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EXPLORING MUSICAL LEARNING

- Learning can be considered as the process by which people acquire, understand, apply and extend knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes. Children and young people also discover their feelings towards each other and towards learning itself. Learning is thus a combination of cognitive, social and affective elements. The teachers’ recognition of what learners bring to their education is crucial. (Pollard et al., 2014: 34)

Introduction

This chapter explores some of the complexities of musical learning – what learning is, how and where we learn and how music in schools contributes to developing musicianship. Pollard et al.’s (2014) broad definition of learning demonstrates that music education potentially contributes to all of these processes. Yet music also goes beyond this; as Reimer (1989: 50) notes, it is the embodiment of music that sets it aside from other more mainstream subjects; that is, ‘we receive an “experience of” feeling rather than “information about” feeling’ – signifying the aesthetic.

Musical learning happens in a variety of settings. *The Music Manifesto* (DfES, 2005), the first of two reports outlining the then Labour government’s commitment to music education, defined three ‘sectors’ of music education (Table 2.1). Children may engage in musical learning in all three sectors, even within a school environment.

Table 2.1 Music education sectors as defined by *The Music Manifesto*

Formal	Learning takes place in statutory provision or with statutory funding in schools, colleges or music services
Non-formal	Learning takes place outside formal education provision, but can include out-of-hours work in schools, supervised by adult professionals
Informal	Young people organise and lead learning themselves without adult supervision

Source: *The Music Manifesto* (DfES, 2005)

Fundamentally, learning needs to make children believe in themselves and develop as learners in ways that have currency and validity beyond the classroom and extend into the future, regardless of where learning takes place.

Objectives

Through this chapter you will:

- explore ideas about how and where musical learning happens
- consider what musical learning is
- identify barriers and enablers to learning.

Exploring musical learning

When thinking of ‘a musician’, we likely head straight to a vision of someone actually ‘doing it’ – making and/or creating music, which is probably what children want from music education. Music learning is practical and experiential – learning through doing and through the experience of immersion in music. As Paynter (1982: xiii) notes in his guiding principles for music education, ‘Music is a way of listening to sounds, and musical experience is a way of working with sounds and learning to control the medium’.

A collation of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum (DfE, 2014a) and the National Curriculum for Music (DfE, 2013) yields a model given in Table 2.2. Note, however, that the learning outlined combines activities, behaviours, attitudes and outcomes. These are not intended to be seen as a cumulative progression; such an additive approach is misleading as learning is not always linear.

Table 2.2 Music education as defined within the EYFS and the National Curriculum for Music

EYFS Ages 3-5	Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7)	Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11)
explore and play with a wide range of media and materials	use technology appropriately	
	have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument	
	play tuned and untuned instruments musically	play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
investigate and experience things and ‘have a go’		
concentrate	listen with discrimination	
	listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music	listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

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EYFS Ages 3-5	Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7)	Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11)
keep on trying if they encounter difficulties	increase their self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement	
have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things	create and compose music on their own and with others	
	experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music	improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them.	learn to sing and to use their voices	
	use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes	develop an understanding of musical composition, organising and manipulating ideas within musical structures and reproducing sounds from aural memory
safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function		
children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent (and share) their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories.	creativity	
	engage and inspire pupils to develop a love of music	
	develop a critical engagement with music	
		use and understand staff and other musical notations
	listen with discrimination to the best in the musical canon	
	develop their talent as musicians	
	appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians	
		develop an understanding of the history of music.

Source: Compiled from EYFS (DfE, 2014a) and the National Curriculum for Music (DfE, 2013)

The language used by the EYFS framework leans towards experiential learning, having a go, acting creatively and developing what might be considered as essential habits for learning – resilience, experimentation, personal discovery, learning through experience, etc. It also embraces aesthetic possibilities, for example sharing thoughts and feelings about music. In contrast, the limited guidance within the Key Stage 1 and 2 National Curriculum documentation focuses on a broad set of activities and outcomes in which listening, composing and performing are more clearly delineated as artificially separate entities and a body of knowledge is assumed.

The inherent principles of the EYFS framework are useful in helping to bring the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 to life. The holistic approaches are underpinned by Paynter’s (1982: xiii) guiding principles, including ‘making music is more important than musical information – which is only a support for musical activity’. The *integral* relationship between making music, creating music and being critically engaged as a performer, composer and listener, has synergy with the approaches advocated throughout this book.

Musical knowledge

Current educational policy focuses attention on ‘knowledge’, a central facet of the increasingly prevalent neoliberal educational policies evolving in the UK and elsewhere throughout all levels of education (Allsup, 2015). In initial teacher education, a ‘subject knowledge audit’ examining ‘subject matter knowledge’ and ‘knowledge of teaching the subject’ (pedagogical content knowledge), is often central.

However, knowledge is a complex term, defined in multiple ways. As Wright (2012: 23) candidly notes:

Knowledge that finds its way into schools as the music curriculum is never neutral. It is the result of ideologically impregnated policy through which it becomes filtered to enhance and preserve the culture and economic interests of the dominant social group. As such, it is a relay for certain social and cultural values.

Table 2.3 breaks down one way of defining knowledge types, relating these specifically to musical learning.

Table 2.3 Examples of types of knowledge displayed through musical learning

Knowledge type	Example
Knowledge ‘about’	Knowing the significance of the lyrics in relation to the story Knowing that the song has a call and response structure in the chorus Knowing that many songs have verses and choruses Knowing the meaning of the term ‘descending’
Knowledge ‘how’	How to sing and change the pitch of your voice How to play with other people How to project your voice How to sing and do actions simultaneously How to pitch the first note from hearing the backing track

Knowledge type	Example
Knowledge 'of'	Knowing that changing your voice gives rise to different sounds Knowing that when the conductor lifts their hands, you should be ready to play Knowing that the shape of melodies goes up and down Knowing that some notes are longer than others

Source: adapted from Philpott, 2016

Here is a classroom example of different types of knowledge interweaving through musical learning:

Year 2 pupils, dressed as shepherds, perform a catchy, upbeat song in the school's annual nativity to a packed intergenerational family audience. Singing along to a backing track, they add simple actions (which they agreed in a lesson) including stamping, clapping and pointing, 'painting' the lyrics with their gestures.

The chorus includes a 'call and response' section; one group asks the question 'what are you looking for?' and the others respond 'we're looking for a baby'. The children learnt this song in a number of ways – from an audio recording playing in the background as they entered the classroom each morning and changing for PE over the previous three weeks, by rote (copying a line at a time) from the teacher, and from playing musical games such as laying out the shape of the phrase 'what are you looking for' with coloured counters, noting the descending pattern.

Yet, Reid (1967: 131) warns us that by reducing musical learning to an exclusive focus on certain knowledge types, we overlook 'embodiment' – a fundamental dimension of the arts:

In the art-experience of the whole person, the body and mind together, the bodily side is important in ways in which it is not important, say, in mathematical or in scientific thinking. In our total contemplative absorption in art the quality of our own embodied living through it is enhanced. It is an experience which is intrinsically valuable, good for its own sake, a raising of the level of psycho-physical being.

In planning music lessons and musical learning experiences, we need to be mindful that by focusing exclusively on developing skills, understanding and knowledge, embodiment and aesthetic knowing may be unwittingly being sidelined.

The knowledge and understanding that we acquire through 'musicianship' is complex, and contextually bound. Elliott (2014: 1) notes the following:

Musicianship, which *includes* listenership, is a rich form of procedural knowledge that draws upon four other *kinds* of musical knowing in surrounding and supporting ways. Musicianship is context-sensitive, or situated: that is, the precise nature and content of musicianship and listenership differs from musical practice to practice ... Musicianship is a form of cognition – a rich form of thinking and knowing – that is educable and applicable to all.

Combining diverse thoughts on knowledge and the philosophy of knowledge, on which this book has only scratched the surface, we begin to understand the all-encompassing potential impact of a musical education – mind, body and soul.

Models of learning

An understanding of how we think and learn has the potential to impact on the way in which learning is designed (Wood, 1998). Sloboda’s (2005) work explores a series of interlocking areas relating to musical learning – cognitive processes of learning, the impact of motivation, talent and skill development, and the function and existence of music in the real world, in which values underpin experiences. Sloboda’s model highlights many kinds of learning – from that which is deliberately sought, such as deliberate repetitive practice of a specific skill, to learning primarily developed through interactive social processes as we go about our everyday life.

Bloom et al. (1956) propose a model of three inter-related domains of learning – *thinking* (cognitive domain), *feeling* (affective domain) and *doing* (psychomotor/ kinaesthetic domain). All of these are important in music, and applicable both in and out of school.

Cognitive learning is perhaps the best-known domain in Bloom et al.’s (1956) ‘Taxonomy of Educational Objectives’. In this taxonomy, knowledge and understanding progressively develop as we move from simple cognitive functions such as recall, towards bringing together multiple ideas and sources in order to critique, justify and evaluate. This system of classification, which assumes a hierarchical structure through which ‘higher order’ thinking and deeper learning can be developed, has undergone many adaptations and revisions.

However, the taxonomy can be useful in thinking about ways of developing and supporting learning. For a critical examination of this issue, see Fautley’s (2010) book *Assessment in Music Education*.

TASK 2.1

Look at the potential activities in Table 2.4 and identify those you would consider useful for developing musical learning.

The activities in the left column suggest ‘knowledge of’ music, for example the instruments of the orchestra and the position of notes on a staff. However, these could be better developed through acquiring this ‘knowledge’ from more inherently musical activities, encouraging pupils to act and think musically. Teachers need to know their pupils well in order to be able to develop questions and tasks offering appropriate challenge.

Table 2.4 Examples of lower- and higher-order thinking

Activities engaging lower-order thinking	Activities engaging higher-order thinking
• Repeated rehearsal of a musical phrase • Researching facts about composers • Memorising note names on the musical stave in isolation of sound • Copying down musical terms • Colouring in pictures of instruments • Chanting 'Every Good Boy Deserves Food' to learn the notes on the lines of the treble clef	• Repeated rehearsal and improvement of technique and fluency through own critical evaluation and reflective/reflexive action • Devising a plan for how to develop own music • Working out a basic melodic shape by ear • Comparing two versions of the same song • Creating a melody on a musical instrument or using technology • Working out which of four graphic representations accurately represents the musical phrase heard

Metacognition and self-regulation

There is often a need for repetition in order to make improvements (e.g. when learning to fluently play a musical phrase on the xylophone), which, on the one hand, could be considered a low-order thinking skill. However, since the ambition with such an activity is to develop the quality somehow – perhaps the fluency, tone, timing or technique – cognitive engagement at a higher level is required in order to recognise what needs changing through self-critique, working out how to adapt, trying it out, and keeping on going through this cycle. This kind of cycle is the essence of *metacognition* – a crucial set of learning skills bringing together awareness of the knowledge of cognition and the skills of self-regulation. Metacognition is described by the DfES thinking skills group (no date, cited in Fautley and Savage, 2007: 39) as 'the process of planning, assessing and monitoring one's own thinking ... thinking about thinking in order to develop understanding or self-regulation'. As Claxton (1999: 21) states, 'learning to learn is knowing when, how and what to do when you don't know what to do', an adaptation of an idea first used by Piaget to describe intelligence. This is different from just 'learning', which Claxton (1999: 21) describes as 'what you do when you don't know what to do'.

Self-regulation is defined by Vohs and Baumeister (2004: 2) as 'any efforts by the human self to alter any of its own inner states or responses ... thoughts, emotions, impulses or appetites, task performances ... [and] attentional processes'.

McPherson and Renwick's (2001) longitudinal study of musical development reports that when learning a musical instrument, the level and quality of self-regulation varies in line with skill. Between the ages of 7 and 9 years, they suggest that self-regulation in general is low, thereby proposing that it develops over time, possibly as a function of maturation, environmental or skill-level factors or a combination of these. They conclude that the main priority in skill development is to provide learners with the means by which they can develop their own learning strategies to enable them to focus their practice time and concentration, recommending that children are given the encouragement to self-monitor, set goals and

evaluate their actions to assist their skill development. The development of these abilities leads to self-regulatory strategies becoming automatised later in a child's development and is beneficial to subsequent skill advancement (Macnamara and Collins, 2009).

These recommendations are important when you are planning learning experiences for your class.

TASK 2.2

Think about a music lesson you taught or observed recently:

1. Were there examples within the learning situation which encouraged the development of higher-order thinking skills? If so, were these successful and how do you know?
2. Was there a focus on self-regulation in any way? If so, how was this achieved?
3. How would you adapt the lesson to cognitively engage pupils more effectively?

Affective learning encompasses the development of our thoughts, interests, behaviours, attitudes, values and the social-emotional aspects of learning. In music, there are many ways in which these are important; examples are given in Table 2.5. Evidently, self-regulation transcends affective learning and overlaps partially with cognitive learning. Sheridan (1991: 29) argues that affective objectives of learning are of fundamental importance, since they are required to help pupils 'gain positive self-concept, greater self-esteem and a more developed sense of competency'. This needs to happen from a young age, since it is clear that early experiences can impact on children in the future. This is particularly important if children are to remain motivated to be involved in music education.

Table 2.5 Examples of affective learning through music education

- Having an emotional response to a piece of music; responding to music in ways which reflect own thoughts and feelings
- Controlling emotions in socially acceptable ways during a rehearsal when working with others
- Handling anxiety and nerves etc. during a performance
- Communicating with an audience through music
- Not giving up when things are not right instantly
- Feeling confident to join in and that the learning/task is achievable
- Valuing music lessons in school

All of the examples in Table 2.5 are important for developing musicianship and creativity. Through music education, we strive to develop habits and behaviours that allow us to develop as musicians. For example, if we don't play something as desired on the first attempt and then give up, it will be difficult to develop some aspects of musicianship. Likewise, if we don't have the willingness or the confidence to try out our own ideas when composing, or we can't work with other people, learning is likely to be affected.

Psychomotor learning is the third domain of Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy. This encompasses the development of motor skills and manual skills. According to Krathwohl et al. (1964, cited in Miller et al., 1998: 69), psychomotor learning relates to aspects which 'emphasize some muscular or motor skill, some manipulation of material and objects, or some act which requires neuro-muscular co-ordination'.

Simpson (1971) further develops these ideas into a model with differing levels of classification, following the same structure as the design of the cognitive and affective domains. There is much potential for the development of psychomotor skills in music education, particularly through the development of instrumental, vocal and technological skills. Physical maturity plays a part in this development. As before, this domain of learning inter-relates to the cognitive and affective domains. Table 2.6 offers some potential examples of psychomotor learning.

Table 2.6 Examples of psychomotor learning in music education

- Hearing that a recording has 'jammed'
- Listening to the sound of a G string on another pupil's ukulele and then tuning the G string on own instrument through pitch matching
- Adjusting the volume of own instrument or voice to blend in with others
- Watching conductor and stopping when directed
- Practising striking individual notes on a xylophone
- Trying out different sounds on a tambourine
- Singing with expression and stylistic awareness
- Improving the fluency and accuracy of a musical phrase through repetition
- Creating music based on a given or chosen starting point
- Arranging the pre-recorded loops on a tablet computer application to create a simple repeating chord sequence

TASK 2.3

Look back through the previous tables of examples of cognitive and affective learning. Identify which of the activities listed in these also require psychomotor learning in order to be successful.
What does this tell you about the domains of learning?

Spiral learning models

Bamberger (2006: 71) states that: 'Musical development is enhanced by continuously evolving interactions among multiple organizing constraints along with the disequilibrium and sensitivity to growing complexity that these entanglements entrain.'

This points towards a spiral model of development, in which knowledge, skills and understanding are constantly learnt, consolidated, revised and developed on a series of inter-related planes. Spiral models of learning are well established (e.g. Bruner, 1960, 1975). In terms of music specifically, Swanwick and Tillman (1986) proposed a sequence of musical development around a study of children's compositions based on Piaget's Stage Development Model. Similarly, Thomas (1970) produced a spiral model following the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project, which was concerned with children's rejection of school music as they reached Piaget's 'logic and reasoning' stage. It focused on three areas of relevance: artistic, personal and social. Whilst this is arguably more applicable to older children, towards the end of the primary phase there is evidence of children clearly delineating music in school and music out of school (e.g. Lamont et al., 2003; Marshall and Hargreaves, 2007) and is something we should be mindful of when planning musical learning.

The importance of motivation

Children need to be drawn into learning and motivated to want to get involved. The topic of motivation is a whole area of study you may wish to explore further, but within the confines of this book we can only scratch the surface.

Historically, it seems that academic researchers have not been particularly good at asking children directly about their views, but have instead made many judgements on what we assume they think. This is highlighted by Smith et al. (2005) who carried out a systematic review of what 11–16-year-olds believed motivated them to learn. Of 13,730 articles screened for suitability, only eight were selected for in-depth case studies through meeting the inclusion criteria. Of these, only one came from music. Many others were rejected because they were about children's motivation but completely ignored children's own perspectives.

The findings offer multiple ways in which music teaching in primary school could benefit, including considerations of planning or content, organisation of learning, engagement, values, assessment ownership, relevance and autonomy. Table 2.7 brings together Smith et al.'s (2005: summary) results and makes suggestions for implementation within music education. The degree of overlap between these categories should be noted.

There are significant challenges to motivating all pupils at all times and there are times when we have to accept that some children cannot be fully motivated for a range of reasons. Often, though, there are ways in which motivation can be improved in order to re-engage someone in learning, if only temporarily.

Table 2.7 Factors impacting motivation for musical learning

Category	Considerations within school music education
The role of self	• Multiple factors influence pupils' decisions about music in school, and once made, these decisions become the dominant influence on levels of engagement: ◦ Your 'teacher radar' needs to always be scanning in order to be aware of the influences and to do what you can to support pupils; these influences come from a range of places and people – friends, parents, siblings, other teachers (including instrumental teachers), popular culture, events in school, as well as the curriculum itself, the way learning is promoted and the impact of 'assessment' if not used well • Children prefer to work in groups; group work increases engagement • Teacher expectations impact on motivation; teachers need to show all pupils that they have high expectations which are realistic and motivating
Utility	Learning needs to be perceived as useful and relevant. In terms of music, this should include: • bringing in children's own musical preferences and ideas • encouraging them to bring instruments they play into class music lessons to use within the curriculum • building links between what children are familiar with and where you want to take them • helping children to be able to feel that their 'real' musical self can be developed in school, rather than creating divisions between school music and 'real' music
Pedagogy	• Pupils prefer activities that are fun, collaborative, informal and active – this should be central to the decisions made when planning and teaching • The teacher's attitude affects pupils' engagement. The messages and signals you send out about how you feel about pupils need to be positive and encouraging. Some teachers may be feeling under-confident to teach music, but should really make an effort to join in and act musically, modelling where appropriate, rather than being detached from the musical culture in the lesson • Authentic learning tasks are more likely to engage pupils cognitively, so helping them to recognise the purpose of the learning and see the relevance beyond just a task in a lesson is important
The influence of peers	• It is important not to be made to appear foolish in front of the peer group. Some children may be shy or embarrassed to perform or answer questions in front of others. Teachers should get to know their pupils as quickly as possible and work hard to create a safe and creative classroom environment where risk taking is encouraged • How groups are organised needs careful consideration and is likely to vary from situation to situation. Think about ways to bring together children from different social groups and different ages – music is fantastically flexible to be able to include children and adults with different skill levels and experiences

(Continued)

Table 2.7 (Continued)

Category	Considerations within school music education
Learning	• Pupils believe that effort is important and can make a difference; they are influenced by the expectations of teachers and the wider community • Expectations should be high, offer appropriate challenge and be achievable; individual and collective successes should be valued and celebrated
Curriculum	• A curriculum can isolate pupils from their peers and from the subject matter. This needs careful and considered planning to overcome – you may also be able to bring pupils into some of the curriculum decision making in order to have an evolving and co-constructed curriculum. Think about what is in your curriculum and why – is it the right thing for these particular pupils? • Some pupils believe the curriculum is restricted in what it recognises as achievement; assessment influences how pupils see themselves as learners and social beings: ◦ There is absolutely no need to give ‘grades and marks’ to pupils; using dialogic feedback in encouraging ways should help all children to move forward in their learning • The way that the curriculum is mediated can send messages that it is not accessible at all: ◦ Try to create a curriculum that has plenty of scope for all pupils to recognise that they are making progress, to celebrate everyone’s achievements, and which takes account of what children want from music education ◦ Think about who is ‘demonstrating’ or performing – is it always the same pupils? ◦ If you were a pupil, do you think that you would pick up the values your teacher wishes to embody? Are they the right values? Are they fully inclusive? What would they say about your attitude in the classroom and your dual role as a teacher and a musician?

Source: adapted from Smith et al., 2005

TASK 2.4

Decide what you will do as the teacher in each of the scenarios below.

Ellie, a Year 5 pupil, is usually an engaged learner, taking a leading part in group work. She plays trumpet in the school band and is in the school street dance group. Today, Ellie is taking a very passive role in her group’s attempts to improvise over a repeating chord pattern using the notes of a pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G and A). Looking around, you notice that the rest of the class seem to be enjoying themselves and engaged in the task.

In this situation, there may be a multitude of reasons why Ellie is unmotivated to join in. Here are a few – think about each situation in turn and consider what actions you might take to help Ellie re-engage:

1. Ellie's mother died recently; this is her first day back at school after the funeral.
2. Ellie does not like playing tuned percussion instruments.
3. Ellie perceives the task to be too easy – she attempted it initially and then gave up over the perceived lack of challenge.
4. Ellie fell out with her friend at lunchtime, directly before this lesson.
5. Ellie has just stopped learning the trumpet. Free provision in the school through a whole-class scheme has recently come to an end and Ellie's family is unable to pay for on-going lessons.
6. Ellie just got the result of her science test and had not done as well as her friends.
7. Ellie's best friend was chosen to help demonstrate with the teacher when the task was set.
8. Ellie is not entirely sure what she needs to do.
9. Ellie is a speaker of English as an additional language.
10. Ellie is too hot.

The list could go on and on. The point is that motivating all children is key to effective education. Situations, environments, relationships, moods and feelings are all dynamic and we are all different. Some children are motivated by competition, yet this makes other children switch off. Some come to school to escape their problems at home and are glad of the opportunities to immerse themselves in learning. Others cannot function effectively. We can adapt what we do, or the way we are, and it will hopefully make a difference. You need to keep trying so that children don't think you've given up on them, but there isn't always a magic solution that will draw someone into learning on a given day. Yet, as the list shows, there are plenty of things for us to reflect on to help us keep adapting what we do and how we do it, striving to motivate and engage everyone.

Barriers to engagement

There are many barriers to full participation that are more or less prevalent at any one time. You could think of these as being like a graphic equaliser – on some days, they may all be at zero or full, but on other days some issues may arise which prevent full engagement with musical (and other) learning.

Figure 2.1 (Daubney and Marshall, 2011) shows a model of identified barriers to musical learning/engagement for looked-after children who were offered the opportunity to take part in music 'taster sessions' as part of a summer holiday course. The categorisations are not mutually exclusive and there is a degree of overlap between some aspects.

Whilst some of the barriers were identified from children who engaged with the courses and were barriers they had overcome, there are many children who found

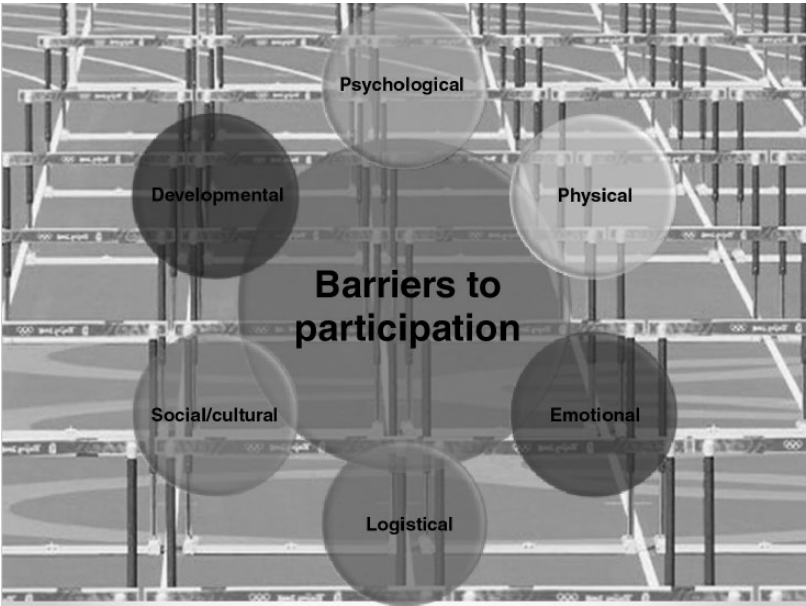


Figure 2.1 Barriers to participation in music for looked-after children

Source: Daubney and Marshall, 2011

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engagement difficult or impossible and were unable to overcome enough barriers for them to engage at all. Table 2.8 highlights specific examples of barriers affecting children of primary school age.

Ofsted (2012, 2013) notes that engagement in extra-curricular music is not always representative of a school's population, for example involving fewer children who have free school meals, who are from specific groups such as travellers or who are in care (looked-after children) than in the general school population. Whether or not children fall into a specific 'category', they can be difficult to engage and therefore a concerted, on-going effort is needed to encourage and include all children and for teachers to see past the 'labels' which may be attached to children.

TASK 2.5

Decide what would you do in the following situation:

Kelly, a Year 6 pupil with a love of singing, begins to draw attention to herself through poor behaviour manifested by shouting out and being disrespectful towards people and instruments towards the end of every music lesson.

Table 2.8 Examples of barriers to learning

Logistical	• Finance – affording lessons, clubs, trips • Getting forms signed by parents/carers • Getting to venues • Staying behind after school for rehearsals or concerts • Getting involved in lunchtime clubs when they need to queue for their free school meal • Family having no insurance so cannot take instruments home • Having no access to computers/instruments outside the classroom • Length of the sessions unsuitable to meet the needs of the individual
Emotional	• Difficulties forming relationships with others • Difficulty expressing feelings and emotions • Difficulty in handling the emotions evoked by some music and topics • Difficulty in understanding the boundaries of relationships with others • Inability to deal with emotions in large groups in socially acceptable ways • Finding the ending of 'projects' difficult, as they have formed a bond with a particular person
Social/cultural	• Difficulty working with other people in large groups • Wanting to choose who they work with outside of the classroom (e.g. not just other children who are 'labelled' with similar issues/difficulties) • Wanting to be with people who understand them • Not knowing what they are signing up for • Not having the confidence to get involved without their friends • Peer pressure – it is not 'cool'
Developmental	• Lack of challenge • Learning not broken down enough • Pace too fast • Inability to access learning through ways introduced • Inability to process instructions
Psychological	• Fear of failure • Reluctance to try something new • Poor self-image • Low self-esteem • Low resilience • Being unable or unwilling to commit to more sustained work at that particular point in time • Difficulty engaging in learning both initially and on a sustained basis
Physical	• Learning not being adapted to help engage pupils appropriately with learning or medical disabilities or issues • Inability to access the learning space • Physical dexterity issues

Source: adapted from Daubney and Marshall, 2011

This is what actually happened:

The music teacher kept Kelly behind at the end of the lesson for three consecutive weeks. During these short, 5-minute sessions with the music teacher, it became quickly apparent that Kelly was purposely misbehaving to gain exclusive attention from the teacher. Advice was sought from the class teacher, revealing that Kelly was the youngest of five children. As each of the older siblings had reached the age of 11, they had been placed into foster care. Kelly was coming up to her 11th birthday and had severe anxiety issues impacting on her behaviour, her confidence and her need for one-to-one attention. Knowing a little more about Kelly's situation helped the music teacher to rebuild a little of Kelly's confidence by using the 5 minutes at the end of the lesson to work with Kelly and a chosen friend on something that the class would be doing in the next lesson in order to help her feel confident to participate effectively. The music teacher also invited a support assistant into a lesson to join in for the last 15 minutes. This helped Kelly recognise that there was a network of people in the school who could support her emotionally and also celebrate her achievements.

Fear of failure

According to Claxton (2002: 17), creative learners display many desirable qualities, including being 'ready, willing and able to work in different ways' and developing resilience, both of which are related to risk taking. Some children feel that it is better not to do something than to 'fail' at it. There are aspects of our education system that perpetuate this. For example, if children feel that school is about seeking 'right' answers, it must be confusing when a teacher says 'try something out' or 'experiment with the sounds'. Fear of failure manifests itself in the classroom in many different ways, for example from a child who quietly does not take part to the 'class clown' who successfully avoids doing something by averting attention. In order to help children overcome their fear of failure, we need to help them have the motivation and self-determination to 'have a go'.

Conroy et al. (2002: 77) identified five main fears of failure in sport:

1. Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment
2. Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate
3. Fear of having an uncertain future
4. Fear of losing social influence/fear of important others losing interest
5. Fear of upsetting important others

Clearly, there is much synergy between the reasons for fear of failure in sport and those relevant to music education. It is important for teachers to be aware of the potential for fear of failure when planning and implementing learning opportunities. According to Sagar et al. (2009: 75):

Fears are generally accepted as normative during childhood and are considered as an adaptive emotional reaction to threat (real or imagined). Fears are an adaptive aspect of development that warn one of dangers and motivate escape or avoidance behaviour.

Humans are complicated beings with complex and dynamic needs, behaviours and thoughts. Returning to the analogy of the graphic equaliser, it is important that teachers put in the time and effort to get to know their pupils as human beings and not just as classroom music students. Whilst on the one hand I sometimes hear that teachers or visiting artists do not want to know anything about pupils before they meet them for the first time so that they do not have negative preconceptions, I personally think this is a rather short-sighted attitude. After all, how do you expect to provide worthwhile, motivating and appropriately challenging learning if you do not know enough about the people you are personalising it for?

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored multiple ideas about how, where and when children learn, as well as considering barriers and enablers to learning. Learning is complex – it is impacted by situations, interactions, personalities, motivations, experiences, moods, feelings, emotions, cultures and much more. Some learning is deliberate, some is ‘caught’ through our engagement with the world and some is perhaps a combination of both. Returning to the opening quote from Pollard et al., we recognise learning as multi-dimensional and acknowledge different levels and functions of learning. Teachers need to make a considerable effort to get to know their pupils in order to work out what motivates them and how to nurture their musical lives in holistic and meaningful ways which develop children’s individual and collective musical identities. Everyone has different rates and ways of learning, bringing different experiences and preferences to musical learning, wherever it happens. Planning for this creates challenges for teachers not least because children’s self-determination needs to be encouraged. All children are unique and special; we should nurture and celebrate this diversity. We need to work hard to build positive relationships in enabling environments, helping children to feel confident to take steps towards developing musicianship both inside and outside the classroom and school.

Further reading

- Daubney, G. and Daubney, A. (2017) *Performance Anxiety: A Practical Guide for Music Teachers*. London: Incorporated Society of Musicians. Available at: www.ism.org/performance-anxiety-guide
- Fautley, M. (2010) *Assessment in Music Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ofsted (2009) Making More of Music: Improving the quality of music teaching (primary). Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/making-more-of-music-improving-quality-of-music-teaching-primary> [This is not the most recent Ofsted report on music education but it has some useful guidance on music lessons and musical learning in primary school.]
- Reid, L.A. (1986) *Ways of Understanding and Education*. London: Heinemann Educational.
- Swanwick, K. (1988) *Music, Mind and Education*. London: Routledge.