Teaching music in the early years in schools in challenging circumstances: developing student teacher competence and confidence through cycles of enactment.

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Abstract: The call to raise UK educational standards has a focus on the underachievement of pupils attending schools in challenging socioeconomic circumstances. This is exacerbated when lack of expertise in what are seen as specialist subject areas can affect teacher confidence and knowledge of teaching strategies required to engage and stretch pupils.

Research suggests that music can have a significant role in developing children's phonological awareness which then impacts on future reading ability. However, many generalist primary school teachers feel that they do not have the confidence or competence to teach music. Student teachers may, therefore, not have the opportunity to observe music teaching, or teach it, whilst on placement.

A teacher educator with interests in both English and Music carried out an action research project using predominantly discursive group and individual interviews. The aim of the project was to improve understanding of how to support student teachers in developing their confidence and competence to teach music in the early years. Undertaken as part of a partnership approach (Hope Challenge) that brings together a university Initial Teacher Education programme and urban primary schools in challenging circumstances, the project consisted of a collaborative cycle of enactment that involved a teacher educator, student teachers and a class teacher in modelling, reflecting and acting. This cycle of enactment formed an action research approach that played a crucial role in developing confidence, pedagogical knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching music in early years practice. This offers a model for future teacher professional development.

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Background

In the UK the House of Commons Education Committee report (2012, 14) stated that the impact of a good or outstanding teacher is 'both tangible and dramatic' compared with that of a mediocre or poor teacher. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows that Liverpool is the eighth most deprived district in England. Statistics show that 16 (5.4%) of Liverpool's lower super output areas (LSOAs)[1] are amongst the most deprived 1% in England; these are home to 4,300 children between 0 and 15 years of age. Furthermore, 120 of Liverpool's LSOAs (40.3%) are amongst the most deprived 10% in England. These statistics are significant because 'the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their better off peers is closing too slowly' (Ofsted 2013, 16), with these gaps being established by the time the children are five years old and continuing to be evidenced at ages 11 and 16 (EEF 2017). Children with low social and economic status (SES) are likely to be less successful in the future than children from families with greater social and economic capital (Siraj and Mayo 2014).

It is possible, however, for children with low SES to succeed against the odds. Whilst home environment appears to be the most important factor, average or better quality preschool education can 'alleviate the effects of social disadvantage' (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2011, iv). It was found that variations in the quality of teaching in schools which served the most deprived and least deprived communities, were large, and so the document argues, 'recruiting the best teachers to schools serving disadvantaged pupils is a priority' (66).

One of the key findings of Liverpool Hope University's Initial Teacher Education report from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted 2012), echoed and developed in the subsequent 2014 report, was that the teacher training at this University was one 'who takes a full part in professional school life and teaches "with moral purpose, the whole child"' (Ofsted

[1] Generated by the Office of National Statistics as a way of dividing geographical areas into small units, super output areas facilitate the collection of census data

2012, 3). On the other hand, the inspectorate had concerns about how student teachers (STs) were being prepared by their initial training to face the rigours of teaching in schools in challenging circumstances (Moore, Cronin and Pearson 2016). Inspired by the first report, and in response to the second, an initiative called 'The Hope Challenge' was devised in collaboration with Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs), local authority officers, school head teachers and Hope tutors (ibid). The aims of the project were to build confidence and resilience in STs so that they would be able to be successful in a range of schools, and to increase the number of talented graduates working in schools in challenging socioeconomic circumstances.

Typically, a partnership school in challenging circumstances would be invited to identify an area of concern for a vulnerable group of pupils; these might range from phonics to problem solving in maths, from working scientifically to supporting children with English as an additional language. In each project, our student teachers would be educated in an intervention, and would work in school with those children alongside a tutor from the university. Their emerging skills would both benefit the schools and pupils and give the students themselves a richer sense of a range of school contexts.

Music in the Primary School

It is recognised by academics and educators, that music in its various forms can have a role to play in language and reading development, a recognition that is supported by scientific evidence (Long 2008; Patel 2012; Forde Thompson and Schlaug 2015; Thomson, Leong and Goswami 2013). For example, after having had four months of music lessons which included singing, rhythm work and graphic representation, a group of four and five-year-old children showed that they could segment phonemes more fluently compared with children who had not had the same musical experiences (Gromko 2005). Verney (2013, iv) shows that 'an intervention based on rhythmic structure in either a rhythmic speech form or in musical form can be successful in improving children's phonological awareness skills'. This has implications

for early years and primary classroom practice where the affordances of music may not be fully exploited (Pitt and Arculus 2018).

Over the past four decades, and particularly since the 1978 survey of primary education in England, carried out by HMIs of Schools, there has been much discussion about the teaching of music in primary schools, and the challenges it presents (HMI 1978; Mills 1989; Bresler 1993 and 2005; Collins 2014;). More than many other curriculum subjects, music is generally perceived by teachers and STs alike as one requiring 'special skills', such as being proficient at playing a musical instrument (HMI 1978; Mills 1991; Glover and Ward 1993; Stunell 2010; Andrews 2016). Evidence suggests that STs perceive, along with serving teachers, that there is a need to have formal training in order to teach music (Hennessy 2000; Wiggins and Wiggins 2008), and that musical ability is fixed, or only given to a chosen few (Hennessy 2000; Biasutti, Hennessy and Vugt-Jansen 2014). This view is likely to be reinforced by the demands of the National Curriculum which states that children should:

- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression;
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music;
- use and understand staff and other musical notations, (DfE 2013, 197).

Currently, music is often marginalised in the primary curriculum because, as well as teachers lacking in confidence to teach it, it is held in low regard, being seen as a non-academic luxury (Bresler 1993 and 2005; Hennessy 2009; Garvis and Pendergast 2012; Collins 2014). Education in the teaching of music has often been a low priority for schools and universities (Hennessy 2000). Either because of its specialist conception or because it is simply being squeezed out of the timetable by the so-called 'core' subjects (maths and English), it is possible

to find evidence of some schools/teachers avoiding teaching it altogether (Mills 1989; Bresler 2005; Welch and Henley 2014).

The Role of the Teacher Educator in the teaching experience

It has been reported that teachers with musical qualifications have more confidence to teach music than those without (Holden and Button 2006). It should be noted, however, that formal training has also fostered negative feelings towards music, especially if that formal training has been unsuccessful, leaving STs with feelings of inadequacy. Hennessy (2000) suggests that it can be better to have no music training at all than to have tried and failed: 'Consequently, student teachers will often have arrived at a view of their own musical abilities (or lack of them) well before they arrive at university to train as primary teachers...Thus, a cycle of low expectation may risk being perpetuated' (Hennessy 2000, 184).

Research has also suggested that, crucial to the development of musical competence, confidence and positive attitudes, is the quality of the ST school experience whilst training (Hennessy 2000; Garvis 2012; Russell-Bowie 2010). In Welch and Henley's 2014 study, students were required to teach cross-curricular music in school and reported an increase in confidence to teach the subject. Kokotsaki (2012) reported that STs were likely to have richer conceptions of creativity in music if they had actually taught it. And Author ref. (2014), found that STs who had had the opportunity to teach music, rather than those who were more musically qualified, were better able to theorise about the place of music in the primary curriculum. It may be concluded, therefore, that actual teaching experience is crucial to the development of competence and confidence.

Central to the Hope Challenge approach is the practice of active modelling followed by collaborative reflection and subsequent enactment on the part of STs in order for them to teach 'ambitiously', i.e. to teach in response to the needs of the pupil using a critically minded and

responsive form of teaching (Lampert et al, 2013). There is evidence to show that if activities are modelled by a Teacher Educator (TE) they are then more likely to incorporate what has been modelled into their own planning (Lampert and Graziani 2009). Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen (2007) also explore this notion of modelling, arguing that when trainees are observing teaching in school they do not always comprehend elements of good practice when they are implicit, but that it is almost impossible for the class teacher/teacher mentor to articulate different aspects of their teaching in situ. They suggest that it is the TE's role to model pedagogical practice explicitly, giving a meta-commentary as they proceed.

Loughran and Berry (2005) examine an aspect of the teacher educator (TE) as model in greater depth. They recognise that 'explicit modelling is not as simple as saying what one is doing' (197). They argue that just as the classroom teacher may find it challenging to articulate different aspects of their teaching, so may the TE struggle between 'informing and creating opportunities to reflect and self-direct' (198). They therefore propose a model whereby a second TE acts as 'de-briefer', helping the STs to interpret and evaluate the presenter's interactions. Indeed, Averill, Anderson and Drake (2015) found that when they introduced a coaching element whereby a second TE colleague would 'debrief' the students during a lesson about the presenter's teaching decisions, it enabled the STs to identify critical moments and the quality of the learning.

In 2015, (Author 1 name) (first author, university lecturer and TE) recognised that STs at her institution were often not getting the vital experiences needed to gain confidence in their ability to teach music in primary schools. She considered it her job, therefore, to try to provide opportunities for teaching music that would help to develop not only STs' confidence and competence to teach music, but also their personal theories about the value of music in the curriculum. She therefore designed this action research project with the express intention of learning more about and addressing these issues. In particular, she wished to understand the

impact of engaging STs in experiential processes in schools, mentored by the teacher educator. This aspect has not previously been formally researched. The role of (Author 2) has been to act as a reflective partner for (Author 1). She worked alongside (Author 1) as a critical friend, furthering understandings and meaning making from both the research activity and analysis of the data, but did not take an active part in the programme.

In this paper we report on this action research project undertaken under the Hope Challenge umbrella. The aim of the research was to find out how STs might be encouraged to teach music in the early years. The moral purpose that drives Hope Challenge, to improve outcomes for student teachers teaching in challenging circumstances, underpins this research. The 'Cycle of Enactment', first described by Lampert et al. (2013) was the starting point, whereby groups of trainees observe the enactment of an instructional activity, collectively reflect on and analyse it, prepare to teach and rehearse it within the group, and then finally enact the activity within a classroom setting, reflecting on the experience afterwards as a group,. This Cycle of Enactment, when repeated, formed an action research (AR) project the aim of which was to encourage STs to have the confidence to teach music in the early years.

The Project

I[2] (insert name of author 1) had previously carried out a three-week AR project with STs in the second year of a four-year BA QTS course, in a school in a relatively prosperous area of Liverpool. This proved successful in terms of the STs' teaching and the children's responses. I now wanted to see if this could be repeated in a contrasting setting. I arranged for a second project to take place in a school with higher levels of pupil premium (an indicator of lower

[2] As the practical experience of carrying out this project belongs to (Author 1), the personal pronoun 'I' will be used when reporting her actions thoughts and activities.

socio-economic status) in a different part of the city. I invited participation from the third year of the four-year BA QTS course at Liverpool Hope University. Five STs responded and volunteered to participate. Of this group, three students had what they would describe as a musical background. Jane[3] was the most proficient, studying music as her minor pathway or specialism. Fiona had studied flute to Grade 6 (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), had a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in music, and came from a musical family. She had also undertaken some classroom music teaching since the beginning of the course. Although Simona had no formal musical education, she came from a singing background and had sung in school choirs, and whilst having a leading role on church camp. Juliet and Emma, on the other hand, had comparatively little musical experience. For Emma, music had 'never really been an interest', but for Juliet, some of her experience had been negative:

> Yes there was an opportunity to sing at a local rugby stadium but there was a selection process. I really wanted to do it but I didn't get picked. I wasn't good enough. (Juliet)

When questioned further, Juliet acknowledged that this had impacted negatively on her view of herself as a singer.

Before the project began, I developed a pack of materials for which the only musical instruments used were the singing voice and un-tuned percussion instruments, so that it was accessible to and teachable by generalist classroom teachers. Audio recordings were made of all the songs.

The first project, at three weeks, had not been long enough for the STs to observe any progress in the children's learning. I therefore extended the second programme to six weeks. I was careful to include the class teacher (CT) at every stage in the AR cycle, including the

[3] All names are pseudonyms

group reflections and individual interviewing, as the first project had revealed the valuable contribution the CT was able to make. The AR project followed three stages (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 Action Research Process here

Stage 1 (University Based Orientation) consisted of a morning spent at the university where I (TE) instructed the STs into the music course. I shared the rationale for the project and taught the STs a selection of the games and songs that I would use with the children in the afternoon. It was important for the STs to have this experience for a number of reasons, not least because it would help them to make an informed decision about which ones they felt most comfortable to teach themselves. Furthermore, without the distraction of having to learn the songs and dances themselves for the first time, they would be able to join in more confidently with the activities when they observed the lesson in the afternoon, and to focus more easily on the children's learning and on my teaching strategies. This approach accords with the findings of Hennessy (2000), who remarks that STs 'were most comfortable when they could recreate, quite accurately, an activity they had previously experienced' (192).

At the end of the morning, the proposed lesson plan was shared with the STs. This was important because the STs were largely unfamiliar with what a music lesson plan looked like, and indeed, how to write one. The lesson plan identified such things as learning objectives and success criteria and described the activities and assessment opportunities. The STs needed to know what to expect, but crucially, the lesson plan became an instrument for reflection. If I deviated subsequently from what was written, for instance, they were able to explore why such decisions had been made.

Stage 2, (Classroom Based Modelling), took place in the afternoon. The STs went into school where they observed me teaching the children in the Reception class, both as a whole class and subsequently in small groups. I taught a twenty-minute to half hour lesson with the whole class, with the STs and the class teacher observing. I then modelled the teaching of further activities with two small groups of children. I felt that modelling in this way was important, not least because I knew that I would teach the children with an enthusiasm and energy that, had I employed it in the morning workshop with the STs themselves they may have perceived it as patronising and inappropriate. In other words, I could demonstrate a lack of inhibition with the children that I wanted the STs to be able to emulate. Thus, I was 'not only the imparter of knowledge but also the model of how this knowledge is imparted' (Jeanneret 1997, 41). I hoped to do what Russell Bowie's lecturer did in communicating 'a passion, love and excitement for music' through the teaching (Russell Bowie 2013, 59).

The modelling was followed by a designated time for group questions and reflection, and the joint planning of subsequent lessons (the start of the repeating cycle that was Stage 3). In subsequent weeks, the afternoons typically assumed a similar pattern, with the STs teaching the children in small groups after a whole class modelled introduction from me. Time for reflection was always built in. This was audio recorded on an iPad with appropriate permissions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered using a multi-methods approach. Included in the data were the recordings of the post-lesson reflections in which the STs, the CT and the TE were all involved, individual interviews with each ST and the class teacher, my reflective diary, short questionnaires and a masters assignment written by one of the STs which discussed music and phonological awareness and drew on her experience of the project. This provided opportunities for triangulation; although not in the positivist sense that a multiple data source 'is superior to a

single data source' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, 197), but in order that a plurality of voices may be heard (Feldman 2007) and a richer picture be seen. I analysed the data using thematic analysis on the basis that 'meaning and experience is socially produced and reproduced' (Braun and Clarke 2006, 85) rather than residing in the individual. Codes were generated that were driven both by the data as it emerged (induction), e.g. children's musical responses; and by the literature (deduction) e.g. student musical background.

Findings

The findings are presented in a quasi-chronological way that follows the path of the action research cycle, beginning with the STs' evaluation of the preparation day, and followed by what they observed about the children's responses, which demonstrates the STs' ability to assess pupil progress, an essential part of teaching competence. Findings show how the fundamental approach to teacher education, (the cycle of enactment process depicted in figure 1) was valued by the STs. Simona remarked on the effectiveness of learning, rehearsing and enacting the activities in the different contexts (university and school).

> It was really well thought through because … having the meeting (in the university) and then you showing us everything…and then being able to just fully apply that on the day, it was almost reaching all aspects of any way you can learn – whether it's kinaesthetic or more static. (Simona)

Also included in this section is evidence of the STs' burgeoning teaching skills, and their evaluation of the post-lesson group discussions as a vehicle for reflection and the value of involving the classroom teacher.

a) Value of the modelling process

Four of the STs specifically commented on how being able to rehearse the songs and activities together (which initially they found embarrassing), before they went into school, increased their confidence. They felt that it is one thing 'making a fool' of themselves in front of children, but it was more difficult to do this in front of their peers in the session. As Emma put it, 'So, if you had…just expected us to go into school, I don't think we would have been so enthusiastic, because I personally… I would have stepped back a little bit because I'd not had that embarrassment with [the others] first.'

Jane felt the modelling time in the classroom had enabled her to get to know the children a little before she taught them: 'We needed that first week just to watch you and to settle ourselves in because we didn't know any of the children.' Jane, for whom enjoyment of music was very important, also had this to say:

> Watching you (modelling) was very useful – like how you would deliver it – like in a calm manner, and all the children would have been excited to learn and you weren't being too strict on their behaviour and if they got excited you let them – in a good way – you let them be excited and then you'd say, "OK right, we're going to start now," where … some people are very strict on children who are excited to learn. (Jane)

Watching and reflecting on the modelling enabled both Jane and Emma to recognise the value of live singing and how it was much more engaging for the children than learning by listening to CDs, for instance. Emma commented on this further: 'You kind of showed us the body language you need, you showed us the enthusiasm you need to put across when you're doing the songs.' Fiona had been surprised by how songs may be taught to young children:

> I always thought that the best way to teach was to teach the lyrics first and then get them singing. But I saw that, especially in the early years, it's better to keep singing, with them joining as and when they felt ready, which I felt was really good. (Fiona)

Juliet appreciated seeing how music could be taught to young children:

> …because I didn't really see much of that when I was in the early years, except for an outside person coming in and doing things like rhythm and movement and things like that, but not necessarily singing and the instrument side of things. (Juliet)

b) Learning through collaborative reflection

Four of the five STs found the group reflection sessions supported their learning. They found it helpful to hear about each other's interactions with the children and taught them further ways of developing their own practice:

> … we listened in on some activities that Emma and Jane had done, and that actually influenced our following session and how they'd [done] what you did, putting the instruments down, letting them have a play on the instruments. We'd had one [session] with instruments that hadn't gone as well as we'd hoped. It was trying to find time for everyone to have a go on the instruments, but hearing how well [Jane and Emma] found it worked, and how well they'd followed them, we thought, well we'll try it in our next session and it worked really well. (Fiona)

Thus, STs were able to articulate not only that they understood the value of modelling and reflection, but how they had embedded the learning from these processes into their own practice.

c) Assessment of children's responses and progress

Assessing children's progress in music is central to the teaching process (Glover and Ward, 1998) and 'it plays an important part in aiding progression because it provides the teacher with

understanding and information as a basis for matching activity or instruction to the child's needs' (62). Data demonstrates how students had used the reflection and observation element of the cycle of enactment to develop their critical and analytical skills and then used these to support pupil achievement.

Four of the five STs commented on individual children's musical progress. Sometimes the observations were relatively simple, such as noting that a child had learned the names of all the instruments used, or that a child was able to tell the difference between long and short sounds. The STs frequently attempted to interpret the children's responses, leading them to draw tentative conclusions about the quality of learning. For instance, although they worked with children in different small groups, both Simona and Jane noticed that in trying to identify whether two rhythmic patterns were the same or different, children often responded in unexpected ways:

> You said 'How do you know it's different?' and something he said was, 'It's higher.' So he wasn't necessarily commenting on the pattern, he was commenting on what he was hearing. (Simona).

> It was OK… I think they find it very confusing – some were playing tambours, some were playing tambourines, others had triangles. One little boy clapped and then they were saying 'it's different'…they were listening to the sound [timbre]. (Jane).

Again, in describing the children's responses to the 'Stand up, sit down' game, Simona recognised that it was a challenging activity for the children to direct: 'The children were confused because J wasn't playing the maracas for long enough.' She is showing the ability to interpret what wasn't working in order to adapt and improve activities. An ST with a very informal musical background, Simona was also able to make an interpretation of the responses of a child with suspected autism, identifying where the problem lay:

> Development wise, I was looking at R… in the big group activity when you were doing the difficult [more complex] clap patterns. And the absolute focus on her face as she was trying… she did struggle a bit with it... It was just the (clap clap clap-clap clap)...then she would get it, and then she would fall out of rhythm almost; she forgot to keep thinking. (Simona)

Three of the STs also noted the way in which children spontaneously added extra challenge to the 'What am I playing?' game by playing the instruments in such a way as to disguise the identity of the instrument, or by playing more than one instrument. Thus they recognised that it is not only important for them as teachers to heighten the difficulty of an activity, but also to allow the children the space to explore and develop games themselves, which demonstrates their understanding and capabilities.

It should also be noted that when discussing and reflecting on the responses of the children, the most frequent reference made by the STs and the CT was to the level of engagement and enjoyment that the children had displayed both in the whole class and group sessions. This was a constant theme across all interviews and post-lesson reflections.

d) Developing adaptive skills for ambitious teaching

Glover and Ward (1998) argue that an important stage in the process of assessment is to make use of conclusions to inform future planning. There was evidence that the STs made use of their assessments to adapt activities to the children's needs and interests. Juliet and Fiona made a particularly detailed study of one child in their group who found it difficult to respond verbally to questions, yet would sing short phrases on her own (You can't see), and move in time with certain songs. These two STs experimented to find ways to make an activity accessible for her:

> [H is] improving. Initially, she wasn't responding verbally to questions and we had to try and find a way of giving her a response she could… We tried two thumbs up or one thumb up which didn't work. So we tried shaking the head. So if it's the same, nod your head – different, shake your head. Things like that. So she shook her head instead of verbally responding. But then she did respond verbally not long after that. (Juliet)

All the STs reported adding extra challenge to the activities. Emma and Jane, for example, got the children to disguise their voices for the 'blindfold game'; and Fiona and Juliet had the children guessing two instruments rather than just the one in 'What am I playing?'

The STs also saw the benefits of encouraging the children to take the lead in activities. For instance, as soon as Emma and Jane invited one child to conduct the instruments of the 'orchestra game', they found that the game itself gained in popularity with the children because they all wanted to take on the conducting role.

In addition to adapting material, Emma and Jane had the confidence to add elements of their own. Feeling that it was really important for the children to learn the names of the instruments, they took every opportunity to rehearse and revise these. The STs' developing abilities to assess the children's progress and adapt activities accordingly are evidence of their growing competence to teach music in the early years.

The impact of Class Teacher support

The involvement of the class teacher (CT) in the reflective sessions supported the development of the student teachers. First of all, she set the scene, focusing on the children and their responses:

> There were two children in that group – there was M and he's a very shy boy, he's one of the youngest children…Then you've got the likes of T. She's very, very confident, she's very able…. But they were very engaged, so that's where your differentiation would come in, and I think that was well done as well.' (CT Focus group interview 1)

Secondly, during the reflective sessions, she gave the STs a context for the children's progress. Here, she and Juliet talk about another particularly shy child:

> Juliet: Yes, H sang back, it wasn't – she didn't always respond in a verbal way to questions and that, but by the end of it, in the 'You can't see', she did respond; she did (sing) 'Yes, I do.'
>
> CT: Yes, because when we did 'Hot Potato', she wouldn't answer and the clapping and that she couldn't say – she wouldn't say, though she knew. And then she developed her confidence to actually sing, which was really, really good. And I thought the most interesting thing was J –He did the blindfold [musical game]…And he was actually able to go over and touch the person that had sung. So that was amazing.

Thirdly, she affirmed the students in their teaching. Here, she commends Emma on her behaviour management:

> …the behaviour management …was really good. You know, C was waving her hand in your face all the time and you were really good saying to her, 'You know you don't need to do that, I can see that – even though you're sat next to me.' She was just being really enthusiastic and then you were good as well stemming T's enthusiasm.

Lastly, she was also able to give advice about teaching strategies:

> I mean, with very young children, you have to be sort of larger than life. Like a performer and snappy with the pace and, if something's not going to work, just change tack or move on, or 'What is it that you like? OK, let's do that then.

Engaging the CT in the cycle of enactment offered the STs valuable opportunities for feedback and interpretation of individual children's responses and further built their confidence to create lively and challenging music lessons with the children.

Impact of the project on the Class Teacher's practice

An unexpected outcome from the project was the impact on the class teacher, who acknowledged that music had not regularly been part of the children's experience.

> And I think people are kind of pulling away from it because [if] you're not a musical expert, you feel like you can't deliver it. And watching this being done as well, the classroom assistant and I were saying, 'Right, that's it. We're going to pencil it in and we're going to do this session every week.' Which we wholeheartedly intend to do. Because the children enjoyed it so much. And we've enjoyed it. And sometimes it re-inspires you doesn't it, it gives you a bit more like, 'Ooh, I can do that!' (CT)

The CT did indeed continue with the music and invited me to her class assembly later that year where the children performed a range of musical items.

Discussion

Returning to the research question 'How may we encourage student teachers to teach music in the early years?', the findings demonstrate that the STs felt that their confidence and competence to teach music had developed through the project. These elements are now discussed alongside what appeared to contribute to the success of the programme for these STs, and its limitations.

In describing teaching they had previously seen undertaken by music specialists in schools on placement, even though what they had seen had been effective, there was an underlying feeling that STs believed that they could not emulate what they saw. This may have been because, as Hennessey (2000) suggests, they perceived the specialist as having gifts and talents to which they could not aspire. There did not seem to be this barrier when they observed their own university TE modelling practice, even though I was no more the children's normal class teacher than the music specialist. Although this was never said, the fact that I am not a music specialist at the university may also have been a positive aspect of the modelling. I was certainly careful to strip myself of any advantages, such as playing a tuned instrument, in order to make the teaching as accessible as possible. This was noted by the CT, who, like the students, felt enabled through seeing music being taught using singing voice, body percussion and un-tuned instruments only, to build it into her curriculum.

I had hoped also that the STs would be able to question and critique my practice in order to develop their understanding further. In adopting a teacher role, I made myself vulnerable, but I felt that my being prepared to take the risk of teaching in front of the STs and not only to receive feedback, but also to be openly self-critical where it was appropriate, helped me to 'disintegrate the boundaries between the knower and the known' (Vicars 2007, 104). I became a 'fellow learner who was willing to risk a comment just as [the STs] were expected to do' (Malone 2003, 806). This was only partially successful, however, certainly to begin with. When I invited critique after the first session, Simona took me at my word, saying that she thought one of the songs had been sung too fast. However, Emma quickly expressed surprise at how well the children had sung considering how new it was to them, and I wondered if she felt uncomfortable about giving me anything but positive feedback: 'I think she may have been a bit embarrassed by Simona's implied criticism' (TE's Reflective Diary 26.01.16). Further,

when I pointed out a mistake I had made in the whole class input that day, intending to model honest reflection on action, again, Emma was keen to be consoling:

> Sometimes I think it's nice to – I know you did it by accident, but… some of them realised and they said, 'Miss you did it wrong' and I think it's nice to actually do that on purpose sometimes so they recognise it. (Emma)

It may be that some STs have heightened sensibilities where feedback is concerned, knowing how destructive potentially negative feedback can feel, and therefore being unwilling to give it, so more work needs to be done to build a culture of questioning and honest reflection.

This study drew on the expertise and findings of other researchers in the field (Barrett 1994; Kokotsaki 2012; Biasutti et al. 2014; Collins 2014; Welch and Henley 2014; James 2016). The insistence on the part of these researchers on practical experience is universal. However, the nature of that experience differs widely from study to study. For instance, James (2016) aimed to develop her STs' competence to play a tuned classroom instrument; and Barrett (1994), Russell-Bowie (2012) and Biasutti and her colleagues (2014) provided their STs with a course of classroom-based music making experiences. On the other hand, for Welch and Henley (2014), it was most important not only for the STs to have a level of competence gained in the university workshops, but that they should then teach real children in a real classroom in order to improve their confidence. I, too, saw it as vital that the STs had experience in teaching (Kokotsaki 2012). As Juliet put it, 'You're always going to experience more doing it yourself. And that's what I found.' The difference between this action research study and many of those above is that not only did the STs acquire new skills, but their supported immersion in practice enabled them to navigate the uncertain waters of the classroom. Significant also may be the power of the children's positive responses to the activities which was frequently noted by the students in the post-lesson reflections. Hennessey argues that the

response, or feedback, of the children is 'often the most immediate and effective factor in motivating the student (teachers) to progress' (Hennessey 2000, 193). This would certainly not be possible to obtain without classroom experience.

A key component for this action research study was the embedding of reflection within practice throughout the project. As Hatcher and Bringle (1997) argue, when STs reflect on their experiences in school, assumptions may be challenged, and new frameworks and perceptions built through which future action may be influenced. Our reflections in the current research were joint, and took an oral rather than a written form; nevertheless, the effect appears to be similar. STs interpreted the children's responses and, in doing so, challenged their previous assumptions; discussed such things as behaviour management; and built on each other's ideas for future lessons.

What did appear to be significant was that the STs felt that they had a relationship with me through the shared enquiry that had given them confidence to engage in critical reflection and enactment. This was a relationship they might not have at first with the CT with whom they were going to work in school. This relationship, started at the initial stage of orientation at the university, carried through into the school. It supported the STs in both their reflection and acting on their learning from that reflection.

In this study, the STs were all predisposed to have positive attitudes to teaching music, since they had each volunteered for the project. Most of them, too, had musical backgrounds, which made it likely that they had a personal biography that was conducive in taking on the challenge (Russell-Bowie 2010; Wiggins and Wiggins 2008). Should the project be repeated with STs that might be more reluctant, or less enthused about the possibility, the modelling and materials would need to be adapted, but given the power of the action research process to develop self-and collective learning, that would remain the same.

Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented here suggests that this study was successful in achieving its aim to develop the confidence and competence of STs to teach music in the early years. A strength of the study was the design of the training. The action research cycle both supported and challenged STs to become critically reflective as the basis for developing not only confidence, but ambition in their teaching practice.

Hallam and Creech (2010) call for a partnership between school and university that goes beyond a simple placement, in order for students' teacher education to be really meaningful. Through participation in this action research, STs' music teaching skills were scaffolded and extended through a reflective approach under the supervision of the TE and CT in such a way as to maximise the opportunities to try out new and potentially challenging ideas and activities. Furthermore, this study showed how action research based approaches to teacher education, that take place during the school day in primary school classrooms, may benefit the CT as well as the STs. Participating in CPD that is focused on knowledge areas that teachers feel less confidence to teach can engender anxiety or resistance. Yet involvement such as this where the teacher is observing and contributing to the training of others with the teacher's own class could be a very powerful model. In traditional models of CPD, teachers are often the passive consumers of received wisdom.

The Hope Challenge project described above demonstrates how an action research approach, whereby those who participate become active in their own learning; harnessing their own particular skills and areas of expertise to enjoy new self-efficacy in subjects where they had previously lacked confidence, can contribute to building ambitious teaching.

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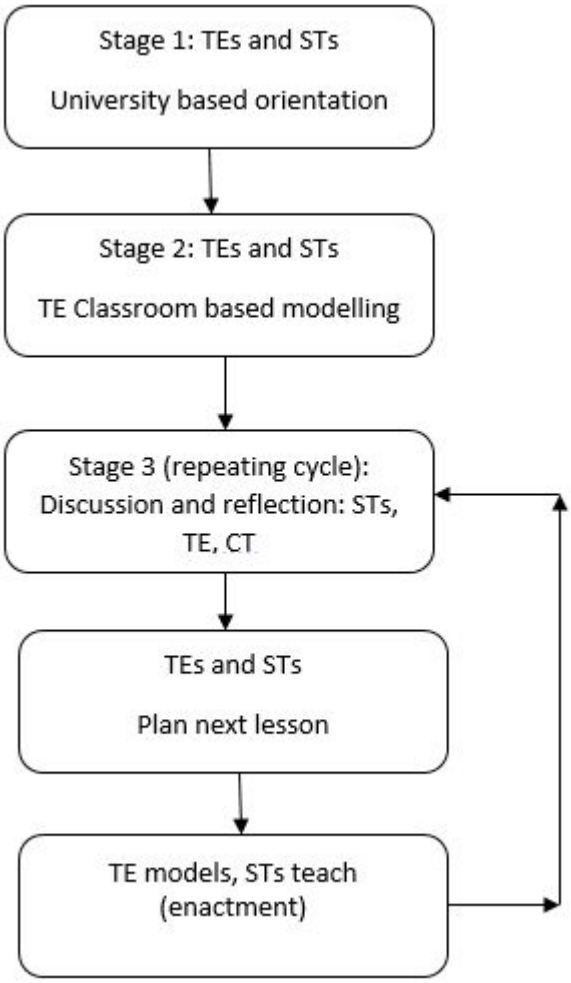

Figure 1 Action Research Process