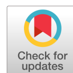

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ARTICLE

Exploring the potential of informal music learning in a perceived age of pedagogical traditionalism for student teachers in primary music education

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Abstract
This research explored the impact of informal learning (IL) in primary music initial teacher training. A small group of undergraduate student teachers had an opportunity to learn about and facilitate an IL approach. Data were collected from interviews, participant reflective logs and researcher reflections. The findings show that perceived benefits included freedom for serendipity, pupil autonomy and aural learning; perceived tensions included student teacher anxiety and a lack of teacher control. The researchers propose two aspects for consideration: first, that language associated with IL has social meaning that must be updated; second, that while direct instruction remains at the heart of primary teacher education, IL can continue to be justified despite the current emphasis on direct explicit teaching.

Keywords: Informal learning; music education policy; musical futures

Introduction

In England, current music education policy is regarded as increasingly formal and traditional (see, e.g., the Model Music Curriculum, Department for Education, 2021; Ofsted Research Review (ORR), Ofsted, 2021). Increased emphasis has been placed upon the value of traditional notation, music theory and ideas stemming from cognitive psychology. This creates tension with informal learning (IL), which places emphasis upon aural learning, increased scope for pupil freedom and choice, and haphazard learning, despite the potential benefits of the pedagogy (Green, 2002, 2008).

IL in music education is implemented on a national and international scale (Musical Futures (MF), 2022; Musical Futures International, 2022). Much of the research into IL has been conducted within secondary music education (e.g., Green, 2008; Hallam et al., 2008; Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2011) and within pre-service secondary music teacher education in Higher Education (HE) (Finney & Philpott, 2010.).

Our examination of the literature suggests that there is limited research into IL in both the primary education (4–11 years) context and in pre-service primary teacher education (in England, pre-service initial teacher training is referred to as ITT). This is the first study, to our knowledge, that has extended the scope of IL into pre-service primary ITT. Our project is guided by Green's (2002, 2008) original research, rather than the reified interpretation of IL offered by Musical Futures. In doing so, we have highlighted important issues that are relevant to other music educators and researchers.

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Background

Informal learning

In this article, use of the term 'IL' refers to a pedagogy that has been adapted to fit within the formal education context of schooling and policy. The pedagogy does not reflect IL in the fullest sense as the learning cannot take place anywhere at any time (Mans, 2009). Yet elements of the informal can be infused into the formal education context through adoption of the IL pedagogy. IL is understood as actively making and playing music, sometimes referred to as *musicing*, rather than a focus upon how to play music (Folkestad, 2005). An IL approach can be seen as a potential solution to some of the problems attributed to formal, traditional teaching pedagogy in music education, for example, low pupil motivation, low pupil engagement and lack of authenticity (Green, 2002). Green's (2002: 9) research involved interviews with 14 popular musicians involved in 'Anglo-American guitar-based pop and rock music'. Five principles were identified as characteristics of IL:

P1. Learning music that musicians choose, like and identify with
P2. Listening to and copying recordings – by ear
P3. Learning with friends who have shared musical tastes
P4. Personal and often haphazard learning without structured guidance
P5. Integration of performing, listening, composing and improvising.

These principles have important implications for how we approached IL in this study. Indeed, Green (2008) explored the transfer of these principles into 21 secondary schools in England, structured according to 7 stages where at least one of these principles were present at any stage. The role of the teacher was to set tasks and ground rules and then to stand back and adopt a facilitator role. This was considered to be a reworking of the teacher's role and was central to our approach to IL with our teaching training students. Cain & Cursley (2017: 139) termed this as a 'more relaxed approach to teaching music'. Furthermore, Gower (2012: 14) suggests that 'rather than devising a plan for the learning that will take place in a lesson, teachers respond as learning unfolds'; certainly, being adaptive, responsive and flexible were key attributes which we emphasised in our student preparation sessions. While some teachers in Green's study perceived potential failure of education policy implementation due to the nature of the teacher role, Green (2008: 2) argued these concerns were 'more apparent than real'. In this study, we contend that it is possible to offer certain freedoms associated with IL, while remaining faithful to the policy implementation with which we, as serving teachers, have been charged.

Since its establishment in 2003, the MF initiative (www.musicalfutures.org) has adopted, funded and continues to promote Green's IL approach in England and beyond. MF has since incorporated Key Stage Two (KS2), aged 7 to 11 years, primary music education into its scope, and has previously worked alongside several primary 'Champion Teachers' to showcase their work. MF has produced an abundance of resources that build upon an IL ethos, although Green's underpinning IL research can be separated from the MF organisation. As indicated above, in this study we have chosen to return to Green's foundational principles, rather than to adopt the reified interpretation offered by Musical Futures.

Informal Learning literature

The impact of IL and MF in secondary music education has been well researched in a variety of international contexts. It is acknowledged that the various discourses, values, policies and other influencing factors present in different countries will have impacted upon the implementation, perceptions and subsequent research on IL. Mantie's (2013) work based in the United States, has identified potential international differences between popular music pedagogy discourse

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(including IL) between American and non-American-based authors. Hallam et al. (2008) and Hallam, Creech & McQueen (2011, 2015, 2018) have conducted extensive research on IL and MF within the English educational system, followed by Mariguddi's (2021) study exploring more recent IL perceptions in England. Jeanneret (2010) and Jeanneret, McLennan & Stevens-Ballenger (2011) have offered a perspective on IL from Australia, where the MF International branch is currently based. O'Neill & Bespflug (2012) and Wright et al. (2012) have commented upon the success of introducing IL and MF in Canadian schools. Evans, Beauchamp & John (2015) have explored implementation of MF and IL in Wales, prioritising pupil voice to generate findings. Overall findings from these studies have continued to substantiate Green's (2008) claim of increased pupil motivation and authenticity, and the value of pupil autonomy. The literature on IL in HE and primary music education is less substantial.

Moore (2019) sought to explore IL as a branch of the MF organisation in both primary and secondary music education. Moore (2019) explored implementation of both IL and JustPlay in Ireland. JustPlay is an approach developed by MF which has been influenced by the ethos of IL but provides increased structure and support specifically aimed at primary aged pupils. Moore's (2019: 243) findings echoed the positive aspects of the secondary school focused research on IL, which included increased 'motivation for learning, developing critical listening and ensemble skills, and enthusiasm for music as a subject' – aspects which are important for our study. Gubbins's (2023) research builds upon Moore's (2019) study, exploring use of a JustPlay approach in primary schools in Ireland. Positive findings were again reported, including enhanced student attitudes towards music learning and increased musical and extra-musical skill development. Wilson (2022) similarly drew upon a wider IL and MF approach for her research in an Australian context in primary and secondary schools. Attention was drawn to the complexities of student engagement when facilitating an IL and MF approach within various school contexts, highlighting aspects of perceived tension with policy. Papazachariou-Christoforou (2022: 1) explored use of IL with 10–11 years old in a rural setting in Cyprus. Findings 'support the notion that young students can construct their music learning when given the opportunity to be active agents and collaborators in the learning process'. Thus, it appears that an IL approach can have affordances within the primary school setting, which we explored further in our research project.

Within a HE pre-service teacher training (ITT) context, two studies appeared significant to build upon. One of the studies, Barnes & Shirley (2007) involved one of the present authors in this report and involved an action research project with generalist primary student teachers to encourage cross-curricular and creative thinking through arts subjects. The project invoked similar sentiment to IL – seeking to nurture increased playfulness, pupil choice and teacher facilitation (rather than instruction). The article recognised 'great potential of shifting the locus of control towards children' but also acknowledged that this was a challenge for ITT (Barnes & Shirley, 2007: 162). In the second study, drawn from the context of secondary music teacher education, Finney & Philpott (2010) show how the music classroom is dominated by formal musical knowledge, formal musical learning and formal musical pedagogies. IL, which they argue is an important element of musical learning, is largely omitted in favour of the formal. Finney and Philpott offer a solution which is central to the work we have undertaken in this project: first, that students should 'live' IL within their training experience, and second, that the potential of IL needs to become known through the reflexive process of *excavation*. Two possible outcomes are identified: first, that some will experience unresolvable dissonance and will not be able to accommodate IL pedagogies within their practices; second, that some will adapt their practices as a result of productive dissonance.

Policy in music education and initial teacher training

If music education classes, both in schools and within the ITT music classroom, have tended to focus on formal musical learning as Finney & Philpott (2010) suggest, then it is likely that this is a

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response to identified policy problems and solutions in which music education is situated (Bowe et al. 1992). For Ball, (2015) educational policy is constituted from particular discourses which frame what it is possible to do, think and say. Furthermore, education policy influences the kind of [music] teacher it is possible to be. Within the ITT context in which we both work, education policy in the last 10 years has had a significant impact on what we do in our music classrooms. Indeed, as noted by Cochran-Smith (2021), ITT has been completely reshaped by an emphasis on accountability which has reduced the space for discussion, in favour of curriculum delivery and core knowledge. It is likely that, within our context, our approach to music teaching has become increasingly formal on both content and pedagogy.

Cochran-Smith (2021) argues that, recently, ITT is seen as a social *problem* in England. McIntyre, Youens & Stevenson (2019) make the point that the United Kingdom (UK) Conservative Party thinking on education in England draws on the ideas of ED Hirsch, which favours 'core knowledge' and 'traditional pedagogies'. Teaching has become positioned as a craft, best learnt through observation and imitation in school settings. Unsurprisingly, the UK Department for Education's (DfE) 'Importance of teaching' (Department for Education, 2010) and, more recently, the ITT Core Content Framework's (CCF) minimum entitlement for ITT (Department for Education, 2019) have emphasised 'school-led' ITT provision, while universities, seen as 'problematically progressive' and 'abstractly intellectual, are 'rendered invisible' and of limited value within the reproduction of the 'conservative social order'. Indeed, through publications such as the ITT CCF (Department for Education, 2019) and the English school's inspectorate, Ofsted (2021) ORR of music education, government has attempted to validate a particular view of learning which emphasises cognitive science in the form of working memory theory and cognitive load theories, at the heart of musical learning. Constructivist narratives are discredited, and a biological foundation is offered for what is and is not teachable. Official knowledge in the ITT context, now, it would seem, must carry an official government stamp.

The upshot is that, in recent years, it is likely that music teaching in English primary schools has become increasingly formal, both in terms of content and pedagogy. Some aspects, such as explicit instruction of efficient song teaching, are probably justifiable; however, we have to be careful not to be over-zealous in our policy interpretation. Drawing on the work of Folkestad (2006), the ORR does acknowledge the importance of IL through its reference to tacit knowledge. Indeed, it is such a reference which gives us license and confidence to approach IL with our student teachers.

Perhaps the difficulty, then, is not how to validate IL within our ITT music provision; it is in recognising our own fear for the inclusion of anything which might be seen as informal or progressive in any way, despite the apparent license, afforded above. Indeed, such fears are probably confounded by a third policy move in ITT which is the DfE market review which requires all ITT providers to apply for re-accreditation of their programmes. Writing in the Journal of Education for Teaching, Newman (2022) criticised the market review as an attack on the academic autonomy and integrity of university-based ITT provision. Indeed, in the first re-accreditation round, only one in three ITT institutions were successful. The stakes, for failure are high, and as Hyatt (2013) has noted, the policy context becomes filled with mythical tales which provide cautionary measures for how policy is interpreted. Furthermore, as we wait for the school inspectors to arrive and to assess the quality of our teacher training provision, we, too, are becoming increasingly cautious and increasingly formal in our music teaching. The stakes of failure are too great.

Methodology and methods

An IL approach was explored through a qualitative, interpretative lens. Stake (1995) depicts qualitative research as being empirical, interpretive, empathic and holistic – elements that aligned

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with the aims of this exploratory study. The subjective perceptions of student teachers were sought through this project to generate increased understanding of an IL approach, as influenced by many factors such as their music education backgrounds and social groups.

The research design was influenced by case study methodology. Merriam (2002: 8) defines a case study as 'an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit'. The case is the social unit of the student teachers, building understanding and experience of an IL approach. Although it is acknowledged that due to a small sample size, generalisations will not be possible, but it is hoped for this project to contribute towards the expansion and deepening of current knowledge both in the discipline area of primary music education and within ITT through relatedness, and reflection upon practice and policy.

Research questions (RQs)

1. What are the perceived benefits of adopting an IL approach for student teachers in primary music education?
2. How are the tensions between current education policy and an IL approach played out in this primary case study?

Project steps

Participants were recruited from a cohort of undergraduate student teachers in primary education with a minor specialism in music, England. Fifteen students participated. It is important to note that although students were registered on a primary generalist ITT programme (and were required to teach other subjects aside from music education), the participants had actively chosen to specialise in music for this module, reducing the likelihood of confidence and self-efficacy issues often raised in the literature relating to generalist primary teachers (e.g., Hennessey, 2000). The module was allocated 18 taught hours for music sessions in their third and final year of their degree. The majority of students in this research had some instrumental music skills. Some had gained these skills through informal or community-based musical activity, such as bands and choirs, while others had followed an examinations route, up to, and including, Grade 8 which is the highest, pre-diploma, music qualification in the UK. Some of the students had completed a general or advanced music qualification, usually at ages 16 or 18 years, which would include a rounded perspective of performing, composing, and listening, along with an introduction to music history and theory; however, none of these music qualifications are a requirement for the teacher training programme which is aimed at primary generalists. Indeed, some students might choose the music 'elective' option because they have little confidence in the subject, and they may want to develop their ability to support music teaching as a primary generalist.

The project had four stages which spanned over a period of 2 weeks:

1. Timetabled session for participants (exploration of IL theory) led by researchers. This provided students to engage in discussion about IL in music education and reflect upon Green's pedagogy in light of the pre-session IL reading advocated.
2. Participant planning workshop (to develop an IL episode for primary pupils, informed by an IL approach) facilitated by researchers. This also provided opportunity for students to engage in IL themselves to live the approach – namely to copy a nursery rhyme by ear.
3. Participant-run IL episode in a primary school for student teachers to reflect upon (approximately two student teachers worked with eight small groups of up to six pupils, aged 9 to 10 years old, to choose, copy and perform a nursery rhyme adopting an IL approach) – to work through productive dissonance in practice. Researchers observed and supported.

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4. Participant reflection upon IL pedagogy, to excavate their own learning practices in light of their experience, and to assess the affordances of IL for primary music education.

Due to practicalities and time restrictions placed upon the project, an abbreviated version of Green's (2002, 2008) IL pedagogy was used. The approach was adapted to ensure that it was appropriate for student teacher prior knowledge and skills, primary school settings and that it was manageable within the short research timescale available. Thus, we built upon an IL ethos, where a focus upon student choice, autonomy and aural learning were emphasised. During the planning and implementation stages of the IL episode for this research, participants were encouraged to listen to and follow pupil lead and direction when facilitating learning, based on pupil interests expressed. A decision was made to refer directly back to Green's (2002, 2008) original IL research and encourage students to maintain awareness of Green's five principles but to focus upon this abbreviated version adapted for the context of this study. The underpinning rationale for this decision stems from previous observation that it can become questionable to what extent various adaptations of IL become misconceptions or a different pedagogy altogether over time (Mariguddi, 2021, Wang & McPhail, 2023). Thus, the methodology departed from previous research that has drawn more explicitly upon adapted resources and approaches already developed by MF for the primary context (e.g., Moore, 2019; Wilson, 2022; Gubbins, 2023). We intended for our HE adaptations to stem directly from Green's (2002, 2008) underpinning research, akin to Finney & Philpott's (2010) approach. However, unlike Papazachariou-Christoforou's (2022) study, we were unable to directly utilise Green's (2008) seven stages due to the limited time spent on this project with the student teachers. We were able to draw upon some of the ideas featured with the stages, such as a particular focus upon certain principles at different times, when developing our abbreviated version suitable for the primary HE context.

The focus of this project was upon student teacher perceptions, which informed the key data collection methods. We were particularly aware that, on their formal 'assessed teaching practices', the student teachers may be reluctant to take risks, or to deviate from teacher-led 'explicit' instruction, as required by the English schools' inspectorate (Department for Education, 2019: 13). Here, then, was an opportunity to work with an urban school in the North West of England which was open to novel 'informal' experience where the stakes of failure, for the students, were significantly reduced. The school valued the opportunity for their pupils to work with our students on a music project; the students valued the opportunity to make music with these 9/10-year-old children.

For us, as tutors, much remained 'at stake'. First, we wanted the students to have a positive experience of making music with the children; second, we wanted the children to enjoy this opportunity and to feel a sense of achievement in their music making; third, while the schools were open to novelty, there was still the expectation that we would make good use of their time. Indeed, one of the most difficult decisions concerned the use of traditional English songs and rhymes as the raw musical material. We felt that such rhymes were both familiar and simple in both rhythmic and melodic structure. Traditional songs of this kind are often referred to as nursery rhymes, and we knew we had to use these materials sensitively; however, one of the author's experiences of Orff Schulwerk suggested that such material could stimulate musical improvisation, involving rhythm melody, musical instruments, voices and body percussion. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Papazachariou-Christoforou (2022) reports the use of traditional Cypriot music in her informal music teaching with primary aged pupils in Cyprus. In the event, the children in our English project accepted the challenge to select a rhyme of their choice from a long list, to pick out the tune 'by ear' on tuned percussion, then to draw on wider music resources, including voice, untuned percussion instruments, found sounds and body percussion, to create their own music performances, to share.

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Methods

Student teachers were asked to keep and maintain individual reflective logs between their initial introduction to Green's (2002, 2008) IL approach and their final interviews. Semi-structured audio-recorded interviews with the student teachers were conducted in two groups at the end of the project. Researcher reflections considered the student teachers reactions, behaviours and thoughts expressed and sought to develop the co-construction of meaning within this case. Researcher reflections were written up after each stage and also fed into discussion where meaning continued to be co-constructed throughout the analysis process.

A thematic analysis approach was taken to generate findings in answer to the two RQs. Analysis was conducted in adherence to Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases. Both researchers participated in the data analysis to enhance trustworthiness (adhering to Lincoln & Guba's, (1985) framework).

Compliance with the British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidelines was adhered to. The researchers considered the potential unequal power distribution between themselves and student teachers. It was emphasised that this project would not contribute towards any assessment on course. Pseudonyms have been used when presenting findings.

Perceived benefits of the IL approach

(Unexpected) success

The students voiced that although unexpected (see later 'anxiety' section in challenges), the IL approach was successful in practice:

> Stephanie, Interview Group 1 (G1) – 'I'm like really surprised about how it went [. . .] I was very surprised how smoothly it ran.'

> Ally, G2 – 'I think before this I really was not feeling confident in my own ability to do this, and I think from this, seeing how effective it was, I now feel confident that I could do it with children.'

The students appeared relieved that their adoption of an IL approach in practice had had a positive outcome, and as a result, had developed confidence to consider future implementation of the approach – suggesting that 'productive dissonance' (Finney & Philpott, 2010) had indeed taken place to some extent. This element of (unexpected success) also occurred in Barnes & Shirley's (2007) study, where student teachers were initially unsure about risk-taking. In addition to this, there was a perceived positive impact upon pupil skill development and pupil enjoyment in this study. This echoes the advantages of an IL approach previously identified in the literature (e.g., Green, 2002, 2008; Hallam et al., 2008; Jeanneret, 2010; Jeanneret, McLennan & Stevens-Ballenger, 2011; Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2011, 2015, 2018; O'Neill & Bespflug, 2012; Wright et al., 2012; Evans, Beauchamp & John, 2015; Moore, 2019; Mariguddi, 2021). Furthermore, there was expression of the pedagogy appearing natural and at the centre of what should be valued in music education:

> Stephanie, G1 – 'It's like what the heart of what music should be.'

> Laura, G2 – 'It felt natural to them.'

Green (2002, 2008) has previously argued that an IL approach is a more natural, authentic way of learning, and the reduced sense of pressure is likely to relate to the decreased sense of right and wrong emitted through the pedagogy (and that pupils knew that the activity was not formally assessed).

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Accessibility of aural learning

Overall, emphasis upon aural learning as opposed to traditional notation was viewed positively after implementation of the IL approach.

> Mark, G1 – 'a very important thing for teaching music anyway [. . .] as a few people have said, they learnt by [. . .] watching people, hearing people, doing it, [. . .] so it's important to kind of model [. . .] hearing something and then giving it a go themselves.'

Mark felt that it was important for the student teachers 'model' use of aural learning to prove acceptance and perhaps permission to do so. This could reflect current discourse in music education policy, where emphasis upon reading and writing traditional notation is noted (e.g., the Model Music Curriculum, Department for Education, 2021; ORR, Ofsted, 2021). The aspect of aural learning was also relatable to some student teachers' backgrounds in learning music:

> Stephanie, G1 – 'because I can't read music [. . .] but I can go and I can sing them a nursery rhyme. And I can sing it until I'm blue in the face over and over again with them just trying to listen out for the right notes.'

Thus, Stephanie perceived that the approach played to her strengths as a musician and highlighted the skill she was able to share with pupils.

Increased pupil control and freedom for serendipity

A key aspect of an IL approach is to facilitate increased pupil control. This was valued by the student teachers, and they were impressed by the level of pupil engagement that subsequently occurred. The level of freedom afforded to pupils also marked the pedagogy as being particularly different in comparison to their previously adopted pedagogical approaches and what they perceived to be happening in other lessons:

> Clare, G1 – 'You're not structuring every single thing for them before you go into the lesson [. . .] the role was reversed and it was really interesting and quite effective in that sense'.

> Stephanie, G1 – '[We were] taking a step back and letting the children be the leaders which in a normal classroom we wouldn't tend to do.'

The IL approach provided space for pupil play and exploration. Pupils were granted time and freedom to explore their musical ideas and moments of serendipity were embraced:

> Laura, G2 – 'I think it's good because it unnerves all the children in the classroom, they know that they don't have to be able to read so well, it's just a matter of being able to listen and try and put that on to whatever instrument they're playing'.

Although the term 'unnerving' can have negative connotations, Laura used the word to represent a positive feeling of shedding nervousness. The sense of pupil enjoyment and motivation perceived by the student teachers was attributed to a freedom in choice afforded to pupils in relation to the direction of their musicing. However, in this project, pupil choice did have boundaries, dependent on the instruments available, group sizes advocated and within the confines of the task set. The student teachers observed pupil leadership skills being developed and showcased amongst certain pupils. In addition to this, a reduction in teacher workload was mentioned as a benefit. Student teachers perceived that by relinquishing control and allowing for increased pupil freedom and

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musical exploration, the need for detailed lesson planning and resources was reduced. However, the notion of play became problematic without an outcome. Each group was asked to share a musical performance by the end of the IL episode, leading the student teachers to take back control to draw ideas and structures together. Student teachers switched back to a more formal approach of teaching to conclude the episode. Student teachers were beginning to navigate productive dissonance to seek a balance between the IL and the practice that was more familiar to their ITT experiences.

Co-construction of music as a collective pursuit

Student teachers discussed a sense of co-construction during their moments of musical play and exploration. A sense of building on each other's ideas – both of the student teachers and pupils – was appreciated, respected and validated during IL groupwork. These often took the form of musical conversations. Student teachers also referred to improvisation occurring within the IL experience, interwoven with listening, performance and composition – as advocated by Green (2002, 2008):

> Daniel, G1 – 'I guess people could see sort of improvisation could be, the feeling of being unprepared, this negative thing was, we kind of turned it into a positive today, you know. It's all about the lack of planning, turned into the gain of work.'

Although there is evidence of misconception about improvisation in Daniel's quotation, the point he was making could be understood as seeing value in play and the unexpected, as opposed to a heavily structure activity with a predefined outcome. Student teachers also recognised a sense of safety felt by pupils by working alongside their friends when trying out new ideas (Green's third principle of IL). An unexpected co-construction of musical exploration occurred in one small group in particular. Pupils introduced the idea of beatboxing (building upon their prior learning experienced in previous classroom music lessons). The student teachers embraced this input that they had not considered.

> Stephanie, G1 – 'They were so interested, and they wanted to do it, so. And it was all about them choosing what they wanted to do, so why not beatbox in a nursery rhyme, that's your choice.'

By proposing the beatboxing idea, pupils had perhaps found solution to the perceived unauthentic content that the student teachers had raised as a challenge (described below). The element of co-construction resonated with Papazachariou-Christoforou's (2022) study, where pupils were similarly able to construct their music learning when provided with such opportunity and autonomy.

Tensions between an IL approach, current education policy and contemporary expectations

Perceived difference of IL

The student teachers were aware of the accountability measures they would be subjected to as soon-to-be qualified teachers. Being 'seen' to facilitate quality pupil output would be a key priority in adhering to policy and fulfilling their role as a teacher. This finding indicates some similarity to Wilson's (2022) article, expressing perceived dissonance with policy.

Ongoing co-construction of perceptions of children's behaviour and what could be permitted during the task was a key consideration for student teachers:

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> Stephanie, G1 – 'And once they know that they're not in trouble, they're not being told off and getting told they're being silly, they really want to get involved and take it a bit more seriously.'

It must be acknowledged that whilst on their previously experienced school placements, behaviour management would have been a key area for assessment, particularly due to the value placed upon this area in the CCF (Department for Education, 2019). Thus, any perceived weakness in this area, both to the student teachers and to outsiders, could reflect negatively upon the building identity of the student teachers as competent professionals.

Following on from this, certainty and control often have positive disposition in schools. Thus, Green's (2002, 2008) fourth principle of 'haphazard learning' could evoke negative meaning within this discourse. Student teachers labelled certain moments as being chaotic, emphasising a lack of control and difference at times:

> Ellie, G1 – 'A little bit kind of 'oh my word'. Chaos.'

> Amy, G2 – 'It worked in the end, but there were just moments where it was just chaos almost, with them just chatting and messing around and stuff.'

It can be questioned whether student teachers were quick to judge this environment to perhaps distance themselves from what the IL approach looked like in practice during the haphazard moments, in comparison to their previously obtained classroom control in other settings during their training. Furthermore, it can be questioned what constitutes 'chaos' and to what extent the 'chatting and messing around' was problematic in comparison to other lessons outside of an IL approach.

Language used also carries social meaning. Although Green (2002, 2008) intended for the 'haphazardness' to reflect pupil learning as opposed to teacher control, we question whether this term requires updating due to the social meaning it carries within the current educational landscape. Student teachers do not want to be perceived as losing control within the classroom, yet have expressed positive perception of the freedom and moments of serendipity afforded to pupils through the IL approach. We question whether the notion of 'haphazard learning' could be reframed to emphasise the potential to become more attuned to noticing these moments of serendipity and allowing them to flourish.

Anxiety

Prior to the actual experience and implementation of an IL approach, student teachers were anxious and nervous about facilitating a session in practice:

> Ally, G2 – 'before it I was absolutely [nervous], because it's really out of my comfort zone, letting them have control really just threw me off.'

Student teachers perceived a sense of risk, and this was often related to a lack of structure and control over pupil grouping and allowing friendship groups to work together:

> Reflective log excerpt: 'Children working with their friends/choosing their groups = distractions. This is why teachers have seating arrangements.'

This challenge appears to have been remedied by student teachers acknowledging value in the co-construction of music as a collective pursuit, enhanced by the safety of working with friends. At times, links were established between perceived anxiety and student teachers' previous musical

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learning backgrounds. For example, Laura spoke of familiarity with an IL approach stemming from childhood experience with folk music learnt by ear, providing her with increased confidence in facilitating an IL approach:

> Laura, G2 – 'because I've never really had that fear of making a mistake, so going into the classroom today and giving the example, I said to them, "I might make a mistake and that's okay, I'm not going to be embarrassed about it".'

Other student teachers discussed different experiences of there being a clear sense of structure, notation and a right or wrong way of musicing, in contrast to how they perceived the pupil's freedom to explore music without negative consequence:

> Ally, G2 – 'I was really nervous because I'm not used to getting it wrong, because it's there for me, so I never get it wrong as such, whereas like the children today, when they got it wrong they didn't care at all, it was just strange to watch because that's not how it was when I was doing it; if I got it wrong, it was quite a big thing, whereas they were just like, *"Oh, it's like that,"* it was very different.'

Students had begun to engage with the excavation of their own music learning backgrounds, as Finney & Philpott (2010) had advocated. However, there was no clear pattern for all student teachers between their music education background and their susceptibility to expressing anxiety at the prospect of implementing an IL approach. Some who had experienced more formal, traditional music education backgrounds in school settings also spoke of IL musicing through choice and enjoyment – hence, removing any tendency to categorise according to a binary notion.

Students raised a lack of time to experience, prepare and plan the IL approach for practical implementation as causing challenge. As researchers, we accept that this was problematic, but other aspects such as timetabling, an ethical obligation to consider student teacher workload and our own commitments resulted in a shorter amount of time being allocated to this project than we would have hoped. This was also problematic in the sense that student teachers were unable to 'live' the IL approach to the same extent that they had done in Finney & Philpott's (2010) research.

Lack of teacher control

Perhaps one of the key challenges identified in the student teacher perceptions was their fear over having a lack of control. A lack of teacher control often related to concerns over pupil behaviour and outcome:

> Megan, G1 – 'I agree with the lack of control thing and like kind of how we've been taught to teach a certain way. Just like trying to not be a control freak with it, and just let them do what they want.'

> Stephanie, G1 – 'but it is hard to give up control, as like someone who's used to standing at the front and being like "okay, you do this, you do this." It's hard to step away and be like "go for it, do what you want" and then still get them good results, cos we all know you wanted their groups piece not to sound rubbish.'

Megan and Stephanie allude to a more traditional pedagogy with increased teacher control, presumably influenced by their ITT taught sessions and experiences on school placements. When student teachers were questioned about whether they would draw upon aspects of an IL approach in their future practice, increasingly formal elements of control were cited as important considerations to make such as learning objectives and groupings. This suggests that this aspect

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might have become an 'unresolvable dissonance' (Finney & Philpott, 2010) for the student teachers at this stage.

Student teachers were also wary that the 'novelty' of the task could wear off if they implemented the approach outside of this project. Other issues to consider related to staffing ratios and available space. The approach was deemed more suitable to large spaces, smaller staff–pupil ratios. An issue of trust was also alluded to, when students suggested that the approach might be more suitable for KS2 due to a perceived sense of increased classroom control for an activity that promotes freedom and pupil autonomy. A perceived lack of teacher control was a tension also identified in Barnes & Shirley's (2007) project, suggesting that this is a key challenge yet to be overcome in ITT.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that despite student teacher initial nervousness and lack of confidence when they were first presented with the IL task, they were able to identify benefits as an outcome of their experience. Student teachers had increased understanding of why we had encouraged them to implement an IL approach due to the overall success of the experience, despite continued perceived tension with policy and wider discourse relating to the increased popularity of more formal and traditional education approaches. This underlying tension prevailed and led to the pedagogy being branded as 'different', prompting a feeling of anxiety linked to a reduction in teacher control.

Ethical considerations were made during the design of this study. The project was scheduled towards the end of the music minor specialist module and was viewed as an enhancement rather than a replacement for any core module material. The students had already completed their main assignment task for the module and their final school placement, so the experience was unlikely to impact negatively upon student assessment outcomes in this context. Other jurisdictions are likely to have similar curriculum restraints and ethical considerations to be made when implementing a pedagogy outside of core curriculum knowledge, largely driven by the CCF (Department for Education, 2019) and English music education policy in this case. What the project was able to offer to student teachers was encouragement to challenge perceived constraint and restriction, and to trust pupils to take increased ownership within lessons. Student teachers will be able apply these implications for their teaching practice beyond the university setting, in various school contexts. Furthermore, as we have been able to locate space for IL and justify the approach in light of current policy, despite our initial hesitation, we now feel increasingly confident to expose future student teachers to IL within taught university modules. Perceived benefits found in this study are likely to enhance the experience of future student teachers in this context, and the perceived tensions encourage critical awareness and reflection upon pedagogy and policy.

Limitations of the study are acknowledged. The research involved a small sample over a short amount of time in one particular context. Power issues were present between the researchers (as lecturers) and student teachers. However, much effort was made to build upon positive working relationships with the students and support and reassure them through identified difficulties and moments of anxiety. The researchers were present at every stage of the project to verify the reliability of student perceptions expressed in the concluding interviews.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have identified perceived affordances of adopting an IL approach for student teachers: a feeling of (unexpected) success; accessibility of aural learning; increased pupil control and freedom for serendipity; and the co-construction of music as a collective pursuit. Second, perceived tensions and difference between current education policy and an IL approach did impact upon this case study by influencing student judgement and informing their sense of

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boundary within the classroom. A feeling of anxiety and a lack of teacher control were experienced. Yet, we have identified space in policy for IL to be justified as a pedagogical approach that can be embraced in primary music lessons. Adaptations made to suit our context stem directly from Green's (2002, 2008) research rather than to directly draw upon MF resources. For IL to flourish, there is acknowledgement that the language that frames an IL approach could be updated to reflect current discourse. Further research is advocated to explore these ideas on a larger scale in the current educational landscape, both within the HE environment and in school classrooms. The project has also raised question about the extent of perceived agency that student teachers have when approaching and facilitating pre-packaged resources. This again provides scope for exploration in future research.

This research has also allowed us as researchers the opportunity to begin to explore, not only the variety of influences which shape what we do, what we say, who we are and what we think it is permissible to do but also our own assumptions about these aspects. The research has shed some light on the conditions we personally set for ourselves, revealing that the spaces we need, to do what we believe in, are actually already there. We encourage readers to engage with this thought in relation to their own practice, actively seeking productive dissonance, 'holding your nerve' and finding opportunities, in the detailed language of policy texts, to legitimise diversity in the ways we each approach music education with our student teachers.

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