

Comparing Pedagogical Practices of Music Teachers in Group and Individual Lessons for Primary Students

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Keywords: Kodály, Orff, Pedagogical practices

Abstract: This article describes the pedagogical practices employed by music teachers when instructing primary students in class and individual settings. When delivering effective Kodály and Orff methods, music teachers should create an integrated environment, believe pupils as musicians, keep learning new knowledge and teaching skills, and become a reflective practitioner. The differences of operating practices in whole class and individual sessions are identified as follows: group social dynamics vs. focusing on more efficient learning in individual classes; differentiated teaching or instructions for the groups vs. tailored objectives for one-to-one teaching; and different assessment methods.

1. Introduction

In England, there is a national curriculum for music education at all key stages 1-4 that expects all children to have music classes. The aims of the national curriculum in primary music study are to ensure that all pupils learn an instrument, sing, create music, and develop foundational musical literacy. Pupils may become interested in music study beyond classroom which can include one to one individual lessons. This phenomenon has drawn more attentions from researchers to investigate the contemporary context of both whole class and individual lessons ([9] McPhail, 2013; [2] Folkestad, 2006, [3] Gaunt, 2007). The whole class session is characterized as free of charge, limited room space and one teacher to cope with a lot of pupils while individual session is based on one-to-one, higher tuition and more focused and intensive learning process. There are two famous music educators from the 20th century who developed distinctive pedagogical approaches. Primary school children who have experiences with these classes will be better find their route in an immersive music world. Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) is a Hungarian composer that created the Kodály method after his name called Kodály. And Carl Orff (1895-1982) is a German composer that created the Orff method of after his name. Both methods can be applied in primary school class as they are friendly with beginners and make children feel interested in music. The way these pedagogical approaches nurture creativity in music which is attractive to many music teachers. This article will compare the operating practices when music teachers are teaching instrument in primary schools in group class and in studio individual lessons. While both individual and group lessons prioritize a supportive learning environment, the development of new skills and the teacher's reflective practice, there are key differences in teaching approaches related to social dynamics, teaching strategies and assessment methods. It is observed that the role of music teachers is very important that will impact on music learning outcomes for pupils. The two pedagogical practices-Suzuki and Orff will be used to further

address the importance of creating an interesting and integrated class for children.

2. The similarities of operating practices of music teachers in whole class and individual sessions

Learning musical instrument can provide the opportunities for primary school students to feel a sense of enjoyment and achievement after they realise the beautiful sound came out through their instrument. However, this might be their first time to access to an instrument and everything is interesting. [13] Model Music Curriculum (2021) introduces that MMC is a complementary for National Plan Music Education and it is intended to provide a guidance for music teachers of primary school in England. The entire class can learn one instrument or on different instruments to make a whole class ensemble and during this process, pupils are also doing activities such as playing music games, singing and composing. MMC specifies the learning time and resources that shall support pupils in all ages. One-to-one sessions are particularly focused on extensive training for specific skills, and in the meanwhile, the relationship between teacher and student is closer. Since playing a musical instrument is based on listening, sight-reading, rhythm, and singing, it is good practice for teachers to help students lay a strong foundation before they start to play. The Kodály and Orff pedagogies are applicable for music teachers who teach music to whole class and groups in primary schools, as well as to those who teach one-to-one class in a studio. These pedagogies enable classroom teachers to promote inclusive and inspiring environment to support their students as good practices.

The Kodály approach tries to the fullest extent possible to inspire children to develop fundamentals such as pulse, listening, singing and creating. The recognition system of children is constructed by using gesture movements (Fig.1). Through the mother-tongue folk songs can better enable children experience the music heritage and encourage their music literacy to read and write about the vocabulary of music. Even no background for instrumental techniques is required from the beginning, children are gradually trained in terms of rhythm, listening and tunes which will lay the foundation of instrument learning in the future. While folk music was a cornerstone of Kodály, its core principles can be adapted to modern classes. According to [1] Cary (2012), there are three tools in Kodály approach: (1) Tonic sol fa. In the natural syllables, dol is the tonic in major keys while la is the tonic for all minor keys. Children can make louder claps or stamp their feet when they hearing or watching these notes. (2) Hand signs. Each syllable (note) is represented by a unique hand sign as shown in the picture below. Children can sing according to each gesture of the music teacher, and in the meanwhile, they can imitate from teacher.

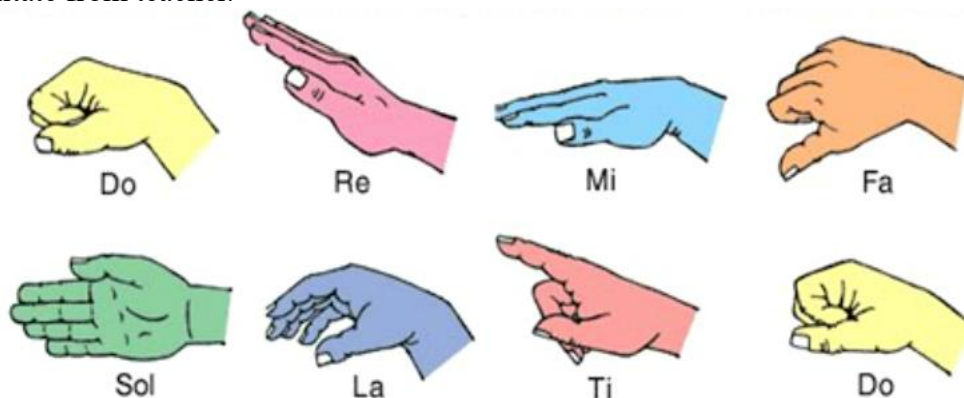


Figure 1: Kodály musical hand signs

Hand signs are effective to provide a physical placement for vocal pitch, and the gestures can be imitated easily by children.

3. Rhythm duration syllables

As for elementary school children, they are not mature enough in distinguish the variety of rhythm. For better understanding, teachers can apply with simple voicing pattern such as Ta, Titi, Too, tika-tika and etc. (Fig.2) under the rhythm.

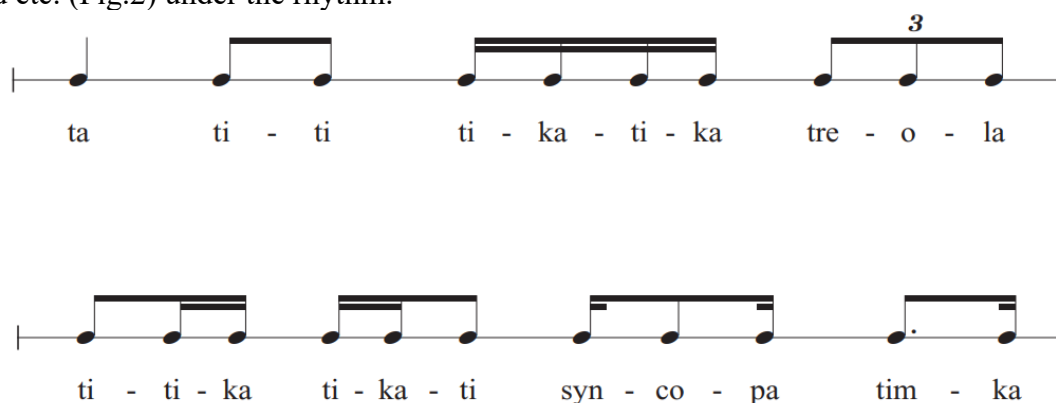


Figure 2: Kodály rhythm syllable

However, after fluency in singing songs and basic movement games, pupils are empowered to improve their critical thinking to develop music literacy skills. This is a long way to go and requires teachers to provide some guidance on the elements being studied such as concept of new notations, characteristics and new melodic patterns. It is important for children to do improvisation and composition because these processes are constituted from integrated skills, on the other hand, they are good ways to show their creativity. Pupils are improvising rhythm patterns of 4 or 8 beats by clapping and speaking the voicing syllables, and then they can improvise melody by singing and hand signs.

As for lesson planning for elementary school children who already had experience in music activities in kindergarten, the objectives of Kodály approach are developing students' knowledge of repertoire, performance skills and critical thinkings ([5] Houlahan & Tacka, 2015). Some good practices shall be considered by music teachers: (1) warm-up exercises as singing a familiar song or playing a game which let children feel engaged and interesting in the body movement; (2) Introduce and demonstrate the new knowledge of the upcoming repertoire in background, rhythm, tunes and composer's intention; (3) Creative expressions of understanding and applying to improvise and compose. And there is a closure loop for music teachers which is to review the performance of pupils and take notes on the reflective diary.

The Orff approach explores ways to use classroom percussions and other instruments to support an inclusive learning which are social, emotional, cognitive and physical for primary school children. The objectives of Orff approach are: Every music is a mixture of language, movement and dancing that students shall involve as a performer ([14] Okeyo, Shitandi, and Kanake, 2022); Students are gradually learning from simple rhythmic pattern in one word to more complex phrase and period, to stimulate imagination through the feeling of music by drawing, creating movements, or imitating tunes. The teaching principles of Orff lie in focusing on rhythm, playing percussions, improvising performance, music games and involvement as enjoy. And it is widely believed that children who play music games regularly will become more comfortable with music elements due to the improved cognitive feeling come from the rhythmic reciting and change of speed. Participants in the music games that play with different instruments could get hands-on experience in making their own music improvisation. The percussions can be triangle, small cymbals, sand hammers, drums, timbrels and

xylophones. [17] Zhang and Mansor Bin Abu Talib (2023) examined the effectiveness of Orff pedagogy that instructed on primary school children in social emotional competence. Precisely, children who join more in Orff-approached classes are likely to have better motion regulation, empathy, social skills and self-expression. The perceptions of different emotions in melodies will better help them to constitute the conceptualization of the consonant or dissonant music. The primary school children are encouraged to express their feelings without any interventions from teachers, thus they are likely to behave more confidently and share their opinions with others. The Orff pedagogy is focused on children's games such as cup crash gaming and dancing with different speed, strength and beat are considered as good trainings on both listening and sensitivity of rhythm.

In order to gain the insight of effective teaching, the good practices required to improve pupil engagement are identified below:

4. To Create an Integrated Environment

As the Whole Class Instrumental Teaching (WCIT) will instruct the pupils to learn one or one family-rooted instrument at a time, an integrated approach by music teachers is considered to enhance music skills, interests and understandings of pupils. Many researchers are revealing the importance for music teachers to lead integrated experiences. [8] Matthews (2011) describes the natural experiences which integrate listening, performing and composing and require a meaningful classroom in a broader context even with experiences of music outside of school. And [12] Mills (2005) believes the music education is an integrated experience. Music education for primary school is designed to let pupils feel the beauty of the life, and engage with a range of musical activities to boost their interest and potential talents. Children will understand music as a creative language that they can write, understand or speak with listening, reading playing notes, and singing in tunes, thus it is an integrated academic skill for everyone study as a lifelong objective. To create an integrated environment is better to apply Kodály and Orff approach in whole class and individual session. Teachers try to plan for lessons in considerations of developing the skills such as listening, movement reflections, singing, sight-reading, and improvising. Although there is not much group cooperation in individual sessions, the music teacher can still make the one-to-one class more interesting and interactive by exchanging roles with the student, allowing them to give instructions to each other. Furthermore, teachers in on one-to-one sessions can act as peer students, sharing ideas and performance, and guiding questions to inspire the communications and expressions in pupils.

5. Believe in pupils as musicians

For the purpose of deep immersions and believe as a musician, it is necessary for music teachers to develop technical skills through authentic musical experiences to support musical thinking of pupils. Teachers show their belief that each student is a musician can give students confidence to overcome the difficulties when they are doing music related activities. The self-imagination as a musician can lead students to think about questions such as what shall I do now since I am a musician. [7] Kooistra (2015) examines the self-belief as obtaining musicianship can be realized though a designed music environment as the expanding boundaries of room, creating pretend context and make the music class lively. Although Kooistra carried a test on her own student in examining the nature of engagement in individual piano lesson through descriptive and reflective communications in the video, however, the evaluation of individual lesson effect can be complex as the data collection in Kooistra is very limited and the only participant that she examined is the one she is very familiar with thus the guidance and reflection might be biased. To believe pupils as musicians can be a good point to stimulate thinking and understanding, while the plan for the class shall be well designed in advance and this put forward a higher requirement for music teachers to make a closed-loop management from

design class, engagement of students in class, and make assessment for the activities. Teachers design the Kodály or Orff games to train rhythm and movement, and the students can improvise with critical thinking. Peer students can share their work to each other, and the good criteria summary will encourage students to feel a sense of honour. The encouragement from teachers can be done through the game process especially for those pupils who are shy and fear of mistakes. In one-to-one sessions, the relationship between the pupil and the instrument teacher is closer, potentially providing more opportunities for detailed reflection-in-action between both parties. Encouragement is very essential in helping students develop an interpretation of music and become confident in the learning process. This self-efficacy, in turn, enables pupils to generate positive psychological reactions to overcome difficulties in learning an instrument.

6. Keep learning new knowledge and teaching skills

However, in order to provide a high-quality class, even music teachers who have successfully obtained a postgraduate degree including PGCE or who have passed a music exam with distinction will need to improve their teaching skills with further trainings and educations. There are variety of short-term courses that can meet different learning purposes, such as professional institutions that provide teacher training and social networking. The membership of British Kodály Academy and Orff institution can be taught with highly effective teaching skills, advice for working with children of all ages and a supportive community of teachers that to join many events. CPD plans from ABRSM is calling all music teachers come to the teaching hub to share resources, experiences and knowledge. Both group lesson teachers and individual teachers can choose from a wide range of online and in-person from British Kodály Academy and Orff institution to meet different requirement.

7. Become a reflective practitioner

Teaching and learning are considered as a mutual process. With the development of music forms that received by pupils via smartphones and I-pads, it seems that pupils have their own understandings about music. There is a good practice for teachers to review their teaching experiences as evolving with students' demands for music class in higher quality. According to [15] Schön's (1987) model of reflection for reflective practitioners, the 1st level is knowing-in-action which means the skilled physical actions applied by music teachers may be unconsciously teaching methods or knowledge. Apparently different from the first level, the second level is reflection-in-action which means the professional teachers are consciously thinking about their actions when they are in the teaching process. In this phase, teachers may ask themselves such as: Do I make sense to those pupils who are not good at score reading at the moment? Is this class interesting and stimulating for pupils? The third level is ongoing iterations of reflection that may raise reflections on personal development or previous experience such as: Did this plan need modifications since some pupils were already good at improvisation? How can I modify the teaching practices to further improve the engagement? The reflective diaries or journals are essential to keep a record of thoughts and events which teachers can analyze the different situations. As for music teachers that apply Kodály or Orff approach in class, for the long-term objective, they should behave as professional to stand at third level. Plan the interesting and integrated class in the meanwhile to train students effectively. After class, they should think about whether there are some improvements can be made in the next time.

The differences of operating practices in whole class and individual sessions are identified as below:

8. Group social dynamics vs. Focusing on more efficient learning in individual class

As for a group teaching process of WCIT, children are studying at the same time together in the same space, and social interactions occur as they are watching the performance of each other, and peer evaluations and criticism are made during their class. This is a teamworking project when pupils are learning for same repertoires and are going to make the performance as a group. The WCIT has its advantages in cumulating honour of unity, and promoting communications. While the disadvantages are obvious since the teacher cannot keep a close eye on progress of individuals and even worse the one who is left behind in the class might feel depressed and lose confidence. Although personalization seems to be difficult to achieve in the whole class learning context, the music teachers can still lead to different learning experiences through the designed lessons. Teachers shall be open to the experiences and feelings that pupils bring out of school, and in order to keep an inclusive music classroom, teachers need to think carefully about potential barriers and unexpected changes in the learning process. WCIT class can be interesting with more collective interactions, while one-to-one class is more focused on efficient practice and in this process the pupils are more likely to concentrate on learning technical skills such as rhythm, listening and sight-reading. Teachers are teaching only one child in the specific time, and this process is believed to be more efficient in trainings than collective class. Both Kodály and Orff class are full of group activities that call for everyone to share ideas, engagement, and cooperations while there might occur whisper and chatting, distracted mind. In order to cope these potential problems, teachers have to keep pupils engaged and feel interesting with the content, and in the meanwhile to monitor their reflection.

9. Differentiated teaching or instructions for the group vs. Tailored objectives for one-to-one teaching

In a Kodály classroom, pupils follow clear and sequential instructions, progressing from simple to complex levels to train sight-singing and keen pitch discrimination. At higher levels, this leads to music literacy. However, each student may have a different learning pace, with some understanding quickly while others do not. Additionally, some students are good at singing while others may not be. Since one class is limited in time, thus teachers may think about dividing pupils into groups into different levels of objectives and outcomes. Orff class is more flexible, and it is cognitive to stimulate imagination. Teachers can bring many songs for students to meet different understanding levels of pupils thus guide students to use different instruments to play and have fun. However, their background experiences and musical abilities may vary, therefore music teachers in WCIT should organize activities that consider different levels and situations of pupils including those with special educational needs (like OCD and dyslexia). Normally, one-to-one instrument tuition starts from early school ages ([6] Jackson, 1980; [4] Griffiths, 2004). There is a very detailed and focused communication channel in one-to-one tuition, and this kind of parental-alike relationship provides opportunities in guiding, nurturing and moulding. And that is why parents are willing to pay extra tuition fee to get the customized learning. However, this relationship sometimes stems from teachers' preferences to either get closer to or keep some distance from students. Students taking one-to-one tuition are more likely listen to and follow what teachers say because they believe teachers are always right as authorities. Given this circumstance, the goal setting template, which involves encouraging critical thinking, is necessary for individual teachers to implement. For individual classes that apply Orff and Kodály methods, the teacher can focus on training some specific skills that pupils struggle with, saving time compared to teaching in whole classroom setting. There is debate about the most effective way to improve the effectiveness of individual lessons. Proper gestural scaffolding approach could better help students to conceptualize the keyboard skills. ([16] Simones et al., 2014, [10] McNeill, 2007). To be specific, the different body movement and gestures when teachers are applying

in the class has been considered as non-verbal behaviours. Since the teacher can better observe the learning state of each individual student, encourage the creativity in playing the instrument, and respond to specific needs, being responsible and fostering mutual trust are crucial for maintaining a long-term relationship. However, keeping this long-term relationship can be challenging because teachers may face long working hours and emotional demands from students who rely too heavily on them.

10. Different assessment methods

After trainings in Kodály and Orff methods, some form of assessment should be conducted in class. In a school setting, learning assessments typically fall into categories such as questioning, feedback, or peer evaluations. For questions designed by music teachers, pupils are encouraged to express their feelings, opinions and emotions, as these responses are used to check their understanding and review their expressions. Feedback activities can be undertaken as pupils are required to complete a few basic activities such as playing a single note in their instrument, singing with a song and so on. Another important assessment in WCIT is peer assessment which involves pupils acting as teachers to apply marking criteria to others' performance. As for individual session, music teacher can evaluate the skills of pupils. Moreover, pupils can be assessed through competitions on their instrument or by taking exams evaluated by external examiners. If they struggle to keep a stable rhythm, pitch or distinguish notes, the individual teacher may provide specific trainings to address these issues. Overall, assessment is an effective way to review learning outcomes of pupils, and it also allows music teachers to reflect on their own teaching skills.

11. Conclusions

As pupils are involved with a more integrated environment which include singing, composing, improvising and playing with music, this in turn require higher quality class organized by music teachers. Overall, both Kodály and Orff take into account the whole dimensions of music trainings in listening, singing, rhythm and improvisation. With the aim to create an interesting class that are enjoyed by pupils, games are introduced, and pleasure feelings are considered. Both approaches are widely used in UK that bring inspirations and enlightenment for primary school children. However, there are some differences between them. Kodály approach normally rely on singing while using different hand signs, but for Orff, children are playing different percussion instruments for accompany. Kodály focused more in sight-reading and has a more sequential plan while Orff is more flexible in improvisation. By combining instrumental performances with individual reflection and attention to aesthetic growth, music teachers may develop an expressive student musicians and lifelong learners ([11] Miles and Blocher, 2007). As for teachers themselves, a long-term learning is necessary to keep updated knowledge and teaching skills. A good teacher shall become a reflective practitioner to keep students be curios with music learning and enjoy the process. All music educators are supported with appropriate skills development and resources in order to provide a creative class that are appreciated by pupils. Music learning and teaching is a mutual process, and it is a lifelong journey for both pupils and teachers.

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