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Chapter 16

Towards Pedagogies of Creative Collaboration:
Guiding Secondary School Students’
Music Compositions

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I sit next to Emma\(^1\) in one of her school’s music practice rooms. She is a music teacher in an inner-city school for girls in London, UK, and today is my last visit. The students have gone home for the day and the mood is relaxed. Over the last two months I videoed Emma’s pop-song composition project with her 13–14-year-old students (Year 9) as part of a larger study of music teachers’ perceptions of creativity. It is a couple of weeks after the project’s final concert and we have met to watch a selection of recorded extracts from the project. Emma is excited to watch the resulting selection. In the first extract, from the second lesson, we see clips of a voice warm up and singing followed by work for the pop-song composition. Four groups of students sit in circles in a spacious music room writing the lyrics of their songs. Then two groups read their choruses to everybody before going to separate practice rooms. Next, we see Emma working with one of the groups. She helps them find the tempo for the drum pattern and start shaping their melody. I stop the viewing and ask her to describe what she was doing: ‘I was trying to give them a way into the melody without writing it myself, starting from the words they already had, giving them some opportunities to see different ways they could take that tune for a walk. I was saying, “Oh, you could go up, you could go down … ” giving them one example, and it just seemed the right example of how they might get into the next step. It is not the only way of getting into a melody but it felt instinctively the way to go for them.’ She explains that having spent many years working with bands she tends to do things instinctively rather than by having a plan, because every group will have different knowledge and expectations.

We continue watching. In the next extract she moves onto another room and works with a group that seems to be at a different stage. Their first draft of the lyrics is almost finished and the melody and harmony begins to appear predominantly from the singing of two students. The time spent with this group is shorter and her interaction with them different. I ask about her impression of the extract and she says she is pleased with it because it felt like she just pulled all the things together and then left, so students could get on with it: ‘I did feel a bit like the doctor going, “Ok, what have you got for me? Oh, you’ve got tune, you’ve got words, lovely! You’ve got beat as well, ok. Let me just dadadada [singing]. I’ll fix this.” There was a bit of a feeling of those TV programmes when they go in and fix peoples’ houses, they just put a lick of paint on the walls and then the whole house is renewed but is [sic] the same things they had in the house.’ In both examples of working with the two groups, Emma seemed to pause, listen, and offer feedback and suggestions intuitively, depending on the stage the students were at. She appears to be at ease with this type of loosely defined activity and not afraid of asking the students questions and offering examples of how they may get into the next stage. Her enjoyment of the job is evident from talking with her about the extracts and I have a sudden realization of how much I have learned from watching her lessons over the last two months.

\(^1\) Pseudonyms are used throughout the chapter.
Introduction

The pedagogy of creative collaboration in music classrooms is hardly clear from the literature. There are plenty of tips and strategies for setting up composition activities and even some useful models for peer and self-assessment of composition processes. But what about the nature of the interaction between the teacher and the students, and amongst the students themselves, as the composition is unfolding? How can these interactions facilitate the development of the students’ independent musical thinking? And what is the influence of the teacher’s background and musical experience on their approach to facilitating creative collaborations in the classroom? This chapter will explore these matters by first reviewing some literature on this topic and then profiling the case of Emma and her students in a case study of an English secondary class that has composition as part of the music curriculum. For this purpose, I observed Emma’s lessons at key points in the music project to see the different stages of the students’ composition processes and what collaboration can bring to it. Transcripts of student and teacher observations were studied and then summarized for illustration, in the form of vignettes. In the discussion, I will suggest approaches that can be used to develop effective creative collaborations between students working in groups, and between the students and the teacher, while preserving the independent musical thinking of the students. In a further section, Emma’s educational and musical background is considered, charting relevant, self-reported, critical incidents in her education and professional path. Links between her pedagogy of creative collaboration and her background are drawn. The chapter closes with some suggestions for building blocks for the design of pedagogies of creative collaboration.

Outlining Recent Literature on Creativity

Creativity is a controversial concept that has been defined and re-defined in several disciplines, including psychology, education, musicology and aesthetics, since the beginning of the twentieth century. The term ‘musical creativity’ seems to have different interpretations depending on whether it is being applied to school-aged students or professional artists. Some authors have suggested that, due to the loss of its meaning by overuse, it would be better to stop employing the term musical creativity and to use instead musical imagination (Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald, 2012). Arguments for doing this would include issues of overgeneralization – unitary definitions cannot work because creativity exists in different contexts – and issues of mistaken ideas still to be found in the psychological study of creativity, including that creativity:

\[ \text{Transcripts and notes are extracted from the unpublished dataset of my doctoral study, parts of which have been discussed elsewhere (Odena, 2005, 2006, 2013a; Odena, Plummeridge & Welch, 2005).} \]

\[ \text{The section on ‘The teacher’s background’ draws on and reworks some ideas included in Odena and Welch (2007, 2009). The vignettes and related discussion have not been published before.} \]

\[ \text{For a literature review on the concept of creativity and its meaning relevant to the secondary music classroom please see Odena (2012b). Other reviews on creativity are available with a particular focus on arts education (Burnard, 2007), music psychology (Webster, 2009), music education (Welch, 2012), performing arts and sports science (Nordin-Bates, 2012) and psychological science (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010).} \]
• is divergent thinking, when it also involves convergent thinking;
• is located in the right brain, when left-right hemispheric specialization has been proven too simplistic by contemporary neuroscience;
• only occurs in a state of defocused attention, when different forms of creativity may occur in defocused and focused states;
• is facilitated by altered states of consciousness, when creativity often occurs in the normal waking state. (adapted from Hargreaves, 2012, pp. 545–6).

I would argue, however, that the above misconceptions emerged from the accepted practices for studying and generating knowledge (epistemology) in particular disciplines; for example, by gathering together instances of evidence in order to predict behaviours or by measuring the individual traits of people deemed to be creative.

An illustrative example of the epistemological shift that took place in the second half of the twentieth century is Csikszentmihalyi’s (1994) realization, after spending 20 years studying the personalities of creative people, that to begin to figure out what creativity was, the context in which individuals operate is of paramount importance. He relates, in a frank statement, how he came to the conclusion that ‘the more [he] tried to say that “creative people are such and such” or “creative people do this and that”, the less sure [he] became about what creativity itself consisted of and how we could even begin to figure out what it was’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, p. 135).

While research into creativity during the 1950s and early 1960s was characterized by studies about the cognitive processes of creation and personality traits of creative people – following the path of Guilford (1950, 1967) and other psychologists – the environment necessary for developing creativity was considered more deeply during the latter part of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Recent music education research has focused on a variety of contexts in which creativity occurs, discussing multiple definitions such as ‘individual’, ‘collaborative’ and ‘intercultural’ creativities (Burnard, 2012a) and considering how these operate in practice (e.g. Burnard, 2012b; Deliège & Wiggins, 2006; Díaz-Gómez & Riaño-Galán, 2007; Kaschub & Smith, 2013; Odena, 2012a). In this chapter, embracing a pragmatic view aimed at being relevant for practitioners, musical creativity refers to the development of a musical output that is novel for the individual(s) and useful for their situated musical practice. The following may be a good illustration of this definition:

A professional musician routinely repeating a scale during a jazz concert would not be developing his or her creativity, whereas a student in a school jam session trying hard and consciously arriving for the first time at some of the same musical ideas would be doing something novel at an individual level and useful for the situated practice. Clearly, s/he would be developing his or her creativity, even if the resulting product was of a different standard compared to commercial recordings (adapted from Odena, in press).

Some authors have proposed a re-focussing of this area of study, emphasizing the importance of the creative aspects of music listening, which may ‘lead to a more fundamental view of imagination as the cognitive basis of musical activity’ (Hargreaves, 2012, p. 539). Listening skills appear to be closely linked with, and necessary for, the development of

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4 Elsewhere I have discussed aspects of this epistemological shift, such as the growth in interpretive inquiries, and I presented a generative model of knowledge development (Odena, 2013b).
the students’ musical imagination during composition, improvisation and performance activities. Music educators have also looked not just at the cognitive processes and skills but at the musical practices more likely to motivate students, advocating for an increased recognition of the students’ musicianship from their communities of practice (Allsup, Westerlund & Shieh, 2012; Barrett, 2005). Barrett (2012) has recently applied ecological thinking to discuss the complex cultural and relational web that shapes the environment which holds creative activity, outlining the need for ‘recursive and reflexive study of the pattern, context and meaning of our creative engagement as learners, teachers and musicians’ (p. 216). Examples of developing the creative aspects of listening and of using the students’ musicianship as part of a composition project are discussed in the next section, which considers Emma’s work in developing effective creative collaborations.

An Illustrative Case from an English Secondary School

To maintain the anonymity agreed with Emma, her school description would need to be brief. It is sufficient to say that the school is located somewhere in London, UK. It is a comprehensive inner-city school for girls with a well-resourced music department that includes an orchestra, choirs and bands. It is a state school, which means that (a) the school follows the English statutory National Curriculum for Music (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2007), and (b) the school intake is comprised of students of mixed socioeconomic family backgrounds characteristic of the school’s catchment area. Whereas the commitment of Emma to her students’ musical creativity development may not be representative of all teachers, composition activities are to be found across most schools in England due to a number of factors. These include the tradition for music in generalist schools coupled with the inclusion of composition and improvisation in the National Curriculum.

In England, musical creativity practices have a relatively long tradition – reviews of which can be found in Mills and Paynter (2008) and Pitts (2000). For example, the National Curriculum states that students should be able to ‘improvise, explore and develop musical ideas when performing’ and to ‘create, develop and extend musical ideas by selecting and combining resources, within musical structures, styles, genres and traditions’ (QCA, 2007, p. 182). Music is taught by specialist teachers at secondary level, and classroom music education is compulsory until age 14 years. Between the ages of 16 to 18 years, secondary school students can study towards their A level, the requirements of which include developing a portfolio of composition exercises and an original piece. In many other EU countries, the equivalent level of musicianship would only be taught in specialist music schools or conservatories, with selective entrance examinations or high fees (or both). Musical creativity practices in English state-funded schools go back to the 1970s and 1980s with the work of teacher educators such as Paynter and Vulliamy, who advocated for musical experimentation and contemporary and popular music languages (Paynter, 1972; Vulliamy & Lee, 1982). A characteristic of current musical creativity practices is the introduction of a rich variety of music traditions, including the music of the people who settled in the UK in the last century. The debate in recent years has been on whether the students’ preferences should have more presence in the classroom in order to diminish the perceived gap between music in and out of school (Green, 2008; Welch, 2001). The expectation is that composition activities are integrated with musical understanding, performance and aural skills, with a focus on the learning process. This involves a reconsideration of the student as the source of
knowledge and an increase in the use of music technology, as this allows access to sounds and an array of new possibilities that were previously not available to students and teachers (Finney & Burnard, 2007). Most teacher education courses in the UK feature musical creativity and creative teaching, and creativity is discussed in teacher education handbooks (e.g. Evans & Philpott, 2009). In a popular volume for secondary student teachers, Philpott (2007) prefaces some points for consideration when facilitating creativity in the classroom with the following explanation:

It is possible for you to create the conditions in which creativity can flourish, although like any flower you cannot guarantee that it will grow. Despite producing a suitable environment for creativity we have to accept that sometimes little creative activity emerges and there are failures for pupils and teacher alike. However, despite the necessary risks, it is only by allowing pupils to make music in many different ways that opportunities for creativity appear, in other words a pupil’s entitlement to music is also an entitlement to be creative. (p. 124)

Well said.

Guiding Secondary School Students’ Music Compositions

In our conversations, Emma observes that there are many different ways to song-write: one may start working on the chords first, or the tune, the rhythm, the words, or a combination of the above. Different groups need different instructions and ‘different ways of getting into it’. In this type of project she keeps the process open from the outset. The only

After viewing another recorded extract of the students working in groups Emma explains that in this type of composition work there is a lot of group dynamic: ‘It is about them working off each other and hopefully catching that moment when it just sort of sets fire. It happens at different times with every group. And there was one group today who just got to that point, six weeks later they suddenly came together, they were completely fired up.’

The practice rooms are used so she can ‘get out of their way; I just come in and, hopefully, push it up one level when they’re getting stuck, rather than giving them too many ideas’. ‘The project has two outcomes. One is that students learn some songs to perform in public. The other is to have a group song they have written that has the qualities of a pop song, and that each member of the group is involved in some way.’ This gives an opportunity for some students to be doing other things apart from singing and still be involved: ‘They may be good on words, they may be good on arranging, but it doesn’t mean they have to be singing; in some groups I have found that the song-writer wasn’t the performer.’ She observes that around this age the students make their minds up about whether they like music or not and some of them have already ‘switched off’ from music. Her aim is to engage everybody in creating ‘their own song’, which they can videotape or perform at the final concert, which is open to family and friends.

When asked about lesson plans, Emma explains that apart from the two outcomes above, it is difficult to go into a lot of detail about how they are achieved because every group goes into different stages. This is one of the challenges, as ‘not every group is working at the same stage. Some groups get it straight away and for some groups it takes a few weeks of struggling and then it comes through.’
pre-established activities are the warming up and song rehearsing at the start of each lesson, and some listening and analysis of selected chart songs (for example, a song by Macy Gray). She explained the advantages of working with well-known examples:

The aim is to get them excited about the project, to take some good examples and say: ‘Well, how did they do this?’ ‘How did they put together their choruses?’ ‘How much repetition was there?’ ‘Did they use a very traditional way of putting a chorus together where it’s just four lines and the lines rhyme or … ?’ There were some unconventional choruses so it was just opening up their eyes to the things they could use. If it’s in the charts they’ve heard it a million times. Subconsciously they know it so well.

Before joining the students in the practice rooms she would let them work for a few minutes on their own. Then, when going into the different rooms she would try and see which was the best way to get into each particular group. She explained that a few students – around 10 per cent in each class – would find it harder to engage in this type of project and that she was always looking to engage everybody. There was an element of empowering the students and of demystifying the composing process:

I think it’s demystifying the whole thing of ‘Oh those people on the television can do it, they are so special, we can’t do it.’ When in fact, we’re seeing that all of them are capable of producing a fine pop song. Lots of them are absolutely very fine, if they were produced properly, they would be in the charts.

Giving students some time to work on their own increased their time management and agency through opportunities to work like professional musicians. This carried with it a degree of unpredictability regarding how and when each group would reach the expected objectives. There was always a fine balance between what students came up with and Emma’s feedback and musical examples, which she had to constantly re-assess during each interaction with the students. In addition to her communication with them, opportunities for interaction amongst the students emerged while in practice rooms, and students who were more articulate at querying the work of others in the group often facilitated these interactions:

Some students are very good at questioning other kids. That is a very important skill, asking each other, talking to each other … there’s still a lot of work to be done with how they question each other and how they get each other going. There were some groups who were better at encouraging each other, saying ‘that was really good what you did’, or ‘what about this idea?’

Discussing their assessment with the whole class provided students with opportunity to develop constructive questioning skills and an understanding of the assessment criteria:

The evaluation that is important is when they watch it back on video and they talk about it. We have really good discussions about ‘What worked?’, ‘What didn’t work?’, ‘If you had more time what would you do?’, ‘How did the mood come over?’, ‘What was the hook?’, ‘Where were the successful moments?’ ‘If you had three pounds and you had to buy one of those on single which one would you buy?’, ‘Why?’ … I usually ask them to...
grade it first and why they gave themselves that grade. Then I tell them why I’ve given
them a grade. It’s very important they are involved in that process, because there’s no point
in giving them the grade if they don’t understand why.

The final extract includes clips of one of the groups arranged to give a sense of continuity. First
we see the students, unsupervised, finishing the song arrangements in a practice room. One student
writes on the board and others try different things out on the accompanying percussion instruments.
They play the song and two of them talk as the music goes on about decisions that are made while
others nod. Then they sing on stage during the last rehearsal. We finally view the end of their
performance during the concert. Emma is fascinated to see the students working on their own in
the practice room ‘just like I would expect to see a group of adults working together; the way that
they were reacting to each other, whether they were just nodding, the body language was there’.
She feels excitement from viewing the students’ original song being finalized and then watching
the performance at the final concert. I ask her about her definition of creativity and she explains
that it is more to do with ‘a type of awareness that you do it with, rather than what you are doing’.
She thinks it is about being in the moment that makes something creative, rather than doing it
unconsciously. She observes that the students in this last extract were ‘totally engaged with the
now’. For those moments ‘they were not thinking about the makeup, or the boy or the hair, or the
whatever. They were totally in that process, doing it, and that for me is what creativity is all about.’

I query her about how she keeps her students engaged and motivated and she explains that she tends
to be enthusiastic, but not too over-enthusiastic, and she gives students time: ‘If one is relaxed,
and excited about something, which again comes back to being absolutely there with it, then the
motivation will come.’ She says her job is ‘to start the spark going, get their attention to now’. Often
she will see students mentally drifting off and will get them back to engage with the class: ‘I will
pick them out, one at a time, I’d just go, “Right Becky, come back, I want you here now.” Because
if they are “here now”, it’ll all happen.’

We finally talk about the school’s curricular and extracurricular musical activities. Emma
explains that they keep developing, as ‘every year I am unsatisfied’. She has some reservations
about this year’s final concert and wonders if next time they could organize ‘a big workshop’ such
as African drumming or dancing rather than ‘standing on a hot stage for an hour and a quarter’.
Her main aim is that students have a musical experience, and she explains that the school’s Head of
Music is in agreement with this: ‘It’s about the fact that everybody in the community feels as if they
are a musician, involved in a musical experience and not excluded.’ ‘We are always rethinking how
to organize things so that the kids are in the experience, rather than feeling like outsiders.’ Because
of her own experiences as an adolescent, not being ‘involved in anything musical at school, apart
from the choir’, Emma feels quite strongly about the fact that she does not want any students left
out of activities because they are not formal instrumentalists: ‘They are interested in music; they
are just not interested in sitting in a room with one person, learning an instrument. They want to be
doing music that’s doing music … . You can’t play in the wind band until you are grade 2, which
means you have to sit in a room playing on your own for three years.’ She wants students to be able
to participate in a musical experience from day one, but acknowledges that ‘to put it into practice
it’s another thing all together’. She explains that they have ‘a very creative relationship within the
department’ and are ‘very open about trying different things’.
The Influence of the Teacher’s Background on the Approach to Facilitating Creative Collaborations

As part of data collection Emma was asked to complete a Musical-Career-Path response sheet derived from methods developed by Denicolo and Pope (1990) and Burnard (2005). Using an undulating snake-path drawn on a single sheet, she was asked to think back over her life experiences and was invited to write down specific instances that had influenced the direction of her musical and educational outlook. The open-ended nature of this technique had the added advantage of letting her choose the experiences she wanted to highlight. By using this technique instead of asking a battery of questions, the thread was maintained for both of the prime intentions of this type of exploratory enquiry, namely the researchers’ posture of ‘not knowing what is not known’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 235) and the intention to offer illustrative examples rather than generalizing theories (Eisner, 1991).

Emma’s first musical experiences were singing ‘with parents from the age of six’. She learned the piano and sang in church, but stopped her formal music training at the age of 13, choosing art instead of music at secondary school. Emma was involved with rock bands at college and wrote songs there, joining a rock band and touring Europe in her 20s. She worked with several pop and rock bands as singer and composer, and has worked in studios, recording and engineering. After returning to England, she studied a university Jazz course and then trained to be a music teacher. She taught full-time for some years, but then ‘burned out’ and now teaches part-time, as well as leading vocal workshops as a freelancer. She also started conducting choirs and became involved in a practitioners’ network of world music.

Emma’s experience of stopping formal music education at school seems to have had an impact on her ability to see music potential in disengaged students. For instance, she acknowledges different ‘ways’ in which pupils may develop their creativity. She observes that some pupils are ‘very extrovert’ and ‘tend to get into trouble in lots of places within the curriculum’. A lot of these students ‘are very creative and what happens in a very formal education is that their ‘creativity doesn’t really get a place to flourish’. She describes herself as being extrovert and a bit problematic when she was an adolescent, and feels that she can recognize this type of pupil because of her own schooling:

Those are the kids that I have my eye on because I was a bit like that myself … but then I am not having anything against the kids who are very creative and introvert as well . . . . Both [types] have to be nurtured.

Having had experiences with a variety of music styles and activities, including composition, seems to have informed her description of the features of an appropriate environment for creativity. She keenly puts forward comments regarding the factors that might hinder this environment. For instance, she explains that ‘anxiety’ due to preparation for concerts and ‘lack of time’ may distort or even break the appropriate ‘emotional environment’ for creativity. She also comments on factors that facilitate such an environment (e.g. motivation and engagement) and is able to acknowledge all of these conditions and act upon them. Perhaps due to her own composing experience, Emma outlines the process of creativity as having no prescribed or rigid steps. She is sceptical of outlining a universal staging in the creative process (‘every group goes into different stages’). The examples considered above are in keeping with suggestions by Green (1990, 2001) that young people engage with a variety of processes depending on their experience and the music style of the piece. In facilitating the musical development of her students Emma describes herself as a ‘nurturer’.
Creativity is about ‘feeling’. You can set up the right sort of feeling and mood and *that* can be taught. But I think … I’m a facilitator and I’m also a nurturer and, hopefully, someone that people want to spend time with. I’m creating an environment where creativity can happen. It’s bit like that old analogy with the soil, you can’t have lovely flowers if you don’t water the soil, and I think I’m more like the gardener looking after the beds, just making sure that they are watered regularly and that I put the seeds in at the right times. And then I don’t just leave them, I do come back and water them regularly and talk to the flowers as well. Humour is incredibly important, and being relaxed.

**Pulling Things Together**

Teachers who, like Emma, have years of experience working with young composers hold important insights into meeting the needs of students working collaboratively. Reese (2003) and Webster (2012), in their papers on responding to student compositions and developing pedagogies for revision, examined the views of several such practitioners. In doing so, they summarized a few lessons that may serve as foundations to pedagogies of creative collaboration, suggesting that educators should:

- **Respond first to the overall intent** and expressive nature of the composition and try not to focus too quickly on technical aspects.
- **Be receptive of the readiness of students to accept feedback**; to determine this, asking ‘How can I help you best?’ is a good start.
- **Encourage improvisational thinking** (or imaginative thinking in sound) when preparing original pieces.
- **Listen, perform and discuss music**; the more we extend our sonic experiences and understand what a composer is doing to create what we hear, the better.
- **Establish a climate for revision** earlier rather than later in the compositional journey.
- **Ask students about their process of composition** to figure out how to help improve the work.
- **Have students discover on their own**, making sure through questioning that as many sonic possibilities have been considered as makes sense.
- **Build over time**, a variety of compositional experiences over years of music learning will result in best creative collaborations, as well as knowing what each student has experienced and trying to build on what has come before.
- **Give themselves agency**, to lead compositional activities and to offer students guidance with enthusiasm and understanding. Educators may prepare for this by engaging in composition themselves. (adapted from Reese, 2003, pp. 217–19, and Webster, 2012, pp. 109–10)

Intrinsic motivation appears to be a driver for successful students and this could be facilitated rather than inhibited by offering students increased choice in musical materials and activities: ‘the role of the educator should be to fire up the individuals’ curiosity to learn, developing rather than inhibiting their interests’ (Odena, 2012a, p. 208). Indeed, the motivation afforded by an increased degree of ownership in musical activities would be an important part of the environment that holds creative activity (Barrett, 2012). Allsup, Westerlund and Shieh (2012) have advocated for student agency as the starting point in music lessons, so that schools are ‘laboratories of experiment and imagination, spaces...
where students and teachers work together towards negotiated and personally meaningful ends’ (p. 470). Educators may also explore the music practices of their schools’ catchment area so as to develop ‘place-conscious’ music education opportunities (Stauffer, 2009). Combining teacher and students’ agency, such as in Emma’s self-directed group activities, and developing place-conscious education opportunities would assist in diminishing disengaged students’ feelings of being ‘outsiders’.5

In closing, I propose below a few other building blocks for the design of pedagogies of creative collaboration, which could be used across a number of settings and age groups. These suggestions refer to composition activities but they could be adapted for all types of musical activity, for instance when exploring the use of musical elements to give different emotional qualities to the performance of a song or when appraising the qualities of a recording:

• Plan suitable stimulating challenges in relation to the students’ developmental stage, setting them a problem that they have a realistic chance of solving. Students do better when the activity fits how they think – for instance, offering alternative open-ended and challenging tasks (more instruments, different musical materials, extended structures).

• Build up rich and stimulating resources, which can be used to both initiate and support the creative process. These resources can be musical and extra-musical: a variety of recordings, instruments, films and music software.

• Be sensitive to the students’ time needs during their composing process and flexibly adapt the expectations as a unit of work progresses.

• Build a positive emotional environment: students need to feel capable of taking risks and sense that their contributions are respected. This positive environment can be built and sustained through dialogue between students and teacher with constructive positive feedback.

• Include various levels of structure when promoting creativity, depending on the students, the task, and the desired learning. For example, teachers might set students a free choice about which problems to solve and how to do this. To increase efficiency, work needs to be preserved.

• Facilitate the students’ technical development, by questioning, prompting, and modelling. Educators need to set up opportunities for models to be heard (e.g. older students, external musicians or themselves). They need to encourage further development of musical ideas, as novice musicians may be satisfied with their work after an initial exploratory phase.

• Share the assessment of work and develop the assessment criteria with students to develop their self-assessment skills and facilitate the emergence of further ideas – for instance, students may be asked to come up with musical examples that match each of the assessment criteria. (adapted from Odena, 2012b, pp. 520–21)

Composing experience and practical knowledge of different music styles seem to have enriched Emma’s descriptions of the facilitating environment for creativity and its assessment. It would appear that educators need opportunities to work creatively in different musical styles during their formative years and beyond. Further enquiries may benefit from

5 Diminishing ‘outsider’ feelings and promoting inclusion through music education is a related area I discussed in Odena (2010, 2014).
exploring the value of collaborative work between beginner teachers and professional composers. The above discussion corroborates suggestions that point to a need for teachers to have appropriate composing experience if they are to be more able to assess musical compositions from a wide range of styles (Odena, 2012a). This is necessary not only for the assessment of the final music products but also for the teachers to engage with the pupils’ composing processes. I think Emma and her students would agree with all of this.

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