

Excerpts from Assignment 1 Critical Commentaries and Portfolios

A note about using these excerpts:

The sharing of these excerpts are intended purely to demonstrate examples of successful interpretations of the Assignment brief. They are to help provide examples of how the use of literature, Harvard referencing, reflective writing, tone and the portfolio works together in this assignment. The content, teaching, ideas or opinions are not the focus for sharing these examples but you should be able to see how literature and theory are applied to personal reflections and teaching examples to demonstrate critical reflective writing.

Any replication of content from these examples in the assignments submitted will be treated as plagiarism, with consequences detailed in the student handbook.

Excerpt 1:

In this critical commentary, I intend to focus on two specific learning theories in depth: Swanwick's principle of "Fluency First and Last" (Swanwick 2011: 53); and the Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET) model in which music education takes place via the instrument as a vehicle to explore and develop the student's musical world and identity (Fautley 2019: 35). I have found these two theories particularly inspiring and sought to incorporate them into my evolving teaching method. I will explore how they differ from the behaviourist way in which I was taught, demonstrate how I have developed in response to these ideas, and reflect on my successes and ongoing development needs.

Swanwick's third principle of "Fluency First and Last" from *Teaching Music Musically* argues that musical fluency should take precedence over musical literacy (Swanwick, 2011: 49). He points to non-classical music traditions, where the ability to intuitively understand music ("playing by ear") and respond to aural stimulus (improvisation), coupled with the skill to play an instrument is valued over traditional notation. Werry expresses it in a similar way: "play first, talk later, and writing, if it happens, even later than that." (Werry 2016:1). Swanwick does not believe that musical literacy should be the ultimate aim of music education: it should facilitate learner engagement and inspire musical creativity, allowing learners to derive their own personal meaning from their engagement with music. Swanwick's method requires teachers to enable student autonomy and facilitate conversations that lead to further understanding and new discoveries, giving life to Salaman's stance that "a child should emerge from a lesson a little altered" (Swanwick, 2008:10).

This approach differs hugely from the more traditional, behaviourist teaching methods reflected in my own learning experiences. I was taught using books that started with a list of rules that one must learn before being allowed to play notes (musical literacy). It was a method that relied on "skill and drill exercises", exams to measure progress and positive reinforcement from my teachers (Wray 2018: 67). Swanwick criticises this method as partial and incomplete, focused on teaching specific musical elements in isolation, telling us nothing about musical expression and providing only a partial experience. Boyle expands on this by claiming that "instrumental teachers working in the UK are able to progress from the role of student to instrumental teacher with no formal training, perpetuating methods and

techniques potentially acquired in an apprenticeship model of tuition in a range of professional contexts” (Boyle, 2020: 51). This rings true and was one of the primary motivating factors for applying to the PGCEi course. I have thus far relied heavily in my teaching career on replicating the behaviourist education I received, deeming it effective in most situations, and with an emphasis on musical notation. I have been inspired by Swanwick’s theories that call for integrated musical experiences linking various musical activities (composing, performance and listening) rather than presenting individual musical elements or “sound materials” as unrelated educational activities taught in isolation (Swanwick 2011:41). He warns that traditional methods lead to a musical experience that lacks expressive depth and meaning, saying “although tunes are made from tones, exclusive attention to tones diverts us from tunes” (Swanwick 2011:43).

Excerpt 2:

The third principle for teaching music musically is ‘fluency, first and last’ (Swanwick 1999: 49). Fluency relates to knowledge ‘of’ music, which comes from a deep understanding and familiarity (Philpott 2016:45). I have experimented with singing as a tool to grow this knowledge. It is the most effective foundation on which to build musicianship skills because musical knowledge learnt through singing is usually internalised more than knowledge gained on an ‘external’ instrument (Bowyer 2015: 27). Singing is a wholly inclusive activity with few prerequisites, and its benefits, especially of singing in groups, are well documented (Daubney 2017:17). I use singing for classroom control with singing commands, for playing games, as a means of learning new music and of exercising creativity, and I believe this helps to nurture musical fluency in the young people I teach see Figure 2 for Reflection on my Y5 class. I extensively use solfa and hand signs, helping children to internalise relative pitch (Bowyer 2015: 27). We learn songs with fairly limited pitches and mainly stepwise movement in the Seals, and some of the children can already hear the solfa in our songs. In our recent lessons, I have been playing the ‘Mi Do Do’ game with them – a little like Simon Says, but we don’t repeat the pattern ‘mi do do’ if sang. When their voices are warmed up and the key and pitches are established, I stop singing the patterns and ask them to sing from just the hand signs. This can be heard in Figure 3 Audio 3 at 1:40. Their accuracy with this exercise is gradually improving and it has been really impressive to hear this showing me that their ‘inner hearing’ is developing effectively using these methods.

Sawyer advocates putting improvisation activities at the core of the music curriculum, arguing that students with a grounding in improvisation will be able to think and converse more musically and be effective ensemble players with more ability to interpret musical scores (Sawyer 2009: 1). Practising scales on their own can often feel like intellectualising music before experiencing it, implying a potentially ‘boring’ prerequisite for playing the actual music which we will only get to do later on (Jeter 1997: 4). I looked at changing the way I taught scales to include improvisation, I believe the activity in Figure 7 Video 1 fulfils both principles two and three, as the young people are making their own music through improvisation (from 1:35) with fluency and understanding for the sort of rhythms needed to remain within the jazz style. Once I had briefly reminded the group of our finger shapes in E flat major, we were able to start playing musical phrases straight away. I’m fairly confident the children would have been able to play the E flat major scale afterwards, however the route we took to that knowledge felt far more ‘musical’ and gave them access to participating and being inside the music making or as Philpott terms it, knowledge ‘of’ music rather than just the knowledge ‘how’ which an isolated scale might provide (Philpott 2016:45).

Portfolio Evidence Examples (taken from different assignments to show different student approaches):

Evidence 9:

Screenshot of Lesson 5 lesson plan (beginning, middle, end).

THE LESSON			
Stage in Lesson	Intent <i>What is the intended learning? Why are we doing this?</i>	Implementation <i>What teacher/student activities will this lesson include? How will they be organised & delivered?</i>	Impact <i>What exactly will I assess? How? What am I looking for? How will I know this has been achieved?</i>
Beginning	1) Developing active listening skills, ability to keep a steady beat, recognising certain recurring patterns/tunes 2) Knowledge of left hand 3) Awareness of the sound of the instrument	- YouTube clip, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeSuYk33zns - Children responding to music, feeling beat, volunteers deciding where to keep the beat (hands, feet etc). - Mouse creeping up and running down the children's left hand when they hear the tune - Asking questions to keep the children engaged	- In a small group I will easily be able to see when students maintain a steady beat. - Students can identify different instruments or pitches (advanced). - Ask for opinions on how it makes them feel/what it reminds them of etc.
Middle	1) Needs to be flexible, as I don't know the make up of the class. - Include elements that can cater to all with opportunity for more advanced students to help beginning students.	- Revision of B, A and G. - Simple rhythms and tunes on these notes. Both written and aural call and response, using PowerPoint, backing tracks and floor stave and icons. - Ties in with homework task. Children compose their own tune at their level. Using icons, note names, or notation for the whole class or volunteers to play	- Listening out for students making a steady and relaxed sound on the instrument. - Small group and individual playing will help me identify those needing additional help. - When pieces are changing pitches, I will be on the look out for those who are struggling with fast finger changes
End	2) Composition	1) Needs to be flexible, as I don't know how far we'll get. Recap of what we learnt this lesson - Flexible ending. Have a challenge page towards the end if we are running early. - Need to remind children to look after their instrument - Recap LH vs RH and animal fingers - Explain and hand out homework sheet. Make expectations clear, but no pressure if they can't/forget.	- Asking individuals for suggestions will help me gain a good insight into their understanding of pitch, rhythm and fingering. - Ask for questions to see if any student is unsure of things covered in class. If so, ask an advanced student volunteer to help explain to the class- that way I'm assessing the understanding of both students

End of document

Evidence 10:

Lesson 2, Monday 27/10/21.



What? Revision of breathing 1,2,3,4 and counting fingers 1,2,3,4 to a backing track. Revision of notation learnt last week. I introduced new notation needed for new pieces and incorporated Kodaly time names and the note value information on the slides, which I hoped would tie in with the information given in classroom music lessons. I tried to make the difference between the minim and semibreve rest clear by drawing an upright and an upside-down stick man. This made the kids laugh. I also did some rhythm rhymes (tying in new notation information).

So what? I started off the counting fingers exercise too fast (double speed). K asked to go slower, so I switched it to half speed. I will remember this for next time, as the children were immediately more accurate in their fingering. Some children knew all the note and rest values but were less familiar with the staff/stave. Most knew a bar line, but only Mo was able to identify what 4/4 meant. I found this hard to explain to the class, but I attempted to by clapping some rhythms in 4/4, whilst marching a beat- left, right, left, right. I'm still not sure if I was effective and explaining clearly to all students so will need to check in again next week.

Li, Lai and Mah need further help with maintaining a steady beat in feet whilst saying/singing the lyrics to the rhythm rhymes.

I explained a treble clef and asked for volunteers to give me examples of instruments that played in the treble clef. Almost everyone volunteered an answer. Some said drums or piano, so I had to explain that the piano played in two different clefs, and that most drums didn't have a clef, but could be high or low. I was impressed by the variety of instruments known to the students.

Now what? Next week, I will revise the concept of 4/4, and tie this in further to my clapping rhythm rhymes exercise. I will also test the knowledge of the notation we have learnt so far and revise treble clef instruments.

Figure 1. Lesson plan

Date/time Mon 7th Nov

Group String Ensemble (45 mins)

Main activities

Why? (time-ish)	How	Assess the impact – reflections in red
Revise the definition of 'pitch'. Practice showing pitch in different ways. Learn a new wintery song together – having fun!	What is pitch? 'I need help with this song' – direct children to show pitch with their snowy fingers. Perform 'Snow is Falling' song (with viola pizz accompaniment). Teach song, make up new wintery words if time.	Can children hear and show pitch moving up and down? Do we all know our definition of pitch? How is the singing today? <i>Mostly thumbs up for 'do we know what pitch is?' but not sure whether this tells me about their actual</i>

		<i>understanding of pitch. They sang song in tune and with mainly correct pitches after a few tries through.</i>
Listen to a piece of music in a fun and engaged way. Follow a leader. Have an opportunity to share our responses.	Introduce two new puppet friends. Grumpy donkey (stop still) and Pippa Puffin (copy me). Listen and move to Delibes Pizzicato. Allow time for responses afterwards.	Can we follow our leaders? What were the responses to the music? <i>Excellent engagement, all participated and good freezing for the grumpy donkey. 'The music sounded silly!', 'it was like a fog horn in the middle' – quick talk about brass instruments, 'I could hear the strings being plucked' learners demonstrated critical listening skills differentiate between sounds.</i>
Prepare to hold the bow.	Be a zombie, check your friend's zombie hands – are they soft and floppy? (Give out scarves.) Find right hands, practice pulling scarves through fingers. Try holding bows if time/appropriate – check everyone has one, discuss care, find the tip and the heel.	Can the class all show me super soft hands? Do they know which their right hand is? <i>All found soft hands easily in zombie mode, but much harder with the scarves. Tried briefly holding bows, bobbed round to help. Not much success, but most trying hard and excited.</i>
Play a piece together, have pride in our playing.	Allow class to choose our last tune – Crocodile, Circles in the Air, Seagulls.	Notice posture, ensemble, does everyone seem confident with their string colours? <i>Didn't have time today.</i>

Relevant 'back pocket' activities

Snowy song – traffic lights, solfa, in a round.

Swans and rabbits.

Rosin and Key

Diversity and inclusion; differentiation; pupil voice etc

Children can make up words in snowy song, and invent different ways of showing pitch.

Opportunity for free movement within listening exercise.

Offering choice.

Peer support and assessment when finding soft hands.

Varying communication using puppets.

To remember for next time

Words for snowy song, invented by the class: The snow is falling on the ground, the snow is floating in the air, the snow is making me so cold, the snow is falling in the tree.

Figure 1:

Activity	Resources	Outcomes
Greeting – Hang Massive - Once Again - 2011 (hang drum duo) (HD) - YouTube – Simple body percussion patterns for class to copy – tap knees, clap hands/feet, to a steady pulse. Pupils can lead the activity when confident.	Music Here Today song Hang Massive - Once Again - 2011 (hang drum duo) (HD) - YouTube	Pupils greet each other and settle into the session, building rapport with one another and with staff. Children can become calmer if needed, or can wake up and become engaged if needed.

FOCUS ON THE <u>PULSE</u> Listen to other piece/s of music to feel the pulse in varying tempi and style.		Choose pieces of music to engage, energise or calm as needed.
Movement – <i>Song or piece of music encouraging physical movement.</i> 'I Say Hello' – stood up or sat down. Add clapping between lines. This song is acapella. "C'mon" from Can Do Music. "Can You Sway" from Can Do Music. <i>Choose song carefully taking into account the feeling of the class.</i>	Can you Sway mp3 C'Mon mp3	Pupils will demonstrate the pulse with body movements. Gross and fine motor dexterity will develop.
Featured Instrument 3 Note Bossa – using tuned percussion and keyboard. Pupils can take turns.		Pupils will take turns playing an instrument. Dexterity will develop using fingers on piano or gripping and swaying carefully with the ocean drum. Pupils will listen to each other play. Pupils can develop notation reading skills by engaging with Charanga visuals, OR simply explore the xylophone.
Choosing – <i>Pupils choose an instrument to play.</i> "Choosing" song from Can Do Music. Pupils come up to choose and instrument from the trolley or choose from the box.	Box of assorted hand held percussion and music trolley. Choosing Song	Pupils will develop instrumental preferences and develop their skill using their chosen instrument.
Playing together – <i>Pupils play solos and play together.</i> THEN Lovely Day by Bill Withers in G. G / Em / C / D C / D	Pupils should have instruments to play.	Pupils will... • Develop ensemble skills • Develop individual instrumental skills.

Play song on the bass guitar emphasising the PULSE. Pupils can play the note of G if on a tuned instrument. <i>PUPILS RETURN INSTRUMENTS TO THE TROLLEY WHEN ACTIVITY HAS FINISHED</i>		• Develop dexterity • Develop sense of pulse and rhythm. • Develop confidence as they solo • Keep a steady pulse as a group whilst performing a song.
Session Close – <i>A song or piece of music to close the session</i> Goodbye everyone – use as a calming end to the session. OR Any other calming goodbye song.		End the session, pupils can begin to adjust to the next activity.

Reflection Cycle using Kolb:

