

On being and becoming a jazz musician: Perceptions of young Scottish musicians

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Abstract

This paper examines what goes on in an improvising jazz combo in a secondary school in Scotland, where teaching follows Rogoff's three-stage sociocultural process, moving from an initial apprenticeship model through one of guided participation to one of participatory appropriation. Using a case study research design and interpretative phenomenological analysis, and drawing on sociocultural perspectives, the music-making and participation of three participants is discussed and presented through narrative account. Three key themes emerged as perceived benefits: (1) personal effects, (2) social effects; and (3) jazz effects. The development of confidence was seen as the main outcome of learning in the jazz combo. This study suggests that learning in an active participatory jazz combo with pedagogy more appropriate to an informal learning style may help to foster the development of learner voice and help enable a creative disposition, in line with the philosophy of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Keywords: jazz music; improvisation; qualitative; sociocultural; secondary school; case study

Introduction

The study of jazz improvisation in Scottish schools tends to be minimal. This paper examines what goes on in a small-scale study in a secondary school in Scotland where one teacher/researcher, through personal enculturation in jazz, foregrounds jazz and jazz improvisation in the school. The paper presents the experiences of the young people and the perceived impact of their active engagement in music-making through jazz as they gained initial mastery of jazz improvisation. It will argue that although this is a single case it may offer insight into the pedagogical methodology employed. Through focusing on the young peoples' meaning-making from a sociocultural perspective, it may be relevant for music educators engaging with jazz in the secondary school.

There are clear limitations to this study. It is based on self-reports from a small sample of young people from one school. However, by using thick description (Geertz, 1973) it is hoped that the reader may be able to relate it to his or her experience and apply what Lincoln and Guba (2000) define as the process of transferability.

Improvisation is a prominent feature in jazz, and in particular in small jazz combos. It is an activity that requires spontaneous, creative thought and interaction with others. Jazz musicians do not simply recreate music, as is generally the case in Western classical music; instead they can freely interpret and adapt melodies, rhythms and harmonies. Creative decisions are made

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within real-time performances: 'always musical personalities interacting, not merely instruments or pitches or rhythms' (Aigen, 2013: 184). According to Cho (2010), the jazz process is about teamwork, collaboration, performance and innovation. There is encouragement to embed creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation across learning in Scotland in order to foster the development of critical thinking skills and learner voice:

Scotland needs to prepare its young people for life and work in an uncertain economic and social environment if they are to thrive in an era of increasingly rapid change. The need for a well-developed set of higher-order skills will be a key part of the toolkit they will need and the ability to think creatively will be one of the most important tools in that toolkit.

(Education Scotland, 2013: ii)

The following research questions were addressed:

- How do young people reflect on learning in an improvising jazz combo in an active participatory setting?
- How does a young person's participation in an improvising jazz combo change as they are guided through a developmental process?
- What do the young people who come together to make jazz music say and think about their practice? How have these experiences shaped their development?

The study is exploratory in nature and although informed by sociocultural theory, it is inductive in nature; therefore no predetermined hypothesis or theory was in place at the outset (Creswell, 2013). In the discussion that follows, participants in the study are referred to as 'N', 'L' and 'J'.

Background to the study

J: Because I come from a school where we play jazz all the time. It's what we do. The music department is jazz. That's how everyone looks at it. That's how I looked at it when I came up. The band you want to play in is the jazz band.

J's words set the scene to show that jazz had always had a high profile in the school, even before new pedagogical methods were adopted as part of the jazz combo project. When J arrived at secondary school, improvisation was not taught; rehearsals were teacher-directed and focused on technical execution and reproduction of repertoire. This model of 'school jazz' (Jaffurs, 2006), directed in a style not dissimilar from other large ensembles, is common in schools (Mantie, 2007).

The majority of programmes that are in place to educate music teachers in the UK privilege classical music skills, and as a result many teachers teach popular styles of music in a formal pedagogical manner more suited to classical music (Green, 2002; Green, 2009; Finney and Philpott, 2010). Although many non-jazz-trained music teachers form jazz ensembles, the by-product can be non-improvising bands, as many teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach jazz and improvisation (Gatien, 2009; Coker, 1989; Baker, 1989). A strand of research has looked at teacher efficacy in teaching improvisation (Madura Ward-Steinman, 2007; Bernhard, 2014). In the jazz combo in this study, dominant (classical) pedagogical methods are challenged.

Musical change

Ethnomusicologists define enculturation as the process of becoming 'literate in a specific cultural idiom' (Turino, 2008: xvi). It can be challenging for many music educators, trained primarily in Western classical music, to learn jazz, and this could be described as musical change

(Blacking, 1995). Through gaining an enhanced understanding of jazz-specific subject content, as the teacher I was able to develop my own jazz-specific pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986).

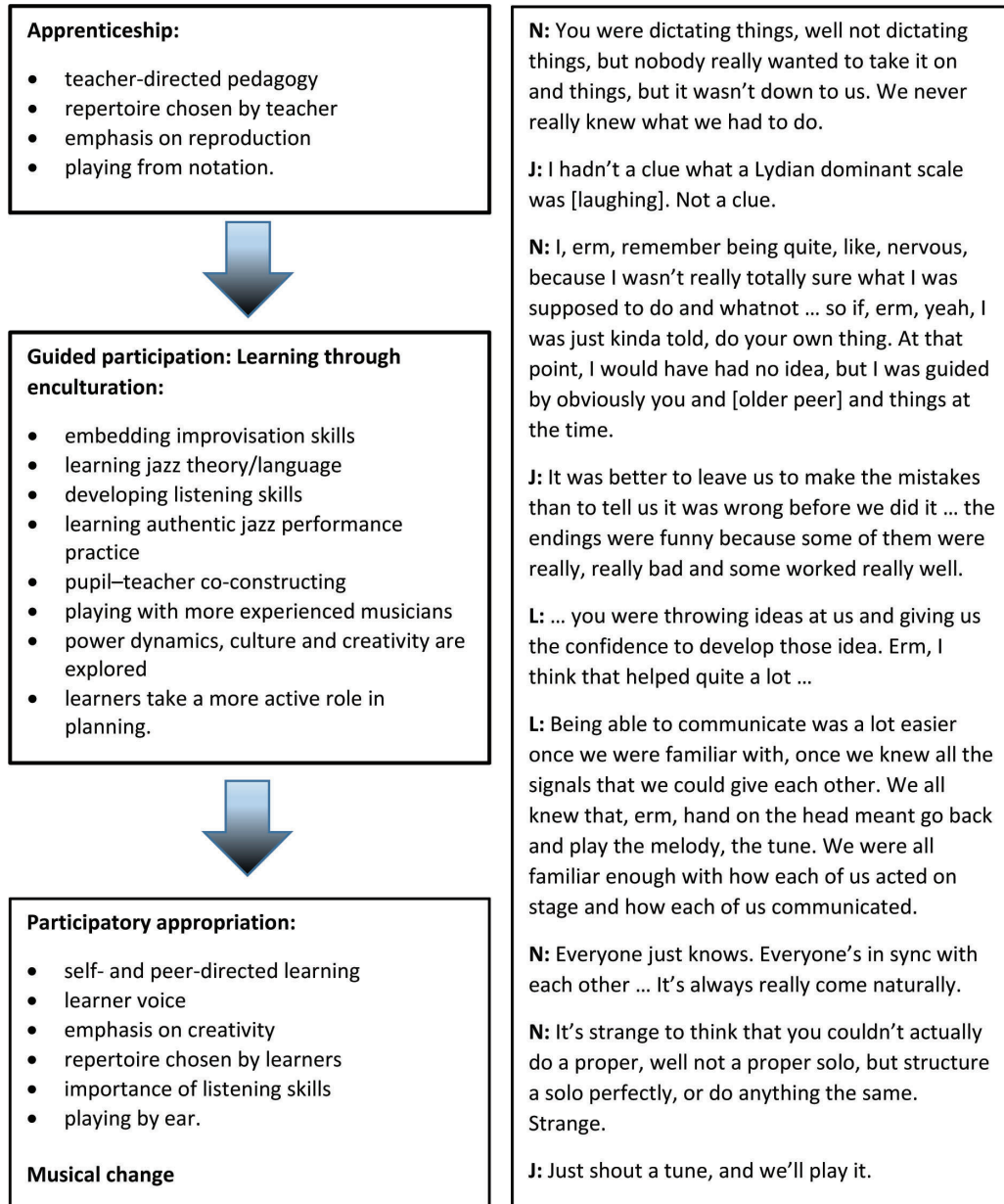


Figure 1: Developmental stages – moving from apprenticeship through guided appropriation to participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1991)

Building on the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Dewey (1985), I suggest that teaching in the jazz combo followed Rogoff's three-stage sociocultural developmental process, whereby the teaching

and learning moved from an initial apprenticeship model through one of guided participation to one of participatory appropriation: 'individuals change so that they handle other situations in accord with developments in previous situations' (Rogoff, 1991: 132). Rogoff's apprenticeship model is a model commonly found in music education (Westerlund, 2006). It is also described as a 'master-disciple' (Turkenburg, in Schippers, 2009) or 'quasi-classical' model (Woodford, 2004). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) state that creative practices are not guaranteed with this model of teaching. Silverstein and Layne (2010) argue that a creative process is present, but only for the teacher, who is making all the creative choices.

Developmental stages

Valuing Van Manen's (1990) notion of the individual experience, Figure 1 links the narrative accounts of the young people to Rogoff's (1991) theoretical framework, and applies Turino's (2008) concept of enculturation and Blacking's (1995) concept of musical change to the learners.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is understood as the difference between what learners can do unaided and what they can do with the help of one who is more advanced in that field. All three participants provided their perceptions (Figure 1) of what Bruner (1978) refers to as scaffolding of learning. This is in line with Hickey (2009), who acknowledges the fine balance required between structure and freedom, the teaching of skills and the freedom to explore music. J used the phrase 'trial by fire' to describe the way that learning experiences took place. This approach follows what Hickey describes as a 'throw them in at the deep end' approach (286).

J describes the first time the jazz combo performed without teacher direction as one instance of 'trial by fire' where the role of the teacher is clearly seen as having changed: 'you were our safety net ... the shield's gone! [laughing] But we did it ourselves. Which is good. It was. It was trial by fire! But it worked.' The jazz combo project was intended to be a group preparing the young people involved for playing as musicians 'in the real world', developing their life skills as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of jazz-specific skills and musicianship, in line with the work of Dewey: 'learn to act with and for others while you learn to think and judge for yourself' (Dewey, 1985: 98).

Jazz in secondary schools

Music ensembles can be vehicles for the development of teaching participation and social awareness skills, as well as for enhancing motivation to learn in young people. The benefits of personal and social development through music have been well documented. Opportunities for group performance can greatly encourage the self-confidence of a young musician (Hallam, 2010; Hewitt and Allan, 2012; Creech and Hallam, 2011; Allsup, 2003; Dagaz, 2012). Music education can therefore go well beyond technical skills and musical knowledge.

There is a smaller volume of jazz education research in the UK compared to the USA, and jazz education research at secondary school level is limited compared to jazz education research in higher education (Coker, 1989; West, 2013). This study attempts to address the scarcity of research on jazz education from the perception of the young person.

Research has been conducted into teaching jazz through an American band programme, which is very different to the system in the UK (West, 2011). Peer mentoring has been another focus of research in American jazz bands (Goodrich, 2007). Jazz researchers have studied pedagogies specific to improvisation (Watson, 2010; Prouty, 2008; Wehr-Flowers, 2006) and gender and improvisation (Wehr-Flowers, 2006).

There are those who criticize jazz education from within the jazz community, arguing that to formalize the study of improvisation, and to institutionalize it, is to remove the very essence of the music. Prouty (2008) suggests that many pedagogical methods were created for jazz that were representative of methods more suited to the Western canon, in order to satisfy critics who might have been resistant to jazz entering academia. Whyton (2006) states that non-educators are rarely advocates for 'celebrating the benefits of jazz pedagogy' (68); instead they argue that it curbs the creative process. Whyton goes on to argue that there are many jazz professionals employed in higher education who must be 'in denial' or 'just along for the ride' (70), and who make the claim that jazz cannot be taught. There is a discourse about the historical notion of the jazz musician as being uneducated and self-taught (Trodre, 1998), as seen in Kenney's (1995) historical research, which claimed that in fact education was a prominent feature in Louis Armstrong's development. Hickey (2009) presents the argument that teaching improvisation can be limited, but acknowledges that genre-specific idioms require a balance between the teaching of skills and a response to the environment, in an enculturation view of teaching. I would state that the enculturation model (Tishman *et al.*, 1993) of teaching jazz improvisation is one I follow.

Cultures, the use of notation and performance practices associated with the genre are significant considerations in the learning (Prouty, 2008; Dyas, 2006; Leavell, 1996; Jorgensen, 2003). Jazz is a social process subject to wider cultural influences (Monson, 1996). I follow these arguments, also placing an importance on context and real-life tasks as motivating factors for learning, as stated by Lave and Wenger (1991). I also concur with the work of Jaffurs (2006), who suggests that the informal setting in the formal educational establishment is more desirable for the jazz-learning experience. This can present challenges for the educator, and Whyton (2006) chooses to use the term 'anarchy' to describe: 'the way in which the performer challenges traditional codes and conventions, and the systems by which "judgement" is made' (Whyton, 2006: 77). Anarchy could also be thought of as symbolic, whereby by promoting the benefits of jazz education, this in itself might be seen as an anarchic act, 'kicking back against the norm of anti-education sentiment within the dominant jazz culture' (Whyton, 2006: 77).

In recent years the term 'informal learning', derived from Green's (2002) study of how popular musicians learn, has enabled more teachers to become familiar with a different style of pedagogy and to engage in a process of real-world learning familiar to the popular musician. An informal learning pedagogy attaches far greater importance to the process, and places less of an emphasis on the end product, with aural skills, peer learning, experimentation and collaborative learning as key. This informal and learner-led approach requires a very different skill set for the teacher and as such can be challenging (Finney and Philpott, 2010). Although Green's work is not specific to jazz *per se*, but instead looks at the general field of popular music, I suggest it provides a model for a valid and more authentic learning experience in jazz. Green's research centres on the importance of the social context for groups making music and learning, and the importance of music in a real-life context. (Green, 2002).

The dichotomies of formal versus informal learning pedagogies in music education are often discussed in parallel with classical and popular musical styles, and academic and community music settings (Green, 2002; Green, 2009; Folkestad, 1998). Folkestad (2006) goes on to suggest that the formal/informal debate should be seen not as a dichotomy for the music classroom, but on a continuum, so that both styles should be used when appropriate, to maximize benefit to students.

Power relationships and culture both play a significant part in music-making, and many classroom teachers will remain within their hegemonic preference for the classical canon (Allsup, 2003).

Sociocultural theory

Lave and Wenger (1991) advocate the value of participation as a motivation for learning. According to Lave and Wenger, learners move through a stage where they are legitimate peripheral participants (in this case in the jazz culture), to one where they gradually become more involved in the participation process. There is much in common between Lave and Wenger's knowledge-building community model and Rogoff's participatory appropriation model. The sociocultural environment is a rich learning space for the learner to observe, actively discover and then put into practice newly acquired knowledge and skills. Vygotsky (1978) and Dewey (2004) understood the cognitive development of a child as being interlinked with the social environment and interaction with more experienced others: 'mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which the master is part' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 94).

Research method

The research is an investigation of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990), an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) of one particular school jazz combo, to be looked at in detail. Following Yin's (2003) holistic (single unit of analysis) case study design, the jazz combo is the context and each young person is a case study (Newby, 2010). Prior to beginning the research, the young people involved in the study were followed as part of the teaching process over a period of two years, and as the researcher was also their teacher, their musical activities were observed in great detail. The researcher had collected data as part of a previous study, and ethical approval was granted to use archival data from that study in this research.

The research was carried out in an inner-city comprehensive school in Scotland. All eight members of the jazz combo were informed of the research purpose and process, and then participants were recruited for the study. Selection was based on agreement from the young people and their parents' informed consent. Three young people were purposively selected for interview, as they were deemed to be representative (Newby, 2010). A gender or ethnic balance could not be achieved, as all of the members of the jazz combo were male. This is in line with research showing that jazz is a genre of music that is male dominated (McKeage, 2004; Gourse, 1996; Wehr-Flowers, 2006). The participants received their first instrumental experience through individual 'classical instrument tuition' (Green, 2002: 128).

Using qualitative case study inquiry allowed the use of a range of methods and data sources in order to develop a rich, thick description (Geertz, 1973): interviews, artefacts (such as gig reviews and sheet music), archival data (such as video footage, field notes and personal reflection) and reflective personal analysis. In order to delimit the study, the main method of data collection was to use archival data as stimulus in individual qualitative interviews. Three semi-structured interviews were undertaken, each lasting 60 to 80 minutes. The interviews took place during June and July 2015, with shorter follow-up interviews during July 2015 for member-checking purposes (Creswell, 2013), referred to by Bryman (2004) as respondent validation. This was to ensure credibility of the interpretation by the researcher, not to validate one single truth (Yardley, 2000). Moving from the position of teacher to researcher raises the question of familiarity in interviews, and this could have influence on the participants' answers. Bryman (2004) suggests a more neutral role is appropriate for the interviewer; however, I follow Oakley (1981), who places great importance on rapport between interviewer and participant, and therefore throughout the research I needed to remain aware of pre-existing beliefs: 'critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings' (Finlay, 2008: 17).

Semi-structured interview

The young people were given the opportunity to respond to broad questions related to the start point, mid-point and end point of the jazz combo project concerning:

- their feelings about playing jazz
- their knowledge and understanding of jazz
- their perceptions of leadership
- their developing jazz skills
- their progression in jazz and other music.

Participants were allowed to comment on any areas of experience that they felt were worthy of note. Interactive interviewing (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) with elicitation techniques incorporating multimodality (Kress *et al.*, 2001; Rowsell, 2013) was used to stimulate response within the interview, following Kuhn's (2010) recommendations to use visual media to explore self and collective identity through what Kuhn describes as memory work. Yow suggests that when working with memory texts it must be borne in mind that a person may see things in a different light: 'If the event or situation was significant to the individual, it will likely be remembered in some detail, especially its associated feelings. However, the interpretation may reflect current circumstances and needs' (Yow, 1994: 21).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith *et al.*, 2009) was chosen as a methodological framework so that social-constructionist approaches could be explored and so that a rich data set about the personal experience of participation in the jazz combo could be generated. IPA is concerned with looking in detail at how participants make sense of their lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). IPA research, with its idiographic focus, uses small sample sizes (Langdridge, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2009), and the richness possible within a single case study (Smith, 2004) is considered ideal for IPA.

Interviews were audio recorded, and later transcribed and examined carefully during a period of immersion in the data (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). Data analysis involved inductive thematic analysis following guidelines for IPA by Smith *et al.* (2009). Initial comments noted semantic content and use of language (Smith *et al.*, 1999), and observations about interviewees' thoughts and experiences. Smith *et al.* (2009) refer to these as conceptual comments, drawing on the philosophical underpinnings of Gadamer, whereby the researcher is drawing upon their own experiences and perceptions and reflecting on this professional knowledge in interpreting the experience for the interviewee. Taking into consideration the issues of prejudice and personal bias (Lanzoni, 2005), I follow Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), who call for the researcher to remain sensitive to these issues: 'Striving for sensitivity about one's prejudices, one's subjectivity, involves a reflexive objectivity' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 242). The process in IPA is constantly to revisit the data, which is a set of parts to be looked at from many different angles relating back to the hermeneutic circle (Crotty, 1998).

The next step in the data analysis procedure was to develop a set of emergent themes (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Langdridge, 2007), which were discussed and agreed with a second researcher, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Categories from individual interviews were compared across the other interviews and a noticeable consistency in perception across the three interviews emerged, resulting in superordinate themes.

As a further method of triangulation at this stage, I met again with the participants to discuss my interpretation of their interviews and the emergent themes and subsequent three

superordinate themes that I had chosen, in the process of respondent validity (Bryman, 2004). This process further increased the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007), as well as suggesting areas for further discussion. Reflexivity (Finlay, 2002) remained ongoing throughout this analysis procedure.

Results and discussion

Three significant themes emerged from the data analysis that were fundamental to all participants:

- the development of personal skills and feelings, defined as ‘personal effects’
- the development of group interaction and social skills, defined as ‘social effects’
- the development of jazz/musical skills, defined as ‘jazz effects.’

There was a degree of overlap, as could be expected with complex personal experiences. There was a wide range of perceived benefits from learning in the jazz combo, with all participants unanimous that confidence building was the key skill that each had benefited from. However, this manifested itself in different ways for each participant.

Confidence building

An increase in self-confidence was the major change cited by all participants in their development (Dagaz, 2012). For N, his newly found confidence was mainly associated with jazz musicianship: ‘confidence to improvise ... just the whole idea of improvisation. I think the jazz band brought that out initially, but just the confidence to do different things and stuff in the jazz combo, I think that helped.’ For L, it was not so much about music per se; instead confidence was all about presenting himself and developing communication skills: ‘confidence, certainly on the stage, and presenting myself to an audience. The combo was just a fantastic opportunity for that.’ J, on the other hand, saw confidence and musicality growing in parallel: ‘it built confidence in all of us. It built confidence, therefore it increased the musicality of each member and then it boosted the musicality of the group.’ J also discussed the key point that, for him, playing in the combo had allowed him the opportunity to question and challenge things:

... that actually made me question, we would ask why you would choose to do things more, which maybe was a pain for you [laughs]. I think we became more confident to ask you questions ... and why we were doing this ... and why this happened.

Personal effects

Skills and confidence were developed within the jazz combo, both for individuals and in a group context. L described the jazz combo as having a major impact on his learning: ‘I think the combo was actually sort of one of my main experiences for learning. My main experience for learning to present myself.’ J talks about his first time playing a solo at a level beyond that he is used to, and he describes the feeling where he might ‘panic midway through’. However, after gaining skills, and through sustained practice, his self-esteem developed: ‘if you’re positive about how you’re playing then you know you’re good enough to do something. Everyone was more adventurous, more confident in themselves towards the end ...’ L and N both compare the change to the perceived safer environment, where they could hide behind others in a big group to starting to play in the small jazz combo. L said: ‘Combo was an opportunity to be able to sort of deal with nerves. It was helping me to present myself as a soloist.’ Although N admits to feeling a little scared at feeling exposed at first, he also ‘quite enjoyed it’, and intrinsic motivation was a key

theme for all participants. N said: 'I always enjoyed Friday lunchtimes, going to play in the jazz combo. I wouldn't have stuck with it if I didn't enjoy or whatnot, enjoyment was a big thing.' Group success led to enhanced self-esteem and raised determination to make considerable effort to meet group expectations, raising overall standards of musicianship. The ambition, and the desire to strive for collective improvement, was an important feature highlighted by all of the young musicians. J said: 'there was a competitive nature from the last gig. It was to always try and outdo the last gig. The band was like, we want to do this better, we want to do that better.'

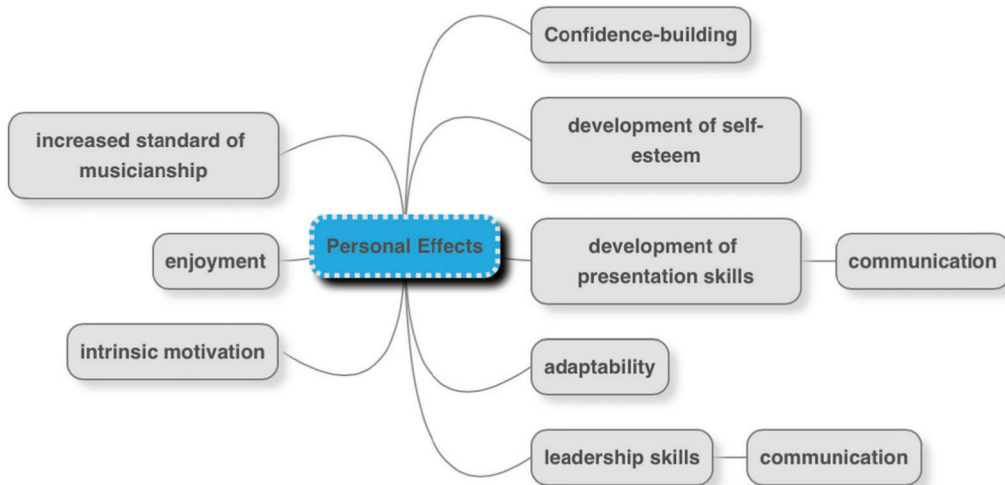


Figure 2: Personal effects as perceived by the participants

Leadership skills

Learning with pedagogy more appropriate to an informal learning style (Green, 2002) was found to empower the young people and, according to their own perceptions, this allowed them more autonomy to make decisions and enhanced their leadership skills. This development of leadership skills (Green, 2009; Abrahams and Abrahams, 2010) was a key theme that emerged, as evidenced by all participants, and this was found to be in line with Bush (2011) and Ladkin (2008).

J describes how he did not expect to engage with a leadership role in a musical activity and was initially surprised when he began to do this: 'I moved on to somehow taking a fairly large leadership role in a lot of the tunes.' N's initial recollection of leading the combo (and learning jazz performance practice) was to say, 'it just comes naturally, really'. N's perspective was that certain things had always been that way, and he had difficulty remembering how things were, prior to gaining initial mastery. However, when probed further he did recall that initially it was quite a daunting experience:

I think the first tune I counted in was 'Watermelon Man'. It was far too slow [laughs]. Yeah, I just remember being really nervous before the piece started and, yeah, it's really not that big a deal. Well, it doesn't seem a big deal now, but at the time it was, well it was really quite scary [laughs].

Learning the roles of leadership within the jazz combo, as would be found in the 'real world' of jazz musicians, was one major benefit of the group, but for all participants it appeared so

embedded in their practice that it had come to be expected and they seemed to take it for granted. L said: 'A different member of the combo can take every tune and give directions to the band.' The leadership experiences that the participants all valued the most were not associated with the musical skills; instead they all discussed leadership skills that they had been able to transfer into other contexts, and the ways in which leadership skills had manifested in beyond the jazz combo.

L attributes to the jazz combo his increased confidence in his coursework at college, in particular with presentation skills:

It's helped me out as a musician in other groups ... and in other styles of music, certainly knowing how to lead a section ... for my college part of my graded unit. If it weren't for the combo, I wouldn't be able to imagine myself being able to talk to an audience, to stand in front of a band.

For N, finding his voice was a key development from leadership in jazz combo:

just having the confidence to kinda make what you think heard ... express your ideas with other people and say, 'do you wanna do fours with this person?' or something, rather than just kinda sitting back and let someone else say, 'you do a solo now', and then you don't have any input.

The development of collaborative creativity can be evidenced here, which is one of the desirable core skills of the twenty-first-century musician.

J highlighted adaptability as being a key feature in his personal development:

I'm happy to adapt now, and this is not even as a musician, this is just in general. I wouldn't say before the combo, I was particularly adaptable, I would just kinda do what I was gonna do, no matter what.

J is now a university student, and he went on to discuss how he applied adaptability and 'improvisation on a grand scale' in his non-music degree, when he suddenly took the lead in a group presentation, and he goes on to answer on behalf of 'everyone':

Midway through the presentation, the guy forgets what he's trying to say 'cos he's trying to translate in his head ... so you take over, you try and push them in the next direction ... so you just move him away from that and it's like, for example, someone's playing a solo and they're at the end and you're going to take over, move to the next point. So you just have to just adapt. It's improvisation in every sense.

This also highlights J's perception of having the ability and intuition to know when to take the lead and move from an accompanying role to a soloist's role within the combo, based on critical thinking, listening and improvisation skills. In a jazz combo, leadership is shared, with individuals taking responsibility for roles according to the demands of the moment (Sorensen, 2013).

Social effects

From individuals to group

When participants were asked individual questions, they all responded on behalf of the group:

Q: How do you think you've changed?

N: I think *our* confidence has grown massively, 'cos I think *we'd* done a few gigs before that point anyway ... *we're* just kinda used to it now ... *we* just seemed to knit together as a band ...

J: *Everyone* now is quite spontaneous in that group.

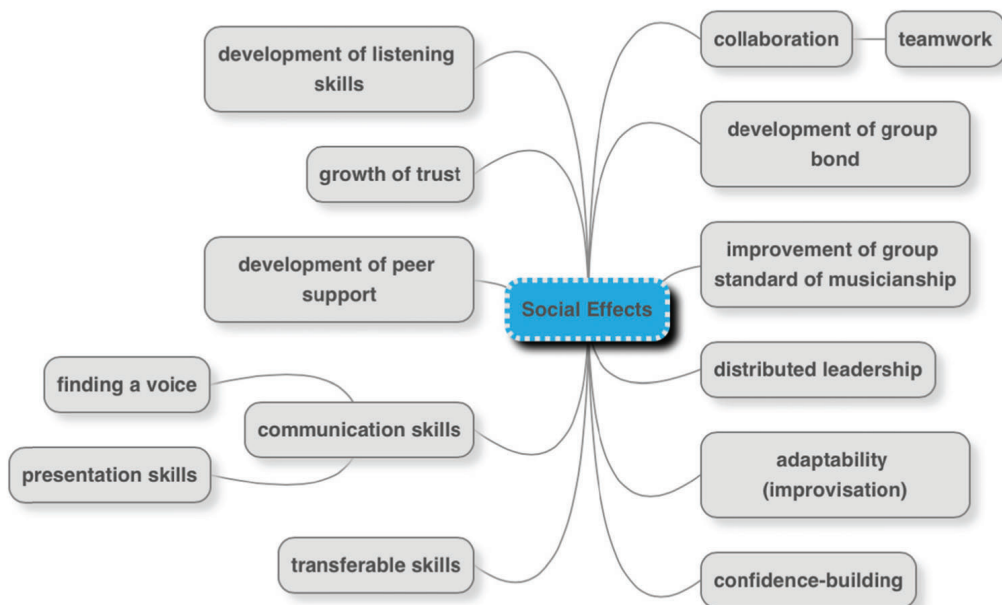


Figure 3: Social effects as perceived by the participants

When asked to recall a certain concert chosen for discussion, L chose to focus on the impact that had on him, which was on the development of leadership and presentation skills. Again, he answered on behalf of the group: ‘our first example of us presenting ourselves onstage and leading ourselves onstage ... we have the confidence to do that in front of people by this point.’ When J was asked to recall performances he had played in, he also replied on behalf of the group: ‘I can’t imagine that *our* first gig at [...] was particularly good, but it boosted *our* confidence.’ It became evident very quickly in all the interviews that great value was placed on the collective unit. This group was not formed from a group of young people who were already friends:

N: I didn’t really speak to them like outside of music [prior to beginning the combo] but obviously I spoke to them a lot more, I knew them better as people ... everyone just got along really quickly. We just bonded with the music I guess [laughs].

J: You’ve got six very, erm, different personalities trying to work together [laughs].

When analysing development through a sociocultural lens, Rogoff describes development as ‘*transformation*’ (1995: 157), with this transformation occurring through interaction and participation with others. This study has shown, through the perspective of the young people, that there was considerable transformation. In particular, the evidence suggests that learning in this jazz combo enabled a group of individual musicians playing together to move on to develop a strong collective group bond, in line with Wenger’s (1998) community of practice theory. Personal, interpersonal and community developments (Rogoff, 1995) were all evidenced and interlinked.

According to Green (2002; 2009), the social context is important for music-making in a real-life context. Participants all perceived the jazz combo as being of a social nature, as well as being a musical group, although, as can be seen, this did not start out this way. L said: ‘It was an opportunity for everybody to see each other. It was a chance to stand up and play with my mates all the time.’ Evidence in this study has shown that a group of individuals formed a friendship

group and subsequent social bond, which led to progression and real-life experience in jazz. This study may suggest that playing in a school jazz combo can lead to lifelong engagement in music, through preparation for a real-life experience (Pitts, 2008; Pitts, 2011). J said: 'you've ended up making the next generation of jazz musicians. They are playing in the jazz orchestra, putting on their own gigs, taking on lead roles in other bands, playing solo gigs.' Some would argue that school music is not relevant to young people, and that it is disconnected from the music they wish to play (Lamont *et al.*, 2003; Tobias, 2015). However, the evidence in this study would not support this argument. In this case, having now left school, all of the musicians are still actively pursuing jazz and enjoying it. Numerous authors have argued that group music-making can enhance personal and social development (see, for example, Hallam, 2010; Hewitt and Allan, 2012), and this study appears to add evidence to this argument.

Collaboration and peer support

Participants valued the opportunity to collaborate, experiment, take risks and work together as a team. Working in an environment whereby creative musical exploration was encouraged gave rise to enhanced cooperation. J valued being allowed the freedom to explore learning creatively with the same group of people, as the bond developed in the jazz combo. His perception is that at that stage he could not have done that in another environment, but because of this experience he is now able to transfer his creative musical skills into other group contexts:

Back then, if I'd been shown into a new group and told to develop a piece of music, then I would've more likely than not frozen up and not been able to get my ideas out there, not been able to suggest things to people, not have the confidence to suggest things. Something I'm doing quite a lot now in college is being able to go into a brand new group of folk and being able to develop this piece of music and knowing that not all of my ideas are rubbish [laughs]. It's nice to be able to develop something yourself.

L frequently referred to the benefits of the 'safer environment' of the classroom in enabling the group to practise routines and to develop communication skills. This encouragement and growth of pupil voice is also reflected by N:

Everyone was allowed to voice their opinion and kind of, like, say what they thought, and you were, like, never shot down for saying anything. Everyone was really open-minded and willing to try new things, all our ideas were accepted and tried out. It was a collective. Collective discussion.

All participants expressed that learning by inquiry, and having the freedom to take risks in a safe environment, were positives of the guided participation environment. The creative process 'can be messy' (Silverstein and Layne, 2010: 6), and the emphasis on learners engaging in experimentation can be a challenge for the teacher, as it is difficult to know what could emerge. This study may suggest that learning in a jazz combo can enhance creative learning through exploration and risk-taking (Silverstein and Layne, 2010).

Distribution of leadership was valued, and all participants commented on the value of trust, rapport and peer support:

N: We just seemed to knit together more as a band so, yeah, you just kinda trust each other and it seems to get better the more and more you play with them, I think.

J: We picked things up from each other, we all kind of stole things from each other. That's the thing I said about working off each other.

N went on to discuss how the group members all had complete confidence in each other's abilities, as 'the team':

N: I've never gone into a gig at any point where I've thought that the band's not gonna play well. I always think, we've done the rehearsals, we know each other's capabilities and we've never done anything which we wouldn't have been able to play, I don't think.

By the end of the combo project, the musicians began to pass on improvisation skills to younger players in other bands:

J: You've never been taught to do this, so how can you expect to be able to do it? [laughs] You can't. But we can try and show you things, and that was one thing the people in that band learned from the [jazz combo] group. They listened to us and they'd go, 'oh'.

N: It's good for me to give them some kinda guidance, almost. Not tell them what to do, but just give them a few tips and whatnot, like [...] did to me when I first joined. I found myself taking on the role of kinda helping them out, really. I mean, they're really capable musicians, but it's a new experience for them.

Jazz effects

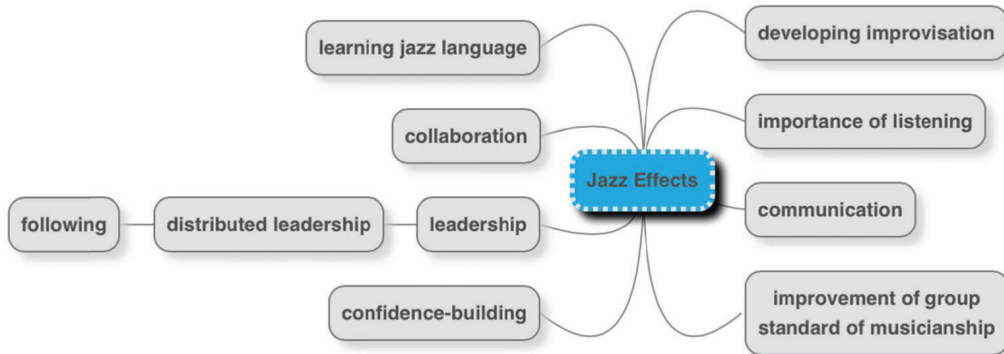


Figure 4: Jazz effects as perceived by the participants

All participants saw a distinction between learning jazz and learning other types of music, and all were in agreement that learning jazz had benefited them in other types of music. L said: 'having confidence in myself as a player and, like, even playing solo, even if it's just me and an accompanist, certainly it's helped me out a lot.' J talks about how he perceives his position in relation to others in a different jazz band: 'I could happily say there were people in the band who were less confident and far better musicians than I am [laughs]. They were more musical. Just not as confident in jazz.' The development of jazz vocabulary in the jazz combo environment was perceived as beneficial for improving participants' levels of ability in jazz, and having the environment in which to experiment with these was valued. J said: 'understanding the use of modes ... finding things that fit over progressions by playing.' L transferred these skills into the curricular context for composition portfolio work, showing that he had a deep understanding of jazz conventions and that he was able to transfer his knowledge into a different musical environment: 'I was formatting it like a jazz standard, like we would've played in combo.' N summarizes his thoughts on gaining initial mastery in jazz improvisation by stating: 'everyone

just knows [what to do]'. N frequently uses the phrase, 'It's always really come naturally.' In fact, it did not always come naturally, but for N, this part of the learning process has been forgotten, because it seems so natural for him now.

Progression

J recalled the time they were invited to perform in a joint concert with a local semi-professional jazz orchestra:

Well, the thought of going, these are all people that play to a very high standard and are we at that standard? No, but are we going to get there? Probably – that was the hope. It was trial by fire again [laughs].

Here is another reference to 'trial by fire', or what Hickey (2009) describes as 'in at the deep end'.

All three participants have now left school and play in jazz and other bands, some formed from the same membership as the jazz combo and some from wider circles. All three participants have now played with the semi-professional jazz orchestra, and two play on a permanent basis. All participants show a keen interest in wanting to keep learning:

N: I think I haven't stopped learning things from first year up until now. I'll probably keep going until whatever stage ... I mean, if combo hadn't taken place, that band probably wouldn't exist, so that's really cool [laughs].

L: It's sort of my bread and butter [laughs]. But I wouldn't have been playing in all these smaller bands and groups, and I certainly wouldn't have been doing as much playing as I am doing now.

Having gained initial mastery in jazz, participants can now apply their skills successfully in other musical groups, thus showing progression in real-life situations.

Conclusion

The results indicate that the young people identify a variety of outcomes that have had a strong influence on their development, both in a musical and in a non-musical manner, citing confidence-building as being paramount in their development. Learners in this improvising jazz combo became involved in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) as they gained initial mastery of jazz. It could be suggested that through the learning and teaching, the young people underwent a process of transformative change (Rogoff, 1995). This study suggests that culture, along with associated performance practices and social skills, should be considered when considering jazz pedagogy, and that the informal setting in the formal educational establishment may be more desirable for the jazz-learning experience (Green, 2002; Folkestad, 2006). The music teacher may wish to consider this pedagogical stance and the learning environment when teaching jazz. Sociocultural learning in an active participatory setting was found to empower the learners and, according to their own perceptions, this allowed them more autonomy to make decisions and enhanced their leadership skills. Learning in an improvising jazz combo may therefore help develop learner voice and contribute to the development of higher-order skills, such as critical thinking and creativity, in line with Education Scotland's (2015) policy.

I suggest that enculturation in a jazz environment in a secondary school may help foster a creative disposition, 'teaching students to be disposed to think creatively and critically in appropriate contexts' (Tishman *et al.*, 1993: 148). Evidence in this study suggests that learning in an active participatory jazz combo can aid the development of team building (Wenger, 1998),

collaborative learning (Dewey, 2004) and high-performance standards and creativity (Silverstein and Layne, 2010). This is in accordance with the jazz process, according to Cho (2010). I suggest that these improvisatory practices, specific to playing in a jazz combo, are significant in the development of the 'skills for learning, skills for life, skills for work' (Scottish Government, 2008: 10) philosophy underpinning the Curriculum for Excellence framework.

Genuinely transferable skills were noted, with participants evidencing examples of applying knowledge and skills gained in jazz combo in non-music contexts. This study also suggests that playing in a school jazz combo can lead to lifelong engagement in music, through preparation for a real-life experience.

This study had limitations in that the researcher was also the teacher, however practitioner research can also be viewed as advantageous. It would be beneficial to study a jazz combo in a context where the researcher is not the teacher. It would also be beneficial to study a jazz combo with female participants, as research has shown that females lack confidence with regard to learning jazz (Wehr-Flowers, 2006).

A study could be undertaken to ascertain the efficacy of student teachers when teaching jazz improvisation and initial teacher education programmes may wish to include jazz pedagogy in their programmes. Continuing professional development courses for non-specialist jazz musicians are vital to ensure that more teachers are confident in being able to access the genre.

Certainly for the young people in this study, jazz is no longer a mystery: 'Throughout the history of music, for many students ... learning to play jazz has been somewhat of an elusive mystery' (Tolson, 2013: 190).

Notes on the contributor

Pauline Black is a music education lecturer and Programme Director of the BMus (Hons) education degree at the University of Aberdeen. She has over twenty years' teaching experience in schools, and prior to taking up the university post in 2012 she was Faculty Head (Expressive Arts) at a large Scottish secondary school. In September 2016, Pauline was part of a team that received a Will Michael Jazz Diploma in recognition of an outstanding commitment to jazz education.

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