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Collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning as a site for enhancing pupil wellbeing

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This study explores the nature of the elements that co-influence collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning and the intrinsic potential for enhancing pupil wellbeing as evidenced in a particular secondary-school (extra-curricular) group instrumental programme *Percussion 1*. Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP) and Engeström's Activity Theory (AT) provide an in-depth analytical framework for the analysis of 14 rehearsals, 13 semi-structured interviews and 41 teachers' and pupils' reflective diary entries. Findings support the intrinsic potential for enhancing pupil wellbeing by *empowering* them through supportive statements and decision-making, and *engaging* them through the embodiment of music learning.

Keywords: collaborative creativity; music learning; wellbeing; activity theory; community of practice; adolescents' extracurricular activity participation

1. Introduction

There has been a historical neglect in music education research generally and instrumental learning specifically which occurs outside subject curricula music and classrooms. Creativity in music education is often characterised by creative students of different ages (developmental studies), the elements that co-influence creativity (confluence studies), the thought processes of the people involved in creative activity (cognitive studies) and creativity outputs (assessment studies) (Burnard, 2007, 2012a; Hickey, 2002; Odena, 2001; Odena and Welch, 2009). According to these categorisations the present study of extra-curricular music activity 'falls' into the category of studies exploring the experience of school pupils studying instrumental group music learning, which is culturally situated and fundamentally social, and into the category of 'confluence studies' as it unwraps the elements that co-influence creativity which are inextricable from the interactions and relationships in which creative activity takes place. As the verb 'to influence' has its origin in the Latin verb meaning 'to flow' or 'to flow into', the verb *co-influence* builds on it and emphasises the collaborative nature of two or more elements that either flow together or come together to become one. Traditionally, confluence is used to describe the meeting of two or more bodies of water, especially rivers of approximately equal width. Metaphorically, confluence means the gathering, flowing, meeting or coming together of factors/elements at one juncture or point. This study explores the

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elements that have ‘flowed’ and ‘come together’ in receipt of ideas and responses to those ideas as a form of collaborative in a particular group instrumental programme and accounts of creative group performance by members of a group called *Percussion 1*.

The phenomenon of creativity, whether it is creativity in general or creativity in instrumental music learning or classroom music and art education, gets convoluted due to tensions between multiple creativities, i.e. individual creativity (Sefton-Green and Bresler, 2011), collective creativity (Vygotsky, 1978), group and collaborative creativity (Littleton and Mercer, 2012) and communal creativity (Lapidaki, de Groot, & Stagkos, 2012). Burnard (2012b) puts forward an argument against the historically linked and limited definitions of high-art orthodoxies that exalt the individual genius or where the focus is primarily on the creative individual. In presenting some contemporary (i.e. real world and grassroots) practices that support socially constructed views of musical creativeness and expand the notion of multiple creativities in music, her research undermines the conventional notion ascribed by and mythologised by the canon of great composers and performers, and, as with Vera John-Steiner’s (2000) research on creative relationships within different fields, challenges the view of creative work as province of a gifted elite. Drawing on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1999) Systems Model of Creativity, multiple musical creativities can be constituted as practices within social, cultural and activity systems. Thus musical creativities in different forms and activities (music learning, music teaching, music-making etc.) become the locus for forms of collaborative creative activity involving a whole group together rather than specific individuals. R. Keith Sawyer (2003) theorises group creativity as activity which is distributed across the group, where ownership of the output cannot appropriately be attributed to any particular individual who provides a range of creative options, any one of which may result in a radically different and unique performance, perpetually open and oriented to possibility, uncertainty and self-making (Taylor & Littleton, 2012).

We take as a starting point for discussing these assumptions the idea of musical creativities being the locus for social, cultural and activity systems and the creative relationships within the elaboration of creative (group) instrumental music learning activity as fundamentally social. The relationship of creative (group) instrumental music learning activity to collaborative creativity can, perhaps, be made explicit in contexts and communities where learners make new meanings; where self-making suggests in different ways that participation in creative activities enhances life experiences and, in their learning relationships, develops wellbeing.

Odena (2012) reminds us that Csikszentmihaly (1994) spent many years studying creative people, only to come to the conclusion that the context in which creative people operate is of paramount importance. Extra-curricular instrumental group music learning is rooted in and represents people working together to express their needs, their hopes, their visions, about people being active and having fun together, and the self-respect of individuals and the community. We saw, first hand, how instrumental music groups collaboratively create learning communities in which they can articulate their music learning space and music learning activity as something shared and collaboratively created. This lends itself to a conceptualisation of collaborative creativity in the context of group instrumental music learning as a shared learning experience where individual and social actions and activities coalesce. Therefore, one aim of this study is to determine what elements co-influence

creativity in instrumental group music learning and whether those elements provide conditions for collaborative creativity to flourish.

Examining the potential for wellbeing

Collaborative creativity is not always invoked through instrumental group music learning. We take as a starting point, however, that the interactions and relationships in which creative activity takes place might occur within contexts where learning communities engage in improvisations and playful forms of collaborative creative activity promoting choice, multivoicedness and wellbeing involving a whole group together. In spite of the fact that research interest in wellbeing (e.g. Deci and Ryan, 2002; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005; Krapp, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and particularly in wellbeing and its relationship to the arts (e.g. Karkou and Glasman, 2004; McLellan, Galton, Steward and Page, 2012) has grown considerably in recent years there is little consensus about what wellbeing is, how it differs from other related concepts such as happiness, and how it is explicitly linked to creativity. Matarosso (1997) discovered 50 types of social impact resulting from participation in art, including improvements in health status. The survey of 243 adults and 270 children participating in arts projects found that 52% of adults said that they felt better or healthier since their involvement. Everitt and Hamilton's (2003) systematic evaluation of five major long-term community-based arts for health projects also found good evidence of the impact on mental health in relation to reducing social isolation and improving self-esteem and confidence. Arts activities seemed to enable the development of emotional literacy, which was considered important for good mental health and for the development of strong relationships.

The definition of the notion of wellbeing, however, depends largely on the discipline-related perspective taken, i.e. on whether a psychological, medical, cognitive, social or educational perspective (to name just a few) is employed. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997) refers to wellbeing and mental health as consisting of two key elements: empowerment and active participation of individuals. The Department of Health (2009) defines wellbeing as 'a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment'. Both of these definitions embrace the notion of *feeling* empowered and that of *functioning* within a social environment or community.

Due to a broad diversity within the discipline of psychology, its perspective on wellbeing is differentiated by whether cognitive, social, educational or positive psychology, among others, has situated the notion of wellbeing at its centre of interest.

In a seminal study of the impact of creative partnerships on pupils' sense of psychological wellbeing, McLellan and Galton et al. (2012) concluded that 'wellbeing was a means to an end' (p. vii) where certain activities designed to make pupils feel better in themselves or to make them more confident were intended to overcome the low motivation levels but that there was no distinction made between creativity and wellbeing. Ryan and Deci (2000) note that intrinsic motivation helps social development and wellbeing and, taking the Self Determination Theory (SDT) perspective, suggest three essential innate psychological needs for constructive social development and personal wellbeing: the needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. Soini, Pyhältö, and Pietarinen (2010) apply the key elements of wellbeing mentioned by Ryan and Deci (2000) to a school context and develop a definition of

pedagogical wellbeing. According to Soini et al. (2010) ‘a sense of autonomy, relatedness, competence, and belonging generated for teachers and pupils in the everyday interactions of school’ (p. 737) can be seen as pedagogical wellbeing. Soini et al. argue further that fostering pedagogical wellbeing ‘can be seen as an active, collaborative, and situated process’ (p. 737). This definition echoes some of the features of the nature of collaborative creativity in (group) instrumental music learning mentioned above.

Since the present study explores the potential of collaborative creativity in instrumental music learning as a site for enhancing pupils’ wellbeing, staying with the educational strand of defining wellbeing might provide a necessary focus. The Universal Education Foundation (UEF), an organisation working across the world with its vision of ‘Education by All for the Well-Being of Children’, defines wellbeing as the ‘realization of one’s physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual potential’ (Awartani, Whitman, & Gordon, 2008). Desjardins (2008) argues that ‘one of the key purposes of education is to facilitate the processes involved in developing and maintaining capabilities so as to generate well-being, ranging from the economic to the social and personal aspects’ (p. 24). O’Toole (2008) emphasises that there are several studies claiming that emotional, physical and social wellbeing can be affected by boring and meaningless learning experiences at school (e.g. Natwig, 2003). In her study on implications of individual patterns of learning on students’ wellbeing, O’Toole (2008) concludes that ‘when individuals are able to choose what and how they learn, they are asserting their need for autonomy and creativity’ (p. 76). As this intrinsic motivation for learning combined with the need for autonomy and creativity leads learners to feel empowered, O’Toole continues with the claim that feeling empowered brings learners confidence in their abilities. Similarly, Warwick (2007) and Kellett, Forrest, Dent, and Ward (2004) report that pupils’ participation in learning activities increases motivation, self-esteem and skills which are all linked to mental health and wellbeing.

The above-mentioned studies as well as the WHO and UEF seem to share an understanding of three common features of pupils’ wellbeing: empowerment, autonomy and competence. Other additional features explored and mentioned in the studies include intrinsic motivation, participation, relatedness, self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Based on the educational perspective on wellbeing, the connection between pupils’ wellbeing and the meaning of the learning activity they engage with seems to be quite powerful. Rudduck (1978), Rogers (1980) and Schön (1983) argue for the influence of socio-emotional elements on effective learning. The idea that learning is not only a cognitive activity was advocated by Rogers who claimed that learning has affective and moral dimensions and as such involves both ideas and feelings, supporting the growth of whole persons, not just ‘education from the neck up’.

This poses a question about identifying which subject domains link directly to enhancing pupils’ well-being. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Index of Children’s Well-being based around the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see UNICEF, 2007) makes mention of the role of the arts.

Even though Csikszentmihalyi (1999) researched the phenomenon of happiness rather than wellbeing, in his description of the concept of flow it seems that he got very close to the concept of wellbeing. Hence his studies on flow and on the connections between flow and creativity might be pertinent to the question about which

subject domain links directly to pupils' wellbeing. Csikszentmihalyi compares the state of flow, defined as a state of deep absorption and immersion in an intrinsically enjoyable activity, with the state of artists and athletes when they are fully focused on their performance. Csikszentmihalyi's focus on artists and athletes may indicate that the art and sport-related subjects could provide fast and easy links to pupils' absorption and immersion in a learning activity.

Not surprisingly, the number of researchers interested in conceptualising and measuring the impact of arts on young people's wellbeing in general and that of pupils in particular is growing. However, given that research into this aspect of young people's lives is a relatively new phenomenon, there are still too few studies to make any generalised claims. The Labyrinth Project, initiated by arts therapists as a response to increasing national suicide rates amongst young people, is one of the examples where the arts were used for pupils' emotional wellbeing and social inclusion. One of the aims of the project was the development of skills (among teaching staff) for using the arts to address pupils' emotional wellbeing (Karkou and Glasman, 2004). Karkou and Glasman argue that in the past a more child-centred and less curriculum-based education emphasised self-expression, emotional development and self-actualisation of pupils. They advocate a need for today's arts teachers to be less focused on teaching pupils *about* arts and more focused on providing artistic stimuli for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. The idea of the arts education being crucial for pupils' wellbeing is not recent; it was also promoted by Witkin (1974), who claimed that children's wellbeing is enhanced through active participation in creative activities. Bruscia (1988) sees engagement in the arts as affecting multifaceted dimensions of human experience; thus growth within the arts can lead to growth in other aspects of the person. NACCCE (1999) seems to support this view by saying that 'when individuals find their creative strength, it can have an enormous impact on self-esteem and on overall achievement' (pp. 6–7).

Based on the discussion of wellbeing in general, pupils' wellbeing and the function of arts education, the value of artistic engagement for pupils' wellbeing seems high. Therefore, the second aim of this study is to determine whether engagement in creative instrumental group music learning is linked to pupils' wellbeing.

Combining two theoretical perspectives as macro- and micro-analysis frameworks

The idea of musical creativity being the locus for social, cultural and activity systems led to the study's employment of Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) and Engestrom's (1999) activity theory (AT) as a unique combination of theoretical frameworks that served as lenses for in-depth analysis of the creative process of instrumental music learning.

The use of social practice theory (or CoP) offers a way of identifying and conceptualising collaborative creativity and activity theory (AT) offers a way of characterising what is specific to the activity of a particular instrumental music learning that might enhance pupils' wellbeing. What we see as a key potential in combining CoP and AT as an operationalised analytical framework is the offer of a more comprehensive unit of analysis than either one or the other on its own. What seems to be missing in other analyses is a dialectical movement between group learning relationships, the co-construction of learning and music learning activity.

Community of Practice sees knowledge, or knowing, along with creativity, or creating, as being situated in the practices in different places at different times, part of established ways of doing and being. The emergent practice of a new community is less powerful than the pressures from established practices. What makes sense in school communities may not necessarily make sense outside school communities. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), and as emphasised in *Community of Practice* (Wenger, 1998), *activity* is what participants engage in as they participate in practice. The key idea, and what is important for this study, is that belonging to a community is tied up in authoring specific practices of creativity.

Similarly, we see *activity theory* relating closely to practice largely in the way the word ‘activity’ is used by Lave and Wenger: activity is what participants engage in as they participate in practice. In activity theory, activity has a more precise meaning that offers us a means of emphasising the importance, in social participation or learning activity, of the mediation of tools, rules, performance tasks and goals.

Activity theory has developed from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and particularly from the work of his colleague A.N. Leont’ev. Vygotsky’s law of cultural development suggests that learning is seen first of all on the social plane and only later on the mental plane. He emphasised the importance of social participation. Hence, activity is what participants engage in as they participate in practice as a form of creativity. Instrumental music learning is rooted in participation and comprises (mediated) goal-directed action. An *activity system* (Figure 1) includes the full complexity of the social situation and activity of people acting within it and is conditioned by the *rules* or norms that govern or constrain activity, the *communities* or social settings in which activity takes place, and the ways in which activity and responsibility

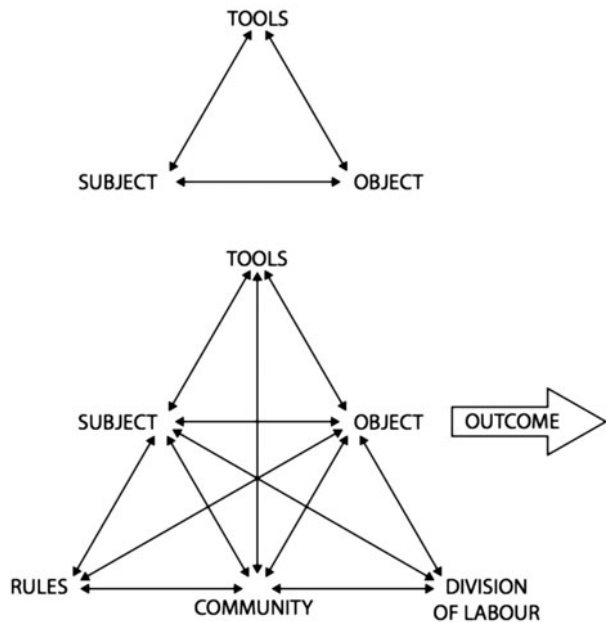


Figure 1. Activity system representation (Engestrom, 1999).

are *divided* amongst participants. *Tools* enable the participants in the activity to make meaning in music (*object*).

Engestrom (1999) sees the simple triangle as the tip of the iceberg where the submerged part represents what he calls ‘the hidden curriculum’ which offers the means to the achievement of goals. We construe these elements as units of analysis for collaborative creativity in instrumental music learning activity.

Our starting point is the use of participatory methods, which engage the participants and assist them in gaining insights into the complexity of their own instrumental music learning activity. This research adopts a socio-cultural stance and in particular sees the practice as arising from, and located within, many overlapping activity systems.

Therefore, the third aim of this study is to explore whether there is a case for using Engestrom’s activity theory and Wenger’s community of practice for characterising links between creativity, instrumental music learning and wellbeing.

To sum up, our primary research questions were:

- (i) What elements co-influence collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning?
- (ii) What is the intrinsic potential for collaborative creativity arising in instrumental group music learning to link to pupil wellbeing?
- (iii) Is there a case for using Engestrom’s activity theory and Wenger’s community of practice for analysing and characterising links between creativity, instrumental music learning and wellbeing?

2. Methods

The research reported in this article forms part of a larger study (Burnard and Dragovic, 2014) that explores the creative learning culture manifest in an Australian State High School instrumental and choral music programme and its learning community. This programme has been running for 11 years in its current form and is one of the largest and most highly regarded in Queensland. It involves around 400 students in 24 ensembles, including choirs, string groups, an orchestra, stage bands and percussion, brass, wind and guitar ensembles.

The *Percussion 1* programme (the focus of this article) included an intergenerational group of eight learners (five boys: John, Jeremy, Joel, Noah and Alistair and three girls: Zeta, Rebecca and Barb), one teacher/head of the programme (Sarah) and one former student/teacher (Shaun) who worked as an assistant to the head teacher.

This was a group of learners who were musicians positioned, like all ensembles, at the centre of the music programme. During most lunch hours you would find these students in the social context of the learning community and the space of the music building itself. These learners were also participating members of several other ensembles. They were neither unusual nor different from most committed music students who signed up to regularly attend choir, band and small instrumental group rehearsals and concert performances regularly scheduled across the school week. Being active and engaged in the music programme meant practising individually, working together in rehearsals, having one-on-one formal music lessons, chatting and ‘hanging out’ with peers and teachers.

In the present study, high levels of enjoyment and student commitment were observed in other instrumental music groups whether they involved these students or not. Selecting *Percussion 1* as the sample learning group, with its particular membership and prosocial peer group, was deemed appropriate because of their participation in the multiple structured extracurricular activities that formed the music programme.

Increasingly, questions are being asked about the potentially beneficial effects of instrumental music learning on students' academic motivation, engagement and achievement. The contribution of co-curricular music research differs from curricular music research with respect to the particular contribution to pupils' wellbeing made by music engagement in the school curriculum and co-curricular activities (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant, 2003). Drawing on prior research into the effects of extra-curricular activity on academic outcomes, there are a number of hypotheses concerning the impact of arts education generally, and music education specifically, on broader achievement (see Marsh and Kleitman, 2002; McLellan et al., 2012). In this study, however, the sample group of learners featured in the present article, and their experiences of music learning, are indicative and reflective of their enjoyment, their attitudes and the ways they feel about themselves, their peers and their teachers. While there were rehearsals in which the frustrations and pressures of preparing for and anticipating performances became noticeable, this could be attributed to shared values, mutual goal aspirations and a sense of belonging to a community based on encouraging self-regulation and intrinsic motivation.

Informed consent was acquired from teachers, students, their parents and school management. All involved were informed about the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Assurance of anonymity (changed names) and secure storage of data was also given.

A qualitative illuminative case study methodology was employed to investigate ensemble interactions. The data were gathered by observations of 14 rehearsals, which were all video-recorded. The temporal affordances of video research are critical to the study. Semi-structured interviews (13) with teachers and pupils were also carried out and both the teachers and learners were asked to keep journals/reflective diaries (41) after each rehearsal. The interview questions were carefully conceived with the aim of building up a shared understanding of how creative learning played out in the rehearsals and performance outcomes of this ensemble. Conducting the interviews, which took place before and after the video and diary data collection, meant responses were gathered over 12 months. The journals/reflective diaries did not have any pre-determined form and were 'free-flowing' accounts of teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the group instrumental music learning activity. Each method of data collection had its purpose. Video-recorded rehearsals were used to observe the pupils and teachers 'in action', in their natural setting and to note down concrete recurrent behaviour patterns/events/episodes. Semi-structured interviews provided exploration of teachers' and pupils' ideas about their experience of instrumental music learning activity. Journals/reflective diaries gave the teachers and learners a chance to freely write about their feelings, thoughts and ideas relating to the experience of participating in an instrumental music learning activity.

Sampling of the 14 rehearsals out of 40 was decided on by choosing a specific task within a specific period in the instrumental programme *Percussion 1*. There was a period of around six months of preparation (14 rehearsals) for the *Percussion* performance at the Gala Concert (an annual key concert bringing together the local,

Table 1. Multi-phased coding process.

Phase of coding	Categories	Type of coding
1st/(Primary) coding	Six pre-determined categories informed by AT elements: tools, rules, division of labour, subject, object, community	Deductive coding
Extended 1st (Primary) coding	Two categories: non-verbal and verbal patterns	Inductive coding
2nd (Secondary) coding	Themes of each category	Inductive coding
Extended 2nd (Secondary) coding	Two nodes: empowerment and engagement	Inductive/ deductive coding

school, pupil and parent communities in a musical celebration). The Gala Concert was chosen as a time-defined concrete activity/task with its concrete object: the Gala Concert performance.

A thematic analysis of teachers' and pupils' perceptions, observations and writings was undertaken. Both inductive and deductive coding were employed (Table 1). Primary deductive coding was planned and based on six AT elements: tools, rules, division of labour, subject, object and community. Since rehearsals provided a wide range of teachers' and pupils' repetitive behavioural patterns, both verbal and non-verbal, extended inductive primary coding in two categories (non-verbal and verbal patterns) was undertaken. Only then could the secondary coding process start with thematic analysis of each verbal and non-verbal coded pattern and the development of thematic descriptors. In the end, for the sake of easier handling of findings, extended secondary coding was carried out, mainly in order to group tools of creative instrumental music learning into two nodes: empowerment and engagement.

What follows are the findings organised according to the activity theory elements and discussion with comments on related topics of being and becoming a member of a community of practice, on the nature of the creative instrumental music learning activity, and on the sense of wellbeing.

3. Findings and discussion

Since the findings are based on the in-depth analysis of video data later triangulated by learners' and teachers' reflective diaries and interviews, this section follows the same format: first presenting video captures and/or vignettes from rehearsals related to the AT-based categories (rules, tools, division of labour, subject, object, and community) followed by substantiated data from interviews and diaries.

Tools: Engagement through embodiment, improvisation and playfulness

Tools that have been used in the activity of instrumental learning are, according to activity theory, defined as artefacts (or concepts) used by actors in the system.

The observational data provided evidence of the employment of engagement through embodiment of the played music. *Embodiment of the played music* is here understood as integration of body movements while playing the music, e.g. dancing or moving to the rhythm of the music played, or 'acting out' a metaphor related to the music played.

The following vignettes and video captures offer brief examples of learners' and teachers' engagement in the instrumental music learning activity through the use of embodiment of the played music:

In Rehearsal 3/part 3 Shaun encourages the learners to continue after the break and reminds them about the part they will start with. The students start playing and Shaun invites Noah to start dancing in a circle with him in the middle of the room. (Video capture 1)

Rebecca starts moving and dancing to the rhythm of the played music while waiting for her part to start; Shaun and Noah slowly move back to their positions. (Video capture 2)

The moment Rebecca starts waving her whole body Joel and Jeremy to her right start getting into frog position ready to jump/hop around. In a few seconds there are three boys jumping/hopping as frogs in the centre (Joel, Jeremy and John) of the room and around the instruments. (Video capture 2)

The above examples not only demonstrate the expansive/fast-spreading nature (from individual to group embodiment) of the use of embodiment of the played music but also pupils' full acceptance of embodiment as part of a shared repertoire of tools and strategies for instrumental music learning. This might indicate an interactional and relational nature of the use of embodiment as pupils are interacting with and relating to each other in the process of generating movements, dances and enactments of the played music.

The interview and reflective diaries' data provided triangulation and a multi-layered account of the importance of 'engagement' in general and



Video capture 1. Shaun and Noah embodying the played music through dancing.



Video capture 2. Rebecca embodying the played music through dancing and Joel, Jeremy and John jumping/hopping as frogs.

‘embodiment’ in particular, as well as pupils’ reasoning behind the use of *embodiment* of the played music. Pupils rooted their kinaesthetic/non-verbal approach to instrumental learning in their beliefs about strong interconnectedness between playing music/instruments on one hand and human mental, emotional and physical expressions on the other as well as in their understanding of what competent music playing should be like (Table 2).

The accounts in the interviews and diaries provided a rationale for the engagement through the use of embodiment with its contributions to interactions in the ensemble, leading to a high quality and competence of music playing, and to immersion.

Keeping in mind the above accounts based on micro analysis of rehearsals, interviews and diaries, *Percussion 1* could be elaborated further as having features of

Table 2. Findings on embodiment from interviews and diaries.

Segment	Thick description	Specific findings
Interview 1/Zeta	... it’s not just about playing well, you’ve got to play like emotionally and credibly and everything.... So not just being able to play well, you’ve got to play like with energy and with moving and everything....	Embodiment of the played music contributes to body memory and to playing with energy, i.e. to playing emotionally and credibly (quality, competence, expertise)
Interview 2/ Jeremy	... Yeah, exactly, it’s a body instrument in a way. And if you don’t have that energy flowing through your body and out into you instrument it’s not going to sound full....	Embodiment of the played music contributes to ‘full sounds’ of instruments (quality, competence, immersion)
Interview1/Zeta	... Yeah, interaction is probably one of the main things because we all do like the movements together and everything....	Embodiment of the played music contributes to interaction among members of ensemble (interaction)

communities of practice, defined by Wenger (1998) as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Engagement, participation, competence and immersion have been used by different authors and sources when describing wellbeing in general and pupils' wellbeing in particular (see e.g. Ryan and Deci, 2000; Soini et al., 2010). Thus *Percussion 1* could also be elaborated further as a learning activity providing conditions for achieving pupils' wellbeing.

The gradual transformation of individual engagement into group/shared engagement indicates how the collaborative nature of creativity is used for the embodiment of the played music.

Another tool for engagement was closely tied to the process of the emergence of novelties (e.g. adding new improvised sounds, naming sections, creating new movements etc.) through improvisation/playfulness.

Improvisation/playfulness is understood as being in an 'as if space' and/or experimenting beyond the expected, prepared or prescribed.

This tool was characterised by the realm of the unknown, by the lack of any pre-determined 'final product' and by 'going with the flow'. The following vignette from one of the rehearsals illustrates the point.

Rehearsal 5: 'Have you got it?', Sarah asks but several learners look down and shake their heads as if not being happy with how everything sounds. Sarah prepares to start again: 'Let's do it again!', places her arms in front of her chest and then let her arms fall along her body and says: 'Spark is not the word. What is the word I want (John shouts 'twinkle') yes, thank you (laughter,) one twinkle (laughter), it's quite hard to say (laughter).' Everybody gets energised and chatty, Barb suggests they shorten it. They come up with a new word 'twink', which causes lots of laughter. Sarah tests it by saying 'one twink' (laughter). Shaun sitting in the background growls: 'Aaarrggggh' (laughter) and says 'twaaaaank' with exaggerated long vowel.

The above account illustrates the processes of improvising and playfulness leading to engagement of all involved. The teacher encourages pupils' improvisation/playfulness by asking for their ideas, and by accepting and incorporating any presented idea. The whole process of improvisation is characterised by not only its emergent character but also by the joint effort of all involved in the process.

Wenger (1998) emphasises joint enterprise (along with mutual engagement and shared repertoire) as one of the three key features of communities of practice. Joint enterprise refers to the shared understanding by the members of what binds them to the domain and is brought about through the members' interaction and main activity. The joint nature of the emergence of new ideas through improvisation/playfulness in *Percussion 1* might indicate that its main domain transcends music playing and encompasses improvisation and playfulness in instrumental music learning activity.

The interviews and diaries revealed that pupils and teachers see the use of improvisation/playfulness as worthwhile, particularly due to it bringing excitement, fun and pupil agency into the instrumental music learning activity. Jeremy, in his first interview, says:

I've never pictured a rehearsal to be so exciting, so funny, people jumping around, people running around and we don't know why we do that and what happens next and it is fun and exciting ... sometimes we throw in random words, sounds, anything ... and make something really new, unexpected, good. (Jeremy, Interview 1)

Jeremy clearly enjoyed the rehearsal he describes and emphasised what a positive learning experience it was for him. Positive learning experience combined with active participation of individuals can contribute to emotional, physical and social wellbeing as documented by Natwig (2003) and the WHO. Warwick (2007) and Kellett et al. (2004) also confirm that active participation increase pupils' motivation, self-esteem and skills, all of which are linked to mental health and wellbeing. *Percussion 1*, once again, proved to be fostering pupils' wellbeing.

By co-creating novelties through improvisation/playfulness, creative practice of instrumental music learning activity in *Percussion 1* seems to be defined by co-creation, i.e. by the collaborative nature of creativity.

Tools: Empowerment through supportive statements and decision-making

Supportive statements are defined here as 'positive' statements that are likely to encourage or empower the 'receiver'. Decision-making is seen as the act or process of deciding a course of action individually or with a group of people.

The accounts below illustrate the use of *empowerment through positive statements* as a tool in creative instrumental music learning activity.

In Rehearsal 2/part 1 they have been playing a slow piece of music a few times already and they are still not happy. Sarah encourages them to explore more and asks Joel 'What is the feeling when you come in? What do you reckon?' Others start talking all at the same time and Sarah listens, then Joel says 'I rot' and Sarah immediately exclaims 'Yes, you are right, that's it, you rot'. Everybody seems pleased and ready to play the piece again.

By the use of supportive statements ('Yes, you are right, that's it') pupils are also invited into the process of decision-making. This is quite prominently explained in their teacher's diary entries. In her Diary 8, Sarah acknowledges the pupils' active engagement in the process of decision-making in *Percussion 1* in the following way:

On a number of occasions I have given them the option not to tackle extremely difficult pieces, to go for something easier and less time consuming. For example with Toccata, I said right from the start that it would be a lot of work, that everyone would be pushed to get there. I gave them an option of not doing it, of doing something less challenging. I often involve them in these sorts of decisions. Same with rehearsals – do they want to have extra rehearsals? And they always want to do what it takes to achieve at a high level, despite the long hours, the repetition and the tiredness. (Diary 8, Sarah [teacher])

The presented account is meant as an illustration of the pupils' participation in decision-making but it also represents a valuable record of the pupils' intrinsic motivation and their participation in communities of practice where they demonstrate commitment to high-quality creative instrumental music learning.

By their participation in decision-making processes pupils start to feel ownership of both the creative process and the creative product, as Sarah describes below.

Kids decided to introduce so many changes, the piece is now completely their own – the original sheet music is no longer usable, things have changed too much. (Diary 8, Sarah [teacher])

In her entry above, Sarah supports O'Toole (2008) conclusion that 'when individuals are able to choose what and how they learn, they are asserting their need for autonomy and creativity' (p. 76). As documented in the introduction to this article,

intrinsic motivation and autonomy is demonstrated in the use of empowerment as a tool in *Percussion 1*'s creative learning activity.

Rules, which are defined within the activity theory (AT) system as governing or placing constraints on actions within the activity, were evidenced in the study as *overt* and *covert*.

When the current head of the instrumental programme (and also the teacher in our study) took it over, she clarified the overt rules and even published them in an article. Overt rules included having an 'open-door' staffroom and the sharing of food, intergenerational ensemble participation, etc. Even though overt rules are very intriguing and provide the foundation for the nature of instrumental music learning in *Percussion 1*, it was the covert rules that caught our attention.

Covert rules such as a whole-group interactions and relationships in which creative activity takes place together rather than through specific individuals or one-to-one lessons invoked processes of *togetherness*, *co-creation*, *allowing the making of mistakes* and *risk-taking*. A situation unfolds through a series of moment-to-moment musical contingencies in which each player's action depends on the one just before, where plans may have never been uttered, nor been scripted or indeed, foreseen and yet 'togetherness' and 'co-creation' were elements present in rehearsals and performances, documented in diaries and invoked by all involved in the instrumental programme.

For example, the covert rules of *allowing mistakes* and *risk taking* are clearly described below:

I always remind the kids before we play that I won't be the slightest bit worried if they play something wrong – as long as we've done the work and everyone takes emotional risks on stage, I'll be happy. Our mantra before we go on is 'high-risk playing'.... Kids won't put themselves in a vulnerable position unless they are surrounded by unconditional support and trust. Once kids trust you, once they feel that they are safe no matter what happens, they're wonderful risk takers. They like to live on the edge – to play things fast and loose. (Diary 9, Sarah [teacher])

Sarah is here literally 'spelling out' two of the ensemble's crucial covert rules as well as their impact on pupils' daring improvisation. This group of students recognises that 'to live on the edge' involves risk-taking, which is a characteristic of performance creativity (John-Steiner, 2000). The communal practice articulated here is a joint activity that has shared agendas, goals, tasks and intentions. It involves dynamics of agreement, disagreement and acceptance of mistakes as part and parcel of the participants' contributions (Matusov, 1996, pp. 31–32). These learners were encouraged to 'live on the edge' whether they were rehearsing a composed piece, rearranging an existing piece or improvising. Improvisation is characterised here by flexible, adaptive, responsive and generative activity. Improvising enables risk-taking.

The other two covert rules are *togetherness*, meant as being in association with or in relationship to one another, and *co-creation*, meant as the process that allows and encourages the generation of mutual value through active engagement.

In her diary Sarah explains that her teaching changes according to the group she works with because it is a matter of co-creation.

My way of teaching a piece changes depending on the group I'm teaching because so much of the creation comes directly from that group of kids and that particular time. (Diary 10/Sarah [teacher])

Whereas the overt rules were known and accepted by the learners prior to their enrolment in the instrumental programme, it was the covert ones evolving over time that seemed to have impacted most significantly on the creative instrumental music learning activity in *Percussion 1*. Togetherness and co-creation in particular can be seen as contributors to pupils' wellbeing, as are the similar concepts of a sense of belonging and relatedness that have been registered by Soini et al. (2010) as elements that enhance pupils' pedagogical wellbeing.

Division of labour: role and relationship building

Division of labour in activity theory is defined as roles (musical and non-musical) that define the structure of activity and performance practices, where the division of activities among actors in the system is articulated.

The division of labour observed in the rehearsals, performances and further explored in the interviews proved to be non-hierarchical, horizontal and democratic. Both learners and teachers demonstrated two key features of the division of labour: *dual roles*, i.e. intertwined leader and follower role, and *shared responsibilities*.

Dual roles indicate the lack of classical vertically linked relations and the presence of more democratic horizontally linked relations. For example, observed communication flow during rehearsals did not indicate any power or vertically linked relation between teachers and learners as it encompassed many different directions simultaneously. The following vignette evidences horizontally linked and thus democratic relations between teachers and learners and among learners themselves.

In rehearsal 7 teachers were addressing Joel and Noah on their left and exploring different options of how to play their part while other learners simultaneously started communicating both to the addressed learners and among themselves (but not to the teachers). All comments and opinions were equally heard and explored.

The below represented democratic communication flow (Figure 2) enabled all involved to 'play' both the roles of leaders (when and as necessary) and followers.

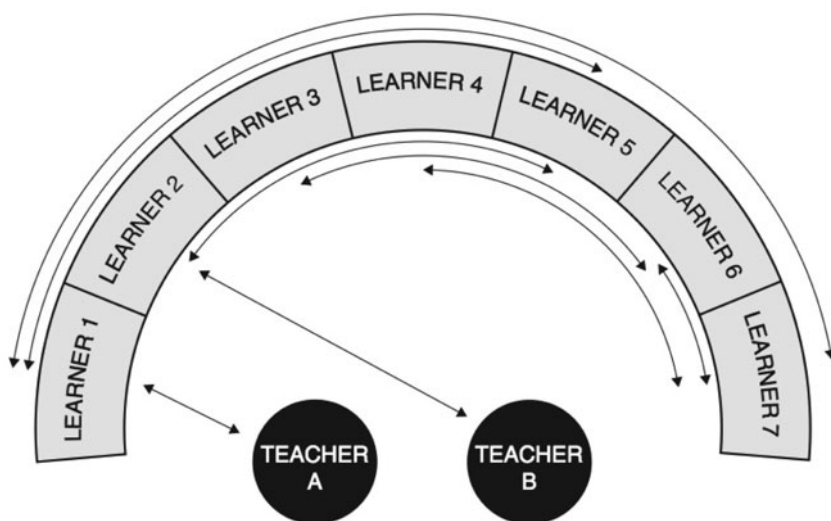


Figure 2. Communication flow among participants (Rehearsal 7).

There was no evidence of a traditional task or responsibility distribution – not even according to fixed instrument choice. During rehearsals learners tried out different instruments and were encouraged by teachers and other members to experiment with swapping instruments and even to try playing ones they had never tried before. In his diary Alistair shares how he experienced swapping roles (i.e. instruments) with his teacher.

In River Waltz today I swapped instruments with Shaun (teacher). I played vibes while he played bass. This was fun as I am not the greatest percussionist but I managed to play the melody correctly. Today was based on getting the right feel as River Waltz is a fantastically dynamic piece of music. (Diary 4, Alistair)

The unexpected switches of roles could be taken as indicators of an established full membership of all involved. *Percussion 1* allowed mutual engagement of both teachers and pupils, thus providing evidence of the collaborative nature of creative instrumental music learning as well as providing evidence of community of practice, where all members are actively involved. The active participation of all involved combined with the empowerment and autonomy that come with shared responsibilities provide conditions for enhancement of not only pupils' but also teachers' wellbeing.

Subject, object and community

This particular ensemble (*Percussion 1*) was the subject in the activity of instrumental music learning steered by the common object which was music, i.e. playing, making and performing as well as meaning-making, with the specific object described in the learners' words as 'our own performance at the Gala Concert'.

Data from the rehearsals, diaries and interviews reveal that the learners see their ensemble as something special and as such it plays a big role in their lives. The following accounts depict the importance of *Percussion 1* for them.

So many things make this ensemble even more than special, we're like a family.... Percussion 1 is just like totally different to the other ensembles. I mean obviously all the ensembles are special but Perc. 1 just takes it to like a whole new level. We all have such a passion for music and an enthusiasm to reach further and to achieve great things which really brings us together.... (Diary 6/Barb)

Percussion 1 is definitely special to me for a number of reasons. One of the main reasons is that I am around like-minded people, who all love, understand and feel the music in the same way. (Diary 7/Zeta)

As the illustrative examples show, *Percussion 1* is not just an ordinary percussion ensemble in the eyes of its members. It features as being on a different level compared with other percussion ensembles and as being a family setting. A similar pattern is repeated with the definition of object.

It is hard to put into words what this concert actually is.... To me, it is a moment in time that is pure magic. It is an esoteric connection with something other wordly. It is moving and playing with people you enjoy being around. It is a moment of clear thought. It is a moment of pure bliss. And it is a sole reason I play music in pursuit of this magical moment. (Diary 7/Joel)

The above diary entry is just one of many that describe the multi-layered and sophisticated nature of their object. It encompasses creating as well as making music and the concert is a magical moment and bliss rather than just a performance.

Percussion 1 has proved itself as a community of practice within the joint enterprise/domain of music making, creating and performing, with individual and mutual engagement and with a shared repertoire of overt and covert rules and tools like engagement and empowerment. Following the pattern of subject and object definition, *Percussion 1* as a community (of practice) is described by all involved as being of a special *transformative nature*. The following accounts illustrate the point:

This programme has been the most amazing experience and journey and has taught me incredible things, one of these things is how to express myself not through words (as expected by our education system) but through music. Every rehearsal I discover new things about the members and also myself. (Diary 5/John)

One of the most beneficial things of being in this ensemble is the ability to use the skills we learn throughout the process of developing music, into other tasks and processes. This has allowed me to take different approaches to tackling the many missions that lie before me!!! (Diary 6/Noah)

John and Noah emphasise how they changed by being members of this community and this process, and what they got out of it. The transformative nature of this community of practice means that being a member is tied to the transformative process of music making, creating and performing while authoring learning through the use of embodiment, improvisation/playfulness, positive statements and decision-making. The pupils' description of being part of *Percussion 1* as a life-changing experience is a testament to how much participation in this particular instrumental music learning activity enhanced their wellbeing.

Linking collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning to pupil wellbeing

What follows is a tabular summary of the findings from AT analysis of elements that co-influence collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning and their links to the intrinsic potential effect on pupil wellbeing (Table 3).

The in-depth data analysis of rehearsals triangulated with learners' and the teacher's interviews and reflective diaries revealed key elements that co-influence collaborative creativity in instrumental music learning. Creative instrumental music learning is co-influenced by the use of *engagement* through embodiment of the played music and improvisation/playfulness, and by the use of *empowerment* through positive statements and decision-making, in a community of *transformative nature*, where learners and teachers play the *dual roles* of leader and/or follower while conforming to *overt* and *covert* rules and being guided by *shared responsibilities*.

The findings suggest that the pupils' full engagement in the *Percussion 1* community was motivated and driven not only by intense experience and emotional responses to music and meaning-making but also by autonomy, togetherness, competence, co-creation, immersion and the sense of belonging to a family-like setting. In other words, the pupils experienced satisfaction of three basic psychological needs for wellbeing: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The use of tools such as *engagement* through embodiment of the played music and improvisation/playfulness and *empowerment* through positive statements and decision-making paved a pathway for the *Percussion 1* creative learning activity to provide a framework for pupils' wellbeing. Covert rules in *Percussion 1* including risk-taking, allowing mistakes, co-creation and togetherness also promoted pupils'

Table 3. AT analysis of elements that co-influence collaborative creativity in instrumental group music learning and their links to wellbeing.

ACTIVITY THEORY (AT) ANALYSIS OF CREATIVITY IN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC LEARNING	FEATURES OF WELL-BEING
(1) Tools:	
a) <i>Engagement</i> (embodiment and improvisation/playfulness)	Engagement + Active participation of individuals
b) <i>Empowerment</i> (supportive statements, decision making)	Active participation of individuals + Autonomy + Competence
(1) Rules:	
(b) <i>Covert</i>	Belonging
- togetherness	Relatedness + Empowerment
- co-creation	Competence
- making mistakes	Autonomy
- risk taking	
(1) Division of labour:	
a) <i>Dual role</i> (leaders and followers)	Relatedness + Autonomy
b) <i>Shared responsibilities</i>	Competence + Autonomy
(1) Subject:	
(a) <i>Percussion 1</i> (family setting)	Belonging
(1) Object:	
(a) <i>Concert</i> (esoteric connection)	Relatedness
(b) <i>Playing music</i> (magical moment)	Empowerment
(1) Community:	
(a) <i>Transformative</i> (journey, self-discovery, life-changing, belonging)	Belonging + Autonomy + Competence + Relatedness + Active engagement

wellbeing through autonomy, agency and authoring of learning. The findings suggest that engagement in the Percussion 1 creative instrumental music learning is linked to pupils' wellbeing.

The potential of Engestrom's activity theory and Wenger's community of practice (theory) use in analysis of instrumental group music learning

One of our questions and a strong theme to emerge from the findings was the potential of Engestrom's activity theory and Wenger's community of practice for analysing and characterising links between creativity, instrumental music learning and wellbeing. The application of these theories to the study of instrumental music learning suggests that there is much that can be gained by exploring these theories key principles as a unit of analysis for the multivoicedness of collaborative creativity and identifying wellbeing outcomes. Using Engestrom's activity theory in parallel with Wenger's community of practice offered a way of generating a wider understanding of the relationships and contributions between top-down and bottom-up

perspectives in an educational process related to music. This not only identified dimensions of self-empowerment but also offered new ways of focusing and identifying the specific qualities of the process of the programme that enabled our awareness spectrum of wellbeing outcomes. What is highlighted by seeing creative instrumental music learning activity through the lens of activity theory and community of practice is the critical importance of group learning and creative learning in fostering collaborative creativity but also an understanding of the interplay of all the AT-based elements in enhancing pupils' wellbeing. There are profound implications for what it takes to create a socially cohesive learning community motivated by the collaborative creativity activity involving a whole group together rather than specific individuals. Creativity is distributed across the group.

Activity Theory (AT) lays out the constituent parts of the community of creative learning and highlights the collaborative engagement of pupils. Activity theory has the potential to offer a way of looking at the complex world of learning, making visible, accessible and assessable ways of generating collaborative creativity and increasing pupils' wellbeing within any subject.

Summary of findings, implications and final thoughts

This study provides evidence that collaborative creativity supports instrumental music learning and enhances pupils' sense of wellbeing. Our findings can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Creative instrumental group learning activity is co-influenced by the transformative nature of the community in which the tools *engagement* and *empowerment* as well as covert rules such as *co-creation*, *togetherness*, *making mistakes* and *risk-taking* flow together in the process of collaborative creativity.
- (ii) Creative instrumental music group learning activity has the potential to enhance pupil wellbeing by *empowering* them through supportive statements and decision-making, and by *engaging* them through embodiment of the played music and improvisations/playfulness.
- (iii) A transformative community of practice, where pupils feel connected and a sense of belonging, provides a family-like setting for a journey of self-discovery and life-changing learning activity, thus satisfying the three basic psychological needs and features of well-being: autonomy, competence and relatedness.

The democratic approach to music education that exists in *Percussion 1* between the teacher and the specific members of the instrumental ensemble could be said to exemplify the relationship that exists in a community of practice which stresses wellbeing in all its manifestations. A key point here is that the positive relationship between learning and practice that underlies the multitudinous ways in which musicians establish authentic connections to music and other musicians occurs when music is utilised in knowledgeable and creative ways with beneficial effects on wellbeing within the community of practice. There is a considerable amount of unequivocal evidence highlighting how music affects behaviour (North and Hargreaves, 2008), as well as the effects of music on identities (MacDonald, Miell, & Hargreaves, 2002) and extracurricular activity participation on adolescent

development (Bloomfield and Barber, 2010). However, as shown in this study of a learning community, even where music is not being used specifically to achieve a positive outcome there may be secondary benefits for participants relating to health and wellbeing. This point illustrates the difference between conceiving music education in aesthetic terms and conceiving music education as a social praxis that has profound implications for all forms of social musical participation and communities of learning.

The potential of this approach to music education and the music curriculum in schools is to place more emphasis on pupils making music rather than learning about 'the canon'. In England, some studies have suggested that music is the most disliked subject on the curriculum (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant, 2003). This is quite an achievement given how many pupils really enjoy music outside school. The approach taken has implications for the ways in which pupils work in other school subjects: a teacher who adopts a democratic approach and becomes a teaching artist, whatever his/her art form or discipline, could become a pioneer in developing a transformative learning community.

While it has been possible only to indicate the intrinsic potential for pupil wellbeing this study suggests that there is much that can be gained by exploring music-learning activities that engage pupils in collaborative creativity. Further investigations that take the pupils' perspective and take account of multivoiced experience will be beneficial to gaining further insights into the impact of instrumental group music learning on the wellbeing of children and young people in diverse educational settings.

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