of wider educational concepts (e.g. pupil-centred learning) in music

education, and a weak ecosystem for instrumental CPD.[10] Furthermore, the limitations of current practices are seldom examined for the plain reason that many of the authors of literature in this field are (or were) teachers and/or strong advocates of the methods and approaches they discuss. This is true of the existing Colourstrings literature, which is largely written by (or includes substantial quotes of) Géza Svilvay or by teachers who have completed Colourstrings training, e.g. Sanzone in Australia or Zavalko in Ukraine.

This sense of evangelism also affects Suzuki method literature, which tends to describe how to maximise success *within* its system and takes a celebratory rather than critical approach as a result. Robert Duke, for example, praises the method's approach to teacher talk and physical contact—even though overreliance on the former is known to be ineffective (Hallam, 1999) and the latter is evidently controversial (as discussed in §2.2.6):

> [E]xcellent Suzuki teachers' instruction regarding music repertoire… is characterized by… high proportions [*sic.*] of teacher talking (65% of instructional time) and performance demonstrations (27% performance, 9% performance approximations), and prominent use of physical positioning (13%) (Duke, 1999, p. 305).

Practitioner-focussed writing has a long history of being criticised for being uncritical. Before this century's flourishing of practice-led research, which tends to be underpinned more rigorously (e.g. by phenomenology or ethnography), Estelle Jorgensen observed how authors were drawing too often on their own opinions to defend their respective methods, neglecting dispassionate, reasoned arguments (Jorgensen, 2006).

[10] Effective CPD delivery nowadays is hampered by the tightening of hubs' budgets and especially by the casualisation of instrumental teachers' terms of employment (Hallam, 2016; Boyle, 2020; McNally, 2022). Teachers paid by the hour are not necessarily obliged to complete CPD, and when they do, they must naturally be paid extra, making CPD appear as though it is costly to deliver. The processes of decentralisation and marketisation that the NPME accelerated are discussed in §1.2.2. CPD is discussed further in §2.5.1, especially note 15.

2.2.9. The investment model of music education

Belief in another powerful concept—investment—is an important factor in the loyalty that many teachers and families show to some of the methods and models I have chronicled so far. The path to professionalism in music requires a conscious decision to devote time, energy, and money in the hope (or expectation) that this investment will reap rewards. Such connections are well understood in sociology, where Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has long been used to refer to the symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that serve as resources in social action (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). However, their influence in music, and particularly instrumental learning, is also strong because being able to play a musical instrument well, the fostering of those abilities *through* investment, and opportunities to perform all serve, in their own ways, as markers of achievement, discipline, prestige, and class (Bull, 2019).

Sociologist Annette Lareau later coined the term *concerted cultivation* to describe a parenting style common to the middle classes. She describes a style of parenting (in the context of the United States) whereby the child is conceived of as a project in which to be invested for the future, accumulating resources, skills, and experiences that will shape the adult they are to become (Lareau, 2011). This investment is often accrued through parents' efforts to foster their children's talents by incorporating organised, extracurricular activities into their everyday lives. In principle, and often in practice, such efforts are aimed at improving school performance and widening future job opportunities. Working-class parents, by contrast, tend to favour unstructured play and are less inclined to overschedule their children's time, allowing interests and talents to emerge and develop with less intervention—a parenting style Lareau brands 'natural growth' (p. 5). Beatriz Ilari argues that these distinctions are particularly powerful in music and that middle-class efforts to aesthetically condition children are an explicit means by which those families distinguish themselves from the working classes—thereby reifying the class system and cultural hegemony (Ilari, 2013). An investment model of music education is characterised by a focus on investing in the musician that the child will eventually become, rather than prioritising their musical experiences, and enjoyment of those experiences, in the present. It follows that middle-class families are much likelier to

‘buy into’ and comply with the demanding methods such as Suzuki and Colourstrings, as their anxiety and proactivity to support (and fast-track) signs of talent is contrary to the assumption of natural growth.

I would add that, in string-teaching, the embedding of behaviours such as restraint and sacrifice (e.g. students being encouraged to prioritise practice over leisure in pursuit of technical mastery) in fact pre-dates Suzuki, Colourstrings, and Rolland. Galamian’s hugely influential *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (1962) suggests that students ‘must become fully equipped with all of the technical tools so that his [*sic*.] musical ideals may be fully realized’ (Galamian, 1999, p. vi). This may appear to be uncontroversial or even sage advice, but its casual reference to ‘technical tools’, ‘musical ideals’, and ‘fully realized’ are freighted with assumed meaning. Its legacy has been to inculcate teachers and students with the sense that *delaying* becoming an apparently fully-fledged musician, or of seeing themselves as such, is both necessary and worth the sacrifice. For all but the select few, the problem is that only once ‘all’ the rules have been followed can students be ‘fully’ and individually creative and expressive.

2.2.10. ‘Getting ahead’

Central to the investment model, from its beginning to its maturity, are two related contexts: parental involvement and starting to learn a musical instrument from an early age. The idea of parental and familial support for music lessons is reinforced across literature about the Colourstrings approach and Suzuki method. Suzuki specialist John Kendall describes the parent-child-teacher relationship as ‘the keystone of a good learning environment’ (Kendall, 1986, p. 45), and as we have already seen, many Suzuki teachers insist on parents attending lessons in the early stages and even taking notes in order to support home practice, which should happen ‘only as many times as you have breakfast’ (an apocryphal quote often attributed to Suzuki).

Regular meetings are also scheduled for parents and titles such as *To Learn with Love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents* and *Beyond the Music Lesson: Habits for Successful Suzuki Families* offer further advice to parents about how best to supervise their children's learning (Starr & Starr, 1995; Goodner, 2017). Colourstrings also impresses from the outset that 'a parent or "constant other" is expected to commit unconditionally to aiding a child's learning' (Bingham, 2018). Sue Mitchell argues that the life choices parents must make when choosing Colourstrings make it 'not a method, but… a musical upbringing' (Mitchell, 1994, p. 30). The parent-teacher-pupil triangle such methods implicate and look to fortify has also been adopted by literature on instrumental tuition, which tends to accept rather than critique it as a basis for progress and success (e.g. Creech & Hallam, 2003).

Opinions vary about the ideal age at which children should start to learn a musical instrument, but advocates of these methods are almost obsessive in their agreement about starting young. Addressing teachers and parents, Géza Szilvay repeats Kodály's advice that 'the time to start teaching a child music is nine months before it is born!', adding that Kodály 'was hardly exaggerating the importance of starting music-training early' (Szilvay, 1979, p. 17). Both Colourstrings and Suzuki were explicitly designed to enable young children to acquire skills more commonly learned by older children. Zavalko explains how using pictures to represent strings enables 'very young children' to sightread music, hence Colourstrings is 'set up to do things younger, better, quicker' (Zavalko, 2013, p. 38).

There are also repeated signs in methods-centred literature of cherry-picking from science to identify and acclaim the advantages of investing in early musical experiences—for example, improvements in cognition, psychomotor skills, memory retrieval, and/or concentration shown by pre-school children with musical experience (Scott, 1992; Bugos & Mazuk, 2013). A few authors have tried, at least, to warn about the dangers of either accelerating learning in music or valorising it as a marker of success. Kendall criticises classical music's '"earlier beginning, more and more difficult music" syndrome' and questions whether a child as young as three or five should be playing a concerto by Bach, Mozart, or Mendelssohn (Kendall, 1996, p. 50).

Reaching a prematurely advanced level of music-making can also alter the broader dynamics and relationships within children's schooling. For example, it can complicate their integration in a more mainstream setting. American violin teacher Augustus Brathwaite gives the (anecdotal but credible) example of a mother of a Suzuki-trained child asking to observe a school's orchestral rehearsal, as though evaluating the session and exhibiting a concern, reinforced by some Suzuki teachers, about whether 'those public-school students' are worthy enough to make music alongside their children (Brathwaite, 1988, p. 42). Equally divisive is Géza Szilvay's insistence that 'the first steps in basic musicianship should be the same for the future professional and the serious amateur' (Svilvay, 2010, p. 3). He instructs teachers using the first Colourstrings book, recommended for children as young as four, that 'the child may become a great artist on this instrument' (p. 3).

2.2.11. Professional pressures and contexts

Measuring musical achievement and plotting the many stages of a journey towards mastery has long been prioritised by instrumental teaching. This journey is commonly punctuated by successive music examinations. The two most prominent examination boards in the UK, the Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and Trinity College London (TCL), are, as their names suggest, products of conservatoires. Income from ABRSM exams fees directly subsidises the 'Royal Schools', namely the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music (both London), Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow), and Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester), as well as research, outreach, and inclusion initiatives (Wright, 2013; ABRSM, 2023). The examinations these and other major exam boards offer range from Initial and Preparatory for beginner musicians to the standards (typically, post-Grade 8) required to apply to join the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (NYO). Performance and teaching diplomas are also offered. Schools in England and Wales typically advise that a piece of Grade 5 standard has sufficient technical difficulty to access the higher grades of the Performance element of GCSE Music.

These contexts hold a powerful sway over how instrumental musical progress is currently measured, and this owes much to the prestige of the institutions to which they are attached. Musical success is code for passing examinations, as if inching closer to accessing a professional training ground. The situation is cyclical, ensuring that conservatoires continue to be highly influential in training musicians and shaping classical musical culture not only in the UK, but also internationally, using their authority to export the musical norms and ideologies they uphold (Bull, 2019). This reality adds to the pressures instrumental teachers face because of the sector's normative methods and working practices, which include, but are not limited to: giving pupils solid foundational technique; establishing practice routines; and engaging pupils and parents during the long journey ahead. The circumstances and history of instrumental teaching lend weight to the idea that to neglect any of these aims is to deprive pupils of learning opportunities—and the opportunity, in time, to become a professional musician.

Like many dedicated teachers, I used to find this a heavy burden to carry and typically impossible to implement, exacerbated by working in settings far 'below' the ideal/elite environments I describe above. In practice, celebrated pedagogies are rarely fit for purpose when instrumental teaching enjoys little or no parental support, when pupils either lack a suitable environment in which to practise, or, above all, when 'getting ahead' and 'investment' are dormant or irrelevant concepts. It is hardly surprising, then, that post-WCET teaching and learning is problematic. Even where circumstances are advantageous to children's continued learning, traditional pedagogies, which are ideological, systematic, and typically prioritise technical training, lack the flexibility to celebrate alternative outcomes. Looking forwards, they do not offer an alternative to celebrating professionalism as the pinnacle of music-making. Looking backwards, their contrast with WCET pedagogies is simply too stark. Persevering with traditional pedagogies therefore risks demoralising instrumental teachers (who feel compelled to deliver a watered-down version of a celebrated model) as well as their pupils (who, as we have seen, tend not to thrive because of this status quo). I believe these arguments strengthen the case for alternative approaches that are more inclusive, consider pupils' musical aspirations,

and choose to work with what pupils bring to their lessons—rather than what teachers *wish* pupils had brought.

2.3. Programmes promoting social justice through music

Advocates for social justice have long recognised that certain barriers must be dismantled if *all* children are to be given equitable musical opportunities. Anyone involved with organising and delivering music programmes must therefore be mindful of significant variables such as financial support, parental time and commitment, and the quality and extent of instrumental tuition and performance opportunities, both individual and ensemble. As this section will show, certain prominent figures and organisations have designed music programmes in different corners of the world, pursuing social justice with verve and committing to the socio-musical ideals of open participation and the transformative potential that musical interactions can foster. However, these laudable goals have often been promoted by means that, ironically, privilege a narrow set of musical practices, traditions, and forms of musical knowledge.

The teaching methods examined by this chapter are also disproportionately common in such programmes, which do not question the need for alternative pedagogies and so unwittingly alienate or even exclude many children from musical opportunities. They do so either because the exacting standards and approaches upon which celebrated methods tend to insist are explicitly prized, or because they take for granted that no other route to achieving—or defining—musical success exists. Either way, the investment model, introduced in §2.2, continues to be treated as a requisite for success. Currently, then, research in these areas does not identify this anomaly but instead falls into two distinct camps: that which acclaims the benefits of the investment model and calls for related learning opportunities to be given to more children, regardless of their background and circumstances; and that which argues that organisational efforts to achieve equality through the prism of classical music are fundamentally or logistically flawed. I will now examine these arguments further

in the context of three prominent music programmes that put social justice at their heart.

2.3.1. Gallions Music Trust, UK Music Masters, El Sistema

Gallions Primary School opened in 1999 on the Winsor Park Estate in Newham, one of London's most deprived areas. It immediately launched a 'through school' music programme, with the ambition to improve academic achievement and, in turn, its pupils' life prospects. Today, all children still begin learning a string instrument from the age of 6 until they leave for secondary school at 11. Instrumental lessons are taught in small groups, using the Colourstrings method, which builds on three years of musicianship classes, from Reception to Year 2 inclusive. Besides group lessons, the school also offers individual instrumental lessons to 'around 24' pupils each year; pupils who show particular enthusiasm or talent for music are identified by teachers and individual lessons are arranged (Gallions Music Trust, 2023a).[11]

The school's charitable foundation, Gallions Music Trust, is open about how access to musical opportunities is limited for many children and families, but optimistic that its co-curricular (rather than extra-curricular) approach can redress this socio-economic disadvantage:

> Many children in the UK have parents who are able to ferry their children around to extra-curricular activities, giving them every chance to find "their thing" in life. Sadly, this is not always possible for children from a more disadvantaged background, but we believe this should not mean they miss out. The talent is out there—let's give these children a chance to discover theirs. (Gallions Music Trust, 2023b).

[11] Gallions Primary School is therefore another example of an educational setting openly celebrating their continuation routes *only* for those considered 'talented' (see also §2.1.5). The specific criteria, however, are not shared as openly but are instead left at the discretion of schools and teachers, running the risk of being based on ideals that, ironically, are socio-economically reliant, and perpetuating the idea that only those children with 'ability' benefit from long-term music-making.

With a similar mission to serve children in disadvantaged areas of London, UK Music Masters (f. 2008) also delivers string programmes in five flagship schools across Lambeth, Westminster, and Islington. Musicianship classes again begin when children start school, before small- and large-group instrumental lessons on the violin and cello are arranged, using a hybrid Suzuki model.[12] An extra Pathways programme also exists, supporting 'promising and committed' instrumentalists at Key Stage 2 with individual lessons and further mentorship and performance opportunities (Music Masters, 2023). Two further characteristics set UK Music Masters apart: its high profile, with famous musicians such as Nicola Benedetti and Sheku Kanneh-Mason serving as ambassadors for the organisation and occasionally working with pupils in schools; and its flagship PGCEi teacher training programme, Musicians of Change, accredited by Birmingham City University and specialising in social justice contexts and group teaching.

Researchers have not yet paid much attention to these UK initiatives; when they have sought to examine socially oriented music education programmes, they have instead looked to an older and more prominent example: El Sistema (f. 1975), the brainchild of José Antonio Abreu (1939–2018). This Venezuelan project explicitly linked orchestral music-making and social mobility, initially launching a single youth orchestra and today comprising over 400 music centres (*núcleos*), over twice as many orchestras, and approximately 700,000 participants (Baker, 2016). Instruments are loaned to students and tuition is offered at low or no cost. El Sistema's uniquely intensive schedule emphasises orchestral practice: many students spend four or more hours a day in their *núcleo*, for five or six days per week. A primary focus on the classical orchestral canon is supplemented by genres such as Hollywood film music (Baker, 2016).

El Sistema has been praised, and emulated, widely. Simon Rattle described the initiative as 'the most important thing happening in music anywhere in the world' (Rattle, quoted in Schoenbaum, 2012). The proliferation of Sistema-style models in

[12] 'Hybrid' acknowledges how exceptions to traditional Suzuki features are made, for example parents not always being able to attend lessons in school. Suzuki repertoire is also supplemented by other material, widening the range of musical genres that are covered.

different countries has been hailed as ‘one of the most significant social and artistic developments of the twenty-first century’ (Tunstall, 2012, p. xvi). Notable examples include, among others, the Sistema-inspired Hola (Heart of Los Angeles, f. 1989), Orquesta Sinfónica Infantil de Venezuela (Venezuelan Children’s Symphony Orchestra, f. 1995) in Galicia, Spain, and El Sistema Sweden (f. 2009), which was launched in Gothenburg and later expanded to other cities in the country.

The trend is also clear in the UK, especially (and deliberately) in areas with high numbers of disadvantaged children (ACE, 2012). In 2008, Sistema Scotland launched its first programme in Raploch, Stirling, known as ‘Big Noise’; equivalents in Glasgow and Aberdeen soon followed. In 2009, programmes in Liverpool, Lambeth (London), and Norwich were initiated, funded by the Department for Education and branded In Harmony Sistema England, which added programmes in four further regions in 2012.

2.3.2. Extramusical benefits?

For all their local differences, belief in the social benefits that learning and making music can bring unites organisations such as Gallions Music Trust, UK Music Masters, and El Sistema. From children’s emotional and physical well-being to their self-esteem, resilience, and ambition, claims are also made for how cognitive and behavioural improvements can benefit academic engagement and attainment, leading to better life chances. Researchers, sometimes doubling as advocates for the programmes they are discussing, publicise these claims. Tricia Tunstall describes how El Sistema aims to ‘foster the growth of children toward being cooperative, productive, and joyful members of a community and a society’ through music-making (Tunstall, 2013, p. 69). Richard Hallam speaks passionately about positive outcomes of an In Harmony project, citing the greater engagement of parents with their children’s learning: ‘The project has brought about a cultural change in the school’s wider community, with parents and families placing prime value on music education, willingly and proudly supporting their children’s musical learning and attending performances’ (Hallam, 2012, p. 21). Christopher Harkins, Lisa Garnham,

Aileen Campbell, and Carol Tannahill's qualitative study found that participation in the Big Noise programme enhanced participants' mental and emotional well-being (Harkins et al., 2016).[13]

Quantitative studies similarly focus on linking instrumental learning and improved academic performance. One report concluded that after one year of participating in Norwich's In Harmony programme, children in Years 1–4 (aged 5–9) at one school were achieving better scores in mathematics, reading, and writing (compared with peers who were not involved), and that 90% of the children were reaching target grades in mathematics compared with 68% for those not involved in the programme (Smithurst, 2011). Susanne Burns and Paul Bewick found that after two years of participating in Liverpool's equivalent In Harmony programme, in which pupils engaged with music for 4½ hours per week, 43% of children had progressed more than four levels in mathematics, 53% in reading, and 42% in writing, compared with a national average of three levels, despite the fact that participants included a high proportion of children with special educational needs (Burns & Bewick, 2011). Reflecting on later data from multiple studies, Susan Hallam and Kevin Rodgers conclude that young people learning an instrument show greater progress and have better academic outcomes than those who do not, with the greatest impact felt by those children who have played for the longest time (Hallam & Rodgers, 2016).

A more critical perspective has been taken by other researchers, for example highlighting possible tensions between social justice and music education, whether focussing on the aims of the two endeavours or on how these are pursued by different programmes (Baker, 2014a/b; Bull; 2016: Fink, 2016; Scripp, 2016: Fairbanks, 2019). El Sistema has again attracted the most attention, including concerns about the danger of hagiography, especially around key figures such as Abreu and Gustavo Dudamel (the El Sistema-trained conductor who was appointed Music & Artistic

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[13] These types of findings tend to be supplemented by more anecdotal or survey-based research by the organisations themselves. Gallions Music Trust's website, for example, notes that teachers see 'increased confidence', 'greater empathy', and 'greater aspirations' from the children involved in group playing (Gallions Music Trust, 2023). UK Music Masters reports the outcomes from a survey of parents, schools, tutors, and students as including 'better concentration and teamwork', 'elevated levels of self-esteem and confidence', and 'greater focus and organisation in academic subjects' (Music Masters, 2023).

Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2009), and questions about the efficacy of El Sistema's social outcomes. Indeed, the very idea of pursuing social justice through orchestral music-making has been criticised for perpetuating cultural hegemony (Fairbanks, 2019), and in counterpoint to the body of research acclaiming the extramusical benefits of music education, Xiomara Alemán and colleagues measured only a marginal effect of children's participation in orchestras and choirs on the way they think, behave, self-regulate, and socialise (Alemán et al., 2017—hereafter, IDB report).

2.3.3. Critiquing the El Sistema ethos

Dudamel's description of how El Sistema treats the symphony orchestra as 'a model for an ideal global society… [and] the best example there is of what a community can be' encapsulates the programme's utopian zeal (Dudamel, quoted in Baker, 2016, p. 15). It also helps explain why some scholars have begun to question certain aspects of its creed-like practices, from the idea that the hierarchical structure found in orchestral music-making should serve as a model of a democratic society, to the consequences of this criticism for concepts such as cultural capital, democracy, and citizenship. Should children from working-class and/or diverse backgrounds necessarily aspire to improve their prospects by developing their cultural capital through classical music? And can an orchestral model ever be truly inclusive in its demands or democratic in its practices?

Robert Fink argues that the notion of disciplined orchestral music as social justice and harmony is the stuff of fantasy (Fink, 2016, p. 34). Certainly, the imbalance of power between a conductor and a large group of musicians tasked with carrying out their instructions is not the most obvious example of democracy in action. As Gustavo Borchert has recognised, 'freedom and creativity are not top priorities in the professional routine of an orchestra player' (Borchert, 2012, p. 57). This raises a clear problem for any attempt to harness Western symphonic traditions for the purposes of developing creative voice. While it is important to note that Sistema-inspired programmes in the UK are not franchises and do not operate exactly as their

Venezuelan counterparts do, structural aspects of their organisation and orchestral rehearsals *have* been emulated and, occasionally, even flagged as concerning. In a report on Sistema Scotland's projects, for example that 'some [observers] questioned the cultural relevance of this [provision] for children in both Raploch and Govanhill, citing this as a possible barrier to engagement and inclusion' (Baker, 2017). The inherently competitive nature of some of the projects' practices, for example practice expectations and even seating arrangements, were also questioned: 'It's competitive, it's not inclusive... if you can't practise your instrument because of your home conditions, then you're not good enough and you're going to quit' (anonymous observer, quoted in Baker, 2017).

Certainly, many stories exist concerning the unusual number of hours that pupils subscribed to El Sistema-like programmes are required to rehearse. Eric Booth recognises that while no programmes beyond Venezuela have sought to involve students for the 20-plus weekly hours that are typical there, some programmes have reached 12–15 hours, and that maximising participation time remains a common aim (Booth, 2016, p. 46). Even more gruelling practice schedules have also been reported: Geoff Baker reports observing Venezuelan children having to wake at 5am and rehearse until midnight (Baker, 2014a). Although Abreu has defended El Sistema's demanding schedule by citing its intended social and behavioural benefits—'as an educator, I was thinking more about discipline than about music' (Abreu, quoted in Baker, 2014b)—questions about welfare, including children's physical development, must be asked. Baker is particularly critical of what he identifies as an overt intention to discipline/regulate/civilise the poor through a decidedly autocratic system of musical training (Baker, 2016).

Data presented in the IDB report has also led some researchers to question whether participants from the very poorest backgrounds are benefitting sufficiently (Baker, Bull & Taylor, 2018). While the estimated poverty rate among participants was 16.7%, this was significantly lower than an average of 46.7% for states in which participants lived (Aleman et al., 2017). High drop-out rates were also identified: one study showed that 44% of children who were offered a place failed to complete two semesters (Aleman et al., 2017). The difficulties of first engaging a hard-to-reach

demographic and then sustaining that engagement is, of course, not unique to Venezuela. Evidence from the Sistema-inspired Big Noise project shows that, despite its inclusive aims, children belonging to an ethnic minority, or those with English as a second language, or those with additional support needs, were still more likely to drop out, suggesting that some aspects of the programme were too demanding for those facing additional challenges to access in the long term (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2015).

The observation brings us back to the prevalence of traditional pedagogies—or at least the pitfall of replicating pedagogies in socially-oriented music programmes to which they are potentially ill-suited. Researchers have increasingly coalesced around the idea that El Sistema and its offshoots overwhelmingly employ traditional models and approaches. Sistema Scotland explicitly declares that it blends established methods including Suzuki, Kodály, Dalcroze, and Colourstrings (Sistema Scotland, 2023). They are generally less sure about whether this is something to be celebrated or criticised. Booth, for example, describes the rehearsal techniques employed in El Sistema in glowing terms, recalling their intensity and pace:

> [A] fast and insistent motor underneath every minute; time is never wasted. Also, repetition is the dominant rehearsal strategy… and often seems to be relentless. But it is fine-tuned, so that each repetition adds a new challenge. A nuance, something new to aspire toward (Booth, 2016, p. 50).

However, Nicolas Dobson, an instrumental tutor on the El Sistema-inspired programme, confirms its teacher-led nature and recalls his experience of following strict lesson plans, which went as far as prescribing how teachers might coach the children to *look like* they were having fun: one planning document for tutors he quotes calls explicitly for children's demonstration of 'their enjoyment in their bodies and faces' to be practised (Dobson, 2016, p. 106).

Dobson concludes that the programme's child-centred practices are illusory and that El Sistema-style pedagogy is, on closer inspection, akin to old-school conservatoire teaching (p. 105). Fink and Baker have also cited El Sistema's teacher-centred mode

of delivery, its use of so-called banking pedagogies,[14] and its common emphasis on repetition, clearly geared towards music's performance rather than, say, its composing, improvising, arranging, or listening (Fink, 2016; Baker, 2017). Fink contends that El Sistema's progressive claims are undermined by such conservative choices, which serve to renormalise and revalidate established practices in institutional music education (Fink, 2016). Likewise, Stephen Fairbanks finds no notable differences—in delivery—between El Sistema-type programmes and the type of co-curricular high school music programme common in the United States (Fairbanks, 2019).

Booth's optimism is also balanced by Baker's description of the reactions of some participants in Raploch and Govanhill's projects, whose intensive rehearsal style was again found to impose a large degree of repetition, listening, and silence during group rehearsals (Baker, 2017). Baker recounts how some participants grew frustrated by this, and that behaviour worsened. One researcher felt so uncomfortable by observing children effectively being taught to conform that they 'wanted to get them up and dancing or whatever, but of course that's not what it's [supposed to be] about' (anonymous observer, quoted in Baker, 2017). Another researcher remarked: 'I saw a few kids who looked like they were enjoying themselves, but some of them looked truly miserable.' Further reports have suggested, similarly, that participants 'may benefit from greater opportunities to exercise their creative skills' and from 'the development of freer and more creative activities' rather than just 'learning and perfecting playing techniques and practising performance pieces' (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2015, p. 36). A Sistema Scotland instructor interviewed for the same report stated: 'There is a lot to be said about giving them free reign to improvise… I think there is something missing' (p. 36).

In common with many of my colleagues, I was initially swept along by the El Sistema hysteria that followed Símon Bolívar Youth Orchestra's appearance at the BBC Proms in 2011. Three years later, I attended a talk by Baker at City University,

[14] Coined by Paulo Freire, the banking model of education (*modelo bancário de educação*) refers, disapprovingly, to learning directed by the teacher, who 'deposits' knowledge for the student to receive passively, memorise, and repeat (Freire, 1970).

London, eager to learn how children facing significant social barriers were attaining such high standards of performance. Then, and in the decade since, I have gained a much broader understanding of the organisational and pedagogical realities of the Sistema movement. I appreciate that while high standards of performance are impressive and marketable, they come at a cost, as this section has explained. My stance when developing this project, then, has been to foreground musical experiences that will better serve pupils during the learning and, indeed, their lives. The next section of this chapter considers how this might be possible.

2.4. Signs of change?

This chapter has so far helped chronicle some of the deep-rooted assumptions about what good-quality music education is thought to be, about how it can be delivered, and how current music programmes may, unwittingly, be entrenching social and musical inequalities they seek to solve. While some tentative ideas about movement and improvisation have been offered as an alternative musical focus, there is no detail about how such strategies might be delivered to large numbers of children, nor about which pedagogies might be most appropriate to enact a more creative vision. It is doubtful that such a pedagogy for instrumental teaching currently exists. Nevertheless, this century has witnessed two related (or at least strongly relatable) trends in education research that promise meaningful change: heightened awareness of the relevance of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to achieving educational outcomes; and growing recognition of the benefits of teaching a wider range of genres and styles, i.e. beyond classical. A growing number of practitioners and researchers have also begun to reflect on the suitability of certain features of instrumental pedagogy for modern practice, including the master-apprentice model, assessment strategies, and alternative approaches—albeit largely at tertiary levels of learning. These and other signs of change are the focus of this section.

2.4.1. Product *versus* process: Making music in the present

This chapter has described how the investment model of music education, with its ties to cultural capital and concerted cultivation, valorises professionalism. As such, it is important to acknowledge how another influential figure, Christopher Small, took aim at the 'greater and greater professionalisation of music' nearly half a century ago (Small, 1977, p. 194), and did so many years before his better-known ideas about 'musicking' were laid out in full (Small, 1998). Professionalism, Small argued, had stunted creativity and inclusivity, for example the rise and availability of professional recordings may have widened access to music and seemingly raised its quality, but it also created a skewed emphasis on the *product* of music to the detriment of its *process*. Similarly, the growing number of music competitions and superstar musicians risked deterring people from identifying as musicians or from performing in public.

Small's ideas were prophetic and are brought to mind when music is described as a rarefied art rather than an everyday activity, or when people are quick to deny that they have any aptitude for music-making (e.g. 'I don't have a musical bone in my body'). Small drew a direct comparison between Western traditions—citing Joseph Haydn's hope that he would not die in his 60s as he was only just getting the hang of composing—with non-Western cultures, which he believed encouraged a much greater sense of immediacy by learning through doing from an early age. By encouraging children to behave as musicians in performances (rather than rehearsals), they can develop their proficiency without accruing the constant fear that they are 'not there yet'. Small called for children in the West, too, to be able to make music in the 'present tense', undoing the prevailing future-orientated preoccupation with producing a musical product (Small, 1977, p. 195). While Small admitted that some virtuosity might be lost as a result of such an educational shift, he argued that this same virtuosity was responsible for cutting many people off from music, and that new perspectives would see more gains than losses.

Applications of Small's ideas are still few and far between, even though some educationalists, especially this century, have sought to develop them. Randall Allsup, for example, asks, rhetorically, whether 'the children we teach [are] musicians or…

incomplete future musicians?', and argues that a 'love-of-process' and 'love-of-product' must be combined in music education if children are to thrive (Allsup, 2007, p. 55). Robert Duke and James Byo urge teachers to provide frequent opportunities for their pupils to act like musicians, even at the earliest stages, pointing out that the prospect of *being* musicians is what attracts many children to learn music in the first place (Duke & Byo, 2019). Reflecting on my own experiences working with young string players, I agree with Duke and Byo's premise that children begin to play because they want to make music, much like the musicians that have inspired them. It is not the physical skills of instrumental performance that attract them to studying, but the music.

Duke and Byo chronicle poor continuation rates in the United States and, after Small, blame a preoccupation with the mastery of technical skills—teachers unwittingly dangling the carrot that pupils will (only eventually) be able to express themselves musically. If many children are currently giving up instrumental lessons because of a perceived time lag (and pedagogical schism) between instrument-playing and music-making, then the latter, they argue, must be recognised for the intrinsic motivation it provides, i.e. the feeling and sensation of being a musician. Based on my own teaching and teaching observations over the years, I would support aspects of Duke and Byo's arguments. The acquisition of sound technique features far more commonly and explicitly in instrumental lessons than the development of musical expression. The situation is not helped by tutor and method books that introduce a new task or concept on each page, sending a clear message to pupils and teachers that progress is to be measured according to how many new things pupils are able to do.

Duke and Byo endorse a different model, encouraging multiple and varied opportunities to apply each new 'thing' in varied contexts of music-making. The primary goal of such an approach is not getting to the new thing, it is making old things—known things—more beautiful. They observe that beginners need lots of practice, with basic notes played beautifully and musically, and that such music-making becomes a priority for pupils only when it is a priority for teachers, who are not currently supported, either through professional development or existing learning

materials, to deliver this type of teaching. Henrique Meissner goes one step further, highlighting the dominance of technique and sight-reading skills in instrumental lessons, but offering a toolkit for the teaching and learning of expressiveness, employing strategies such as questioning, modelling, metaphorical language, and movement (Meissner, 2018; Meissner, 2021).

Allsup's later research with Eric Shieh revisits the connection between accelerating technical development and the proficiency required to become an accomplished musician (Shieh & Allsup, 2016). In doing so, they contest another bastion of the investment model: the assumption that technique advances independence regardless of how it is taught. Instead, they set forth a vision in which students are required to 'make musical decisions that matter', advocating learning through problem-based activities that call for judgements about how to use music from a particular genre in different settings (p. 32). Musicianship, involving creativity and collaboration, and technical understanding are intended to become more equal partners, with pupils being encouraged to mix genres familiar and unfamiliar to them, therefore making music in traditional and new contexts. Shieh and Allsup argue that to ask pupils to make aesthetic choices in these ways is to extend traditional boundaries (e.g. of genre) while also promoting pupils' independence.

Michael Webb and Frederick Seddon similarly suggest that access to technology can allow more genres and musical traditions to be embraced (Webb & Seddon, 2019). They cite as examples the potential synthesis of classical and folk traditions, the possibility of new modes of music-making (e.g. using smartphones and laptops), and the benefits of such activities to inclusivity, both culturally and to pupils' motivation and proficiency. The argument echoes recent calls for greater representation in the music curriculum—a theme that also underlies Peter Gouzouasis and Jee Yuon Ryu's recognition that music lessons (specifically, piano lessons) are often as much a social experience as they are a musical one (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014).

Proposing a new 'listening pedagogy', Gouzouasis and Ryu call for teachers to permit and assign value to general conversations in lessons that may appear to have nothing to do with music-making per se, but which are directly relevant to pupils'

reality (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014, p. 410). Such conversations can be harnessed to bring a new dimension of well-being to instrumental lessons, nurturing respect and empathy. These ideas may seem idealistic, if not impractical: group instrumental teaching usually takes place in noisy environments in which conversations deemed to be irrelevant are discouraged because they eat into precious playing time. Nevertheless, Gouzouasis and Ryu's principles are a promising example of process being legitimised over product—and inviting teachers to follow suit. Teachers with fewer time pressures, such as those working privately and/or in a one-to-one setting, would be better placed to consider how musical, verbal, and especially listening interactions between themselves and their pupils could enhance learning and personal development and even generate new forms of musical learning. The tantalising challenge of how to achieve this in a group learning environment, and the open question of how 'talk' can be channelled into processes that are musically and pedagogically meaningful, will be explored in subsequent chapters.

2.4.2. Contesting the master-apprentice model

Burwell's argument, cited earlier, that master-apprentice teaching is accepted in music education in part because of a lack of discussion about the model itself generally holds true, although notable exceptions to the rule can be found. Andrea Creech and Helena Gaunt compare the type of performance-heavy music programmes common in conservatoires with their equivalent academic degrees to illuminate what they identify as a relative deficit of critical thinking on the part of conservatoire students, whose reliance on their teachers' guidance reduces their obligation to take personal responsibility for their learning (Creech & Gaunt, 2018). The one-sidedness of the master-apprentice model is a shortcoming that Allsup and Cathy Benedict also criticise, citing the high levels of inflexibility and control that directors of North American wind band programmes tend to exercise (Allsup & Benedict, 2008). Drawing on Paulo Freire's influential ideas (Freire, 1970), they argue that this dynamic replicates the behaviours of the oppressed and oppressor, effectively silencing alternative discourse in a teaching tradition that 'goes beyond

the normative concept of training or *tekhné* to what behavioral psychologists call "conditioning"' (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 158).

Some practitioner-researchers have begun to address these imbalances, proposing alternative modes of instrumental teaching, at least for tertiary levels of education. Elizabeth Haddon, for example, weighs the benefits and pitfalls of students having more than one teacher during their undergraduate learning (Haddon, 2011). She acknowledges students' concern about dealing with conflicting advice and being loyal to more than one teacher, but also cites benefits such as exposure to a broader range of musical and technical ideas and greater pedagogical insight. Ryan Daniel similarly explores a piano group teaching model as a means of redistributing power through three-way interactions between multiple students and their teacher, attempting to rectify what he identifies as 'a power dynamic founded upon dependence rather than building for independence' (Daniel, 2008, p. 10).

A secondary finding of Daniel's study (but one highly relevant to the current thesis) was that participants' failure to prepare adequately for their lessons was less detrimental to follow-up lessons when group pedagogies were employed. The benefits of students being able to listen to one another and to learn through in-lesson peer *and* teacher interaction led teachers involved in the study to acknowledge that their students were not as disadvantaged as they might have been in a one-to-one learning environment. Given how much traditional pedagogies rely on regular between-lesson practice to maximise their effectiveness, Daniel's finding would appear to hold much promise—although his specific labelling of group pedagogies to describe strategies that largely centred peer-led learning and interaction, reflection, and appraisal must be noted. Based on my professional experience observing instrumental lessons, it is evident that many teachers do not alter their approach when teaching small groups, but instead employ traditional (one-to-one) strategies. It follows that, as it stands, prevalent small-group teaching styles are less likely to be effective unless sufficient independent practice takes place between lessons.

Adding a different perspective on the master-apprentice model, Tim Patston and Lea Waters aim to bypass the adverse effects of its corrective pedagogies by proposing an

alternative model that teachers might use to deliver feedback to pupils (Patston & Waters, 2015). Again intended to enhance student well-being, their Positive Instruction in Music Studio (PIMS) model endorses: starting lessons with a piece (rather than, say, scales or other technical work), and ensuring that it is one pupils believe they can play well; encouraging discussion of and self-assessment of character strengths, i.e. in addition to performance strengths, for example pupils' bravery at attempting something new; incorporating moments of 'positive pause', for example asking pupils to stop playing when something goes *right*; and, similarly, giving praise that acknowledges effort and practice techniques, rather than focussing exclusively on outcomes.

While researchers have tended to approach the master-apprentice model from different perspectives, there is general agreement about the benefits of giving pupils a greater say in their instrumental learning, nurturing autonomy. Besides Shieh and Allsup, several other researchers report that encouraging a more active voice, for example by allowing pupils a greater say over musical activities, repertoire, and even the setting of learning objectives, can improve their motivation and progression (McPherson, 2009; Lamont, 2009; Creech & Gaunt, 2018). Creech and Gaunt go further, proposing that teachers adopt a new notion of learning as being 'transformative' rather than merely 'reproductive' (Creech & Gaunt, 2018, p. 155). Their call is not designed to side-line traditional skills, knowledge, and traditions in the learning process, but to re-incorporate them in a transformative mode of learning that centres student reflection, autonomy, and self-directed learning. Their facilitative (rather than master-apprentice) model is intended to motivate teachers and students to collaborate, reflect, and problem-solve together.

Some educationalists are alive to the criticisms that pupil-directed learning can face. Fautley, Eric Shieh, and Allsup challenge the idea that it lowers standards, arguing that when students take a more prominent role and stake in what they do, they hold themselves to higher standards and continue to seek expert guidance (Fautley, 2009; Shieh & Allsup, 2016). Allsup and Benedict also defend collaborative decision-making, amplifying how its decisions can create a more democratic learning environment and even embed musical, historical, and sociological issues. They

propose a scenario in which, rather than imposing an interpretation of an ensemble piece, the ‘teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own’ (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 169).

2.4.3. Green’s informal pedagogies

Arguments in favour of facilitative learning often draw on the work of Lucy Green, who, observing how popular musicians rehearse, saw the potential to create new pedagogies in schools that would be less formal than usual but more authentic, inclusive, and motivational (Green, 2002). The principles Green developed include: learning music that students choose, like, and identify with; learning by listening to and copying recordings; learning with friends; and integrating into music lessons a blend of listening, performing, improvising, and composing. Taken together, these principles are intended to foster a more personalised and collaborative approach to understanding music, in which learning is often deliberately haphazard and unfolds without structured guidance. In 2004, Green’s approach was co-opted as ‘pathfinder’ programme by Musical Futures, an organisation that had been founded a year earlier to engage 11- to 19-year-olds in musical activities and to support innovative teaching practices. The organisation has continued to advocate and promote Green’s work (Mariguddi, 2021; Musical Futures, 2024).

In the meantime, multiple projects and reports across the UK, Australia, and Canada, drew positive conclusions about the approach, citing improved engagement, behaviour, motivation, teacher confidence, and opportunities to develop musical and extramusical skills (O’Neill & Bespflug, 2012; Evans, Beauchamp & John, 2015; D’Amore & Smith, 2016; Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2016; Mariguddi, 2021). Other researchers followed Green’s lead, seeking in popular music and its educational practices new ways of working in the music classroom (Green, 2002; Bowman, 2004; Westerlund, 2006; Green, 2008), but not without attracting criticism of its own—principally, that tailoring musical choices to students’ desires and needs

creates a new set of conditions and, potentially, limitations that must be considered (Allsup, 2007; Jorgensen, 2008; Woodford, 2015; Hess, 2019).

Paul Woodford, for example, argues that because students' tastes, like our own, are shaped by powerful external interests (e.g. corporate and capitalist), any brand of music education that is overwhelmingly pupil-directed risks failing to prepare children to participate adequately in society, that is, beyond the influence of their peers. A stronger approach, Woodford argues, would be to use the familiar as an initial hook, establishing connections between familiar and unfamiliar musical contexts. Allsup likewise describes how a fundamental aim of teaching is, or should be, to prepare students for change and growth, while Jorgensen and Juliet Hess share a concern that elevating popular music over other forms of music may, ironically, 'create a different kind of tyranny' given the prevalence of popular music in society at large (Jorgensen, 2008, p. 33). Hess nuances this point, arguing that when certain types of popular music are assumed by teachers to be relatable, for example mid-to-late twentieth-century rock, there is a risk that a new hegemony, here white and male-dominated, emerges (Hess, 2019).

Hess also highlights how the tendency in popular music education to replicate (i.e. cover) existing music, albeit usually by ear rather than by notation, brings it closer to classical music's educational paradigm than its practitioners may realise: the recording is a proxy for a score and the material is no better aligned to young people's 'realities and interests', which for many educators was a key motivation (Hess, 2019, p. 29). Questions of authenticity, then, remain contentious. Green herself understood this, criticising how certain types of music, especially those bracketed as popular, were being taught in ways completely at odds with their cultures, thereby dulling the learning experience and lessening its impact (Green, 2002; Parkinson & Smith, 2015). This observation explains why Green's informal pedagogy is ideally (but, perhaps, exclusively) suited to popular music: its learning activities are intended to be authentically in keeping with the original contexts of their production and performance.

Researchers have *not* tended to ask what effect informal pedagogies might have were they to be applied to classical music or other (non-popular) styles. This chapter has highlighted some of the pitfalls of teaching classical music traditionally, suggesting that, here at least, a potentially unwelcome trade-off between authenticity and inclusivity is likely to exist. In folk music, for example, if a child was unable to learn a tune by ear, it would surely be absurd to deny them the opportunity to learn it with the help of notation. In my experience, few children choose to learn an instrument with the specific hope of learning a certain genre; they simply want to be able to play music. At the first stages of learning, then, authenticity and genre-specific concerns may be less helpful pedagogically than other aspects of Green's approach. By extension, pedagogies that are informal but also flexible—for example, blending successful strategies from different musical traditions or emphasising the similarities between musical styles rather than looking to separate them—may best serve the needs of individual learners.

2.4.4. Reconsidering assessment

Another notable focus of recent research in music education that can be traced to Small concerns assessment strategies, specifically those that centre student voice and so promote the autonomy and democracy of the learning environment. Given Small's emphasis of process over product, it is no surprise that he railed against an exam culture—'an elaborate system of quality control designed to assess the quality of manufacture at all stages'—that appears to do the exact opposite (Small, 1977, p. 196). Fautley is similarly critical of assessment criteria in music that is exam-focussed and which tends to favour qualities such as complexity, attentiveness to a score, and phrasing, i.e. those prized by the Western classical canon (Fautley, 2009). He suggests that teachers instead take a more flexible approach, posing assessable questions that, for example, require students first to identify the key characteristics of a certain style or genre, then to form a judgement about how well their own creative work, be it a composition or performance, meets the contextual requirements of the same style or genre.

Allsup develops this theme, describing a ‘critical pedagogy’ that could encourage students to be more mindful of the musical results they are producing (Allsup & Shieh, 2016 p. 34). He agrees with Fautley that rebalancing educational power, with the teacher no longer the sole arbiter of quality, democratises the process of how music-making is valued. It follows that if pupils are tasked with co-developing criteria in relation to the content, focus, and goal of their music-making, then value is shaped alongside knowledge and skills, for which individual student take greater responsibility. If a student has invested in the musical process in this way, it will naturally affect how they hear, and subsequently self-assess, the musical product. To Allsup, such personal investment offers great potential for remoulding criteria surrounding aesthetic judgements in music. Quoting Maxine Greene, Allsup is excited by the prospect of ‘pushing back the boundaries of what we have thought of as beautiful music’ (Greene, 2001, p. 192, quoted in Allsup, 2016, p. xi). Music in this sense may be regarded as beautiful as much by its creative evolution as by its final product.

These arguments invite comparison with Don Lebler’s earlier applied research into peer assessment practices in music education, specifically as a tool to learn about learning (Lebler, 2008). Lebler assigned students from mixed year-groups to different ‘panels’ that would peer-assess each other’s recorded performances, developing not only their collaborative skills but also their confidence to make well-founded judgements. His finding that these peer assessments routinely fell within 2% of the scores that teachers themselves would have awarded is significant in itself and also because it lends support to Allsup and Fautley’s arguments.

The idea of privileging formative processes is endorsed in further work by Fautley on alternative methods to evaluate composition and performance (Fautley, 2015). He observes that the processes pupils follow to arrive at their musical products are often invisible to, or ignored by, established methods of assessment. Where summative assessment is a must, Fautley argues that it is nevertheless more helpful to the future learning process, and more democratic, to regard progress as the distance travelled by individual pupils, rather than as the point of arrival. This is logical and equitable: a pupil who has received three years of formal instrumental tuition may need to make

no progress whatsoever to reach the same point as another pupil with no musical experience.

Having struggled myself to measure progress via established benchmarks with post-WCET pupils—e.g. examinations, programmes of study (discussed in §1.1), concert performance—I am motivated to investigate alternative modes of assessment. The argument that peer- or self-assessment can simultaneously motivate pupils to improve *and* enhance their aesthetic awareness of the sounds they produce would seem to offer learners a virtuous circle that could also address some of the product-driven concerns this chapter has identified. At the same time, it is difficult to predict the extent to which instrumental teachers would need to intervene, especially at the early stages of a pupil's learning, to set peer- and/or self-assessment in motion and to achieve these aims. How much intervention or control would be necessary to ensure that pupils felt comfortable during either their learning or, especially, their appraisal? Is there a risk that any new approach based on this thinking could, ironically, further unbalance the teacher-pupil relationship, given the time it might take to explain the process to pupils, to agree its boundaries, and so forth? And even if this risk exists, might the benefits of a new approach justify it in the long term? These issues will be important to address during and after my fieldwork and are discussed further in the second half of the thesis.

2.5. What's missing from the literature and the instrumental classroom?

Having reviewed existing literature on WCET, on string pedagogy's established methods and models, on programmes intended to promote social justice through music, and on potential new directions for instrumental teaching, the scale and urgency of the work needed to improve teaching and learning across the sector appear great. This chapter has drawn widely on academic and grey literature for two reasons: because this mix is a true reflection of current and past perspectives, which include limited academic research on continuation after WCET; and because the preoccupations of the authors that the chapter has cited have shaped the knowledge

that is available to us (as well as gaps in the literature) in a revealing way. For example, the emphasis of successive Governments on the number of pupils accessing instrumental learning co-exists with concerns voiced largely by third-sector organisations about the quality of provision. These agendas have left gaps in the literature, especially around young people's voices. In terms of post-WCET provision specifically—the domain in which I have gained much of my experience as a teacher and teacher trainer—there are several further areas whose absence from the literature and/or practice is particularly problematic. The next section lists and discusses these omissions, six in total, in the context of this chapter's most significant points of contention. In doing so, it also provides the rationale for the thesis's central and subsidiary research questions.

2.5.1. Six problems

First, there is insufficient qualitative data about WCET. Although quantitative data shows that WCET has been successful in granting greater numbers of children their first musical experiences, a lack of qualitative data hampers efforts to understand or critique the quality of these experiences. The situation has arisen in part because ACE compels hubs to report quantitative data. It is hardly surprising that hubs, prizing their survival, tend now to focus less on the quality of the musical experiences they provide and more on complying with their funders' requirements. Yet, the situation is also at odds with emerging ideas in the literature about what constitutes best practice, that is, arguments in favour of taking an integrated approach to WCET that centres musicianship *and* instrumental skills. Had ACE incentivised hubs to roll out and test such methods, much more qualitative data would now exist. This thesis helps address this shortfall in the domain of post-WCET teaching and learning.

Second, no consideration at all has been given to what should be identified as post-WCET pedagogies. This deficit is related to a professional reality concerning continuation; specifically, the lack of consensus about what constitutes legitimate continuation (i.e. in terms of it qualifying for inclusion in the statistical data hubs

routinely gather), about what continuation does or is supposed to achieve, and, consequently, about the form continuation should take. Although hubs must provide continuation opportunities to meet one of the NPME's five strategic aims, they are left to shape their offer according to their own strengths or interests and data shows that continuation rates after initial WCET programmes are low. Yet, there is no research critiquing or even documenting how post-WCET pupils might best be taught, nor any acknowledgement that alternative approaches may be required.

Third, there is a failure to recognise how jarring the demands of traditional instrumental pedagogy can be to pupils who have experienced WCET, whose learning is much more integrated and less autonomous. Figure 2.1 outlines common features of WCET and post-WCET lessons, drawn from my own experience and from literature covered in this chapter, and shows that these two modes of learning, as they are currently practised, are virtually distinct. WCET lessons are deliberately inclusive, accessible, low-pressure, and are viewed more like a club than a long-term programme of training to which pupils and their families must commit. These perceptions are often shared by the parents and carers of children who choose to continue learning after WCET, who tend to be supportive but also musically inexperienced, and share their children's desire to continue participating in something they found 'fun'. In reality, pupils progress to small-group or one-to-one lessons that invariably follow a traditional pedagogical approach and therefore abruptly promote new activities and behaviours such as those chronicled earlier in this chapter, e.g. early interventions, familial support, regular independent practice, and exam success. However, the existing literature and practice overlook not only how most families are not versed in the tacit rules of traditional instrumental pedagogy, but also the significant pedagogical and class-based implications of the distinction between WCET and post-WCET learning.

Fourth, traditional pedagogies remain common even in music programmes designed to achieve social justice. They are still assumed to be the surest way to uphold not only quality, but also the equality of high-quality provision—as the prevalence of Suzuki, Colourstrings, Rolland, Kodály, and Dalcroze methods attests. Yet, as we have seen, except for a small number of studies on El Sistema and Sistema-inspired

Figure 2.1. Common features of WCET and post-WCET teaching.

<table>
<tr><th>WCET lessons</th><th>Post-WCET lessons
(one-to-one and small-group lessons following a traditional model)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Ensemble skills and group music-making are centrally important</td><td>Greater emphasis is placed on individual achievement, sometimes in a competitive spirit</td></tr>
<tr><td>Progress is achieved largely or exclusively through work carried out during lessons; pupils’ pupils’ instruments are typically not taken home but stored at school</td><td>Progress relies more on independent practice, which is typically completed at home</td></tr>
<tr><td>Music stands are used rarely, if at all</td><td rowspan="2">The music stand is typically at the centre of the lesson, physically and figuratively</td></tr>
<tr><td>Simple standard (i.e. Western) notation is sometimes introduced, but always supported by learning by ear</td></tr>
<tr><td>Musicianship activities (e.g. pulse, rhythm, pitch work) and creativity (e.g. improvisation, composition) inform most of the lesson, ensuring NC requirements are met</td><td>Musicianship and creativity tend to be given little or no attention, except as a tested component in exams (e.g. aural tests, sight-reading)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Technical skills are introduced slowly and gradually and are consolidated regularly</td><td>New pieces, rising in difficulty, are introduced more regularly; this prioritises the advancement of technical skill and musical complexity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>An inclusive culture is nurtured with (e.g.) musical parts being differentiated to accommodate all abilities</td><td>Striving towards personal goals (e.g. exams) justifies an investment model emphasis on technical accomplishment</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Regular low-key group performances for parents and/or other school children are arranged to celebrate learning</td><td>Performances are often more formal, arranged less frequently, and can even be limited to exam-taking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Exams (e.g. ABRSM, TCL) rather than group performances become a benchmark for success</td></tr>
</table>

programmes, there is no independent research into whether the use of these methods is an appropriate or effective way to improve social justice.

Fifth, where such questions *are* beginning to be posed, viable alternatives have not yet been widely tested, established, or shared. It is worth dwelling briefly on the pressures instrumental teachers face, as they help explain why novel approaches are not more common. As a teacher and teacher trainer myself, I know that researchers, policymakers, and teachers all strive to provide children with high-quality musical opportunities, but also that a stark disconnect between the worlds of research and practice hampers their efforts to do so. Valid criticisms rarely lead to enactable solutions either because they remain untested in real school settings or because hard-pressed instrumental teachers are unaware of the latest research or are resistant, consciously or otherwise, to change.[15] If meaningful change is to happen, alternative approaches must be set out in ways that hubs and teachers can access, interpret, and implement, and which the wider music education community respects.

Finally, although the benefits of a student-centred approach to instrumental teaching are beginning to attract attention, this research currently focusses on tertiary education or on classroom music teaching, and proposals that can be implemented are limited to advanced one-to-one learning in conservatoires. No comparable consideration is given to the unique, and far more wide-reaching, circumstances of group-teaching in state primary schools. It is perhaps unsurprising that very little of the valuable work that instrumental teachers do in state primary schools is celebrated: it is not 'elite'; it perpetuates pedagogies to which its circumstances are often ill-suited; and it is judged to underachieve, at least according to a value system that prizes exam successes and other formal modes of performance. Compounding

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[15] Of the many factors that are responsible for this resistance, two stand out and both cause existing approaches to instrumental teaching to be perpetuated. The first concerns continuing professional development (CPD), which is routine in classroom education but is often delivered in-house by music hubs desperate to save money. As a teacher and, later, a CPD deliverer, I observed how colleagues were drawing only on the approaches with which they were comfortable, avoiding the difficult questions that lacked clear and enactable answers. It was this realisation that motivated me to begin this thesis. The second factor is that even when teachers appreciate the intellectual dissonance between inclusivity and nurturing individual creativity on the one hand and a dogmatic one-size-fits-all approach to teaching on the other, the investment model still looms large. That is, the dominant approach to instrumental teaching eschews anything that might jeopardise a pupil's emerging professionalism.

this problem is the fact that, beyond popular music, informal pedagogies are enacted rarely, if at all. There is an urgent need for research that explores ways to use less formal pedagogies in new ways—for example, to ease pupils' transition from WCET to post-WCET learning.

2.5.2. The central research question

The problems identified in §2.5.1 directly inform this thesis's central research question: How can instrumental pedagogy be adapted to better facilitate pupils' engagement and progress as they continue lessons after WCET? Chapter 4 will explain in detail my approach to answering this question, which I am well-placed to answer both as an experienced practitioner and having designed action research for this thesis. The project examines my own post-WCET teaching and reflects on the effect of implementing new strategies that are contextualised by socio-educational philosophies that are discussed in the next chapter. By generating lesson footage and outlining my own critical reflection, I will contribute qualitative data that the study of WCET-related teaching currently lacks.

The project seeks to identify and meet the specific needs of post-WCET pupils by facilitating a smoother transition into their new lesson environment. By experimenting with alternative teaching strategies (post-WCET pedagogies), the project will explicitly counter some of the barriers erected by the investment and master-apprentice models of instrumental teaching. Instead, I will build on research advocating for pupil-centred learning, examining how new approaches could be enacted in a primary-level instrumental group setting in order to encourage better engagement in lessons and to improve the musical outcomes for pupils involved in my research. The project will generate data showing a teacher (me) modelling reflective practice and embracing all the messy, joyful, and haphazard moments that instrumental group teaching brings to the surface.

My approach will create footage that intentionally looks and sounds very different to that which is commonly shared among instrumental teachers for training purposes,

e.g. Zweig (2024), Sassmannshaus (2024), and International Minifiddlers (2024), whose specialist educational settings do not serve as the most helpful comparison for teachers working in more typical environments. Indeed, establishing closer connections between research and practice is a subsidiary aim of the thesis that is embedded into the fabric of the project itself. My positionality, coupled with this research design, will make the project authentic and relatable to other teachers. By sharing my findings with scholars and teachers alike, I hope that the project will also inspire others to experiment with practitioner-based research and will support instrumental teachers to rethink their approach.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Throughout this project, I drew inspiration from the American philosopher, social reformer, educationalist, and psychologist John Dewey (1859–1952). This chapter begins with a brief overview of Dewey's key concepts and considers his influence on educational policy and practice in England, on curriculum music teaching, and on instrumental teaching. Criticisms of Dewey's work are examined before an explanation is given of my rationale for choosing certain Deweyan principles as a theoretical framework for my fieldwork. Finally, I describe how these principles were enacted, that is, transformed into strategies that served to underpin the project's new approaches to instrumental pedagogy.

3.1. Understanding Dewey's arguments

A prolific writer, Dewey's impact on education was, and arguably remains, profound (Carr & Harnett, 1996; Talebi, 2015; Hildebrand, 2023). Dewey's educational philosophies emerged at a time (in the 1890s) of fierce debate between so-called progressives and traditionalists (Hildebrand, 2023). The former urged a child-centred approach whose starting point was a child's natural curiosity, interests, and experiences. The latter pressed instead for a curriculum-centred approach, viewing children as empty vessels that could be filled via a rigid curriculum. Instruction would therefore discipline children to ensure they were receptive to educational content, which was supreme. Dewey became an avid campaigner for progressive education. He critiqued the assumed effectiveness of what he described as closely monitored, didactic, and passive pedagogies that were prevalent in American schools at the time, and called for more participatory, democratic models to be adopted. Although Dewey's beliefs and proposals were presented across several key texts, spanning four decades—'My pedagogic creed' (1897), *The School and Society*

(1899), *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), *Democracy and Education* (1916), and *Experience and Education* (1938)—the themes of pupil-led learning, the importance of both reflection and the role of the teacher, and democracy recur.

Democracy, in particular, underpins all of Dewey's ideas, guided as they were by the belief that because learning is a social and interactive process, the school itself is an institution through which social reform can, and should, take place. Dewey therefore regarded 'education and democracy as being intrinsically linked' (MacBlain, 2014, p. 210). He argued that by accepting pupils from different classes, cultures, and abilities, schools would lay the foundations for building notions of democracy for children (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). Put another way: just as democracy encourages citizens to accrue information, knowledge, and wisdom, democratic learning experiences will be the most successful sort to prepare pupils to be active members of their communities and societies (Dewey, 1938). Dewey's arguments, then, were moral ones, that encouraged teachers and schools to bear responsibility for nurturing character as well as knowledge and skills.

A democratic approach also called for consideration of the interests and needs of individual learners. Dewey's educational philosophy is often described, simply, as pupil-led. In *School and Society* (1899), Dewey likened the relationship and dynamic he wished to see prevail to a changing centre of gravity, in which 'the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he [*sic*.] is the centre about which they are organised' (p. 103). If curricula are designed around pupils' interests and their creativity, then learner-centred pedagogies will not only be able to cater for learners' personal preferences, expectations, and needs, but also take account of their existing (individual) experiences, rather than being shaped by dogmatic, subject-specific thinking. At the same time, Dewey also strongly advocated group learning, arguing that, through collaboration, learners (and teachers) can create their own understanding by solving problems they encounter across different situations and subjects. Emphasis was therefore placed on group discussion, collaborative activities, and experimentation, with a view to creating socially interactive environments in which pupils could be engaged more actively.

In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey went further, likening passive learning to training and offering the memorable example of a child forced to bow every time they meet someone by applying pressure to their neck muscles, such that bowing would eventually become automatic (p. 35). The message was that while Dewey prized experience, merely participating in an activity did not necessarily qualify as such. The danger of learning by rote, without true understanding being allowed to develop, could be regarded as merely another form of passivity. Pupil-led learning, rather, would prioritise the individuals' *present* needs, avoiding too great a preoccupation with future-orientated learning. As Dewey argued in 1938, reflecting on the contemporary education landscape:

> The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject matter, and methods upon those who are only slowly growing towards maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. (Dewey, 1938, pp. 18–19)

The belief that education should aim to equip children with the knowledge and skills they will need in their adult lives has, and continues to be, viewed as both pragmatic and far-sighted. But one of its pitfalls, as Dewey highlighted, is that if we accept and practise this idea uncritically, then we risk suggesting that childhood is merely a rehearsal for 'real' life, as though children's lives have not yet properly begun. Another consequence is that, knowingly or otherwise, teachers may (and often do) prioritise and give greater energy and attention to the educational end product than to either the processes of engagement that may prove fruitful, or to the 'continuous process of growth' that Dewey believed education should be (Dewey, 1916, p. 50). Instead, the future ought to be considered no more important than the present; the two effectively blend into one, if 'every energy… [is] bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible' (Dewey, 1916, p. 65).

Centring the educational present and what we now commonly describe as lived experiences, Dewey defined education as 'a process of living and not a preparation

for future living… [through which] we can build a child's self-esteem in not only the classroom but in all aspects of his or her life' (Dewey, 1897, p. 78).[16] Learning is therefore integral to everyday living and has the potential to develop the confidence of pupils to live well (and better) in both the present and the future. It follows that, rather than banking skills and knowledge for the 'remote future' (p. 80), teachers should be alert to opportunities to apply them at any given stage of learning.

Dewey also emphasised the importance of reflection in the learning process. He argued that teachers should adopt a cyclical mindset, that is, planning and executing lessons based on their observation of, and reflection upon, their own experiences and interests as well as those of their learners. Dewey defined reflective thought as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (Dewey, 1933, p. 118). He stressed that for reflective practice to be effective, each experience should be connected and reflected upon holistically, rather than being viewed in isolation, thereby building a body of knowledge ripe for future development. To some, this pragmatic approach might be regarded simply as learning-by-doing, but this would be to disconnect the active experience of doing from that of thinking, neglecting the cycle through which Dewey argued that meaningful understanding would emerge (Phillips, 2016).

Dewey's most powerful argument, which echoes across his writings, was to couple his ideas about how learning processes should take place with a reimagining of the role teachers play within those processes. Although he was at pains not to stifle learners' individual autonomy (a risk when knowledge is regarded simply as being transmitted in a single 'downwards' direction, from the expert to the learner), it was never his intention to devalue the role of teachers, who he described as facilitators able to 'select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him responding to these influences' (Dewey, 1897, p. 78). Instead, Dewey understood that learners needed direction and believed that teachers had a responsibility to plan and introduce activities through which pupils could progress by making their *own* discoveries, channelling their individual curiosity and motivation so that they could develop

[16] I use the term 'educational present' after Jeff Frank (Frank, 2019).

intellectually. Put simply, Dewey envisioned a more reciprocal relationship where teachers, his own words, would be the medium through which 'skills are communicated' (Dewey, 1938, p. 18).

3.2. Dewey's influence on education in England

To examine curriculum developments in England in the second half of the twentieth century is to highlight how attitudes to Dewey's progressive philosophies have fluctuated. His ideas have exerted the greatest influence upon primary education, where a policy shift from traditional, knowledge-based systems towards more learner-centred ones has been a recurrent theme since the 1960s (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). The landmark report *Children and their Primary Schools* (1967, also known as the Plowden Report) showed clear awareness of, and drew inspiration from, Deweyan ideals—for example, that 'activity and experience, both physical and mental, are often the best means of gathering knowledge and acquiring facts', and its advice emphasising the importance of teaching reading and writing skills in the context in which might be used by the children themselves (Central Advisory Council for England, 1967, p. 195).

Comparison of the language the Plowden Report used to advocate for a learner-centred approach is also notably Deweyan. 'At the heart of the educational process lies the child' (p. 7) is a maxim that revived one of Dewey's most striking metaphors:

> The change which is coming into our education is the shifting of the centre of gravity… In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the centre about which they are organised. (Dewey, 1899, p. 103)

Karl Aubrey and Alison Riley point out that this progressive approach to education was a natural and perhaps even inevitable consequence of a post-war period in which society was striving for a more optimistic future (Aubrey & Riley, 2016).

The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in 1979 revived a more traditional subject-based curriculum. This about-turn was fuelled in part by traditionalists such as Thatcher's advisor (and philosopher) Anthony O'Hear, who contested many of the premises of the Plowden Report. He argued, for example, that 'education… is irretrievably authoritarian and paternalistic [*sic*.]… imparting to a pupil something which he has yet to acquire… The transmission is… inevitably between unequals' (O'Hear, 1991, p. 5). He even singled out Dewey for criticism, blaming the 'egalitarianism which stems from [Dewey's] writings… as the proximate cause of our educational decline' (p. 28).

The same Government's Education Reform Act (1988) advanced these beliefs, imposing upon schools and teachers a subject-based National Curriculum intended to be delivered using formal, whole-class teaching methods, with knowledge organised into traditional subject categories and imparted in a more didactic manner than was common at the time. This dramatic shift prompted several others that are now considered routine, but which profoundly impacted the primary classroom—for example, the introduction of systematic testing, the assembly and publication of educational league tables, and the Ofsted-led inspection system (Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004). Studies identify that the percentage of individual pupil work teachers were observing fell from 72% of class time in the late 1970s and early 1980s to ~50% of class time by 1996, while whole-class teaching increased from 19% to ~35% (Galton, Simon & Croll, 1980; Galton et al., 1999; Pollard et al., 2000). Setting, i.e. placing pupils in ability groups on the basis of their attainment in a single subject, also increased (Pollard et al., 2000). In 1993, the Department for Education encouraged all primary schools to introduce setting (DfE, 1993).

Based on testing, targets, and what Derek Gillard branded 'divisive elitism', this increasingly didactic approach was prolonged by New Labour when it was elected in 1997 (Gillard, 2002, n.p.). The introduction of Literacy and Numeracy Hours was similarly prescriptive in seeking to harmonise approaches to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and instructing teachers how to do so. With similar trends prevailing since the 2010 election of the Coalition Government, it might be assumed that practical application of Dewey's ideas depends most on the political weather in each

country and era. Yet, progressive educational ideals have proven to be durable and the concept of learner-centred learning has never completely lost its appeal. Revisions of curriculum policy, for example, show how the approach continued to make a significant contribution to pedagogical frameworks (Finney, 2016; Aubrey & Riley, 2016).

Likewise, the Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum (2008) promoted the benefits of a creative curriculum using a more flexible thematic, rather than subject-based, approach. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (2012) embraced Dewey's theory that for meaningful learning to take place, 'the child and the curriculum must interact', encouraging teachers to base their planning on a child's existing personal experiences (Noddings, 2010, p. 269). Higher Education has also embraced elements of Dewey's democratic ideals: staff-student committees are now common across universities, colleges, and conservatoires at departmental and institutional levels; and an inexorable focus on surveys, including the National Student Survey (NSS), guides its practices and structures (albeit the focus here is arguably as much on league tables as it is on learner-centred learning). Many primary and secondary schools and other youth organisations have followed suit, amplifying pupils voice through student councils, student panels on staff interviews, house captains, school newspapers, pupil questionnaires, and even dedicated pupil voice champions. Ofsted now requires schools to demonstrate how they have taken their pupils' views into account when reaching decisions (Sanderson, 2023).

3.3. Dewey's influence on music education and instrumental teaching

Similar tensions between conservative and progressive educational ideals have played out in classroom music lessons since the second half of the twentieth century. Sympathies have tended to align with one of two distinct approaches to the music curriculum, encapsulated by their advocates, Arnold Bentley and John Paynter. Bentley's more traditional view of music in schools prioritised the acquisition of technical skills and musical literacy through listening, singing, playing instruments in

the classroom, and reading and writing music, creating what he considered to be a well-balanced curriculum (Finney, 2016). Paynter's more progressive approach sought to foster creative work, particularly composition, as well as thinking and feeling like a composer. His collaboration with the composer Peter Aston, *Sound and Silence* (1970), had a particularly great influence on subsequent classroom music practice, encouraging teachers to design activities that nurtured independent exploration and interpretive decision-making through a more personalised, multifaceted style of delivery (Paynter & Aston, 1970; Spencer, 2010).

In general, the world of instrumental teaching has been much more reticent to engage with, much less respond to, these debates. Exceptions have tended to focus on music conservatoires. Andrea Creech and Helena Gaunt, for example, critique one-to-one tuition in this context but observe that perceptions about its value and purpose have changed very little, despite our conceptual improvements in our understanding about what effective teaching and learning is, growing cultural diversity, and changing patterns of musical engagement (Creech & Gaunt, 2018). A natural question to ask is: why is the instrumental teaching community apparently so resistant (or immune) to change, when other sectors in education have experimented and evolved, and continue to do so?

There are several plausible answers to this question (most beyond the scope of this thesis). The preservation of musical traditions is, understandably, an historically important part of music teaching. In my professional experience, this tends either to take place with little or even no self-reflective thought given to the pedagogical process, or, conversely, takes the form of an obligation that can weigh heavily on the shoulders of instrumental teachers. Either way, the process involves teachers transmitting information and practices to their pupils, often as the teachers themselves were taught, as a means of inducting pupils in an established musical culture (Shaw, 2023). In the context of classical music, for example, Anna Bull argues that the genre's aesthetic conventions, including its instruments, canons, and ideals (e.g. beauty), draw upon and shape a specific set of practices, including pedagogy (Bull, 2019).

This also helps explain why it can be very difficult to disentangle musical traditions from the pedagogical traditions upon which their continuation depends. The historical dominance of the master-apprentice model is a preserving force and gives the impression that to perform, say, classical music of the late eighteenth-century authentically, one must *learn* it in an authentic way, almost as a musician from the era would have done. Aspects of the master-apprentice model are woven throughout the most famous violin treatises, including those written by celebrated teachers such Francesco Geminiani (1751), Leopold Mozart (1756), and, more recently, Leopold Auer (1921) and Ivan Galamian (1962). Examples abound of controversies triggered when performance traditions and/or pedagogical methods are challenged or even critiqued (Leech-Wilkinson, 2020). Efforts to change one without the other are similarly difficult.

A lack of regulation and infrastructural support in instrumental teaching (in comparison with classroom music) is another significant factor. Kim Burwell observes that while classroom settings are more accessible to researchers and to institutional monitoring, the physical isolation of the music studio makes instrumental teaching, music conservatoire culture, and their traditions of apprenticeship much less open to scrutiny (Burwell, 2017). To Burwell, Dawn Carey, and Gemma Bennett, this typical inaccessibility to outsiders makes the dominant one-to-one setting of instrumental and vocal teaching a 'secret garden' (Burwell, Carey & Bennett, 2019, p. 1).

Those studies that can be carried out prove that conservatoire teachers are typically high-level performers who often lack pedagogical training (Creech & Gaunt, 2018). Instrumental teachers tend first to acquire the professional knowledge and skills that earn them a place within a specialist community of practice (e.g. an orchestra or chamber ensemble), only later acquiring knowledge and/or experience of how to teach. Creech and Gaunt disclose the hidden truth in conservatoire culture that if a teacher there had been taught in a conservatoire, then it is assumed that they will also be able to teach (Creech & Gaunt, 2018). Similarly, they recognise that one-to-one instrumental teachers typically have close ties with the professional music performance community and therefore 'make lessons an arena for the maintenance of

a particular cultural practice', embedding performance conventions as well as 'rules, standards and expectations related to what it means to be a teacher' (Creech & Gaunt, 2012, p. 154).

When a teacher's effectiveness is measured by the performance of their pupils, the pressure to disregard Dewey by employing autocratic decision-making is likely to increase. Frank Heuser openly admits that, for the typical American music ensemble instructor, expectations tend to impede more democratic approaches:

> The idea that a fundamental purpose of education is the creation of a just society is difficult for many music teachers who dream of conducting student musicians in polished performances. (Heuser, 2011, p. 293)

Some areas of instrumental music teaching *have* sought to embed mainstream concepts such as pupil-centred learning, pupil voice, and pupil autonomy, but this is by no means prevalent and as we saw in §2.2, even well-meaning initiatives such as Colourstrings rely heavily on the master-apprentice model, for all its child-friendly design and system of notation. In a similar vein, the performance of any musical instrument is evidently a practical act, but this does not mean that Dewey would accept performance alone as active learning. The training of pupils to perform, say, a set of scales and arpeggios in various keys would likely only qualify as active learning if meaningful connections were drawn between that task and their musical applications and contexts (that is, besides pupils being obliged to recall the skill in a practical assessment).

Adopting democratic pedagogies in a superficial or tokenistic way, appearing progressive but unwittingly maintaining the status quo, is not unique to instrumental teaching. As Randall Allsup observes:

> The notion of democratic education is a complex one, more nuanced than, for example, letting members of a choir select the color of the group's robes or giving the pep band an opportunity to vote on music. Democracy requires collaboration, and it must involve more than just adults—its practice should incorporate the rights and opinions of both teachers and students (Allsup, 2003, p. 27).

We have seen (in §2.4) some signs of change, albeit typically in tertiary education and beyond classical music, that would make instrumental teaching more compatible with Dewey's ideals and/or acknowledge the potential advantages of a more progressive approach. The desire to rebalance product and process is distinctly Deweyan (Small, 1977; Allsup, 2007; Duke & Byo, 2019). Dewey's ideas about pupil-led learning also lend weight to arguments in favour of employing technology more widely (Webb & Seddon, 2019), the development of listening pedagogy (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014), criticisms of the master-apprentice dynamic and experiments to subvert or surpass it (Daniel, 2005; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Haddon, 2011; Creech & Gaunt, 2012), and, especially, Lucy Green's informal pedagogies (Green, 2002; Green, 2008).

Also rooted conceptually in Deweyan thinking is Gary McPherson and Alexandra Lamont's plea for greater pupil autonomy, the teacher facilitating student decision-making and reflection and fostering what Creech and Gaunt describe as transformative rather than reproductive learning (McPherson, 2009; Lamont, 2009; Creech & Gaunt, 2018). Don Lebler and Martin Fautley's call to rethink assessment strategies, experimenting with peer appraisal and prioritising formative assessment to improve engagement and standards, shows how Dewey's concepts, even when they are not cited explicitly, have long since entered the lexicon of educational practice (Lebler, 2008; Fautley, 2015). This project, then, takes inspiration not only from Dewey's ideas, but also from how they have been reworked, consciously and otherwise, by successive generations of scholars and practitioners. I will return to this lineage and to my response to it in §3.6.

3.4. Criticisms of Dewey

When Dewey's ideas were published, they were out of keeping with mainstream educational thinking and were not readily acted upon. Many of Dewey's contemporaries were wary of his political leanings and mounted an aggressive campaign to undermine him (Woodford, 2012). Along with many other social

progressives in the United States at the time, Dewey was scapegoated for the country's failings—foreshadowing McCarthyism in the mid twentieth century. Yet, even today, he remains something of a divisive figure. More rational criticisms of his ideas tend to centre on their perceived idealism, for example Dewey's 'modernist (and romantic) faith in human reason and democratic community' (Irwin, 2012, p. 6), or his 'poetic' ambition to cultivate democratic pedagogies (Garrison & Neiman, 2002, p. 19). Striving to inculcate social democracy in schools is likewise described as a fictitious 'utopian vision' that, while laudable, cannot be reconciled with or realised in a society that is increasingly commercial and market-driven (Peters, 2022, p. 440). Denis Phillips argues that Dewey's 'Pollyanna-like' view of democracy fails to confront the fact that communities contain individuals whose differences are sometimes 'unnegotiable', and that people can and do act in ways that serve themselves rather than seek to promote the welfare of their communities (Phillips, 2016, p. 14).

The criticism is not reserved to society at large but is supported by observations of teachers during the mid-to-late twentieth century. Despite the influence of the Plowden Report, observers consistently found that whole-class teachers were teaching to an 'imaginary average' child, neglecting the differentiation that the classes' range of abilities required (Hacker & Rowe, 1993). Richard Pring observes that it was so difficult for teachers to respond constructively to each child, catering for multiple particular interests, that those interests were rarely developed constructively, or in ways that deepened understanding of the experiences children were bringing into the classroom (Pring, 2017, p. 7). While reflective practices are firmly established in education nowadays, the idea of planning for, and responding to, individual learner experiences, or attempting to capture the attention of all pupils by referring to those experiences, is still regarded as being largely impractical (Elkjaer, 2009). As Tom Burke notes, while Deweyan ideals are much discussed and occasionally promoted, significant constraints on practice (e.g. a ballooning syllabus, teachers having to take on multiple roles) make reversion to more traditional approaches the norm (Burke, 2007).

I know first-hand that responding to individual pupils' preferences in a whole-class setting, whether simply deciding which piece of music to play or seeing to an emergency instrument repair, can disrupt lesson flow and potentially distract other pupils. But if we choose to apply Dewey's democratic ideals carefully and strategically, for example by setting up opportunities for pupils to give personalised responses to a certain learning, then his ideas may become more feasible, especially in a small-group setting. Designing open-ended activities that encourage pupils to make choices according to their interests, ability, and even their mindset on the day would be a clear departure even from current progressive group-teaching strategies I have employed (e.g. offering pupils differentiated parts, which are still fixed in themselves). More promising still given this project's research aims is the Deweyan notion that granting pupils greater choice could help reduce resistance of the type I sometimes encounter among post-WCET learners. Nurturing a learning environment in which multiple answers are valued would leave behind a fixed 'right or wrong' answer and may therefore reduce competition between group learners—a cause of demotivation and disengagement I have often witnessed.

To some educators and caregivers, Dewey's notion of growth is simply too nebulous to be enacted effectively. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued that growth or development is not 'a movement toward a fixed goal… [it] is regarded as having an end, instead of being an end' (Dewey, 1916, p. 55). This open-ended definition has begged questions about how best to evaluate growth, and about how to be sure that teachers are encouraging the right kind of growth, that is, in areas that are in children's best interests (Hildreth, 2011). Similarly, Sara Ruddick highlights the problem of how to uphold a healthy breadth and balance when a child's particular interest is given free rein (Ruddick, 1989). She gives the examples of a boy who is gaining computer skills but asks whether he is developing sufficiently as a social being. A girl may be a talented dancer, but is she reading enough? Notwithstanding these stereotypes, Ruddick's next questions are valuable: does Dewey's sense of growth allow room for the *dis*comfort children will unavoidably, perhaps desirably, feel when they attempt (or are encouraged to attempt) activities to which they are *dis*inclined? And could such activities unlock even greater growth?

I believe that these questions are directly relevant to instrumental teaching and nowhere less so than in string-teaching, which typically requires of learners a sense of physicality that can seem unnatural and even injurious. Fine and gross motor skills can be gained with appropriate teaching, repetition, and patience, but an initial degree of discomfort when trying new physical actions on the instrument is almost inevitable (e.g. sore fingers from compressing strings, aching arms from holding the instrument in position). Were young pupils left to follow their instincts, many would surely reject such physical demands. My inclination as a teacher has been to distract from rather than dwell on the usually mild expressions of trepidation that some pupils voice, and to aim instead to create a learning environment in which uncertainty is a natural and accepted part of the learning journey. As Ruddick's question imply, the alternative would be to deprive pupils the sense of satisfaction and achievement they feel when they overcome their initial apprehension.

Other critics argue that Dewey sought to devalue the use of theories and facts, contrary to the spirit of scholarly enquiry. They argue that subject-specific facts are the proper basis of theory, and that active experience, as Deweyans would label it, is an inadequate and naïve substitute. Dewey's advocates, however, reject these criticisms as an oversimplification or distortion of what he intended. For example, whereas some educators have taken Dewey literally, banishing (e.g.) any repetitive or memorisation activities ('drill and rote') from their classrooms, Nel Noddings contends that Dewey did not necessarily require this to happen (Noddings, 2010). She acknowledges that children are unlikely to learn many important skills and principles in a subject such as Mathematics without some direct instruction and routine practice, but that teachers should therefore be mindful to explain to pupils where such practices lead, always posing themselves questions such as 'when is drill facilitative?' and 'how much is too much?' (Noddings, 2010, p. 273). Noddings argues that these questions, not the blunt prohibition of activities, are implied by Dewey's more general concern about where the acquisition of skills leads.

Other writers have been critical of the significance Dewey attached to everyday experiences as an initial catalyst for learning (Pring, 2017). Writing in 1968, Robert Dearden argued that this leap was too great, refusing to accept, for example, that

children could ‘start with ordinary practical situations such as kitchens and gardens… and grow outwards by the unbroken continuities to the more structured experience we have called theoretical understanding’ (Dearden, 1968, p. 125). At the turn of the century, too, Kieran Egan took exception with this connection, arguing that young children are engaged by fantastical stories about monsters, witches, and dragons, rather than families, local environments, and communities, which are too taken-for-granted to be explored meaningfully (Egan, 1999). Answering on behalf of Dewey, Noddings rebuffs these criticisms, highlighting the choice of pedagogy (rather than of subject matter) as the decisive factor governing whether both everyday or imaginary situations are viewed as, say, boring or exciting or as lifeless or stimulating (Noddings, 2010).

Those who favour more traditional educational methods have tended to blame so-called informal learning strategies when seeking to explain drops in academic standards that they allege have occurred (Bennett, 1976). Because Dewey centred active experiences, learner-centred and learning-by-doing approaches, and catering for individual interests, some critics have cast such terms as playing rather than learning, or criticised them for lacking focus, for *causing* poor levels of literacy and numeracy, or for their ‘exaggerated subjectivizing’ (Geiger, 1958, p. 8).[17] Similarly, given the results-driven climate that prevails in English education today, it is perhaps understandable that risk-averse teachers may not share Dewey’s faith in learners’ ability to collaborate to create their *own* understanding: recollection of facts is a more secure means of measuring learning, being much easier to test. Put another way, viewing the teacher as a facilitator and collaborator calls into question their role and, with it, how their own achievements are understood. This reality helps explain why this specific part of Dewey’s philosophy was only fully embraced in early years education, where, rightly or wrongly, the stakes are regarded as being lower.

[17] Nowadays, the connections between learning and play, and the benefits of adopting a play-orientated approach, especially in early years settings, are recognised widely (Broadhead & Burt, 2012; Nicholson, Bauer & Wooly, 2016; Vogt et al., 2020; Parker, Thomsen & Berry, 2022).

3.5. Rationale for this project's Deweyan theoretical framework

Although child-centred learning is now common in many areas of education, especially in primary and pre-school settings, Dewey's specific ideas have only ever been cherry-picked, rather than implemented systematically. This is especially apparent in classical instrumental music teaching, where evidence of child-centred practices is scarce, and, when it can be found, is written by the practitioners themselves and addresses one-to-one teaching in higher education. As a practitioner myself, and one who I thought was progressive and alert to most new teaching initiatives, Dewey's writings were a wake-up call that obliged me to rethink the conservatism of my teaching practices, encompassing their conception, implementation, and end goals. I was also shocked by how pertinent Dewey's criticisms of twentieth-century practices were to the models still used, and held in esteem, a century later. I therefore began to explore how certain Deweyan principles could be translated into new pedagogical practices in instrumental teaching, in the hope and expectation that they could improve the status quo, especially for small group teaching in primary schools.

When seeking inspiration from educational philosophies in this way, flexibility is key. Teaching musical instruments in a school setting is very different from teaching classroom music teaching, and another attraction of Dewey's ideas was their wealth of written material from which to draw and their *lack* of definition about how to put theory into practice. In contrast to the work of Dewey's contemporaries, such as Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and Maria Montessori (1870–1952), whose pedagogies have been developed explicitly in their names, there is no Deweyan system for teachers to take off the shelf and replicate in their schools. This liberated me to examine Dewey's writings further, while considering how his ideas might improve my own teaching strategies.

Dewey's commitment to democratic values strengthened the connection, given his clear conceptual alignment with both the NPME's aspirations towards inclusivity and, by extension, my project's context of WCET continuation (DfE & DCMS, 2011). Dewey's argument, that schools should be not only a good grounding for life, but also 'a representation of life itself… a purpose of improving and ameliorating the

existing external world' (quoted in Howlett, 2013, p. 187), also aligns with the latest iteration of the NPME, whose strapline is 'the power of music to change lives' (DfE & DCMS, 2022). The new NPME's ambition 'to level up musical opportunities for all children, regardless of circumstance, needs or geography' could have been written by Dewey—albeit his democratic ideals far exceeded what we now call 'widening access' (DfE & DCMS, 2022, p. 4).[18]

3.6. Planning lessons through a Deweyan lens

Having presented an overview of Dewey's ideas and their educational influence, I turn now to a discussion of the specific Deweyan principles on which my fieldwork will draw and the rationale for my choices.

3.6.1. Focussing on the educational present

Although Dewey wrote about general educational practices, and did so nearly a century ago, his description of their 'traditional scheme' still resonates strongly with the dominant models of instrumental teaching today (described in §2.2). To Dewey, anything resembling a Machiavellian approach to education, in which the ends are seen to justify the means, should arouse suspicion (Dewey, 1938). If we revisit the investment model in this light, then it is not difficult to understand why Dewey felt that his argument was strong: early technical investment may prepare pupils to eventually perform a virtuosic canon of works that call for a professional skillset, but the curriculum, mode of delivery, and expectations (particularly regarding practice) that teachers put in place to achieve this risk deterring young pupils because they are either logistically unfeasible, culturally alien, or simply undesirable.

[18] Furthermore, critics of the original NPME were quick to argue that its policy and practice never sufficiently aligned to realise such egalitarian ideals. Gary Spruce contended that while it extolled inclusivity, its narrow vision of implementation, realised principally through traditional teaching pathways, would likely deter many young people from formal music education, thereby preserving (not reducing) social and educational inequalities (Spruce, 2013).

Considering why pupils are motivated to learn music in the first place, Susan Hallam recognises that the better aligned the aims and objectives of music teachers and their pupils, the more productive and positive their *shared* outcomes are likely to be (Hallam, 1998, p. 16). Further research also points to the reality that a failure to acknowledge pupils' personal goals can lead to feelings of discontentment and disengagement, and for their own musical aspirations to be suppressed (MacIntyre, Potter & Burns, 2012). These scenarios present teachers with a dilemma. By shifting priorities away from longer-term goals and towards, say, weekly and termly targets and musical experiences, more children may believe that their lessons serve their own aspirations in the short term. Yet, such a shift risks excluding them from becoming professional at a later date. Teachers may feel duty-bound to keep their pupils' options open, while realising that such an approach may increase the chance of them stopping lessons altogether.

The challenge to apply this thinking in instrumental music teaching is stark. Rethinking the quality of the educational present, so that a stand-alone lesson provides the most engaging and rich musical experience for pupils, would logically affect every aspect of lesson planning and execution, from the learning objectives teachers set, through the activities and repertoire they choose and perform, to the ways in which feedback is given to pupils. From a Deweyan perspective, engagement is an active process that requires pupils to be agents in their own learning. Its positive identification in instrumental lessons is dependent on evidence of pupils' ability to make decisions, solve problems, self-appraisal, and respond creatively to a musical stimulus. An ideal 'Deweyan' curriculum, then, should blend 'a love-of-process with a love-of-product so one cannot make sense without the other' (Allsup, 2007, p. 55). In doing so, it gives licence to action researchers to test new pedagogical approaches that seek to understand why pupils might be distracted or deterred, and, in turn, to improve levels of engagement.

3.6.2. Pupil-led learning

For pupils to offer personal insights, demonstrate points, and interact with one another in a practical and safe space, the physical environment in which learning takes place must be given careful attention. Dewey highlighted the fundamental inadequacy of traditional classrooms:

> [I]f we put before the mind's eye the ordinary schoolroom, with its row of ugly desks placed in geometrical order, crowded together so that there shall be as little moving room as possible, desks almost all of the same size, with just space enough to hold books, pencils and paper, and add a table, some chairs, the bare walls, and possibly a few pictures, we can reconstruct the only educational activity that can possibly go on in such a place. It is all made for "listening"—because simply studying out of a book is only another kind of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another. (Dewey, 1899, p. 44)

Although primary schools, particularly at Key Stage 1, have generally now moved beyond this antiquated scene by rethinking their spaces (e.g. spacing tables to allow easier movement across the classroom, accommodating informal seating and even laying, using so-called outdoor classrooms for certain learning activities), there is a stark contrast between the fortunes of classroom and instrumental teachers. Having worked in dozens of state primary schools over the last two decades, I can attest to the prevalence of teaching spaces reserved for instrumental teachers that, at worst, are an ill-suited afterthought, e.g. headteachers' offices, first aid rooms, staff rooms (sometimes with staff present and even eating), and playgrounds. Many instrumental teachers still lack a regular, suitable environment in which to teach, with enough space to have pupils spread out but contained, no or few distractions from equipment such as PE apparatus and drumkits, and a working music stand. As it is, Dewey's bygone plea remains relevant to instrumental teachers, who rarely have the luxury to reconfigure their spaces or, by extension, to test alternative learning activities that greater space might permit.

Space is not the only problem facing instrumental teachers. Even in an ideal group learning environment, it is typical for pupils to be positioned either in a single line or

in rows, with the teacher at the front. One example of this can be seen in Brenda Brenner's online video series *Setting up for Success in the String Classroom* (Brenner, 2023). Carpet squares are also sometimes used to mark out individual places. This fixed, hierarchical approach is the modern-day equivalent of Dewey's scene. Of course, the attentive listening that Dewey criticised is a valuable part of music-making, but if listening occurs only within a closed loop of teacher-led demonstration and verbal correction, then we cannot be surprised if group learners fail to interact with each other musically and only look forward, either to the music stand or to the teacher. Even if pupils are peripherally aware of each other, the standard layout leaves little room for group experimentation or for physical musical gestures to be shared and communicated between peers.

Despite these circumstances, as it stands, the ability of teachers to maintain their pupils' focus, defined in this singular sense, is often used as a yardstick of positive engagement and successful group management. For many years, I also fed back to teachers in this way after I had observed their lessons. This project's theoretical framework convinced me to change course radically, and that experimenting with different classroom setups is necessary in order to design and deliver the type of musical activities that would evidently increase musical interactions between pupils—even if taking this step obliges us to rethink what we mean by musical engagement and progression themselves.

3.6.3. The teacher as facilitator

The role of a teacher to facilitate rather than dictate learning poses a further challenge to instrumental music education, principally because it stands in contrast with the master-apprentice dynamic that dominates the field, and which, again, once characterised my own pedagogical approach. Realising this increased my confidence that designing and testing a new approach could directly answer my central research question: how to promote greater engagement in instrumental music lessons. From a Deweyan perspective, a teacher who seeks to facilitate and guide, rather than direct and prescribe, would generate more learning opportunities for their pupils by

encouraging them, whether alone or in groups, to make more musical choices as they approach and solve musical problems. I will return to the question of how this facilitation and guidance can be enacted, but an immediate connection that can be drawn is between encouraging pupils' independence, collaboration, and choice on the one hand, and the emergence, detection, and valuing of their own voice on the other.

3.6.4. Cultivating reflective teaching

The importance Dewey placed on reflection aligns perfectly with a project of this nature. Reflection has shaped my emerging identity as a practitioner-researcher, including this project's action research blueprint and the strategies I decided to employ for it—for example chronicling pupils' real-time and post-lesson reactions to the new techniques and activities I was introducing, reflecting on these in field notes and a reflective journal, and overseeing three cycles of intervention. (Data collection is described in more detail in §4.2.3.) It now felt natural to involve pupils holistically in these reflexive processes, so they were not simply recipients of the project but could themselves reflect on their position and engagement and that of their peers.

Reflection is widely known to be a further way in which pupils can be engaged more actively in their lessons, encouraging self-awareness of their learning. Eric Shieh and Randall Allsup also cite reflection as a likely means of raising standards, with pupils holding themselves to higher standards and seeking expert advice when they are given a greater say over what they do and about what they have achieved (Shieh & Allsup, 2016). The links here again seemed very promising, especially to the second half of my principal research question ('how can instrumental pedagogy be adapted to better facilitate young musicians' progress as they continue lessons after Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET)?'). How to centre reflection in my teaching *and* rebalance the dominant corrective dynamic, no longer always making pupils subject to their teachers' approval, was therefore my next challenge. It pointed towards an opportunity to engineer a more democratic learning environment, sanctioning instrumental teachers to step back and watch musical activities unfold, rather than

micro-manage their every moment. Although I was still unsure about its exact guise, and apprehensive about how new approaches would be implemented and received, rethinking the role of the teacher now seemed key to addressing my research questions.

3.6.5. Progress as growth

If we accept Dewey's pragmatic premise that established beliefs and theories should be questioned critically and revised in response to contemporary developments, then traditional classical music training, which has tended to preserve and revere the status quo, is ripe for change. More specifically, the prospect of equipping music pupils with the skills they will need to be rounded citizens compels us to rethink the learning objectives and activities of their instrumental lessons. Whereas traditional lessons tend to be individually focused and contextualised by competition and grading (literally so in the case of music festivals and examinations), planning lessons through a Deweyan lens would be more likely to nurture collaboration towards a shared goal, mutual support, the ability to take the lead *and* follow, and the skills that such tasks would require, e.g. empathy, kindness, and negotiated decision-making.

Given the post-WCET context of my project, these implications resonated strongly with my aims. Before I could complete my design of a new pedagogical approach, however, I needed to return to the Deweyan concept of the educational present, that is, making 'the present experience as rich and significant as possible' (Dewey, 1916, p. 65).[19] I knew that a new emphasis on formative learning processes (and de-emphasis of summative product) would be controversial to some instrumental teachers. I therefore needed to consider how appreciation of these processes might be reconciled with a new understanding of musical progress.

[19] See also §3.1, esp. note 16.

Dewey's 'pedagogic creed' described how a pupil's interest in *any* given activity can, and so should, be used as evidence of their learning or their learning potential:

> I believe that interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power, I believe that they represent dawning capacities. Accordingly, the constant and careful observation of interests is of the utmost importance for the educator. I believe that these interests are to be observed as showing the state of development that the child has reached. I believe that they prophesy the stage upon which he is about to enter. (Dewey, 1897, p. 15)

Put another way, teachers looking to monitor or assess progress should focus on the nature of a pupil's engagement with the learning activity, helping them not only to ascertain the pupil's current levels of attainment, but also, in turn, to predict ('prophesy') the most logical next steps in the pupil's learning. As we have seen, this mode of pedagogy calls for careful observation of the learning process itself, rather than prioritising, or even exclusively assessing, the quality of a final product.

A significant consequence of these ideas is that the ways in which pupils' 'growing power' can be assessed are suddenly broadened to include, for example: the pupil's initial reaction to the task, including the initial steps they take to approaching it; the pupil's desire to understand the skills and knowledge for which the task calls; efforts by the pupil to show the confidence to problem-solve, either individually or alongside their peers; the ability of the pupil to pose questions that are appropriate to the task; and, finally, their capacity to appraise their own performance during the task with greater attention to detail. Writing nineteen years later, Dewey recognised the scale of the challenge that such a shift—away from assessing the summative product and towards formative learning processes—was likely to cause:

> Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth, something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked. (Dewey, 1916, p. 183)

As described above, Dewey believed that engagement is an active process that requires pupils to be agents in their own learning and that engagement is a requisite

of learning and that to demonstrate engagement is to show progress or growth. This mutuality is clearly relevant to my aim to find new ways to facilitate better engagement and progression for children participating in lessons after WCET. If evidence besides the traditional, i.e. beyond the correctness of execution, can be held up as a legitimate marker of musical progress, then instrumental teachers would surely feel more confident about including learning activities that would elicit new types of evidence in their lessons. A pedagogy designed along these lines also has the potential to rebalance lessons' technical focus—a known cause of pupil frustration and disengagement (Cope, 1999)—and to be more inclusive conceptually (after Dewey) and practically (designing new musical activities in response). By granting more opportunities for engagement to be demonstrated, observed, and responded to, I would also make 'engagement' less reliant on pupils' independent practice, i.e. their home routine.

3.7. Designing a new pedagogy: 'Be a musician'

Moving from a conceptual theoretical outline to an enactable framework, I was ready to design a new pedagogy that would better meet the needs and expectations of children continuing to learn after WCET. A powerful, rhetorical question—'are the children we teach musicians or are they incomplete future musicians?' (Allsup, 2007, p. 55)—inspired the title I gave to the new approach I was devising: 'Be a musician' (hereafter, BeAM). This positive acronym captures the essence of the new pedagogy, prioritising musical experiences and *being* a musician in instrumental lessons, rather than treating them as preparation for *becoming* a musician in future.

My first substantial decision was to focus on the nature and quality of the 'musical experiences' I would need to design. This called for activities in which pupils would be able to apply the preliminary knowledge and skills they had developed to date (e.g. through WCET), while reducing or rethinking any activities whose traditional purpose was to introduce more advanced instrumental techniques. I knew that this rebalancing would, at a stroke, dramatically increase playing time and opportunities

for pupils to collaborate—in short, to allow pupils to act like, and be, musicians much more consistently in their lessons. Next, I considered which musical behaviours could be incorporated successfully into group lesson design and be brought to the fore by learning activities, new or old. For example:

- Musicians make decisions about elements such as tempo, articulation, phrasing, and balance;
- Musicians collaborate when they make music with each another;
- Musicians can be spontaneous and respond to different musical situations;
- Musicians problem-solve, independently or together, in rehearsals or when faced with creative musical challenges;
- Musicians appraise other musicians' music-making, and can be encouraged to do so constructively and diplomatically;
- Musicians communicate their musical ideas and visions to other musicians and to an audience.

The overlap of keywords between this list and Dewey's philosophies is a deliberate means of rethinking and deepening musical learning and the traditional balance of power between pupils and their teachers. Thereafter, BeAM took shape in four stages, which the rest of this chapter will describe: designing a new set of teaching strategies to be used in instrumental group lessons; reconsidering the structure of those lessons to maximise their effectiveness; deciding on the repertoire and learning materials I would use with different groups during the lessons; and, finally, considering how the pupils' progress could be appropriately assessed.

3.7.1. Teaching strategies

The first stage, designing a new set of teaching strategies, fell into seven parts, which I called: leading and following; pass the parcel; finding musical allies; reimagining repertoire; taking a problem-solving approach to notation; collaborative musical decision-making; and reflection. Figure 3.1 outlines the connections between these strategies and Dewey's philosophy.

i. Leading and following

The aphorism 'the deepest urge in human nature is the desire to be important' is commonly attributed to Dewey (e.g. Carnegie, 1936). When a teacher's control of a lesson is exclusive and one-directional, pupils may feel that their contribution is unimportant, causing them to be passive. Instead, I sought to rebalance power, offer pupils greater choice and ownership of their activities, and, in turn, improve engagement and outcomes. One obvious way in which pupils (and, indeed, everyone) can be made to feel important is to grant them authority. I decided that BeAM would seize on this by creating learning opportunities in which the desire of pupils to lead and make decisions about group music-making activities would be explicit. Lead-and-follow activities were the first and most regularly used pupil-led strategy I introduced. Each activity would provide a brief opportunity for the pupil to take a turn in the limelight and to have their ideas or decisions copied or tried out by others, assigning them value and importance. I realised that this would also require a change to the usual lesson formation, with pupils taking their position at the front of a semi-circle—a position typically reserved for the teacher—visually symbolising their role as the leader. I would relocate to the pupil's old position, assuming a new role as their follower.

Figure 3.1. Connections between ‘Be a musician’ (BeAM) and Dewey.

Strategies and activities in BeAM	Connection to Dewey’s philosophy
Leading and following	Democratic classroom, rethinking the role of the teaching, and collaboration
Pass the parcel	Pupil-led learning, collaboration, and being educationally present
Finding musical allies	Collaboration, and being educationally present
Reimagining repertoire	Pupil-led learning, and experimentation
Taking a problem-solving approach to notation	Problem-solving through collaboration
Collaborative musical decision-making	Democratic classroom, rethinking the role of the teaching, and collaboration
Reflection	

ii. Pass the parcel

Thinking further about BeAM’s potential choreography, I was keen to incorporate successful existing strategies in ways that would allow more physical gestures and encourage eye contact between group members. I anticipated that this would deepen musical communication while also giving equal opportunity to learners to participate and to contribute to developing musical structures. A frequently used copycat strategy I termed ‘pass the parcel’ involves passing a fragment of music, usually a key motif or difficult excerpt, around the group. Historically, I would model the motif before each child in the group copied it in turn. This offered the opportunity to check understanding and to hear each player individually. However, it was clear, with the benefit of hindsight, that pupils were usually engaging with me (via eye contact, verbal feedback, and praise where appropriate), but not with one another. I decided to rectify this, giving the strategy new meaning and significance in BeAM

by encouraging pupils to pass the motif to one another out of order. I would no longer judge the motif's success or pause to do so. Instead, multiple repetitions and pupils listening to one another would, in principle, serve to correct mistakes more self-sufficiently. The potential for new, interesting configurations, with pupils passing the motif back and forth like a musical joke, would also feature.

iii. Finding musical allies

Just as 'pass the parcel' would require everyone to be alert and be interactively involved in decision-making—in short, more democratic—another existing strategy reworked into BeAM promoted these behaviours in the context of ensemble performance. When tackling music in two or more parts, I decided to depart from the traditional approach, i.e. the teacher allocating parts to manage differentiation and balance, and instead to allow pupils first to choose a part then to locate someone else in the room who had made the same musical decision before standing beside them. In this environment, pupils would weave around one another, seeking out classmates visually and aurally. This physical and conceptual departure from the norm would prioritise musical interaction and listening over the regimented and well-balanced product. I would also encourage pupils to switch parts, if they felt comfortable doing so, and to reposition themselves in the learning space. My role was as a fellow musician, choosing a part and moving among and in step with the pupils. I also knew that I could change my own part discretely to support any musical line that was 'wobbling', without needing to correct anyone verbally.

iv. Reimagining repertoire

To amplify pupils' creative voice, putting their own musical ideas at the heart of their learning, I decided to experiment with regular activities involving improvisation. One strategy I devised was to reimagine a piece on which the group was working, so that pupils could take a similar range of notes (e.g. all three fingers on the D string), a rhythmic pattern (e.g. quaver, quaver, quaver, crotchet, minim), or a defining structural feature (e.g. a call-and-response structure, with the first and last notes of

each part overlapping) and effectively recompose the piece. Another strategy would be to instigate activities in which pupils would be asked to invent rhythmic variations and/or a freer improvisation that would serve as an introduction to (or an interpolation in) a piece. The musical mood might be inspired by the title or character of the piece, for example 'alien conversations' in the middle of Thomas Gregory's 'Walk on Mars'. I knew that including this type of activity regularly would be key to it becoming familiar, creating a relaxed and confident approach and more convincing, fully-formed musical ideas. I therefore aimed to include at least one 'repertoire reimagining' in each lesson.

v. Taking a problem-solving approach to notation

Addressing note-reading, which I knew was a recurrent difficulty for many group learners, I decided to combine pedagogical techniques by designing scaffolded activities that called for problems to be solved collaboratively. Typical practice is this area often relies on the teacher singing or even loudly calling out note names, pre-emptively or correctively, while pupils play. This can easily disrupt concentration and musical flow. Instead, I would laminate sheets displaying the names of notes on individual strings as well as their position on the stave, then incorporate short activities tasking pupils with decoding a new piece of music (e.g. working out note names and corresponding finger numbers) in pairs or groups, initially without their instruments. A related form of the exercise would enable pupils to create their own scaffold, for example by annotating copies of the music with prompts.

vi. Problem-solving through collaborative musical decision-making

If pupils were to be allowed to 'act like, and be, musicians', then I knew that they would need to be given greater responsibility for decisions about how to perform familiar pieces, and that this would require them to engage with each other musically and verbally. To stimulate these 'musical conversations', I planned regular lesson activities in which, after some initial teacher-led explanation, I would have no further

direct involvement. These would be activities where I transferred authority to the group as completely as I could, standing back to observe and nurture further interactions only after the activities themselves.

For example, by freeing pupils to decide how they wished to divide the music they were playing together, the musical moment would be more personal and meaningful and a new type of learning could emerge. If pupils chose a certain configuration that did not make sense, at least by traditional logic, then I would let them pursue the idea anyway, so that they would either discover this for themselves or discuss and work through its implications. (Examples might include attempting to play in canon music that would not harmonically fit into that form, or playing single systems of music that are unlikely to correspond with the musical phrasing.) The exercise would better prepare pupils to appraise the sounds they were producing *and* to direct me to help address specific questions that arose. I anticipated that it would also give pupils greater independence, whose benefits would be increasingly noticeable as the exercises unfolded.

vii. Pupil reflection

To make reflection a normal and expected part of how pupils experienced their instrumental lessons, I planned simple, open-ended questions that I could routinely ask to hear and centre their opinions. ‘How did that sound to you?’, for example, at the end of a piece, or ‘how did that feel to play?’, reflecting on the physicality of playing. In response to individual pupils making musical choices in a lead and follow activity: ‘What musical mood was created?’. Thinking about the sound they would produce: ‘What did you like or dislike about that sound?’ or ‘is there anything you would like to change the next time you play?’

I knew that if responses to the questions called for a repeated attempt, then I should aim to let it happen with no further interference, lining up another reflective question after the second try. Only when pupils were unsure what to try next would I suggest a helpful focus. I intended to sometimes ask pupils to listen to one another’s playing and to offer their own support by showing or advising their classmates how to

achieve, say, the right pattern of notes. This would again keep pupils attentive—to one another and to what was happening collectively in the room—and would be a natural differentiation tool, entrusting the most able pupils to act as teacher. I planned to model this reflective feedback in a deliberately respectful and caring way, so that pupils would hopefully mimic this tone.

3.7.2. Lesson structure

Figure 3.2 summarises key conceptual and practical differences between traditional approaches to instrumental teaching and BeAM.

From an early stage in the project, it was clear that BeAM's priorities would have a radical effect on traditional instrumental lesson structure. Here, I describe the structure on which I settled, delineating a typical 30-minute group lesson using BeAM. Timings are approximate and can fluctuate according to each group's level of engagement with a given activity. I aimed to include most elements in each lesson to ensure a good balance, maximising the chance of sparking interest with different pupils while developing the intended range of musicianship skills across the groups.

i. Warm-up, e.g. 5 minutes

Through an initial musical activity, I planned to make pupils to feel present in the moment and engaged from the outset. 'Engagement' was to take a specific meaning: pupils being attentive to their situation in a group violin lesson playing alongside their friends and fellow musicians. As such, I decided to begin each lesson with a warm-up that would involve playing the same piece in unison, supported by a backing track, and from memory. I wanted each group to enjoy being together in the room, making music within what would quickly become a routine. Choosing familiar, technically undemanding repertoire was a quick win, accommodating all

Figure 3.2. Comparing traditional instrumental teaching with BeAM.

Traditional approaches	BeAM's approach
Pupils are arranged in lines, facing towards the teacher. Music stands are spaced so that pupils can see both the music and the teacher.	Lesson set-up is less static, more flexible, with pupils arranged (e.g.) in a circle rather than in lines to promote interaction. Music stands are moved into position as and when required.
Lessons begin by hearing the repertoire, studies, exercises prepared at home during the week.	Lessons begin with a familiar warm-up, played in unison, from memory.
Teacher makes musical decisions and encourages adherence to the 'correct' execution according to the established way of playing or to the directions on the score.	Pupils make musical decisions about how a piece is to be played.
Teacher listens to the pupils' ideas but swiftly guides them back to planned activities so as not to waste time.	Pupils' creative and exploratory ideas are pursued, even if these are unplanned.
Teacher gives detailed technical and musical feedback, to which the pupil or pupils react.	Encourages peer reflection, observation, and assessment.
Little pupil interaction is evident during lessons. Teacher helps to support struggling pupils.	Encourages pupils to help one another, e.g. suggesting what is not quite working and to help solve problems
Less playing time, whether sustained or measured overall, with more stopping-and-starting to correct mistakes and to give/receive instructions about new pieces.	More playing, less verbal instruction.
Teacher directs the pupils individually, and individual rather than collective achievement is centred.	Collaboration is encouraged. Working together towards a group goal is at the forefront of lessons.
Teacher leads the music-making.	Works with pupils to support them to use musical gestures to lead and follow.
Tends to prioritise accuracy of pitch and rhythm before other musical matters are considered.	Thinks about musical expression and how moods are created technically from early in the learning journey.
Note-reading is the primary basis for learning most new pieces once some motifs have been taught by ear.	Less importance is attached to note-reading (according to pupil preference) although it remains a part of the lesson.

pupils, including those who had not played their instrument since the last lesson. Neither sheet music nor music stands would be needed, making it easier for pupils to notice everything that was happening in the room and to hear and appreciate the collective sound.

ii. Lead and follow activity, e.g. 5–10 minutes

Described in greater detail above, lead and follow activities were planned to allow pupils to take turns to lead musically, for example by playing a scale, short technical exercise, or a motif related to a piece they were learning. The leader would give physical and musical cues to their followers, for example by choosing a string to play part of a scale, creating an introduction, and/or gesturing to their classmates to bring them in, and be free to make their own choices about tempo, articulation, dynamics, and mood.

iii. Investigation, e.g. 5–10 minutes

I planned musical investigative work in pairs, threes, and fours. This would typically comprise a short, pupil-led task that called for problems to be solved and self-reflection. For example: reading and playing a short passage using notation; improvising within certain set parameters; working out a more complex part in an existing piece; and deciding how a piece should be played by members of a group, each of taking a different part or dividing and sharing a single-line piece.

iv. The 'big play', e.g. 5 minutes

We have seen how one of the shortfalls of traditional instrumental lessons is their relatively short, aggregate playing time. In the 'big play', emphasis would be placed on making music together for an extended period, rather than a minute or less and being punctuated by instructions. Ensuring that instruments remained up would involve doing several different things with one piece. Repetition would therefore be a prominent tactic, for example: different parts to be tried out; deploying 'pass the

parcel' for certain passages; improvising within the framework of the piece; splitting up pieces into motifs and themes to be played by different pupils to make a (new) whole; use of movement (pupils moving around the room while playing); pupil-led changes of dynamic and mood. Reflection would be encouraged only after each play-through, informing both the repetition and, in the longer term, to help plan future lessons.

3.7.3. Repertoire decisions

Guided by BeAM's new priorities, I decided to make a concerted effort to rely less on note-reading during lessons. As §3.7.2 (iii.) makes clear, notation would not be neglected; I planned to include it principally during 'investigations' before moving on to a contrasting activity. At the same time, I was mindful that introducing new material often (or too often) would require pupils to learn new sets of notes repeatedly. I therefore chose to limit the quantity of repertoire that would be included in each cycle of lessons, focusing instead on the multiple learning opportunities that could arise from a few carefully chosen pieces.

I selected repertoire from my existing bank of resources in order to ease the transition to BeAM's new approach for pupils and myself alike; I knew that pupils would find resources such as *String Time Starters* and *Vamoosh*, with their distinctive backing tracks, recognisable from their experience of WCET. This also chimed with Dewey's recommendation that teachers engineer more productive learning environments through familiarity (Dewey, 1938). I also knew that each of the three groups with whom I would be working were at similar stages of learning, i.e. pre-Grade 1 (according to benchmark standards) but 'established beginners': Group 1 would be the oldest and most experienced, comprising Year 5/6 pupils who were in their second or third year of continuation after WCET; and Groups 2 and 3 would be Year 3/4 pupils in their first year of continuation after WCET. Figure 3.3 describes the resources I decided to use, when and with whom I planned to use them, and their relevance to BeAM.

Figure 3.3. A list of resources used in BeAM.

Resource	When used and with whom	Relevance to BeAM
'Ballad', *Vamoosh 1.5* (Thomas Gregory)	Cycles 1–3 Groups 1–3	Used as a musical signal that the lesson has begun, quickly settling the group. A familiar memory warm-up for Group 1 (no need of notation). An opportunity to address technique (posture, set-up, bowing action, sound production) and awareness of ensemble. Also creative work with rhythmic variations, including new bow patterns.
'See a Little Monkey', pre-'Twinkle' *Suzuki* material	Cycles 1–3 Group 1+3	Conjunct scalic movement develops left-hand fluency and intonation. Opportunities to lead and follow and to explore tempo, articulation, dynamics, and creating a musical mood.
'Ev'ry Time I Play', in three parts, *String Time Starters* (Kathy & David Blackwell)	Cycle 1 Group 1	Its simple part-writing consolidates notation fluency and scalic hand patterns, while introducing more complicated syncopated rhythms. An opportunity for musical decision-making, different combinations, ensemble, and choosing tempo and dynamics.
D-major scale variations, *Vamoosh 1.5*	Cycle 1 Group 2	Fluency in the key and its scale (left-hand coordination). Opportunities to read/consolidate rhythm-reading and to create variations.
'Walk on Mars', *Vamoosh*	Cycle 1 (Groups 2+3) and Cycle 3 (Group 1)	A memorable tune, with a chorus easy to learn without notation, while its middle section helps develop note-reading. Opportunities to improvise, to have 'alien conversations', and to break up and play in different characters and speeds. A popular performance piece.
'A String Hoedown', *Vamoosh*	Cycle 1 Group 3	Introduces semiquaver durations, facilitates note-reading on the A-string, and affords creative opportunities to rewrite music using different musical elements.

‘The Wizard’, in three parts, *Team Strings* (Christopher Bull, Olive Goodborn, Richard Duckett)	Cycle 1 Group 2	Consolidates slur work. Also encourages musical decisions to be taken about ensemble combinations, leading and following, and/or dividing music for duet performance.
‘Feelin’ Blue’, in two parts, *String Time Joggers* (Kathy & David Blackwell)	Cycle 2 Groups 1–3	Explores the jazz and blues genres. Also an opportunity to explore musical mood and arrange creative work, e.g. in a question-and-answer format.
‘Footprints in the Snow’, *Vamoosh*	Cycle 2 Group 3	Consolidates conjunct finger patterns and scales. Also allows pupils to recreate their own piece and to take musical decisions about how to play in a duet format.
‘Double Monkey’ (1-octave scales), pre-‘Twinkle’ *Suzuki* material	Cycle 2 Group 3	Features scalic finger patterns and grants opportunities to lead and follow, to explore tempi and musical mood, and to practise ‘the drop’, i.e. a three-finger drop technique in the left hand.
‘Broadway or Bust’, in two parts, *String Time Joggers*	Cycle 2 Groups 1–3	Used to encourage musical communication centring motifs, ensemble, and note-reading.
‘Moonlight’, *Vamoosh 1.5*	Cycle 2 Group 2	Prominent use of slurs and A-string note-reading. Also an opportunity for improvisation against a backing track.
‘Slurs and Ties’, *Vamoosh 1.5*	Cycle 3 Group 2	Consolidates understanding of slurs and ties. Another opportunity for improvisation against a backing track.
‘Gypsy Dance’, *Violin Star 2* (Edward Huws Jones)	Cycle 3 Group 2	Used to explore musical mood, to consolidate slurs and note-reading, and/or to allow pupils to make musical decisions about how to play in duet format.
Laminated notation sheets, one per string, self-created resource	Cycles 1–3 All groups as needed	Used as scaffold to build pupils’ note-reading independence.

3.7.4. Measuring progress

Traditionally, progressively challenging repertoire is the dominant framework through which pupils are expected to make technical and musical progress. By contrast, my ambition was not just to outline a repertory that pupils would accrue, but to identify in it as many opportunities as possible so that pupils would encounter learning experiences that aligned with BeAM's priorities. Progression would be embedded in the activities themselves, so that everyone could access the music more democratically, at their current level of understanding. I also anticipated that progress would be detectable through pupils' increasingly sophisticated engagement with the various activities I was overseeing.

The question of improved technical facility remained an open one, in that lesson planning was principally concerned with musicianship ('becoming a musician'), rather than with technical goals exclusively. I was also doubtful whether technical improvement would even be measurable, given the relatively short period of fieldwork I had planned, and because it was difficult to predict exactly how the characteristics BeAM was set to nurture (e.g. greater comfort playing, expressivity, creativity, and autonomy) would be seen and heard. Nevertheless, mindful of Dewey's 'growing power', and having now designed BeAM, I suspected that new insights into musical progression could emerge once my fieldwork began.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1. From aims to research design

A project's research design should be guided by its aims. The central aim of my project is 'to design and test a new pedagogy that would better address the needs of post-WCET learners' (§1.4). To learn which adaptations would improve pupils' engagement and progress, I decided to draw on my position as a teacher-researcher in a school setting to deliver specially designed instrumental lessons to groups of children who had chosen to continue playing after WCET, and to observe and study how these lessons were received. Collecting qualitative data about how the pupils experienced the alternative content and styles of delivery I planned for these lessons would help address a current deficit in discussion of WCET and post-WCET learning, meeting another of my research aims (having already identified 'potential gaps in the data… to be filled').

I also wanted to shine a light on instrumental group teaching in state primary schools—a common mode of teaching but one sometimes considered a poor relation, especially to the supposed gold standard of private one-to-one tuition. For my project to be useful and credible, I knew I would need confront and document the highs and lows of teaching in a group setting and of enacting new pedagogical methods. I was versed in reflective practice as a teacher and teaching mentor; this project was an opportunity, more publicly than before, to reflect on my own experiences, to rethink traditional pedagogies, and to consider alternative forms of engagement and progress. I also aimed to 'align the new pedagogy with the "music education for all" agenda of the NPME' (§1.4), knowing that doing so would simultaneously make my findings transferrable and help address the problem of poor rates of continuation after WCET.

These aims called for a research design that: would permit direct pedagogical intervention; was creative and socially aware; could be flexible enough to accommodate across its course reflexivity and possible changes in direction; and would generate data that was practically valuable and academically rigorous. This chapter explains and justifies the choices I took in response to these needs. It begins by explaining why action research was an appropriate structure for my research design and how it complemented the project's Deweyan lens. Next, I describe the project's sampling strategy, its blend of live and written methods, and how I collected and analysed data while endeavouring to maintain trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter addresses the project's ethical considerations and how certain methodological limitations were anticipated and ameliorated.

4.1.1. Why action research?

The psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) is credited with developing action research, an approach that follows a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Lewin, 1946). In the decades since, action research has become a leading research method, particularly in education and the social sciences. Especially powerful at local levels, it is flexible enough to be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks, and procedures require a solution, or where changes to the status quo can lead to better outcomes (Winter, 1982; Conway & Borst, 2001; Furlong & Sainsbury, 2005; Somekh, 2006). Given that action research implements change and is underpinned by critical reflection, I was keen to design and oversee pedagogical action research to frame the intervention I was seeking to make, testing solutions to challenges I had long witnessed and doing so in a school in which I had taught for many years. As this section will explain, however, I was also mindful of the initial need to address certain criticisms that action research has faced.

The different schools of action research that exist today are still driven by a desire to improve practices by creating, then drawing on, a rigorous evidential trail of data. I knew that a transparent, systematic description of the specific circumstances of my project, of my positionality as a researcher, and of the methods I would employ to

gather data would address Steve Bartlett and Diana Burton's critique of action research's supposedly under-developed conventions (Bartlett & Burton, 2006). It would also address concerns posed by John Furlong and Jane Sainsbury, who reviewed over 100 action research projects and found that their outcomes were 'hard to disentangle' from the teacher-researchers' professional development (Furlong & Sainsbury, 2005, p. 69).

Contemporary action research still follows a rational sequence of events, for example: identifying the problem(s) that are to be addressed; planning an intervention; implementing that intervention; and evaluating the outcome(s). Reflection takes place at each stage, which helps to generate and refine new plans, starting the cycle afresh (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). Reviewing action research in music education specifically, Tim Cain argued that few projects were truly cyclical, i.e. they involved more than one cycle of action, with most studies presenting just a single study with reflection (Cain, 2008). Planning my project, I concluded that three cycles of action were possible and desirable, as this would afford a much greater degree of reflexivity than a single cycle.

Of the arguments about action research that have been made this century, Bridget Somekh's constructive advice to work with, and within, policy initiatives resonated the most with my project's ambitions (Somekh, 2006). Learners suffer if we do not search for ways to work better *because* of the constraints teachers face—particularly so in contemporary music education, where diminishing budgets tend to squeeze out creative subjects (Hodgkiss, 2018). Most music teachers, whether working in the classroom or peripatetically, would argue that the time and resources they are given are insufficient to deliver the breadth and depth of curriculum their subject needs and deserves (Zeserson et al., 2014). Nevertheless, Somekh's advice is that implementing change, however insignificant the change may appear, can still help transform the education system and engage policymakers.

My project supports this ethos, as it considers how to make the best (i.e. different) use of the time and resources currently granted to post-WCET provision. In this respect, action research also addresses an important deficiency in much music

education literature: that its recommendations for future practice, when these are made, are commonly left untested. Jean McNiff (2016) explains that the best action research shows how the researcher's learning has influenced other people's thinking, such that actions are developed. Like Somekh, Zina O'Leary (2007) is quick to praise the multivalency of action research, which not only generates new knowledge but also instigates change, often to everyday issues—both contributions my project aims to make.

Pursuing action research also allowed me to recruit participants I already knew and who would be participating in their natural, familiar learning environment. This would be logistically beneficial, of course, and mean that my interpretation of pupils' reactions was likely to be more nuanced and insightful than it would have been otherwise: the teacher-pupil relationship was already firmly established and my prior knowledge of the pupils would help me discern (e.g.) the significance of their expressions, body language, opinions, and playing during the project. (In the event, several meaningful comparisons of pre- and in-project reactions were made, as I recorded in a reflective journal and, in some cases, my findings.) I could have interviewed many more pupils, including those I did *not* teach and those from different parts of the country, gathering more data about attitudes towards post-WCET lessons. I decided that the trade-off such an approach would have created—between painting the broader picture and understanding the effect of pedagogical changes on pupils (and myself as a teacher)—was justified and, indeed, desirable.

The decisive factors here were realising that no one else was experimenting with what I had begun to brand *continuation pedagogies*, and that designing as authentic a project as possible would be likely to increase its impact, that is, to be received well by other teachers and influence future practices. This was important to me because of my own experiences as a teacher and teacher trainer and because researchers have identified the profound challenges instrumental teachers face, not least their precarious employment (e.g. isolated working conditions, hourly paid), which makes it difficult for them to afford and attend professional development courses (Norton, Ginsborg & Greasley, 2019).

As discussed more fully in §3.3, further reasons why instrumental teachers rarely access or seek external influences to help develop their practices include: a reluctance to change the status quo, which may have served teachers well during their formative years; the unregulated nature of the profession, with many instrumental teachers lacking formal teaching qualifications (Burwell, 2005; Haddon, 2011); and research that does not access or gain insight into the real teaching situations many teachers, especially those working in state schools, face. This final factor is one I have long discussed with colleagues and is corroborated by Colleen Conway and James Borst, who argue that well-meaning researchers have tended to define themselves as outsiders, thereby limiting their ability to identify and solve problems that are most important and relevant to practitioners (Conway & Borst, 2001).

Action research, on the other hand, makes solid connections between research and practice and is therefore popular with teachers. Tim Cain found that secondary music teachers' reception of action research was more positive than traditional research, and that they reported how 'listening to others [fellow teachers] was… best' (Cain, 2010, p. 308). Likewise, a known shortfall of much policymaking, even that which appears academically sound, is its idealism and failure to consider everyday life (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). My project would be carried out by a researcher-practitioner working in their familiar professional environment, such that any inauthentic 'staging' would be minimised. I would seek to give readers a rare, and unvarnished, glimpse into the instrumental teaching setting, documenting its highlights, lowlights, breakthroughs, and frustrations alike. The misplaced instruments and music; the disruptive last-minute room changes; the pupils distracted by a view of the playground; the earnest pedagogical try-outs that fall flat; the wild swings between pupils delighted by grasping a certain activity one minute, only to forget it completely the next. Such scenarios are plausible and relatable because they are real.

The project would therefore analyse data drawn from the pupils' usual weekly violin lessons. By observing experiences and perceptions in this environment, I was more confident about collecting and gauging authentic responses to the project's new

pedagogical approaches (described in detail in Chapter 3). I judged that altering the lessons' personnel, duration, or day, or making them co-curricular in addition to pupils' usual lessons, was not ideal; that doing so risked making the lessons themselves seem (more) anomalous and would potentially affect pupils' behaviours during them, e.g. playing to the camera. (I knew that some initial excitement as the project began was inevitable, but in the event, I was able to ascribe most abnormal actions, e.g. face-pulling or crouching while passing the computer screen, to age-appropriate behaviour that only added to the authenticity of the project.)

Authenticity, then, is a powerful factor in the pursuit of change because it makes a project's findings and recommendations easier to apply and to extrapolate to similar scenarios. A longstanding quirk of CPD overseen by string pedagogues is that it invariably showcases high levels of technical accomplishment, often by ever younger pupils, causing most teachers to wonder how they could possibly achieve similar results with their own learners—e.g. Zweig (2024), Sassmannshaus (2024), and International Minifiddlers (2024). Instead, my project would draw on contemporary thinking about action research and older educational philosophies, which I considered to be compatible, much more constructive, and in alignment with my research aims.

John Dewey's perspectives dispelled any lingering doubts I had about my research design. As outlined in the previous chapter, his pragmatism has proved influential in educational research at large but much less so in music education. His arguments that knowledge is generated through experience, and that truths are not absolute and immutable but are determined by their practical implementation, are almost a prototype of action research (Dewey, 1913; Kraushik, 2019). Dewey once argued that 'an empiricism which is content with repeating facts already past has no place for possibility and for liberty' (1931, p. 33) and would later endorse reflection as a principal means of connecting experiences and their consequences (Dewey, 1933).

4.2. Sampling strategy

This section explains more of the decisions I took when designing my action research and provides further context for the project, including about the primary school that hosted it, the project's timeline (including the unavoidable effects of the Covid-19 pandemic), and how it was designed in a way that would generate the most useful data.

4.2.1. Why did I choose this school?

Since graduating in the early 2000s, most of my violin and viola teaching has taken place in rural primary schools. I first taught at the school that agreed to partner on this project in 2007, making it one of my longest engagements. As a (then) young teacher who had recently moved out of London, the school's rural setting was especially idyllic. I was supported there by an enthusiastic headteacher who was keen for her pupils to access music lessons, despite—or perhaps because of—the school's small size. The school, a state primary, taught well under 100 pupils at the time to children aged 4–10. It expanded in 2010, creating a Year 6 class, and as of 2022/23 taught 115 pupils.

The school would likely feel familiar to instrumental teachers working in rural southern England, but much less so to those more used to teaching in urban settings or even rurally elsewhere in England. Most of the school's pupils live either in its village or in neighbouring villages, with a small number of pupils travelling from the local market town. A brook meanders through the centre of the village, effectively dividing it in two. To one side of the brook, the main road is lined mostly with substantial, quintessentially English properties, including many cottages built from local clunch (a chalky limestone that gives the properties a distinctive creamy-grey appearance). This side of the village also features a Norman church with a distinctive copper spire, one surviving public house, and a community-run shop that now also hosts the post office. To the other side of the brook, behind the main street (as though hidden from view) are newer estates with properties that were largely built between 1950 and 1980. Much of this housing was built and let by the council. Some of it

remains social housing, but much of it is now privately owned. In 2002, the primary school itself relocated from the centre of the village to a purpose-built site on the other side of the brook.

The contrast between the two halves of the village is understood and sometimes commented on by its residents, for example loose talk about living on the 'right side of the brook'. The educational implications are also clear. In early years and Key Stage 1, pupils are evenly split between working- and middle-class families (a distinction I draw based principally on my knowledge of pupils' parents' occupations), but this balance typically shifts at Key Stage 2, as families who can afford to send their children to private schools do so. By no means unique to the village, this 'state till eight [years old]' approach leaves in its wake a greater proportion of pupils from working-class families from Key Stage 2 onwards.[20]

The school arranges pupils into five classes named after local landmarks, of which four bring together year-groups, e.g. Reception class, Years 1–2, Years 2–3, Years 4–5, and Years 5–6. At the time of the project, a designated music coordinator was employed to deliver weekly lessons to all classes except Years 2–3, which received WCET on the violin in partnership with the local music hub, West Sussex Music. As a string teacher for the hub, I had led each presentation of the WCET programme since 2011. After I left West Sussex Music in August 2019 in order to concentrate on research, I continued teaching in some of my schools on a freelance basis. The school's headteacher secured funds via a local church to purchase a new set of 30 violins, replacing the instruments that had been loaned to the school by the hub and ensuring I could continue teaching the programme in the school. This was a mark not only of the close relationship the school enjoys with the local church (being a faith school), but also its commitment to whole-class instrumental learning: music enjoys a very positive, public profile and learning the violin was an accepted part of pupils' school experience. Although I was a peripatetic teacher, I always felt valued by the school as a member of their staff. The class's music lessons that year comprised 30 lessons, each 45 minutes long, and were delivered year-long—a pattern that is at the

[20] Research into factors affecting parental choice regarding private and public schools is well documented (Ball, 1996; Burgess et al., 2009; Green et al., 2017).

upper end of lesson and programme durations in WCET programmes across England (Fautley & Whittaker, 2017).

My project included children who had opted to continue learning the violin with me after participating in WCET. This meant that 14 children were eligible to participate, as nine had participated in the whole-class programme during 2019/20, after five had done so in 2017/18. I issued invitations, hoping to attract a sample of ten pupils. The rationale for this target was that it would provide sufficient data while allowing for the possibility that a handful of pupils may decide not to participate in the project. It would also permit me to continue teaching two existing groups of children in their pandemic-affected class 'bubbles', causing no disruption to the status quo and so also reducing the likelihood of pupils' behaviour changing during their lessons (which would have led to a less authentic result). My approach adhered to the school's own risk assessment, which was designed to keep children safe during the pandemic and which formed part of this project's ethics approval application. Although ten participants was an ambitious target (a fact commented upon by the approval committee), the fact that it was achievable attests to the strong reputation of music in the school.[21]

4.2.2. Timeline

My original intention was to complete two cycles of research, each comprising ten lessons, spanning two school terms, with focus groups held at the end of each cycle. After being granted ethical approval in December 2020, I circulated information sheets and permissions forms and collected replies. Unfortunately, the anticipated start date for the project was thwarted by a second round of school closures in early 2021. Fieldwork and most aspects of my usual teaching routine were put on hold once again. During this time, I offered pupils online lessons via Skype and Zoom. I

[21] Ten children participated in the project. Four children who were eligible to participate but chose not to do so continued to receive lessons as usual, either in other groups or individually, depending on the preference of the pupils and their parents.

did not otherwise alter my usual teaching style, as implementing further changes to established lesson routines at a time of extreme uncertainty would not have been fair. Five of the nine families (*sic.* – two of the participants were twins) permitted their children to continue with individual 15-minute lessons online while the school was closed. Two families chose to pause lessons until their children could resume school; one of these families replied to point out that because the violins were stored at school, no instrument was available on which to have a lesson. The two remaining families did not reply to the invitation to switch to online delivery. This contextual information highlights some of the barriers to musical access that pupils faced during the pandemic, at a time directly before they started to participate in the project.

Thereafter, I adapted the project's timeframe, delaying fieldwork until March, when I knew access to the school would be permitted. With fieldwork set to begin four weeks before the end of the Spring term, I decided to make use of the break provided by school holidays, dividing the remaining time into three cycles of four weeks, five weeks, and five weeks respectively, with focus groups, as introduced below, held at the end of the second and third cycles. (It would not have been possible to persist with the original durations, carrying the project over to a new academic year, as four of the participants were in Year 6 and would be moving to their secondary schools.) I have no regrets about the amended timeframe or its three shorter cycles. Even with six lessons fewer, I was able to collect a vast amount of data. The new pause in fieldwork between the first and second cycles was also fortuitous: the Easter fortnight allowed me the time to plan the second and third cycles safe in the confidence that the first cycle's activities and new modes of delivery had been positively received.

4.2.3. Data collection

Triangulation of methods is an important way in which the validity of data gained through qualitative research can be tested and strengthened (Bresler, 1995; Whitehead & McNiff, 2016). Using multiple methods to gather data supports findings by showing that independent measures concur with them, or at least do not

contradict them. In my project, then, I used a combination of written and live methods, including video recordings, narrative field notes, and focus groups. To monitor progress and engagement, I analysed video recordings of pupils during 30-minute lessons over two terms (14 lessons) and completed handwritten narrative field notes at the end of each day of teaching. Recording my own observations of pupils' work during lessons in this way would, it was hoped, yield data evidencing not only pupils' development of instrumental skill and musical knowledge, but also their willingness to engage with learning tasks, their musical interactions with one another, and their ability to reflect and appraise their own playing and that of their peers.

I also decided to include in the field notes my own reflections about the personal consequences of the lessons, which I knew were likely to mark a profound change in my teaching and my learning objectives. For example: my real-time reactions to these changes; how the views I held before the project may have changed; and how the project's approaches compared with my own experiences of being a pupil, i.e. how I was taught. To help appreciate the significance of my observations, I wrote using a style of thick description that, again, is commonly aligned with the use of qualitative methods (Ponterotto, 2006). Popularised by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, thick description aims to describe observations and context as fully as possibly, going beyond surface details to acknowledge and amplify voices, feelings, actions, and their meanings (Geertz, 1973). The approach is intended to bolster the credibility of researchers' interpretations.

As I would be pedagogically active throughout each of the lessons, prompting and responding to pupils, I would not be able to observe interactions closely or with any objectivity. Filming the lessons would therefore be a necessary complement to the field notes, allowing me to watch the lessons back, to gather more data, and to make important weekly comparisons about the groups' playing and interactions. Filming not only lent greater weight to establishing the validity of claims to knowledge than words alone (McNiff, 2005), but will also be invaluable to my ongoing work with teachers, providing a bank of examples of real musical situations—a type so often absent from Continuing Professional Development-type workshops in instrumental

teaching—on which to draw. I secured permission from families to use footage for ten years (until 2030).

At the end of the Spring and Summer terms, I scheduled two semi-structured focus groups per lesson group. These recorded sessions (audio-only) each lasted approximately 45 minutes and encouraged pupils to discuss what they had experienced in their lessons. This third method of data collection would generate ten first-hand accounts of pupils' experiences of the project, allow proper triangulation to take place, and prolong the Deweyan spirit of my intervention by further amplifying pupil voice. Pupils were by now very familiar with learning and working together, whether in their instrumental lessons with me or in their usual classes at school. Because of the pupils' age (8–11 years), a more formal interview situation may have discouraged pupils from giving accurate, authentic descriptions. My fear was that they would be inclined to second-guess what I wanted to hear, seeking to please or support me (McNiff, 2016), rather than give a true account of their experiences.

Focus groups were designed to put the children at ease. Chairs arranged around a small table created a setting that looked and felt like a group discussion facilitated by a class teacher. I began with an icebreaker activity (Fargus-Malet et al., 2010), providing pupils with blank cards, pens, and pencils, and asking them to draw or write about the different activities that tend to take place in instrumental lessons. I hoped that the activity would also serve as a prompt, stimulating conversations about aspects of the lessons that pupils had enjoyed, found interesting, had improved most over time, and so forth. The discussion would be pupil-directed from the outset (Clark, 2005). Giving the children the option to write or draw catered for individual preferences: the assumption that all children are more comfortable drawing has been proved, in some cases, to be counterproductive (Scherer, 2016). Each of the participants readily engaged with the task. I had to create additional cards during the first focus group because the pupils, having filled the initial set of cards, had more ideas that they wanted to write down. Most pupils chose to write either individual words, for example naming one of their favourite pieces of music from the lessons, or short sentences. Some pupils added picture doodles to decorate their words. Focus

Group 1 (involving children in Years 5–6) wrote more extended prose commentary than Focus Group 2 (involving children in Years 3–4), which is unsurprising given their respective levels of writing skills.

The popularity of the activity, which had been designed simply to get pupils thinking 'in the zone', was such that I decided to embed it in subsequent focus group meetings. It soon became apparent that greater amounts of text were being written and that two children preferred to express themselves on paper, giving fuller answers than they subsequently would verbally. Children wrote as they listened to one another's ideas, sometimes adding further comments as a new thought came to mind. Where appropriate to the question being asked, I encouraged everyone to order their cards numerically, ranking their preferences, for example for favourite-to-least-favourite activities. Some children took particular pride in the activity, editing their spelling and meaning before handing their finished cards to me with their names written on the reverse side. Including this additional activity, which was semi-autonomous and did not necessarily require eye contact with the teacher, added to the relaxed atmosphere of the focus group. The data it generated also helped corroborate verbal statements; I was also able to take direct quotations from some of the cards, even providing advice to teachers from the participants themselves (e.g. Chapter 8). A full list of focus group activities and a sample of prompt cards are given in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

As my own learning and development as a teacher would be central to the project, a reflective journal documenting my thoughts before the project was a logical method of data collection to adopt. It would also contribute to my positioning in the research (McNiff, 2016). In the journal, I began by recounting the sorts of pre-project frustrations that had moved me to design the project in the first place, for example that post-WCET pupils repeatedly forgot their instruments on the day of their lessons, or that independent practice had been neglected, requiring material to be re-covered each week, or that some pupils would appear lazily disinterested when faced with new (notated) music. I would also use the journal to record interesting ideas I had heard anecdotally and at conferences, to consider how these ideas might fit into my changing view of instrumental teaching, and to reflect on my training, i.e. those

factors which had inspired, shaped, and sometimes hindered my own engagement and progress. The journal would be succeeded by field notes taken during the project itself.

4.3. Data analysis

Data analysis is generally recognised as being the most complex phase of qualitative research, yet it once attracted the least discussion in literature exploring research methodologies (Thorne, 2000). Criticism for the lack of transparency in describing analytical processes in published research reports was also once common (Tuckett, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To avoid these pitfalls in my own approach, I created a data analysis plan before attempting analysis, recording the rationale for my decisions (in the context of relevant literature, e.g. Nowell et al., 2017), and describing in detail how analysis would be conducted.

After considering different qualitative analytical approaches, I chose thematic analysis primarily for its flexibility and applicability when examining and comparing the perspectives of multiple research participants (as my project was set to do), but also for its relevance to unforeseen insights. By centring on primary school-aged children, the project made me an active participant (or research practitioner) across each of its stages, collecting various types of data, from written and oral evidence to audio and visual data, including body language and music-making. Flexibility would therefore be important as I switched roles between teacher, facilitator, interviewer, observer, focus group leader, and researcher. Pupils' contrasting backgrounds, musical experiences, and peer relationships would also directly influence their reception of the lessons' content and style, and I expected that this might generate diverse and, at times, unanticipated results. Finally, thematic analysis is relatively straightforward to grasp—an advantage for teachers reading my research, who are unlikely to be researchers themselves—and is well-suited to handling large datasets by distilling their key features. With many hours and pages of footage, focus group

recordings, and field notes to be taken, it was clear that thematic analysis would be an efficient choice.

Although thematic analysis is used widely in qualitative research, it has attracted some criticism for its alleged lack of coherence, careless application, and, by extension, the trustworthiness of the results it generates—for example, that its flexibility is a double-edge sword that can creates inconsistencies or incoherence when themes are derived from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Other scholars believe that thematic analysis has been treated unfairly and deserves to be recognised equally alongside established methods such as grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Having chosen to pursue thematic analysis, I was mindful to keep coherence, rigour, and trustworthiness—concepts to which I return in §4.5—at the heart of my planning, implementation, and documentation.

I do so in three main ways. I make explicit my epistemological position at the start of this thesis (§1.3), consistently underpinning the study's empirical claims. I also follow Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's comprehensive, sequenced guide to thematic analysis (2006) which was devised to address criticisms that the method was not sufficiently rigorous (e.g. Sandelowski, 1986; Koch, 1994; Holloway & Todres, 2003). Lastly, I heeded Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba's advice (1985) about the need to demonstrate, inwardly and to readers, the trustworthiness of qualitative research: the four criteria they introduced to do so—credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability—were valuable benchmarks for my own decisions. (They are also refinements of conventional criteria in qualitative assessment, i.e. validity and reliability.)

4.3.1. Preparing the data for analysis

Before data can be analysed, several decisions about its preparation needed to be made. Archiving each form of raw data was necessary, creating both an audit trail and a benchmark against which subsequent analysis and interpretations could be

tested for adequacy. Data management would also be important, especially because of the sensitivities and safeguarding implications arising from its footage, which features children. All raw data, including audio, video, and documents, was labelled by its respective lesson and cycle numbers and dated. Heeding advice (Heath, Hindmarch & Luff, 2017), I compiled every piece of footage, listing dates, lesson lengths, who was present, and a rough outline of content (potential phenomena) shortly after each cycle of recordings had been made.

To transcribe the focus groups at the end of the project's second and third cycles, I chose a *verbatim* approach (Eros, 2020), that is, recording all instances of any repeated words, expressions such as 'uh-huh', and sounds such as laughter and surprise. I considered this beneficial, as such expressions and gestures often add significant detail about people's feelings, which children, especially, can struggle to articulate verbally. Based on agreement or disagreement relative to a given statement, I was sometimes able to ascertain which statements which participants felt most strongly about, and, consequently, which statements could be considered with more confidence, which was helpful when the coding process began (Eros, 2020). A prominent example during the first focus group was pupils' animated speech, body language, and desire to offer opinions when discussing activities which they had enjoyed, and their quieter movements and utterances when listing what they had not enjoyed. The contrast helped affirm that certain lesson activities which I believed had been well-received *were* genuinely enjoyed.

4.3.2. Responding to preliminary reflections

After the first cycle of the project had concluded, I assembled my preliminary reflections to consider the responses, however embryonic, that my changes were causing. I had explored and promoted various ideas by this stage, including more musical decision-making, greater interaction, and collaboration between pupils—the latter subdividing into peer-learning, an emphasis on creativity, fewer teacher corrections, less prominence of notation activities, and greater opportunity for self- and peer-reflection. I was able to identify examples of pupil responses to each of

these strategies in my footage and field notes. It was clear that some strategies elicited particularly distinct and vivid responses or featured more prominently than others, and that these might be significant to pupils' engagement and progression.

After consulting my supervisors, I decided to continue implementing similar teaching strategies and observing *all* responses to watch for change or development, rather than adjusting my approach to concentrate on assessing several with greater focus. These initial findings also encouraged me to spend more time discussing pupil-led activities, for example during the first focus groups, than I had planned. I wanted to understand why certain activities were received well by and engaged different pupils, and whether observations I had made in my field notes and in response to footage could be substantiated, strengthening triangulation.

At this time, I also looked more closely at four particular video clips that I had selected to share with teachers during ESTA's Summer School (2021) because they exemplified how pupils could take the lead during creative work and activities. While this was valuable for other teachers and personally, giving an accessible route into analysis of the footage, I could sense the temptation to seek out further footage that would substantiate these initial observations. For this reason, I chose not to watch any footage again for another four months, when I was able to review it with fresher eyes and could also follow advice to read through the project's whole dataset at least once before beginning its coding (Braun & Clark, 2006).

4.3.3. Deductive thematic analysis

When deciding whether to use inductive or deductive thematic analysis, I was guided by my central research question. Because action research projects tend to confront challenging situations that inspire planned action, I felt that a goal-free or purely inductive analysis would be counterproductive (McNiff, 2016). I therefore began organising data using two deductive keywords, 'engagement' and 'progression', again derived from my central research question. My definition of these concepts at this early stage of analysis was deliberately broad. I included instances (across all

forms of data) where individuals and groups appeared both engaged *and* disengaged during a certain activity, hoping to uncover connections between teaching strategies, activities, and the responses they elicited. My conception of progression was similarly open-ended at this stage, which is why I included all instances, however modest, of pupils showing audible improvements in their technical and musical fluency.

Even so, I was alarmed by how much data I was seemingly unable to categorise (or *code*, a term to which I return in the next section), but which I knew held significance to my research questions—a common complaint about deductive approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008). For example, instances of pupils: asking questions that disclosed their genuine interest in the activity, where once they may have been carried along by my instructions with no outward sign of enthusiasm; approaching tasks with greater independence, even if the performance itself was no better than before; and offering advice to fellow pupils and thereby showing deeper concern for musical detail, albeit without playing the violin themselves. If these examples could not be classified according to my initial criteria, were my definitions somehow still too narrow? Or, should I consider drawing on inductive thematic analysis as well, as many evaluative projects do (Thomas, 2006)?

The answers to these questions steered the project in new directions. Reflecting on the possible implications of Dewey's concept of 'growing power' for my data, I was excited by the prospect of progression being identified, legitimately, in ways other than those I had accepted throughout my teaching career. I therefore decided to embrace inductive thematic analysis, generating from the data inductive codes or sub-themes that would not only help redefine progression, but also possibly paint a fuller picture about the nature of pupils' engagement. After an initial spell of coding (described below), I continued to use reflexive writing ('memo-writing') to record and examine how my approach and ideas were evolving (Lempert, 2007) and to provide another audit trail.

4.3.4. Generating codes

Looking at footage and field notes concurrently was logical and most efficient, given that their subject was, of course, the same. I watched lessons chronologically, with hard copies of field notes to hand, pausing the video at the end of an activity or when a certain comment or action seemed noteworthy, and checking whether I had made similar observations in the field notes I had made at the time. There were many instances of identical reflections but also many additional significances I was able to observe with the benefit of hindsight—particularly so when charting pupils' progress, as my understanding of how this might be evidenced had changed since the fieldwork had concluded. It was also naturally easier to observe how pupils' skills, knowledge, and attitudes had developed over periods of a month, term, and, indeed, the whole project than it was immediately after each lesson.

I recorded such instances, i.e. where my observations 'then and now' were distinctly different, by marking them in a new font colour. Timings were checked, pinpointing the start of a specific activity or in-lesson remarks I was keen to highlight and further drawing together written and visual data. I began to organise the data using codes, highlighting sections of text with different colours. Codes identify a feature of the data, whether semantic content or latent, that appears of interest and which refer to 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). Examples in my project include: pupils' reactions to activities; evidence of engagement or disengagement; teaching strategies key to the activity being overseen (e.g. peer reflection, creativity); and evidence of progress.

I also created a miscellaneous code to house, temporarily, examples that still appeared to resist classification. Nigel King argues that codes that may seem only marginally relevant can still add significant context to thematic analysis or provide new leads (King, 2004). Pupils' frequent voicing of their preference for easy-to-play music was one such example in the project. My field notes record both my surprise at this preference (or rather, at its recurrence across lessons and focus groups) and my subsequent decision to draw upon this the sentiment as a stand-alone code. What once appeared marginal therefore took on new significance, and even helped, in time,

Figure 4.1. An example of how raw data was initially coded.

Key
Engagement – e.g. pupils actively involved and/or interested in activities or discourses
Progress – e.g. developing new or existing skills or knowledge.
Not engaged – e.g. distracted and/or not on task
Miscellaneous – e.g. potentially significant other points of note.

Footage times taken in this ex. from 1:1:1	**My field notes** (taken directly after lessons)
2’46”	Evelyn able to follow a verbal instruction really to the word. She obeys in the traditional sense. I ask them all to use the full bow in ‘Ballad’ and she does it immediately without question. There is a notable difference in what she is doing before and after the instruction.
6’14”	Jake not ready. Leaning body against a radiator (stays there even when violin up) and not ready to join in with scale until a few notes in.
5’27” – 13’25”	Pupil-led activity (first of the project). Seven repeats of scale so time to achieve fluency and extended music-making. Ava and Grace hands up to lead. At 7’58” once one child has led and everyone knows what it entails there’s a *very enthusiastic* hands up with power and speed as they all want to lead, including Jake (who wasn’t engaged) and Olivia, who puts her bow up (but not as high as others). Evidence of engagement. When Freya leads (8’19”), you can see Jake on tiptoes trying to check which string; Freya is providing an introduction and he comes in on time. Jake is now engaged with the activity.
10’04"	Freya being reflective without prompting, ‘Mrs Dromey on the camera I was watching me and Grace and our bows were moving together.’
11’31”	Freya reminds me to zip! Evidence she is enjoying a redistribution of power or authority.
14’02”	‘Pass the Parcel’ with ‘Ev’ry time I play’ but they aren’t really engaging with one another. They are just playing in turn. They are engaged with me (more like traditional pedagogy) but not with one another.

15’54”	‘Oh, we can’t play that’ in response to a piece of music being put on the stand with traditional notation. Notation elicits varied and sometimes negative responses from the pupils.
16’08”	Freya wanders off away from the music stand when asked to sort out the notation. Lazy – doesn’t want a challenge (is that my preconditioned musical prejudice coming through?)
16’22”	I have lost Ava and Grace now. They are looking to the side of the room and not doing the task.
16’39”	Evelyn and Olivia only pair on task. Both looking at music and working out together.
17’18” – 18’20”	Freya and Grace start to work together. Perhaps this task is new because it is not teacher-led. At 18’02” I give a two-minute time limit and this prompts action from Freya, Grace, and Ava.
17’18”	Jake a bit lost. Not doing the task and just leaning against radiator. Missing company of other boys. Not a natural person to put him with. I end up working with him.
16’38” – 22’04”	Investigative work with the notes of ‘Ev’ry time I play’. Talking about the music. Working towards musical independence. Mixed engagement, semi-successful.
21’40”	Ava looks at the clock on the computer. ‘We have 9 minutes left.’
23’40”	I am still leading and feeding them answers during this activity but they have had some input and exploration earlier, which is new.
25’24” – 26’17”	I invite constructive comments. ‘Tell me one thing that was good about that? Tell me about something you did well as a group?’ At 25’33”, Freya comments that they all observed the rest. This showed that they were feeling the beat. At 25’51”, Jake reflects that his bow was touching the D-string while playing the A. I follow up, asking how he could correct this with bow angles. At 26’08” Ava wants to improve the high D as it wasn’t all in tune. We follow up by checking everyone’s high Ds, checking they match.

to reframe my thinking about how the mastery of increasingly complex repertoire is a marker of success in traditional pedagogy. Figure 4.1 offers a further example of how codes were applied to a segment of raw data derived from my field notes.

Once I had coded all the footage and field notes, I turned to the focus groups. After transcribing their recordings, I followed the same process as before, coding each focus group comment in turn. The breadth of focus group data, especially in relation to pupil engagement, was such that new codes were generated at this stage. This enlarged set of codes is reproduced as the right-hand column of Figure 4.2. Some data now belonged to two or even three codes. This is not a problem, but an inevitability: repeated engagement in a musical activity usually produces different outcomes over time, as pupils' approach and execution change.

4.3.5. Searching for themes

The next step was to transfer all the potentially relevant coded data to a new spreadsheet and to organise it into themes. While the process of coding is part of analysis, coded data differs from themes, which tend to be broader: a 'theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). As it was already apparent that many of the learning activities that had best engaged pupils were those in which they had had direct input, I could see that pupil-led learning was a strong contender for being the dominant catalyst for improved engagement and progression. I therefore decided to make pupil-led learning the project's first distinct theme. Sub-themes made better sense of certain codes by grouping them to show how they were similarly pupil-led in nature: the codes 'improvisation' and 'composition' became the sub-theme 'reimagining repertoire'; 'lead and follow' and 'musical gesture' became the sub-theme 'leading and following'; 'musical collaboration', a particularly data-rich code, was divided into two sub-themes, 'problem-solving' and 'decision-making'; and the codes 'reflection' and 'being musically present' were simply carried over to identical sub-

Figure 4.2. Creating themes and sub-themes from codes.

Theme	Sub-theme	Former code
Pupil-led learning	Reimagining repertoire	Improvisation
		Instrumental technique
		Composition
	Leading and following	Lead and follow activities
		Musical gesture
	Problem-solving	Musical collaboration
	Musical decision-making	
	Reflection	Reflection
	Being musically present	Being musically present
	n/a	Not engaged [22]
Growing power	Independence	Progress
	Creativity	
	Creative 'flow'	
	Resilience	
	Self-reflection	
	Peer-reflection	
Teacher-led learning	n/a	Teacher-led learning
Performance	n/a	Miscellaneous
'Easy' music	n/a	
Evelyn	n/a	

[22] Ultimately, while I was able to make several observations about moments when pupils were not engaged with lesson activities, these were not frequent enough to justify 'Not engaged' as a discrete sub-theme. The data nevertheless helped define why pupil-led learning improved engagement.

themes. Figure 4.2 lists these themes and sub-themes and shows their relationship to one another and to the codes I had already identified.

For the second theme, I co-opted Dewey's concept of 'growing power' (§3.6.5). Its relevance to my central research question was increasingly clear, in that any attempt to redefine progress changes (or should change) not only how teachers teach, but also how they observe. I therefore selected sub-themes to elucidate both 'growing power' itself and the increased number of learning traits that researchers and teachers might subsequently observe. For example: pupils' newfound independence; creative ideas; creative 'flow'; and resilience. Because reflection is so important to Dewey's ideas around progress, I created two further sub-themes in this area: 'peer reflection' and 'personal reflection'. Viewing data through this lens, I was able to include multiple instances of pupil engagement as evidence of progress, and this was reflected further in an overlap that emerged between certain themes: progress in problem-solving often increased independence or resilience; progress reimagining repertoire often yielded more creative ideas, executed with greater musical flow. Identifying themes therefore successfully linked substantial amounts of data and meaningful, implementable concepts began to emerge.

To these two principal themes I added four further themes that are revisited in Chapter 8. The first of these is 'teacher-led learning', which may seem counterintuitive in a project expressly designed to spotlight and interrogate pupil-led activities within instrumental lessons. Although much less data could be classified under this theme, its value was to provide balance, to ensure findings were trustworthy, and to acknowledge the many occasions when I either explicitly led an activity (especially in the first cycle) or responded to the pupils' reception of a certain activity with greater intervention or scaffolding than I had planned originally. Similarly, on a handful of occasions I reverted to a default teaching style out of habit. From the 'miscellaneous' code I drew three smaller but discrete themes: the act of 'performance'; so-called 'easy music'; and 'Evelyn'(my use of a pupil's name as a theme is discussed below). Decisively, each of these new themes also seemed to have the potential to help me reach a better understanding of the workings of the other three themes.

Where data appeared to fit too conveniently into more than one of the themes, negative case analysis was used to give a necessary counterbalance (Antin, Constantine & Hunt, 2015), i.e. I actively sought to analyse and understand the existence of the few examples that contradicted the explanations that were emerging. This lent credibility to the project and suggested reasons why most of the data *was* adhering to the themes (Burnard et al., 2008; Bazeley, 2009). For example, one pupil's exceptional preference for teacher-led learning over pupil-led learning, and two pupils' fondness for reading musical notation, were insights into how these aspects more typically associated with traditional pedagogy were appearing to impede an inclusive WCET continuation pedagogy. Eventually, I was able to identify so many interesting connections between negative cases that I decided to grant them a theme of their own. Its title, 'Evelyn', was the standard-bearer for the 'ideal pupils', who, historically, had flourished in traditional pedagogical environments.

4.3.6. Re-analysing footage

Having derived codes and themes from the project's data, I began to form a hierarchy of its footage, prioritising stand-out moments and other significant clips (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2021; Tobias, 2020).[23] Although I had watched all the footage prior to coding it, the scale of the data was such that rewatching it all several times would have been inefficient and may also have risked conducting only a surface analysis of the footage. The selective approach I took instead was usually straightforward. I was comfortable to skirt over the chit-chat that always begins and ends lessons while instruments and music were prepared and packed away, as those interactions could be summarised by a few words in my field notes, e.g. pupils' readiness to set up their instruments and to begin playing demonstrating a positive engagement with the lesson's first activity. Elsewhere, I selected fragments—usually

[23] Christian Heath, Jon Hindmarsh, and Paul Luff advise that the identification of 'standout' episodes or fragments of data can be based on a range of interests and concerns (Heath, Hindmarch & Luff, 2021, p. 7). Selection of such episodes or fragments can be influenced by the overall aims and objectives of the project or by seeking to contribute to the understanding of an existing topic or issue. However, they also argue that it is more likely that these episodes or fragments will emerge from the researcher's initial review of their materials, whereby certain activities or events may have been seen to recur or simply appear to warrant further attention.

less than half a minute long—to analyse in detail, usually because my field notes had already flagged their actual or potential significance to the project's outcomes. Of the 339 separate data entries, 32 were analysed more rigorously and were distributed roughly equally across the three cycles.

I watched these fragments multiple times, transcribed them *verbatim*, and often draw upon them illustratively in my findings across Chapters 5–8. As with the focus group recordings, both speech and actions were analysed. Evan Tobias contends that the ability to be responsive to different modes in this way is critical when events or interactions involve either a high density of multimodal data or constant shifts between modes (Tobias, 2020). The argument is clearly relevant to action research in music lessons, where the process of music-making likewise forms an important part of the data (Pellegrino, 2020). By designing and analysing activities involving musical communication, many subtleties—eye contact, bodily gestures, the shaping of sound—had to be considered as evidence. Too narrow a focus would have obscured the broader meanings of what had taken place.

4.3.7. Refining the themes

Following Lincoln and Guba's advice, I now returned to the raw data to re-verify my themes. I was concerned about including too many minor themes to allow for adequate analysis, or having insufficient data to support them, so I decided to bracket the three 'miscellaneous' themes under a single 'musical likes and dislikes' theme. Partly prompted by this new title, I identified some related material in the data concerning technique that had not always been addressed by an existing code, for example pupils animatedly exploring new bow-strokes and opting for double-stopped scale patterns, with no initial instigation from me. These instances appeared relevant not only to the new theme, but also to my assumption that pupils would prefer to remain within their familiar technical boundaries, rather than extend them. I had downplayed technical advancement in my lesson planning, centring the communicative and democratic aspects of musicianship. Had I not been as alert as I could have been to the potential role of technique in encouraging pupils' creativity?

As the question deserved further thought and analysis, I added ‘instrumental technique’ to the project’s list of codes.

4.4. Ethical considerations

Following British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines on researchers’ responsibilities to their participants and to the educational research community, this section addresses the project’s ethical contexts, which include: consent, transparency, right to withdraw, harm arising from participation, privacy and data storage, and disclosure (BERA, 2018). A comprehensive list of anticipated ethical considerations and related actions is given in the project’s ethics approval form. The relevant subsection of this form (‘Anticipated ethical issues’) is reproduced as Appendix 3.

4.4.1. Gaining and recording consent

Having discussed my project in detail with the school’s headteacher, we agreed that she would contact all parents of children (i.e. those children currently receiving violin lessons at school, having previously participated in WCET) to introduce the project and to describe the opportunity for pupils to be involved. I then issued my own invitations by email, attaching a parental information sheet to describe the project in more detail, and a parental consent form I had written, seeking agreement for participation and for pupils to be filmed during their lessons and the focus groups (see Appendices 4 and 5 respectively). I did not want any child or family feel coerced into participating—a possibility anywhere, but particularly at a school where the teacher was well-established—so I emphasised this and explained that any child whose family preferred them not to be filmed would not be excluded from lessons, but instead be positioned out of shot. Everyone was also offered the chance to pose questions, and this was reiterated to pupils verbally.

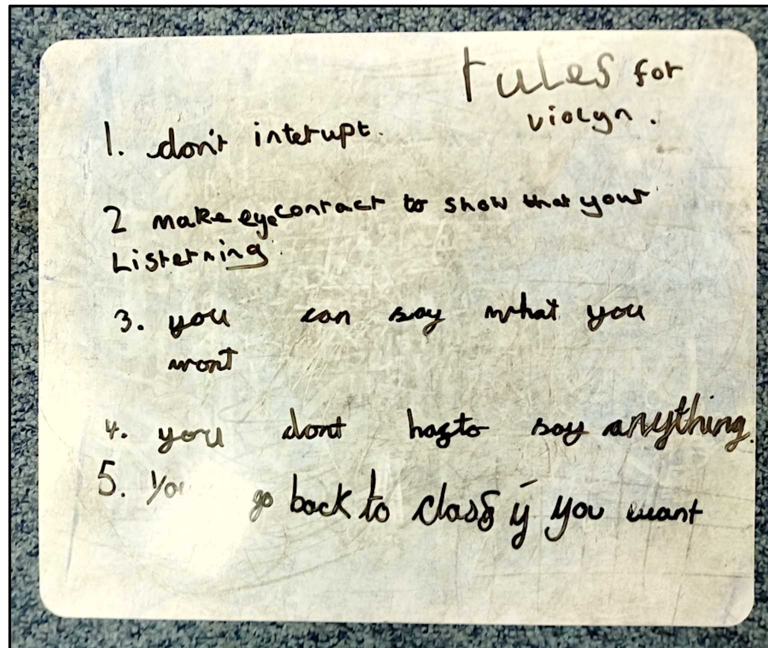
Before the first lesson of the project, I created a separate age-appropriate participant information sheet (see Appendix 6), which I shared with pupils when I spoke with them about the project in their groups at school, again allowing time for discussion and questions. Before circulating the parental consent forms, I anticipated another ethical issue: that parents could be concerned that their child's music education might be adversely affected by participating in the research, because pupils agreeing to take part would be receiving a style of instrument lesson different to that which they knew. In the event, the reassurances I had prepared about the project's pupil-led focus and how this would prioritise engagement and enjoyment were not required. I received 10 completed parental consent form and 10 participant assent forms (the latter reproduced as Appendix 7) and stored them safely on a password-protected external hard drive, where they remain.

Participants were made aware that they could opt out of the project when focus groups were held, even if they had given consent previously (BERA, 2018). I also reminded pupils at the start of each focus group session that they had the option of leaving and returning to their regular classes at any point, without blame or repercussions, should they wish to do so (Scherer, 2016). This reminder recurred in focus group ground rules, which participants wrote and agreed with me at the start of each session (Theobold & Kultti, 2012). Figure 4.3 reproduces photographs of the whiteboards on which these rules were written.

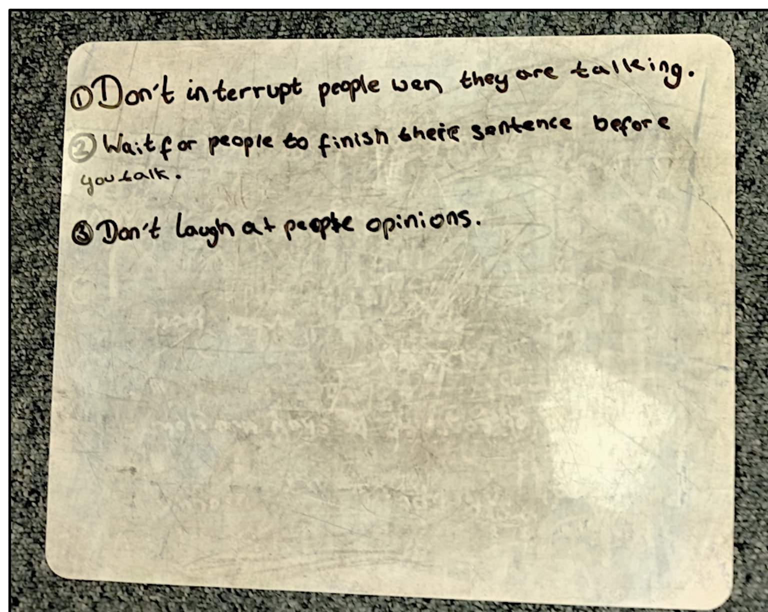
4.4.2. Data management and anonymisation

In addition to the consent and assent forms, all raw data (lesson observation notes, focus group audio transcriptions, and lesson footage) were saved on a password-protected laptop, used solely by me, before being transferred at the earliest opportunity to a password-protected external hard drive. This thesis also anonymises the project's school and pseudonymises its participants. Although this significantly reduces the risk of identification, I was mindful, especially when collecting and reporting on the data, that my sample is relatively small, that the project centres on a village school where I am well established (and where parents, teachers, and pupils

Figure 4.3. Focus group ground rules.



[Group 1] 'Rules for violin [focus groups] – 1. Don't interrupt; 2. Make eye contact to show that you're listening; 3. You can say what you want; 4. You don't have to say anything; 5. You [can] go back to class if you want.'



[Group 2] '1. Don't interrupt people when they are talking; 2. Wait for people to finish their sentence before you talk; 3. Don't laugh at people['s] opinions.'

generally know the school and each other well), making complete anonymisation impossible. Footage also features multiple interactions between myself and the participants, who naturally address each other by their first names. For this reason, principally, I decided not to grant open access to my data, nor to include in this project's submission its footage, which has been comprehensively analysed and used to corroborate my field notes. Four extracts of footage have been included in Appendix 8 to provide a sample of lessons for reference by Examiners only, i.e. this Appendix will be redacted when this thesis is made publicly available.

Teacher training remains an important part of my ongoing work and authentic lesson footage, rather than staged show-lessons, is a valuable learning material that is often difficult to source. I therefore included a separate clause on the parental consent form, seeking permission to show teachers and student teachers extracts of the footage I would take for training purposes for up to ten years after the project's completion. Over the last three years I have used such excerpts in my work with the European String Teachers Association (e.g. PGCert in String Teaching lectures and during annual summer schools), UK Music Masters (teaching training sessions and guest lectures), and at the University of Southampton (Music (Education) (MMus) lectures and workshops). When sharing excerpts in these ways, all attendees have been, and will continue to be, forbidden from filming the footage. The data will be destroyed 10 years after the project's completion (July 2030).

4.4.3. Adherence to school policies

As an established violin teacher at the school at the time of the project, I naturally agreed to follow all school policies, including a risk assessment describing strategies to address Covid-19. For example: I was able to teach groups of children only in their class 'bubbles', minimising pupils' interaction; pupils were obliged to wash their hands at the start and end of each lesson; touched surfaces in the teaching space were to be wiped clean after each lesson; children were required to follow a one-way system around school to access and leave the teaching room; and singing activities were prohibited indoors.

4.5. Methodological limitations

The project sought to address a glaring deficit of qualitative data in scholarly and professional conversations about WCET and the experiences of young musicians choosing to continue after these programmes (discussed in §2.6). No design of a research project is flawless, however, and to acknowledge methodological limitations is important in itself and as a means of contextualising a project's findings (Sharpes, 2016). My findings, for example, are informed by the reactions of 10 pupils to pedagogic strategies designed and implemented across 14 weeks by a single teacher. This sample size, duration, and learning environment mean, unavoidably, that the project's findings are highly dependent on the specific individuals involved, and that to extrapolate generalisations from the research might be difficult. (At the same time, my experience as an upper-strings teacher in the state sector, and as a manager of instrumental teachers, including observing colleagues over a hundred times in similar teaching environments, gives me the confidence that the project's sample is not exceptional.)

I therefore decided at an early stage of the project to use thick description generously, explaining the circumstances and processes of the project to readers in full, thereby enabling them to compare the project with their own teaching scenarios. This method seeks to maximise the project's transferability and reach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), such that it can positively influence future practices. To paint as vivid a picture as possible, §4.2.1 described the school environment, the project's lesson format, and participants, including the pupils' ages, previous musical experiences, and attainment. §1.3 also included excerpts from my reflective journal, reproducing my thoughts and pupils' comments about lessons before the project began. This also helps address another potential limitation of projects such as these, namely credibility, which addresses the fit between respondents' views and researchers' representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Put another way, greater credibility can be achieved in this project simply by ensuring that readers are confronted with, and may recognise, the experiences it describes.

The next limitation I identified concerned the trustworthiness of my findings—a criterion that again called for thought about the project's subjectivity (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). After all, running the project was feasible only because of the close connection I enjoyed with the school and its pupils. I recognised that there would be an unavoidable trade-off between the detail and insight I was able to glean thanks to my privileged position and my ability to view the project's implementation and initial findings objectively. It became evident while first writing field notes and watching back the earliest footage of the project that my vested interest in the pupils' musical progress would be, if not a limitation, then at least an important context to navigate. This interest is sometimes evidenced in my own in-lesson reactions (as recorded in my field notes), such as when pupils were unusually unfocussed because of events scheduled close to their lessons, such as Headteacher interviews (pupils interviewing those shortlisted for the role) and Bikeability (a one-off bicycle training course for Year 6).

My personal challenge to practise the new teaching role that the project called for was also a factor more generally. Teachers want their pupils to be happy and to do well. My concern was that, despite its best intentions, the project could impede pupils' enjoyment or progress. This also went some way towards explaining the ideological tension I often felt (and described in my field notes) between the old and new pedagogies: the former being inclined to tell pupils what to do, so that they arrive at the intended destination more directly, but usually more passively; the latter more facilitatory and less autocratic, taking pupils on a journey that is often exploratory and more circuitous.

In response to these potential and actual limitations, I have been as transparent as possible in my reporting of the project about the subjectivity of its research design, data collection, analysis, and its interpretation. I ultimately chose to embrace my close connection with the project's materials and contexts, and to draw upon these consciously to help explain and interpret the significance of pupils' musical, verbal, and bodily (inter)actions. In turn, I decided to attempt to craft a narrative that conveys the most important details from the project's vast collection of data, but also acknowledges the values that inform the analysis and evaluation that must be carried out to uncover these details. This way of thinking, coupled with the philosophical influences I outline in Chapter 3 (e.g. John Dewey's democratic pedagogies),

emboldened me to focus on active musical engagement, and on how and why pupils might be more present in the musical moment.

The idea that I or any *sole* action researcher use their own values, old or new, as criteria by which to judge the quality of teaching practices may nevertheless remain a limitation, as it risks implying that these values are fully justified and unquestionable, which is not and should not be the case (Schmidt, 2020). A more orthodox perspective, for example, would likely have focussed on the soundness of pupils' technical set-up—a premise that would have inspired to a very different-looking project. Ultimately, I am persuaded and reassured by Alan Peshkin's pragmatism, which he described when reflecting on his ethnographic research into a school community:

> Any number of observers could have joined me in Mansfield and shared my "scientific observation." To be sure, they might have seen something else… They could have overlooked what I was seeing, by fastening upon some dimension of the phenomena before us that was central to them. But I believe that if I pointed to what I was seeing, the overlookers would then be able to say, "Yes, I see what you see." (Peshkin, 1982, pp. 62–63, quoted in Schmidt, 2020, p. 35)

Chapter 5

Engagement through Pupil-led Learning

This chapter is the first of four that present this thesis's empirical work. Each chapter follows a similar structure: first, offering an interpretation of data derived from lesson footage, field notes, and focus groups; second, discussing the significance of the data and my findings in relation to selected literature introduced elsewhere in the thesis, especially in Chapters 2–3.

§

Exploring the reception and impact of a pupil-led learning approach was central to the project's research design. As this chapter will show, it was already clear by the end of the first cycle that pupil-led learning was improving pupil engagement, that it would be an important empirical theme, and that the data this theme was generating would need to be divided into sub-themes to acknowledge the effects of implementing different types of pupil-led learning. Each of these types shared a common aim: to rebalance power between the teacher and the pupils, allowing multiple opportunities for pupil decision-making. In a group learning environment, some degree of communication and interaction features in most activities, and so some overlap between sub-themes is inevitable. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish findings according to their intended learning focus (that is, as intended by the teacher), as follows:

- leading and following
- musical communication
- creating music
- collaborating with others

Given the amount of data belonging to this final category, it can be divided further into *collaborative problem-solving* and *collaborative decision-making* (e.g. about how to play a piece). The next sections address these sub-themes in turn.

5.1. Leading and following

Dewey believed that education and the school environment can instil democratic values by making pupils' learning more social and interactive, thereby giving all children a chance to be heard (Dewey, 1916; MacBlain, 2014). This makes sense: when a teacher exerts too much control over a lesson, pupils can feel that their voices are insignificant, causing them to be passive. One of my aims, therefore, was to rebalance power, offering pupils greater choices and ownership of lesson activities in order to encourage better engagement and learning outcomes. One obvious way in which pupils (and, indeed, everyone) can be made to feel important is to grant them authority. The project exploited this by seeking to create learning opportunities in which the desire of pupils to lead and make decisions about group music-making activities would be overt and evident across all three cycles of action research.

'Lead and follow' activities were the first and most regularly used pupil-led strategy I introduced, and they remained popular across all three cycles. Each activity provided a brief opportunity to take a turn in the limelight and to have pupils' ideas or decisions copied or tried out by others, giving them value and importance. This also necessitated a change to the usual lesson formation, as pupils took their position at the front of the semi-circle (a place typically reserved for the teacher), visually symbolising their role as the leader. I moved to their position, symbolising my new role as a follower.

Lesson footage from all three cycles, my field notes, and focus group data provide multiple examples of this practice. Pupils exhibiting interesting body language, such as standing on tiptoe with their hands and bows raised high in the air, indicating that they would like to be selected for the task, jumping on the spot to express

excitement, and exaggerated or overt eye contact to attract attention, were common responses to the question ‘who would like to be the leader?’—sometimes before the task was even explained. When I momentarily offered too much verbal instruction (having promised the activity would be pupil-led), I was reprimanded with a gesture to ‘zip it’ by one pupil—proving that the redistribution of power was welcome and would not be easily relinquished.

It was also noticeable how ‘lead and follow’ activities offered an opportunity for more extended playing times. In my experience of working with groups, a teacher-led activity sometimes lasts just a few minutes before focus is lost. Frequent stopping and starting between activities can impede an ideal working environment. As my field notes bear out, transitions can encourage distracting chatter about matters unrelated to the activity, with instruments also needing to go back into position.[24] Yet, the prospect of pupils waiting their turn to lead often resulted in their concentration being maintained for longer periods. For example, my first lead and follow activity with Group 1 (1:1:1) was sustained for close to eight minutes,[25] with seven repetitions of a scale pattern on one string. Pupils took turns to lead a scale, choosing one of the open strings and providing a four-bar introduction for their peers before everyone played the scale in unison.

Members of the group needed to ascertain which scale had been selected by observing the angle of the leader’s bow on the string and hearing the descending scale introduction. My field notes for 1:1:1 make a point of describing Jake (who had been leaning against the radiator and was not keen to join the semi-circle formed by the other group members until this point) standing on his toes to get a better view of Freya’s bow angle as she takes a turn to lead, proving his interest in the proceedings. Setting up such extended musical sequences allowed pupils to remain in the musical

[24] ‘I feel so frustrated by the amount of time wasted during transitions between activities. I added up the minutes today and it was at least ten (after a four-minute delay at the start). Putting instruments up, getting bow-holds ready, and making sure everyone is comfortable takes time in a group situation and it ideally needs to be repeated each time playing restarts. If pupils could play for longer stretches of time, they’d naturally have greater opportunity to gain fluency and also benefit from observing one another as they play together.’ (reflective journal entry, November 20th, 2019).

[25] As explained on p. 8 (List of Abbreviations), my method of referencing footage here and throughout is that (e.g.) Group 1, Cycle 1, Lesson 2 is given as (1:1:2). Likewise, focus groups are indicated by (F1) and (F2), such that F1:2 signifies the first meeting of the second focus group.

moment for ‘longer stretches of times’ (to quote my pre-project journal entry),[26] with the repetition involved in taking turns offering space and time for pupils to engage with material and achieve ‘greater… fluency’.

For those children who did not practise regularly at home, this strategy also proved an effective one to develop not only their technical skills, but also their musicianship. Moreover, repetition of familiar material, each time with a slightly different focus, permitted me to introduce to the pupils the concept of musical mood for the first time. In 1:1:3, my reflective lesson notes recall my excitement and satisfaction at having entered into the (as yet unventured) territory of musical communication. I write: ‘Important moment: we’ve never got this far historically; we’ve always only note bashed.’ The notes document the concentration in the room at that point, with bodies still, instruments poised and ready, and all eyes directed towards the chosen leader. They also note the enthusiasm for continuing the activity, as the next leader is selected with bows in the air, and a high-pitched ‘me’ from four members of the group.

Grace leads first and chooses a brisk tempo. This is followed by a musical joke from Ava, who chooses the slowest tempo she can manage. Grace laughs at this funny choice and other group members share the sentiment with smiles. When Ava finishes her turn, I try to emphasise the objective of creating a musical mood through musical choices by encouraging them to be specific in their descriptions:

Helen	It’s not just slow, is it? It was like…. (1:1:3)
Freya	Worn down and tired.
Helen	Yeah, you [looking at Ava] actually did that with your violin.
Jake	Really weary.
Helen	[pointing at Jake quickly to emphasise that his word choice is accurate] Yes!

[26] See note 24.

Freya provides contrast, with another brisk tempo choice, then Jake takes the lead. When working from notation, Jake would typically choose the easiest part in an ensemble piece, but by inviting his creative input he offers the most complicated variation, challenging his peers to accelerate and decelerate within his descending scale. Jake's gestures are difficult to anticipate and his tempo fluctuation is rather erratic, which makes good ensemble difficult. Grace comments 'I don't get this' but nevertheless it is possible to observe the eye contact made between Jake and his peers as they focus on his bowing action and try hard to follow it. This activity has introduced the idea that the same music can be played in multiple ways, and that decisions about tempo, dynamics, and articulation have a direct impact on musical affect. I reflect (in my notes) that we are 'beginning to act like musicians', which is valuable, especially as these violinists might still be considered as being in their preliminary stages of learning.

5.2. Musical communication

Reconfiguring existing strategies to encourage physical gesture and eye contact between group members led to deeper musical communication, better engagement, opportunities for 'fair play', and experience of musical form. A frequently used copycat strategy I termed 'pass the parcel' involved passing a fragment of music, usually a key motif or difficult excerpt, around the group. Historically, I would model the motif before each child in the group copied it in turn. This offered the opportunity to check understanding and hear each player individually, however it is clear, in hindsight, that pupils were engaging with me (via eye contact, verbal feedback, and praise where appropriate), but not with *one another*.

This simple strategy took on new meaning and significance when the project introduced opportunities for peer collaboration. One memorable example occurred when we passed a four-note crotchet motif (A-B-D-D) from 'Broadway or Bust' by Kathy and David Blackwell around the group (1:2:3). Rather than pass the motif from me to each pupil in turn, we passed the motif spontaneously (out of order) to

members of the group using gestures such as leaning bodies or taking a step towards the intended recipient, or looking in their direction—very much emulating the gestures of chamber musicians. Because pupils had to be ready to receive the musical motif and to pass it on at any time, they needed to be continuously alert in order to follow the less predictable musical discourse.

There were a few mishaps, for example where notes were missed and a second attempt was made, but on the whole the tasks were completed calmly, with no obvious concerns from the pupils, and the musical flow was not disturbed. Some group members smile as they interact with one another and they remain musically alert as they observe the motif being passed around. At one point Jake and I pass the motif back and forth three times and I observe his facial expression which is showing that he comprehends the musical joke of momentarily taking control of the music while the other pupils wait to see if we would finally choose them. There are also instances where group members are conscious of someone not having been involved for a while, then making the thoughtful decision to pass the motif to them. My field notes describe my delight that there was so much musical engagement in such a short activity, proving that musicians of an elementary technical skill could engage meaningfully in musical communication, understand something of rhetorical devices, and desire a democratic environment.

A second strategy that I reworked to provide greater opportunities for group interaction and pupil decision-making concerned ensemble performance. Part-playing has always featured in my group teaching. It provides a natural opportunity to differentiate parts so that large groups of pupils, with varying levels of skills and experience, can play together and do so comfortably. My usual process was to teach everyone the simplest part first, usually by ear, to ensure all pupils could easily access some music before directing other individuals to attempt more complex parts, ensuring a balance was achieved for a satisfying musical outcome. In the project's reconfigured activity, all pupils were introduced to three parts before being asked to choose one of them (keeping the choice secret). As we all began to play, I asked pupils to identify other pupils who had made the same musical choice by listening and moving towards them in the room. My field notes include observations of smiles

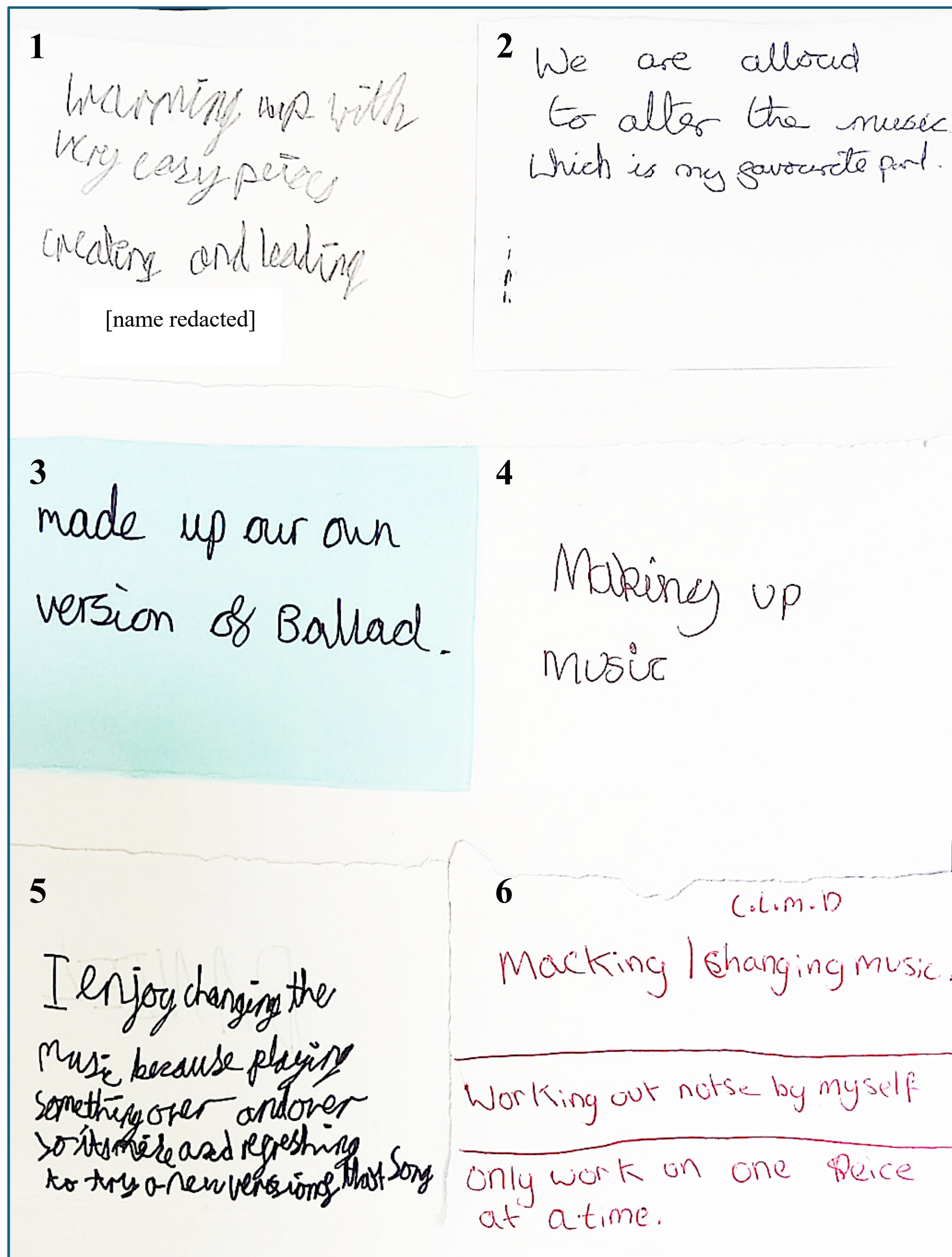
between group members (1:1:3), who are clearly happy to have the new opportunity to move while playing, to make eye contact with one another, and to discover which part their peers had chosen. There is a satisfaction in being together in the space and enjoying playing music in the moment.

The traditional lesson formation was altered as pupils wove around one another, actively seeking others who were the same visually and aurally. By shifting the musical focus away from achieving a well-balanced product and towards musical interaction and listening, I was able to sustain the activity for a longer period, which, in turn, allowed the exercise to be looped repeatedly. Another benefit—also noted in my field notes—of this uncommonly un-interventionist approach is that although it eschewed a confrontational correction pedagogy (Bull, 2022), after six repetitions of the material the ensemble had settled (i.e. musically stabilised) of its own accord. Collectively, pupils solved issues of rhythmic accuracy through listening and by becoming gradually more aware of a steady pulse and how their part fitted into the complete texture. Another benefit was that movement created a more relaxed setting, which also encouraged greater risk-taking: some pupils stayed on the same part throughout (Jake, Grace, Olivia), while others changed on the third and fourth repeat (Evelyn, Ava, and Freya). I believe that pupils' movement was central to them feeling less closely monitored by the teacher and, in turn, more inclined to change parts, because going 'wrong' would be less noticeable.

5.3. Creating music

One well-received strategy I used to nurture pupils' musical voice was to encourage reworkings of certain pieces using (e.g.) the same pitch range, emotional affect, structure, rhythm, or harmonic outline. Focus group data frequently corroborates that composing and improvising were two of the activities pupils enjoyed the most. Prompt cards written by each participant made multiple references to creating their own music: Figure 5.1 reproduces six such comments. In the first round of focus

Figure 5.1. Six focus group prompt cards citing pupil-led creativity.



1. ‘Warming up with very easy pieces. Creating and leading.’
2. ‘We are allowed to alter the music which is my favourite part.’
3. ‘Made up our own version of ‘Ballad’.’
4. ‘Making up music.’
5. ‘I enjoy changing the music because playing something over and over so it’s ?nice and refreshing to try a new version of that song.’
6. ‘Making/changing music. Working out notes by myself. Only work on one piece at a time.’

groups, Ethan reflects how ‘I love making up questions and answers in ‘Walk on Mars’’. When prompted for more detail about why he enjoyed that activity, he responds that ‘it allows you to create your own music.’ Ruby adds that ‘it allows you to be creative’. Composition and improvisation remained firm favourites with the second focus group. When asked to name her most enjoyed activity, Ruby asks, ‘can I say copying, where one of us makes up a piece and the other one copies it?’

Composing and improvising their own music also requires pupils to make creative decisions, which, in turn, allows them to indulge and express their own musical preferences. Talking about his reworking of ‘Beach Holiday’ by Kathy and David Blackwell, Jake comments that ‘I enjoyed my own holiday ‘Screech Holiday’ because it involved all my favourite notes.’ His corresponding card reads: ‘I enjoyed making up your own ‘Beach Holiday’ because you didn’t have to conscript [sic. – i.e. restrict] the notes.’ Freya also welcomes the freedom to personalise a piece of music. When asked what advice she would give other violin teachers looking to plan lessons for their pupils, she recommends a creative approach: ‘My advice is make the lesson fun by letting pupils make up their own music. They could get a really easy piece and let them change it up a bit with the same rhythm but different bits.’

Offering opportunities to improvise around an existing structure allowed pupils to transfer knowledge and to apply it independently from other parts of the lesson, demonstrating their understanding. For example, Grace chooses to lead a scale sequence for the group, putting her finger across two strings to achieve the interval of a fifth and mirroring (and, in fact, extending) a motif from part two of ‘Feelin Blue’ (1:2:3). This was a more complex double-stopped scale than I would have thought to introduce at this stage of learning, yet it was received by the group positively and successfully imitated. My only intervention was to reinforce a flatter finger shape, so that it might rest on both strings more reliably.

As creative activities became an established feature in lessons, pupils became bolder in their musical choices and often experimented with increasingly complex musical patterns. Following Grace’s scale in fifths, Jake instigates a scale alternating between the D and A string (1:2:3). His creative idea is not executed cleanly (unsurprisingly,

as it presents a significant technical challenge requiring multiple string crossings), however after some puzzled looks from two members of the group, I help everyone try out his idea by modelling and by saying finger patterns out loud so that others can join in. Olivia comprehends the pattern, as I can see her predicting the finger that would be needed in advance of it being played.

My field notes conclude that the process of trying out Jake's idea was beneficial even though the product sounded untidy, with adjacent strings being accidentally caught as pupils alternated on each degree of the scale. Following Jake's lead, Olivia, usually one of the group's quieter and more reserved members, chooses to take her own risks by varying the tempo of her chosen scale when it was her turn to lead (1:2:3). Footage shows Grace and Evelyn watching and mirroring her bow movements very carefully, and Jake reinterpreting the idea of tempo change with something similar, albeit not achieving synchronicity with the group. Group leaders are developing enough confidence to take risks with untested and more innovative musical ideas, and followers are prepared to attempt their execution without being certain that they might succeed.

When given free choice to create their own variations, some pupils selected articulations that naturally lent themselves to exploring new instrumental techniques. For example, after I suggested that pupils invent new rhythmic variations for the piece 'Ballad' by Thomas Gregory, which we had used as a warm-up since the beginning of the academic year (2020/21), Jake attempts a light bouncing stroke (akin to *spiccato*; 1:2:4) and short rapid bow strokes producing a trembling effect (*tremolando*; 1:2:5). The instigation of new techniques *by* pupils represented a new mode of teaching for me. I had historically planned and enacted sequential technical progression, introducing certain bow strokes and left-hand skills at carefully prepared moments in the learning journey. Jake's *spiccato* variation lacks the control often prized by traditional training, but it nevertheless had real energy and attack, providing an interesting contrast from the other variations that were offered.

Indeed, the rest of the group are keen to try it out for themselves (1:2:4). One reflection recorded in my notes is that because these bow strokes were pupil-led, I

found myself offering a less conventional and comprehensive explanation, carefully selecting only what I thought the pupil seemed to need to facilitate what they were doing at that moment, rather than what I feel I should cover. I formalised the technique by giving it a name and offering general pointers to encourage a relaxed action, using the analogy of a smiley face to indicate the curved shape of the stroke on the string. I conclude, however, that it is the group's interaction—observing one another's bow movements and listening for similar articulation—rather than the verbal explanation of the teacher that was the driving force behind the groups' success.

Interestingly, Ava repeats the word 'spiccato' after me, emphasising the long 'ah' sound in a formal voice (1:2:4), perhaps conveying that technical vocabulary is rather haughty or at least unfamiliar for her liking. Considering the change of approach that feels both reactive and less formal, I had six pupils playing with a rustic *spiccato* with good ensemble within a relatively short (five-minute) time frame. It is also potentially significant to observe how a pupil-led pedagogy has positively influenced Jake's musical engagement. His willingness to offer ideas and play alone has increased dramatically, changing his role in the group. Rather than offering silly comments and sound effects on his violin, made for their comic appeal or their potential to distract others (and perhaps also serving to mask his disengagement with the lesson content), Jake is increasingly viewed, by me and his peers, as someone with valuable creative ideas to share. For Jake, greater personal input has facilitated better musical progression.

Activities involving improvisation, taking musical elements such as the structure, pitch range or rhythm from notated repertoire, also freed pupils from note-reading—a barrier that had often thwarted fluent playing across the three groups. It also helped pupils gain a deeper understanding of how music is constructed, however repetition and patience remained central to developing a sense of musical timing and flow. For example, while Kaylee and Ruby's note-reading is not yet at the stage where they could reliably read the four two-bar phrases (which involve quaver patterns across three strings) with a steady tempo, they are able to successfully improvise their own phrases using the rhythm of the original, copying the structural alternation and

overlap of the two parts to create a plausible reworking of the music. After our first attempt at this exercise Ruby points at me with her bow and says gleefully ‘I interrupted you’, indicating an understanding of the musical structure (3:3:1).

We repeat the activity five times during the lesson. By the fourth attempt there is a reliable sense of timing, with Kaylee identifying and independently restarting her early entry. We revisit the activity the following week. Both girls achieve a clearer sound as they feel more assured. Several three- and four-note patterns begin to feature regularly after two or more attempts as musical ideas become established (3:3:2). Unlike the occasions where playing relies on printed notation, when I might need to relay finger numbers to achieve any sense of musical flow, we are now creating a similar piece with almost identical musical parameters and achieving continuity independent of scaffolding. Both girls’ eagerness to take turns, to make eye contact with me and one another, and to make numerous attempts is new. At the end of the activity, Kaylee shows her satisfaction at the more equal partnership that has been established:

Kaylee I really like interrupting you, since you’ve been interrupting us! (3:3:2)

Helen That’s true. Yes, it’s good to reverse the roles, isn’t it?

5.4. Collaboration

Dewey observed that learners become collaborators with other learners and teachers to create their own understanding by solving problems that they encounter in a variety of situations (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). I therefore designed activities that challenged pupils either to solve a problem or to make decisions about how to play a particular piece as a group.

5.4.1. Problem-solving

A key issue I identified in my reflective journal before starting the project was the role of notation in instrumental lessons after WCET. Note-reading is a notoriously difficult skill to master and one that relies on regular home practice, yet most WCET participants were reading music just once a week in their lessons. They were therefore understandably slower to consolidate knowledge than pupils who were playing several times a week. Although most children in each group were reasonably fluent reading their four open strings (whose distance on the stave makes them easily distinguishable), reading of fingered notes and especially those in conjunct patterns was less reliable. The additional demand for string players to control a physically demanding instrument while reading music is also an extra burden. I had routinely used note-reading aids such as note names and finger numbers to help pupils achieve greater fluency when playing from printed music, but I had always felt frustrated at pupils' dependency on these props and wished I could improve independence.

Offering four laminated notation sheets, each representing the notes of an open violin string, the project attempted to encourage independence by giving pupils time to work out passages of notated music in pairs or threes without my help. Initially, the task had little positive impact and was met with indifference and even tacit resistance. Those pupils who were already more confident with note-reading engaged well with the task; however, others who perceived the skill to be something of a chore saw in the more autonomous learning time an opportunity to relax or become distracted. For example, footage shows Evelyn and Olivia (1:1:1) to be the only pair (of the three) to be on task when asked to work out the notes for Part 2 of 'Ev'ry time I play'. They immediately set to work with a pencil, marking in notes, then Evelyn tests out annotations by playing an excerpt of the part.

But as I place the music on the stand Freya is sharing, she comments 'oh, we can't do that'. She moves away from the group to look at toys (stored for activities led by the school's pastoral team) in the far corner of the room. She then returns to her original position and looks into the camera, asking Grace to stand directly behind her and jokes 'hi, I've got two heads'. Jake, too, does not attempt to begin looking at his music, preferring to lean against the radiator while swinging his bow up and down. I

move towards his stand and begin to ask him questions about note names, which he answers correctly. Ava quietly removes herself from the group and visibly sighs before sitting down, while Grace and Freya begin to work out the part without her. Ava re-joins the others after I advise the group 'I'll give you two minutes', having observed the lack of focus on the task. Although the activity's exploratory stage is allocated a full six minutes, engagement is sporadic, with one or more pupils doing something other than the task for over half the time.

I begin to make this type of collaborative problem-solving activity a regular feature of lessons, always with a short and clearly delineated time frame. Pupils gradually focus better as a result. Just two lessons later, following a brief demonstration, I note that Freya, Ava, and Grace have played their part together without my direction (1:1:3) and there are other successes where groups collaborate to work out new sections of music (e.g. 1:2:2, 2:2:1, 2:2:4). Pupils were more positive knowing how long they would be spending on what they may have perceived to be a slightly laborious task, and by the beginning of Cycle 3, the task has become an accepted, even welcome lesson activity. For example, Freya and Grace accurately work out the middle section of 'Walk on Mars' using finger number annotations, and Evelyn experiments with the first section from memory before consulting notation for the middle section (1:3:1). With group members working independently, I am free to support Jake and assess his understanding of the middle section.

There are further examples of the group meeting a challenge of working out the next two lines of notation in two minutes (e.g. 1:3:2) and everyone immediately sets about completing the task in hand. Before including this type of problem-solving activity in lessons I had anticipated pupils would want to play together, would stop when unsure and perhaps check the sheet for clarification, and then try it out again. Reviewing footage, I found that there was very little playing at all during these times, but a preference to write similar prompts in the music that I had once put there. Note names seemed to feature more prominently than numbers. Figure 5.2 reproduces one pupil's annotations of 'London Eye' to support their note-reading. My field notes include the thought that 'note-reading has always been a bone of contention so if

Figure 5.2. An example of pupils' annotations to support note-reading.

London Eye

Steadily turning ♩ = c.100

rit.

During the introduction, try making big circles in the air with your bow in time to the music. Use two bars – or six beats – for each circle.

ACTIVITY

[After Dalcroze, 'stride' in bars 8–9 denotes a minim—
understood by the pupil to signify a long note.]

they can write prompts in their music independently, using their own knowledge rather than being passively spoon-fed note names by me, more active learning has taken place and the music achieves better flow.'

A preference to work together with greater independence to solve problems is corroborated by focus group data. When asked (during the first focus group) about the things they have enjoyed most about playing the violin and their lessons, Grace comments:

> **Grace** We… work out the notes by ourselves. (F1:1)
>
> **Helen** Do you like doing that?
>
> **Grace** Yeah, I like that better.

Eager to gauge opinions about whether collaborative note-reading activities have been enjoyed, I follow up with a question to the whole group:

Helen Do you like working together to work it out, or do you prefer working alone?

Freya Together, because then if I don't know or… [*gesturing to Grace*]… we can help.

Evelyn [*backing up Freya's sentiments*] I like working together with a friend because if you don't know one string, they might know that string, or if they don't know one string you may know that string.

Encouraging peer modelling and support also rebalanced the 'teacher knows all' group dynamic and offered good opportunities to consolidate and differentiate learning, while prompting careful listening and critical thinking. However, such activities had to be set up carefully, otherwise group members might take offence and be quick to blame one another. There are numerous occasions where pupils helpfully model a phrase for their peers. For example, Olivia models the 'Broadway and Bust' motif for Grace (1:2:3) and Ethan demonstrates 'Walk on Mars' for Alfie (2:1:2). When one pupil is already fluent but another needs more time, this solo opportunity offers a chance to shine. Pupils were also independently capable of identifying where someone had gone wrong. When Freya plays two incorrect pitches, Evelyn can pinpoint them exactly (1:2:1). During a 'pass the parcel' activity where Olivia passed on a different motif to the one that was originally shared between group members, Evelyn is also able to name them ('she needed two Ds' – 1:2:1).

As this skill gradually developed, I encouraged pupils to take peer support a step further, not only identifying problems, but also assisting to solve them by offering advice. When Ruby shows Kaylee how to play 'See a Little Monkey', Kaylee attempts the piece but it still has two incorrect notes (3:1:1). Ruby is able to point out to her that it does not sound right and that her fingering is incorrect before Kaylee repeats the exercise successfully. This consolidates Ruby's learning of the piece *and* provides an extension by asking her analyse Kaylee's first attempt more closely. As I become more comfortable with pupils leading problem-solving activities, I consciously take a step back from the camera so pupils have the opportunity to move

into 'my' space. When Alfie is confused with the notes at the end of line 4, I automatically ask Ethan to move in and help him, rather than provide the answer (2:2:4). It was often difficult to transfer responsibility in this way and tempting to solve problem myself. There are instances in the footage where I move forward to help, become aware of my action, then deliberately remove myself (e.g. 2:2:4).

However, when verbal feedback between peers became an accepted and often helpful problem-solving strategy in lessons, there were occasions where this more open and frank mode of communication backfired. When Kaylee and Ruby played 'Footprints in the Snow' together, Ruby's immediate verbal assessment of their performance was accusatory in tone. When the music stopped, she commented:

Ruby	I did it and you didn't! (3:3:3)
Kaylee	Huh?
Ruby	You're the one who… I was the one who got it right.
Helen	Right or wrong?
Ruby	The first time, I got it wrong the first time and then you…
Kaylee	[*interrupting*] I got it wrong?
Ruby	You forgot to go onto the… [*plucks string to check*]… D-string again and then you quickly changed.
Kaylee	What? No I didn't. [*shows disgruntled face to Ruby*]
Helen	[*diplomatically*] I think that was quite well-remembered.

While I was pleased that Ruby was listening carefully to the collective performance, her reaction had upset Kaylee. I reflected after the lesson that this more open dialogue needs careful management. Because children are still learning to understand empathy, modelling sensitive feedback and seeking to recognise and praise kind feedback when given by pupils are necessary steps, particularly in a collaborative environment.

Over a period of three months, as pupils became more accustomed to taking the initiative and helping one another through modelling or, say, identifying a pitch or rhythm error, there was a noticeable shift in the dynamic between the pupils and the teacher. During one improvisation activity based on a pupil version of Thomas Gregory's 'Footprints in the Snow', Kaylee listens to my four-bar pattern using fingers on the D string and comments:

Kaylee	Ah, that end bit I really liked. (3:2:1)
Helen	Oh, thank you.
Kaylee	Cause… what did you do there?
Helen	[*Singing at pitch while modelling with my fingers*] It's 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1.
Kaylee	[*correctly plays the pattern I have sung*] Like that?
Helen	Yes.
Kaylee	Oh, that sounds really nice.

The question and the way it is directed to me feels unexpected and unfamiliar. I usually tell pupils how to do something but they do not ask about my own ideas. Kaylee is driving the learning agenda by requesting to learn my pattern. I record a new collaborative dynamic between teacher and pupil in my field notes. In this moment Kaylee and Ruby are busily engaged with the task in hand and treat me as both a facilitator and a fellow musician.

5.4.2. Collaborative decision-making

Another of the project's aims was to encourage pupils to engage with one another in musical conversation, stimulating collaborative decision-making about how to perform a familiar piece. I therefore planned regular lesson activities in which, after some initial teacher-led explanation, I would have no further direct involvement. These were activities where I attempted to transfer authority to the group completely, instead observing and nurturing further positive interactions only after the activities themselves.

During my first attempt (1:1:4), I physically left the room (while filming continued) so that pupils would work together in response to me asking them to decide how they would like to play the four-part ensemble piece 'Ev'ry time I play' by Kathy and David Blackwell. Field notes record my extreme discomfort at leaving the group, even though I was actually lurking just outside the room. Acutely aware of my duty of care to the pupils, I feared an eye being poked with a bow or some other unlikely scenario unfolding while I was not present to keep everyone safe. (Observing Jake rotating his bow like a drum major's baton, these fears were not wholly unfounded.) During subsequent lessons, and especially with other groups, it was more practical to move away from pupils' immediate space into a corner of the room to sort out my bag, music, have a drink of water, or pretend to be attending to something other than the activity pupils were involved with.

Although some positive initial steps were taken as a result of this innovation and the activities were well received, footage shows the extent of the knowledge, skills and experience pupils must have in order to achieve the ideal of being able to make multiple creative decisions about how to perform a piece. It also shows that any larger-scale implementation of such an exercise must necessarily be gradual. In this first attempt, for example, pupils reacted by considering a logical order in which to play the music's four parts, but not their aesthetic effect (1:1:4). Ava and Grace offer suggestions about who might play each part while Evelyn is keen to act as scribe. For Evelyn, having a written version of the proposed events seems to control and fix decision-making and ensure clarity. Olivia also participates by initially pointing to the part she wants to play with her bow. The group remain largely on task with a couple of moments of restlessness. Freya later exhibits similar off-task behaviour by dancing for the camera, notices Jake not participating, and shrieks 'Jake!' using a high pitch (perhaps mimicking a teacher voice), before moving to his stand and pointing to the part he is playing. Perhaps feeling slightly outnumbered as the only boy in the group, Jake is cooperative but not actively making decisions. Ava suggests they play parts in pairs, taking turns, before putting the parts together for the final performance. Grace and Evelyn repeat these instructions in part to clarify who is paired with who, but there is general agreement from the start.

I had envisaged hearing playing outside the room as the group experimented with different options about which sounded most musically satisfying, interspersed with pupils offering an opinion about the various textural combinations. This prediction was unrealistic; the expectation would only be fulfilled by a much longer process. When I return to the room, possibly a little earlier than planned, there has been no playing at all, although a reasonable amount of productive discussion can be observed on the footage. The group play their chosen sequence before reflecting that there are more repeats provided by the backing track than they had planned for. Freya suggests they continue playing together until the end, which is accepted by the rest of the group. Following Evelyn's comment that she is struggling with her part, I move to stand near her and play along. After a second attempt is complete, I encourage some suggestions about how to achieve a better ending. Jake suggests an ending by finishing with the rhythm that fits with the words 'Ev'ry time I play', demonstrating the passage with his bow. Everyone experiments with Jake's suggestion and after I model the kind of gesture that might work using a breath, Jake signals the ending using a body gesture.

This activity served to initiate the process of collaborative decision-making and confirmed the value of even simple or perfunctory collaborative decision-making. It also underlined how autocratic my teaching may once have been. First, the idea of a transfer of power is met with an excited whoop from Grace, jumping up and down from Ava, and smiles from Evelyn and Olivia as I leave the room. During the second focus group, pupils fondly reflect how they 'really enjoy it when you go out of the room and then we all crowd together and decide what to do.' Similarly, Evelyn says she enjoyed organising people into parts: 'It's fun to work things out yourself.' (F1:1). Second, the activities' focus encourages pupils' awareness of one another rather than being solely fixated on a single part. Ava laughs when she sees Jake trying to signal an ending, only to realise it is too early. All eyes then watch Jake as he successfully ends, and there are smiles across the group as they finish together, alive and musically present in the moment.

A morale-boosting moment for Ruby and Kaylee occurred when they took ownership of their rehearsal and performance of 'Footprints in the Snow' by Thomas Gregory

(3:2:4). I ask Ruby and Kaylee to spend some time preparing the piece together, choosing how they would like to divide the music between themselves and to let me know when they are ready to play it to me. My notes record how I move to the desk at the opposite side of the room before asking the girls to practise, before letting me know when they are ready with the music. They have lost copies of the music and I use the situation as an opportunity to rely on their memory. After a confident start there is some uncertainty. They both forget that the music moves to the A string in line 3 and stop two bars later, realising it does not sound right. They correct and complete. Kaylee counts them in, '3, 2, 1'. Again, after a confident start Ruby forgets line 4, but by listening to Kaylee she manages to play the last two bars, then continue. Similarly, Kaylee forgets the last line but listens to Ruby to bring her back to the ending.

My only interjections are to praise ('that's it', 'well done') and to confirm the *pizzicato* ending through air-playing while singing. I also ask the group whether they plan to share the tune or play together. They decide to stay together. Their next attempt is nearly secure with the same memory slips as they go to repeat the opening lines rather than play the subtle changes in lines 4 and 5, but by listening to one another they just about manage to finish the piece. They decide to repeat, but this time with dividing. They discuss together alternating phrases and then playing the ending together. There are small slips by Kaylee, signified by body language, but at the end first Ruby and then Kaylee raise their bows high in the air, triumphant in their success. I record the uplifting moment in my field notes, noticing that the girls' happiness and high morale at the end of the activity was largely due to their collaboration and determination to overcome challenges leading up to it.

Enjoyment is confirmed when I ask during the first focus group 'do you like it when I tell you which line to play, or do you like to decide yourselves more? Which is best?' They immediately respond, in unison, 'I love/like to decide ourselves' (F1:2). The success of this performance was also due in part to my allowing them to practise during the lesson. In a more traditional lesson format, this would be reserved and expected for home practice so that they were ready to perform and move to the next piece. Because this is not a realistic expectation for either pupil, traditional pedagogy

would always leave them feeling disadvantaged and underprepared. Neither sentiment is conducive to the self-belief and preparedness for risk-taking required in instrumental playing.

5.5. Discussion

In contrast with the teacher-centred approach described and celebrated by Marienne Uszler (1992), Monika Nerland and Ingrid M. Hanken (2002), and Kim Burwell (2013) in the context of the master-apprentice model, the data I collected during this project showed the positive impact of a new, pupil-led pedagogy. Likewise, whereas the prominence of teacher talk, performance demonstrations, and physical positioning have been lauded in instrumental teaching (e.g. Duke, 1999), my project showed how *reducing* teacher intervention can improve pupil engagement for post-WCET pupils. The rest of this chapter discusses the significance of these findings in more detail, first outlining the different ways in which pupil-led learning improved engagement, then examining their implications for instrumental teaching at large.

5.5.1. Five ways in which pupil-led learning improved engagement

Pupil-led learning improved engagement in five main ways:

i. Lead and follow activities fuelled pupils' willingness to repeat activities and to actively follow their peers;

Such activities were successful because of the pupils' tacit understanding that their patience would be rewarded when it was their turn to take the lead. In the Suzuki method, it is common for teachers to specify a certain number of repetitions of a particular exercise or passage as a daily practice task, subject to the age and experience of the pupil (Butz, 2019). Beyond Suzuki practitioners, the use of repetition divides opinion: Eric Booth praises its efficiency in the context of Sistema-inspired orchestral programmes (Booth, 2016), while others criticise its seemingly

unavoidable, teacher-centred, banking-style delivery (Dobson, 2016; Fink, 2016).[27] BeAM makes use of repetition in ways that are pupil- rather than teacher-led, drawing an important distinction from Booth's example and from the Suzuki method.

It was possible in BeAM to preserve and even democratise repetition as a teaching strategy: creative control was divested to pupils and playing fluency improved. This intervention also helps address concerns about practice expectations (e.g. the aforementioned quotes from Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2015), as repetitions during lead and follow activities effectively served as practice time *within* lessons. My data also supports the idea that students who do not practise between lessons are less disadvantaged in group (rather than one-to-one) learning environments (Daniel, 2008). Repetitive playing sequences enabled my participants to learn by listening to and observing one another in action, reducing reliance on either home practice or the need for pupils to improve on their own.

ii. Pupil-led activities centring repetition reduced the need for corrective pedagogy and increased pupils' engagement in such activities;

Data showed that, through BeAM's approach, pupils were more willing to be involved in their learning and that they understood there was little chance of them being criticised individually. When pupils were involved in choosing their own part in an ensemble piece and sought out others who had made the same choice, the activity's multiple repetitions helped fluency because pupils could listen to and learn from each other either overtly (by copying) or inductively (by hearing their part elsewhere). Pupils' understanding arose from their awareness of and collaboration with their peers, rather than through the teacher specifically. The need for commands or 'do it' instructions (Colprit, 2000) was reduced for this reason and because pupils were able to cross the room, e.g. attempting a more challenging part further away from the teacher. This learning environment also reduced anxiety (of being correct) and occasionally increased musical risk-taking. My fieldwork therefore helps address concerns about pupils' overreliance on teacher critique (albeit at conservatoire level,

[27] For more on the banking model of education, see §2.3.3 (especially note 14) and §3.1.

e.g. Creech, 2012; Burwell, 2013) and about the scarcity of non-interventionist approaches (Bull, 2022).

iii. Pupil-led activities that reconfigured the learning space or which asked pupils to move improved engagement;

I was able to pursue such learning activities for longer stretches of time than I had expected or which traditional approaches would have allowed. Pupils enjoyed the freedom to move around the room (e.g. to find musical allies or to change their status from follower to leader), and even more modest movements (e.g. pupils turning their bodies to gesture musically to their peers) made a noticeable difference to pupils' presence in an activity. This discovery was surprising and exciting: I often observe teachers keen to *fix* pupils in position during group lessons they oversee, using name tapes or carpet squares equally spaced on the floor, as if traditional, physical order (or restraint) will render sonic order. The benefits of movement to the development of musicianship are central to Dalcroze eurythmics (Nibrant Webin, 2015). However, such activities only supplement instrumental learning, whereas BeAM's endorsement of activities that incorporate movement is rare in instrumental teaching. My fieldwork suggests that, far from distracting pupils, using space imaginatively can improve focus and increase engagement. In the time since completing fieldwork, I rarely keep younger pupils static for the entirety of their lessons and am continuing to design activities that incorporate spatial and gestural movements during playing.

iv. Creative activities led by pupils prompted an unexpected interest in exploring instrumental techniques;

Pupils reacted positively to new, open-ended opportunities to experiment instrumentally with texture and timbre. Such instances also led pupils to stumble across new instrumental techniques by accident or to recall and reproduce techniques they had heard before but not been taught (e.g. rapid string crossings, double-stopping, a bouncing *spiccato* bow-stroke). My response to this 'haphazard' learning, as Lucy Green labelled it (2002, p. 208) called for explanation and demonstration

that allowed me to support pupils' curiosity in the moment and was therefore better targeted to pupils' real-time engagement. Pupils' technical ambitions and outcomes also exceeded my expectations, affirming a similar connection drawn by Green (2008). Before BeAM, introducing these instrumental techniques at these pupils' current stage of learning would have seemed overambitious.

BeAM's creative re-creation of known pieces (rather than copying existing pieces, as discussed in §2.4.3) also addresses the criticism that Green's approach risks imposing new limitations, i.e. because pupils tend to copy music with which they are already familiar (Allsup, 2007; Jorgensen, 2008; Woodford, 2015; Hess, 2019). BeAM's open-ended activities enabled pupils to share their own variations on a theme and to hear and perform each other's variations—an environment that bears further comparison with Green's informal pedagogies. As such, BeaM shows that it is possible for new informal pedagogies to be effective outside of the original context of Green's approach, i.e. beyond popular music-based secondary classroom music teaching. BeAM is a more structured approach, and the teacher (rather than the pupils) chooses the repertoire and is present throughout (rather than moving between different groups working in separate spaces), but it is still able to increase pupil autonomy and opportunities for creativity and collaboration between teachers and their pupils.

v. Collaborative, problem-solving activities involving musical discussion involved pupils in new and more varied ways, helping them to stay engaged;

Collaborative, problem-solving activities succeeded in generating independent musical talk in two distinct ways: about how to play a piece, when I deliberately removed myself from the discussion; and about how a musical character had been created, as part of a facilitated discussion. As with the question of room set-up, other instrumental teachers may worry that a conversational atmosphere could, in fact, impede musical focus. This concern is dispelled by BeAM and is also a symptom of the tendency in master-apprentice teaching to suppress pupil voice and even to regard it as a marker of good lesson management, e.g. expecting pupils simply to

obey instructions and to limit their talking to answering the teacher's questions. Conversely, BeAM's collaborative, problem-solving activities began to take on the appearance of focussed musical rehearsals, with pupils gaining musical understanding from talking *as well as* through playing. My tentative experimentation in this domain develops the concept of listening pedagogies, reframed for the post-WCET environment (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014).

5.5.2. Should any instrumental lesson be fully pupil-led?

Throughout my project, I chose the repertoire, designed a loose structure for each lesson, and planned the learning activities that pupils would cover. I also considered the skills and knowledge I aimed for pupils to gain and my oversight of and reactions with the lessons were integral to how they unfolded. To grant the power of decision-making to pupils was itself a decision. The extent to which any instrumental lesson can or should be truly pupil-led is therefore a valid question, which this project's data and theoretical framework can help answer.

Had I allowed pupils to run their lessons in a literal sense, giving them free reign to choose their groups, repertoire, and musical approach, then simply observing that process, I anticipated that the pupils would have quickly become confused, anxious, and, in all likelihood, upset—not least at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic had caused such upheaval to their schooling. I was also conscious of my duty of care to the pupils from a pedagogical and ethical perspective; I deliberately designed lessons that would not break entirely with the existing teacher-pupil relationship, which I knew would be necessary to keep everyone at ease and, relatedly, to collect meaningful data. I was also mindful to preserve the essence of Dewey's democratic vision, recognising the rights and opinions of teachers and pupils alike and doing so collaboratively (Allsup, 2003). My fieldwork supports Randall Allsup's insistence upon collaboration across all stages of a pupil-led learning journey, but also shows how the balance of power between instrumental teachers and their pupils must fluctuate as learning activities unfold. Were the project to be repeated over a longer timeframe, with pupils more used to exercising their autonomy, I would hope that

even greater choice would be desired by and beneficial to the pupils and, indeed, their teacher. But as my project data shows (i.e. when pupils reacted conservatively to being granted autonomy), BeAM must move at a pace suitable to the age and experience of its learners.

I took care to strike a balance between engineering learning experiences that were more open-ended and less interventionist but which nevertheless 'select the influences which shall affect the child and assist [them in] responding to these influences' (Dewey, 1897, p. 78). In this sense, BeAM's learning activities were pupil-led because they allow pupils to express themselves musically, to learn by creating their own musical ideas, and to collaborate. BeAM also evidenced the Deweyan criterion, as Eric Shieh and Allsup interpret it, that pupils must be empowered to 'make decisions that matter' (Shieh & Allsup, 2016, p. 32). Pupils' individual and collective reactions to BeAM demonstrated how they were able to influence and change a learning activity's direction, effectively authorising me to deviate from my original plan. Likewise, particular moments of pupil enthusiasm and success could be harnessed to lengthen certain activities without this feeling indulgent or rushed. As we have seen in §5.5.1 (iv.), pupils were even able to instigate the teaching of new instrumental techniques they happened to explore during BeAM's creative activities.

When a Sistema Scotland instructor complained that 'something [is] missing' from the instrumental lessons they had observed, they could easily have been referring to the lessons' lack of pupil voice (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2015, p. 36). BeAM addresses this deficit but does not develop 'freer and more creative activities' for the sake of it (p. 36). Instead, a distinction must still be drawn between approaches that are pupil-friendly (e.g. using upbeat backing tracks, illustrated sheet music) and pedagogies, like BeAM, that are pupil-led. The former may entertain pupils, but they do not centre or value pupils' own wishes or grant them a meaningful say over the course of their learning.

As discussed in §2.2.9, when instrumental pedagogies *have* granted autonomy to learners, it has tended to do so only for musicians who are already technically

accomplished and have extensive experience. My project, however, shows that it is possible to subvert Ivor Galamian's elitist advice: young pupils in a group learning environment are able to use their existing skills to realise some of *their* 'musical ideals' and, indeed, are motivated by the prospect of doing so (Galamian, 1999 [1962], p. vi). My data also corroborates Henrique Meissner's argument that more expressive playing is achievable at earlier stages of learning (Meissner, 2018; Meissner, 2021). Beyond the one-to-one context of Meissner's research, my data also shows that pupils can recognise character in one another's playing and describe it using metaphorical language during musical discussions facilitated by their teacher. In short, the project achieved better engagement by treating its post-WCET participants as musicians. There was no need to regard its pupils as fully-fledged artists or to judge them by that hypothetical standard, but neither, to endorse Allsup's argument, should they be treated as 'incomplete future musicians' (Allsup, 2007, p. 55).

5.5.3. Implications for the role of the teacher

Data, especially lesson footage, shows that my role as an instrumental teacher changed when the project was implemented, as I had anticipated. Reflecting on this after I completed the fieldwork, I am reassured that my role had not diminished, but become more complex and varied, e.g. musical director, facilitator, supporter, and fellow musician. This flux gave the outward appearance of a more equal power balance, which helped address the one-sidedness that Allsup and Cathy Benedict cite in relation to the master-apprentice model (Allsup & Benedict, 2008). Data shows how it also delighted and engaged pupils during lesson activities.

At the same time, I recognise that by retaining ultimate responsibility for the learning experience, I remained, in one sense, at the centre of the lessons, which is another feature of the master-apprentice model (Nerland & Hanken, 2002; Scott, 2012). The key difference in my project was that, despite this, I was able to assume more of a behind-the-scenes role—usually less prominent, rarely centre stage figuratively or literally, but still an anchor for the pupils. I was no longer the '*universal* motivating

force' that Marienne Uszler assigns to the master (Uszler, 1992, p. 584; emphasis added), but in addition to assuming the roles I have described, I generated and was able to monitor and guide each lesson's momentum.

The fluidity and subtlety required of my teaching role in the project may not appeal immediately to all instrumental teachers. Its demands on musical and pedagogical intuition to decide when to (and when not to) intervene were faithful to a Deweyan cycle of in-lesson reflection—always 'active' and 'persistent' (Dewey, 1933, p. 118)—but could also be very challenging. I did not always make the right calls or necessarily achieve the best outcomes. Ingrained habits, especially corrective pedagogies, were hard to resist, and a non-interventionist approach was difficult to sustain, especially during moments when I believed pupils had lost direction because an activity I had designed had possibly given pupils too much autonomy.

Similarly, my field notes record several occasions when I was alarmed by seemingly reverting to type. For example: 'Yikes! I'm calling out finger numbers for Part 2 at Letter B. This is old-style teaching!' (1:3:4). Sometimes, the temptation to intervene, addressing a problem there and then, rather than allowing pupils to find a solution in their own time, was too great. After a later lesson, I again questioned my new role and whether I was striking the right balance between facilitation and direction:

> It's hard to step back and allow the pupils to work it out. My normal strategy is to provide nearly all answers, both technically and musically, and to keep correcting to the point that they can take no more information on that occasion. That's what I experienced in my own training and it's hard to resist. Would a quicker route in the long term be to allow more working out? Is this more common in the classroom environment? But perhaps here we're requiring a more precise skillset and so it doesn't work? I'm trying to allow pupil exploration but there seems to be a need for teacher-led. They begin to work out the middle section. I try to stand back and let them correct mistakes. They struggle, so I use lots of questions to check understanding. This isn't working, though, and I do go into correction mode at the end… Watching for a second time, they're

> engaged. This is a teacher-led, scaffolded learning of a new section. (2:1:2)

Immediately after the lesson, I regretted stepping in to solve the problems pupils had encountered, but watching the footage at a greater distance made me realise that my intervention had been successful: having attempted the task semi-independently, pupils listened and responded positively to my advice. It was important to remind myself on such occasions that while Dewey believed in the benefits of teachers facilitating rather than dictating learning, he never lost sight of teachers' expertise, i.e. that they necessarily not only 'select the influences which shall affect the child', but also 'assist [in] responding to these influences' (Dewey, 1897, p. 78). I draw two conclusions: facilitation requires different degrees of intervention at different times; and supportive intervention is more likely to be welcomed (and thus effective) when it *not* the default teaching strategy. As such, deciding what to do, and when, in a pupil-led approach such as BeAM is exciting and new, but also sometimes unsettling and messy.

Chapter 6

‘Growing Power’: Reconsidering Progress

Aiming to facilitate better progress for post-WCET learners was central to my project’s research design. My priority was for BeAM to enthuse and engage pupils. Since progress depends on the quality of how pupils engage with lesson activities, I anticipated that evidence of progress would be a natural outcome of BeAM’s new approach. However, unlike pupil-led learning, whose positive impact in the data was clear from an early stage of my action research, evidence of progress was much harder to detect. After the first cycle, I was alarmed by the fact that while pupils were participating more actively in their lessons, tangible signs of progress were negligible at best. As the project unfolded, I came to realise that the Deweyan theoretical framework that had helped shape BeAM made it desirable, and necessary, to rethink my understanding of musical progress itself. This first half of this chapter draws on data to support this new connection, examining the types of pupil actions, behaviours, sights, and sounds that, after John Dewey, can be observed as evidence of musical progress. The second half of the chapter examines the implications of reconceptualising musical progress in these ways for post-WCET teaching, its scholarship, and instrumental teaching at large.

6.1. Identifying pupils’ progress through a Deweyan lens

> I believe that interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power, I believe that they represent dawning capacities. Accordingly, the constant and careful observation of interests is of the utmost importance for the educator. I believe that these interests are to be observed as showing the state of development that the child has reached. I believe that they prophesy the stage upon which he is about to enter. (Dewey, 1897, p. 15)

§

Dewey argued that a pupil's interest in any given activity can, and therefore should, be used as evidence of that pupil's learning or their learning potential. In other words, that teachers looking to monitor or assess progress should focus on the nature of a pupil's engagement with the learning activity, which will help them not only ascertain their pupils' current levels of attainment, but also, in turn, to predict ('prophesy') the most logical next steps in their pupils' learning. Such a mode of teaching calls for careful observation of the learning process itself, rather than prioritising (or even exclusively assessing) the quality of a final product. By extension, the ways in which pupils' 'growing power' can be assessed are suddenly broadened. For example, they may include: a pupil's initial reaction to the task, including the initial steps they take to approaching it; a pupil's desire to understand the skills and knowledge for which the task calls; efforts by the pupil to show the confidence to problem-solve, whether individually or alongside classmates; a pupil's ability to ask questions that are appropriate to the task; or a pupil's ability to appraise their performance during the task with greater attention to detail.

To Dewey, interest or engagement in any given activity is synonymous with progression. It is not desirable, or even possible, to have one without the other. My discussion in the previous chapter of pupil-led ways to improve engagement, in which participants engaged with collaborative problem-solving, took turns to lead and follow, improvised, and reimagined familiar pieces making their own musical decisions to vary character and mood, can likewise be reframed to help identify and describe pupils' progress. For example: the desire of pupils to gain new musical skills and to broaden their expressive range; the ways pupils show they are musically present in the lesson; their use of physical gestures to communicate and improvise; or their ability to appraise their own playing. The following section examine these and other indicators of musical progress in turn.

6.1.1. Pupils leading their learning by exploring new techniques

The desire of participants to lead their own learning by exploring new techniques was a surprising source of evidence of their growing interest in violin playing and musical expression. When planning BeAM's learning activities, I had been determined that their focus should move away from technical corrections and towards musical interactions. Apart from occasions during my fieldwork when I prompted comfortable foundational set-up of posture, instrument position, left-hand shapes, and relaxed bow-holds, I was content *not* to introduce new instrumental techniques, but to consolidate existing skills through a focus on musicianship that I believed would be a catalyst for better engagement. I was surprised, then, when technical discussion featured in both focus groups: Grace and Ruby, for example, say they would like to use their fourth finger more, while Alfie says he would like to learn vibrato. When I asked Group 1 to write down what they had improved or would like to improve, techniques clearly re-emerge: 'I have improved my fingers' (Freya); 'I have improved holding my violin correctly' (Ava); 'I am better at playing fast tunes' (Evelyn); and 'I drop my wrist and it's way easier to play' (Jake). After reading his card aloud, Jake adds that one thing he dislikes is the 'painful string marks on his fingers' when he stops playing. His remarks prompt another technical discussion about changing playing positions, with Evelyn commenting that it makes her arm ache.

These comments could be interpreted as a legacy of traditional pedagogy, that is, pupils raising issues about which they thought I wanted to hear. Or, we could regard the pupils' enthusiasm and observation of technique as evidence of their interest in the mechanics of violin playing and its potential expressive effect. Either way, by departing from technique-centring lessons, better engagement was evident, and this link came full circle as pupils began to drive the development of technique themselves.[28] This voluntary interest is proof that pupils were progressing. Pupils exhibited a desire to use ergonomic physical movements that would help them play

[28] Besides these examples, I have discussed (in §5.3) instances when pupils initiated the exploration of techniques (e.g. *spiccato*, *tremolando*, double-stopping) and how I facilitated this process using instructions to enable their immediate use—rather than using exercises to prepare pupils to use them in future.

comfortably, and to gain new techniques that would facilitate new modes of expression now that they were being given an opportunity to explore them.

6.1.2. Being musically present in the lesson

One piece I used regularly to signal the start of the lessons musically was Thomas Gregory's 'Ballad' from *Vamoosh 1.5*. Its melodic contour is easy to memorise, freeing pupils to be more aware of the sensation of playing, of the sound they are producing, and of being part of the group making music together. One unplanned outcome of videoing lessons each week was that the screen allowed pupils to watch themselves and one another, so I was able to observe both their growing interest in the ensemble and their ability to reflect on its effects. For example, in the very first lesson with Group 1, Freya is struck by the synchronised movement between group members as she watches the computer screen, and asks her classmates: 'Do you notice looking at the camera that we are all in sync?' (1:1:3). Excited by what she has observed, Evelyn adds: 'We were all moving our bows at the exact same time.'

I initially deliberated about whether to use the same music to begin each lesson for all three cycles, but starting with a well-known piece offered security, gave pupils the confidence to join in as soon as instruments were ready (and even to play with their eyes closed, e.g. 3:3:2), and added a moment of calm focus to the lesson routine. To take another example, Ethan chooses to position himself so that he can see the camera and keep eye contact with Alfie while they play (2:1:4). In the second focus group, I ask pupils in Group 1 whether we should change the warm-up at the start of the lesson but receive a resounding 'no' in unison. Field notes I wrote after this focus group include the question: 'Does something need to challenge in order to enrich? Once a challenge has been conquered, I have often been too hasty to move towards the next hurdle instead of consolidating and simply enjoying pupils' achievement to date.'

Two further examples of pupils being absorbed in the musical mood took less conventional forms. When I model 'A String Hoedown' (from Gregory's *Vamoosh*)

against its backing track, Kaylee and Ruby energetically bob up and down to the beat (3:1:3), responding to the lively character of the dance. While their own attempt to play presents challenges—the original tempo and character are not preserved—their introduction to the piece encourages a positive outlook. Similarly, when we listen to the backing track of the middle section of 'Walk on Mars' (also from *Vamoosh*), both girls instinctively pretend to be astronauts, taking large 'weightless' strides around the room (3:1:1). They enjoy the moment so much that they ask to repeat the activity as soon as it finishes. Both girls have memorised the short repetitive motifs of the outer sections of the piece. The middle section, however, is less repetitive and calls for accurate note-reading on the A-string at speed. After multiple attempts at a slower tempo, they decide to perform the piece by playing the outer sections and moving like astronauts in the middle section—a creative compromise that maintains the musical mood.

In each of these examples, pupils took advantage of the opportunity to engage with something familiar, which feels easy and comfortable, enabling them to enjoy being part of the collective musical experience in whatever form that took. When Evelyn recalls the calming effect of playing 'Ballad' in the first focus group, she encapsulates the idea that music-making is less about overcoming obstacles to prepare her for the future, and more about being actively present in a musical experience that unfolds in the lesson itself. Similarly, Ruby and Kaylee's hybrid solution may once have been branded a failure, i.e. they could not play something accurately at performance tempo and were looking for ways to avoid performing it. Yet, both girls are working together effectively to solve a musical problem. Rather than give up, their resolve to remain musically engaged, playing what they can now, and moving as astronauts when they cannot, shows clear understanding, ingenuity, and progress.

6.1.3. Musical gesture

Throughout the project I actively modelled and encouraged pupils to use musical gestures to communicate with one another during lead and follow activities and to develop pupils' musical awareness and spontaneity. As the participants became more comfortable in each another's company and made greater use of musical gestures, Ruby and Kaylee clearly enjoyed the bond they had formed. From the very beginning, this noticeably improved their engagement in activities. Over time, it also improved their commitment to completing a task. In one lead and follow activity, Ruby chooses a violin string to begin her scale and provides a musical introduction to reveal her decision (3:1:1). Kaylee and I must look and listen to determine which string she has chosen. Kaylee makes eye contact and uses a nod gesture to confirm that I have also selected the correct string and that we are both ready to play. In another activity, Kaylee and Ruby look and lean over to one another, 'physically' passing a tune between them and deciding in the moment when to stop playing and hand over the melody.

Footage shows them absorbed in the activity, looking only at one another and the music until the piece has been completed (3:1:2). An entry I made in my reflective journal before the project began highlights contrasting levels of interest (then compared with now) as well as a greater desire to complete a task when the pupils are taking ownership:

> Kaylee has given up. She is sitting on the floor looking deflated. Notation has finally beaten her. She doesn't want to try any more even though we have broken the piece into smaller sections and played it at a very slow speed. She can read, she can play, but (at present) she can't do both together. (Lesson with Kaylee, Alfie, Ruby, and Reece, November 20th, 2019).

Kaylee further develops the idea of non-verbal musical communication when she independently translates her thoughts into musical gestures. After Ruby plays a short passage with good fluency, Kaylee offers her friend congratulations with what she terms some 'musical claps' by rapidly playing the D-string with her bow in a *tremolando* action (3:2:2). By the end of the second cycle, Ruby and Kaylee are so

assured in their new approach that they are able to describe its benefits to Ethan and Alfie. Explaining how they need to watch one another in order to know what will happen, Ruby and Kaylee both demonstrate a developing interest in musical independence:

Ruby We make eye contact and it's really important in most of our pieces because there's two different parts and we always look at each other before we play… (F1:2).

Kaylee We do different lines, like, let's say someone does the top line then next line, next, and sometimes we do the last line together…

Ruby … and when someone does the start of 'Monkey', someone goes in front, sometimes we just carry on and switch straight away so we have to look at each other to see who's going to go there.

6.1.4. Making up music

I arranged improvisation activities only sporadically before the project but was keen through BeAM to give pupils a regular opportunity to develop their creative voice by reimagining pieces I had selected. The pupils were willing to contribute their ideas from the outset but less sure about how to reference or build upon either their musical source or one another's contributions. Another area that required careful thought was how pupils would fill a certain duration, that is, to supply a response that sounded musically complete. Through successive attempts over the weeks, awareness grew, leading to musical responses that showed a growing interest in the subject matter and in one another.

When I invite Ethan and Alfie to take part in an 'alien conversation' in the middle section of 'Walk on Mars', Alfie initially acknowledges the quaver-crotchet pattern

of the original, then selects seemingly random strings for around nine bars (not the four bars needed to fill the musical space) and loses the sense of pulse (2:1:2). Unsure how to feedback constructively, I say 'You had a lot to say as an alien!' Several attempts later, both pupils can comprehend the appropriate phrase structure, but the material they each play still does not relate (i.e. to one another): Ethan replies to Alfie's light quaver motifs with D-string scales, using slurred articulation that again appears to be chosen haphazardly (2:1:2).

By the beginning of the second cycle, both boys are showing their developing interest and understanding by listening more intently to each other's musical choices and being able to respond with their own ideas. When I instigate a three-way musical conversation, Ethan immediately seizes on my use of an accidental and responds with his own version, moving his first finger back to alter the pitch, despite not learned this note formally yet (2:2:1). During subsequent turns he adds accents to the new pitch, using a *marcato* bow stroke, and comments that he was expressing the emotion of anger. Alfie replies, remarking on and showing me his 'shy' playing by choosing a light bow-stroke and a quiet dynamic. My field notes record that we have progressed beyond 'random doodling' on the violin—although this, too, was a necessary part of the learning process. Connections are being established between playing styles and their emotional effects. The pupils are beginning to respond more directly and expressively to each other's playing.

Admittedly, there are occasions when my own training limits the project's democratic intentions (that is, for all voices to be heard) and I unintentionally quash the momentum pupils are generating in their activities. When Alfie wants to add a trill to make the ending to 'Feelin' Blue' sound even sadder, I agree but do so reluctantly, stressing that we should really focus on playing what is written first (2:2:1). Reflecting on the footage, my notes record some embarrassment: 'Why did I say that? I should have encouraged their newfound creative voice, not insisted on adherence to the score for the sake of it.'

As improvisation activities became a regular feature of lessons, I experimented with new activities, asking pupils first to alter, then embellish, a well-known melody in

order to reimagine it with their own ideas. I often used backing tracks as a tonal and structural scaffold, allowing pupils to hear how their ideas would fit with the original frame. One activity began with Alfie and Ethan taking turns to devise their own rhythmic variation for 'Ballad'. Alfie alters the melody by changing some of the note durations and adding repeated notes, while embellishing the melodic line with passing notes (2:2:3). I react by changing the criteria to acknowledge and encourage more creative ideas. Although Ethan is dissatisfied with his first attempt, this second chance allows him to show that he can respond musically in the moment. When Ethan's turn arrives, he realises that he has moved on too soon in the tune and responds adeptly, filling the space with repetitions of the same note so that he ends on time. Both boys pull off a musical improvisation that is musically convincing and which has been achieved by listening to each other's attempts. The open-ended nature of the activity and the need to respond in the moment have required careful listening and appraising—more so than when a teacher remedies their pupils' mistakes with quick-fix solutions or measures their efforts through assessment.

6.1.5. Pupils' ability to self-appraise

Teaching pupils how to appraise their own playing as well as that of their peers was more complicated than I had anticipated. When I designed the project, I assumed, perhaps naively, that asking open-ended questions such as 'how did that sound?' or 'could you tell me what you were pleased about?' would prompt detailed, reflective answers. It quickly became apparent that pupils were giving little or no thought either to what they were playing or to how they felt during the activity. This lack of awareness ranged from overall musical effect to more practical issues, such as whether pupils were either ready to start with everyone else or playing from the beginning to the end using most of the correct notes. This deficit is perhaps a natural consequence of delivering group lessons, a mode of teaching that relies traditionally on interaction between the teacher and pupils, rather than between the pupils themselves.

At the same time, data shows that the pupils' progress in this area was not linear, but instead fluctuated between general comments and moments of more profound, self-appraising insight. For example, when I ask for remarks about a scale activity during the first week of fieldwork, Jake is preoccupied by his own mistakes. He explains that his bow was touching the D-string while he was playing the A and does not pick up on the sound of the group as a whole (1:1:1). Grace, on the other hand, can pinpoint the inconsistent positioning of her peers' third finger on the A-string to make the note D, leading to poor intonation of the final note in 'Ev'ry time I play', and wants to improve it. In a similar D-major scale warm-up, Alfie responds with 'I think it was good' when asked to reflect but offers no further detail (2:2:1). Similarly, Freya says 'it sounds horrible' in response to the group's performance of 'Ev'ry time I play', without saying why she thinks this. Watching the footage back, it is notable that she stops playing after two bars, having begun on the wrong note. Her comment, like Jake's, probably reflects how she feels more about her own playing than that of the group's ensemble (1:1:4).

The data also includes many instances of pupils commenting about the person next to them, showing that pupils' awareness tends to be limited to the immediate vicinity. When I ask for reflection about ensemble, Evelyn tells me that she must be playing faster than Freya because she needed an extra F-sharp (not the three written in the music) to finish at the same time as her (1:1:2). Ava, who is stood the other side of Freya, immediately also reveals some awareness, agreeing that 'it's hard to know how fast to go.'

Only later in the fieldwork, when opinions began to be offered without my instigation, was I able to observe more clearly a growing interest in how something sounded as well as how it felt to play. At times, pupils even expressed their frustration when a piece did not sound together—evidence of a new sense of care for the overall sound. When Jake shares with the group that he decided to go faster in the last variation of 'Ballad', Evelyn is immediately frustrated, commenting how 'it was very annoying standing next to him and hearing him not be in time' (1:2:4). In another lesson, in which pupils take turns to lead a scalic piece that pauses (indefinitely) on an third- and fourth-finger ostinato until a physical cue permits

everyone to descend the scale, Freya complains that she did not receive a clear signal from Grace (1:3:1). This flashpoint prompts discussion about where an appropriate point in the sequence might be to make such a gesture, giving time for everyone to react. Evelyn and Olivia then watch Grace's second attempt carefully and manage to follow her nod. But, after Evelyn's turn to lead, there is further discussion about precisely when to begin descending the scale. Some pupils have responded instantly, while others have completed one turn before starting their descent.

When it is Jake's turn to lead, he counts everyone in at a chosen tempo—'a one, a two, a one, two, three, four'—then plays, somewhat unhelpfully, at a slower speed. Despite this, pupils do finally settle and move together, until Jake changes his ostinato pattern (using fingers 2–2–3–3 rather than 4–4–3–3). Nevertheless, Jake succeeds in giving a very clear, if comical, cue, which makes Evelyn giggle and brings everyone down the scale together. Jake's fellow group members immediately tell him what he did 'wrong' because they are all watching and listening so carefully:

Freya I got really confused because I was looking at you, and you…

Grace You were doing one finger wrong each time.

Ava Yes, I saw that.

Evelyn < *shows Jake what she thought he played while he watches* >

Freya < *plays* 4–4–3–3 > … and then you did …
< *plays* 2–2–3–3 >

Jake Yeah, that's because my finger hurt, so I had to swap.

Helen < *jokingly* > So you were happy to keep your whole group playing, in pain, while you changed the pattern for yourself!

Pupils' observation and ability to appraise has improved across successive attempts of the activity. They are alive to each other in the moment, acting like musicians rehearsing. Although some pupils continued to comment solely on their own performance, these observations became more specific and articulate and showed greater attention to detail. Kaylee, for example, says she is pleased that she played 'the bit with B–B–B–B–A' in the middle section of 'Broadway or Bust' correctly, but that she would like to remember how '13 Ds change to A' (F2:2).

There are also prominent examples of pupils' awareness of the whole group and the audience (the latter during a showcase in the school hall) as well as a desire to take ownership of the performance. Freya, Ruby, and Ethan each reflect on the quality of ensemble: Freya concludes that the best performance was 'the one that we were all good at… where we were all [coming] in and out at the same time' (F2:1); Ruby reflects how 'it was nice that we were all in time… Ethan and Alfie were in time with their bows, too.' (F2:2); and Grace also considers the audience's reaction, remarking how ''Walk on Mars' was good because no one looked bored while we were playing it', and even the fluency of their overall presentation, advising how 'we should have practised what [we] were going to say beforehand as well as the pieces, because that bit sounded uncertain.' (F2:1). Ethan shows his awareness of bow direction when he admits: 'I don't know how Alfie plays.' (F2:2). Prompted to elaborate, he describes how Alfie started 'Gypsy Dance' on an up-bow (a down-bow is marked), so they did not match.

The progress pupils made through self-appraisal was evident in their willingness to offer reflections, especially unprompted, coupled with a sincere interest to improve and/or successfully complete an activity. Some pupils were able to reflect on their own playing, that of their peers, and, occasionally, that of the whole group. Often, pupils were also able to pinpoint specific areas for improvement and to describe and even model solutions.

6.2. Discussion

So far, this chapter has shown that BeAM's Deweyan perspective widens the range of pupil actions that can be recognised as indicators of progress. It follows that other instrumental teachers could be liberated to follow suit—not to emulate BeAM, as such, but to plan and deliver lessons from a comparable perspective. Activities in traditional pedagogy that are either subsidiary or do not feature at all, such as problem-solving and self-reflection, take on new significance in BeAM. Behaviours that instrumental teachers sometimes discourage, such as moving and even talking, are reframed. Barriers known to impede progress, such as note-reading and pupils' reliance on home practice, influence the design and delivery of the pedagogy and are ameliorated. The rest of this chapter offers more evidence of these contrasts and discusses their implications, which revise our understanding and approach not only of progress, but also of curriculum design, assessment, group teaching, and the role of reflection.

6.2.1. Rethinking learning objectives

Reconceptualising progress reshapes our understanding of instrumental lesson design. It justifies devoting more lesson time to encouraging, gauging, and responding to how pupils show interest in musical activities. It intentionally reduces the pace at which technical skills are taught and/or the amount of new music they encounter, concurring with Robert Duke and James Byo's arguments defending a slower pace of technical progression (Duke & Byo, 2019).[29] It also shifts emphasis further away from corrective pedagogies, suggesting that instrumental teachers should think twice before pre-empting pupils' mistakes by issuing detailed instructions to them, or judging musical success exclusively in the (real or imagined) context of how the final product is performed.

Traditional pedagogy leaves little room for musical processes to be observed; indeed, those processes *are* the pedagogy and they centre teachers rather than the pupils.

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[29] BeAM's departure from these arguments is explained in the next chapter (§7.4.2).

Data in this chapter shows that it is unnecessary to fetishise the eradication of mistakes at every stage of learning, especially when lesson objectives are broadened and learning activities are designed to elicit personalised, creative responses, rather than black-and-white answers. In BeAM, 'mistakes' were problems to be tackled collaboratively, not solved at speed through teacher intervention. Participants also enjoyed spending longer on the same piece when they were allowed to work with their classmates to perform it in a way they chose. Kaylee and Ruby were happy to practise a piece multiple times during a lesson, pinpointing incorrect notes for one another, when they believed that a problem they had identified could be solved together.

This data corroborates research linking improved motivation and progression with (conservatoire) students' more active voice, suggesting that greater pupil autonomy is also feasible and desirable at a much earlier stage of learning (McPherson, 2009; Lamont, 2009; Creech & Gaunt, 2018). The domino effect this could have upon subsequent levels of learning would help address a deficit of critical thinking on the part of more advanced students, whose reliance on guidance from their teachers has been shown to reduce the responsibility they take for their learning (Creech & Gaunt, 2018).

Now that fieldwork is complete, it is possible to suggest how an ideal set of learning objectives, foregrounding a Deweyan sense of progress, might look:

- a growing awareness of the choices musicians make, including that multiple ways to perform a piece of music exist;
- understanding that these choices represent a personal expression, revealing something of themselves and their understanding of and relationship to the music;
- an emerging skill to remodel existing music according to their own ideas;
- the ability to collaborate fairly and democratically, allowing other voices to be heard and acknowledged;

- an increasingly positive attitude to learning and playing music, exhibited through (e.g) their growing confidence and enjoyment of learning activities;
- an awareness of musical directions and changes, demonstrating growing spontaneity in response to them;
- increasing attention and responsiveness to aural detail, including the ability to form and offer constructive feedback, self-reflectively and to fellow musicians;
- developing fluent, technically assured playing that allows for a convincing performance.

This list does involve compromise, especially if viewed according to traditional markers of success. Greater pupil autonomy implies, at least in the short term, a *less* direct route to technical improvement. Teachers willing to enact less interventionist approaches, such as BeAM, would need either to subscribe wholeheartedly to a Deweyan sense of progress or to recognise the longer-term educational value of pupils' ability to collaborate and self-correct (or, more likely, a blend of the two).

6.2.2. Ongoing formative assessment is prioritised and enhanced

Paying greater attention to pupils' learning processes elevates the role of formative assessment in instrumental lessons. BeAM makes Martin Fautley's arguments on the need for alternative methods to evaluate composition and performance relevant to pupils' in-lesson experiences (Fautley, 2015), solving the current problem that these processes are often invisible to, or ignored by, established methods of assessment. This project's data supports the Deweyan idea that pupils' reactions to tasks they have been set, the questions they ask before attempting them, the strategies pupils choose to overcome challenges, and the ways they support classmates to do so, are more accurate indicators of musical understanding than a one-off, summatively assessed performance.

By recognising and valuing such actions pedagogically, ongoing formative assessment takes on a new significance in instrumental teaching—particularly so in post-WCET teaching, whose pupils, in my experience, are less prepared for (or resilient to) the competitive pressures of exams and traditional public performances than other types of beginner learner. Competition plays no part in informal performances (e.g. school assemblies) typical of WCET, in which pupils tend to share with their classmates and families the pieces they have learned during the term and, in the case of BeAM's pupils, the songs and rhythm games that bring to light some of the processes that supported them to learn those pieces. (The relevance of performing and sharing music publicly is discussed further in §7.2.) Against this backdrop, BeAM is seen as an example of how teachers might distinguish between assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning, and the benefits of prioritising the former.

6.2.3. A group lesson can be an ideal learning environment

In instrumental teaching, one-to-one teaching has long been regarded as being optimal. This assumption does two important things: it serves to perpetuate the master-apprentice model, which one-to-one delivery best serves; and it devalues group instrumental lessons, which are often maligned as a necessary evil to reduce costs and maximise participation rates, rather than something to respect pedagogically. As I outlined in §2.1, a premise of this project was my observation that instrumental teachers thrust into group teaching after the original NPME were importing approaches tried and tested not in group learning environments, but in one-to-one settings. These tensions only add to frustrations about group teaching.

To reconceptualise progress, as this chapter does, is to make a new, evidenced defence of group teaching. Data shows that pupils' interest in collaborative musical activities was not just clear, but infectious, particularly so in relation to activities using body gesture. This corroborates Ryan Daniel's argument that in-lesson interactions between pupils and their teacher improves motivation (Daniel, 2008). Progress in BeAM was apparent when pupils engaged in problem-solving activities,

especially when pragmatic joint 'solutions' were found, such as moving to the music. These activities reduced the onus on pupils 'getting it right' (Bull, 2022, p. 65), lowering the pressure of the learning environment in tandem with further outcomes, such as pupils' ability to advise each other and their appreciation that errors were less noticeable within the sound of the collective.

By centring musical processes, BeAM brought them to the fore in lessons, and circumvented instrumental teaching's general (over)reliance on home practice (Baker, 2017), with the teacher privy only to the result of those processes in the lesson. This was not always an easy adjustment to make. Stepping back during BeAM's group lessons to observe learning processes in action sometimes felt unnatural and was an ability I gained and grew comfortable with only gradually. Now that the project's fieldwork is complete, I have fewer doubts. I recognise that the awkward silences that can punctuate one-to-one lessons, caused by pupils having to work and problem-solve independently, never recurred in BeAM's convivial, collaborative environment. BeAM shows that far from being an unwelcome compromise, a group lesson has the potential to be an ideal learning environment in instrumental teaching.

6.2.4. Reflection is no longer an afterthought, but has a central role

Traditional instrumental teaching too often monitors and rewards a pupil's compliance rather than their interest: if a pupil struggles to follow their teacher's sequenced instructions, or enact corrections issued by the teacher, an impasse is reached, and progress (as conventionally defined) is impeded (Colprit, 2000; Blackwell, 2020; Bull, 2022). In my own group teaching, I sometimes felt that my most successful lessons were those in which pupils had the *least* time for reflection, so well-ordered had my sequence of activities been, with no restlessness from the pupils in between those activities. Although I would welcome and acknowledge moments of appraisal, usually at the end of an activity, pupils' comments had little or no bearing on my lesson plans, nor did I consider them central to the concept of progress. Instead, I was confident that I could put pupils on the right track if an

activity had not gone to plan, issuing new instructions and corrections during the next lesson.

Designing and overseeing activities that nurture reflection marked a radical change in my teaching style. This chapter's data evidences the practical benefits of allowing more space for pupil reflection; reconceptualising progress underscores its importance. Dewey's broad definition of reflection, discussed in §3.1, implies that pupils exhibit interest through activities in which they are actively engaged in the moment, rather than as passive observers or recipients. BeAM's pace through activities was slower (compared with traditional pedagogy) because I was no longer the sole arbiter of the learning and because these activities were designed principally for their reflective potential, to which technical details were subservient. The success of this approach is apparent in this chapter's data, which exceeds Dewey's definition by exemplifying Donald Schön's reflective cycle, in which pupils are understood to reflect: *in action*, as they problem-solve, make musical decisions, respond to one another's musical cues, and spontaneously create music that relates to certain structures and moods; and *on action*, for example when appraising a group performance or asking relevant questions to improve upon subsequent attempts (Schön, 1987).

Seen this way, peer assessment is another example of *on action* reflection. Pupils' growing awareness of one another, and of themselves, over the course of the project endorse arguments in favour of peer assessment in instrumental music education (Lebler, 2008). Pupils' ability (during the second round of focus groups) to comment on presentation, ensemble, technical features, and audience reactions showed their self-awareness as musicians, including an emerging aesthetic understanding of the sounds they were producing. Informal peer assessment of this type could be developed further, encouraging pupils to articulate such opinions even more openly, confidently, and perhaps even according to pupil-authored criteria.

The data's occasional examples of blunt and/or negative remarks are a reminder that embedding peer assessment as a learning activity would require careful thought by the teacher. Although intended to be used by teachers, Tim Patston and Lea Waters's

PIMS model (discussed in §2.4.2) could conceivably free pupils to praise their peers with 'positive pause[s]' (Patston & Waters, 2015, *passim*). An adaptation along these lines would be bold and Deweyan, nurturing empathy and self-esteem as much as musical growth and centring the performer(s) *and* the observer(s) upon whose listening skills the activity would rely.

Finally, one chance discovery from the data was that pupils enjoyed watching themselves and their peers on the computer screen while they were playing, to the extent that several constructive, reflective remarks about physical positioning and ensemble were made. This discovery supports arguments for using technology to maintain motivation and develop proficiency (Webb & Seddon, 2019), and could be harnessed to overcome instrumental teachers' reluctance to film lessons (Gaunt, 2008).

6.2.5. Deeper musical understanding becomes more accessible

A further advantage of aligning (Deweyan) growth with (musical) progress is the potential, realised by BeAM, to deepen musical understanding. To Dewey, understanding is achieved through an approach to reflection that connects experiences with their consequences (Dewey, 1933). It follows that the more time teachers devote to pupil-led activities that incorporate reflection, the more mindful pupils ought to be about the results they produce. When I asked participants to improvise their own version of a piece they already knew, or to hold a 'musical conversation' with a classmate, or to respond in the moment to a musical stimulus, I made (at least) as great a demand on them as I would have had I asked them to copy or recreate music that was more technically advanced. The resources and activities I chose and designed for BeAM were more approachable and memorable than traditional pedagogy, but their cognitive demands were no less advanced.

BeAM treated its participants as musicians from the outset, granting more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills than traditional pedagogy would typically permit—however preliminary those skills may have been. Data from this and the

previous chapter have shown how these skills were varied, applied, and pupil-led. These qualities, supported by this chapter's data, suggest an immediacy that is more accessible: by applying their skills creatively and expressively, BeAM's post-WCET pupils arrived much sooner at what, in traditional pedagogy, is a hoped-for destination.

Chapter 7

Three Inductive Themes

As Chapter 4 explained, I decided to approach thematic analysis deductively in order to identify data that would be most relevant to pupils' engagement and progression during their lessons—two keywords of my central research question. I remained open to the possibility of identifying themes inductively, and this chapter shares three such themes that deserve attention: first, how participants perceived, and enjoyed, musical activities and pieces that they labelled 'easy'; second, the significance participants attached to sharing music with other people; and third, how participants overtly recommended that pupils' voices be heard and centred in future instrumental lessons. Because each of these themes relate to, but are also distinguishable from, engagement and progression, they serve as further evidence of the problems that traditional pedagogical approaches pose, especially in a post-WCET context. The final section of this chapter discusses the significance of these three themes in greater detail, referring to project data, relevant arguments revived from Chapter 2, and the wider context of continuation between WCET and post-WCET learning.

7.1. Perceiving and desiring 'easy' music

Across the project's two first focus groups, which were conducted with Group 1 and Groups 2–3 respectively, participants referenced the word 'easy' twelve times to describe either a musical activity or a piece of music they had enjoyed. Reflecting on this trend, I came to realise that pupils were perhaps simply replicating each other's choice of adjective, in the moment and through convenience, rather than thinking deeply about their use of language. At the same time, I believe that this sentiment, expressed so often, is too significant to overlook. When participants were asked what they had most enjoyed about their violin lessons, 'easy' was used positively to

describe activities that had been enjoyed. Easiness, in this sense, is to be welcomed and is implied to be something that made playing the violin more 'fun'. Indeed, there are two instances where the word 'fun' is used in the same or adjacent sentence as 'easy'.

Similarly, when participants recalled their favourite pieces and exercises from their lessons during the first focus groups (held at the end of the second cycle), Freya and Evelyn cite 'Chicken on a Fencepost' and 'Ballad' respectively because they are 'easy to remember', and when Evelyn adds that there is 'no need to turn the pages of music', there is a tacit understanding that memorising the music is one way to gain musical fluency while overcoming the barrier of reading (or learning to read) the music. Ava and Olivia both name 'See a Little Monkey' as their favourite piece because it is easy to execute. Ava is more specific about the physical action she needs to achieve the scalic movement in the piece, for which she needs to 'add her fingers to go up', a left-hand technique she describes as being fun because 'it's not that hard to do'. Reflecting on her peers' responses, Grace comments that 'it seems we all like easier things', to which Freya immediately responds, 'yeah, we do, 'cause then it's easier to learn.' Jake agrees: 'yeah, and it sticks in your mind'.

At this point in the focus group, I recognise that participants' responses, taken together, are potentially in conflict with the value embedded in traditional instrumental pedagogy that increasing technical and musical complexity is a key marker of progress. I therefore pose the group the follow-up question 'does anyone prefer challenging music?' No immediate response is forthcoming from the five participants, who listen but continue quietly writing and sorting out their prompt cards, as though there is no need to answer because they have already expressed their preference. After a pause, I receive a single positive response from Evelyn: 'I like a challenge, although I do get cross with myself when I can't recognise the notes.' She then fondly recalls her individual lessons, which took place online during the Covid-19 pandemic, smiling as she adds: 'That [i.e. the online lessons] was good on Zoom calls.'

It is surely no coincidence that Evelyn is the only pupil who takes her violin home to practise. If pupils play their instruments between lessons, then they are more likely to remember how to 'recognise the notes' successfully and be able to execute more complex repertoire. If, conversely, pupils play their instruments only during their lessons, then repertoire is more accessible if (and only if) it can be 'easily' recalled from the previous lessons, for example through a simple, aurally memorable, and/or repetitive motif that, to quote Jake again, 'sticks in your mind.' Such music is common in beginner material, especially that designed with WCET and group-teaching more generally in mind. (The first book in the *Vamoosh* series, on which my fieldwork drew heavily, was written in 2009 by cellist and educator Thomas Gregory specifically for use during whole-class string programmes delivered by London's Haringey Music Service.)

In my field notes two weeks later, I decided to record the actions and reactions of another of my violin pupils, one *not* involved with my fieldwork, towards playing 'easy' music because they stood in such contrast with the opinions that had been expressed in the focus groups. In an individual lesson, Alex's negative reaction to playing an easy piece as a warm-up activity is made clear through his body language and actions. He plays 'Mexican Fiesta' (from *Fiddle Time Sprinters*) in a half-hearted way, not bothering to check whether his first finger is in tune with the open string (which I always insist on) and playing considerably faster than the initial tempo I had modelled. As soon as he thinks he has finished the piece, he flicks towards the end of the book, looking for harder material that he will enjoy more. I conclude:

> He simply isn't interested unless there is challenge or a problem to overcome. He possesses a high level of self-efficacy that Freya and even Evelyn don't have. I think this must be borne out of a previous track record of success (in musical activities and at school more generally) leading to a belief that he can overcome the hurdle and impress himself, and in turn me, with his unexpected accomplishment or precocity. He is so well-suited to the traditional model. (May 12th, 2021)

Three months later, the sentiments of the second focus groups echoed (in the context of this theme) those of the first. For example, Jake describes how he likes 'warming up with easy pieces', to which Olivia nods in agreement and cites the warm-up piece 'Ballad'. Grace has enjoyed learning new pieces that are 'fun to play… I like 'Walk on Mars' and 'Mellow D''. I pick up on participants' unprompted revival of this theme and look to clarify whether the consensus about enjoying 'easy' pieces remains by asking 'who prefers easy pieces?' Four pupils reply positively, raising their hands and pencils in the air. Reflecting further, Freya tempers her answer, adding 'I like [an] 'in-between' challenge', to which Evelyn nods in agreement. Jake offers a rationale for his earlier answer and describes the sense of pride he feels from other people's reactions to him sharing what he considers to be 'easy music', i.e. music in his technical and musical comfort zone: 'Once you've learnt it, you can effortlessly play it, and everyone will be: 'how do you do that?!'

7.2. The role of performance

A second theme that can be identified inductively is the significance participants attached to sharing music with other people. My decision to adhere during the project to the BeAM criteria I had written (outlined in §3.6) was intended to make the quality of the pupils' musical experiences a central priority, rather than the lessons serving or striving towards the goal of performance. As my fieldwork unfolded, I was content that the responses pupils were exhibiting in their lessons were pointing to better engagement, and that the project, according to its intended outcomes, was on track. Later, however, I came to realise that I had not given sufficient attention to how pupils felt (or would feel) about the concept of performance, or, more generally, about sharing music with other people outside of their lessons.

As this section explains, the data obliged me to acknowledge a misplaced assumption I had made: that performance would be a lesser priority for participants. Because I knew that most participants, either through choice or impracticality, would *not* be practising between their lessons, and may not have even thought about playing their

instruments other than on the day of their lessons, it had seemed logical that they would attach little or no significance to the concept of performance. I was surprised, then, when pupils' enjoyment of performing music featured so strongly in the focus group discussions. As a result, I decided to review the footage to identify where performance had been discussed or reflected upon in some way. Doing so further underlined the importance of performance opportunities to the participants. I first broach the idea of planning a performance during Cycle 1 at the end of the participants' second lessons, asking Ruby and Kaylee if they would like to share some pieces they are working on with their class. At this stage of the pandemic, schools were still operating in class 'bubbles', so this was the only feasible performance opportunity available during the school day. They respond to the question by looking at one another to gauge a reaction, then smile and nod at the prospect of sharing their violin-playing with the class (3:1:2).

After their planned performance to classmates from Years 3–4, Groups 2 and 3 return to the teaching space to pack away their instruments while chatting enthusiastically about the experience. They are noticeably excited, speaking loudly and animatedly, as though the post-performance adrenalin is still having an effect. They recall specific places in the music where they forgot to do something they had planned to do and their observations of certain classmates' expressions while they played (3:1:4). Kaylee and Ruby also talk to one another about feeling self-conscious during 'Walk on Mars' and about not completing their intended moonwalk movements (exaggerated strides they had planned to take during the middle section of the piece). They voice their concern that some expressions from their friends in the audience might have been unfavourable, showing that being accepted by (or gaining approval from) their peers was either a significant motivating factor or is one that has dawned on them after the event.

Later, during the second focus group, I encourage the group to reflect on their classroom performance opportunity, asking whether it was something they enjoyed doing. Their reply is again animated, and suddenly louder, as they talk over each other, unanimously affirming:

Ethan	Yeah! (F1:2)
Ruby	Oh, I loved playing for my class…
Alfie	Oh yes, it really was. When everybody clapped, it felt nice.
Kaylee	Yes.

Towards the end of a lesson during the second cycle, Kaylee's initial reaction after playing the piece 'Footprints in the Snow' fluently with Ruby is to raise her bow in the air triumphantly and announce: 'That sounds amazing, I really want to show it with the class' (3:2:4). It is apparent that Kaylee's expression of pride goes hand in hand with a desire to share her achievement. Lesson reflection notes include a reminder to myself not to lose sight of the role performance plays in either the learning experience or when explicitly seeking to rebalance process and product.

7.3. Participants' advice to other instrumental teachers

A question I posed on the spur of the moment during the second round of focus groups, 'what advice would you give to violin teachers planning lessons for their pupils?', elicited such interesting responses that I was able to identify a third theme inductively from my fieldwork: how participants overtly recommended that pupils' voices be heard and centred in future instrumental lessons. Figure 7.1 reproduces in full this theme's data, which touches upon and corroborates earlier themes, as this section will also examine.

Except for Ethan's hesitancy, these views are cogent and expressed confidently, showing that participants had understood the question and welcomed the opportunity to offer their own recommendations. The desire for pupils' voices to be heard surfaces clearly. Four of the participants (Grace, Freya, Jake, and Ava) explicitly request input into repertoire choices, including creating either their own music or their own versions of existing music. Jake's positive recollection of a pupil-led activity where the teacher 'go[es] out of the room and then we all crowd together and

Figure 7.1 Focus group responses to the question 'what advice would you give to violin teachers planning lessons for their pupils?'

Group 1 responses, in order

Grace Make pupils more involved in choosing a piece and make sure they look like they are enjoying it—and don't be too strict! (20'32")

Jake Warming up with very easy pieces and creating and leading, like I really enjoy it when you go out of the room and then we all crowd together and decide what to do and one time we chose the notes to make a different version of some song. (21'00")

Evelyn Make the lessons fun and warm up before going into a tricky piece. Make the music that you play along to fun and happy. Don't do a sad song, basically.

Freya Yeah, like 'Feeling Blue'. (21'33")

Ava Make it fun to learn and play fun pieces, not missing out on anything you like, and make it spacious. (21'51")

Freya My advice is: make the lesson fun by letting pupils make up their own music. They could get a really easy piece and let them change it up a bit with the same rhythm but [with] different bits. Let them have a choice about what they play. (22'04")

Jake We've not done much of it because a lot of the music I like doesn't fit the violin, but if you were doing one on one lessons like with [Jake refers here to a classmate not involved in the project], you could say: are there any songs that you like and listen to and that might make it a lot funner? (22'43")

Olivia I like playing 'Ballad' for a warm-up. (23'09")

Groups 2–3 responses, in order

Kaylee Make it fun and get to know what they like so they enjoy things. (13'26")

Ethan Can I do something that I don't think you should do? [After I answer "definitely", Ethan is silent, as though thinking] (14'08")

Ruby Make sure they trust you so you have to make sure that they trust you are teaching them right. Play the copying game and 'See a Little Monkey'. (14'46")

Alfie To ask people's opinions and get to know them. (17'28")

decide what to do' is also a striking example of a pupil welcoming the autonomy to take decisions and, it is implied, to engage classmates in the process.[30]

Figure 7.1 also underlines the significance of teachers establishing a positive relationship with their pupils: Kaylee and Alfie express a desire for pupils to be known and for their preferences to be accommodated; Ruby mentions the importance of trust between teachers and their pupils, reminding us that pupils welcome this reassurance so that they know they are being taught well; a pointer towards a less hierarchical relationship is given by Grace's recommendation that teachers take care not to be 'too strict'; and Grace even advises teachers to observe their pupils' body language to ascertain how an activity is being received.

In a similarly convivial way, friendship and collaboration were cited five times across the focus groups (in the context of features that were reported as being enjoyed the most by the participants):

Evelyn	I enjoyed… seeing Mrs Dromey and my friends each week. (F1:2)
Ava	I have enjoyed learning the violin with my friends. (F1:2)
Kaylee	Playing with my friends and getting to play my own pieces. (F2:2)
Ethan	We played together. (F2:2)
Ruby	My favourite thing is working with friends and mostly with Mrs Dromey (F2:2)

[30] To put this remark into context, as I have twice been asked about it during recent training sessions: although I did leave the room during this collaborative activity, as part of my attempt to transfer authority to the pupils, I was standing just outside a windowed door, out of sight of the pupils but still able to discreetly observe them.

Recommendations continued to be made by the two participants who answered a question I asked in order to draw each focus group to close (simply, 'is there anything else you would like to add before we finish?'): Kaylee responds, earnestly, 'follow your heart with violin' (F1:2); and Freya answers, 'I want to mention that we should have more lessons in a week than just one' (F2:1). Both statements evidence an emotional connection to playing the violin and speak to the positive significance of post-WCET learning in the participants' lives. Their investment—to borrow this term from §2.2.9 and §2.4.1—is no less significant to them for resulting from post-WCET learning, in which no independent practice is carried out between lessons and no assumptions are made about their future learning. Another comment by Kaylee in this context is telling, as she asks whether there will be enough time for her usual lesson to be held after our focus group. I explain that there will only be time for talking this week and she looks visibly disappointed (F1:2).

7.4. Discussion

The rest of this chapter discusses the broader significance of its three inductive themes, referring to data, arguments originally outlined in Chapter 2, and the wider context of continuation between WCET and post-WCET learning. This context is necessary because WCET instils in pupils strong expectations about post-WCET learning that only new pedagogical approaches can help meet, with BeAM serving as one such solution to this problem. Yet, these implications are not always straightforward because each inductive theme points in their own way to new perspectives about the ideal nature of post-WCET learning and teaching, and to the need, especially when interpreting the data, to remember the significance of pupils' experiences of WCET itself.

7.4.1. Understanding how WCET conditions pupils' expectations

Post-WCET learning is by no means compulsory, nor a core academic subject. Technically, it is an extracurricular activity into which pupils opt, joining small-group lessons in the same way they might choose to develop their football or artistic skills during an after-school or lunchtime club. Managed well, WCET enables pupils to gain a skill that they have been told, probably repeatedly by the teacher and by other school staff, is special, and to do so in a low-pressure environment. As I outlined in §2.1.2, WCET pupils are likely have taken part in activities that support a holistic approach to their learning, such as those designed by experienced practitioners (e.g. Ley, 2004; Bunting, 2005; Spruce, 2011). Similarly, pupils may have worked towards achieving a broad range of learning objectives, involving technical skills specific to their instrument, general musicianship, and wider skills such as listening and groupwork—albeit at a slower pace of technical and musical progression than traditional small-group work would allow, given the logistics of teaching large groups in WCET and the aim not to leave anyone behind (Cooke, 2011; Stafford, 2016). It is likely, then, that participants' initial experiences of WCET did most to shape their expectations of learning to play an instrument as 'easy' or, at least, achievable. This is not to diminish the effect of a new pedagogical approach, such as BeAM, to post-WCET. On the contrary, it underlines the need to 'smoothen' continuation, to reflect on the tensions between old and new approaches as such changes are made, and, in turn, to think further about the implications of the inductive themes this chapter has identified.

For example, when Evelyn advises instrumental teachers to 'make the lessons fun and warm up before going into a tricky piece' (F1:2), she is requesting the support of a scaffold to cushion the succeeding task, enabling something that she perceived to be harder still to feel manageable and 'fun'. When Ava requests that teachers 'make it easy to learn and play fun pieces', she swiftly clarifies that one way to achieve this is to 'make it spacious'—an intriguing description that I interpret as meaning 'delivered at a manageable pace' (F1:2). When, more generally, participants show a preference for musical activities and pieces that feel 'easy', they are expressing a desire to feel comfortable (i.e. *at ease* with their music-making) and to know that

what they are going to be asked to do is achievable (i.e. in line with their expectations, based on their prior experiences).

It could be self-defeating, then, for post-WCET teachers to neglect the circumstances of WCET learning. The participants in my fieldwork had not been allowed to take their instruments home during their initial WCET year, so the opportunity to do so between their post-WCET lessons marked a significant change. None of their prior achievements had relied on home practice and playing during their weekly WCET lessons had almost always been in unison, giving everyone the security of hearing themselves as part of the group, rather than exposing individual sounds. Similarly, backing tracks had been used regularly, primarily to support the musical flow, but also serving in practice to cover some flaws in pitch and articulation and to produce a more pleasing collective sound than solo playing would typically allow at this stage of learning. Most pieces had been taught by ear, using a sequence of scaffolding activities, e.g. singing using call-and-response, signing of the different pitches through use of a body stave (i.e. E-string for the head, A-string for the shoulders, D-string for the tummy, and G-string for the knees), and stepping out the rhythm around the room. Such activities had been chosen to accommodate a range of learning styles and to ensure melodic contour and structure were well-known before playing was attempted.

Comparing WCET's holistic approach with that of a traditional small-group or one-to-one instrumental lesson that I deliver to children of a similar age, it is fair to say that WCET lessons cover approximately half as much ground (that is, in terms of the amount of repertoire pupils learn, the musical activities they complete, and the range of skills and knowledge they gain). In terms of proficiency, too, my experience suggests that a group of Year 3–4 pupils learning for a whole year tends to reach the same technical level as similar-aged pupils taught individually would achieve by the end of their first term of learning. These comparisons could be (and often are) regarded as indictments of either the stark differences between one-to-one and whole-class teaching, or of inclusivity serving to 'dumb down' or 'de-skill'. But an essential alternative viewpoint, evidenced clearly in my data, is that pupils whose pace of learning is unhurried and not dictated by accelerating through new techniques

and repertoire, are much more likely to describe their musical learning experiences as ‘easy’ than ‘hard’.

John Dewey might well have understood pupils’ reticence to grapple with the musical demands that are ‘foreign to the[ir] existing capacities… [being…] beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess’ (Dewey, 1938, pp. 18–19). In contrast with approaches, such as Colourstrings, that are ‘set up to do things younger, better, quicker’ (Zavalko, 2013, p. 38), Dewey would have cautioned that pupils learning by rote often copy things that they do not fully understand. Pupils’ enjoyment of easy pieces can be viewed through a Deweyan lens as positive, natural engagement with material in which they are interested and through which they are able to make some sense. When learning activities are pupil-led, giving space for pupils’ own ideas to be realised, they feel easier because they are authentic and personally relatable. BeAM’s ability to make pieces feel easy and fun therefore aligns with Dewey’s aim to ‘build a child’s self-esteem in not only the classroom but in all aspects of his or her life’ (Dewey, 1897, p. 78).

7.4.2. Inductive themes intersecting

The implications of these connections between theory and practice extend further, because participants’ perception and enjoyment of ‘easy’ musical activities and pieces also intersect with their recommendations that pupil voice be heard and centred in future practices. For example, given the prevalence of ‘easy’ as a descriptor during the focus groups, it is striking that no participants used its antonyms ‘hard’ or ‘difficult’ in any context. Likewise, ‘fun’ was raised several times, unlike ‘boring’ or ‘serious’, which were also absent. In my experience as a teacher and teacher trainer, it is not at all uncommon to hear pupils in more regular, traditional lessons describe a piece of music or an instrumental technique as ‘hard’, ‘difficult’, or even ‘impossible’. They do so either as a plea for sympathy from their teachers or even as a badge of honour, proudly (self-)acknowledging the effort they have made to attempt or accomplish a certain passage, piece, or instrumental technique.

These contrasts are significant in themselves and because they support my interpretations in §7.1. At the same time, it is telling that one of my reflective diary entries, written shortly after the second focus groups (and long before this chapter's third theme was apparent to me), paints a much less nuanced picture. In it, I record my reluctance to accept the apparent desire of participants for their music-making to be or feel 'easy', asking: 'Am I simply making too much of these children's preference for everything feeling easy? Am I indulging their laziness by accommodating their desires?!' (February 28th, 2021). In retrospect, these questions feel a little sensationalist, but they do lay bare the pedagogical values and behaviours that are instilled through years of classically centred training, of which prizing the desire to pursue the more challenging option is a prime example.

Educationalists have long recognised how classical musical genres prize complexity (Green, 2002; Fautley, 2009). The greater relevance of this trend to my project is that, inevitably, similar attitudes affect how music is taught. For example: tutor books that make a feature of introducing a brand new task or concept on each page, implicitly equating quantity (of tasks and concepts) with musical progress (Duke & Byo, 2019); music education's '"earlier beginning, more and more difficult music" syndrome' (Kendall, 1996, p. 50); and the valorising of discipline and sacrifice, making a virtue of choosing the harder option, especially in classical music (Bull, 2019). The burden these ways of thinking can place on musicians and teachers is detailed earlier in this thesis (§2.2).

This project's data shows that manageability (of technical demands, of memorisation, and so on) was valued and enjoyed by its post-WCET learners, who had never encountered or been confronted by traditional pedagogical approaches. BeAM shows that equating musical complexity with commitment, or, worse, assuming that pupils are simply lazy ('indulging their laziness'), are oversimplifications—of musical criticism and education in general, and of the valid attempts of participants to convey something to me about the limits or thresholds they are confronting during their learning. Freya's account during the second focus group is a prime example. She explicitly recalls, and demonstrates, the sensation she feels when encountering music whose demands are overwhelming her: footage clearly shows how her arms, left-

hand fingers, and torso are unsynchronised, moving rapidly and exaggeratedly (F2:1). Centring pupil voice, then, is a call to instrumental teachers not to ignore or admonish pupils' reactions to musical overload, should they arise, and to lessen their frequency.

Another aspect of BeAM's design was to address different learning objectives using the same musical material, so that pupils had more time and space to develop their skills and knowledge through activities that did not first require them to learn a new set of notes. In this respect, I was influenced by Robert Duke and James Byo's advocacy of slower, more thorough learning, providing multiple and varied opportunities to apply each new 'thing' in a music-making context (Duke & Byo, 2019). Data shows how creative engagement with familiar pieces, including making musical decisions about them, were well-received, e.g. that working with the same musical material helps it to 'sticks in your mind', creating a learning experience that felt 'spacious', 'fun to play', and 'not that hard to do'. In this light, too, the viability of an engaging alternative to proceeding (too) quickly through musical activities and pieces of ever-increasing complexity is again suggested.

Unlike Duke and Byo, BeAM does not insist that to act musically is to make an existing technical skill, such as tone quality or articulation, more beautiful. BeAM instead centres the quality of the music-making experiences in lessons and the learning that takes place during its collaborative, experimental, and creative processes. Put another way, BeAM aims to make the musical processes, rather than merely the notes, more beautiful. It shows that there is a legitimate place for 'easy' in instrumental teaching, and that 'easy' can be something of a misnomer, at least from the outside looking in. After all, BeAM makes demands on the pupils to be alive and alert to the musical proceedings, to solve problems collaboratively, to create new versions of pieces, and to reach decisions about how to play existing ones. When these processes felt easy to participants, they did so for the reasons this section has outlined and, ultimately, because they could be achieved in a lesson setting alongside (not in competition with) their classmates, at a pace dictated by their decisions and actions.

7.4.3. On performance, sharing, and significance in the moment

The pride participants took in their musical achievements, their surprising views on the role of performance, and their sense of collective endeavour are evident in different ways across this chapter's three themes. The final section of the chapter shows that, taken together, these perspectives develop interpretation of the data and point to how BeAM (and BeAM-like pedagogies) might be developed in the future.

Reflecting further on how participants felt about performance, it is significant that they speak only about performing in a group. There is no mention or assumption that they might play on their own. This stands in contrast with some of my other pupils (and their parents), who tend to expect solo opportunities to be offered at key moments during the academic year (e.g. leading up to an exam), or would at least welcome the idea of working towards an occasion. One comment from the fieldwork does tacitly invoke solo performance, when Kaylee outlines a preference for group performance. She highlights the security of knowing that if she were to make a mistake when playing alongside her classmates, it would be less apparent to her listeners; instead, she can 'have more fun and relax' without 'worry[ing] about messing up' (3:2:4). This honest admission supports the idea that music's examination culture does not attract and inspire everyone, and that better ways to recognise the accomplishments of young musicians who do not take exams are still needed (Music Commission, 2019).[31]

In line with existing research that shows how informal performance opportunities positively influence decisions to progress from WCET to post-WCET learning (Hallam, 2016), I believe that, again, participants' prior experience of WCET does most to explain their emphasis on group performance. Every participant was used to regularly sharing what they had been learning during a WCET-centred assembly for families each term, including not only customary stand-alone pieces, but also warm-up activities, songs, and rhythm games—underlining how WCET develops

[31] Examination boards do show some awareness of these ideas. The ABRSM recently revised its 'Music Medals', a UK-only scheme blending solo and ensemble performance and intended to support teacher-led assessments for younger learners (ABRSM, 2024). Although the scheme offers a lower-pressure alternative to traditional solo examinations, it also explicitly repositions the teacher as 'teacher-assessor' and still fundamentally equates success with the passing of exams.

musicianship holistically. Although these were far from formal occasions—they were deliberately informal—they effectively conditioned participants to expect similar experiences of their post-WCET learning. This, coupled with data on the role of performance reported in §7.2, is a reminder that any further development of BeAM should continue to include rather than omit opportunities for pupils to perform.

For two reasons, this is not necessarily an easy recommendation to follow. First, Randall Allsup's Deweyan advice to blend 'love-of-process' and 'love-of-product' is persuasive but does create a new set of factors for instrumental teachers to consider when facilitating performance opportunities (Allsup, 2007, p. 55). For example: whether they are meaningful to pupils; what degree of pressure they put upon pupils; and how pupils' achievements, developed through processes that are pupil-led, can be shown in the best light. Some teachers might regard the challenge as impractical or even utopian, siding with Dewey's critics (Peters, 2022). Although I do not hold this view and believe instead that prioritising process over product can bring huge benefits to post-WCET and to instrumental teaching more generally, my data does suggest that to ignore pupils' overt desire to share their music-making through performance opportunities would be, somewhat ironically, to contradict its Deweyan theoretical framework.

Second, instrumental teachers feel great responsibility for their pupils' performance opportunities. I was reminded of this as I prepared pupils for their end-of-year performance during the final cycle, as the tensions between Dewey's democratic ideals and 'polished performances' became more evident (Heuser, 2011, p. 293). My pupils had undoubtedly benefitted from their new-found autonomy, but I was concerned that this learning would not be heard (or seen) by an audience, and that pupil-led pieces without 'polish' could disappoint. This is another implication of pupil-led learning for the role of the teacher (§5.5.3), belonging to the project's teacher-led theme, which captures the times I stepped in and took control of an activity (13 times recorded in the data). Significantly, the frequency of these instances entries falls between Cycles 1 and 2 as everyone settled into the new ways

of learning, then increases during lessons that led up to the performance at the end of Cycle 3.

In retrospect, it is understandable that the anxieties of performance, so engrained in musical cultures, would be difficult to discount altogether in the project. Nevertheless, other data suggests that pedagogies after BeAM may benefit from reframing performance, and performance culture, even more ambitiously. When Ruby points out a poster on the classroom wall that says ‘mistakes are proof that you are trying’ (F2:2), she is not only responding to Kaylee’s concern about ‘messing up’, but also showing her understanding about how mistakes are a natural part of her learning. Ruby’s familiarity and comfort with this fact is completely at odds with a perfectionist approach to music performance. I already tend to use *performance* and *sharing* interchangeably when speaking with pupils: the latter implies less formality and, by extension, less pressure. Perhaps instrumental teachers should go one step further, embracing sharing more explicitly, emulating practices elsewhere in primary education (e.g. sharing assemblies, show-and-tell activities), and actively encouraging pupils to share not only performances of what they have been learning, but also their learning processes (e.g. the musical decisions they have taken and how they chose to work together musically).

Such a significant change would respond positively to calls for music’s performance cultures and aesthetic criteria to be rethought (Small, 1998; Allsup, 2016; Bull, 2019). Musical sharing in the context of primary education ‘push[es] back the boundaries of what we have thought of as beautiful music’ as much by its creative evolution as by its final product (Greene, 2001, p. 192). The emotional investment in violin-playing that several participants disclosed is an important reminder that the significance of learning an instrument does not necessarily depend on preconceived ideas about high-quality outcomes, and that pupils who appear to excel at music are not alone in feeling music’s significance in their lives. As Paulo Freire advised, teachers must not invest only in those pupils they regard as most likely to repay their investment (Freire, 1970). I would add that instrumental teaching must be neither conditional, nor predominantly product-driven. Whether or not participants continue

to learn the violin, or even continue to make music in other ways, data shows that their musical experiences were significant to them at this time in their lives.

Chapter 8

The Dichotomy of Evelyn and Jake: Two Types of Post-WCET Learner

Although most of my data showed that adopting a new style of pupil-led pedagogy can positively influence engagement and progress during post-WCET learning, some important contradictions of this finding also arose. The focus of this final empirical chapter is to highlight these exceptions and to offer an interpretation of their significance to my findings. The chapter accordingly employs a negative case analysis as a necessary counterbalance to data I have presented in Chapters 5–7. This analysis strengthens the overall project by providing the means not only to discuss and interpret the anomalies, but also to suggest reasons why most of its data *does* adhere to the themes addressed by those chapters (Burnard et al., 2008; Bazeley, 2009; Antin, Constantine & Hunt, 2015). Of the ten pupils who participated in the project, two children, Evelyn and Jake, warrant attention because they represent two contrasting types of post-WCET learner. Identifying their distinct learning profiles, as this chapter does, develops our understanding of why different pedagogical approaches serve certain types of pupils.

8.1. Evelyn: The 'ideal' pupil

Evelyn began playing the violin in Year 3 through WCET. Enthusiastic from the outset, she told me after just a handful of lessons that she planned to keep playing the violin and become a 'violin-playing vet' when she grew up. After only two terms of whole-class tuition, she organised a small group to play a first piece called 'In Flight', using their school-loaned instruments to perform during the school's annual talent contest, held in June 2018. This was the first time Evelyn's mother had heard

her play, as instruments had remained at school between lessons. It was a special and memorable occasion for them both and shortly after the first-year programme ended, Evelyn was signed up for small-group lessons in Year 4, which she received alongside a second year of WCET provided by the school. During both pandemic lockdowns, when schools were closed, Evelyn continued learning online in an individual lesson over Zoom. She was in Year 5 during my fieldwork and was beginning her eighth term of learning.

In common with her other group members, Evelyn borrowed a violin from me. Unlike them, however, she took it home after her lesson each week and practised once or twice independently. She described how she liked to play some of her favourite pieces to her two younger siblings, who were also interested in the violin, and to try to play new pieces that had been covered in the lesson. She sometimes got confused with part of a new piece and showed me what she was finding difficult the following week so that I could help her. She was one of two group members who always remembered to bring their music folder (provided by their families), which had all her sheets placed in clear plastic wallets, filed in chronological order.

From the outset of her small-group lessons, Evelyn listened and responded to verbal instructions and feedback and was keen to adhere to lesson routines. This continued and is evident in footage across the project. For example, in the very first lesson of the project, Evelyn immediately acts in response to my feedback to the whole group to use their full bow length during 'Ballad' (from Thomas Gregory's *Vamoosh 1.5*) to create a bigger sound. Other members of the group also hear the instruction, but there is a notable difference in the way Evelyn uses her bow before and after the instruction (1:1:1). I observe her increased bow speed, mimicking my own demonstration using air bowing, and she makes eye contact with me, which I interpret as her wanting me to notice that she is doing as I ask.

During the second lesson, she gets her instrument ready independently and begins to play the same piece (which routinely signals the beginning of the lesson), showing she is eager to get started (1:1:2). While Evelyn is playing, footage shows me sourcing alternative violins for two other pupils in her group: they are unable to

locate theirs, despite them being left at school. Home practice continues to distinguish Evelyn's approach from that of her peers. When I begin to explain, verbally, one of the parts of 'Ev'ry time', Evelyn starts to play it. (1:1:2) Having taken the sheet music home the previous week, she has worked out the notes herself. My field notes comment on the contrast between Evelyn's preparedness and that of Ava and Grace (the pupils unable to find their violins even though they did not take them home).

Evelyn feels comfortable following instructions and will ask for clarification if she is not sure what to do. During activities in the project where individual pupil input was encouraged, her choices betray a slight uneasiness at the task request, possibly because she does not feel her ideas are as valuable or as good as either the printed score or the teacher's. For example, when I began to experiment with more creative activities just before my fieldwork began, I asked pupils to create their own version of a piece called 'Beach Holiday' from *Fiddle Time Starters* by Kathy Blackwell. Evelyn chose to replicate the same intervallic patterns on a different string rather than experiment with a different melodic contour. She called it 'Halloween Holiday' and chose the lower (spookier?) G-string sonority for her own composition. Copying the intervallic pattern led to a musically satisfying outcome for Evelyn because it sounded correct to her. Similarly, earlier in the project, when asked to make musical choices about how to play 'See a Little Monkey', Evelyn chooses the same string and tempo as I do during my demonstration (1:1:3). There is a sense in both activities, where the outcomes are more open-ended, that increasing the chances of getting it 'right' influenced her musical choices.

During one of fieldwork's first experiments with musical collaboration, I left the room to allow Group 1 to decide together how they would prefer to perform the ensemble piece 'Ev'ry time', arranged by Kathy and David Blackwell. Footage shows Evelyn sourcing paper and a pencil to write down what everyone is doing (1:1:4). There is a desire to be organised as well as a sense of controlling the potentially unordered situation by confirming in writing the group's decision-making. Enjoyment of pieces that were perceived as 'easy' was also frequently mentioned during each of the focus group discussions. Evelyn's response, however,

sets her apart from her peers. During the first focus group, I responded to a comment by Freya about breaking the music into small sections, making it easier to play, with a question to the group: ‘Who would say that their favourite things are easier things, or does anyone think… they like a challenge?’ Several children answer with details of their favourite ‘easy’ piece, but Evelyn’s response is immediate and definite: ‘I like challenges, although sometimes I get cross when I can’t recognise the notes.’

8.2. Jake: The ‘typical’ post-WCET pupil

Like Evelyn, Jake also began to learn the violin in Year 3 through WCET. I was pleasantly surprised that he chose to continue playing after the whole-class programme, as his enthusiasm during these weekly sessions had not been especially evident. I would often have to prompt him to get ready to play or see him either chatting to the person next to him or making glissando noises on his violin for comic effect while I was trying to give instructions to the class. He moved to a small-group lesson in Year 5 and enjoyed working with another boy in the same year group for two terms. This arrangement changed when the family of the boy requested that he move to individual lessons (the hope, relayed to me by the boy’s parents, being that he might progress more quickly with a private lesson). Jake could have stopped lessons at the end of any term, but always chose to continue, proving that he still wanted to learn and play. During the first lockdown, Jake’s family opted to temporarily pause lessons until everyone returned to school. During the second lockdown they signed up for lessons on Zoom and he attended three of the five lessons offered, forgetting to log on for the second and fifth. Jake was in Year 6 during my fieldwork and was beginning his eleventh term of learning.

Jake borrows a violin from me and leaves it at school during the week. In the first year of small-group lessons, he chose to take the violin home. However, he usually forgot to bring it back on the day of the lesson so we would swiftly source another violin—one that was invariably the wrong size, making playing uncomfortable. Jake does not practise between lessons. He plays his violin for 30 minutes in the weeks

when lessons are offered. Unlike Evelyn, Jake does not have a music folder and folds his sheets of music (often several times) so they can fit in his book bag or the top zip pocket of his violin case. He frequently fails to locate the relevant piece of music he needs during the lesson and either shares with another group member or asks for an extra copy.

During the project, Jake is the only boy in his group of six and does not have a friend from his class to be a partner, unlike several of the girls, which may partly explain why he felt at the periphery of the group. Indeed, there is plentiful footage, especially during the first cycle, of his reluctance to engage with proceedings. Despite being an exuberant character, he does not appear keen on being in view on the computer screen when I begin filming. This contrasts with the girls, who enjoy watching themselves and one another through the screen. Jake positions himself to the far right of the screen and is absent from the camera throughout 1:1:2, for example. Although he plays during the lesson, there are no clear examples of him interacting with the rest of the group.

During the first three lessons of Cycle 1, there are several activities where Jake is not ready to play with the rest of the group: during Lesson 1, he begins playing the scale several notes after everyone else; later in the same lesson I see him standing slightly removed from the group and move towards him to encourage and support playing; and at the end of Lesson 2, he does not join in with the final activity at any point. Even when Jake does play, there are multiple occasions where his body language suggests lethargy or disengagement. We see him leaning against the radiator, sometimes with his bowing arm even touching the wall. There are further moments where he is restless and we see him moving to different positions in the room while I am talking, pulling faces to the camera, stretching his arm high in the air (even touching the ceiling with his bow), or swinging his legs as if to kick a ball (1:2:5). I record in my field notes after the lesson: 'Jake needs to move!'

When attempting to bow on one string, Jake often does not make a clear sound, i.e. he has not yet mastered the correct bow angle needed to reliably prevent multiple strings sounding at the same time. My field notes (1:1:1) include a comment about

the lack of clarity during 'See a Little Monkey', where Jake selects the D string but the adjacent A string is also audible. He does not seem self-conscious about the lack of clarity in his playing, although he regularly experiments with glissando noises on his violin, possibly to distract from his 'proper' playing or to encourage others to try less conventional sounds.

I know Jake to be a very capable reader, but he is less confident reading music, preferring finger numbers or letter names written above the notes as a scaffold. Despite this, he correctly identifies individual notes when asked but struggles to read a sequence of notes while also playing the violin. When differentiated parts are available in the ensemble piece 'Ev'ry time', he opts for the least complex in terms of notation (i.e. minim and crotchet rhythms that can be followed at a slower speed than the syncopated crotchet/quaver rhythms of the other two parts) and chooses to remain on Part 2 for all six repetitions, whereas others (Ava, Evelyn and Freya) experiment by alternating between two or more parts (1:1:3). In a collaborative group activity using the same piece the following week, he again chooses Part 2 (1:1:4).

During the second focus group, and in common with most other members of his group, Jake says that he enjoys playing pieces that are easy (F2:1). Reflecting on the music that the group agreed they most enjoyed (e.g. Jake mentions 'Walk on Mars' from Thomas Gregory's *Vamoosh*) I interpret this 'easiness' to describe music that is not necessarily technically simple, but music that is easily memorised so that it can be played without the help (or hindrance) of notation. Most pupils in the group find reading music at the same time as playing challenging, hence a more complex idea played without notation is less problematic than a simple tune read and played simultaneously. When asked why he liked easy pieces, Jake's reply includes comments about ease and fluency (best achieved when you can play from memory), but also a desire to impress others: 'Because when you've learned it, you can just play it in front of everyone… once you've learned it you can effortlessly play it and everyone will be 'how do you do that?''

Significantly, when encouraged to make his own musical decisions and share his choices with the group without the burden of notation, Jake relishes the opportunity

to experiment with musical parameters. His ideas are frequently the most creative in the group: he instigates dramatic changes of tempo during a lead and follow activity (1:1:3); plays around with *spiccato* and *tremolando* bow strokes when devising his own 'Ballad' variation; identifies a double-stopped passage as 'Viking' music and attempts a scale in fifths (1:2:5); rather tellingly names his reworking of Kathy Blackwell's Beach Holiday' as 'Screech Holiday', showing some awareness of the less clean sound he produces as well as his delight at producing more unconventional string sounds (F1:1); and also understands something of the aesthetic effect of making different musical choices, describing Ava's slow tempo and heavy, legato bow articulation for her scale on one string as 'really weary' (1:1:3).

8.3. Discussion

In the context of traditional approaches to instrumental teaching, Evelyn is an ideal pupil: someone who respects the teacher's authority; appears to feel most comfortable in a controlled situation; is an able note-reader; can follow instructions and respond to feedback; aims to please; and arrives prepared, practises at home, and has a musically supportive family. In stark contrast with Evelyn, Jake represents the most common type of post-WCET learner I teach: someone who regularly arrives without their learning materials; is easily distracted, especially in a formal lesson setting; is less naturally coordinated while playing; is less concerned with precision but *more* interested in timbral exploration, preferring to make their own choices and to find their own way; and plays their instrument mostly (and in some cases only) during their lessons.

The reality of teaching this second type of learner using traditional methods is challenging and often dispiriting. My dissatisfaction with the status quo is explained earlier in the thesis, in relation to existing literature (§2.2.11, §2.5.1) and to reflective journal entries I wrote before the project began (§1.8). Had I encountered many more 'Evelyns' in my post-WCET teaching, I may not have recognised the need for continuation pedagogies to be considered and tested at all. Instead, I came to realise

that I was teaching ‘Jakes’ *as if they were* ‘Evelyns’, with disappointing results that now seem obvious, but which did not at the time. The rest of this chapter discusses the implications of this realisation with the benefit of hindsight, i.e. once the fieldwork had been completed.

8.3.1. The significance of exceptions in the data

Each of the project’s participants was an individual with their own preferences, strengths, and areas for development, but if we were to try to identify a dominant approach to playing and learning, then it would align much more closely with Jake’s than with Evelyn’s. Analysis of data in the previous three chapters identified several areas that generated clear enthusiasm and enjoyment from the pupils, including ‘easy’ pieces, creative, pupil-led learning activities, and new approaches to note-reading. Exceptions to this prevailing view often came from Evelyn.

During the first focus group, for example, she comments that she did not enjoy me leaving the room to allow her group to make decisions, indicating that she preferred instead for the teacher to remain in control. As she reflects, in contrast with her classmates:

> I enjoyed playing ‘Ballad’ and seeing Mrs Dromey and my friends each week. I don’t enjoy making up music or Mrs Dromey leaving the room as everyone is silly. You’re the boss so you can tell everyone what to do but I’m not the boss so I can’t stop them being silly. (F2:1)

A teacher’s authority over and policing of ‘silly’ behaviour made Evelyn feel comfortable and safe. Other group members relished their new freedoms and engaged more fully in activities over which they now had greater control. There is also an admission in Evelyn’s statement that she did not enjoy some of the creative activities offered, such as ‘making up music’—even if, during the first focus group, she had written ‘Made up our own version of “Ballad”’ on one of her prompt cards, marking it as one of her favourite activities.

There is one other negative comment about creative work. Talking about their favourite violin pieces, Olivia says that she enjoyed ‘Beach Holiday’. Then, recalling the reimagining activity where I had asked pupils to try making their own version of ‘Beach Holiday’ using a similar structure, she adds, ‘I don’t like writing the notes for pieces very much’ (F1:1). Prompted to clarify, she describes how she prefers playing pieces that were ‘already written’. Yet, like Evelyn, Olivia had expressed the opposite opinion earlier in the project, when she wrote on her prompt card ‘Making up music’ as an example of something she had enjoyed.

It would be tempting to disregard these negative comments, given there is also evidence of the same two pupils declaring their enjoyment of creativity, in line with the general trend. I think that their reactions—and the changeability of their reactions—were simply natural and honest, in that the novel creative activities with which they were tasked sometimes felt comfortable to them and at other times did not. At the same time, it is surely relevant that Evelyn and Olivia were the most confident note-readers among the project’s participants. They had both been able to access materials via traditional notation during more conventional teaching (i.e. before the project), whereas others had struggled to the point that they gave up trying.

Evelyn always tried hard during the project’s lessons. She continued to listen carefully to my new instructions and was always willing to try all the unfamiliar activities I organised. However, as her focus group views reveal, she enjoyed some but not all of the new-style pedagogy, whereas everyone else clearly embraced it. One type of pupil-led activity where Evelyn showed particular strength was when I took a step back and asked pupils themselves to offer demonstrations and to give feedback to help support one another. When Freya plays two incorrect pitches, Evelyn pinpoints them precisely (1:2:1). During a ‘pass the parcel’ activity in which Olivia passed on a different motif to the one that was originally shared between the group members, Evelyn is also able to name them (‘she needed two Ds’ – 1:2:1). Tellingly, while this activity flipped authority from the teacher to the pupil, it also closely mimicked the teacher-pupil correction strategy so dominant in more traditional pedagogy.

It is important, then, to acknowledge openly that, in a sense, Evelyn was well-served by a master-apprentice mode of delivery in this instance—albeit one in which she was the master. This begs the question, more broadly, would Evelyn have made more technical, skills-based progress had she been taught according to that mode and/or in either an individual lesson or a group setting alongside classmates who shared her outlook and disposition? It is likely that the answer to this question is 'yes'. While this may be an uncomfortable truth, another is that instrumental teaching has long prioritised 'Evelyns', and that the dichotomy of 'Evelyn and Jake' is all the starker in a post-WCET context, given the current disconnect between WCET and post-WCET learning.

Along similar lines, two further observations can also be made: that Evelyn was only one of ten participants involved in the project; and, less bluntly, that her (arguably) impeded technical prowess is a compromise well-made or even desirable. The latter argument is one that rekindles Christopher Small's criticisms of how Western classical values, particularly an obsession with virtuosity, risk cutting many people off from music (Small, 1977). John Dewey perhaps would have had greater sympathy with Evelyn. This is perhaps surprising—contemporary instrumental teaching is scarcely progressive in the Deweyan sense—except that his arguments are not easy to reconcile with a one-size-fits-all approach that would neglect the individual experiences of the child (i.e. Evelyn's), however progressive that approach may be (Dewey, 1899).

It follows that any instrumental teachers looking to adapt their pedagogy in similar ways to BeAM should take care not to simplify Dewey's message by treating all pupils as though they are the same or by 'teaching to the average' (Hacker & Rowe, 1993; Pring, 2017). A true Deweyan pedagogy would instead seek to understand, then embed, Evelyn's preference for teacher-led, notation-based activities, beyond which pupil-led opportunities for experimentation and learning thorough collaboration could be nurtured flexibly and through negotiation (Dewey, 1916). Such an approach would also circumvent the ways in which Dewey's ideas currently play out, that is, in the stories of many classically trained musicians who regret their

inability to stray from the score and improvise because of how they were taught (Bull, 2019).

8.3.2. A pedagogical dilemma

The dichotomy of Evelyn and Jake also has wider implications for instrumental teaching. The ways in which pupils are disadvantaged either because other pupils are being accommodated (or prioritised), or because they fail to conform in a certain way to the ideal types this chapter has outlined, is a dilemma all instrumental teachers face—especially those considering how to approach their group-teaching. The bigger question has been posed before: who is instrumental teaching for? I surveyed the mainstream, egalitarian answer, 'music for all', in §1.2.1, including how both versions of the NPME strive to meet this aim (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe, 1999; Kemp & Mills, 2002; Gruhn, 2005; DfE & DCMS, 2011/22). One unfortunate result of the NPMEs' unspecific mandating of continuation opportunities has been to perpetuate the inequalities of traditional instrumental teaching, which valorises home practice and parental support, and best serves pupils such as Evelyn, who are comfortable receiving direct attention from adults, desire praise, and can seek out and meet increasingly complex challenges (Spruce, 2013). In my experience of teaching, the pupils who flourish in the current system are generally successful in the other areas of their schooling and are driven to add musical skills to their portfolio of accomplishments. When the Music Commission asked, 'what about the rest?', they did so on behalf of most post-WCET pupils, who, as my data shows, do not necessarily share Evelyn's outlook or disposition (Music Mark, 2018, p. 8). 'Music for all' should no longer mean 'music for the few, able to respond well to the demands and contexts of traditional pedagogy.'

The project's final contributions are to encourage reflection on the very purpose of instrumental lessons and, in turn, to position BeAM as one practical alternative to a 'failure model' that currently pushes a small minority of young musicians towards excellence and fulfilment (AYM, 2012, p. 5). Working in a situation where group lessons were her only option, Evelyn enjoyed a higher-quality musical experience

than a traditional approach would have allowed *because* the rest of her group were engaged, rather than being restless or, at times, disruptive. Jake, likewise, was served well by being given a greater and more individual musical voice. I am acutely aware that for many years, I imposed on 'Jakes' rigid musical and behavioural expectations to which they would probably need to adhere if they were to be successful. All too often, pupils who are unable to meet such expectations are still considered either unsuited to the demands of instrumental learning or, worse, unmusical.

Because of its more inclusive ethos, BeAM is averse to such a hierarchy. It does not sacrifice the possibility that pupils can achieve high standards in performance, even if data has shown that this was not a principal concern for the project's participants. Instead, they valued regular opportunities to make and share music together—'follow[ing] your heart with violin', to recall Kaylee's memorable description. BeAM's Deweyan framework means that it seeks to democratise, not police, pupils' behaviour. Now that the project is complete, it is also possible to align its data with that of the Music Commission, which underlined how well-being, personal satisfaction, and fun are among the greatest benefits of learning music (Music Commission, 2019).

Chapter 9

Conclusion

This conclusion revisits the research aims of this thesis before detailing its key findings and recommendations for future practice. The project's limitations are also acknowledged, including certain changes in design and execution I might make with the benefit of hindsight. I also summarise the contributions the thesis makes to existing knowledge and examine the wider implications of rethinking post-WCET teaching for hub leaders and, especially, instrumental teachers open to rethinking their own teaching through a BeAM-like lens.

9.1. Revisiting my research aims

This thesis posed a central research question: How can instrumental pedagogy be adapted to better facilitate pupils' engagement and progress as they continue lessons after WCET? Its central aim was therefore to design and test a new pedagogy that better addressed the needs of post-WCET learners. To do so, it sought to understand these needs more fully, including how they differ from those of other types of learners, and to examine how traditional pedagogies can be prohibitive, especially for post-WCET learners. I recognised during an early stage of my research that a deficit of qualitative data about WCET-related teaching and learning would need to be addressed, so merged this aim with another: to conduct an action research project in a rural state primary school that would generate valuable new data, shed light on post-WCET teaching and learning, and lead a broader discussion about new instrumental pedagogies and post-WCET continuation. To this end, I also aimed to align any new pedagogical approach I would create with the 'music education for all' agenda of the NPME.

9.2. Four findings

This section summarises and discusses in turn four central findings of this thesis:

1. Designing and delivering a pedagogy that is pupil-led can better facilitate engagement as pupils continue lessons after WCET;

2. It is possible, and desirable, for instrumental teachers to conceptualise and identify progress in new ways, supporting post-WCET learners to demonstrate their musical and personal growth (after Dewey) through more varied modes of engagement in lesson activities than traditional pedagogy facilitates;

3. Pupil-led pedagogies are better positioned than traditional pedagogies to support an instrumental music education agenda, such as the NPME, that aims to include and engage all children;

4. Drawing a distinction between training and educating will help instrumental teachers emulate or build upon new, non-traditional pedagogies.

9.2.1. Pupil-led pedagogy better facilitates post-WCET engagement

Of the various changes I made to my teaching style during this action research project, pupil-led learning was by far the most significant; it was also the most decisive factor in answering my central research question. I found that by rebalancing the power dynamic between the instrumental teacher and their pupils, many new opportunities for pupil decision-making were created. Authorising pupils to take the lead in BeAM's learning activities extended playing times (compared with traditional pedagogy) and prolonged pupils' concentration. Pupil-led repetitions in post-WCET's small-group environment became an effective in-lesson practice strategy that were beneficial in themselves, helped dismantle the barrier of (teacher reliance on) home practice, increased musical accuracy and flow, and reduced the need for corrective pedagogies. By freeing pupils to move around the teaching space,

to make and respond to musical gestures, to talk to their peers to solve problems or decide how a piece might be played, and to create their own version of a familiar piece, BeAM demanded considerable focus on the part of its pupils. They became more motivated to maintain this focus because they took a much more active role in their lessons, had the power to influence the musical discourse, and could shape their own learning.

9.2.2. It is beneficial to identify musical progress in new ways

The concept of musical progress, and how best to evaluate it, vexes educationalists. The traditional answer in instrumental teaching has been to prioritise technical skills and repertoire, whose increasing complexity creates benchmarks that can be assessed summatively. I was able to show that it is possible, and desirable, for instrumental teachers to conceptualise and identify progress in new ways, supporting post-WCET learners to demonstrate their musical *and* personal growth (i.e. their 'growing power', after Dewey) through more varied modes of engagement in lesson activities. This new pedagogical outlook was truly liberating and became the second most decisive factor in answering my central research question. Through BeAM, musical processes were more visible and, indeed, central to the success of planned learning activities. The nature and quality of how pupils engaged in (e.g.) exploring new modes of musical expression, discovering instrumental techniques, creating their own music, reimagining repertoire, and appraising their own playing and that of their peers, could now be used to gauge their understanding and progress. Most of these actions are currently either absent from lessons (the activities do not exist to inspire them) or are overlooked (because of a prevailing emphasis on musical product over process).

Shaping lessons so that growth can be nurtured and identified in such ways further reduces reliance on home practice, allowing more pupils to make progress. It also frees instrumental teachers to broaden their learning objectives, no longer teaching only testable knowledge and skills, but embedding BeAM-like scenarios that pose problems, stimulate curiosity, and call for musical decisions to be made. I found that,

although pupils' technical development may be slowed by this approach, a deeper type of learning can be achieved in which pupils put their (preliminary) skills at the service of types of creative behaviours that are traditionally introduced at much later stages of learning. In a post-WCET context, this finding has three further benefits: first, the immediacy of applying skills is especially beneficial to pupils whose experiences of WCET do not prepare them well for an investment model of instrumental teaching; second, BeAM's emphasis of collaborative learning makes group teaching (the most common setting for post-WCET teaching) the ideal, rather than a compromise; and the centring of creativity and musical decision-making, in which fixed outcomes are less relevant or prized, offers new opportunities to pupils who are less suited to or motivated by corrective pedagogies.

9.2.3. Pupil-led pedagogies better support the aim to engage all children

An important first step to designing an effective continuation pedagogy was to understand the needs of post-WCET learners more fully, including how they differ from those of other types of learners. It was necessary for BeAM to be aware of its unique, post-WCET context so it could pre-empt the needs of its pupils and be more inclusive than traditional pedagogies. Fieldwork underlined this need to smoothen continuation. Notable findings in this area included: pupils' preference for and perception of music that they regarded as 'easy', making lessons more enjoyable and revealing a desire on the part of pupils to feel comfortable or at ease during their music-making; the significance pupils attached to performance; and pupils' wish for these preferences to be heard and accommodated by their teachers.

BeAM makes a strong, inclusive case for recognising the benefits of an 'easy' approach in instrumental teaching, planning a wider range of pupil-led learning activities, being alive to the dangers of musical overload, and introducing new notes in a less hurried way (i.e. prioritising creative musicianship and reducing the burden of note-reading). It also shows that 'easy' does not necessarily need to be taken at face value: just as instrumental teachers can foster a deeper learning by identifying musical progress in new ways, so it is possible to make seemingly advanced skills

feel more achievable and accessible through activities that are pupil-led and collaborative, at a pace largely dictated by pupils' decisions and actions. By the same token, pupil-led pedagogies can allow pupils to appreciate that their decisions truly matter and have a genuine effect on the learning experiences and musical processes as they unfold.

Two final implications of pupil-led pedagogies were uncovered. First, that meeting the needs of pupils who relished sharing their *collective* music-making with an audience calls for a new outlook on the part of those who organise and prepare performance opportunities. This outlook would embrace 'sharing' and/or musical processes (rather than products) more explicitly, making future pupil-led pedagogies even more inclusive. Second, the dichotomy of Evelyn and Jake raised the danger of a one-size-fits-all approach to instrumental teaching and reiterated that pupil-led pedagogies should be designed not to treat all pupils as though they are the same, but rather, after Dewey, to learn about and respond to pupils' individual preferences and experiences.

9.2.4. Distinguishing between training and educating is overdue

Nearly a century after Dewey wrote that 'a revolution in teaching' would occur were formative learning processes to take hold in twentieth-century education (Dewey, 1916, p. 183), many instrumental teachers remain wedded to models of training that perpetuate methods (thus discouraging change), implicitly celebrate professionalism as though it is the pinnacle of music-making, and/or preserve master-apprentice hierarchies. This thesis has documented and critiqued the prevalence of these qualities in instrumental teaching, including among approaches that are widely acclaimed for fostering excellence and/or social justice. It has also highlighted how the NPME—whose revised version cites 'education' and its close variants 237 times, 'training' and its close variants just 47 times—would be better served by breaking with traditional pedagogy, especially for post-WCET teaching.[32]

[32] For example: 'educator', 'trainee', and so forth.

For such a break to happen, it will be necessary for educationalists and especially instrumental teachers to draw a much greater distinction between *training* and *educating* pupils. Currently, if the latter is used at all, it is invariably as a synonym for the former, as if to train is to educate. (This fact is one reason why, as discussed in §2.1.2, many headteachers regard WCET as an adequate substitute for, rather than supplement to, classroom teaching of music.) Taken together, this thesis's findings instead outline and endorse an *educating* model of instrumental teaching that is transformative rather than reproductive (Creech & Gaunt, 2018), and more active and personalised than passive and formulaic (Dewey, 1916).

9.3. Contributions to existing knowledge

This thesis advances our knowledge of traditional and new instrumental pedagogies, the specific circumstances of post-WCET continuation, and how drawing on Deweyan ideals can make instrumental teaching more engaging. It has generated new data about WCET-related teaching, addressing a qualitative deficit in this area, and highlighted why traditional pedagogy can be prohibitive for post-WCET learners. The new pedagogy it proposes, BeAM, is the first of its kind: it is centred around primary education rather than conservatoire training; it redefines 'pupil-led' in the lexicon of music education; its Deweyan lens reconceptualises musical progress; and its successful enactment during this thesis's action research has made the case for continuation pedagogies to be recognised and developed further in instrumental music education. This rest of this section elaborates on these contributions in turn.

By advancing knowledge of instrumental teaching at a primary level of education, this thesis adds to calls to rethink pedagogies that, when they are made, have tended to focus on tertiary or specialist pre-tertiary settings. Centring primary education rather than conservatoire training has raised new issues that are more relevant to young musicians' learning, e.g. the need (especially in a post-WCET context) to reduce reliance on home practice, to create new, non-interventionist approaches that

downplay corrective pedagogies (Bull, 2022), to 'be a musician' from as early a stage as possible in their learning, and to slow the pace of technical development while deepening musical understanding (Duke & Byo, 2019). By suggesting solutions to these issues, BeAM also refines existing understanding—for example, it broadens Robert Duke and James Byo's perspective by improving pupils' in-lesson experiences of music-making, helping to make musical processes, rather than notes alone, more beautiful.

Taken together, the arguments and practices this thesis has outlined redefine what is, or should be, meant by 'pupil-led' in music education. By extension, it also suggests that terms such as 'pupil-centred' and 'pupil-friendly' should no longer be used interchangeably with 'pupil-led'. This is because their recent use, at least in relation to instrumental teaching, has been tokenistic or unfounded, connoting a sense of pupil-led autonomy that is invariably missing. This nuance would also help instrumental teachers' draw a greater distinction between pedagogies (which can be pupil-led and grant pupils a meaningful say over their learning) and learning resources (which are often pupil-friendly, e.g. upbeat backing tracks, illustrated sheet music). As it is, 'pupil-centred' in instrumental teaching is usually a misnomer, masking the status quo.

In Dewey, BeAM takes account of a figure whose immense influence in education has been discussed on a philosophical level by scholars such as Paul Woodford and Randall Allsup, but, surprisingly, has not been applied systematically to instrumental teaching. This thesis has drawn a line between Dewey's ideals and progressive ideas forged this century, such as informal pedagogies, peer assessment, collaborative learning, listening pedagogies, and more positive ways to deliver feedback (respectively: Green, 2002; Lebler, 2006; Daniel, 2008; Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014; Patston & Waters, 2015). BeAM advances and re-situates these ideas in a structured and coherent way, showing how engagement is better facilitated by taking new approaches to teaching spaces, collaborative and reflective learning activities, and recognition of musical progress. Through the example of pupils instigating their exploration of new instrumental techniques (which BeAM did not explicitly set out to introduce), the thesis also shows the potential of experiential learning in

instrumental music education, i.e. that pupils can intuit, from practice, elements that can then be clarified and named by their teacher.

This thesis makes the case for continuation pedagogies to be recognised and developed further in instrumental music education. This case, in fact, extends beyond BeAM and its support of the aim to engage more children for longer; music education at large is embattled and will need to absorb new approaches and values over the coming years. It faces a similar set of connected challenges to those raised by this thesis: to understand all pupils' musical expectations, to draw out the positives of small- and large-group teaching, and to support learning objectives that are as much musical as they are personal and social. (The practical implications of continuation pedagogies, especially for instrumental teachers and hub leaders, are discussed further in §9.5.)

9.4. Reflecting on the project and its methods

I was able to design and carry out action research because of the longstanding, positive relationship I had with the school that agreed to host its fieldwork. This arrangement did wed fieldwork to a single rural school, limiting the size and diversity of its participants. While I have taken great care, as described in Chapter 4, to maximise the project's trustworthiness, rigour, and transparency, any further action research in the domain of instrumental teaching would clearly benefit from a larger sample size and duration. The impact of Covid-19 is also relevant here: national lockdowns prevented in-person music lessons from taking place altogether, required instrumental teachers to deliver lessons online (and then only for pupils whose families were able and opted to take them), delayed my fieldwork until 2021, and shortened its duration, as I knew that some participants would move to high school in the autumn. In the event, the amount of data I was able to generate was still (more than) sufficient; analysing any more data would not have been possible within the time I was granted to complete this thesis.

The influence of the pandemic was also felt when in-person lessons were able to resume. Indeed, I wonder, in hindsight, whether my efforts to support pupils' transition back to in-person learning sometimes had a slightly conservative effect on how I enacted BeAM. I was mindful of the huge upheaval participants had already experienced in their education, of the need to provide them now with a comfortable, safe space, and of Dewey's advice that however new a learning experience might be, it should connect with everything that has gone before. Even so, did I explore BeAM's changes to their fullest potential? If I were to repeat the project, especially now that the prospect of further lockdowns has long receded, there would probably be occasions when I would be bolder, for example by resisting the temptation to step in to manage a pupil-led situation that was momentarily losing direction. As it was, it became clear during the project that some new ideas, such as peer appraisal or facilitating *by* stepping back, would need more time to settle. From this perspective, having to shorten each cycle of action research was unhelpful.

Similarly, the end-of-term concert I agreed to organise was a cause of some regret. This was an event that pupils, teachers, and families had always enjoyed and were pleased to revive between lockdowns, albeit now in class 'bubbles'. However, as an event fixed on the school calendar, it came with expectations about how much music the children might play and how it would be presented. The problem of reconciling BeAM's less formal, pupil-led approach with an end-of-term concert that, officially, did not belong to my fieldwork dawned on me towards the end of the third cycle, when the concert inevitably began to impinge on lesson time. I recorded in my field notes a fear that the concert risked completely distorting the project's findings and, in the spirit of the project, decided to give the pupils a greater-than-usual say in its preparation and presentation. However, BeAM had deliberately slowed the pupils' pace of learning, enriching their music-making in ways I was yet to recognise fully. The concert was too much, too soon.

In their different ways, the tensions caused by these two experiences—Covid-19 and the concert—are a useful reminder that the realities of practice will always temper the idealism of theory. Reflecting as a scholar, I am aware that some of the research and writings I consulted for this project make recommendations for change that are

more radical than I was able to achieve. Yet, as a practitioner, in whose care are groups of children wielding violins and bows, sometimes after a wet playtime, certain recommendations do not always feel viable. This project does bridge the gap between theory and practice—a gap that is conspicuously large in instrumental teaching for ideological and structural reasons I have outlined—but I have come to believe that positive change, however modest, should be celebrated not criticised.

Finally, this project's Deweyan lens was intentionally narrow. A close reading of several of Dewey's key works on education (rather than on, say, the place of art in society) allowed me to engage manageably and meaningfully with his arguments, but my application of his ideas was selective. I persevered, for example, with supporting pupils' emerging note-reading skills to various degrees across all three cycles. The decision could be criticised as 'un-Deweyan'; I could have waited to reintroduce notation only when pupils showed an interest in it. Instead, my instinct prevailed—that being unable to read music confidently could deter pupils from joining ensembles at high school—so in this case I chose, through BeAM, to increase the pupils' chances of success within their existing frameworks, rather than give their interests free reign (Hildreth, 2011).

9.5. Implications for future practice

Because the findings of this thesis are largely practice-orientated, they potentially pose a challenge to anyone responsible for the delivery of instrumental music education. This section therefore dwells on the implications of the findings, especially for instrumental teachers and hub leaders, many of whom will be open to new ideas to improve continuation but may also feel instinctively protective of traditional approaches that have characterised their profession for so long.

This thesis has outlined why these tensions exists, from the precarious circumstances that undermine working practices in the sector, to the perception that musical excellence is threatened by change, as if new pedagogies and outlooks risk disserving

children who may go on to become professional musicians. I believe that, far from narrowing children's prospects, this thesis empowers them to shape their learning in new ways in the present. If it also succeeds in better facilitating continuation, then, logically, it will widen the pool of active musicians in our society, enabling music to play a positive, integral, and ongoing part in more people's lives—a key ambition of the NPME. An educating model in music does not preclude musical training. The two must coexist and can do so through pupil-led pedagogies that recognise that instrumental teaching can aspire to much more than teaching technique and note-reading alone.

Questioning longstanding values or admitting that current practices are not serving all (or enough) pupils well is not easy. But 'even a subject that seeks to forefront its esteemed history must adopt pedagogies that serve the needs of its learners today' (Jorgensen, 2008, p. 5), and the changes suggested by this thesis can benefit pupils, instrumental teachers, and hub leaders alike. When I have shared BeAM with teachers, their relief that the significance of instrumental group teaching is being recognised has been palpable (e.g. 'I didn't realise what I was doing was important.'). Perhaps this speaks more to the cachet of one-to-one teaching than it does to the potential of pupil-led pedagogies, but the validation that teachers crave and which hubs are obliged to evidence does suggest that criteria for success other than competition wins, exam results, and membership of flagship ensembles would also be welcomed.

It also affirms the need for continuation pedagogies to be developed further in instrumental music education, not only for their intrinsic benefits, but also to help teachers and hub leaders take greater pride (and educationalists more interest) in the art of post-WCET and group teaching. To this end, I draw the thesis to a close here by reviewing its clearest implications for future teaching practices:

- Post-WCET teaching must not aim to mould 'ideal' pupils but to remember (or gain awareness of) the skills and knowledge they gained and the style of teaching they experienced during WCET, which will have forged strong expectations about post-WCET learning;

- Group working can provide new, effective opportunities for pupils to collaborate by playing, creating, and making decisions about their own music, existing music, and versions of existing music, and solving problems together;

- Collaborative learning activities can also help pupils become more confident note-readers but a new musical focus does not always benefit from introducing a new note or set of notes: covering *more* learning objectives with *less* repertoire frees time for deeper forms of learning;

- Creative learning activities that enable pupils to use their active musical voice are motivational and can allow them to instigate their own exploration of new instrumental techniques;

- Incorporating movement into lessons (around the teaching space and through musical gesture) can help pupils to maintain focus, to respond spontaneously, and to take musical risks;

- Allowing pupils time to talk musically within and around learning activities can aid understanding and encourage peer-learning and autonomy;

- Performances can still be arranged but may be reframed as (e.g.) opportunities to share and celebrate pupil-led processes instead of or in addition to more conventional musical products, giving extra meaning to such events while taking pressure away;

- To implement (any of) these changes is to understand that the instrumental teacher can convey to pupils a more equal dynamic by knowingly fluctuating between the roles of leader, facilitator, and fellow musician, and that learning to relinquish control (as it is traditionally understood) at first makes this new role more, not less, taxing.

Appendix 1

Teacher notes for focus group activities

Focus Group Activities (~45 mins per group)

Establish ground rules through group discussion.

Write these on small white board so everyone can see them.

Activity 1 – Take a pile of blank cards and a pen or pencil. On your own or with a partner, write or draw on each card one type of activities we do in violin lessons.

Ask pupils to tell me about what they've chosen.

Activity 2 – Could you arrange your cards in a line starting with the one you enjoy the most.

Ask pupils to talk about what they enjoy the most and what they enjoy least and why.

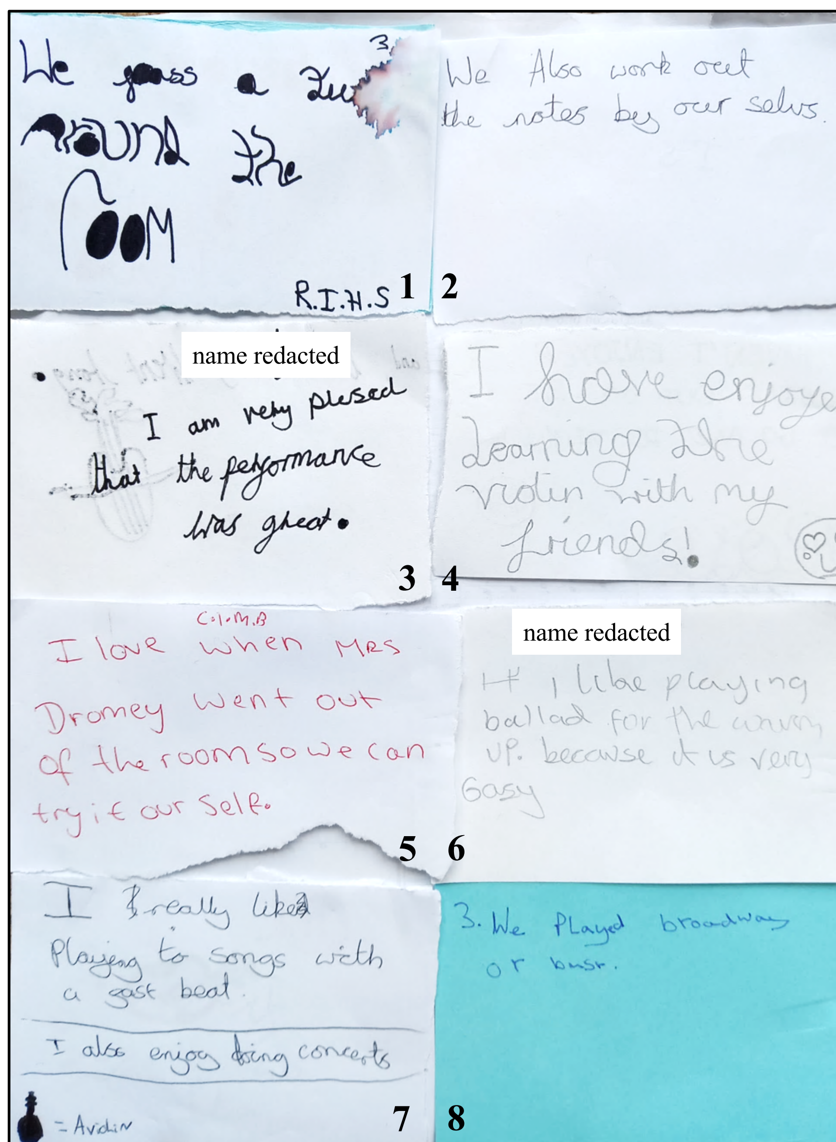
Activity 3 – Could you select something from your cards (or something else you haven't yet mentioned) that you think you have improved this term?

Ask pupils to talk about what they have improved, how they know they have improved, what would they like to improve in future?

Finally – Is there anything else you would like to tell me about playing the violin or about your lessons?

Appendix 2

Sample of focus group prompt cards



1. 'We pass a tune around the room.'
2. 'We also work out the notes ourselves.'
3. 'I am very pleased that the performance was great.'
4. 'I have enjoyed learning the violin with my friends.'
5. 'I love when Mrs Dromey went out of the room so we can try it ourself.'
6. 'I like playing 'Ballad' for the warm-up because it is very easy.'
7. 'I really like playing to songs with a fast beat. I also like doing concerts.'
8. 'We played 'Broadway or Bust'.'

Appendix 3

§9.2 (‘Anticipated ethical issues’) of the ethics approval form

1) Coercion of participants – I have worked at the school for over 10 years and am well-established there as a violin teacher. I have a good working relationship with staff and pupils who may feel reluctant to admit they don’t want be part of the project.

Potential participants will initially be approached via the Headteacher, who will introduce the project and distribute my information sheet and consent form. My information sheet makes clear that no one should feel obliged to participate. Parents and pupils will later have the chance to ask questions and I will verbally reiterate this. Furthermore, my consent form makes clear that when focus groups are held; it remains possible for pupils to opt out, even if consent was previously granted.

2) Threats to the services participants would normally expect from the researcher in their normal role – Parents and pupils may be concerned that they will receive a different style of lesson, rather than the format they know and enjoy, if they agree to be part of the project.

In addition to my information sheet, I will speak more informally to parents and pupils of potential participants in order to answer any questions they may have, and to explain the nature of the ideas I plan to implement. I will also reassure them that feedback from pupils about the lessons is central to the project and will help inform subsequent planning. Their engagement in and enjoyment of the lessons will be a significant concern.

3) Taking and storing video footage of participants

Written consent will be sought before any video footage is taken. Any child whose family has requested that they not be filmed will not be excluded from lessons but positioned out of shot. Raw data, including video footage of lessons and audio tapes of focus groups, will be transferred at the earliest opportunity from my personal password protected laptop to a specifically created folder in the N drive of the University system. All video footage will be securely destroyed after the specified date.

4) Anonymisation

To significantly reduce the risk of identification, I plan to anonymise both the school and all participants, using pseudonyms. I will also make sure that pupils are not identifiable from my descriptions of them. I am aware that when reporting on data in my PhD, I am using a small sample of children in a village school where I am well established as a violin teacher. I do not believe that full anonymization is possible because of the small group of parents, teachers, and pupils who know the school well. For this reason, I do not plan to give open access to data collected. Video footage will be analysed and used to corroborate my written lesson observations but will not included in the project's submission. Excerpts of video footage will only be shown to teachers for training for up to 10 years after the completion of the project.

5) Reporting on and using the data ethically

I will interpret my findings to the best of my ability and my PhD thesis will not name either the school or any pupils involved. I will also make a separate request on my consent form that extracts of video footage may be shown for up to ten years after the project's completion with other teachers or student teachers for training purposes. Any teachers involved in these sessions, will be explicitly asked not to film footage.

Appendix 4

Information sheet for parents

Dear Parents,

For those of you who don't know me well, I've been teaching the violin at school for 16 years. During that time, I completed one of my PGCE placements in Warren, taught at least 11 whole classes the violin, and given lessons to dozens of pupils and small groups. For a small village school, we have an impressive number of violinists and music-making feels a normal part of school life. Beyond teaching violin, I support other teachers for the European String Teachers Association, which led me to study a PhD at the University of Portsmouth. For my project I'm now planning some research, in which I intend to involve current violinists at the school.

My project looks to identify the most effective teaching strategies for children who choose to continue learning after whole-class violin. I'll be designing a "toolkit" of best practice to share with other instrumental teachers. The fieldwork will take place during pupils' usual group lessons over the Spring and Summer terms. Children will not need to give any extra time commitment, or act or say anything differently to normal. I'll simply encourage them to continue enjoying their lessons and playing together. At the end of each term, I'll speak with them in their usual groups about their lessons. Questions might include how they feel they're progressing, and how (or whether!) they're enjoying the different activities we cover in lessons. I'll record their opinions and thoughts and write notes after each lesson about my observations in order to pinpoint the specific strategies that worked best to help children progress and stay engaged with music.

From my experience of working with other instrumental teachers, I know that seeing videoed excerpts of activities in real school settings, rather than reading about them in a book, is extremely valuable for teacher development, and that these are scarce in training material. This is why I intend to record lessons, taking time to analyse exactly what has taken place and, potentially, using clips of the material for the training of other teachers. The material will be used *solely* for this purpose; the school and children will not be named, and of course no material will be shared on social media.

I very much hope and expect that children will enjoy offering their opinions to help improve lessons for others and that they will take pride in their progress. Being part of a research project will be an exciting and positive way to develop a strong musical identity. I have attached a consent form, which needs to be signed by a parent/carer. Electronic signatures are fine. I will follow up this information sheet by talking to pupils about the project so that everyone is well informed and can discuss the project together. Please can I request that completed forms are sent electronically to the school office by **Friday, December 18th, 2020.**

Please be reassured that, no one is obliged to participate. All pupils will still have their lessons as normal and be treated no differently to anyone else; pupils whose parents/carers do not give consent would simply not take part in the focus groups at the end of each term.

If you have any questions about the project or its consent form, please contact me by email (h.dromey@chi.ac.uk) or by phone ([phone number redacted]).

Many thanks,

Helen Dromey

Helen Dromey BMus MMus PGCE LRAM

Appendix 5

Parental consent form

Title of Project: Modernising Instrumental Teaching: Rethinking Continuation through Democratised Learning

Name and Contact Details of Researcher(s): Helen Dromey Email: h.dromey@chi.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of Supervisor (if relevant): Dr Anna Bull

University Data Protection Officer: Samantha Hill, 023 9284 3642 or data-protection@port.ac.uk

Ethics Committee Reference Number:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 10.11.20 (version 1) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time until April 2021 without giving any reason.

3. I understand that data collected during this study will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet (10.11.20 version 1).

4. I consent to focus groups at the end of each term being audio recorded. The recordings will be transcribed and analysed for the purposes of the research. Neither the school nor pupils will be named in the reporting of focus group data.

5. I consent to violin lessons to be video recorded. The recordings will be transcribed and analysed for the purposes of the research. Excerpts of lesson footage may be showed to teachers solely for training purposes for 10 years after collection. They will then be destroyed.

6. I agree to my child taking part in the above study.

Name of Participant:	**Date:**	**Signature:**
Name of Researcher:	**Date:**	**Signature:**

26.10.20 (V.1)

Appendix 6

Information sheet for participants

Hello name redacted

This sheet gives you some information about a violin teaching project I'll be doing in 2021.

When I'm not teaching the violin in schools redacted, I'm studying for a PhD. This is a qualification you can take after you've completed a degree at university. As part of my course, I'm doing a study to find out some new information. I'd like to include the school's violinists in the study, and this includes you!

I want to find out what helps children make good progress in their music lessons and what makes them want to continue playing the violin. To do this I'll be thinking about which activities you all enjoy and which you don't enjoy. I'd like to video our lessons so I can remember everything we did together and write it down each week. I'll also want to know *your* opinion about your violin playing. For example, things you think you're already good at, or things you'd like to improve in the future.

At the end of the Spring and Summer terms next year, I'll get you together in your usual violin groups to talk about these things. I'll want to hear all your opinions and I'd like to record them on an audio recorder so I can remember everything you said to use later in my study. I hope that what I find out will be useful for other teachers. They might like to try some of the things that worked best for us in lessons with their own pupils.

No one *has* to be part of the study. It's your choice. Everyone will still have their violin lessons in the usual way even if they don't want to take part. You might agree to be part of the study and then change your mind. This is fine, too. Just let me know or ask your parents to tell me.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. Let me know if you have any questions. If you think of something you want to ask later, you can stop me another week at school and ask. Your parents can also ask questions by emailing or phoning me or seeing me in the playground.

Mrs Dromey

Appendix 7

Participant assent form

2021 Violin Teaching Project with Mrs Dromey

Tick if you agree

- **I have read and understand the information about the study.**
- **I have asked all the questions about the study that I want to.**
- **My questions have been answered.**
- **I know I can stop being in the study whenever I want, for any reason, and will continue having my violin lessons in the same way.**
- **I agree to be in the group session today.**

My Name:

Researcher's Name:

Date:

Appendix 8

Links to four extracts of footage

Lesson activity	**Link**	**Position in footage** (group : cycle : lesson | time stamp)
Leading and following	[Redacted]	1:1:3 | 16’43”
Pass the parcel	[Redacted]	1:2:3 | 19’08”
Reimagining ‘Feelin’ Blue’	[Redacted]	3:3:2 | 23’39”
Reimagining ‘Ballad’	[Redacted]	2:2:3 | 6’36”

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