Whole Class Ensemble Teaching Research Report – Executive Summary

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WCET Report - Executive Summary

This is the executive summary of a research report into the Whole Class Ensemble Teaching programme in England, conducted during the academic year 2016-17, funded by Arts Council England, and administered by Music Mark, a membership organisation for Music Services and/or Lead Organisations of a Music Education Hub, their teaching and support teams, their partners and their schools.

The research was conducted in three phases:

1. A nationwide on-line survey open to all heads of Music Education Hubs (MEHs) and Music Services (MSs) to complete. This produced 89 usable responses
2. A series of semi-structured interviews with key MEH and MS leads, 24 such interviews were undertaken.
3. A series of elite interviews with experts in the field of WCET.

Key Finding A: Conceptualisations of WCET

This report identifies two main ways in which WCET is conceptualised, and subsequently operationalised. These are:

- Music starts with the instrument (MSWI)
- Music via the instrument (MVI)

These are different, and whichever is used has a significant impact on the ways on which WCET programmes are set up, and put into practice.

Key Finding B: Quality of WCET provision

What makes for quality WCET provision depends on which conceptualisation is foremost. For MSWI programmes, success is likely to include:

- Knowledge of music
- A range of improvising activities, using both the instrument and voices
- A range of composing activities, using both the instrument and voices
- A range of music listened to, including recordings made by others as well as recordings that the learners have made themselves
- Developing technical skills on the instrument with a view to deepening understandings of music via this means
- Opportunities to perform using instruments and voices in a range of styles and genres, and in a variety of venues
- Making progress on the instruments/s concerned


- A basic knowledge of notation as it is appropriate to their stage of development, possibly including, but not restricted to, staff notation
- A realisation of the long-term nature of musical learning
- Opportunities for progress and progression in whatever way/s the learners deem appropriate to them.
- There are opportunities in place for accreditation for musical attainment, both collectively and singly

Success for MVI programmes is likely to include:
- Making progress on the instruments/s concerned
- Singing activities which support musical learning
- Appropriate notation for the instrument/s concerned
- Developing technique on the instrument with a view to making good medium and longer-term progress
- A range of improvising activities, possible starting with instruments and voices
- Opportunities to perform using instruments and voices in a range of styles and genres, and in a variety of venues
- Knowledge of music
- A range of composing activities, using both the instrument and voices
- A range of music listened to, including recordings made by others as well as recordings that the learners have made themselves
- Opportunities for progress and progression in instrumental musical learning in way/s the learners deem appropriate to them
- Opportunities are in place for accreditation for musical attainment, both singly and collectively.

Key Finding C: Quality of Teaching and Learning
This report identifies that quality of teaching and learning are highly significant in WCET provision. It identifies four main aspects:

- Quality of musical curriculum
- Quality of musical activities
- Quality of musical teaching
- Quality of musical learning

All of these are significant in WCET success.

Key Finding D: WCET makes a difference
Done well, WCET makes a real difference to the lives of the children and young people involved. New horizons have opened for children and young people, schools, parents, and MEHs/MSs.
Key Finding E: Progress and Progression need defining

Arising from this WCET research, it is suggested that the music education sector must consider very carefully the words that are being used when discussing progress and progression. This report articulates this distinction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Progress</th>
<th>- to make progress, to get better at something, to have greater depth of understanding or breadth of experience</th>
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<td>B) Progression</td>
<td>- to go from WCET to a school band (etc.), then to an area band, then a music centre band, and so on. In other words to make progress as in (A) above, and then avail oneself of progression routes available via the local hub</td>
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Although interlinked, progress and progression are different, and need to be considered as such.

Key Finding F: Support from schools is vital

Good support from host schools is the most significant feature. This is vital for WCET to take root and succeed. The only common counter-indicator is lack of engagement by schools.

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