Fostering Student Creativity via Music Composition:

An Action Research Study on the Implementation of the Baritone Ukulele

Master of Education

Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

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Overview of the Study

The proposed action research study focuses on fostering student creativity via music composition on the baritone ukulele (Stringer, 2008). Supported by research and pedagogical literature, the teacher-researcher has constructed a pedagogical innovation where students will compose two pieces of music: (a) a textural/rhythmic composition; and (b) a melodic/harmonic composition. The two research questions guiding this study are:

1. What impact will the music composition pedagogical innovation have on students' learning in: (a) music language and performance; and (b) creative expression in music?

2. What are children's perspectives on participating in the music composition process?

Data will be obtained via: teacher-designed evaluation tools (to assess the level of impact the pedagogical innovation had on students' learning), field-notes (recording daily observations of students' progress), video-recording (for future analysis of the creative process and product), formal interviews and focus group discussions with students (to gather perspectives on their engagement in the creative process), and attitudinal questionnaires (Likert-type scales to further assess students' perspectives on the creative process).

Perspectives from Theory and Research

There are a multitude of different definitions of creativity. Russ and Fiorelli (2010) simply state that "[c]reativity is defined as the ability to produce work that is novel, of high quality, and useful or appropriate according to the particular task or discipline" (p. 233). Traditionally, scholars have approached creativity research through four different areas of focus, popularly referred to as the "Four P's": person, place, process, and product (Hickey, 2003; Stauffer, 2013). Based on insights from the research and literature, the pedagogical innovation has been structured cognizant of: the personality traits and tendencies of creative individuals, the
ideal structure for creative learning environments, the various stages of the creative process, and the qualities of creative products. The pedagogical innovation has been modelled after Wallas' (1926) famous, and strongly supported, four-stage theory of the creative process.

**Importance of the Research**

Unfortunately, an investigation of scholarly literature on this topic reveals that the majority of music education programs in Canada either neglect or undermine the creative potential of students (Hess, 2014). Performance and language skills have traditionally been favoured as the apex musical skills to be acquired; the opportunity for students to create and express their individualism has been systematically undermined in lieu of large-scale ensemble performance of music others have created. Furthermore, there is minimal discussion on the baritone ukulele as a pedagogical tool in public school contexts. The baritone ukulele shares the identical tuning to the guitar; consequently, learned skills on this instrument may be immediately transferred to the guitar (a highly authentic mode of music education).

The research will be provide pedagogical insight to the teacher-researcher about the impact the composition learning experience had on students' learning. Furthermore, gathering students' perspectives on their engagement in and experiences with the creative process will be highly valuable for considerations for future teaching endeavours.

**Current Status of the Study**

The thesis proposal is well underway and is currently being edited for formal defense. The proposed study is expected to begin on April 4, 2016. In this presentation, I will present my research design and approach to the study of music composition with children.

**Presentation Format**

A round table presentation format would be preferred.
References


