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Justifying Music in the National Curriculum: The Habit Concept and the Question of Social Justice and Academic Rigour

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National Curriculum, social justice, pragmatism, critical pedagogy.

Abstract:
In June 2015, the British government presented *"the social justice case for an academic curriculum"* as the justification for recent radical changes to educational policy. However, this justification failed to account for both the key changes in the newly-revised National Curriculum for Music and the place of music in the National Curriculum as a whole.

Through a critical evaluation of the National Curriculum for Music, this study will propose how the place of music could successfully be justified within an education system wholly committed to *"social justice". Using the '*habit concep*t'* of classical philosophical pragmatism, it will assess how *and why music's educational value should be understood not through its "academic rigour" but* through its distinctive, inherently destabilising nature.

Contents

1. Introduction: "the social justice case for an academic curriculum"

Between September 2015 and September 2017, a newly-revised version of the English National Curriculum underwent the final stages of being phased into local-authority-maintained schools, as updated curricula for English, mathematics, and science were added to those for other subjects that were introduced in September 2014. The revisions to the curriculum – developed to update the "stagnating" English education system taken on by the coalition government in 2010 (Morgan, 2015) – focus upon achieving social justice by tackling disadvantage and inequality, through "setting high expectations for everyone and ensuring that children have access to all of the curriculum" (Gibb, 2015a).

The former Minister of State for Schools, Nick Gibb, explained the significance of this so-called "social justice case for an academic curriculum" in a speech in June 2015 (Gibb, 2015b). He described how introducing measures to increase academic rigour:

> "will give more pupils the preparation they need to succeed – whether that's getting a place at a good university, starting an apprenticeship, or finding their first job. They will provide the foundations of an education system with social justice at its heart, in which every young person reaches their potential."

This emphasis upon academic rigour has been identified by the government as the cornerstone of a return to a traditional liberal education, valuing knowledge for knowledge's sake and aiming to introduce young minds from all backgrounds to "the best that has been thought and said" (DfE, 2014b). However, the resulting definition of 'knowledge' featuring in the National Curriculum has become remarkably narrow. Knowledge is referred to as abstract knowledge: as if it were an entity in itself, defined objectively and independently of the knower (Scruton, 2007). It is presented as socially decontextualized and abstracted from real life, to be passed from teacher to pupil in an action of preservation rather than in a dialectical negotiation which recognises the active role of both parties in its construction (Davis, 2012; Spruce, 2012; Spruce & Matthews, 2012).

By decontextualizing the concept of knowledge, the process of learning promoted by the National Curriculum has become far removed from anything relevant to or familiar from a pupil's day-to-day life. Abstract knowledge is favoured over emancipatory knowledge: the knowledge whereby individuals learn to relate to the world through an understanding of its power relationships. Emancipatory knowledge is crucial for pupils to learn how to engage in the dialectical construction of different ways of knowing (learning to value differing social and cultural constructs of meaning) which is in turn essential for full educational inclusion and social justice. Without emancipatory knowledge "education then becomes simply a process of induction into the value systems of dominant [social] groupings" (Spruce, 2013a).

This being the case, an education system that is wholly committed to social justice should seek to provide all children, regardless of background, not just with academic rigour and abstract knowledge, but with the chance to develop emancipatory knowledge. This includes the opportunity to learn how to relate to the construction of power relationships within sociocultural hierarchy, how to embrace and manage the inevitability of change outside the value systems of dominant social groupings, and how to navigate their own way through their own unpredictable futures.

In some subjects, such opportunities may well be achieved through academic rigour as defined by the government. However, this study will propose that within the field of music, educational value should primarily be understood not through music's academic rigour, but through its distinctive, "inherently destabilising" nature (Cole & McKay, 2015): its intersubjectivity of meaning, and its close relationship with the very social, political, and historical issues intrinsic to the underpinning of sociocultural hierarchy.

i. An introduction to the 'habit concept'

This study will use as a starting point the 'habit concept' of classical philosophical pragmatism, which can be used to explain the nature of education, learning, and value. Philosophical pragmatism in its broadest sense is centred upon the pragmatist maxim, which implies that the value of any hypothesis should be defined as its value for the practical consequences in question, and that therefore all value can be defined as a function of the ends served, or "value-for" (Goble, 2005; Bowman, 2014; Hookway, 2015).

In contrast to the instrumentalist and utilitarian philosophies which broadly underpinned music education until the mid-twentieth century (Stamou, 2002; Leonhard, 2012; Mark, 2012; Woodford, 2012), the pragmatist approach uses the habit concept to illustrate the existence of one end to which all value claims ultimately contribute: the human aspiration to "reflexive habituality". This refers to the ability to take up new habits and break with the old when they get in the way of "desired trajectories of action or anticipated consequences". Value, therefore, can be defined by its contribution to the development of reflexive habituality, and learning can be defined as the modifying and refining of existing habits. Progress can be defined as the renouncing of "formerly useful habits for newer, more promising ones" (Bowman, 2005a).

These definitions reinforce that an education system wholly committed to social justice may not be compatible with the implementation of academic rigour in the curriculum. Attaining the height of human aspiration – an essential aim in a socially-just curriculum – is possible only through the development of the emancipatory knowledge required to evaluate current value-systems and their impact on the practical consequences of a hypothesis; not through the application of abstract knowledge of the kind emphasised by the newly-revised National Curriculum.

2. A critical evaluation of the National Curriculum for Music reforms

In the National Curriculum for Music, which was introduced into schools in its revised version in September 2014, the new emphasis upon abstract knowledge and academic rigour is evident in its increased "focus on knowledge and skills [...] including exposure to a wide range of music and composers, and teaching children how to read and write using standard staff notation" (Gibb, 2015a).

In seeking to critically evaluate the National Curriculum for Music reforms, this study undertook a qualitative comparative analysis (Saldaña, 2009) of the pre-2014 and 2014 guidelines. Aligning the guidelines side-by-side (Devaney, 2013) highlighted numerous changes in the new curriculum: additions (such as listening "with discrimination to the best in the musical canon"); omissions (such as exploring "ideas and feelings about music using movement"); and changes in terminology (such as playing with "control and rhythmic accuracy", rather than with "increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression"). Using multiple cycles of coding to categorise these changes allowed the detection of recurring themes and the isolation of the five most significant and frequently-occurring changes in focus and expectation, regarding: talent and musicality; greatness and the canon; compulsory performance training; reading staff notation; and an increased flexibility of implementation. A summary of this qualitative analysis is shown in Figure 1.

Having identified these five changes, this analysis then sought to evaluate to what extent each change contributes to the promotion of emancipatory knowledge and the consequent development of reflexive habituality. For the first four of the five changes outlined below, each will be assessed to consider how knowledge is being understood, and how this in turn relates to the government's "social justice case for an academic curriculum".

i. Talent and musicality

Whereas the pre-2014 guidelines emphasise the importance of music according to its use in communication, expression, culture, and building relationships, the 2014 guidelines describe the purpose of its study as to inspire pupils to develop "their talent as musicians". Pupils are expected to "progress to the next level of musical excellence" and sing and play instruments "musically" (DfE, 2013). The consistency in these changes in terminology surrounding the concepts of talent, musicality, and excellence throughout the 2014 guidelines seems to suggest an association with the popular folk psychology which postulates the existence of substantial differences between individuals in their innate abilities (Sloboda, 2005). It leaves no allowance for those pupils who do not identify – or are not identified – as having musical 'talent', and does not account for extensive research in music psychology which has proven that all individuals have an inherent propensity for developing "acquired musical expertise" (Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2012; McPherson

Figure 1: comparison and coding of changes between the pre-2014 and 2014 National Curricula for Music

	Pre-2014 National Curriculum for Music	**2014 National Curriculum for Music** **Coding of changes**	**Category**
Introduction	"Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act"	"Music is a universal language that embodies one of the **highest** forms of creativity"	**GREATNESS AND THE CANON**
	Music "brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development"	"A high-quality music education should engage and inspire pupils to develop a love of music and their **talent** as musicians [...]"	**TALENT AND MUSICALITY**
	Music "helps pupils understand themselves and relate to others"	"[...] and so increase their self-confidence, creativity and **sense of achievement**"	**TALENT AND MUSICALITY**
	"The teaching of music develops pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality"	Pupils should "develop a critical engagement with music, allowing them [...] to listen with discrimination to **the best in the musical canon**"	**GREATNESS AND THE CANON**
	"Teaching should ensure that 'listening, and applying knowledge and understanding', are developed through the interrelated skills of 'performing', 'composing' and 'appraising'."	"Perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including **the works of the great composers and musicians**"	**GREATNESS AND THE CANON**
		"Learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity **to learn a musical instrument** [...]"	**PERFORMANCE TRAINING**
Key Stage 1	"To play tuned and untuned instruments / to rehearse and perform with others"	"To play tuned and untuned instruments **musically**"	**TALENT AND MUSICALITY**
	"To listen with concentration and to internalise and recall sounds with increasing aural memory"	"To listen with concentration and understanding to a range of **high-quality** live and recorded music"	**GREATNESS AND THE CANON**
Key Stage 2	"To play tuned and untuned instruments with control and rhythmic accuracy"	To play "musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control, and **expression**"	**TALENT AND MUSICALITY**
	To understand how music is "described through relevant established and invented notations"	To "**use and understand** staff and other musical notations"	**STAFF NOTATION**
	To be introduced to "a range of live and recorded music from different times and cultures"	To "appreciate and understand a wide range of **high-quality** live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians"	**GREATNESS AND THE CANON**
Curriculum structure	Multiple pages long	Two pages long	**INCREASED FLEXIBILITY**
	Each Key Stage addresses "performing skills", "composing skills", "appraising skills", and "listening, and applying knowledge and understanding"	Each Key Stage has minimal prescription of subject content	**INCREASED FLEXIBILITY**
	Ending with Attainment Target Level Descriptions and Cross-Curriculum References	No Attainment Target Level Descriptions or Cross-Curriculum References. "By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study"	**INCREASED FLEXIBILITY**

& Hallam, 2012; Scripp, Ulibarri & Flax, 2013).

Nonetheless, in some respects the National Curriculum does appear to acknowledge the nature of musical expertise as something that can be acquired. It describes how pupils "should be taught to use their voices expressively" and "should be taught to sing and play musically" (emphases added) (DfE, 2013). It does not assume that being 'expressive' or 'musical' is a question of innate talent. However, the implication of such a description is that musicality and expression are kinds of fixed, objective knowledge that can be imposed upon pupils regardless of how their personal development of acquired musical expertise has been influenced by their own individual musical experiences. Given that the rate of such personal development is influenced by factors such as naturally occurring differences in non-musical, emotional expressivity (Sloboda, 2005), it would perhaps be more appropriate to teach expressivity and musicality as participatory practice, drawing on pupils' own past musical experiences to support their acquisition of musical expertise, emancipatory knowledge, and reflexive habituality.

ii. Greatness and the canon

Like the term 'talent', references to the 'canon' and 'great' composers and musicians in the National Curriculum inevitably suggest the presence of an underlying set of assumptions and ideologies. The concept of the canon embodies a number of philosophical and ideological approaches from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century western classical tradition: principally those of the work-concept, aestheticism, transcendentalism, and formalism. Such ideologies have resulted in the attribution of musical value to a small, select number of certain 'great works': works made timeless through stripping them of their original, local, and extra-musical meanings to become accepted as ahistoric, transcendental masterpieces (Everist, 2001; Treitler, 2001; Weber, 2001; Goehr, 2007).

Throughout the 2014 curriculum there is an emphasis on this concept of "the best" as defined by the western classical tradition: "the best in the musical canon", "the works of the great composers and musicians", and "high-quality live and recorded music" (DfE, 2013). Pupils are expected to listen to "the best" music with a sense of discrimination, rather than listening to a wide variety of music and developing their own ability "to make judgements about musical quality", as suggested in the pre-2014 guidelines (DfE, 2014a). The canon is presented as a single, static object with which pupils are to engage in order to learn how to discriminate musical value. As throughout its history, the canon's association with 'the best' and most valuable musical works suggests its manipulation to serve social and political ends; presented as an authoritative form of knowledge, it supports the assertion of cultural supremacy by those in power (Weber, 2001). Rather than promoting emancipatory knowledge and encouraging pupils to learn to make their own judgements about musical quality, the emphasis upon the canon expects them to accept a pre-existing social construct of musical value.

Nevertheless, the canon itself, albeit an ideological social construct, is a concept of significant historical and musicological importance which remains worthy of study. The evolution of different aspects of the canon (or canons) through the appreciation of craft, repertory, and long traditions of music criticism can give a valuable insight into musical practices and conventions of the past (Weber, 2001). However, when the canon and its works are decontextualised from these associated practices and historiographies – as in the National Curriculum – they act simply to reinforce the abstract and prescriptive concepts of aestheticism and transcendentalism.

iii. Compulsory performance training

The 2011 release of the National Plan for Music set the precedent for many of the changes in focus and expectation in the National Curriculum reforms. Although not intended as a classroom document, the National Plan said that "schools will want to review how they [provide music education] in light of the National Plan and following proposals from the National Curriculum review" (DfE & DCMS, 2011). Though claiming to allow schools wider freedoms and opportunities to decide how to organise their own curricula, the National Plan led to the rapid introduction of whole-class ensemble teaching programmes and singing strategies – leaving many schools virtually obliged to adhere to its new expectations in their everyday classroom music provision. The vision of the National Plan "to enable children from all backgrounds [...] to have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument" and "to learn to sing", within "a flexible template for high quality music provision" (DfE & DCMS, 2011) fed directly into the revised National Curriculum, with its emphasis upon social justice and equal opportunities.

However, the release of the National Plan prompted significant criticism for its almost exclusive focus upon the necessity of compulsory performance training. With its suggested methods, ensembles, and music all based firmly in the western classical tradition, the National Plan was thought to be prescribing a limited vision of musical learning based almost solely upon academically rigorous training in traditional modes of performance (Spruce, 2013a; Spruce, 2013b).

Like the National Curriculum's emphasis on the canon, the National Plan's emphasis on performance training in the western classical tradition is not in itself unworthy of study. Learning to sing and play an instrument should, without question, be an integral part of any music curriculum, and the western classical tradition has had an influential part to play in English musical culture throughout history. However, like the canon, such an emphasis yet again reinforces the assertion of cultural supremacy by those in power. Spruce (2013b) argues that the very practices outlined for performance training in the National Plan – whole-class instrumental and vocal tuition – impose this idea of cultural supremacy through the homogenous nature of playing in large groups. Pupils are expected to

comply with “a particular and culturally exclusive set of musical practices and values”, in which their own musical agency is made effectively redundant within the collective whole.

Whilst the National Curriculum presents compulsory performance training within a more inclusive curriculum involving listening, evaluating, creating, and using music technology, its expectation for all pupils to learn to sing and play an instrument must still be considered carefully in light of the National Plan. At face value compulsory performance training for all pupils appears fundamentally focused upon social justice. Yet in reality, participation in whole-class instrumental and vocal tuition teaches pupils the knowledge and traditions required to fit into existing circumstances, with limited scope to explore different ways of knowing, express diversity and individual agency, or develop emancipatory knowledge and reflexive habituality.

iv. Reading staff notation

Like compulsory performance training, reading staff notation has strong associations with the western classical tradition. Thus, similarly to the three aforementioned changes to the National Curriculum, the expectation to be able to “use and understand staff and other musical notations” (DfE, 2013) in the 2014 guidelines could suggest inferences of cultural supremacy, sociocultural hierarchy, and rigid social divisions accompanying the possession of abstract knowledge over emancipatory knowledge. Nonetheless, also like the previous three changes, this is not to say that reading staff notation is not a valuable aspect of a music curriculum. Reading staff notation is widely considered to be a practical skill of paramount importance for musicians of many traditions.

However, it is important to acknowledge how the educational importance of reading staff notation might not be quite as it is implied in the National Curriculum. Given that any notation can ultimately be interpreted in numerous different ways, reading notation cannot be developed as a standalone skill or an objective form of knowledge (Boorman, 2001; Bamberger, 2005). Walter Ong (2012), writing about the nature of orality and literacy in speech communication, highlights that although literacy promotes learning through extended sequential analysis, orality must always precede literacy as the basic form of language, promoting learning through practice. Being able to “use and understand staff and other musical notations” therefore requires a grounding in an aural understanding of music. Studies into ear-playing and sight-reading suggest that acquiring fluency in reading notation should be supported through engagement in active musical experiences and the consequent development of aural skills (Sloboda, 2005; Woody, 2012). It is therefore possible that expecting musical literacy from pupils as early as Key Stage 2 runs the risk of undermining the opportunity for them to spend time developing the practical and aural skills which are required in order to achieve actual expertise in musical literacy.

The critical evaluation of these four changes in focus and expectation shows the limited extent to which emancipatory knowledge and the resultant development of reflexive habituality are supported by the most recent National Curriculum reforms. In attempting to increase academic rigour, the emphases on talent and musicality, greatness and the canon, compulsory performance training, and reading staff notation all reinforce limited ways of musical knowing, presenting abstract knowledge to be passed from teacher to pupil in an action of preservation, and stressing the existence of rigid divisions and inequalities within sociocultural hierarchy.

Nonetheless, this evaluation has made clear that these four changes still retain the capacity to be valuable and important features of a music curriculum. The National Curriculum could remain a valid way of structuring a music education, provided that its changes are recontextualised and presented as participatory practices, therefore demonstrating music's educational value in developing reflexive habituality within a curriculum wholly committed to both social justice and academic rigour.

3. Social justice and academic rigour: the educational value of music

If, according to the pragmatist maxim, all value can be defined as a function of the ends served, then the educational value of music can be demonstrated only insofar as it is congruent with the aims and values of general education, and able to address them in ways that are "distinctive" (Bowman, 2012). Therefore, in order to present a strong case for the justification of music in the current National Curriculum, it needs to be shown that music can successfully and distinctively support the government's "social justice case for an academic curriculum".

i. Music education can be congruent with the aims of general education

In his praxial philosophy, David Elliott (1995) gives a succinct overview of the scholarly objections to how music is treated as a study in the aesthetic concept of music education – objections that are equally valid in assessing how music is treated in the 2014 curriculum guidelines. He argues against the validity of viewing music as an object and valuing aesthetic perception and experience above other musical understandings. Elliott concludes that actually, "what music is, at root, is a human activity [...] Music is not simply a collection of products or objects. Fundamentally, music is something that people do". Music, therefore, can be defined as practice.

Human practices, musical and otherwise, are essential in the development of reflexive habituality. The pragmatist habit concept shows how practices enable people to rehearse habitual actions and responses to different situations, discovering how and when to take up new habits and break with the old. Wayne Bowman (2005a) describes how this occurs in musical practice:

> "musical rationality – or, if you prefer, the dispositions and propensities of the musically educated – does not consist in the exercise of some mental faculty or static 'intelligence'. Rather, at its core is the capacity for learning; for growing alongside challenging circumstances; for acquiring new, more useful habits; for acting in ways that are congruent with desired and emerging ends."

Because music exists in a continual state of temporal flux, engagement in musical practice inevitably results in the need for constant learning and adaptation to unexpected circumstances. The participant is repeatedly called upon to restructure their understanding of the music as it evolves through time, responding appropriately to its rapid development and to the unforeseeable actions and interpretations of both themselves and other participants (Green, 2008a). In this sense, musical practices encourage the reflexive habituality essential in a socially-just curriculum that meets the government's aim to tackle disadvantage and inequality.

However, it is important to remember that music is just one amongst numerous different human actions and practices, many of which share similar educational value. Therefore, to present a strong justification for music in the National Curriculum, it remains necessary to show not just its congruence with the aims of general education, but also its distinctive and unique attributes.

ii. Music education can address the aims of general education in ways that are distinctive

The temporal and transient nature of music begins to give some insight into why musical practice could be considered to be distinctive amongst other human actions and practices. From an aesthetic standpoint, these qualities of music have been associated with its 'intrinsic' or 'inherent' value: with the implication that "music (all of it) is important because of things it (all of it, invariantly, because of its innermost nature) does that no other human practice does" (Bowman, 2014). However, the pragmatist notion of value as a function of the ends served implies that there can be no such thing as intrinsic or inherent value.

This is not to say that music does not have intrinsic or inherent meaning which contributes to its educational value. Lucy Green (2008a) describes how "inter-sonic musical meaning" arises as a result of music's existence in temporal flux. As an object of knowledge existing independently of the knower, music possesses a fundamental structure in and of itself. As it unfolds through time, the participant in the musical experience continually has to reassess the structural function of each individual moment in response to what has already passed and their expectation of what will follow. How each moment relates to what has already taken place and what is still to come defines its meaning: the perception of its implications upon higher-level musical structures and processes, such as the creation, inhibition, or satisfaction of musical expectations (Fiske, 2016).

This creation of inter-sonic meaning is in itself a unique and distinctive characteristic of musical practice. However, Green maintains that music cannot consist entirely of inter-sonic meaning. Rather, musical meaning is influenced by the innumerable social factors mediating the relationship between the music and the participant in the musical experience. Hearing music automatically results in the recollection of associations within the social world: with other people, personal experiences, or collective understandings of musical status. Through this social mediation, music creates for itself a place in social, cultural, and historical contexts through communicating "delineated musical meaning".

Within this nexus of inter-sonic and delineated meanings musical practice can be considered to be distinctive amongst human actions and practices. The impact of a musical experience on a participant is defined by the interaction between their understandings of these two meanings. If they find the music to delineate positive social associations and affirm their understanding of its inter-sonic

meaning, then the experience will be involving. If, on the other hand, they find the music to delineate negative social associations and aggravate their understanding of its inter-sonic meaning, then the experience will be alienating. If musical experiences result in opposing responses to delineated and inter-sonic meanings, then they will be perceived as ambiguous (Green, 2008a).

In this sense music's distinctive nature could be considered to be inherently destabilising. The intersubjectivity of musical meaning allows it the capacity to involve, alienate, and create ambiguity. Just as it can include and celebrate, it can also exclude and offend, create tension, and emphasise division.

Throughout history, these aspects of music have been inextricably tied to the social and political milieux in which musical practices take place (Bowman, 2005b; Comte, 2012; Philpott, 2012). Different practices originate as a result of different social, political, and historical circumstances which shape and define their delineated musical meanings. Such practices become associated with exclusivity, ideology, and rigid divisions within sociocultural hierarchy. In some instances they are explicitly associated with agendas such as nationalism or the manipulation of behaviour (Philpott, 2012), whilst in others such associations are more implicit.

It is in these contexts that music is best placed to address the government's aim for a "social justice case for an academic curriculum" both successfully and distinctively. Through emphasising positive and negative associations with social, political, and historical circumstances, musical practices could challenge pupils to question the processes of social construction and power manipulation which underlie the delineation of musical meaning, and engage them in developing an understanding of the issues of exclusivity, ideology, and hierarchical division which exist throughout society. They could be encouraged to consider how to respond to such issues, and how "to act rightly, appropriately, and responsibly in circumstances that are fluid, never wholly predictable, and ever subject to change" (Bowman, 2012).

4. Achieving social justice and academic rigour: a proposed critical pedagogy

It is clear, therefore, that the educational value of music and the justification for its place in the National Curriculum could be understood through its distinctive, inherently destabilising nature. Presented as practice rather than as study, music promotes the emancipatory knowledge and reflexive habituality which is essential in an "education system with social justice at its heart".

However, in depicting music as an inherently destabilising practice rather than simply as an academically rigorous study, it is all too easy to verge towards hypocrisy and present a justification for music in the curriculum which seems highly abstract and far-removed from the daily lives of pupils and teachers. For teachers under the pressures and demands of delivering the National Curriculum in the classroom every day, presenting a justification based upon a philosophical concept rarely examined in relation to the field of music education could seem an exercise in rendering objective and abstract knowledge, decontextualised from real life.

Therefore, it must be asked how such a justification for music in the curriculum could actually impact its practical delivery in the everyday classrooms of schools across the country. Given that all local-authority-maintained schools are currently subject to meeting the demands of the National Curriculum, which emphasises music as an academically rigorous study, how might such schools be able to implement a pedagogy which presents the educational value of music through its distinctive and inherently destabilising nature?

Perhaps unexpectedly, to answer this question it is unnecessary to look any further than at the National Curriculum itself. Having evaluated the implications for social justice and academic rigour of four of the five major changes in focus and expectation in the most recent guidelines, the fifth change must now be considered in the light of what has previously been discussed.

This fifth change – an increased flexibility of implementation of the guidelines – means that, in theory, schools are able to make their own decisions about how they teach music, as long as they remain accountable to the government's expectations. This allows them the viable option of exploring how each aspect of the National Curriculum could be best exploited to demonstrate the unique nature of music. In this way, schools could ensure that the music education they provide is both academically rigorous, as highlighted by the National Curriculum itself, and socially just, as achieved by promoting reflexive habituality through musical practice.

By developing their own means of music education, schools could establish their own local curricula designed to interact with the National Curriculum, maintaining accountability whilst also fostering critical, innovative, and autonomous pedagogical approaches (Weaver-Hightower, 2008; Schmidt, 2009; Benedict & Schmidt, 2012). Such pedagogies could highlight how musical meaning is socially, politically, and historically constructed, and inseparable from the issues of exclusivity, ideology, and hierarchical division throughout society (Usher & Edwards, 1994; Abrahams, 2005; Green, 2008b; Lamb, 2010; Philpott, 2012; Spruce, 2012).

For example, instead of presenting pupils with the abstract concept of "the best in the musical canon", a critical pedagogy could be employed to encourage pupils to reflect on the complex nature of the canon: its conceptualisation as objective and abstract; the existence of multiple different canons; and the human propensity to construct them (Citron, 1990; Randel, 1992; Goehr, 2007). Having taught their pupils a basic definition of the western classical canon, teachers could ask pupils to create their own individual 'canons' based on music that they value or consider important. Over the scheme of work, the teacher and pupils could discuss how they define what should be included in their 'canons', and how they perceive musical value. A dialogical approach such as this would allow pupils to draw on their personal musical experiences and knowledge from outside the classroom: breaking down the boundaries between musical knowledge and pupils' day-to-day life; recontextualising musical practice; and inviting pupils to question social power relationships through presenting alternative views of the world (Green, 2008b). Pupils would have the opportunity to highlight their own appreciation for craft, repertory, and music criticism (Weber, 2001): their admiration of musical artists; their associations with different music or lyrics; and their understanding of the social significance of their preferred music for their friends or peers.

Through then applying these concepts to the western classical canon, pupils could develop their own understanding of how similar social constructs underpin the attribution of musical value on a much larger scale than within their personal 'canons'. Further discussion between teacher and pupils could introduce works of the western classical canon, posing questions about why it is that such works may have been afforded canonical status. In this way, such a critical pedagogy could remain accountable to the National Curriculum, whilst also encouraging pupils to draw on their own pre-existing knowledge to question the social, political, and historical contexts in which canonical musical value and meaning are constructed.

At the same time as adhering to the government's academically rigorous curriculum revisions, this manner of critical pedagogy could develop the questioning attitudes essential to achieving social justice by promoting emancipatory knowledge and reflexive habituality. Through examining the value systems and sociocultural hierarchy of their society, pupils could regain the freedom to evaluate the impact of these social constructs on their everyday lives: the freedom to learn to think for themselves, embrace the inevitability of change, and navigate through the unforeseeable future. Moreover, they could learn how music impacts and reflects the habits and actions of the everyday lives of others: the people and cultures from whose lives it originates (Goble, 2005). Pupils could gain an insight into how the inherently destabilising nature of music relates to people's habits and actions across societies, as it includes and celebrates, and excludes and offends. In this contribution to the development and awareness of reflexive habituality, the place of music within an education with "social justice at its heart" could, without question, be justified.

5,544 words

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