

**The Assessment of Musical Attainment:**

**Acquiring Cultural Capital and Building Learning Power**

**in Instrumental Music Tuition**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

This thesis describes an action research project undertaken within a mass participation instrumental music programme situated in East London. This action research project aimed to improve the way in which instrumental music pupils are assessed through the use of the graded examination. It also intended to provide opportunities to gain social and cultural capital for children in East London that are available in more affluent areas of the United Kingdom.

The action research methodology was employed over three cycles of research. The research involved six instrumental music teachers, including myself, as an active participant. Data was collected through focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews which were analysed using thematic and narrative analysis.

Amongst the main findings of this thesis are the following: The current graded examination is unsuitable and inaccessible to children learning to play musical instruments in a group learning context. The cyclical nature of the action research created a new type of accessible graded examination providing cultural capital and social justice for children in music education, developing and building their learning power and independent learning. The new type of graded examination was introduced into sixty-five primary schools as a form of assessment across East London impacting the practice of 180 teachers and the learning journey of over 10,000 children.

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## Abbreviations

ABRSM	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
AGM	Annual General Meeting
BERA	British Educational Research Association
DfE	Department for Education
ELP	East London Primary
EMS	Ealing Music School
KS 1	Key Stage 1
KS 2	Key Stage 2
LiM	London Instrumental Music
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAG	Performance Award and Graded Examination
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SATs	Statutory Assessment Tests
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

# Chapter 1: Outline of the thesis

## Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the thesis and an overview of the research, including the rationale and professional context of the study. It also introduces the research paradigm, methodology and theoretical framework.

### 1.1 Overview

This thesis presents my contribution to new knowledge through an action research study which focusses on the assessment of musical attainment in small group instrumental music tuition. The research is situated within the small group model of teaching in a mass participation instrumental music programme which I have developed as part of my doctoral research in primary schools. Instrumental tuition in this research is defined as small group tuition on a weekly basis for thirty minutes from a teacher with expert knowledge of the instrument (or its family), including the history and repertoire associated with the musical instrument. This study is concerned with instrumental lessons that operate away from a governing body and are essentially free to teach and most importantly assess in any manner they see fit away from the glare of public bodies such as Ofsted.

Traditionally instrumental tuition has been assessed through the use of the graded examination. In this thesis, I argue that an alternative is

required in order to meet the needs of young learners in the twenty-first century. Within the cultural field of instrumental music tuition, there is a lack of research with mostly classroom taught music lessons at the forefront in the research paradigm (Fredrickson *et al.*, 2013a). Research in instrumental learning is usually found in advanced and professional levels of education within the world of music conservatoires and universities rather than in the wider domain of everyday instrumental teaching (Burwell *et al.*, 2017). My research is positioned within the everyday instrumental teaching context as a professional enquiry regarding the assessment of musical attainment in the United Kingdom. I am a musician, a teacher, an examiner, an assessor and now through this study; I am an action researcher.

My action research study examines the use of the graded examination as a suitable form of assessment within small group instrumental tuition. Furthermore, the research looks at ways to break down barriers that prevent children from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing the same social and cultural capital that is available to those that can afford it or are familiar in how to gain access. Three cycles of action research created a new type of graded examination which is accessible to all, particularly low-income families in the borough where the research took place.

Taking a critical, constructivist and interpretative stance, I argue that instrumental teachers need to look beyond the current graded examination system as the only or preferred form of assessment. In what

can sometimes be seen as the elitist world of Western art music, the graded examination provides little benefit for the candidate other than cultural capital. Cultural capital includes different types of legitimate knowledge created and maintained by players within a field such as music education acting as a social space where players compete to define and influence their power (Bourdieu, 1986). Burnard (2012), has demonstrated one way in which the field is maintained by acknowledging the esteem of superiority and cultural capital a musician held in the eighteenth-century classical music world continues to hold the same value today. Savage (2006) has discussed the ongoing power and superiority struggles in the field of music education. The interest here is 'such struggles for power (capital) in the field of classical music intersect with, and are enacted through education' (Sagiv and Hall, 2015: 114). As those with graded examinations have 'lots of musical education, and thus cultural capital' (Savage and Gayo, 2011: 351).

I suggest the graded examination continues to assist in the maintenance of the cultural field of instrumental music tuition as the assessment system is predominantly focussed on Western art music. By assisting in both the definition and acquisition of cultural capital, it grants respectability and possible class mobility (Hofvander Trulsson, 2015). Bourdieu (1984) has demonstrated in his work that music can be exclusive and it can exclude as 'nothing more clearly affirms one's class, nothing more infallibly classifies, than the taste of music' (*ibid*: 18). If 'classical music creates cultural capital...higher status and position in the

societal hierarchy' (Burnard *et al.*, 2015: 5), it could be argued that the graded music examination supplies certification and appropriate identification for membership.

In real terms, the graded examination as a form of assessment could be seen to act as a subjective review that takes the budding musician out of the context of a musical performance into a setting that does not reflect the true nature of musical attainment and the musical environments of children. The musical environment of a child reflects the everyday lived experiences of being involved in music and music-making embedded deep in a personal and social context (Sloboda, 2005).

While the graded examination may provide cultural capital, it is questionable whether the assessment provides a pathway to independent learning and builds learning power in the young musician. In discussing the graded examination, Green (2014), notes the assessment of musical ability and skill in these examinations is mostly concerned with the accurate playing of notation, yet 'there is no real consideration of the music's context' (*ibid*: 176). Although not referring to the graded examination, others have recognised the problematic issue in that the 'subjective nature of quality in musical performance makes accurate assessment difficult' (Brophy, 2008: 47).

I employed an action research methodology in order to explore, investigate and create an alternative form of assessment conducive to small group learning in primary school. Action research is the most

suitable approach because it is 'an orientation to knowledge creation that arises in a context of practice' (Bradbury-Huang, 2010: 93). As 'music instruction has remained unchanged for centuries' (Upitis and Brook 2017: 93) action research is ideal because it is transformative as 'action researchers seek to take knowledge production beyond the gate-keeping of professional knowledge makers' (Bradbury-Huang, 2010: 93). It is only by taking action that understanding becomes clearer as action research is practice rather than research about practice. Action research as a methodology allows change to be implemented in the context of the action, my workplace. Given that my research questions intend to improve my practice and that of others, action research is the only methodology that can implement such changes through the various cycles that demonstrate a practical improvement. My living educational theory has been generated from the action research, which is practice-based as 'theory without practice is not theory but speculation' (*ibid*).

My understanding of action research has been informed through the literature developed over the past seventy years with a particular focus on the more recent work of Whitehead and McNiff (2006), McNiff and Whithead (2011), McNiff (2011; 2013; 2014) and Whitehead (2008; 2013; 2017). I have also been influenced by Noffke (1997), Somekh (2006) and relating to music education, Cain (2008).

My action research study consisted of three cycles of planning, action, reflection and evaluation that resulted in an improvement to my practice

professionally as evidenced through the data. The three cycles reflect how, as a participant researcher, I have developed and continue to reflect on my living educational theory.

During the research, I engaged with a diverse range of literature that searched for theoretical perspectives and understandings on how a hegemonic culture of assessment has led to the dominance of the graded examination in instrumental music tuition. Different theories have assisted in shaping and framing my research, in particular, Bourdieu's (1986; 2000) concept of capital, field and habitus, and Claxton (2002) on building learning power, enabling children to become better learners.

My action research has resulted in a new type of performance-based assessment which provides a curriculum, or repertoire of learning for children receiving free instrumental music tuition through a mass participation music programme in East London. Performance Awards and Grades (*PAGs*) are assessed and awarded by a UK University with accreditation by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) at grade one. The *PAGs* underpin a sense of achievement for both pupils, schools, teachers, parents and the local authority. There is a further benefit to support instrumental teachers with their lesson planning fostering a sense of performance and introducing creative composing with expression. Specifically, at a time when children should be encouraged to be creative and imaginative, courageous and resilient, demonstrating empathy and perseverance. These epistemic qualities which Claxton



(2002) refers to as 'dispositions' are surely crucial elements required for the future.

According to the World Economic Forum (2016), creativity and emotional intelligence are set to become the most important skills workers will need as the fourth industrial revolution is thrust upon us. At the same time, skills which require great feats of memory will slip down the scale as machines make decisions for us using intelligent data (Gray, 2016). As we enter into this new age, the three vital skills children will need in order to thrive will be 'complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity' (Schöning and Witcomb, 2018: 1). Instrumental music tuition can play a key role in developing the skills identified by the World Economic Forum (2016) as research in neuroscience reveals musicians to be the ultimate multi-tasker (Chan-Barrett *et al.*, 2013). My research contributes to new knowledge by reviewing the current graded examination system in order to ensure an alternative assessment provides the pathways for children to develop into young musicians and multi-taskers of the future.

## 1.2 Context

The way in which instrumental pupils engage with music and assessment through performing has been identified as complex and problematic (for example see Fautley, 2010; Russell, 2014; Venn, 2010 and Wesolowski, 2012). Zhukov (2015) refers to the assessment of performing as having numerous issues needing to be addressed beginning with 'the debate on what should be assessed in a musical performance and how this can be

carried out in practice continues around the world' (*ibid*: 57). Philpott (2012) in reviewing the leading work on assessment in music education by Fautley (2010) recognises the problematic relationship music has with assessment. He questions how feasible, or even possible is it to assess a musical performance given its inherent subjectivity (Philpott, 2012). Traditional methods of assessing musical attainment when performing have been made possible through the use of the graded examination system that takes instrumental pupils from grade one through to grade eight. The main area of my research focus is concerned with instrumental pupils' engagement with music and assessment through performing with an intended improvement to practice.

### 1.3 Professional context

As head of music education, quality and strategy for a London local authority, I lead a mass participation instrumental music programme which I will refer to as London Instrumental Music (LiM). In my role, I hold many responsibilities. A crucial area of my work is to provide leadership to a workforce of 180 instrumental teachers and to design and implement a curriculum that delivers the national curriculum for music at Key Stage 2 (KS 2) with assessment opportunities for 12,000 primary school children aged seven to eleven that are currently taking part in the programme. I provide leadership through induction courses for new teachers, so they are prepared to teach in a diverse, vibrant and challenging inner-city borough of London. I provide continuing

professional development for current teachers to build on their skills and knowledge. I train and lead an observation team of four senior teachers and advise music coordinators and headteachers on KS 2 music. I lead on high key profile music events such as the annual Holocaust Memorial Day, The Mayor's AGM, Town Show Carnival Weekend and Under the Stars Festival with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. These events are held throughout the borough drawing on my experience as a professional musician, primary music specialist, and instrumental music teacher. I created a youth symphony orchestra and provide guidance to develop our other ensembles for children, a junior orchestra, a concert band, a choir, brass group, string orchestra, jazz ensemble, marching band, and music group for toddlers.

I began my role in early 2013 managing LiM, where both my position and experience has shaped my research through the professional doctorate in education at Nottingham Trent University. My strategic position in LiM has provided me with the opportunity to undertake research and implement changes that have had a significant impact. The changes brought about through my action research study have now been implemented across the entire service delivery of the programme.

#### 1.4 Ontology and epistemology

My ontological and epistemological standpoint presents a holistic view of how I see knowledge and how I see myself in relation to it. My philosophical assumptions lie firmly in a critical, constructivist and

interpretive research paradigm. I define my critical paradigm as intending to empower people with a view to social change (Asghar, 2013; Neuman, 1991) which 'is consistent with the interpretive ontological position that there is no single "reality out there"' (Bailey, 2007: 55). A constructivist approach to research develops its knowledge of reality through exploration and determines the appropriate course of action depending on the situation rather than a predetermined route (Holliday, 2002). An interpretive approach seeks to understand the world through the perspectives of the participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). An interpretive understanding means as a researcher; I recognise that by exploring the social world of participants, explanations are generated as meanings (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). The meanings are interpretations, and I believe that lying underneath any interpretation, an alternative interpretation can be found. An interpretive approach

'does not seek to begin with nothing but to begin with how the world presents itself to us from day to day and then try to burrow deeply into the hidden springs from which our world has sprung'  
(Caputo, 2018: 37).

By adopting a critical, constructivist, interpretive research paradigm, I suggest there is no single reality or truth that can be defined because realities are created by many (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). My ontological understanding is that all realities are socially constructed entities that are consistently influenced internally (Gergen, 1985; Papert, 1980). My view has been strengthened by a bricolage of what may sometimes seem to be contending philosophies, beginning with the work of Berger and

Luckmann (1966). Their main theory suggests that individuals and groups interact in a social system and eventually create beliefs that become concepts or mental representations of each other's actions. These concepts gradually become embedded and conditioned into reciprocal roles, in turn, played by the actors in relation to each other. In time these roles become accessible to other members of society to join the group and act one of the roles. At this point, the reciprocal interactions have become institutionalised, and meaning is thoroughly embedded in society. Berger and Luckmann (1966) maintain reality is socially constructed because knowledge and our conceptions and beliefs of what reality is have become rooted in the institutional essence and framework of society. They claim that 'power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialization processes and, therefore, the power to produce reality' (*ibid*: 137). In relation to this research, much has been taken for granted in how the graded examination has become embedded as the chosen method of assessment in instrumental music tuition. The graded examination could be viewed as a symbolic universe which can be explained as a system

'prescribed by the 'ruling class' of a society. The abstract theories which sustain symbolic universes are validated more by social support than by empirical evidence. Theories function because they work, and they work because they are said to work and therefore they are convincing. They function because they have become standard in the form of knowledge taken for granted in a particular society'. (Dreher, 2016: 60).

Without the dominance of the graded examination being explored through an action research methodology that seeks to bring about change,

according to Dreher (*ibid*), such a system will continue to function through the possibility of establishing a monopoly. Cope (1999) claims this has already been established as 'there is no real sign of challenge to the monopoly of the ABRSM' (*ibid*: 71). More recently Johnson-Williams' (2016) research describes the success of graded examinations is due to 'the monopoly of power which the dominant examining institutions held and often still enjoy today' (*ibid*: 16).

Berger and Luckmann state 'he who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality' (1966: 127). This statement suggests that a position of power already situated by an elite group or groups is able to formulate and maintain a world. This concept is strongly related to what Bourdieu describes as 'authorised language'; the power of words and worldviews is 'nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson' (Bourdieu, 1991: 107).

My epistemological view, therefore, seeks to interpret reality in order to discover the underlying meanings in human interaction through a hermeneutic approach with critical reflection employing an action research methodology. I place myself within this view of knowledge as the researcher, understanding the reality observed and through the use of action research, taking a step towards an alternative reality.

## 1.5 Ethical context

I am fortunate to be a member of a society that behavioural scientists refer to as 'weird', Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and

Democratic (Henrich *et al.*, 2010). I recognise the privileged democratic ways of policy and decision making in the UK that allows me many freedoms and how my professional role incorporates these freedoms into my everyday working life. I recognise my freedom to make decisions affects others, and I am entirely accountable for the outcomes. In my research, I kept ethical regard for all of those involved making sure I have always thought, spoken and behaved as ethically and morally responsible as possible. I received ethical approval from Nottingham Trent University (see appendix one), and I have followed the guidelines as set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). I kept in mind that 'researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own reflective research impinges on others' (*ibid*: 5). I have kept a reflective journal throughout my doctoral journey describing how I was affected by the research and my awareness of how it affected others. Whilst it is imperative to hold ethical regard at all times, an action researcher must acknowledge 'nobody is culturally neutral' (Zeni, 2013: 261). Rather than be risk-averse I am risk-aware of the bias I bring to this research because I am unable to separate what I already know through my own lived experience (Krieger, 1991; Mehra, 2002).

My research was designed to implement an assessment system that could provide cultural capital to children that would not normally have such access. The majority of children involved in my research do not come from a 'weird' background, and I have taken care not to portray myself as

an all-knowing oracle of wisdom which is often associated with the position I hold. I am cognizant that how I view myself is not necessarily how others view me in that my professional role carries significant power. The balance of power between myself as an action researcher and those involved in the study is an ethically critical consideration at all times 'given that action is seen as consistent with the stereotype of powerful people' (Overbeck *et al.*, 2006: 481). According to Pfeffer (1992), power is often viewed as 'dirty' (*ibid*: 300), a phenomenon seldom ever mentioned or acknowledged where those possessing power often attempt to disguise, conceal or completely deny any level of ownership. Research that fails to acknowledge the power of the researcher is at danger of presenting an unethically sound study. Rather than deny my position of power, I chose to apply the highest morals and reflective practice to my conduct by reminding myself how others view me is not how I view myself. I employed high morals with ethical values every day in an almost transcendental manner in an attempt to recognise, reflect and address the power balance between myself and participants. Utilising an action research methodology has assisted in my ethical awareness of the power balance. I have actively reflected through cycles of research in my professional context leading to a transformation in knowledge and practice as living educational theory as recognised by Whitehead (1989) and Whitehead and McNiff (2006). Action research has been described as inherently ethical because of the reflexivity required and the importance placed on the research participants being viewed more as partners rather



than subjects to be studied. Humanity and democracy lie at the very heart of action research (University of Sheffield, 2015).

Me, myself as the *I* in this research has required me to think ethically and acknowledge the values I hold are influenced by my gender, age, race, religion, class, experiences, education, profession and shape my ontological and epistemological beliefs (Kincheloe, 2004). I, therefore, recognise world views are not always equally shared by a group of actors that inhabit the same stage. As the researcher, I hold the reins of power but employ as many ways of seeing as possible to ensure the research contains ethical sensitivity and fairness allowing a voice for all participants regardless of their background or beliefs.

## 1.6 Developing knowledge through assessment

Historically, instrumental music tuition has been thoroughly rooted in a 'master and apprentice' approach of knowledge transmission with the knowledge assessed through the graded examination. I believe assessment should provide empowering opportunities for children to become independent learners creating their own construct of knowledge rather than a transmission of knowledge from their teacher. I value a constructivist based pedagogy where education is based on experience (Dewey, 1934) and understanding shaped through assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1950).

This is an interactive and social process (Vygotsky, 1978) building on current knowledge (Bruner, 1960) which I believe is particularly relevant

to instrumental music education. The development of teaching and learning is entwined with the creation of knowledge and meaning resulting from human interaction and experience (Twomey-Fosnot, 2005). I believe a constructivist pedagogy develops the young musician in becoming an independent learner, empowering them to create their own knowledge. This is shaped through experience and guidance from the teacher on a journey, gradually requiring less reliance on the teacher to scaffold learning (Vygotsky, 1978). I agree that in taking a constructivist approach

'instrumental music teaching should aim towards broad educational goals...it should not be based solely on the transmission of pre-existing knowledge through imitation or reproduction of pre-defined narrow models' (López-Íñiguez, 2017: 3).

My action research has aimed to support a constructivist pedagogy with an assessment process that enhances this approach which emphasises providing an assessment for independent learning.

### 1.7 Assessment for independent learning, learning to perform independently

Drawing on literature, I place great importance on the power of assessment as a tool for learning how to perform music. In Western art music, performance could be described as the interpretation of printed signs that constitute musical notation as the 'score stands primarily as a scaffolding for performance' (Kramer, 2011: 259). During a performance, there is a four-way process where some roles may be shared. In discussing the four constituents of music performance, Godlovitch (1998)

refers to these as 'sound, agents, works and listeners' (*ibid*: 11). A musical performance could be described as consisting of sounds produced through some means by agents following instructions written or instinctive, absorbed by listeners. An assessment then could provide meaningful and constructive feedback so that young musicians may develop their performing skills fostering a sense of confidence and ownership. If roles are shared between the listener and performer, an empowering and enlightening assessment could provide the understanding that generates knowledge and meaning for the young musician. There is the potential here to engage and encourage pupils to prepare for lifelong learning rather than focus on a narrow set of technical abilities. I have been influenced by the work of Claxton (2002) in his building learning power theory which is concerned with developing the child as a whole. I view building learning power as far more than acquiring the skills needed in order to play a musical instrument. It is about enjoying the experience to seek out further opportunities for learning. Therefore, assessment through performance could enhance and build on a child's learning power.

### 1.8 Building learning power for independent learning

Learning power is more than just about acquiring the skills needed in order to learn. Aubrey and Riley (2016), define learning power as 'developing the whole student' (*ibid*: 188). They suggest it is also about

the learning experience being enjoyable, developing a learner identity which leads to 'seeking out opportunities for learning' (*ibid*).

In order to build learning power, there are four aspects of learning which Claxton (2002), describes as 'the four R's...resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity' (Claxton, 2002: 17). He explains that learning power can be developed when we assist children to become

'resilient...able to lock on to learning and resist distractions... resourceful [by drawing] on a wide range of learning methods and strategies...reflective [in thinking] about learning and themselves as learners...reciprocal [by] making use of relationships in the most productive, enjoyable and responsible way'. (*ibid*: 17).

I suggest that creating an alternative assessment of the graded music examination will allow a child to take steps towards building their learning power. Children may begin demonstrating 'the four R's' by practising their instrument at home or at school with friends, developing their own strategies to improve, listening to the sounds they are producing and being able to comment on their friends playing leading to independent learning. According to Claxton *et al.*, (2011), research into building learning power has demonstrated that children do better in tests and external examinations (Claxton *et al.*, 2011).

I define independent learning in the broad sense of learning through self-direction. As explained by (Knowles, 1975),

'in its broadest meaning 'self-directed learning' describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs,

formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes'. (*ibid*: 18)

In relation to this study, building learning power can be defined as an approach to learning that encourages and enables children to find ways in which they can become independent learners (Claxton *et al.*, 2011).

## 1.9 Research questions

The main question for this research has stemmed from my reflection of my practice and current practices within instrumental tuition. At the start of my journey with the professional doctorate of education, I was concerned with how instrumental tuition is mostly assessed by the graded examination. I wanted to discover:

*How can I improve my practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?*

As time has passed by and I have changed jobs the driving question behind this research has fluctuated at times in that I recognise the value of an accredited qualification and what that can mean to children, parents, teachers, and schools. My role in the local government has provided a wider scope of stakeholders to consider, namely, the taxpayer. At times I have been at odds with my research, professional role and educational beliefs. The requirements placed upon me to deliver a form of curriculum and assessment strategy for instrumental tuition has meant I have questioned how I can remain steadfast in my beliefs keeping the

focus entirely on a child-centred approach. However, I have realised just as knowledge can be fluid, beliefs can too, and any belief can take a different shape but still hold the spirit of its essence. By this I mean rather than attempting to create an assessment system that is entirely 180 degrees removed from the graded examination, it became apparent during my research journey that there are benefits within the graded examination that should be included within this action research. I had not considered these benefits before the start of my doctoral journey because I took this as *tacit* knowledge, and my focus seemed to be stuck on removing the barrier instead of building a gate to open. These benefits, such as the cultural capital it provides to children, needed to be included in the new assessment. I discovered during the ongoing reflective process of action research other questions emerged and have shaped this document:

*How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?*

*How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?*

## 1.10 Rationale

The limited or indeed lack of research into the ways instrumental music tuition supports a pupil's understanding of music has been identified and is evident in existing literature (for example see Baker, 2005; Bautista *et al.*, 2010; Creech, 2010; Fredrickson *et al.*, 2013b; Gaunt, 2008; Haddon, 2009; Karlsson and Juslin, 2008; McPhail, 2010; Mills, 2007; Parkes *et*

*al.*, 2015; Parkinson, 2016; Rakena *et al.*, 2016; Robinson, 2011 and Triantafyllaki, 2005). Instrumental tuition is a reluctant player within the academic research domain and the value of instrumental tuition in supporting pupils' musical development, and understanding is largely missing within existing research (Hallam and Rogers, 2016). Instead it is classroom taught music lessons which are at the forefront in the research paradigm (for example see Elliott, 1995; Evans and Philpott, 2009; Fredrickson *et al.*, 2013a; Glover and Ward, 1993; Green, 2008; Jorgensen, 2003; Mills and Paynter, 2008; Price and D'Amore, 2007; Spruce, 2001 and Swanwick, 1988, 1999). This view is acknowledged by those that occasionally explore the 'secret garden' (Burwell *et al.*, 2017) of peripatetic teaching whereby 'although much research has been undertaken in the area of school level teaching, much of it examines the music classroom and group learning contexts' (McPhee, 2011: 334). There are indeed studies that do delve into the cultural field of instrumental music tuition, but they are usually involved with research at advanced and professional levels of education. This type of research is thoroughly rooted within the world of music conservatoires and universities rather than in a more commonplace environment, meaning the type of everyday instrumental music tuition occurring in the UK with pupils that move through the graded examination system (for example see Burwell, 2005; Creech *et al.*, 2009; Gaunt, 2008, 2010; Gaunt *et al.*, 2012; Haddon, 2009, 2011; Hill, 2009; Johansson, 2012; Kingsbury,

1988; Presland, 2005; Purser, 2005; Rakena *et al.*, 2016; Robinson, 2011; Triantafyllaki, 2010; Yeh, 2014 and Zhukov, 2008).

There are some possible reasons for the limited amount of research concerned with instrumental music tuition. Music within the national curriculum has had a higher priority in relation to research focus, particularly as instrumental music tuition is not an integral part of school-based national curriculum delivery. As Robinson (2011) states,

‘Learning to play an instrument is only compulsory at a basic level as part of classroom music lessons; specialised instrumental teaching falls outside both the National Curriculum and the system of training and assessment which applies to learning in the classroom’.

(Robinson, 2011: 3).

In September 2014 changes were made to the national curriculum for music, specifically the introduction of reading staff notation and playing musical instruments as a point of interest to this study in KS 2. Despite these changes, instrumental music learning within the classroom is still a concern as ‘quality continues to be patchy, and despite concerted efforts, postcode lottery still plays a role in pupil opportunities’ (Zeserson *et al.*, 2014: 11). Echoing this view, research by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music acknowledged

‘although the trajectory over the last 15 years is generally positive, there are areas of concern: many children and young people have not had access to instrumental lessons, while others have no engagement with formal music tuition after primary school’.

(Hume and Wells, 2014: 10).

This brings a further concern if many children have not had access to instrumental lessons after significant promises made by a previous



Government. Particularly given the pledge made in 2000 by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills that over time, all pupils in primary schools that wished to do so would have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, known as the wider opportunities programme.

A wider opportunities programme is usually provided by a local authority music service whereby visiting peripatetic teachers teach the national curriculum through whole class instrumental learning. In 2011 the Government released the long-awaited national music plan where despite funding cuts they intend to

‘ensure that every child aged 5-18 has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument (other than voice) through whole-class ensemble teaching programmes for ideally a year (but for a minimum of a term) of weekly tuition on the same instrument’.  
(DfE, 2011: 11).

These instrumental programmes are supplied by the newly formed music hubs replacing music service providers. These consist mostly of local authority providers with some run by private firms or registered charities (Arts Council England, 2017).

Surprisingly then, the introduction of the wider opportunities programme and subsequent similar programmes currently being undertaken in many primary schools whereby pupils are taught whole class music on a given instrument does not appear to have increased interest in research in instrumental tuition. Except for the most recent report published on whole-class ensemble teaching (Hallam, 2016), I

have found little else available or relevant to this research study in regards to teaching musical instruments at a beginner level.

A possible reason for the lack of research in instrumental lessons is that they are most likely at the expense of the pupil, meaning there is no call upon the public purse. 'It is possible to argue that the aims and content of these lessons are the business only of the teacher and the student' (Mills, 2007: 1). This view is strengthened further by a perception that is often associated within the arts in general, where according to some 'research into the methodology of instrumental teaching is an example of 'elitist' musical education' (Salaman, 2008: 240). When considering the current financial climate and since my exploration of this area commenced in 2009 it is no wonder 'musicians and musical learning are being perceived as a luxury in times of economic difficulty' (Gaunt, 2011: n.p.).

Furthermore, instrumental tuition is often perceived as a mystery as it 'remains largely unregulated...external regulation is not and probably never could be applicable' (Holmes, 2000: 33). The mystery is acknowledged by Burwell *et al.*, (2017) as they note classroom settings provide easier accessibility for researchers to scrutinise and undertake institutional monitoring. The isolated environment of instrumental music teaching has been described as a 'secret garden' (*ibid*: 1). This would suggest away from the classroom, instrumental teaching continues to be largely unregulated (Hume and Wells, 2014) and is still somewhat worryingly left to its own devices as 'no system of accreditation exists, despite much recent research indicating the need for better systems of

professional training and development for instrumental and vocal teachers' (Carey and Grant, 2014: 43).

So, despite music educators calling for research in instrumental tuition (for example see Daniel and Parkes, 2015; Haddon, 2009; Hennessy, 2001; Robinson, 2011 and Triantafyllaki, 2005) this is perhaps unlikely to happen without academic support, funding and without an improvement to practice which this research intends to provide. These reasons make for a strong rationale for research in this area. As an instrumental teacher in schools, primary music specialist, programme leader and graded music examiner this acts as a further rationale for enhancing my professional practice and that of others to contribute to the limited existing body of knowledge within the field of music education, specifically instrumental tuition.

### 1.11 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of eight chapters. This chapter provides an outline of the thesis with an overview of the research, rationale and professional context of the study. Chapter two, presented as a literature review, provides evidence for the rationale and explores theories that support the research. Chapter three describes the methodology and action research process. Cycle one of the research is presented in chapter four, with cycle two in chapter five and cycle three in chapter six. Chapter seven explains how the research questions have been answered and how practice has been improved. It also describes how my living educational theory has

been developed as an outcome of this research. Chapter eight provides a conclusion for the research, acknowledging the limitations with recommendations for future investigation. It also evaluates the impact of my research, my contribution to knowledge and details my living educational theory.

The literature review in the following chapter provides a detailed description of the theoretical perspectives I have drawn upon. They provide evidence for the rationale in undertaking my action research, describing and explaining why there are issues in the assessment of musical attainment in instrumental music tuition. The chapter also looks at theories that support the research, mainly that of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 2000) and building learning power (Claxton, 2002).

These ideas represent my living educational theory which has improved and reconstructed my professional practice. My living educational theory is strengthened by the theoretical framework and through my professional experience.

This chapter has provided an overview of the research in my professional context. The following chapter considers how social factors have affected my professional practice and which has inspired my research.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

The previous chapter provided a brief overview of the research, the rationale and professional context of the study. It also presented the organisation of the thesis and identified the theoretical framework underpinning the research. This chapter considers social factors that may play a role in instrumental music tuition by critically evaluating available literature focussing on assessing musical attainment in instrumental tuition, expressing various perspectives and how the literature relates to the research question. The literature review also provides evidence of how the historical background of assessment in instrumental music tuition continues to dominate in the twenty-first century as the preferred mode of assessing musical attainment.

### 2.1 Culture

Graded music examinations play an important part in the culture associated with music education, specifically instrumental tuition. Culture is notoriously difficult to define and can take on many different meanings depending on perspective and understanding of culture. I will now examine culture within the assessment of musical attainment in instrumental tuition.

Culture could be described as a

'fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour'.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 3).

This view would suggest the graded music examination has become embedded within the culture of music education through its ability to influence how individuals or groups of people approach music education.

Education and culture would appear to go hand in hand as illustrated by

Bourdieu

'cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin'.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 1).

Bourdieu (1983) developed the theoretical concepts of capital, field and habitus, which generate further resonance for the graded music examination and this research. A cultural field can be defined as any structure of social relations, which within this research is music education. Within this cultural field of music education are actors that are influenced and influence others through their habitus which relates to the values and dispositions of an individual. Individual actors are located social positions within the field through their interaction, habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Developing an understanding of the different forms of capital has been central to Bourdieu's work (Broady, 2014). Bourdieu explains that capital can be presented in the following three forms, as

*'economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility'.* (Bourdieu, 1986: 243).

Bourdieu also refers to symbolic capital, a more generalised term in which economic, cultural and social capital can be found (Broady, 2014). He defines symbolic capital as 'the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' (Bourdieu, 1989: 17).

According to Lawler (2011), although symbolic capital appears to exist conceptually parallel to economic, social and cultural capital, 'symbolic capital is not a *different* form of capital, but rather should be seen as the *legitimated, recognized* form of the other capitals' (*ibid*: 1418). Any form of capital is capable of being converted into legitimate currency such as education qualifications, which are forms of institutionalised cultural capital that can be understood as symbolic capital from the prestige they represent (Bourdieu, 1989).

In regards to this research, the graded music examination can be viewed as an example of symbolic capital as the resulting outcome of converted

institutionalised cultural capital. Although not specifically related to music, Bourdieu points towards this direction as he acknowledges 'a credential such as a school diploma is a piece of universally recognized and guaranteed symbolic capital, good on all markets' (Bourdieu, 1989: 21).

This conversion acts as an 'official definition of an official identity' (*ibid*: 21-22). However, this does suggest an arbitrary nature for any capital if the value can only be found through conversion to legitimated symbolic capital, such as the graded music examination. In discussing the work of Caillé (1994), Swartz (1997), suggests a further transformation by describing symbolic capital as 'denied capital', which critics see as 'nothing more than a form of economic capital in disguise' (Swartz, 1997: 93).

Given this implied fluid nature or transitory movement of conversion between the forms of capital, I refer to the graded music examination in this research as 'cultural capital' rather than symbolic. For the graded music examination to have a legitimate currency, it must hold use-value. I agree with Skeggs *et al.*, (2008), that use-value can be created through self-investment, such as learning to play a musical instrument.

'Investment is about bringing in proper culture, proper value and learning cultural capital' (*ibid*: 5). Lawler (2011) refers to Bourdieu suggesting cultural capital only works when it is recognised for holding value.

According to Broady (2014), the cultural field of education is 'the main site for the reproduction, legitimization, and transfer of cultural capital'



(*ibid*: 100). As this research is based within the cultural field of instrumental music education, it would seem more fitting to use the term cultural capital throughout.

Cultural capital in this research refers to academic qualifications (Webb *et al.*, 2002) such as the graded music examination. It is, therefore, relevant to understand how and why the graded music examination is such a prominent feature within instrumental music tuition. Particularly in relation to my action research project intending to improve practice against the backdrop of an assessment system that is engrained within the cultural field of instrumental music education. For if education and culture are so intricately entwined 'to be cultured means to be educated and to be educated means to be cultured' (Samuel-Ravi, 2015: 309).

Bourdieu's concepts provide a basis for understanding why the assessment of musical attainment is carried out using a formal tradition such as the graded examination. The graded examination supplies the required cultural capital to both the pupil and teacher, in turn, fuelling their power within the larger cultural field of music education. I argue that the value of the assessment of a graded examination is actually about gaining cultural capital in a field that delights in measuring children's abilities, whether that is really about musical abilities or not, rather than a useful assessment for learning. However, there are other actors here that could be considered to have a contribution in enhancing the leading role. Parent power may have more to say in controlling play on this field.

Brändström (1999) applied Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to his research on children's engagement with instrumental music tuition in Sweden. His findings demonstrated parental investment in instrumental music education as 'an investment in cultural capital and a more or less conscious way to optimise the objective life chances for the next generation' (*ibid*: 54).

Research in instrumental music tuition in the USA has acknowledged this view, recognising the graded examination as a form of cultural capital. The evidence has shown some parents see the graded examination as the main goal of learning to play a musical instrument as a form of cultural capital strengthening the pathway for their children to gain a place at a high-status college (Lu, 2014).

According to Foucault, power is vague and cannot be pinpointed down to one agency or structure because 'power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1998: 68). It is a type of re-inventing meta power which penetrates society while continuously changing identity. Foucault places power into a new term of power/knowledge whereby he recognises the two are inseparable because power is derived from knowledge; knowledge that has been confirmed through scientific understanding or truth. This idea of a changing identity of power assists in understanding the dominance of the graded examination. It serves a need for the teachers as a type of curriculum and anchor, also asserting the teachers' standing and success. It serves a need for the parents as a source of

proof of purchase and money well spent. It serves a need for the examining boards as a source of income and maintains their authority. It is possible to suggest the only player on this cultural field of music education it fails to serve is possibly that of the instrumental pupil who appears to have the quietest voice of all. Although research in this particular area is scant, one study did evidence teachers imposing the graded examination onto children with parents acknowledging and supporting the idea (Davidson and Scutt, 1999).

Bourdieu equally opens up the realm of this dysfunctional educational family as he views power as cultural capital. The amount of power a person has obtained within any field depends entirely on their position within that field, and the quantity of cultural capital they have accumulated (Bourdieu, 1986; 2000).

It was suggested earlier that the graded examination is a type of capital sought out by teachers and parents supplied by the examining boards. It is the examining boards that control the power as the agents that distribute, transform and reproduce their capital amongst the field.

Bourdieu explains 'the subjective hope of profit tends to be adjusted to the objective probability of profit' (Bourdieu, 2000: 216). This statement would imply that those lacking in capital will equally lack ambition and therefore more likely to be content with their circumstances and conditions.

It is suggested this would be the pupils themselves with the least amount of capital and the least to negotiate with. A pupil, or indeed candidate, can only gain capital hereby achieving within the graded examination system. The more exams passed, the more capital gained. For the examining boards, the more candidates entered, the more capital reproduced. For the teachers, the more examination successes, the more capital gained. Finally, for the parents, the more examination successes for their children, the more capital gained for their family unit. From this point of view, the graded examination appears to provide various gains that cater for all those involved. Bourdieu would maintain that like Foucault's notion of 'power/knowledge' constantly shifts so do cultural fields. They overlap, integrate and relate to one another. Examining boards, parents, teachers and pupils are not the only operators on this field. As the field of power becomes larger other institutions become involved such as the government through the Ofqual national qualifications framework for those examining boards that have been deemed 'approved'. In other words, those examining boards have more capital than those without approval. Publishers that work with the examining boards also have a stake in the capital in ensuring their publications can 'make the grade' for a graded examination, thereby competing with other publishers for cultural capital. Composers wishing to gain cultural capital will need to supply music that 'makes the grade' for a graded examination. The more this cultural field is explored, the more it becomes the re-inventing meta power described earlier where Foucault

maintained it is impossible to claim who or what is controlling the power; it 'comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1998: 68).

I, therefore, argue that the graded examination is deeply rooted in the British cultural system of assessment. It has only recently been documented that the graded examination has 'had significant consequences for the organization of British musical training and for the formation and sustaining of a particular sort of British musical culture' (Wright, 2013: back cover). To consider that 'music is a cultural practice and exists in and through cultural contexts' (Beard and Gloag, 2005: 46) goes some way in presenting the graded examination as of its own cultural being. Indeed, the term culture is often used when referring to the arts in general as if we all understand what it means and if we should choose to observe or participate in the arts in some way we will be able to obtain a piece of culture. In agreement with this Beard and Gloag note that 'culture has generally been used as an all-embracing term for creative, educational and artistic activities' (*ibid*: 47). Culture can take on many definitions which is why it 'is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (Williams, 1988: 87). Yet it is perhaps best described broadly as the 'complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor, 1871: 1). Within the context of this study, it can be framed more neatly by understanding that 'the culture concept comes down to behaviour patterns associated with particular groups of peoples, that is to "customs" or to a people's

“way of life” (Harris, 1968: 16). In some ways, the graded examination has become a custom, habit or way of life that features prominently within the cultural field of instrumental music tuition. As many instrumental music teachers would probably agree, anecdotal evidence suggests that the graded music examination is ‘now questionably part of everyday musical study, used not just as benchmarks for teachers and students, but also contributing “points” to GCSE, A-level and university entrance requirements’ (Wilson, 2013: 1). The wider scope is that examinations in any shape or form play a big part within the broad cultural experience operating in the UK as public examinations in general at the turn of the last century provided ‘a vehicle of upward social mobility’ (White, 2014: 10). Although this is not referring explicitly to graded music examinations a clear comparison can be made as around the same time ‘grades and diploma’s became the common currency of scholastic and professional attainment’ (Wright, 2013: 33). Graded music examinations, therefore, act as a form of currency which has exchange value for other forms of capital.

It is fair to suggest that graded music examinations have played a role in shaping culture in that they are not compulsory but accessed through choice, and today they ‘continue to make, a significant contribution to the cultural development and awareness of large sections of the population’ (Meech *et al.*, 2014: 30). Indeed, they have a much broader significance, and impact as Wright (2013) recognises how the process of graded examinations plays a key factor in

'musical taste, habits and attitudes of candidates and their teachers, and by extension, it also affects the many parents and siblings who are inescapably caught up by it...the huge market for grade exams that has taken hold since the late nineteenth century means that the syllabuses put out by examination boards have shaped the way that very many teachers teach, and have defined musical standards and musical taste for millions of people'. (*ibid*, 2013: 6).

Graded music examining boards define musical taste through their choice of repertoire as presented in the various syllabuses both in the past and at the current time of writing. This could certainly be viewed as having a controlling hand on what constitutes as culture. This view is supported further as Wright (2013) acknowledges 'exam syllabuses are designed to influence the process of cultural and technical formation' (*ibid*: 8).

The graded examination has continued to have a cultural presence and as Hallam (1998) reminds us, 'graded examinations dominate assessment in instrumental playing' (*ibid*: 275) and continue to do so with 'approximately 400,000 entries for graded exams in music annually across the UK and a further 410,000 worldwide' (Meech *et al.*, 2014: 10).

Therefore, I would argue that within this cultural field of instrumental music education, the very culture of graded examinations is caught up within a hegemonic culture of its own.

## 2.2 Hegemony

Writing in the early 1930's drawing on Marxist philosophy, Gramsci (1971) developed the concept of cultural hegemony as 'the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group'

(Gramsci, 1971: 12). More recently cultural hegemony has been defined as,

'the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of the society – the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and mores – so that their ruling-class worldview becomes the worldview that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm'.

(Mafuwane and Mahlangu, 2015: 561).

The dominance of the graded examination as the main form of assessment over the past 140 years implies a hegemonic culture at work, accepted as a cultural norm within instrumental music tuition. I argue that graded examinations are the product of a social system, the dominance of which is maintained by a 'wheel of power'. Instrumental music teachers are likely to have progressed through the graded examination system in order to study their instrument at degree level. Graduates that become instrumental teachers are imperative in keeping the circle moving in the graded examination system if the system is to be maintained. With the graded examination being seen as the ultimate assessment it is clear that the external music examination boards have the power in dominating the instrumental curriculum through the instrumental examination syllabus, suggesting what students must learn and be assessed upon. The graded music examination can be viewed 'as setting a 'gold standard' in terms of recognised benchmarks' (Meech *et al.*, 2014: 4) and by their own triumphant admission the

'ABRSM is the leading authority on musical assessment. By delivering our exams rigorously and consistently we set the



worldwide gold standard, with over 600,000 people, in over 90 countries, choosing to take them every year'. (ABRSM, 2016a: 3).

Setting the 'gold standard' is aspirational, and from my teaching perspective, it is important to have high expectations of pupils to assist them in achieving a graded examination that some may consider as being gold. However, it could be questioned as to whose 'gold standard' this is and how an examining board arrives at such a point in influencing their cultural tastes being able to make bold claims in the UK and further afield.

This 'wheel of power' reveals a hidden hegemonic culture that has manipulated instrumental music tuition as it has been suggested that for many teachers what is taught is governed by the graded examination syllabus (Hallam, 1998). Wright (2013) claims further that the ABRSM has made a significant impact by influencing the musical 'lives and tastes of millions...how free the ABRSM has been to impose its musical view of things' (*ibid*: back cover).

Indeed, it is this musical view that is in question as to how it may benefit, or in terms of this study, actually, make an assessment that is engaging and meaningful to candidates. Steer (2008) looks further by comparing instrumental and classroom teaching noting

'the broader cultural situation has changed dramatically over the last half century, and while classroom music teaching has largely adapted to this, instrumental teaching remains for the most part rooted within the limited horizons of an exam-defined world which does little to promote autonomous musical creativity'. (*ibid*: 1).

Perhaps these limited horizons are the hegemonic cultural factors that keep control of instrumental music tuition as if holding on to the last days of a traditional education from an old British empire, fixated in maintaining control. I agree with Wright (2013) that the graded music examination has had a greater and deeper impact on culture in the UK, having made a lasting impression sowing firm cultural and hegemonic roots around the world emphasising the power it wields.

### 2.3 Postcolonialism

There is evidence (see for example Chang and Yoong, 2008; Kong-Chiang Tye, 2010; Saidon and Shah, 2014) that strongly suggest the hegemonic cultural factors displayed by the examination boards that to some extent keep control of instrumental tuition are not limited to the UK. Research in piano teaching in Malaysia noted that graded examinations are 'particularly prevalent and popular in countries that were once British colonies' (Kong-Chiang Tye, 2010: 486). In also discussing instrumental learning in Malaysia this view is supported as it is 'indirectly through the influence of British colonialism that the music examinations here are linked to Britain' (Chang and Yoong, 2008: 82). Supporting this view further still it has been made clear that

'in the case of Malaysia, the impact is great due to the lengthy British rule in the country in which it has left an indelible effect on the musical heritage of Malaysia. Many current practices in music still hold on to British systems. Of this is the dependency on predominantly British music examination boards'.

(Saidon and Shah, 2014: 562).

It seems surprising perhaps, in the twenty-first century at least, that the cultural hegemony of graded examinations remains a dominant force in instrumental music tuition in a country that gained independence over fifty years ago. Graded music examinations have not only had an impact on the musical culture and preferences of Malaysian society but also on the perceptions of what constitutes music education in schools. In discussing the work of Johami Abdullah (2010), Saidon and Shah (2014) describe the content for the music curriculum in schools from the syllabus of the ABRSM with an emphasis on

‘the teaching of western music rudiments, notations and western classical composers and repertoires. This does not come as a surprise given that all the members of the curriculum committee who were involved in the design of the syllabus came from the ABRSM’. (*ibid*: 565).

The literature thus provides evidence of culture hegemony at work, unsurprisingly given that the graded music examination is a ‘multi-million-dollar industry with a large outflow of Malaysian currency being invested’ (*ibid*). As Ross (2002) noted in her doctoral research on external public piano examinations in Malaysia with over 30,000 candidates entered every year, the graded examination is viewed as by many teachers as ‘more of a business thing rather than an education thing’ (Ross, 2002: 102).

Suggestions such as this can be seen to run parallel within the UK when consideration is given that approximately 400,000 candidates entered for

a graded music examination in the UK alone in 2013 (Meech *et al.*, 2014). In 2015 the ABRSM examined 618,000 candidates worldwide (ABRSM, 2016b) providing evidence of a financially successful model business. If the graded examination is so powerful with a hegemonic culture of dominance and a business model that appears to remain mostly unchanged, unchallenged and unshakeable through various financial periods of recession, it becomes questionable if there could ever be an alternative assessment process within the cultural field of instrumental music tuition. However, I propose my action research to make some improvement to practice from a concern in regards to how pupils are assessed in instrumental music tuition. If a graded examination is seen primarily as a business transaction rather than of educational relevance to the young musician, there would now appear to be an additional rationale for this research in questioning who is the assessment for? A question of which Fautley (2018) raised as the most important one to ask in the assessment of music education.

A comparison can be drawn with Malaysia where there have been calls for an improvement to practice through an accredited national governing body to provide an alternative form of assessment (for example see Choo, 2003; Mohd. Fadzil and Thia, 2005 and Ross, 2002). Yet it would appear attempts have not been made due to expected challenges and constraints (Saidon and Shah, 2014). I suggest this is due to the embedded relationship the examining boards have with the Malaysian public in which sits the triadic relationship of parent, instrumental music teacher and

child. As joint consumers, their main shared aim from taking instrumental music lessons is to pass graded examinations (Wong, 2011). The colonisation roots run deep and have had a major impact on music education in Malaysia in that the number of candidates taking graded examinations are 'disproportionate to the country's population' (Kok, 2006: 96).

It would be fair to consider that the graded examining boards operating in Malaysia incorporate traditional music of this region, or modern Malay composers, something that gives a nod in recognising their traditional culture yet 'the content of Malaysian indigenous or local music is almost non-existent in these exams' (Chang and Yoong, 2008: 82). The cultural hegemony of the Western classical music tradition thoroughly imposed by the graded examining boards could be at danger of almost eradicating the traditional music of Malaysia as suggested nearly forty years ago in a warning that Malaysians were becoming strangers to local, traditional and folk music unaware of their own cultural heritage (Nasaruddin, 1979). I suggest this would be due to the examining boards putting forward their dominant view, their *Weltanschauung*, masquerading as Malaysia's identity to maintain cultural hegemony. This is not to imply instrumental teachers in Malaysia, or indeed other countries with colonial links to Britain are acting obsequiously as there are other social and educational implications to consider here. According to Kong-Chaing Tye (2010), some studies demonstrate a link between social class and musical taste. In particular, the research undertaken by DiMaggio and Useem (1978)

has shown that 'consumers of classical music comprised predominantly of individuals who belong to a higher income bracket and education level' (Kong-Chaing Tye, 2010: 484). More recently research in the UK on national classical music audiences commissioned by the Arts Council England has demonstrated that those attending classical music concerts are 'unified by their high levels of education [and] well paid jobs' (Bradley, 2017: 16). This view causes some problems with accepting the examining boards as a postcolonial hegemonic culture steering the musical tastes of the old British Empire. It could be viewed those outside the West that promote the use of graded examinations as a vital component of instrumental learning are doing so for their social status, or as Bourdieu may suggest 'cultural capital' (1986).

Research in other former British colonies reveals the extent of desire for cultural capital which can be sourced through the graded music examination. In Hong Kong, for example, the market for these examinations is driven by middle-class parents striving to increase the educational outcomes of their children (Tai *et al.*, 2018). Parents in Hong Kong recognise graded music examinations as an 'added value that is extremely useful' (Leung and McPherson 2011: 165). Graded examinations play a fundamental role in driving the marketplace for instrumental music tuition in Hong Kong as a means of acquiring cultural capital. This is despite the fact they are based entirely on Western classical music with little regard of Hong Kong's musical heritage (Wong,

2012). Similarities can also be found in Singapore where the appetite for graded music examinations is propelled by parents ensuring the continuity of these exams because they recognise the value they bring to their children (Rochester, 2017). Instrumental music tuition in Singapore continues to be structured through the use of the graded examination system rooted in Western art music. The reliance of which in Singapore has led to graded examinations symbolising a 'homogeneity of habitus' (Lum and Dairianathan, 2013: 336). The acquisition of cultural capital and hegemony rife in instrumental music tuition can be further evidenced whereby grade eight acts 'as a passport for accessing higher musical worlds' (*ibid*).

According to Young (2003), the aim of postcolonialism is 'to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed' (*ibid*: 2). He claims that more often than not, western people see their own expectations and assumptions when viewing non-westerners as opposed to the reality of what actually exists. That existing reality is one that presents a 'world of inequality, and much of the difference falls across the broad division between people of the west and those of the non-west' (*ibid*). Although in considering the evidence of instrumental music tuition in Malaysia, those realities of inequality and difference would appear to be not that dissimilar. There is little difference between the desires of 'a symbolic indicator of higher social status in Malaysia' (Kong-Chaing Tye, 2010: 484) through the use of the graded examination where in the UK 'the pressure for exams

largely comes from pushy parents, but also from schools, where results are a prized commodity' (Steer, 2008: 1). I would also argue there is additional pressure from instrumental teachers as they are responsible for designing a curriculum they choose to teach in which the 'examination system may also be regarded as a means of influencing the content of instrumental tuition' (Davidson and Scutt, 1999: 81).

The idea of cultural hegemony as a driving force behind the graded examinations is not entirely clear cut. It is possible that their dominance feeds and satisfies a desire for social and educational climbing; the two could and do work quite happily hand in hand. Nonetheless, it is worth considering how the extant hegemonic cultures at work within instrumental tuition feature prominently in the everyday practice within this cultural field of music education. Steer (2008) describes his position, 'when I mention an exam-free environment, conventional piano teachers reply "if only!"' (*ibid*). Returning further afield, researchers have worryingly acknowledged how instrumental teachers and their pupils have allowed the dominance of the graded examination take precedence. Examination results have become more important than the essence and intention of learning a musical instrument (Kong-Chaing Tye, 2010).

Another parallel can be drawn between the UK and Malaysia, and most likely other former British colonies in regards to the graded music examination as a hegemonic cultural device at play because,



'music examination boards have shaped the manner in which music is learned and taught from the elementary to the tertiary level...they have convinced a large portion of Malaysian society that the music education in place is a preferred system of operations not only in Malaysia but throughout the world...they continue to enjoy the public perception of the supremacy in musical assessment'.

(Ross, 2002: 244-245).

In many ways, this is not so far removed from the current situation in the instrumental music teaching practices I observe as a teacher and examiner. As demonstrated earlier, although much has been written about the dominance of the graded examination in Malaysia as a post-colonial legacy, little has been said about the hegemonic factor in the UK in the way it affects my practice. There is a clear relevance as to how views on instrumental tuition in Malaysia influence my research because what could be viewed as a concern there could be seen as a triumph here. By that I mean, there is much to be said in opening up a world of Western classical music to the young musician in this country through the graded examination syllabus.

A graded music examination certificate, whether the examination is taken in the UK, Malaysia or anywhere in the world appears to be an asset, a passport towards gaining 'cultural capital'. Despite music having not always been viewed seriously in the past (Smith, 1962), I consider the graded music examination as an academic qualification which provides 'cultural capital'.

With the pointers suggesting instrumental teaching is trapped within a hegemonic culture, this action research, viewed through a critical lens,

could begin to allow some teachers, myself included, to be aware of how hegemonic cultures may shape much of their everyday practice. As suggested by Rose (1991), there is a need for 'the development of a critical consciousness within music education – a consciousness that recognises and addresses the power and potential of music in education as a reproducer and producer of culture' (1991: 6).

More recently the idea of critical consciousness in music education has recognised the power it can bring to pupils, and when 'properly embedded, critical thinking and understanding enables pupils to make connections between their musical learning in school and their lived reality, and thus empower them as learners' (Spruce, 2009: 36).

## 2.4 Musical ability

Another social factor to consider in relation to this study is the understanding and use of the term musical ability. Musical ability has been described as a difficult concept to define (Bentley, 1966), with 'no general agreement among researchers on what the precise definition of musical 'ability' should be' (O'Neill, 1997: 49). Within the cultural field of music education, musical ability is often used interchangeably with aptitude or talent (Kelly, 2009), musicality, and musical potential (Hallam, 2006). This leaves the concept of musical ability wide open for interpretation, broad and varying, making it imprecise and difficult to assess objectively (Radocy and Boyle, 2003).

Despite the difficulty in assessing objectively, recent research demonstrates instrumental music teachers tend 'to associate identification of musical ability with formal measures such as tests and examinations' (Jaap and Patrick, 2015: 269). Historically, psychometric tests of musical ability (see for example Seashore 1919; Lowery, 1926; Hevner, 1931; Drake, 1933; Wing, 1948; Revesz, 1953; Gordon, 1965 and Bentley, 1966), have been one of the main methods used to assess musical ability in instrumental tuition (Hallam, 1998).

As summarised by Hallam (*ibid*),

'most of the work on musical ability has concentrated on the perception of sound and the individual's ability to identify and contrast different pitches, rhythms and timbres'. (*ibid*: 22).

I agree and argue that tests of musical ability and its measurement have little to do with the daily practices of instrumental music tuition I am familiar with. They appear to speak from a psychological perspective rather than a musical or educative one. Hallam (1998), notes the use of psychometric tests of musical ability 'limits the expectations of teachers and parents of what an individual can achieve' (*ibid*: 47). Mursell (1964), suggests further, rather than being concerned with musical ability, these are tests of audiology and acoustics (*ibid*).

Despite originating a century ago, it is worth noting these psychometric tests of musical ability, in one form or another, contain many elements

still currently found in the aural section of the graded music examination (McNeill, 2000).

This may provide an additional reason why instrumental music teachers associate musical ability with examinations (Jaap and Patrick, 2015). This view is further supported as

‘in the UK the grade tests of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music are probably the most widely recognized measure of musical ability and they concentrate on the basic components of musical perception, such as rhythm, pulse, pitch, harmony, melody and listening skills’. (Edwards *et al.*, 2000: 116).

According to Kelly (2009), ‘the problem is that defining music ability is so subjective’ (*ibid*: 116). Sloboda (2005), also recognises the problems surrounding the term musical ability as it ‘may already seem to presuppose too much. Such a term suggests that there is a common factor or set of factors, underlying all accomplishments in the sphere of music’ (*ibid*: 265). Despite the difficulties in providing a definition, I agree with Sloboda (2005), that, ‘for most observers, it is the ability of people to perform well which constitutes the evidence on which we judge their musical ability’ (*ibid*: 267).

According to Hallam and Prince (2003), ‘musical ability is now viewed by a number of authors as a social construction acquiring different meanings in different cultures, sub-groups within cultures and at the individual level’ (*ibid*: 2).

Within the cultural field of instrumental music tuition, musical ability can take on a number of different meanings and definitions which can range from

‘an understanding of exceptional ability as a result of enhancement of cognitive and physiological adaptation brought about by extended deliberate practice, to environmental and intrapersonal catalysts, to the notion of innate giftedness’. (Law and Zentner, 2012: 2).

The literature suggests musical ability is multi-faceted. For some, ‘both genetic and environmental factors contribute to the broader realization of music ability’ (Tan *et al.*, 2014: 1). For others ‘musical ability is significantly correlated with [the] amount of practice’ (Marcus, 2012: 503), developed and learned as an acquired skill (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer, 1993; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe and Moore, 1996).

Given the concerns in attempting a definition, it is perhaps no surprise that ‘the concept of musical ability has been severely criticised in recent years’ (Hallam, 2010: 309). There are many perceptions in which ‘everyone seems to have an opinion of what constitutes musical ability’ (Kelly, 2009: 116), making it an unsuitable term to use in this study. Particularly as these perceptions are ‘frequently affected by social beliefs, stereotypes, and cultural expectations’ (*ibid*: 115).

Just as ‘music technology straddles the intersection between art and science’ (Mitchell, 2003: 1), research in musical ability can be found in several academic fields. It has been noted there is a

'growing concern to understand the role of musical ability in non-musical faculties, ranging from motor skills and general intelligence to language processing and socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy'. (Law and Zentner, 2012: 1).

Despite the various academic fields and their research on musical ability, it is worth remembering 'most teachers do not read academic journals of any kind' (Hallam, 2009: 1017).

Given the complexities of defining and applying the term musical ability in the cultural field of music education, a more appropriate term should be sought to provide clarity in terms of the research aims. This study is situated in the cultural field of instrumental music education and is focussed on providing an assessment of musical attainment rather than musical ability, as 'attainment relates to what has been learned' (Hallam, 1998: 22). Musical skills that are developed through practice to both produce, and comprehend music are 'a significant part of musical attainment' (Marcus, 2012: 503). This study intends to assess these skills of musical attainment, rather than as suggested by the literature, the widely misunderstood term of musical ability.

## 2.5 Assessment

As this study focusses on the assessment of musical attainment, it is important to define and explore what is meant by the term 'assessment'. As with musical ability, the word 'assessment' can take on a variety of meanings before it is placed in the cultural field of music education. We are surrounded by others making assessments on us from being weighed

the moment we are born, to being assessed on our cause of death. We are assessed at birth, as a human experience, we will never remember, to death, a certificate about us of which we will never see. Thinking in these terms, assessment appears rooted and fixed, timelined for prosperity. Yet as we journey through life, we make assessments of ourselves and others continuously and often subconsciously that can vary as our acquired knowledge through experience is shaped. Assessment, as a human experience, should be considered as multi-layered and changeable as our behaviour. Jiang and Cui (2017), describe human behaviour as a 'product of a multitude of interrelated factors' (*ibid*: 101), which affect our personality and interests. Our experience shapes these factors through social interaction, our physical environment and our identity in society. We can think of assessment as a human experience changeable because

'psychological studies demonstrate that human behaviours naturally evolve with the changing of both endogenous factors (e.g., personality) and exogenous factors (e.g., environment, resulting in different dynamic (temporal) behavioural patterns over time'  
(Jiang and Cui, 2017: 101).

By regarding assessment as a human experience that is changeable, shaped by our experiences, we can begin to think of assessment in education from a more holistic sense away from traditional views.

Assessment in education has often been understood to be a separate process away from the everyday teaching and learning context, providing a set of fixed indicators that evidence learning progression. Fautley (2010), notes the parallel between this approach to assessment being

separated from teaching 'as being the way that graded examinations in instrumental music have traditionally taken place' (*ibid*: 3). These types of assessments are known as summative, evaluating learning at an endpoint employing a high-stakes test such as the graded music examination. Formative assessment is often referred to as assessment for learning and is concerned with a more holistic approach that supports learning by providing feedback that allows both pupil and teacher to decide on the next steps to develop learning (*ibid*: 9). Assessment for learning focuses on improvement while summative assessment places the final performance as the core value (Smith, 2014). Although the widespread use and growing frequency of summative assessments have been criticised (see Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002), it has been suggested that the education system in the UK would be unable to operate in the absence of high-stakes examinations (Smith, 2014).

Despite concerns over high-stakes examinations such as the graded music examination, as discussed earlier, they provide a means for pupils to gain cultural capital. Research in the USA on individual instrumental performance demonstrated that summative assessments motivated pupils to practice (Reimer, 2009) and drove pupil progression (Ferm Almqvist *et al.*, 2017). It is possible that motivation to practice and pupil progression could build children's learning power leading to independent learning.

Summative and formative assessment should be viewed as working hand in hand that provide the steps towards independent learning. It is far



more useful to 'think of assessment between formative and summative as being on a continuum' (Fautley and Savage, 2013: 111), where continuous feedback through assessment for learning could lead to developing the skills and confidence required to achieve cultural capital through summative assessment. Furthermore, this partnership of formative and summative assessment could, in turn, lead to motivation towards independent learning and build learning power.

Despite assessment in education being a vital component of teaching and learning (Earl, 2013 and Swaffield, 2008), it has been considered problematic in the cultural field of music education (Fautley, 2010). I would suggest one reason for this is that without detailing the purpose of assessment in the first place, it becomes difficult when defining assessment to come to a settled position. The purpose of assessment has raised some varying opinions. In relevance to the hegemonic discussion earlier in this chapter, Rowntree (1987), notes how some have viewed assessment as a 'tyrannical means of persuasion, coercion and social control, enhancing the power of one group of people' (*ibid*: 3). Yet more recently, it has been acknowledged assessment is the central driving force leading to effective teaching. Assessment acts as the 'bridge between teaching and learning' (William, 2013: 15).

The complex and multifaceted nature of assessment makes it a difficult concept to define and is, therefore, open to misunderstanding and misuse. For this study, situated in a mass participation music programme,

assessment is defined as 'the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of student learning and development' (Palomba and Banta, 1999: 4).

## 2.6 Assessment in instrumental music tuition

The graded music examination is a method of assessment that is particularly specific to instrumental teaching and was introduced in 1877 by Trinity College of Music, London (Wright, 2013). The graded approach is believed to act as an assessment system that can be accessed by pupils and teachers in order to assess an instrumental pupil's progress. There are other examination models on offer that allow musical ensembles to be assessed; however, this research is specifically concerned with the traditional approach of the individual candidate.

The design of the examination itself, generally speaking, has changed little since its inception as 'the process appears largely unchanged to the present day' (Southcott, 2017: 57). Salaman (1994), acknowledges that the graded music examination has remained peculiarly static even after 100 years in that examining boards have failed to adjust the graded examination utilising radical questioning and reflective thinking.

More recently this view has been recognised as unchanged as 'the basic practices, ethos and core activities of these graded examining boards, has remained the same from their inception up until the present day' (Robbins and Howard, 2007: 2). This is unlikely to change as a combination of successful marketing strategies, and the ability to meet challenges has

preserved, if not raised higher, the integrity of the graded music examination. Examining boards 'have met the challenges on their own terms and continue to provide graded exams in the form that is known and loved by so many candidates and teachers around the world' (Meech *et al.*, 2014: 30).

Although there are several examining boards with various options, the majority of them repeat the definitive model created over 140 years ago. The examination consists of the candidate preparing three set pieces from a given list of groups A, B and C, including supporting tests which are made up of scales and arpeggios, sight-reading and aural tests. Some examining boards have the option of the candidate choosing their supporting tests which as well as the ones stated include composition, improvisation and musical knowledge.

Within any form of assessment, validity and reliability are important elements to be understood. An assessment is valid if it is designed to assess what it intends to assess, and reliable if the results can be replicated with different groups of people over time (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Part of the success of the graded music examination may lie in strong foundations of validity and reliability embedded in the process of assessment. According to McPherson and Thompson (1998), the use of standardised criteria assists in providing validity and reliability when assessing music performance. This can be found in the graded examination as 'clear assessment criteria are applied to establish highly

reliable and valid assessment processes' (Jones, 2014: 8). Previous research has provided mixed results on the reliability of judgement when assessing performance in music (Springer and Bradley, 2018). However, validity and reliability can be evidenced in the graded music examination. Jones (2014) states examiners judge each component from three perspectives. These consist of

'the general standard of achievement expected at the grade attempted and articulated by the repertoire, the assessment criteria and related attainment descriptors [and] the attainment bands applied to the specific grade attempted...the examinations consist solely of an external assessment, conducted in controlled conditions on one occasion only'. (ibid: 16).

As a graded examiner, I agree that for the most part as an assessment in the cultural field of instrumental music tuition, they are valid and reliable. This coupled with training and regular moderation processes, assist in providing reliability. In addition, accountability can be found through the role of Ofqual as the regulator of graded music examinations. Ofqual ensures that examination boards 'carry out their roles correctly through formal audits and, where relevant, comparability studies of assessment standards' (Jones, 2014: 6).

Rather than validity and reliability, my research has led me to question the purpose of the graded music examination, and whom it might be for. Specifically, as the graded examination appears to be essentially an assessment system that thrives mostly in the UK, and as indicated earlier, former British colonies. Taylor (1950) noted that outside of the UK and

former colony nations questions were raised as to what benefits graded examinations supplied and to whom. To which she responded that 'it is not always easy to find true and convincing retorts to queries such as these' (*ibid*: 60). In discussing the rivalry between the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, Hallam (1998) claimed that graded 'examinations were not for the benefit of the pupils but the colleges' (*ibid*: 275).

More recently, Rochester (2015) suggests a reason for music graded examinations to have such relevance in the UK because,

'it is a peculiarly British thing; possibly seen by many as typifying that British eccentricity which insists on placing every conceivable thing into clearly-defined categories'. (Rochester, 2015: 2).

Again, this is not a new idea by any means. Concerning the graded examination, Walker (1907), writing a century earlier explains,

'this love of tangible results in the shape of titles and certificates, is indeed, in the field of music, a specially British characteristic: and during the last twenty or thirty years we have increasingly suffered from a tyranny of examinations that at the present day is rampant in every direction'. (Walker, 1907: 401).

Despite the leading examining boards offering examinations globally, one examiner has recalled,

'explaining to incredulous musicians from the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra exactly what graded music exams were; most of them originally came from Eastern Europe or North America where such things are largely unheard-of'. (Rochester, 2011: 1).

There may be many opinions as to why graded music examinations hold such prominence in the UK and ex British colonies, yet research does suggest they are peculiarly the main form of assessment within instrumental tuition (Hallam, 1998). A possible suggestion for the dominance of graded music examinations within instrumental tuition lies embedded deep inside the structure of the relationship between the student and the teacher. It is understood that many instrumental teachers teach using the 'master and apprentice' approach, which has been widely criticised (for example see Bjøntegaard, 2015; Gaunt, 2008; Hallam, 1998; Jorgensen, 2003 and Mills and Smith, 2003). Unlikely to be removed anytime soon, this 'prevalent model of master-apprentice tuition continues by default' (Haddon, 2009: 50). If the 'master' uses the graded examination system as a means of assessment, it is fair to presume that the 'apprentice' will engage with the process. Should the 'apprentice' eventually become a 'master', it is most likely that this tradition will be maintained for further generations. This view is supported in the research undertaken by Gibbs (1993) into private music teachers in the UK and acknowledged further by Ross (2002),

'many teachers themselves had acquired a musical training through regular graded examinations. Thus, it was not unusual for teachers to replicate teaching methods of which they had first hand experience'.

(Gibbs, 1993: 51).

A cyclical pattern of music training through the system of regular music examinations appears to have been established. Its practice seems widespread and well supported'.

(Ross, 2002: 94).

I suggest this is beginning to cast a shadow on the graded examination, looking somewhat like a hegemonic post-colonial relic and provides a reason why an alternative for the twenty-first century should be explored. This, however, is not to say the graded examination should be excluded from instrumental music tuition entirely. Rochester maintains

'there is nothing inherently wrong with graded music exams, but there is everything wrong with the way they are perceived...because of this wholly false elevation of the graded exam into a measure of total musical ability'. (Rochester, 2016: 1-2).

Even those (see for example Ross, 2002; Rochester, 2011 and 2016) who criticise the very nature of the examinations, question what other forms of assessment might be available: 'while it's a flawed system, until anyone devises a better one, I support it one hundred percent' (2011: 2), because 'if graded examinations had never existed, what would we invent to fill the gap?' (Salaman, 1994: 215). This action research study intends to fill this apparent gap as outlined in the following methodological approach. The role of the action researcher is to 'explore the nature of hegemony at work, and to uncover and open up new reflective spaces' (Rowell *et al.*, 2016: 847).

This chapter has provided evidence of how social factors affect assessment in instrumental music tuition. The following chapter details the methodology employed in order to address these factors.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Introduction

The previous chapter provided a critical literature review of the social factors that play a role in the assessment of musical attainment and how the graded examination has become embedded in the cultural field of instrumental music tuition both in the UK and that of former British colonies. This chapter defines and expands on the action research methodology and establishes the ethical framework. It also describes the research methods, how the data was collected and analysed. In addition, it explains why I have taken a critical, constructivist and interpretative research position and how the cycles of action were planned, reflected upon and evaluated.

### 3.1 Action research defined

Within its broadest remit and understanding, action research as a methodology has a valid claim within educational research and provides the pathway in order to improve practice in the assessment of instrumental music tuition.

Action research can be defined as a systematic study that merges action and reflection intending to improve practice, undertaken by practitioners into their own practices (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Kemmis, 1993 and Lewin, 1946).



The action research paradigm, as a methodology in music education, has been welcomed as a valuable methodology. Regelski (1995), recognised challenges when attempting to bring about change in music education with the difficulties stemming from the experience of the teacher and how research often fails to take this into account. Hartwig (2014), makes this clearer by describing Regelski's understanding that 'music education is carried on as a craft, having no basis for practice other than the tacit theorising of teachers who are apprenticed to teach as they were taught' (Hartwig, 2014: 79). According to Hartwig (*ibid*), Regelski (1995), 'believed that a turning toward action research in music education will promote a democratic form of public discussion allowing for an uncoerced flow of ideas and arguments' (Hartwig, 2014: 79).

Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991), maintain that action research provides the opportunity to question existing epistemologies, which automatically locates it within the political arena of knowledge production. They recognise that action research places an importance on the political aspect of producing knowledge with the aim of 'enlightenment and awakening of the common peoples' (*ibid*: vi). Indeed, teachers as researchers could certainly be placed comfortably with the 'common peoples'. Action research could provide power to the powerless by challenging the long-established power and defining elements of the graded examination system while the examination boards continue to hold a monopoly on both the definition and employment of knowledge

within the assessment of musical attainment and the cultural field of music education.

An example in support of this view can be found regarding the value of action research in music education. Conway and Borst (2001) state 'one way to make connections between research and teaching practice is through action research' (*ibid*: 3). In addition, action research is welcomed on the professional level as described by Gall *et al.*, (2013), where their experience of action research is thoroughly rooted in problem-solving at a grass-roots level. The process of action research is small enough for teachers to implement, yet at the same time, can make a significant impact leading to wider-reaching changes to practice.

While my values challenge the dominance of the graded examination system, this action research study does not intend to be dismissive or attempt to discredit the examining boards. Within the constraints of this research neither does the study endeavour to make a remarkable sensation with a new, more appropriate package of tools for assessing musical attainment in instrumental teaching that ignores the past and current practices. Rather than, it questions the suitability and usefulness of the graded examination system within instrumental music tuition in the UK and puts forward some evidence-informed improvements to practice that meets the needs of both the pupil and the teacher in the global twenty-first century.

### 3.2 Challenges in action research

There are various interpretations of action research appearing in the body of literature (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Coats, 2005; Elliott, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McNiff *et al.*, 2003; Sagor, 2000 and Whitehead, 1993) which make this a complex and potentially misunderstood methodology leaving it open to questions of whether it is truly robust. This is because action research is not situated neatly into one academic discipline having been developed from a wide range of fields that have materialised over time (Brydon-Miller *et al.*, 2003).

One of the challenges facing action research is that 'traditional forms of enquiry might argue strongly that action research just lacks credibility' (Sharp, 2012: 58), particularly as it is sometimes viewed as 'lacking credibility as a rigorous research methodology' (Fisher, 2013: 281). My personal experience of action research suggests otherwise; my reflection has been rigorous in that I consistently questioned what I was doing, why and how. Whilst it has at times been on the margins, action research is now an accepted mainstream methodology (Clason, 2016), credible and reliable (Antonellis and Berry, 2017).

There have been some internal debates towards the approaches in action research in how it contributes to knowledge. Not so much a question of knowledge production in a traditional sense, but a shifting of the knowledge base whilst incorporating discrete layers from the many action research projects that are in operation locally, yet on a global scale.

However, in regards to my study, knowledge becomes more problematic when there are arguments that are used to discredit an action research project as a credible measure of academic inquiry. Herr and Anderson (2015), claim that academics are concerned that action research generates knowledge which is practice-based and not driven by theory. They state many academics have a preference for formal knowledge created in the academic world rather than in the informal world of practice.

A statement such as this fuels the reason further for applying action research as a methodology, this research is a study in professional practice, and thereby practice-driven, not intending to create new theories in the traditional sense. Furthermore, I agree that 'theory without practice is not theory but speculation' (Bradbury-Huang, 2010: 93). I understand producing knowledge is not the primary goal of action research, rather making improvements to practice usually involving people is the central focus within an action research paradigm (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

It has been described earlier in this thesis, clearly established and evidenced that there is a lack of research within instrumental music tuition with suggested reasons why. An additional reason can also be considered because of the fundamental nature of these lessons, as they are based on the practical application of learning to play a musical instrument. For academics and their concern of practice-driven

knowledge, there are further concerns in that 'action research is carried out under diverse intellectual traditions, and these traditions are distinct from and generally at odds with the mainstream academic research traditions' (Herr and Anderson, 2015: 11). Rather than searching for an alternative methodology and approach, it is suggested that these concerns raised by the traditional social sciences continue to assist in demonstrating the very need for an action research methodology in regards to this study. Action research can implement an epistemological challenge to those traditions and illuminate both where knowledge and power are currently situated. Traditional research in the social sciences has been known to bring about a certain uneasiness 'on the grounds that field practitioners are alienated by the term research, which is thought to be 'academic' and something carried out by outsiders' (Fisher, 2013: 278). However, by the use of action research,

'it demystifies the role and definition of the "expert". Instead, it transfers the power to create and use new knowledge to those who have been systematically abandoned or denied access to what has traditionally been accepted as legitimate spaces for knowledge acquisition and production'. (Koirala-Azad and Fuentes, 2010: 2).

An unlikely subject for research, such as the graded examination assessment system, which has been so thoroughly rooted in the cultural field of twentieth and twenty-first-century instrumental music tuition, could now appear to be ideal if both pupils and teachers consider themselves to be nothing more than a customer of a service. It could also be implied that any lack of academic interest in the assessment of musical

attainment within the context of this research deepens if examining boards have been reluctant to allow non-experts or outsiders to be involved with what they might regard as a legitimate private arena to acquire and create knowledge. Bearing all this in mind, a suitable definition for this study would be that 'action research is systematic self-reflective scientific inquiry by practitioners to improve practice' (McKernan, 1996: 5).

### 3.3 Emancipating, enhancing critical action research

This model of action research 'promotes emancipatory praxis in the participating practitioners; that is, it promotes a critical consciousness which exhibits in political as well as practical action to promote change' (Grundy, 1987: 154). This type of research aims to develop the closeness between day-to-day issues faced by practitioners in precise settings, and the theories that are used to define and then solve those issues. 'In other words, an attempt to bring together theory and book knowledge with real world situations, issues and experiences' (Berg, 2001: 187).

There is also a second aim with equal importance as the first in helping practitioners to gain a greater understanding of fundamental problems by magnifying their collective consciousness (see for example Berg, 2001; Holter and Schwartz-Barcott, 1993 and Masters, 1995). Theory and practice come together by developing a social critique which is constructed in three parts: theory, enlightenment and action (Berg, 2001). To explain this further, Grundy (1987) introduces the work of

Habermas (1972; 1974) in presenting a theoretical model that enables a deeper understanding of emancipatory action research. She states that 'emancipatory action research mediates between theory and practice through the process of enlightenment. This is the mediating process of Habermas' [1974: 32] critical theory' (Grundy, 1987: 154). Grundy (1987) is referring to Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' which she explains 'is a theory about the fundamental human interest which influence how knowledge is 'constituted' or constructed' (*ibid*: 7). From this stance, it would be fair to suggest that knowledge is being viewed as an action, driven by people, perhaps the researcher, with their own chosen desires and interests. It is suggested then, from this view, knowledge is always created from human interests. This brings about questions as to whether this type of action research is truly emancipating if the research is being driven along by a hidden agenda of human interests. However, Habermas (1972) claims that if these influences are recognised and understood, the researcher is able to find a variety of ways to work with them.

This type of research sits within the critical science paradigm, which allows researchers to dig deep under the top layer of words, symbols and their meanings to understand the root causes of problems instead of quick-fix reactions. Stemming from critical theory which is concerned with the outcome of improvement to human life, or practice, critical science relates to the process we employ to achieve the desired outcome (McGregor 2003: 1). The emancipating, enhancing critical action research

model has been advanced particularly with the work of Kemmis and his colleagues in Australia (see for example Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis, 1983; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988 and McTaggart *et al.*, 1982). The critical approach within an action research model

'rejects the positivist belief in the instrumental role of knowledge in problem-solving, arguing that critical inquiry enables practitioners not only to search out the interpretive meanings that educational actions have for them but to organise action to overcome constraints'. (McKernan, 1996: 24).

The critical approach is the most suitable for this research as it recognises the need to understand an issue before any change can begin, which has been explored in the previous chapter. Critical theory questions what is already in existence, how it got there, what holds it there, particularly in regards to relationships of power (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011).

### 3.4 Ethics

Ethics are a vital consideration in all aspects of research. My study was undertaken in accordance with university ethical procedures following the guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). I received ethical approval from Nottingham Trent University, of which the approval form is presented in appendix one. Informed consent was gained from all of those that took part in this research project and participants were informed that they would have anonymity with fictional names, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Within the consideration of ethics, there is also the question of ownership of data, which is currently stored securely and will be destroyed at a suitable



point in the future after the completion of the Doctorate of Education degree. Teachers participating in this research have been notified that they will be given a copy of the final report, but during the current write up process, they may have access to the draft to authenticate statements at any time. They have also been given a copy of their transcribed interview to approve the content. A researcher has a safeguarding responsibility in making sure no harm will come to any participants, and I kept this fully in mind. I am also the designated safeguarding lead for the LiM programme. The purpose and nature of the research were fully explained from the outset. Cohen *et al.*, (2007), suggest the researcher construct their own personal code of practice designed to fit the research project. My personal code is presented in appendix two.

As an action researcher, I recognise my involvement and my position in managing the LiM programme. I have focussed on being transparent and open with all the participants as power relations should be considered within my role and the possible implications this brings to the research. Finally, while writing this thesis, I am mindful a researcher's ethical responsibilities also consist of the highest academic integrity and honesty, by remaining objective at all times (Kumar, 2005: 304).

### 3.5 Participants

The participants involved in my study over all three cycles of action research consisted of six instrumental teachers employed by LiM and 152 children aged between 9-11. The teachers taking part in the research

were invited to assist in developing the assessment process for the LiM programme. They varied from experienced teachers holding a senior position to those with less experience. What they held in common is that they had all been employed as lead tutors for their instrument group. This role meant they had significant input in creating learning programmes for LiM prior to my employment. They were all well respected teaching colleagues and active musicians, and I had worked with them previously. I have included myself as one of the teachers as I was an active participant in the research.

These teachers taught the children invited to take part in the research. Their lessons took place in their school in the usual LiM small group model ratio of four children to one teacher for thirty minutes every week during term time. The children were not specifically selected for skill or any other reasons. Those that took part in the research were the children whose parents/carers accepted my research invitation and gave their consent. I also obtained consent from the headteachers of the children's schools. Guidelines, as set out by BERA (2011), were followed throughout and informed consent gained appropriately. All names have been changed to allow anonymity except for myself.

### 3.6 Data collection

Action research takes a holistic approach to improve practice employing methods that are associated with a qualitative research paradigm to collect data. Focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews were

the main research tools used along with participant observation and keeping a research journal over the three cycles of research.

### 3.7 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were used to gain an understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of using the graded examination in the LiM programme as a model of assessment. They are structured group discussions that set out to explore specific issues through group interaction (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). This method of data collection was an ideal starting point for this research as focus groups provide a means of obtaining preliminary data on a defined topic with an emphasis on the participant's experiences and thinking. The emphasis on perspectives

'brings together attitudes, opinions, and experiences in an effort to find out not only what participants think about an issue but also how they think about it and why they think the way they do'.  
(Morgan, 1997: 20).

Interaction is vital within focus groups because it allows participants to understand and consider the perspectives of others and the possibility of reviewing or changing their own opinions as they learn from others (Litosseliti, 2003). However, care needs to be taken to make sure there is a safe communicative space for each member, so they can express their opinions freely and honestly, particularly if there are wildly differing views. This can be managed due to the flexible nature of focus group interviews in such a way that it provides an opportunity to discuss and

explore areas where there is a lack of research, such as the graded examination. Building on group dynamics, issues can be explored in rich detail within the professional context of participant's 'without imposing a conceptual framework compared with a structured individual interview' (Nyumba *et al.*, 2018: 29). In my research, I used a small number of participant teachers that had a specialism for their instrument group. These types of focus groups that feature high levels of expertise from individuals in a small group are known as mini focus groups (Hague, 2002).

A focus group requires a moderator of which I took the role to ask the questions, listen intently allowing all members the space to respond and engage whilst keeping the topic on track (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Although I have little experience of this, there are many similar skills a teacher employs as according to Litosseliti (2003), a moderator should listen and inspire whilst maintaining enthusiasm and interest within the group on the subject under discussion. She states 'a good moderator is a good listener: in the best focus groups, people talk to each other, not to the moderator' (*ibid*: 42). Further similarities in teaching can be seen in that moderators are 'confident and in control...flexible and adaptable' (*ibid*). By adopting these qualities with a neutral stance facilitates open and engaging dialogue. This also contributes 'to minimizing the risk of bias that can result from the moderator leading the participants or the participants responding to the moderator's prejudices' (*ibid*: 43).

### 3.8 Semi-Structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews take a less formal approach to a structured interview. They are conversational in style 'with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015: 6). Using this tool to gather data allowed me to understand the everyday lived experience from the interviewees' perspective (*ibid*). I used this method to interview three of the teachers from the focus group. This also provided some form of validity as themes that emerged from the focus group also appeared during the semi-structured interviews. I recorded and transcribed the focus group and semi-structured interviews.

### 3.9 Data analysis

A large amount of data accumulated from the focus group and semi-structured interviews. Prior to analysing this data, I had observed how frequently the teachers used stories to illustrate their worldviews. According to Mishler (1986), the frequent appearance of stories or narratives 'are one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to order, organize, and express meaning' (Mishler, 1986: 106). I chose to combine framework and narrative analysis to the data as I became increasingly aware of how my story and the story of the teachers were intertwined with shared experiences, values and beliefs. Narrative analysis is appropriate for the research methods I used as interviews are a form of discourse which can be

described as 'speech events whose structure and meaning is jointly produced by interviewers and interviewees' (*ibid*: 105). These speech events became part of a narrative that moved this study forward to develop three cycles of action research bringing changes to practice. Framework analysis is based on a thematic approach and is equally appropriate for this research because it is able to provide 'core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78). A thematic narrative analysis provides a more descriptive and holistic understanding of the data (Brannen, 2005 and Floersch *et al.*, 2010). This combined approach is ideally suited within a constructivist research paradigm as both thematic and narrative analysis 'view experiences, meanings and social structures as mutually constitutive' (Shukla *et al.*, 2014: 3). Furthermore, this research story is one of transformation leading to my living educational theory. Other action researchers claim 'it may be valuable to use action research and narrative analysis to begin asking deeper questions about our assumptions regarding the nature of teaching and learning in music' (Strand, 2009: 361), with which I concur.

### 3.10 Procedure

According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), there are numerous and varied approaches in qualitative research to thematic analysis. I have followed the five-step framework approach, as presented in table 1, developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994).

Table 1: Five phases of framework analysis

Phase	Process
Familiarisation of data	Transcribe data and become thoroughly immersed by reading and rereading. Listen to the audio recording repeatedly. Make notes of initial ideas and recurring themes.
Identify thematic framework	Code interesting features and collate data relevant to each code. Identify key concepts emerging from the data and research aims.
Indexing	Place codes into possible themes. Gather relevant data for each theme.
Charting	Produce an overview of the data using framework headings.
Mapping and interpretation	Describe findings, concepts and explanations.

The framework approach is particularly useful as it sets out a clear procedure 'which aims to be transparent, thus allowing policy-makers access to the process, and allow researchers to work together' (Donovan and Sanders, 2005: 522). This is applicable for my action research as I was aware the intended outcome of finding an alternative approach to the graded examination as a form of assessment in LiM would be made a core policy as part of the delivery within the mass participation music programme. A sample of coding from the focus group is presented in table 8, appendix 13.

Narrative analysis was also applied to the data to understand and hear the experiences of the teachers as well as a means to confirm the themes appearing from the framework analysis. I applied a *bricoleur* procedure as presented in table 2 overleaf, based on suggestions from Polkinghorne (1988), demonstrated in Emden (1998), as there is currently no definitive approach (Sharp *et al.*, 2018).

Table 2: Four phases of narrative analysis

Phase	Process
Familiarisation of data	Read and reread the full interview transcript numerous times.
Delete	Delete interviewer questions and comments. Delete unnecessary words that distract from the main idea from the interviewee's responses.
Identify	Identify themes emerging from the narrative.
Move	Move themes to create a coherent story of the interviewee's experience.

I utilised this four-stage approach as I was interested to see if my story told as my experience of the graded examination system was similar to the teachers and if theirs were similar to each other. Combining the two approaches of a framework and narrative analysis to the data is appropriate as it allows 'space to discover other unexpected aspects of the participants' experience or the way they assign meaning to phenomena' (Gale *et al.*, 2013: 3). A sample of narrative analysis from an interview is presented in table 9, appendix 14.

Themes emerging from the data are identified, described and discussed from each cycle of research in chapters four, five and six.

### 3.11 Acknowledging prior research

Shortly before I began my research, the LiM programme had begun investigating possible routes of providing quality assurance to stakeholders providing evidence through graded examinations. Graded music examinations had been suggested by the research department in the local authority as a means of assessing not only the merits of the programme but that of the children's musical attainment. In March 2013,



management within the LiM programme asked their lead tutors to suggest suitable children to be entered for a grade one examination with ABRSM in the Summer term. Children were prepared for the examination during their lesson time and through a weekend workshop. The workshop was designed so children could rehearse with an accompanist and teach them the skills needed for the aural tests. I began my role at LiM just a few days after these examinations took place, and I was fully aware of the process leading up to and on the day of the examinations. For this reason, I have chosen not to undertake a pilot study as this work provided the initial pilot to my research. A pilot study can be defined as a 'small scale version, or trial run, done in preparation for the major study' (Polit and Tatano-Beck, 2010: 563), in addition to the idea of trying out a specific research instrument (Baker, 1994). An advantage of undertaking a pilot study is that it may be able to give indications to possible weaknesses in the study. However, in many ways, this prior research undertaken in LiM acted as a type of pilot study to my research and through the focus group interviews I was able to understand both the weaknesses and strengths of the ABRSM examinations that had taken place. I agree that

'researchers have an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase'. (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 4).

Therefore, I have made use of the initial attempts by the LiM programme in ascertaining an appropriate and suitable method to assess children's

musical attainment. By acknowledging this study as a pilot, I have been able to investigate and present a new approach through research to contribute to new knowledge.

### 3.12 Participatory action research

Action research includes a multitude of various subsets or alternative terms to describe exactly what it is. Therefore, as an active participant, my study can be described as participatory action research (PAR). PAR recognises the need for people to be involved in the research that directly affects them, bringing empowerment, access and social justice (McDonald, 2012). Such an approach is ideally suited to my study because

‘participatory research insists on an alternative position regarding the purpose of knowledge creation. The purpose of participatory research is not merely to describe and interpret social reality, but to radically change it’. (Maguire, 1987: 29).

The strength of PAR lies in its collaborative nature in finding solutions to problems faced by those involved. As with other action research approaches, PAR has been criticised as a soft method by those whose epistemology understands science to be the truth (Fals Borda, 2001). However, my epistemological views are in line with PAR where researchers recognise science as a social construction concerned with the everyday experiences of participants to generate meanings and interpretations rather than a single truth (Young, 2006). Participatory

action research tells a story beginning with the practitioner/researcher asking, how do *I* improve my practice?

### 3.13 Living educational theory

Living educational theory has been defined as

‘an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work’.  
(Whitehead, 2008: 103).

According to action researchers Whitehead and McNiff (2006), Whitehead began developing the idea of living educational theory in 1976 to establish first-person action research as a response to concerns within interpretative action research. Whitehead’s main concern with interpretive action research stemmed from practitioners undertaking the research, yet the theory being generated by the external observer, usually an academic in which he found himself to be positioned. Whitehead also found himself to be a contradiction by acting one way but having his beliefs in another (*ibid*). Despite the promise of action research and all the empowerment it has to offer, it was clear to Whitehead that this methodology was still grounded in the traditional social sciences as

‘power to interpret data, establish the validity of the work, and disseminate it for legitimation within critical public forums still rests with the external researcher. Power has never been entirely devolved to practitioners’.  
(*ibid*: 21).

By taking a living educational theory approach the practitioner as the researcher is able to explain their educational influence in both their

personal learning and the learning of others, along with the social formations that influence their own practice. While the term living educational theory and living theories have been used interchangeably, it is important to note that living educational theory can be understood as an approach to educational research that refers to an individual's unique explanation, or theory of their educational influences in learning (Whitehead, 2013).

Living educational theory through action research positions itself well to this study as an enquiry into how to improve practice in the assessment of musical attainment in instrumental tuition. Living educational theory allows myself as the practitioner/researcher not only to generate knowledge as to how may *I* improve what *I* am doing but furthermore, how *I* got there in the first place and through what influences.

Living educational theory is not like traditional research within the social sciences. Indeed, a professional doctorate in education is equally unlike traditional research through the PhD route with the professional doctorate being designed for practitioners in professional practice. A living educational theory action research approach will be reflective throughout the action research cyclic process and contribute new knowledge through the identified theory in regards to the assessment practices in instrumental music tuition.

### 3.14 Action research process

In the most minimal form, the action research process is often described in the cyclical process of plan, act, observe and reflect (Lewin, 1946).

Although this appears to be a rather simple process, it is useful nonetheless to hold these steps in mind and view as signposts in order to keep the research design on track. Lewin's (1946) original model of action research offers up a slightly more detailed process and is based on a cycle of steps which consists of identifying a concern, carrying out reconnaissance/fact-finding, plan, take action, evaluate, further reconnaissance/ fact-finding, amend the plan and take action.

There is relevance in looking at how action researchers describe the process involved with this methodology to be able to locate my research. As described earlier, there is a general agreement in the definition of action research, despite the concerns regarding the procedure usually being presented as a clockwork process of steps. It is unlikely or at least questionable as to how these steps could be neat and tidy when undertaking any research that involves human interaction. It is suggested that these clockwork steps are more likely to be played out as a systemic polyrhythm with the steps overlapping through the constant implementation of planning, acting and reflecting which in turn develop new plans, new actions and further reflection.

'In reality, the process is likely to be more fluid, open, and responsive. The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully but rather whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices,

their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice'. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2008: 277).

In this study, I have employed a living theory action research route which allows for a fluid and open approach following a five-step process as developed by Whitehead (1989; 2003). The five steps as set out in (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011: 90) are as follows:

- I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice.
- I imagine a solution to the concern.
- I act in the direction of the imagined solution.
- I evaluate the outcome of the solution.
- I modify my practice, plans and ideas in the light of the evaluation.

Experience, imagine, act, evaluate and modify are the five steps that have been undertaken in this action research study in order to make changes to improve my practice in instrumental music tuition specifically concerned with the assessment of musical attainment.

### 3.15 Experience

I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice. This has become evident to me from my observations and experience of 25 years in music education having worked as a peripatetic instrumental woodwind tutor for a county music service, primary music specialist in a state school and examiner for a graded music examining

board. Beginning the journey of this professional doctorate in education in 2008, I was confident in claiming there was little in place in terms of a curriculum for instrumental music tuition or a framework for the assessment of musical attainment in instrumental playing, and that remains the case. My concern stemmed from the feeling of 'churning out' a succession of young instrumentalists whose learning was dictated and assessed, and essentially an assessment of my teaching, through the graded music examination. In terms of a curriculum for instrumental teaching, rather than devise my own, I followed the same path that I had taken through the graded examination system, believing without questioning that this was the 'holy grail' in learning to play a musical instrument. My colleagues did the same and continue to do the same; my old pupils that are now teachers continue this lineage with pride.

Despite my strong belief in the graded examination system as a curriculum and assessment model for instrumental music tuition, I was never entirely comfortable with it, the more I began to gain experience in my teaching career. I started to recognise some aspects of teaching that I included in my classroom teaching role, which were missing from my peripatetic role. In the classroom, I had clear learning objectives drawn from the national curriculum for music, which I assessed in making a judgement of how well the children were able to meet the objectives. In my one-to-one or small group instrumental teaching my objectives consisted entirely of being able to pass grade one, grade two, grade three and so on, for there was no national curriculum for instrumental music

tuition, and there continues to be none. While much could be criticised in regards to music in the primary national curriculum, as a new teacher, it provided a clear vision of developing and progressing music skills for children, of which I assessed myself through observing the children, providing performance opportunities during every assembly and hymn practice. It was never quite the same as my instrumental teaching, and I found myself to be a contradiction, thoroughly immersing myself in the master and apprentice approach where I imparted my knowledge and beliefs because that was what I had learned, and therefore must be correct with the assessment fulfilled by an external expert, the examiner. Watching a conveyor belt of graded examinations fill each instrumental pupils' basket of musical knowledge is far from a demonstration of good practice, I found myself to experience concern in my educational beliefs in direct contrast of what I was actively promoting in my practice. Not intending for this to read as a 'greatest hits' compilation of confessions of a bad teacher, rather my experience was demonstrable for grade hopping and grade achieving that meant as far as my employers were concerned I was meeting over and above their mission statements, their vision statements and expectations of placing music into an academic tick box instead of a beatbox with consistent results through the graded music examination. Consistent results that were measurable, yet possibly far from musical but if we are unable to measure something, how do we know it's good? As one teacher describes,



'today, *all* teachers seem to be considered bad until proven otherwise...unless a teacher turns in grades and standardized test scores in the highest level of academic achievement while the students perform in class as the educational equivalents of the von Trapp kids in *The Sound of Music*, there's a chance of being branded a bad teacher'. (Owens, 2013: XIII).

The concerns I had in regards to the graded examination machine created pure delight for other stakeholders as rather than demonstrating bad teaching it would appear I was supplying evidence of the opposite with grade after grade of achieving pupils that could play to the test. They might not be able to play anything else, create anything else, respond to anything else but they could certainly play grade one, list A Rigaudon by Purcell on the flute.

The music service I worked for trusted me and I became a team leader delivering the wider opportunities scheme, training other teachers and acting as a mentor. My headteacher and governors trusted me and allowed me to lead the music department as I saw fit in a small village primary school where I was made a subject leader for music. Parents trusted me in my ability to deliver enthusiastic music education to their children with quantitative results in the form of the graded examination. Children trusted me in believing that I knew what was best for them in their musical learning yet I was unable to trust myself in being entirely secure with an assessment process that fulfilled many needs but did not necessarily act as assessment for learning. Convinced I did not possess enough knowledge, I completed the degree of Master in Education and a

Master in Music Research and went through some rigorous training to become a graded music examiner. I believed that by achieving all of this I would gain further knowledge and become a better teacher, I am sure I did, but the feeling was always there in my instrumental teaching that something was lacking. By using the graded examination syllabus as a form of curriculum and assessment system, I was concerned that my hidden learning objective was to develop the solo recitalist rather than the whole musician. I began to question if I did not do this in my classroom practice why then, do I thoroughly support it in my instrumental teaching?

I found I was not alone in my thinking as

'to many instrumental teachers the idea of 'evolving a curriculum' will probably seem unnecessary, unimportant or even somewhat intimidating!...Since very few countries prescribe any specific national syllabus for the learning of musical instruments, instrumental teachers are left to create their own'.

(Harris and Crozier, 2000: 17).

'In the teaching of musical instruments the great majority of teachers use the grade and diploma system of music exams to form the basis and structure of their teaching'.

(*ibid*: 111).

In agreement, Hallam (1998), stated that 'unless teachers take a decision not to enter their pupils for examinations what is taught is determined by the syllabus' (*ibid*: 275).

Although these references are dated now the relevance is there in regards to the timeframe as I was beginning to question my instrumental teaching practice as more and more of my pupils passed their grade and then

moved on to the next one because that is what I did and everyone else appeared to be doing from my experience as an instrumental teacher and an examiner. My current observations remain the same in that graded music examinations continue to play a dominant role in instrumental music teaching. I agree that 'in 'doing the grades', have fashioned many people's understanding of what constitutes 'normal' practice in music teaching' (Wright, 2013: 3). It is possible then that instrumental teachers, myself included, have embraced a restricted domain of teaching methods to reach the goal of the graded examination, didactic and teacher-led which is the exact opposite of my classroom approach.

My concern then, is that the graded examination as a form of curriculum and assessment is not sufficient to develop a well-rounded, confident, creative and responsive young musician. It does serve a purpose, it is useful as a signpost, and it does foster a sense of achievement and pride in candidates when they pass. As a teacher, examiner and previous candidate, it is clear to me that the graded music examination has plenty to offer given the great importance placed on gaining qualifications in our society in addition to providing motivation and incentive. According to Harris and Crozier (2000), 'grade exams are designed to test all-round musicianship' (*ibid*: 112). I would suggest that an assessment system should assist in developing the all-round musician rather than acting as a test of musicianship alone.

Again, this research does not intend to be dismissive of the graded examination; rather, it searches to find an improvement to practice in the assessment of instrumental music teaching. However, I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice when relying on the graded examination as the dominant or superior form of assessment within instrumental music tuition.

### 3.16 Educational values

My educational values and beliefs have shaped this research as a whole. I believe children should have equal access to instrumental music education whatever their background or circumstances. I value a music education that incorporates a form of assessment that develops children into better learners by fostering their natural inquisitiveness. I consider a recognised form of assessment as an educative right that supplies both cultural capital and builds learning power in children creating independent learners. Having stated my values and beliefs, I describe these as having broad roots in a critical progressive eclectic music education philosophy. By progressive, I mean that I believe music education should focus on the whole child as a musician rather than on curriculum content or the teacher as the expert. A progressive education philosophy places emphasis on actively experimenting as opposed to a passive approach where knowledge is imparted from the teacher as the expert (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). The master and apprentice approach in instrumental music tuition can be viewed very much as a passive model of learning. It relies

on the teacher and their superior knowledge moulding the apprentice through learning from and imitating the master (Koopman *et al.*, 2007), with the master being a mentor, role model and the source of all knowledge (*vide* Bjøntegaard, 2015; Creech, 2012; Gaunt, 2010; Jørgensen, 2000 and Persson, 1994). The concern I experience is that this would appear to be an example of passive education in instrumental music tuition and there are similarities in the graded examination as a form of assessing the candidate imitating their master rather than supplying their interpretation. Gaunt (2010), supports this view in reference to the master and apprentice approach that 'one-to-one tuition may inhibit the development of self-responsibility and individual artistic voice' (*ibid*: 240). This goes against my values as it suggests a barrier for children becoming independent learners being unable to build their learning power.

The passive model of master and apprentice presumes that knowledge is obtained and passed on rather than a product of social communication and interpretation and understanding. As Jørgensen (2000) suggests that teachers

'who dominate the instrumental lessons seem to give their students limited possibility to assume responsibility for their own learning and musical development, and they seem to disregard or neglect highly accepted theories about the importance of active participation from the student for an optimal outcome of learning'.  
(*ibid*: 70).

This view demonstrates a similarity to the much earlier work of Dewey (1938). He challenged traditional education to move towards a

progressive approach, shifting away from the rigid model of teaching and passive learning to an approach that involved participation and democracy. Dewey wrote at a time when education was didactic and authoritarian following a controlled and fixed curriculum.

'The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity'.  
(Dewey, 1938: 18-19).

The graded examination system is not so dissimilar in regards to traditional education as 'the system of grade and diploma music exams that is now so familiar to us is a product of the attitudes and social circumstances of Victorian society' (Wright, 2013: 19). My question in this research enquires as to whether an alternative should be sought for the twenty-first-century learner.

By eclectic I mean

'a conceptual approach that does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, but instead draws upon multiple theories, styles, or ideas to gain complementary insights into a subject, or applies different theories in particular cases'.  
(Jacob, 2013: 2).

Given the fast-paced digital world we live in, it could be seen that any particular steadfast belief in a single theory is naive and narrow-minded, unconsciously unaware if not even dangerous. The twenty-first-century world moves at a lightning pace with changing values and shifting boundaries. An eclectic approach provides diversity and flexibility, for it is fair to say that no one philosophy is so well versed that it furnishes all

facets of education. A modern society that features various cultures, ideologies and beliefs requires a synthesis of philosophies that recognises the global landscape we inhabit.

According to Samuel-Ravi (2015),

'society is changing now and then, it is difficult to know how to prepare and what to aim for. So, it needs to make educational philosophy most modern so as to meet the needs of present day society through a harmonic 'synthesis' between all the conflicting factors in educational philosophies and tendencies'.

(Samuel-Ravi, 2015: 71).

The world may change, yet some things remain steadfast in what could be viewed as a rigid form of curriculum and assessment in that

'graded exams have weathered many changes in the education sector over the last two decades and have remained largely unchanged as there is no particular reason to change a system that has been, and indeed is increasingly, popular and successful for so many candidates. Indeed, the awarding organisations have fought to preserve the identity of these qualifications against a backdrop of shifting political expectations and initiatives, knowing that their original meaning and purpose is valid and greatly valued...the future holds many potential further changes and uncertainties in the political, educational and regulatory landscape. But what seems certain is that graded exams will continue to go from strength to strength, evolving to meet the needs of contemporary teachers and learners through innovative practice which builds on the best traditions of the past'.

(Meech *et al.*, 2014: 30).

By critical, I mean that I continually ask questions about my practice and how my knowledge has been generated. My educational values believe that children have an educative right to a form of assessment that provides cultural capital. By being critical, I can uncover the layers of hegemony that may prove to be a barrier for every child to gain access as

social justice. As described by Scherff (2012) in her work on literacy, a critical stance allows researchers to 'question power, inequality, and the status quo; to understand our own participation in power structures; and to reframe and retheorize our beliefs and understandings' (*ibid*: 202). In addition, my view in being critical should be understood as a process of continual conscious engaging by carefully questioning the original concern through conscious reframing and rethinking.

I am critical in questioning the use of an assessment system that could be viewed as shaped by ideologies and power structures fuelling cultural capital to those that hold power. Therefore, I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice and through an action research methodology, I imagine a solution to the concern.

### 3.17 Imagine

The thought of imagining a solution to a concern could sound somewhat fanciful and therefore lacking a coherent and robust understanding as to how and why the solution was generated. To be clear, this research avoids a fairy tale narrative, although a certain amount of creativity is required within a living theory action research methodology. For imagining, or evoking your imagination, is a requirement to implement the action research process to improve practice. Without some element of imagination, it would be difficult to make some logical and well thought out steps towards improvement. Rather than, this research would become a historical account full of analysis, but lack within action stemmed from



imagination. The difficulty in using the term imagination is in providing a definition that can be understood concerning this study as it conjures up all kinds of meanings in a fantasy world or artistic creativity. While imagination can certainly be recognised as creativity at play, there is still understanding, reasoning and meaning to be considered. To explain further, the imagining of a solution in this research has stemmed from my educational values and experience. There is no magical thread here, but there is an element of the unknown of which imagination has been incorporated to generate the act of action in this research. Johnson (1990), provides for this research a strong rationale to utilise imagination as he claims

'it is important to revive and enrich our notion of imagination if we are to overcome certain undesirable effects of a deeply rooted set of dichotomies that have dominated Western philosophy (e.g., mind/body, reason/imagination, science/art, cognition/emotion, fact/value, and on and on) and that have come to influence our common understanding'. (Johnson, 1990: 140).

I have argued that the graded examination is one of those deeply rooted dichotomies. Imagination then, growing from evidence from previous research, experience and educational values supplies a solution. The imagined and then implemented solution is not a definitive ending but provides an alternative to the widely used current form of assessment in the cultural field of instrumental music tuition.

This chapter has discussed action research as the methodology for my research, including the research methods and data analysis. The following

chapter introduces the first cycle of research and how it begins to answer the research question: *How can I improve practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?*

## Chapter Four: The First Cycle: An Assessment Planning Format

### Introduction

The previous chapter explained and justified the chosen methodology for the three cycles of my action research study. It detailed the five-step living theory action research process of experience, imagine, act, evaluate and modify (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011), which I applied to this study. This chapter describes the first cycle of action research framed in theories of capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986 and 2000), which recognise cultural capital and build learning power, encouraging children to become independent learners (Claxton, 2002). It also details my journey of the infinite process of reflection in action and how my practice and that of others, transformed and led to further cycles of research.

### 4.1 Cycle one

The LiM programme required a form of assessment to be implemented, and an initial approach had been made the week before I started my new position with sixteen children taking an ABRSM grade one examination in June 2013. As a starting point for my research, I needed to understand more about this approach to inform my planning for cycle one to create a new type of graded examination.

In September 2013, I held one small focus group interview as a method to collect data with five instrumental teachers whose pupils had taken the grade one examination earlier. These teachers were invited to take part

as they were in a position to describe and discuss their feelings and thinking on the grade one examination. As an examiner and teacher, I already held several assumptions about this, so it was important to elicit the views of those involved at the time rather than drawing on my own bias.

I developed questions for the focus group interview, which were conversational, open-ended, clear, short and focussed in a sequenced pattern remembering the purpose drives the study (Krueger and Casey, 2000). I wanted to encourage a discussion between the teachers so I could understand the benefits and disadvantages of using the graded examination in the LiM programme. I assisted this by taking the part of the moderator in the focus group where the role is to 'ask questions, listen, keep the conversation on track and make sure everyone has a chance to share' (*ibid*: 9). I was drawn to the use of a focus group because I see the role of the moderator as very similar to being a classroom teacher. I am quite sure I have played this role many times in my primary teaching career. I obtained written consent from the teachers, making it clear they could withdraw from the research at any point.

Following ethical standards, I have anonymised their names except for myself. They are presented in table 4 appendix 5, indicating the instruments they teach. After the initial welcome, introductions and transition, the key question which formed the basis of the discussion for

the focus group began when I asked: *How did the pilot study go?* This was referring to the grade one examinations their pupils had taken previously. It is important to use familiar language, and the teachers understood this as a pilot study which is how team members of the LiM programme had defined it. This open-ended question allowed the group to begin quickly with a conversational start and have a clear focus. I allowed the questions to flow naturally, expecting more to appear as the discussion progressed. Rather than predict these, I chose to remain reflexive and objective as to how the focus group would progress. As recommended by Krueger and Casey (*ibid*), I developed questions that would allow me to explore any issues in the pilot study in order to understand and inform planning to create an alternative form of assessment. They are presented as a questioning route in table 3, appendix 4.

Data was collected by audio recording from which I made a written transcript. Using the written transcript, I employed a framework analysis as set out in the previous chapter, table 1 in 3.10. Framework analysis is regularly used for focus groups to analyse data (Rabiee, 2004), through a process involving five distinct but interconnected stages using a thematic approach (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The five stages allowed me to become thoroughly familiar with the transcript, which naturally moved onto identifying themes. The themes were then indexed or coded into smaller chunks which I then interpreted.

Each line of the transcript was numbered to identify the sentences, and I began to develop a thematic framework noting ideas and concepts that were arising from the raw data and placing them into categories of similarities. The next stage consisted of indexing and sorting by using the thematic framework. I labelled parts of the data that belonged together into new headings. Taking sentences from the transcript, I moved them under the relevant new headings by comparing and contrasting. Finally, I wrote a summary for each theme and each teacher in the focus group. This allowed me to produce an overview of the data into a framework of headings. From this, I could compare and contrast and begin to describe my findings. Krueger and Casey (2000) state that analysis must be systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous. By implementing this process, a line of evidence is created that increases the level of dependability, providing conformability and consistency of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). Table 8, appendix 13, presents an example of coding using framework analysis.

The themes appearing from the analysed data highlighted both a positive and negative response. I identified three main themes which are presented with the relevant codes in table 6 below.

Table 6: Main themes from cycle one

Theme	Codes	
Gaining access to cultural capital	Logistics Barriers	Out of school time Educative right
Irrelevant aspects of the graded examination	Teaching model Group learning	Aural tests Pressure
Benefits of graded examination	Focus on learning Achievement	Performance Repertoire Developing technique

## 4.2 Gaining access to cultural capital

All five teachers felt a graded examination provided a real benefit for pupils giving them a sense of achievement, rewarding them for hard work and providing a focus for learning. However, the logistics of getting the children to the exam venue and taking them out of school time was difficult to arrange. A theme that appeared from the data analysis showed there had been weekend workshops before the examinations which brass teacher, David, had found a particular struggle. He noted that

'you can't just teach grade one trumpet in one day because youngsters are still developing their lip muscles'.

The other teachers in the focus group also indicated there was a clear misconception between LiM management understanding the difference between preparing a child for graded examinations through teaching weekly lessons rather than providing an intense workshop weekend which was really a rehearsal.

Teachers agreed it was relatively stressful for their pupils and the LiM programme had given them little time to prepare each child when teaching in groups of four for half an hour. Strings teacher, Roger, stated that

'we very quickly realised from a teaching and logistical view this wasn't going to work on the large scale'.

### 4.3 Irrelevant aspects of the graded examination

The LiM teaching model of small group tuition clearly did not fit with the assessment model of the graded examination in its current form. The grade one examination requires pupils to perform pieces with piano accompaniment. According to the woodwind teacher, Tara, this was a new experience, and she noted how her pupils were entirely confused by the piano accompaniment during the examination because

'generally there is no access to even the most basic keyboard within their lesson time'.

Keyboard teacher, Desi, added that his pupils needed one to one attention and that was fairly impossible without having a detrimental effect on the group as a whole. David acknowledged the

'grade one model didn't fit; students need one on one attention'.

All the teachers agreed that other aspects of the graded examination were not relevant to the group teaching context with the aural test being singled out as the least important. As discussed by Nick,

'in the context of our teaching, the aural tests are meaningless, not even child-friendly or appropriate for kids of today. Why test them on singing back a tune? I include aural in all my lessons. I tell the kids it's so we can internalise the music and make our playing better. They get that, but it's not needed in an exam. The kids just want to play and show their skills to a grown-up. It's kind of like getting the reassurance they are playing it right.'

Desi recognised not only the pressure placed on the children but also the teachers,



'how often do we find ourselves teaching aural tests at the last minute? That's pressure on us as well as the kids, and it's the test we're teaching, not the actual fine listening and discernment of aural skills'.

The teachers agreed with these statements and felt this part of the graded examination was an unnecessary additional requirement for both children and teachers within the context of the LiM programme. Evidence from the data showed the teachers felt a lot of pressure had been placed on the children that were out of proportion with some of their pupils being visibly distressed on the day of the examination.

#### 4.4 Benefits of the graded examination

Despite teachers voicing their concerns, the analysed data demonstrated the teachers' placed high importance on the graded music examination and felt strongly that some form of alternative should be implemented. This was evidenced by comparing two recurring themes that emerged from the data. Firstly, one which stressed the benefits of graded examinations as illustrated by David, that for children grades are

'really important to give direction with their music-making'.

This can be compared with Roger, who recognised the importance of graded examinations from a teaching perspective as he described, 'teachers like what they know'. The benefits for children and teachers was summed up by Tara,

'it applies discipline in the skill of performing, their knowledge of music growing...the grades are part of the learning process.

Musicians know it, they understand it. Just treat it like a performance, not an exam'.

Although none of the teachers used the term 'cultural capital' the data analysis identified a theme of gaining rewards as an educative right in instrumental music tuition. In referring to children he taught privately in a different area of London, Roger stated,

'parents want their children to pass grades. They know the value of these exams and consider it a rite of passage'.

This view was echoed by guitar teacher Nick,

'the guitar, as a subject, deserves to have academic rights, grades provide evidence of that'.

Tara acknowledged that

'grades offer UCAS points for university. That's where the real value is, in helping you get there'.

#### 4.5 Creating an alternative assessment

I had hoped this first cycle of research with the focus group would give me a clear picture of how the graded exams had gone previously, what the problems were and through reflection, an idea of what planning would be required for cycle two. This, in addition to understanding the teachers' experience and what they felt LiM needed to create a suitable alternative.

I also hoped that a natural discussion would emerge from the focus group, which it did. As a moderator, I almost had little to add, ask or agree with while the teachers eagerly engaged in a conversation where

they expressed some dismay at the lack of pedagogical understanding on behalf of the LiM management and administration team.

The focus group was a useful reflective and reconnaissance phase to inform planning leading to action. The themes were able to clearly highlight barriers for children in the LiM programme in accessing the graded examination as a form of assessment; it was more about the model of teaching and logistics than I had expected. I would be unable to change the model of teaching, but I was in a position to change the form of the assessment through the planning stage.

Working with the data collected and drawing on the literature review, I set about creating an examination format that would meet the needs of the LiM programme. Logistics of removing children from school to attend an examination centre had been a key issue and for a programme the size of LiM, prohibitively expensive. The LiM teaching model of one teacher to four children had also made individual attention to children's playing difficult and not conducive to a group learning context. Introducing a piano accompaniment also presented a challenge as it would be unlikely that there was a piano or keyboard available for each lesson considering the enormity of the programme, teachers were not necessarily pianists and could not rely on the possibility of using backing tracks. Being an insider researcher, it was important to engage reflectively and understand the teachers' perspectives. As an active participant I needed to remove any assumptions I held about how teachers prepare children for graded

examinations; being a teacher and examiner this was more challenging than I had expected and my role required me to act quickly. Despite the depths of my knowledge and experience, an insider researcher should be able to be critical of their own work by understanding a range of perspectives (Costley *et al.*, 2010).

The teachers had felt little preparation time had been allowed for the children, and there was a general agreement that the music in some cases had been too difficult combined with all the other components of the graded examination such as aural tests and sight-reading. Nick, referred to the problem of grade one and the LiM model of teaching.

'A lesson template of one teacher, four pupils. Most exam boards are based for individuals. They can play the music but not in their short lesson time'.

I had observed some lessons prior to the focus group and been a LiM teacher, so I was aware of the varying abilities and skill levels a teacher may be presented with. I had also seen some variation in delivering lessons where a few teachers insisted on giving individual attention to each child for the duration of the half-hour lesson allowing no time for ensemble playing or including the children into a whole lesson. From my teaching perspective, this is not group teaching and certainly not the ethos of the LiM programme of which Desi noted on page 103, this approach

'has a detrimental effect on the group'.

Reflecting on the focus group analysis, my observations and experience, it appeared that grade one was not the best starting point, and a more basic framework was needed particularly to capture and reward those early learning stages. For some children, grade one may not be within their reach as the geographical area in which LiM operates has one of the highest population turnovers and churn in London. Turnover refers to the measuring of migration intensity into an area whilst a population churn takes into account the turnovers and includes movement within the area (Dennett and Stillwell, 2008).

The borough is ethnically diverse and dense (Mintchev and Moore, 2017), with an average of 12,000 people speaking 144 languages moving into the area every year from outside the UK remaining on average for just over a year (McGlynn, 2015). This presents a likely percentage of children being unable to access a grade one examination as part of their educational right within the LiM programme, missing out on an opportunity of gaining 'cultural capital' simply because they did not remain in the borough or one school long enough. Reflecting on these additional factors, I recognised the need for a simpler, basic approach that still covered technical aspects of learning to play an instrument so children could develop their skills in smaller steps, rather than leaping into grade one without the significant scaffolding of learning in place.

According to Claxton (2002), there is increasing evidence in theory and practice demonstrating the argument between traditional learning for

exams and progressive learning for life can be transcended because it is possible to do both. The first main theme arising from the data recognised the cultural power and educative right of the children in being able to access a graded examination. The second main theme demonstrated concern over some aspects of the exam, which were deemed irrelevant to the young musician learning in a group context. Drawing on Claxton's (*ibid*) 'building learning power', I began to consider how I could create a new type of graded examination which was able to provide cultural capital and build learning power. The teachers valued the graded examination as a form of academic qualification, which I suggest also fulfils an educational requirement for other stakeholders as LiM lessons take place during school curriculum time. This I felt was a crucial point that had not been made obvious before specifically as 'academic success is directly dependent upon cultural capital and on the inclination to invest in the academic market' (Bourdieu, 1973: 96). Drawing on this, I reflected on my concerns of the power examining boards hold in their domination of defining and reproducing culture in instrumental tuition through the graded examination system. However, the children in LiM deserved every educational right and qualification that could assist them in building their learning power by gaining cultural capital.

Working from one of the tutor books being used in the LiM programme I selected four beginner pieces from '*Abracadabra Clarinet*' (Rutland, 2008) that incorporated different time values covering the range of just over one octave from low G below middle C to the A above (see appendix 7), and

two scales ascending, G major and A minor. The range of notes and rhythms represented what I considered to be achievable for children within two terms of LiM tuition. I made arrangements of these pieces to include dynamic variety. I considered the possibility of a new type of graded examination, below grade one where the teacher became the examiner rather than children having to leave school to attend a centre or requiring an external examiner to visit.

Considering the existing graded examination model, I adapted a simpler version to be marked out of 100 with each component (scales and four pieces) worth twenty marks with the vision of the assessment being able to take place during lesson time by the teacher (see appendix 8). This would have little effect on the teaching model other than during the lesson in which the teachers chose to complete the assessment. Having incorporated this into my teaching previously as a 'mock' exam, I felt strongly that this would be achievable across my wider workforce of teachers. It would also allow for complete freedom and flexibility to ascertain the best time for the assessment to take place during any of their lessons. Drawing on the ABRSM (2013) marking criteria and KS 2 national curriculum (DfE, 2013) requirements when performing, I created a framework which reflected the early stages of learning to play a musical instrument with allocated marks to be awarded by the teacher (see appendix 9).

During this early stage of planning, I met with Tara for a short structured interview. I asked her for her views on my proposed assessment model. She agreed this was achievable and felt it would be engaging for children. She expressed concerns on how teachers would assess their own pupils and whether some would think more in terms of performance or technique despite the assessment criteria. I recognised from this, with my professional views and experience that a manageable assessment required external validation to implement it across the LiM programme. This new model of the graded examination was a key priority and was authorised by my senior management in the local authority who fund LiM as the most significant importance of my work. This, I believe, demonstrates the value it would add to both mine and teachers professional practice, knowledge and understanding. It also showed the local authority's commitment to the LiM programme and the importance it placed on music education in primary school.

The music, report form and assessment criteria were sent to the focus group for comments and feedback to include repertoire suggestions for their instrument groups.

Positive feedback from the focus group (five respondents) included comments such as 'a nice simple format that will be easy to commit to during lessons'; 'the flexibility to 'do' the exam at any time is great'; 'I think the children will like this because it's easy to explain what they need to do' and 'this will really help with my planning!'. Generally, the focus



group liked the simple layout and marking scheme, and welcomed the idea of taking responsibility for assessing their own pupils. Tara had used the assessment in her lessons with year six pupils and was particularly pleased with how engaged the children had been which I observed. She commented on their excitement and enthusiasm, asking when they could do this again? None of the respondents had considered the possibility of actually being able to create a do-it-yourself graded examination.

Reflecting on the focus group responses and being confident this new type of assessment could work within LiM, I began to list awarding bodies to find a partner to validate and provide accreditation. I approached two nearby universities, including one which had previously undertaken research in the LiM programme. The first declined on the grounds of being committed to research projects for a significant period, and the other felt their strength was in classroom music pedagogy and not instrumental teaching.

After some searching, I found a graded examination board willing to discuss which for simplicity and some sense of anonymity I will refer to as Ealing Music School (EMS). A meeting was arranged with the Director of Examinations, their Chief Examiner and my manager in March 2014 where they (EMS), agreed to be our awarding body. The Director of examinations and chief examiner suggested some changes be made which would make the assessment similar to their introductory exam. This would consist of five pieces and five exercises (rather like scales and

arpeggios) from their syllabus or write my own, which I agreed the latter was the best option and a *viva voce* section (a section where the examiner asks questions relating to the score children have played from for their examination) where children could demonstrate their musical understanding of musical terms and signs. The assessments would need to be filmed, and they would moderate a sample selection. They also recommended I create a team of assessors given the size of the LiM programme and added this would make the process feel more like an official, yet less formal examination. Finally, during the meeting it was agreed the three levels of assessment at Step 1, Step 2 and Grade 1 would have the same standard of equivalency as any other graded examination board and most importantly to LiM, with Ofqual accreditation.

EMS acknowledged I had created a simple but workable form of assessment that could be implemented across the LiM programme, and they were looking forward to our partnership.

#### 4.6 Reflective evaluation

This section evaluates how my first cycle of action research began to answer the driving research question: *How can I improve my practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?* Through an ongoing reflective process, I evaluate how my professional practice and understanding has improved and how it continues to shape my ontological and epistemological view of knowledge.

I began this first cycle of action research with ethical partnership working by considering the previous ABRSM grade one examinations that had taken place in LiM and learning from that through the views and experiences of those teachers involved. The focus group facilitated a platform for the teachers to discuss and for me to listen with a critical ear. This allowed me to be a reflective practitioner and their contribution provided the data I needed to begin thinking ethically and broadly about the requirements of the LiM programme. It would have been easy as an experienced graded examiner and teacher to disregard their understanding of the initial pilot study, but I believe knowledge is a social construct which is constructed by many. By using a hermeneutic approach employing a framework analysis, I was able to interpret the data with a sense of *verfremdungseffekt* as I recognise the importance of radical looking to develop critical questioning (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007). Continuous reflexivity also reminded me of the part I play in this research and the influence I have.

I had intended to create an alternative to the graded examination, not a variation of it, which led to a sense of disappointment. This conflicted with my views and beliefs of what assessment is for because I believe it should provide empowering opportunities for children to become independent learners creating their own construct of knowledge rather than a transmission of knowledge from their teacher. However, it was clear that the 'cultural capital' a graded examination could bring to children in the

LiM programme was important and in ways I had not considered before an educational right.

Reflecting on this first cycle, I was aware that further research would be required to create a process that is both practical and simple to administer, without losing focus on developing an assessment that allows children to build their learning power, gain 'cultural capital' and provide the necessary pathway for them to become independent learners. From this, my action research continued with the next question: *How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?*

This chapter has detailed the research process and outcomes of cycle one. The following chapter describes cycle two and the creation of a new type of assessment in instrumental music tuition.

## Chapter Five: The Second Cycle: Creating the Performance Awards and Graded Examinations

### Introduction

The previous chapter described the first cycle of my action research study in developing a new type of assessment for children in the LiM programme. It began to answer the research question: *How can I improve practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?*

This chapter describes the second cycle of action which sought to answer the next question: *How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?*

The assessment planning format from my first cycle of action research has provided a pathway for cycle two in that it strengthened my belief in being able to bring opportunities of cultural capital to children in the LiM programme. It allowed me to have a clearer understanding of what the barriers were in preventing children from achieving an assessment that had the credibility and validity of the graded music examination.

However, the reflective phase at the end of cycle one demonstrated my sense of disappointment in that I had succeeded in presenting a variation to the graded examination rather than an alternative that would allow children to become independent learners and build their learning power.

On a more positive note, I was in a position to create an entirely new syllabus which challenged me to consistently reflect on my understanding

of building learning power in my practice and presenting this in the *PAG* assessment.

This second cycle of action research is framed by Claxton's (2002) concept of learning power. It begins to demonstrate how, through action research, my professional understanding continued to evolve, my practice and that of others improve and inform my living educational theory (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

## 5.1 Cycle two

Reflecting on cycle one, I recognised that I had been able to create a new type of assessment that would be accessible to children in the LiM programme with Ofqual accreditation, which could be viewed as gaining cultural capital. It was accessible because of these key merits

- The assessment would be taken during their lesson time, so there was no disruption to the child, parents/carers or school.
- The fee would be paid for by LiM, so there were no costs to parents/carers or school.
- LiM would create its own syllabus and provide the music required for the assessment in a booklet, so there were no examination book costs to parents/carers, the school or the LiM programme.
- LiM would train its own assessors that currently teach the LiM programme meaning there would be a good deal of flexibility as to when assessments can take place.

However, my excitement was short lived once I realised the overwhelming amount of work that would be required to bring this to reality. I had agreed to write my own syllabus at three levels, step one, step two and grade one to include five exercises and five pieces for the eight instruments taught in the LiM programme at the time. During this reflection period, it occurred to me that this amounted to 240 pieces of music to compile. Reflecting carefully on what had been identified in cycle one, I felt my next steps were clear:

- Invite the focus group to assist with writing the syllabus (April 2014)
- Create a series of booklets containing the required music for the eight instruments over three levels (April 2014)
- Ask the focus group teachers to trial the assessment with their pupils to check for validity (April–June 2014)
- Pilot the assessments with EMS examiners to check for validity and reliability (Early July 2014)

While creating this timeline and beginning to feel the enormity of this action research study, I reminded myself to ask how I am I improving my practice? I had managed to bring about an opportunity for children in LiM to gain cultural capital by means of a new type of assessment which I had begun calling the *PAGs*. I questioned if I had improved my practice or had I just created an immense amount of work. This period of reflection enabled me to identify the outcome from the planning stage. Now into the

next planning stage, I invited the teachers from the focus group to attend another session.

At the focus group meeting, I briefed the teachers on the research to date and how EMS had accepted the new type of examination they had helped me create from my analysis of the focus group meeting. I also provided the teachers with a definition of my understanding of building learning power as developing the young musician in preparation to be an independent learner. At the time (April 2014), this change in practice had become more crucial to my professional practice and the success of the LiM programme because I had been asked to take the programme into year three throughout KS 2, ending in year six rather than continue into year seven in September. This in itself caused me an immense amount of additional work to consider, and I continually reflected on how I could improve my practice and that of others to develop young musicians in LiM to become independent learners in music by the time they finished primary school. Claxton (2002) has much more to say than my brief description, his building learning power programme is classroom-based and requires teachers to implement a culture of learning incorporating 'resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity' (*ibid*: 13). This will, he maintains, create a confident learner prepared for the ever-changing future. My living educational theory was developing from the idea of an independent learner specifically because I agree with Claxton about creating learners that are resilient and resourceful in order to become independent learners. I also agreed that assessment should be



designed to encourage students; in this case, young musicians to develop 'growth as confident independent learners' (Claxton *et al.*, 2011: 12).

At the end of the briefing I asked the teachers if they would like to help in developing the repertoire for the syllabus for their instruments at the three levels agreed with EMS and would they try the music with their pupils. The five teachers agreed and were generally pleased about the prospect of having such an important input within the LiM programme.

In early April 2014, a two-day planning and writing session was organised with the five teachers to create and write a syllabus for their instruments. I had agreed with EMS to compile the repertoire for our *PAGs* using similar, or where copyright would allow, the same pieces contained in their syllabus. I have presented them with my example for clarinet step one (see appendix 7) in the meeting I had with EMS as discussed in the previous chapter. Using my step one as an example, EMS syllabus and repertoire lists and the tutor method books we use in the LiM programme, we spent some time as a group discussing what a step one *PAG* would consist of for each instrument. Here I did not play the part of a moderator. I was very much part of the active discussion in shaping the repertoire to suit the LiM programme. I made notes throughout our discussions because I wanted to be clear in my thinking and reflecting process. I had included scales in my step one clarinet repertoire, and EMS had asked me to include technical exercises. I talked this through with the teachers, and we agreed, as I presume most instrumental teachers would

concur, that the learning of scales and arpeggios is a fundamental aspect of the technique required and 'forms an important part of every musician's training' (Hallam *et al.*, 2016: 265). Yet 'young pupils tend to look upon them with anything from mild distaste to absolute loathing' (Harris and Crozier, 2000: 53). I suggested we select scales and arpeggios from the EMS syllabus and write them as melodic exercises, in that way we could develop the children's musical skill but in a less mechanical way.

Below is an example of how I used the first five notes of the C major scale to become a melodic exercise for step one clarinet.

**Exercise 1**

Clarinet

**Andante**

5

The teachers and I continued to create five exercises for our respective instruments as indicated in table 4, appendix 5, based on the scale and arpeggio requirements as set out by EMS in their syllabus with a gradual progression of difficulty from step one, step two to grade one. Overleaf is an example of A natural minor scale as an exercise for step two clarinet followed by G major scale as an exercise for grade one clarinet.

## Exercise 5

Clarinet

**Grave**

*mp* *mf*

5

*mp* *mf* *mp*

## Exercise 3

Clarinet

**Allegretto**

*mf*

5

In the first cycle of research, I had carefully chosen and made arrangements of pieces that would be achievable in my professional opinion as a clarinet teacher from the tutor book used in the LiM programme 'Abracadabra Clarinet' (Rutland, 2008). Feedback from the woodwind teacher, Tara, was positive, as mentioned in the previous chapter. I had observed her teaching the material to her pupils and running a mock exam before I had approached EMS. Building on this, I discussed with the teachers and we set about selecting five appropriate pieces for each *PAG* level, once again for our respective instruments. We

did this over two days, which resulted in three levels of *PAGs* over eight instruments. I had asked the teachers to consider how we could build learning power for the children, reflecting on the notes I made during those two days in my reflective journal, teachers expressed the idea of children being able to make links between the exercises and the pieces by attempting to use the same keys where possible. I agreed that this could offer the potential for teachers in LiM to help their pupils 'making links, seeing connections...building patterns; weaving a web of understanding' (Claxton *et al.*, 2011: 73), in order to build their learning power and provide those necessary connections that will allow children to become independent learners.

The next step in the planning phase was to create a set of booklets for each instrument and each level containing all the music that had been compiled by myself and the teachers. Once this was completed the booklets were printed and collated for the teachers to use with their LiM pupils. During this stage I met again with the director of examinations at EMS and I arranged for him, the chief examiner and a senior examiner to assess some of the children for their *PAG* assessment over two days in July 2014. I had hoped this could happen in school during the children's lessons, but because teachers taught at different schools on different days, it became logistically difficult. A solution was found by using three rooms in the local town hall and bringing the children by minibus from each school to take their *PAG* assessment. This completely contradicted my analysis from cycle one, which demonstrated removing children from

school to take an examination, had been recognised as a barrier.

However, this was the best solution for the research to move forward into the action phase. I also recognised that to improve my practice there may be a certain amount of discomfort as one action researcher has suggested, for robustness 'be willing to challenge your own ideas from evidence and literature; do this in both your field work and reading' (Dick, 1993: 48).

On 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014, 66 children took a *PAG* assessment. This process went relatively smoothly with one teacher and one of my administrative team members collecting the children from their schools by minibus. I remained at the town hall with another teaching colleague to oversee the children arriving, allowing them to warm up their instruments and to check they had everything they needed in order to take their *PAG* assessment. I met with the three examiners afterwards, they were pleased with the repertoire and felt this was an excellent start to our partnership. They had been impressed with the children's musical ability and their enthusiasm as well as the teachers. I also spoke with children before and after their exam and made notes in my reflective journal. Most of them were nervous but came out smiling. I asked them what they thought of their exam experience, and many responses exclaimed a mix of terror and excitement. Similar to when I had observed Tara with the mock exams she had done, the children wanted to know when their next exam would be!

I interviewed three of the teachers, and they all described the experience for both them and their pupils as positive. Brass teacher, David, commented on 'how well it had all worked'. The process was gentler and user-friendly to the children and the teachers as opposed to the traditional graded music examination. He did raise a concern about the logistics of getting 66 children to the town hall but recognised this was a necessary step in order to provide quality assurance to both LiM and EMS as part of our partnership.

Tara was keen on the performance element, and she felt it was right for the *PAG* assessment to focus on 'playing the instrument at that given moment' rather than aural and sight-reading requirements that feature in the traditional graded examination. She added that by providing an assessment such as this, it would help the children with their learning process and understanding.

Nick spoke of how the children benefitted enormously. For his pupils in year five, he had set a very large target as 'this was their first exam, you know before SATs. Everything was positive; it was a big confidence booster'. All of the children passed, and their results are presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: First set of *PAG* results July 2014

Level	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Total Number of Children
Step 1	22	15	8	45
Step 2	8	5	0	13
Grade 1	4	3	1	8
Total numbers	34	23	9	66

Although I did not interview the children, I observed them before and after their *PAG* assessment. I made handwritten notes of my observations, so I could capture the moments unfolding as the day progressed. From my field notes, I note I have written how the children appear to look as if they are afraid, yet somehow keen to perform. I was able to ask 23 children how they felt before they went into the examination room. The children responded they were scared, nervous or both, with some using words such as terrified or dreadful. I asked these children the same question immediately after their assessment. Mostly the children said they were happy, pleased or excited, either because the assessment was over, or because they thought they had played well. Some children told me they had played better than in their lesson with one child saying 'I wish my teacher could have heard me. He would not believe I made no mistakes'. I noticed that the children quickly returned to their friends and teacher wanting to tell them all about the experience. I also noticed they wanted to demonstrate to their teacher and friends another performance to show how they had played in their assessment. In their groups, I saw children comforting each other and giving positive remarks as the next child headed towards the assessment room. One child was keen to tell his friends how he felt saying, 'the exam made me feel brilliant. I loved best playing my songs and the man listened to me all the time'.

## 5.2 Reflective evaluation

My action research study attempted to answer the driving research question: *How can I improve my practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?* This section evaluates how my second cycle of action research considered the next question: *How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?* By analysing the data employing a narrative analysis collected through interviews with teachers and meetings with EMS examiners, I found evidence that I had created an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition. Children expressed a sense of pride and achievement, and it is important to note they felt this way before they had received their results. They had not known whether they had passed or not, yet all of the children came away from their *PAG* assessment beaming.

Teachers agreed the traditional ABRSM approach was not suitable for a mass participation music programme and an alternative approach needed to be found. David stated,

'we had to come up with a new way of assessing, ABRSM is just not suitable for the way we are teaching. This is a different environment, and it works'.

Examiners were pleased with the assessment process and repertoire.

They agreed to provide training in September to the teachers that had



been involved so they could become assessors with a view to the *PAGs* taking place during lesson time.

During this reflection phase of cycle two, my beliefs were once again being challenged. The aim was to create an assessment that could happen during children's lessons, but I had removed them from school in order for the second cycle to be put in action. I questioned my ethical understanding regarding this, specifically as this had been indicated as a barrier in cycle one. Furthermore, I noticed the assessments were taking too long. With the children playing all five exercises and pieces along with the *viva voce* section, it was clear to me this would not be able to happen during their lesson time as all teaching in LiM is for children in groups of four for half an hour. With each assessment taking around twelve minutes, this would mean some children would miss out. Reflecting on my experience was a crucial turning point as I was concerned this could lead to teachers only selecting their most able pupils leaving the less able unable to access an alternative to the graded music examination. I spent some time genuinely worried that I had created an alternative to the graded examination that broke down barriers in the cultural field of instrumental music tuition only to find I was on the edge of possibly creating a new barrier in the new assessment. My educational values stand firmly in that every child must have the opportunity to take their *PAG* assessment and gain 'cultural capital' as their educative right in the LiM programme. This was ultimately solved and discussed in chapter eight.

I felt less of a reflective practitioner and more of an active participant; it was difficult to step away and view this cycle from any other perspective. This is perhaps because action research is not a linear process (Noffke and Somekh, 2005) and teachers can 'find action research to be both complex and messy due [to] their dual roles of teacher and researcher' (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2014: 7). Reflection in action research has been acknowledged as complex because putting new ideas into action can possibly lead to a variety of unpredictable outcomes. It is suggested that 'interpreting reflection in action research as a complex system means accepting that this uncertainty and unpredictability applies to that reflection as well' (Luttenberg *et al.*, 2017: 12).

However, by using an interpretive approach employing a narrative analysis, the stories of the teachers and children began to shape my living educational theory as my story evolved (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). This became one of those 'aha' moments when I really started to understand by reflecting and questioning my beliefs, my research story and that of others has improved my professional practice and continues to shape my ontological and epistemological view of knowledge as a social construct.

I began this cycle of action research with ethical thinking and reflection from the data analysis of cycle one. The interviews in the second cycle with teachers and positive observations I made as children came out of the examination rooms provided evidence that a *PAG* assessment is a

viable alternative to the graded examination. More importantly, to me, words could not describe the children's reaction after their assessment, and in hindsight, photographic or video evidence would have demonstrated in bringing their story to life. However, as I reflect on my field notes, I am reminded of how I heard children speak to each other with excitement about their *PAG* assessment with some beginning to demonstrate evidence of building their learning power. I heard one child say to his friend 'I liked it so much, I am so excited to take my step two', turning to his teacher saying 'Sir, when can we do step two?' Another child told me, 'I've been teaching my little sister to play the songs so she can be ready for her exam next year. I liked playing to the examiner. He made me feel confident'. She added that her sister has special educational needs and that she thought 'if she can do step one she can show she can concentrate and that will help her'. I feel comments such as these suggest the children were beginning to find their own way of building their learning power.

As my living educational theory continues to develop, I define building learning power in instrumental music tuition as developing the young musician in preparation to be an independent learner. By building their learning power through the *PAG* assessment, the children had enjoyed the experience, and this led some of them to ask, when can I take the next exam? This provided evidence that at this very early stage of developing as a young musician, the children were encouraged to seek out further opportunities for learning. Therefore, assessment through performance

can enhance and build on a child's learning power by providing an empowering opportunity that leads to independent learning. This forms part of my living educational theory presented in chapter eight.

Reflecting on this second cycle, I was aware that further research would be required to create a process that is both practical and simple to administer during lesson time without losing focus on the power of assessment that allows children to build their learning power providing the necessary pathway for them to become independent learners. From this, my action research continued with the next question: *How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?*

This chapter has detailed the research process and outcomes of cycle two. The following chapter describes cycle three and how the *PAGs* were developed and implemented in the LiM programme.

## Chapter Six: The Third Cycle: Delivering the Performance Awards and Graded Examinations

### Introduction

The previous chapter described the second cycle of my action research study in developing a new type of assessment for children in the LiM programme. It attempted to answer the question: *How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?*

This chapter describes the third cycle which sought to answer the next question: *How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?*

Creating the *PAGs* and putting them into action in the second cycle of action research allowed a natural pathway for cycle three. The evidence strengthened my belief in being able to provide an opportunity for children in the LiM programme to build their learning power and become independent learners. Specifically, I was aware that children would be receiving two years of instrumental tuition in years five and six. Before I had begun my role in LiM, the Institute of Education (IOE) had been commissioned by the local authority to research its effectiveness and impact as a mass participation music programme. During my action research, the IOE delivered their results which were positive but suggested the LiM programme begin earlier in year four as an extra year of tuition would provide greater benefits for the children. After further

discussions with the Mayor, we agreed to start the LiM programme in year three to capitalise on the benefits the IOE research had detailed. Whilst I welcomed this positive outcome, I was disappointed to discover starting in year three meant there would be no ongoing provision for year seven. This led me to reflect on how the *PAGs* could act as a type of curriculum which currently the LiM programme did not have. Mostly, the teacher workforce was left to set their own scheme of work for teaching instrumental music. The interview with David in cycle two brought this to light as he noted the ABRSM approach did not work for LiM and this was also evidenced in cycle one. In reflection, I began to question whether the repertoire for the *PAGs* could be formulated into a long term plan to cover the current two years of instrumental teaching.

Cycle two gave me confidence in being able to deliver the *PAGs* across the borough in 65 primary schools. However, the reflective phase at the end of cycle two created an issue in the time length of the assessment and how these would actually be able to take place during lesson time.

I reminded myself of the stories developing from the children's experience of the *PAGs* in cycle two and how their story would become part of my living educational theory.

This third cycle of action research continues to be framed by Claxton's (2002) concept of learning power, now in the teachers as well as the children. I had not previously considered this as my focus was entirely on the children. Now it was clear to me that by using an action research

methodology, I was uncovering different understandings and meanings to interpret which I do not feel an alternative methodological approach would have achieved.

### 6.1 Cycle three

Reflecting on cycle two, I recognised my next steps as follows:

- Train assessors (September 2014)
- Assessments to take place during school (October 2014-December 2014).
- Ensure the *PAG* approach is suitable, identify any changes then launch across the borough (January-March 2015).

The planning stage began in September with training for myself, David and Nick, with a view to providing cascade training for additional assessors as required. We attended a half-day session with the chief examiner at EMS in order for us to understand how to award marks. EMS examinations are marked out of 100, needing 65 to pass, 75 for merit and 85 for distinction and the *PAGs* would be marked using the same assessment criteria. The criteria for marking is considered confidential and therefore unable to be discussed here, but guidelines are provided in the form of attainment bands as published in the EMS syllabus in appendix 12. I raised the issue of not having enough time to play all five exercises and pieces, so we agreed the children would choose three exercises and three pieces to play. This also allowed for the marking scheme to be

easier for children to understand with exercises marked out of 30, pieces out of 60 and the *viva voce* out of 10.

To provide quality assurance, I agreed to assessments being filmed, and EMS would then moderate a sample of the filmed clips. This also provided validity demonstrating the assessment has been designed to assess what it intends to assess. Moderating the filmed clips would equally provide a means of reliability, hopefully illustrating the results can be replicated. As an examiner, I also acted as an extra layer of quality assurance.

Permission slips were created (see appendix 11) to allow children to be filmed. The first round of *PAGs* took place in an East London primary school (ELP) where David taught trumpet; Nick taught guitar and Tara taught clarinet.

I arranged with the headteacher and music coordinator of ELP for the *PAGs* to take place over two days in October with David assessing Nick's pupils, Nick assessing David's and me assessing Tara's.

Given the logistics of taking children out of school for a graded music examination had been considered a barrier, as evidenced from the focus group, I wanted to create a simple, nearby process for children to take their *PAG* assessment within their school. I arranged for the *PAG* assessor to have a room close to where the children would be having their instrumental music lesson. During the half-hour lesson time, the teacher remained with their group of four while each child left individually to take their *PAG* assessment. One by one, each child was greeted by the *PAG*



assessor and made to feel welcome, which as teachers we felt was important. The child gave their name and was asked what they would like to do first in their assessment. Most children selected to play their three chosen exercises, followed by their three chosen pieces. The assessment included a verbal question. The *PAG* assessor asked the child which was their favourite music they had played today and used the child's answer to select appropriate questions from the score for the *viva voce* section. The average time length for each assessment ranged from five to eight minutes. This meant that each child from the LiM model of four children for a half-hour lesson was able to complete their assessment within their allotted lesson time. As before, all of the children passed, and their results are presented in table 7 below.

Table 7: Second set of *PAG* results October 2014

Level	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Total Number of Children
Step 1	18	10	6	34
Step 2	20	6	8	34
Grade 1	6	10	2	18
Total numbers	44	26	16	86

I interviewed the three teachers separately the following week to gain their perspective on how they had found the process. I was keen to understand if they felt it would be practical for *PAG* assessments to take place during children's lesson time while the instrument teacher continued to teach the remaining three pupils in their group. In addition, a key point was to check enough time was available for four children to take their *PAG* during their half-hour lesson slot so as not to cause any disruption to

the school day. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the course of conversation to flow in a manner that facilitated natural and honest reflection. I employed a narrative analysis to understand the teachers' story as I became increasingly aware of their role in the development of the *PAGs*. Despite this being my professional practice, to begin with, my research and part of my job to place assessment of musical attainment at the very heart of the LiM programme, the teachers' voice would allow me to recognise the next appropriate course of action within the research. Narrative analysis is suited to this study because although I had travelled the same journey as the teachers, we all have different and shared viewpoints to be taken into consideration. The narrative analysis would allow for a broader picture of understanding in how we assess musical attainment in instrumental tuition and whether the *PAGs* would be fit for purpose. On discussing the work of Polkinghorne (1988), Kim (2016), details narrative analysis as 'not merely a transcription of the data, but is a means of showing the significance of the lived experience in the final story' (*ibid*: 197). The lived experience forms very much a part of my living educational theory because experience creates the living. Living educational theories evolve as they are lived by the researcher which includes 'evaluations of our past, to make sense of our present with intentions to create a future that is not yet realized' (Whitehead, 2017: 388). In order for the *PAGs* to be successful and provide a living answer to the research questions, narratives of others should be interpreted to improve practice.

David was able to express his views as a teacher and an assessor. His narrative consistently moved between the two roles, but the data analysis revealed some interesting consistency in themes. Nick referred to the children's 'enjoyment and excitement coupled with apprehension'. This applied to his pupils and those of David's whom he assessed. Both Tara and David echoed this view. Tara suggested this was because,

'performing in front of an assessor is a huge learning platform for children, placing them almost onto an adult stage. Performance is very personal, and nothing should be taken away from the child, even as a beginner, you are still displaying your own internal, individual interpretation'.

David shared similar thoughts in that the *PAGs* offer a way for children to 'move forward with their learning because we had tailored an assessment process to suit our kids and our way of teaching'. This then could be seen as steps towards providing an appropriate way of assessing children's musical attainment, which can foster building learning power encouraging independent learning. I found evidence of this with Tara's pupils as all twelve children had requested the step two *PAG* book after I had assessed them at step one. Tara had informed me that these pupils had practised the following week diligently and were already able to play some of the pieces in that book at their next lesson. Although there were notes they did not know how to play, they had looked them up in their clarinet tutor/method book. Unfortunately, time did not allow for me to follow this up further, but I feel this is an example where children have demonstrated their learning power. A suggestion here is that the

implementation of the *PAGs* have provided the practical conditions needed for children to take responsibility and initiative for their learning in the future. 'Finding ways to give young people experience of guiding their own learning...creates the practical conditions under which learning power develops' (Claxton, 2001: 294).

In November 2014, I met with EMS chief examiner and director of examinations to view a random sample of twenty filmed clips. We also looked at the corresponding marking report forms to check the marks awarded matched the comments written appropriately to the children's performance. EMS were happy with the outcome and felt the *PAGs* provided a robust form of assessment within the LiM programme. We agreed to hold a launch event in December 2014, which was attended by the Mayor and the Head of Music at EMS and pro-vice-chancellor of the University of which EMS is their music department. The launch event was to demonstrate and explain to teachers, parents and the general public why and how we are providing assessment opportunities for children in the borough. The launch event featured performances by many of the children that had taken their *PAG* examination plus speeches from the Mayor and pro-vice-chancellor. Following this, I held twilight training sessions at which 180 teachers employed by LiM in the borough's 65 primary schools attended at the beginning of January 2015 where I was able to brief them on the *PAG* process fully and how this would be the method of assessment to be used in the LiM programme.

## 6.2 Reflective evaluation

Essentially the research study for this doctorate ended here, although, in reality, it has never ended as I continue to question ways of improving practice. Action research is a continuous process of reflecting, identifying issues leading to new research questions followed by action to address the problems. As long as a practitioner recognises there are ways to improve practice further, action research never ends (Lodico *et al.*, 2010).

In many ways, my living educational theory is fluid as I continue to engage with the *PAGs* that currently as of July 2018, over 10,000 children in East London have taken and passed.

As I reflected on the recurring themes of the teachers' narratives and responses from children, it was clear the *PAG* process had been a positive experience for all those involved. However, I had lived this experience so deeply it was becoming increasingly difficult to think or look at the research in any way other than my understanding of it. By this, I mean that I was confident the *PAGs* were an empowering opportunity for children who had always been my focus. Now I recognised the action needed to be outside of those I knew and had worked with to bring this research to life through dissemination. I had 180 teachers and 65 schools to embed this method of assessment into the teachers' teaching and the children's learning. Previously teachers had been given free rein in how and what they taught which according to year seven teachers, created a huge disparity across the LiM programme and this had been highlighted

by the previous IOE research. By implementing the *PAGs* across the borough I realised I would be essentially guiding the teachers, requiring them to teach what was to be assessed. This reflection led towards the additional action of providing suitable training for teachers in order for the *PAGs* to be rolled out across the borough. Although there is no space to write about it here, this continues to be an ongoing process with further training sessions planned for both teachers and assessors.

I had hoped to discover if it was possible that the *PAGs* could provide a curriculum for learning; however, this was clearly too much too soon. I realised further reflection, planning and action would be required to attempt to put this in place and once again, I found my own epistemology challenged as I grappled with this idea. I had been critical of the traditional graded examination system being used by instrumental teachers as a curriculum, and this view has been acknowledged by other researchers (Hallam, 1998; Harris and Crozier, 2000 and Wright, 2013). I began to ask myself if I was not simply doing the same and passing it off as something new. In an attempt to answer these questions, I searched for similarities between the traditional graded examination and the *PAGs*. Searching for similarities between the two highlighted a relevant difference in that the traditional graded examination may be used as a curriculum, but the examining boards did not provide one. I felt the next planning stage would require long term plans to be written or whole schemes of work carefully designed to structure lessons within LIM as there was currently nothing in place. These would need to be designed in

a way so the *PAGs* could fit into children's learning from step one to grade one with the aim of building children's learning power.

Reflecting on cycle three, I believe that it is possible to create a viable and practical assessment that provides the practical conditions which encourage children to become independent learners. This forms part of my living educational theory presented in chapter eight.

This chapter has detailed the research process and outcomes of cycle three. The following chapter looks at the three cycles of action research as a whole in how the findings have improved my practice and developed my living educational theory.

## Chapter Seven: Discussion

### Introduction

The previous chapter described the third cycle of my action research study in developing a new type of assessment for children in the LiM programme. It attempted to answer the question: *How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?* This chapter looks at the three cycles of action research, how they have assisted in answering my research questions and how they have improved my professional practice in developing my living educational theory (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

### 7.1 The three cycles of action research

My action research has been driven by the overall research question: *How can I improve my practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?* This led to three cycles of research which intended to create a new form of assessment, providing cultural capital and building children's learning power in order for them to become independent learners.

The first cycle focussed on creating an alternative assessment fit for purpose in the LiM programme. Informed by the literature, I addressed the research question by analysing data from the focus group I had held with teachers. This developed the planning and action stage leading to the creation of an assessment more suitably tailored towards the small group



teaching context in which the LiM programme delivered instrumental music lessons.

The second cycle focussed on: *How can the PAG assessment in instrumental music tuition provide learning power to children?*

Drawing on the work of Claxton (2002) and Claxton *et al.*, (2011), I addressed the question by analysing the data generated through interviews with teachers, meetings with EMS examiners and the informal observations I made of the children. I also looked at the examination results but I was more concerned with the lived experience of the teachers because I agree with Claxton,

‘the attitudes, values and interests that a teacher involuntarily displays in the course of a lesson constitute arguably the most powerful medium through which the messages of learning rub off on students’. (Claxton 2002: 93).

The teachers lived experiences in both creating the repertoire and teaching the *PAGs* has become an important part of the storytelling and has shaped my living educational theory. I believe knowledge is created by many, socially constructed from experience of the phenomena being studied. Heron and Reason (1997), describe the philosophical underpinning of this view as the participatory paradigm as ‘to experience anything is to participate in it, and to participate is both to mould and to encounter’ (*ibid*: 3).

I had hoped the third cycle of research would be able to focus on: *How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?* In reality, this cycle of research was more concerned with training teachers to become assessors for the actual delivery of the *PAG* assessment within lesson time. This was a practical cycle putting action into practice, and it was clear to me that further cycles of research would be required to answer this question fully. Rather than, this third cycle brought the study back to the overarching question of improving practice by developing an alternative approach towards assessment in instrumental music tuition. The appropriateness of action research as a methodology was demonstrated in each cycle as the reflection, planning and action followed a natural journey to improve practice rather than be constrained in order to answer a question I had genuinely wanted to understand more about. I still hold this question as important because the lived experience of being involved in action research helps 'move teachers in a direction of more 'learner-centered' instruction' (Zeichner, 2003: 318). This view could perhaps suggest a move away from the master and apprentice approach of instrumental music tuition, which was argued earlier as not being conducive within the group learning context in the LiM programme. I suggest focussing on learner-centred teaching is how we can build children's learning power. Building learning power is not about imparting knowledge through a master and apprentice manner of teaching. According to Claxton (2002), learning more does not build your learning

power; rather, it is the ability to develop children as learners to become better learners leading to independent learning.

Cycle three revealed further research would be required to implement the *PAGs* into a learner-centred curriculum to impact further on building children's learning power. Action research is a never-ending methodology, particularly if you are an insider researcher. Never-ending because as a teacher, I tend to view issues and problems as located primarily in my practice rather than in other external or contextual factors. Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) acknowledge this and also note that not all action research leads to change. In discussing educational action research in the UK, they reported part of the difficulty in implementing change is down to the way research findings are disseminated because teachers prefer to focus on improving their practice rather than that of others. Cain and Harris (2013) suggest this is because many teachers are risk-averse, not willing to try new ideas even when action research has demonstrated the ideas to be successful and proven by other teachers. Although I did not apply analysis to the twilight training sessions I had held at the end of cycle three, two teachers demonstrated risk-averseness by vocalising concerns around this new type of examination. They felt I was disrupting their teaching method and repertoire rather than improving their practice. I also saw evidence of this during informal observations of teachers.

I am confident in stating I have improved my practice and the teachers that were involved in this action research study. However, I held some

assumptions that due to the success of the *PAGs*, the children's results spoke for itself. My understanding and practice had changed throughout the journey over some time. In attempting to answer the question *How can the PAG assessment provide a curriculum for learning?* I am aware that in order to inform and improve practice for 180 teachers in 65 primary schools, dissemination of educational action research requires reflective thinking, planning and further action. Where at times action research has failed to affect change on the broader scale it is often because researchers have 'assumed that other teachers' practice would change simply by being given the results of that process' (*ibid*: 436).

Somekh (2006), describes action research as a set of holistic steps leading to positive change in which the changes are further evaluated, data collected, action taken, evaluated and so the cycle continues until a decision is made to publish the research to date. As an action researcher, this is where I find myself now, and yet there is so much more to detail how the journey has continued. Those early positive changes almost seem incomparable to how the *PAG* assessment has developed and grown into a legitimate and recognised qualification, building learning power and independent learning, bringing cultural capital to children who previously would have difficulty gaining access to this richness. As Somekh (2006) details, the 'cyclic process is unlikely to stop when the research is 'written up'' (*ibid*: 7).

Combining my knowledge and experience and that of others throughout the research has assisted in answering the overarching research question: *How can I improve my practice to develop an alternative approach towards assessment within instrumental music tuition?* As a result of this action research study with the collaborative partnership of the teachers, children and EMS examiners, I have been able to create an alternative music examination. Many times I found I contradicted my own epistemological and ontological beliefs, but the outcome is a social transformation on what I consider to be a large scale. The evidence identifies the *PAGs* are an appropriate model of assessment in musical attainment in the LiM programme.

This chapter has discussed the three cycles of action research and how they have assisted in answering my research questions and how they have improved my professional practice in developing my living educational theory. In the following and final chapter, I consider the impact of my research and my contribution to knowledge while acknowledging the limitations. It also details my living educational theory with recommendations for further research.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

### Introduction

In this thesis, I have detailed the three cycles of my action research study and used the literature to situate and answer the main research question and following questions that appeared naturally as the enquiry developed. I have presented how my understanding has developed throughout this journey by being reflective and listening carefully to the views and lived experiences of others.

This chapter evaluates the impact of my research and my contribution to knowledge detailing my living educational theory. It also supplies recommendations for future research and acknowledges the limitations of this study.

### 8.1 Ontological and epistemological beliefs

I acknowledge my ontological and epistemological beliefs have influenced and shaped the research. My ontological and epistemological values present a holistic view of how I see knowledge and how I see myself in relation to it. I believe that there is no single "reality out there" (Bailey, 2007: 55) because realities are created by many (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). I value democratic and ethical ways of undertaking research so that knowledge may evolve naturally from many sources to create my living educational theory.

My research has empowered participants, and now on a broader scale across the borough by implementing an alternative model of assessment that all primary school children in the LiM programme are able to access. I viewed participants as providing their lived experience, assisting in breaking down barriers rather than seeing myself as a fountain of knowledge. I valued their input, suggestions and creativity, their patience and their hard work. I respected their understanding, I listened to children's responses, and I maintained the ethical considerations detailed in chapter three.

## 8.2 Developing a living educational theory

My living educational theory has developed from my three cycles of action research. It has been shaped by my educational values in which I believe all children should have equal access to instrumental music tuition, and a form of assessment that provides cultural capital and builds their learning power creating independent learners. I believe this provides social justice for children in their musical education regardless of their background and circumstances and, is their educative right. In order to achieve this, my living educational theory recognises that children should have the following opportunities:

- Free small group instrumental music tuition in primary school. This provides equal access to instrumental music education.
- A structured long term plan that takes the young musician from complete beginner to grade one (see appendix 16-25). This provides a pathway for teaching in a group learning context.

- The opportunity to take Step 1, Step 2 and Grade 1 Performance Award and Graded Examinations as indicated within the relevant instrument long term plan. This provides cultural capital to children, building their learning power in order for them to become independent learners.
- To be taught by instrumental music teachers that have received the appropriate training in how to deliver the long term plans. This provides quality assurance to bring my living educational theory to life.

My living educational theory, as evidenced in the three cycles of action research, believes the outcome from these opportunities will demonstrate assessment through performance can enhance and build on a child's learning power by providing an empowering opportunity that leads to independent learning and acquiring cultural capital.

### 8.3 Impact of research

I have evaluated my research by looking for improvements to my own and other's professional practice. Each cycle has, I believe, demonstrated the steps to improvement from a mostly inaccessible and elitist form of assessment for children in the LiM programme to the creation of the *PAGs*. This provides evidence that my research has improved my practice, changed and improved that of the teachers in the LiM programme. This has been evidenced through informal observations and conversations with teachers over the past three years. My team of assessors regularly report back how positive teachers are about the *PAGs* and how it has improved their teaching. My approach was rooted in a critical, constructivist and interpretative position. Taking this stance has assisted in moving forward each cycle of research as I consistently reflected on my assumptions from



the beginning and throughout within the methodological frame of action research. As of July 2018, over 10,000 children have successfully taken a *PAG* examination, and I am expecting that figure to be around 17,000 by July 2019.

The *PAGs* have now been incorporated into long term plans for each instrument taught in LiM, and a *PAG* map has been created for assessors as illustrated in appendix 15. This is to streamline how the *PAG* assessments are taken during the academic year, and I now employ eight members of staff as *PAG* assessors so that all children can be assessed on their progress in their musical learning. By using the map, *PAG* assessors assist the LiM programme by making sure teachers are able to follow the long term plans, ensuring children have an opportunity and are prepared for when the assessments will take place. Since implementing this, I have identified that I have fewer teachers requiring improvement from observations of their teaching. This is something that has only recently come to light in the last academic year when I was going through key performance indicators with my commissioner. I had not previously noticed the significant rise in teachers receiving a grade of good or outstanding with only two requiring a plan in place to improve. I am unable to claim this is a direct result of *PAGs* and how they have informed the newly created curriculum in the form of long term plans, but there is a possibility the impact of my research has created greater improvements. Of course, only further action research will tell!

The *PAG* model of assessment has become the key motivator for the LiM programme now operating in 68 primary schools as the borough continues to build new schools to accommodate the increasing number of children. Furthermore, the *PAGs* are used to assess in the local adolescent mental health unit where young people are inpatients and at the two pupil referral units in the borough where the LiM programme is also taught. The impact has been widely felt across the borough as an improvement to practice for all and most importantly in building children's learning power by providing opportunities to take the initiative in their independent learning and improve their cultural capital.

What began as a small seed of thought in the shape of my question has grown into an alternative type of assessment that is valued and recognised as equal to the traditional graded examination accredited by Ofqual and awarded by a London University.

#### 8.4 Contribution to knowledge

The research contributes to the cultural field of instrumental music tuition, instrumental music pedagogy and assessment by offering the *PAG* model of assessment as my living educational theory. This model of assessment is underpinned by theory and was developed, piloted and now rolled out successfully across the borough. The data analysis demonstrated evidence of children becoming independent learners, building their learning power and gaining cultural capital. Therefore, the outcome of my living educational theory believes that assessment

through performance can enhance and build on a child's learning power by providing an empowering opportunity that leads to independent learning and acquiring cultural capital.

I have presented the findings in different professional environments at training days for teachers, assessors and two international conferences. I have also had an article published in EMS' magazine, which is distributed internationally. The audiences for the dissemination of my research covers a range of professions within the world of music and education, and I have been invited by Professor Martin Fautley to present my research findings in the British Journal of Music Education. I have recently met with Tom Watson, deputy leader of the labour party to discuss how the *PAGs* are demonstrating the benefits of small group instrumental tuition in LiM. In March 2018, I began discussions with world-renowned oboist Professor Nicholas Daniel, who approached the Mayor of the East London borough I work in to find out more about the LiM programme and *PAG* assessments. Along with other previous winners of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition, a media campaign for instrumental music education was launched highlighting the LiM programme as a model of success (Savage, 2018). In June 2018, I was invited to sit on the parliamentary lobbying group for music education. Here I met with Labour MP Harriet Harman, Conservative MP David Warburton and Nicholas Daniel to discuss a possible future cross-party agreement for the government to implement the LiM scheme with the *PAG* assessment model nationwide. Also in attendance was violinist Nicola Benedetti,

clarinettist and composer Mark Simpson, cellist Natalie Clein, and composer Issie Barratt. The parliamentary group will meet again later this year to discuss the next steps. In August 2018, I received substantial funding as part of the Mutuels Support Programme for aspiring and growing Public Service ventures from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This funding is particularly aimed at public services who can demonstrate positive social impact. The *PAG* assessments have been deemed to fit the criteria, and an initial baselining workshop was held on 5<sup>th</sup> September to create a support plan to develop the *PAGs* further. In addition, I have been selected to take part in a leadership programme run by Exeter University, as evidenced in appendix 25. From this, I take my contribution to knowledge as being recognised by musicians, educators and central government as having a greater significance than I could have ever possibly imagined.

## 8.5 Limitations of research

Although the research achieved the main aim, it still has limitations which I acknowledge. I had intended to create a completely new type of assessment for children, but it is clear I have developed a variant, albeit a more accessible alternative to the traditional graded examination.

However, this alternative variation appeared through careful reflection during the action research process even when, at times, I had hoped to see something different.

Within the research design, I did not incorporate finding out children's views by interviewing them. It would have been useful to understand what they think should be included in the assessment and what they think they need to become independent learners. Despite this, I made numerous informal observations, and I believe as a primary teacher with much experience I am confident in being able to recognise the pride and joy children felt during their *PAG* examination and when receiving their results.

## 8.6 Implications for further research

Many questions surfaced during the three cycles of research and suggested several aspects to be considered for future development:

- There was insufficient time to really interpret what made the children so excited about the prospect of taking another *PAG* examination after their first one. There is scope here to find out how children felt about their *PAG* examination, and if it was such a positive experience, how this might be transferred to other subjects.
- Some teachers at the twilight training sessions were highly resistant to using the *PAGs* as a method of assessment and did not understand that it would be a requirement within LiM, particularly as the programme is funded by the taxpayer, currently at £2.7m per annum. I was informed by David, Nick, Tara and Roger that there was some fear from teachers in the LiM programme using the

*PAGs*. It would be useful to understand why this was the case and what their reaction is now? As I detailed in the literature review, many instrumental teachers favour the master and apprentice approach, and it is possible they were still trying to teach in this manner which is not conducive to a group learning context in a mass participation programme.

- Research is essential to understand what is required to take the *PAGs* to the next level up at grade two and beyond.
- There were interesting variations in how well children did, depending on the instrument they played. Marks were consistently higher for clarinet and guitar than they were for violin and viola. Electronic keyboard generally revealed high marks at distinction or lower marks at just a pass. The electronic keyboards we supply in LiM are touch-sensitive with a weighted action meaning children can play with a full range of dynamic expression. My understanding is that many teachers are approaching the instrument from a pianistic technique, and this is causing disparity. Further research is required, and I have just held my first focus group to understand more.
- There was no indication from the data of gender differences, but this may be an area for future research.

## 8.7 Recommendations

The recommendations stem from my lived experience of this action research study which I believe will assist teachers in their planning, delivery of teaching and build children's learning power for them to become better and independent learners.

- Teaching children to play musical instruments in a group learning context should be fun, exciting and inspiring. Children should be encouraged to be creative and explore all the music in their *PAG* book. They should be gently led to ask questions about the music, the composer, the performance directions, the structure, the mood and style of the piece. These questions should naturally enhance children's understanding of music, and the teacher should assist so that children can make subtle links between these aspects. This should allow for music to be seen less as a separate entity but part of the primary curriculum in which children begin to make cross-curricular connections.
- Instrumental music tuition should be a holistic and creative process where children are able to understand and interpret music. Children should be able to develop their own meanings rather than acquiring the passage of skills knowledge from the teacher in a master and apprentice model. The use of the *PAGs* as a form of assessment should be researched further to discover the ongoing impact on children's musical attainment.

- Future researchers may want to interview children to discover the full impact of the *PAG* examinations on their learning journey.

My action research study was designed to deliver a method of assessment that was accessible for children and fit for purpose within a mass participation programme. It was also designed to foster children's learning at the beginner stage to grade one, building their learning power and bringing them cultural capital as an educative right. The action research cycles have formed my living educational theory which continues to grow and be refined. The research was conducted in what was the second most deprived area in the UK at the time of the study taking place. I believe it is empowering for children and demonstrates the utility in supporting arts programmes at a time when the importance of music is becoming less. Furthermore, I am always accountable to the taxpayer, and the *PAGs* have demonstrated value for money in delivering the Mayor's election promises that children in East London will have the same opportunities musically as those in more affluent boroughs.



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Ethical Approval

## NTU DOCTORAL SCHOOL

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY 

Dawn James  
Doctoral School Administrator  
Nottingham Trent University  
Doctoral School  
50 Shakespeare Street,  
Nottingham, UK,  
NG1 4FQ  
Tel : +0115 84 88154  
Email: [ntuprofdadmin@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:ntuprofdadmin@ntu.ac.uk)  
Our ref: N0610368

June Bonfield Brown



14 March 2018

Dear June

**Re: : Professional Doctorate Ethical Approval Confirmation**

Thank you for submitting an ethical approval application.

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has been approved.

Student's Name	BONFIELD BROWN, June
Supervisor's Name	Dr Helen Boulton
NTU ID	N0249985
Course	Professional Doctorate – EdD
Committee	Professional Doctorate Research Ethics Committee (PDREC)
Date Approved by Committee	13 October 2014

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me either by telephone on +44 (0) 115 848 8154 or email [ntuprofdadmin@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:ntuprofdadmin@ntu.ac.uk).



Dawn James  
Doctoral School Administrator

## Appendix 2

### My Personal Code of Ethics

As a researcher, teacher and manager, I will act responsibly and avoid any action that would harm participants in this research study. I am responsible for establishing and maintaining a trusting, honest relationship with participants.

I will act in the best interests of those whose data I use and minimise any negative effects from my analysis.

I will explain to participants how and for what purpose the research data is being collected. I will ensure the data is not used for any other purpose than this research. I will provide anonymity to participants in the final report and ensure their privacy of data. I will ensure that data practices are transparent, and all data will be stored securely. I will apply reasonable judgment and be aware of any possible bias in my data analysis.

I will monitor the quality, robustness and validity of my data analysis. I will be accurate and honest in my reporting and allow participants to amend if they disagree.

As an action researcher improving practice, I will remember the research is designed to improve practice for all. I will be aware of the differences individuals bring to the research and respect all of those involved.

I will remain aware of the different roles I play in this research situated in my workplace and consider how others view me may affect their responses.

27<sup>th</sup> February 2014

## Appendix 3

### Research Participant Consent Form

In line with the requirements of Nottingham Trent University's Code of Practice and the requirements of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) all participants of educational research are required to give their informed consent prior to the commencement of any research exercise.

I (Print Name) .....

agree to be a contributing participant of an Action Research project on 'The Assessment of Musical Ability in Instrumental Music Tuition'. I understand that this will require me to participate in focus groups and semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed to be used in an academic submission to Nottingham Trent University. I understand I may be observed during the cycles of action research and records of the observations will be used to support the research. On agreeing to participate in this research anything written about me will be shared with me, and my confidentiality will be protected by use of an anonymised name as presented in the written submission.

I understand that my rights as a participant are:

- To be informed of the purpose of the research
- To be able to terminate my involvement at any stage
- To anonymity (My identity protected by the use of an anonymised name in the written submission)
- To ask for information to be changed or omitted as the research progresses
- To have my comments and information safeguarded
- To have my views objectively reflected
- To express my opinions on the research
- To discontinue the recording at any stage during the interview

- To review the transcript of the interview prior to its incorporation into the research
- To contact the researcher at any time

Signature

Date

## Appendix 4

### Focus Group Questions

Table 3: Questioning route for focus group

Opening:	Please, would you tell us your name and how long you have been working for LiM?
Introductory:	Can you tell us a little about how you came to work for the programme?
Transition:	How did you become involved in the pilot study?
Key questions:	How did the pilot study go? What was particularly difficult?
Ending question:	We want to implement an assessment process and value your opinion, is there anything else you would like to add that could help develop the process?

## Appendix 5

### Focus Group Participants

Table 4: Anonymised Teachers and their instruments

David	Trumpet and Trombone
Nick	Guitar
Tara	Flute and Clarinet
Roger	Violin and Viola
Desi	Electronic Keyboard
June	Clarinet

## Appendix 6

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Can you tell me about your experience of graded music examinations?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of graded music examinations?

How did the *PAGs* start?

How did you come up with the music for the *PAGs*, how was the music selected?

Tell me about the exercises, what exactly are they?

Are there any benefits for children in taking a *PAG* assessment?

Is the *PAG* assessment useful to teachers?

How did you become an assessor for the *PAGs*?

Could a *PAG* assessment be used elsewhere?



Appendix 7

Clarinet Music

Now The Day Is Over

S. Baring-Gould arr Bonfield-Brown

Moderato

Musical notation for the first two staves of 'Now The Day Is Over'. The first staff is in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The second staff begins with a measure rest labeled '5' and continues the melody. A double bar line is present at the end of the second staff.

Little John

German Folk Song arr Bonfield-Brown

Allegretto

Musical notation for the first three staves of 'Little John'. The first staff is in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second staff begins with a measure rest labeled '7' and continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody and ends with a double bar line. Dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf* are present throughout the piece.

# Scarborough Fair

Traditional arr Bonfield-Brown

Moderato

Musical notation for Scarborough Fair, arranged by Bonfield-Brown. The piece is in 3/4 time and Moderato. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a measure number of 9. The second staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The melody is written in treble clef.

## Clown Dance

French Tune arr Bonfield-Brown

Allegro

Musical notation for Clown Dance, arranged by Bonfield-Brown. The piece is in 4/4 time and Allegro. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a measure number of 5. The second staff continues the melody. The melody is written in treble clef.

G Major Scale

Musical notation for the G Major Scale, arranged by Bonfield-Brown. The scale is in 4/4 time and G major. It consists of a single staff of music. The scale is written in treble clef.

A Minor Scale

Musical notation for the A Minor Scale, arranged by Bonfield-Brown. The scale is in 4/4 time and A minor. It consists of a single staff of music. The scale is written in treble clef.

# Appendix 8

## Marking Report Form

### MARKING REPORT FORM

<b>Candidate Full Name</b>							
<b>Tutor First Name</b>				<b>Tutor Last Name</b>			
<b>School</b>				<b>Instrument</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Date of Birth</b>		<b>Year</b>		<b>Date and Time</b>		<b>:</b>	<b>Gender</b>
							<b>M</b> <b>F</b>
<b>Scales</b>							<b>Marks Awarded</b>
							20
<b>Pieces</b>							
							80

Awarding Criteria	
Distinction	85-100%
Merit	75-84%
Pass	65-74%

## Appendix 9

### Marking criteria drawn from ABRSM exams and KS 2 National Curriculum

#### Scales

Marks awarded	
10-9	Highly accurate and fluent playing
8	Mostly accurate and fluent notes
7	Generally accurate notes with a good sense of fluency
6	Fair amount of correct notes with some sense of fluency

#### Pieces

Marks awarded	
20-19	Highly accurate notes and fluent playing with convincing expression and melodic shape
18-17	Mostly accurate and fluent notes with good expression and melodic shape
16-15	Generally accurate notes and some sense of fluency with some expression and melodic shape
14-13	Fair amount of correct notes and some sense of fluency with some attempt at expression and melodic shape

## Appendix 10

### Parental Permission Letter and Consent Form

Date 02/07/14 Ref: ECaM 0002

Dear Parent or Carer,

#### **Every Child a Musician – Performance Award Examinations – Wednesday 16th July**

An amazing opportunity has arisen for your child to undertake a Graded Music Examination.

These Music Examinations (or Performance Awards) are a fantastic opportunity for children to achieve a nationally recognised award in music, fostering a sense of musical development, pride and confidence in the children themselves and pride for the school that they represent.

ECaM is offering your child the opportunity to take a Graded Music Examination, in conjunction with London College of Music Examinations (an accredited and certificated body) as part of the University of West London at absolutely no cost to parents or your school. The ECaM Programme will instead cover the cost.

The examinations are also part of a research project and there is a further letter attached for you to read and give your consent for your child to take part in if you are happy to do so.

#### **Examination Day**

On the examination day your child will be picked up from their schools by minibus with their ECaM Tutor and a First Aid trained member of ECaM Staff. They will then be taken along to their examination at East Ham Town Hall as below and will return back to school at the end of their exam:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
East Ham Town Hall Barking Road East Ham London E6 2RP	Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> July	1.10pm- 1.40pm

These are the times your child will be picked up and returned to your school for their examination:

	<b>Pick Up</b>	<b>Drop Off</b>	<b>Pick Up</b>	<b>Drop Off</b>
School	Your child's Primary School	East Ham Town Hall	East Ham Town Hall	Your child's Primary School
Times	12.15pm	12.30pm	1.45pm	2pm

### **Important Information**

#### Parental Permissions

Like normal exams, we needed to allocate a day in the diary in advance and unfortunately, the examiners' timings are only available during the school day. As such, we understand that we need your Parental Permission to take them out of school and have attached the following forms for you to complete in advance of your child's examination:

- Parental Permission Form

#### Instruments and Materials

Your child will need to bring their instrument along to the examination venue with them and any examination book given. Tutors will have spare copies of the examination book and any additional materials your child pupil may need for their examination.

#### Tutors

Your child's instrumental tutor will be asked to attend the examination with their pupil to help prepare them for their exam. The tutors will not, however, be allowed to sit in the examination room as this is only to be attended by the Examiner and ECaM Team member. We also have a number of fully qualified examination tutors at the venue to assist your child with their practice in the meantime.

### Refreshments

We WILL NOT be providing lunch for the pupils at your child's primary school as pupils are expected to leave school after their allocated lunch break. Drinks and snacks will be available.

### Dress Code

Your child is expected to dress in their school uniform OR in Black trousers/skirt with a White shirt/blouse for the examination.

### Emergency Contacts

The following contacts should be used in case of emergency:

	<b>Emergency Contact 1</b>	<b>Emergency Contact 2</b>
Contact	June Bonfield-Brown (Head of Music Education, Quality and Strategy)	Miss XXXX XXXX (ECaM Liaison Officer)
Number	077XX XXXXXX	077XXX XXXXX

If you are happy for your child to attend the above examination, please could you complete the attached Parental Permission Form and send back to [XXX.XXX@newham.gov.uk](mailto:XXX.XXX@newham.gov.uk) or via the postal address below by no later than **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July**.

We thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to ECaM. If you have any further comments or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully,

Every Child a Musician

London Borough of Newham

Dockside | 1000 Dockside Road | London E16 2QU

DDI: 020 3373 xxxx | Int: xxxxx | Mob: XXXXX XXXXXX

[www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk) | Follow us on Twitter [@newhamlondon](https://twitter.com/newhamlondon)



## **Parental Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

### **Every Child a Musician • London Borough of Newham**

Research: Assessing Musical Ability in a Mass Participation Programme

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_  
June Bonfield-Brown  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Introduction**

- Your child is being asked to take part in a research study on the assessment of musical ability



- Your child was selected as a possible participant as they have been recommended by their ECaM tutor.
- Please, would you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before allowing your child to participate in this research.

### **Purpose of research**

- The purpose of this study is to develop a certified form of assessment to demonstrate musical ability within the ECaM programme.
- This research will be written as a report for a doctor of education degree at Nottingham Trent University

### **Process of research**

- If you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, s/he will be asked to play their ECaM instrument and be assessed by an examiner from London College of Music Examinations and the University of West London as detailed in the attached letter.

### **Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- There are no expected risks. All staff, including examiners, have full DBS. Your child will not be left unattended at any time.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- Your child will receive a marking report form and certificate to recognise their achievements in their musical learning

### **Confidentiality**

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file held by the London Borough of Newham and the University of West London. I will not include any information in any report that would make it possible to identify your child.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you and your child. Your child may refuse to take part in the study *at any time*.

## Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, June Bonfield-Brown at June.bonfieldbrown@newham.gov.uk or by telephone at 020 3373 xxxx. Upon request, a summary of the results of this study can be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by me, you may contact the Mayor of Newham, Sir Robin Wales at the mayor's office by email at mayor@newham.gov.uk
- If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your child's participation, you may report them to the Mayor's office at the email address above.

## Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to allow your child to participate as a research participant in this study, and that you have read and understood the attached letter and information provided above.

Parent/Carer (Print name).....

Signature.....

Date...../7/14

Researcher...June Bonfield-Brown

Signature.....

Date 2/7/14

## Appendix 11

### Performance Awards and Grades Parental Permission Form

Dear Parent/Carer

As part of the assessment process for the Every Child a Musician Programme, your child will be taking a performance award and graded examination during their ECaM instrumental lesson the week beginning Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

For quality assurance and moderating purposes only, the assessment will be filmed and then stored securely at the University of West London. Under no circumstances will it be distributed on social media or made available to any other parties.

In order for the assessment to go ahead please would you sign and complete the box below giving your permission in order for your child to receive a marking report form for their instrumental playing and certificate from London College of Music Examinations and the University of West London celebrating their success.

Please return this form to the school office where it will be collected.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [ecam.exam@newham.gov.uk](mailto:ecam.exam@newham.gov.uk) or 020 3373 xxxx.

Every Child a Musician

----- ✂ -----

Please, could you write your child's name in the table below as you would like it to appear on their Examination Certificate. We ask that you complete this table in **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

Parent / Carer Information	Child Information
Parent Name:	Child Name:
Phone Number:	Class:
Address:	Date of Birth:
Email:	School:

Instrument:	ECAM Tutor:
-------------	-------------

I give permission for my child to take a Performance Award and Graded Examination, which will be filmed for moderation purposes only.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 12

### Attainment Bands

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## 8. Awarding and reporting

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### 8.1 Issue of results

---

A written report will be compiled for each examination. Candidates will be informed of the result of examinations as soon as possible, and not later than four weeks after the examination date, by post. Representatives are not allowed to issue results over the telephone. Certificates for successful candidates (achieving a Pass or higher) are normally dispatched within eight weeks of the date of the examination, but very often they will be received sooner than this. This time is necessary to ensure that all results are properly standardised and have been checked by LCM Examinations. (See Regulation 27.)

### 8.2 Repeats of examinations

---

Where a candidate is not able to reach the minimum standard for a Pass in an examination, application for re-examination at that grade is permitted, upon payment of the current entry fee. All examination components must be completed on re-examination. Marks from examination components may not be carried forward or credited.

### 8.3 Awards of Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction

---

The pass awards are differentiated by outcome. Depending on the level of mastery demonstrated during the examination performance a candidate may be awarded either a Pass, a Pass with Merit or a Pass with Distinction. Each award broadly corresponds with the following descriptions of achievement and requires that the candidate obtains or exceeds the minimum number of marks set as the boundary for the award.

#### **Distinction (85-100%)**

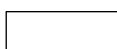
A candidate who achieves a Pass with Distinction will have offered a highly accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated secure technical accomplishment on their instrument or voice, and will have shown evidence of excellent musicality. They will have demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of rudimentary and contextual knowledge in relation to the repertoire performed. They will have communicated, through performance, a sense of real engagement with, and an understanding of, and at Grades 6-8, a sense of individual personality in relation to, the repertoire.

#### **Merit (75-84%)**

A candidate who achieves a Pass with Merit will have offered an accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated a good standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument or voice, and will have shown significant evidence of musicality. They will have demonstrated a largely assured knowledge and understanding of rudimentary and contextual knowledge in relation to the repertoire performed. They will have communicated, through performance, some sense of engagement with, some understanding of, and at Grades 6-8, an emerging sense of musical personality in relation to, the repertoire.

#### **Pass (65-74%)**

A candidate who achieves a Pass will have offered a mostly accurate, fluent and musical response in all or most of the components. They will have demonstrated an acceptable standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument or voice, and will have shown some evidence of musicality. They will have demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of rudimentary and contextual knowledge in relation to the repertoire performed. They will have communicated, through performance, a basic understanding of the repertoire, and ability to engage the listener.



**Below pass, upper level (55-64%)**

A candidate who achieves a mark in this band will have demonstrated some inaccuracy, lack of fluency, and lack of musicality in all or most of the components. They will not have demonstrated an acceptable standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument or voice. Their knowledge and understanding of rudimentary and contextual knowledge in relation to the repertoire performed will have been judged to be below the standard required to pass. They will have failed to communicate, through performance, a sufficient degree of understanding of the repertoire, or ability to engage the listener.

**Below pass, lower level (0-54%)**

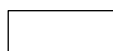
A candidate who achieves a mark in this band will have demonstrated significant inaccuracy, lack of fluency, and little or no musicality in all or most of the components. Their standard of technical accomplishment on their instrument or voice will have been judged as significantly below that required for the grade. Their knowledge and understanding of rudimentary and contextual knowledge in relation to the repertoire performed will have been minimal in relation to the requirements of the grade. They will have failed to communicate, through performance, any discernible understanding of the repertoire, and they will not have succeeded in engaging the listener.

## 8.4 Attainment band descriptions

The guidelines below are not intended to be mutually exclusive, but should function interrelatedly. Thus for any particular attainment band, one or more criteria might exceed those specified, while one or more others might fail to meet the requirements. The specific criteria for each component of the examination are as follows:

### Technical Work: Grades 1-8

<p><b>Distinction (85-100%)</b> A highly accurate and fluent response within the prescribed tempo range, with precise intonation and articulation, and consistent tone quality, as appropriate. Shaped musically and performed at the requested dynamics. Secure knowledge of pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and/or exercises demonstrated.</p>	<p><b>Merit (75-84%)</b> Mostly accurate, with occasional lack of assurance. Played within the prescribed tempo range. Moderate precision of articulation and intonation, and moderate consistency in quality of tone. Evidence of musical shape and phrasing. Mostly secure knowledge of pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and/or exercises demonstrated.</p>	<p><b>Pass (65-74%)</b> A reasonable level of accuracy. There may be some inconsistency of continuity produced by errors and/or restarts. Choice of tempo could be more appropriate and/or consistent. Some evidence of correct articulation and good tone quality. Technical standard is sufficient that the exercises are generally recognisable. Some evidence of musical shape and phrasing. Evidence of knowledge of pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and/or exercises demonstrated.</p>
<p><b>Below Pass, upper (55-64%)</b> Containing restarts and errors and at a variable and inappropriate tempo, but showing the potential to pass. Articulation, intonation, and/or tone quality need more work. Musical shape and phrasing need more attention and work. Some evidence of pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and/or exercises demonstrated.</p>		<p><b>Below Pass, lower (0-54%)</b> Occasional creditable moments, but many restarts and errors so that accuracy and fluency are severely compromised. Tone quality, intonation, and/or articulation are not of a satisfactory standard. Little or no evidence of musical shape or phrasing. Little or no evidence of pitch content of specified scales, arpeggios and/or exercises demonstrated.</p>



## Appendix 13

### Example of Focus Group Coding

Table 8: Sample of focus group data with identified codes

Text	Example codes
I remember going through the treadmill of grades. I did one grade after the other, but it really helped me get to know the relevant repertoire that forms a solid basis in developing a strong technique.	Exam repertoire Developing technique
Yeah, that's true, but I used to hate the aural tests. I never got the point of all those singing back tests. I didn't plan on being a singer! I don't think they are necessary in the early stages, but I do think the idea of the exam being a performance develops beginners.	Performance
Scales, of course, we all know develops technique, but I spent more time learning them than actually enjoying the performance in the exam until I got to grade eight. By then, it kind of made sense.	Developing technique Performance

## Appendix 14

### Example of Narrative Analysis

#### Sample of narrative analysis from a teacher interview

Table 9: Phase one: Familiarisation of data

Question: How did you come up with the music for the PAGs? How was the music selected?
David: So what I thought and I do remember thinking, you know, we felt very strongly that we had to make sure the music that we selected for, for each level was in line with, with the music that was being selected for other examination boards in terms of its difficulty. It may not have been as long as some of the pieces. However, I felt that we would be doing the children an injustice if we didn't set the standard at an equivalent level. So the grade 1 level that we designed is very, very similar with the, within the same range, same rhythmical difficulty, say, as the ABRSM grade 1 or the Trinity grade 1. So the standard is the same. It's just we made sure we stuck to pieces that were not quite so long, or we didn't have the repeats and or err, and so on. Um and then with the trumpet music I looked at I worked my way backwards. I looked at the grade 1 that was being offered by the other boards, selected music for our grade 1 and then came back a level for the step 2 and an easier set of exercises and pieces for step 1.
Question: Tell me about the exercises, what exactly are they?
David: So instead of scales we decided to have some short exercises based around the range and the scales expected for those levels anyway for the other boards. Um, yeah, we just developed, um exercises to help them to develop the skills and technique to go onto to the higher grades. So for step 1, the exercises for brass were some long tones, learning to play those really well with a good sound June: That's why all the pauses are there then David: Yeah absolutely and they, they look quite easy, but for a young musician, a young, you know person, certainly playing say a brass instrument, playing a long tone straight, with a good tone is really challenging and really important for further development. June: Does that help them internally with their ear as well do you think? David: I think so. So, and certainly again, with enough pauses in between that, if they need to, they can take a break and carry on. Um, so, yeah we just worked our way, way up through the steps. June: So they are really tailored for the instrument, those exercises David: Absolutely, and they were written by players, um of the instrument. Um, so for myself being a trumpet player I was involved in writing, err the material for the brass instruments. For the woodwind, clarinet and flute we had a clarinet player and a flautist write music for those instruments. Um, so I think that was really good, really important



because it shows there is a difference err, in what's needed at different levels, you know on different instruments. Um, what's good for a trumpet, beginner trumpet player might not be quite so good for a clarinet player.

June: So thinking about it, other exam boards that have those exercises before they have scales instead. That's actually quite interesting,

David: It's quite generic isn't it?

June: I never really thought about that before

David: No, me neither. I mean, no matter what instrument you play, you play that scale. But we were really able to tailor these exercises to suit the instrument, and I think that's really important

June: Yes, I think that's really a key point. So, you spent two days in a room, locked in it (jokingly)

David: (Laughing) Yes, that's right

June: With no windows, if I remember rightly! (laughing)

David: (laughing). Yes, that's right! It was quite intensive, but it was important that, that we developed these um, the music, the material for these examinations and relatively quickly in order for EMS to, err, um, look over them and that was really important that they accepted what we were asking our students to do. That was actually quite a nice thing to do because it gave us all a bit of, sort of, I guess, quality assurance in a way that what we were doing was and is um, fit for purpose. It's, it's what expected at that level. So, it's been a really, really, really, interesting process and exciting. At the same time, it's making sure that our students are playing at a set level with all four, you know, alongside all the other examination boards. We were able to tailor it to suit, suit our kids and our way of teaching and I think that's been a really exciting thing. I think that's what makes what we do so standing out as opposed to other examination boards

Phase two: Delete interviewer questions, comments and unnecessary words

Thinking, felt very strongly  
music in line, other examination boards, in terms of difficulty.  
not as long  
children injustice if we didn't  
set the standard at an equivalent level.  
very similar range, same rhythmical difficulty, ABRSM grade 1, Trinity.  
standard is the same.  
not long trumpet music  
worked backwards [from] grade 1  
selected music grade 1 back a level step 2, easier step 1.

Instead of scales short exercises, range scales expected for those levels, other boards.

Developed exercises, to develop skills and technique,  
go onto higher grades.

Step 1, long tones, learning to play really well, good sound

Look quite easy, young musician, young person, playing brass instrument, playing long tone, good tone challenging, important, further development.
Enough pauses in between, can take a break, carry on. Written by players, really good, really important, difference needed at different levels, on different instruments. scales quite generic able to tailor these exercises to suit instrument, really important
Intensive but important, developed music material for examinations quickly EMS really important accepted what we were asking students to do. Nice thing to do, gave us all quality assurance, fit for purpose. Interesting process and exciting. Making sure students playing set level alongside other examination boards. Tailor to suit our kids, our way of teaching Really exciting thing. What we do standing out, opposed to other examination boards

Phase three: Identify emerging themes

Equivalent standard to other examining boards (quality assurance, cultural capital)	Justice for children in music education (cultural capital)
Designed for children and teachers in LiM (group learning context)	Developing music skills and technique to go on to higher grades (for independent learning)
Developed by instrumentalists and teachers in LiM – Working together for cohesion across the material (improving practice)	Intensive, exciting, interesting, proud of what we do, innovative (improving practice, questioning hegemonic culture of examining boards)
Differentiation (building learning power over achievable levels in difficulty)	Learning to play (cultural capital and building learning power)

Phase four: Move themes to create a coherent story of the interviewees' experience.

Creating the music for the *PAGs* was an intensive, exciting and interesting process. They were designed by instrumental teachers for children learning in small group music tuition. They are of the same standard as other examining boards giving children equal opportunities in music education. The *PAGs* are innovative in that they provide differentiation tailored to fit each instrument at each level of Step 1, Step 2 and Grade 1. They provide a pathway to develop music skills and technique in learning to play a musical instrument.

# Appendix 15

## Performance Award and Graded Examination Map

	School Term Period						
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	
Year 3		Step 1 Flutophone		Step 2 Flutophone		Grade 1 Flutophone	
Year 4		Step 1 Ukulele		Step 2 Ukulele		Grade 1 Ukulele	
Year 5			Step 1 Clarinet	Step 1 Flute	Step 1 Trombone		
			Step 1 Guitar				
			Step 1 Keyboard				
Year 6	Step 2 Clarinet	Step 2 Keyboard	Step 2 Viola	Grade 1 Clarinet	Grade 1 Flute	Grade 1 Keyboard	
	Step 2 Flute		Step 2 Violin			Grade 1 Guitar	Grade 1 Trombone
	Step 2 Guitar					Step 2 Trombone	Grade 1 Trumpet
						Step 2 Trumpet	Grade 1 Viola
						Grade 1 Violin	

## Appendix 16

### Clarinet Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to assemble the instrument and use the mouthpiece to make a beginning sound</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes C, D, E, F and G</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A and Bb above middle C and low B</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes low G, A and Bb</p> <p>G Mixolydian mode</p> <p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes low E, low F and F# above middle C</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p> <p>G major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note G# (low and above middle C)</p> <p>A minor scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note Eb</p> <p>Playing as an ensemble</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Bb major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>Building a repertoire of short songs that include a variety of rhythms and dynamics – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to compose simple pieces within the group using a wider range of notes</p> <p>G minor scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note C#</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p>	<p>A major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>F minor scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Building a repertoire of short songs played from memory</p> <p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p>	<p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 17

### Electronic Keyboard Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to place the fingers of the right hand on the five-finger position (C to G, D to A and G to D)</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes middle C, D, E, F and G in the right hand</p> <p>Introducing any simple chord in the left hand</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A and B above middle C, C and D in the second octave</p> <p>Learning how to use the left hand to play single fingered major chords (C, D, G and F)</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to use the left hand to play single fingered minor chords (Dm, Am and Em)</p> <p>C and G major scales up to dominant and C and G major arpeggios</p> <p>Improvise individually using notes already learnt</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>D and A minor scale up to dominant and D and A minor arpeggio</p> <p>Learning how to use the drumbeat and the styles on the keyboard</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to use the thumb under technique</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes C, D, E, F and G in the bass clef using the left hand</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes G, A, B, C and D in the bass clef using the left hand</p> <p>C major scale (1 octave)</p> <p>End of term performance</p> <p>Learning how to use the fill-in, intro and outro functions</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes F#, G# and C#</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>G major scale (1 octave)</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes middle C, A, F and G# in the bass clef using the left hand</p> <p>A minor scale (1 octave)</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>C major scale (2 octaves)</p> <p>Learning how to play single fingered dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords (G7 and D7)</p>	<p>G major scale (2 octaves)</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Learning how to play broken chords with the left hand</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p> <p>D major scale (2 octaves)</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Experimenting with different functions on the keyboard</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 18

### Flute Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to assemble the instrument and use the head joint to make a beginning sound</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes G, A and B</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes C (second octave), F and Bb (first octave)</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>F major scale up to dominant and F major arpeggio</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes D and D# in the second octave.</p> <p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note F# (first octave) and C# in the second octave</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes E and F (second octave)</p> <p>E minor scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note D (first octave)</p> <p>D minor scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes G and A (second octave)</p> <p>Building a repertoire of short songs that include a variety of rhythms and dynamics – singing and playing</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>D major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note G# (first and second octave)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>A minor scale and arpeggio</p>	<p>F major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes Bb, B (second octave) and C (third octave)</p> <p>G major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 19

### Flutophone Year 3 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 3	<p>Learning how to hold the flutophone correctly and produce a good tone</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes B, A, G, and E</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing using the notes B, A, G and E</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note, low D and high C</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Developing a clear sense of pulse</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note, low C (middle C)</p> <p>C major scale</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Extending repertoire of songs – singing and playing using the notes B, A, G, E, low D and middle C.</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read Bb and F#</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Fostering a sense of individual performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read C# and Ab/G#</p> <p>F major and G major scales up to the dominant</p> <p>Composing using staff notation including performance directions</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read Eb/D#</p> <p>C, F and D major arpeggios</p> <p>D major scale and C minor scale</p> <p>Playing as a class orchestra in ensemble parts</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>

## Appendix 20

### Guitar Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to hold the instrument and play on the three high strings</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes G, B, C, D and E</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note A on the G string</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes E, F and G on the high E string</p> <p>G major scale up to dominant and G major arpeggio</p> <p>Improvise individually using notes already learnt</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes D, E and F on the D string</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A, B and C on the A string</p> <p>Learning how to play two notes at the same time using the thumb for bass notes</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes E, F, F# and G on the low E string</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>C major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the note F# on the D string</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>G major scale and arpeggio (2 octaves)</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes G# and Bb on the G string</p> <p>A minor scale and arpeggio (1 octave)</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes C# and D# on the B string</p> <p>E minor scale and arpeggio</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note D# on the D string</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the note Bb on the A string</p> <p>G natural minor scale and arpeggio (1 octave)</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>



## Appendix 21

### Trombone Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to assemble the instrument and use the mouthpiece to make a beginning sound</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes Bb, C and D</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes Eb and F</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note B below middle C</p> <p>C major scale up to dominant and C major arpeggio (C, E and G only)</p> <p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note F#</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p> <p>End of term performance</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A B and high C</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>D minor scale up to dominant and D minor arpeggio</p>	<p>C major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Extending the repertoire of pieces to cover notes learnt so far</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the note Bb</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>Building a repertoire of short songs that include a variety of rhythms and dynamics – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to compose simple pieces within the group using a wider range of notes</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the note A below middle C</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Compose a piece for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note G#</p> <p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note, high D</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Extending the repertoire of pieces to cover notes learnt so far</p> <p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 22

### Trumpet Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to assemble the instrument and use the mouthpiece to make a beginning sound</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes C, D and E</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes F and G</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note B below middle C</p> <p>C major scale up to dominant and C major arpeggio (C, E and G only)</p> <p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note F#</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p> <p>End of term performance</p> <p>Preparing Step 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A, B and high C</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>D minor scale up to dominant and D minor arpeggio</p>	<p>C major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Extending the repertoire of pieces to cover the notes learnt so far</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the note Bb</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>Building a repertoire of short songs that include a variety of rhythms and dynamics – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to compose simple pieces within the group using a wider range of notes</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the note A below middle C</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Compose a piece for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note G#</p> <p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the note, high D</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Extending the repertoire of pieces to cover the notes learnt so far</p> <p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 23

### Ukulele Year 4 Long Term Plan

Year Group	School Term Period					
	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 4	<p>Learning how to hold the ukulele correctly</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes for open strings G, C, E &amp; A</p> <p>Learning how to play the chords C, F and G7</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p> <p>Developing a sense of pulse with confident strumming patterns</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play the chords D7, A7 and A minor</p> <p>Introducing tablature</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Extending repertoire of songs to include the chords D7, A7 and A minor</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes D and F (above middle C)</p> <p>C major scale up to the dominant</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes B and high C</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play the chords Dm and C7</p> <p>Extending repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p> <p>C major scale</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes Bb and F#</p> <p>Playing ensemble parts as a class orchestra</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 24

### Viola Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

	School Term Period					
Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to hold the instrument and play on the four open strings using arco (bowing) and pizzicato (plucking) techniques</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes C, G, D and A</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes E, F# and G on the D string</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A, B and C on the G string</p> <p>G major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Improvise individually using notes already learnt</p>	<p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes D and A using the fourth finger (on G and D strings)</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes B, C# and D on the A string</p> <p>D major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes D, E and F on the C string</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>C major scale and arpeggio (1 octave)</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes G and E using the fourth finger (on C and A strings)</p> <p>Learning how to slur up to three notes in one bow</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 4 bars</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes F and C using the second finger (on D and A strings)</p> <p>C major scale (two octaves)</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 25

### Violin Year 5 & 6 Long Term Plan

Year Group	School Term Period					
	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 5	<p>Learning how to hold the instrument and play on the four open strings using arco (bowing) and pizzicato (plucking) techniques</p> <p>Learning how to play and read the notes G, D, A and E</p> <p>Building a repertoire of songs – singing and playing</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes B, C# and D on the A string</p> <p>Introducing group improvisation</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes E, F# and G on the D string</p> <p>D major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>Improvise individually using notes already learnt</p>	<p>Learning how to draw notes on a music stave</p> <p>Preparing for Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A and E using the fourth finger (on D and A strings)</p> <p>Step 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Composing using staff notation</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes F#, G# and A on the E string</p> <p>A major scale and arpeggio</p> <p>End of term performance</p>
Year 6	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes A, B and C on the G string</p> <p>Learning how to improvise using a wider range of notes</p> <p>G major scale and arpeggio (1 octave)</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes D and B using the fourth finger (on G and E strings)</p> <p>Learning how to slur up to three notes in one bow</p> <p>Preparing for Step 2 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Playing ensemble pieces in three parts</p> <p>Sight-reading a melody up to 4 bars</p> <p>Step 2 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Learning how to play and read the notes C and G using the second finger (on A and E strings)</p> <p>G major scale (two octaves)</p> <p>End of term performance</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect and major intervals)</p> <p>Preparing for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>Compose a piece for Grade 1 examination with LCME</p>	<p>Ear training (perfect, major and minor intervals)</p> <p>Sight-reading melodies up to 8 bars</p> <p>Grade 1 examination with LCME</p> <p>End of term performance</p>

## Appendix 26

### Public Service Mutuals Leadership Development Programme

**From:** XXX XXXX [<mailto:xxx.xxxx@exeter.ac.uk>]  
**Sent:** 30 July 2018 17:03  
**To:** June.bonfieldbrown@newham.gov.uk  
**Cc:** XXX XXXX  
**Subject:** Leadership Development Programme Welcome Email

Dear June

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Leadership Development Programme developed for new and aspiring Public Service Mutuals, and run in partnership with DDCMS and the University of Exeter Business School. This is an introductory email to kick off our dialogue and to welcome you to the programme.

My name is Professor XXX XXXX, I'm an academic at the University of Exeter Business School and I'll be your programme facilitator for the next year or so. I'm really looking forward to meeting you at the programme's first leadership development workshop on the 11th October 2018.

My teaching, research and consultancy expertise is in leadership, specifically relating to people's experiences of leading personal and organisational transitions. I'm currently leading a research project on how people who lead public service mutual organizations adapt to the 'mind set shift' required to sustain alternative delivery models for public services. The programme you're taking will be informed by the research insights from this and other projects.

As you may know, the programme consists of:

**1) A three-phase survey of each participant organization.** This will help us tell you more about the changes in change readiness and leadership capacity in your organisation over time.

***We'll be sharing a link to the first survey with everyone in due course, and asking you to complete it.*** We'll also ask you to share a survey link with your colleagues so we can offer you a rounder view of how people in your organization are experiencing this change. This will enable us to give you feedback on the capacity of the organization as a whole to deal with change and adapt to the new imperatives involved in being a public service mutual. In the attached document, I've shared an outline explaining what to expect from the survey, and setting out our very strict approach to data protection/research ethics. If you have any questions about the survey, please let me know. **A briefing about the survey and our ethics codes is attached here.**

**2) A practical leadership development toolkit,** to support your work to embed and empower leadership capacity throughout your organisation. The toolkit will present a model for exploring the shift in logics required between leading in a local-authority owned public service, and a public service mutual. The toolkit also includes a series of checklists, diagnostic tools, work plans and workshop guides which you can adapt for use in your own organization. This will be coming your way in October. Between November and January, we'll schedule a **one-to-one Skype coaching session** where we can work through your plans for embedding some of the toolkit ideas in your organization.

**3) Two leadership development workshops** in London: the first of these is on the 11th Oct.

You're most welcome to contact me at any point, with any questions, ideas or feedback. I'm really looking forward to working with you, hearing more about your mutualisation journey, and to a shared learning experience.

Best wishes  
XXX XXXX

**Professor XXX XXXX**  
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