ED 800 Unit 6 Assignment and Final Exam

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As a music teacher, technology has always featured strongly in my teaching, however without a doubt this has changed and developed over the years, both in terms of the technology used in the classroom, my teaching style, resources and specific music technology. Therefore I have chosen to answer question B for the final of ED800 to analyse my practice through the reflection of this class and enquiry. As a UK trained teacher my role as a music teacher is very different to the USA. I teach 'classroom music', in short music theory, appreciation and general performance and composition skills, my teaching does not focus on instrument specific techniques, although clearly these are taught when the need arises. Music technology therefore is an effective way of exploring music (particularly composition and performance) without the need for instrumental ability.

Personally I am a technology 'junkie', and have always been an 'explorer, I like to try out new things and learn from my mistakes and am definitely not one to read the manual! In terms of my music technology 'training' I am mainly self-taught. I briefly studied music technology during my degree and have had the opportunity to work with knowledgeable colleagues, the rest has come from exploration, which means I generally learn in the same way as my students. I love new gadgets, the internet, social media and overall, the instant access of the digital age, with the world at my fingertips. I have friends and family on the other side of the world I can message daily, video chat the latest updates, share and 'see' their daily events through photographs and video. In music we have literally opened up a world of music to everybody. I can instantly access videos from around the world and show students what the performance conditions are like in Africa. I can 'invite' a Ravi Shankar into the classroom to explain the concept of Indian Rag and show world class performances at the touch of a button. Clearly none of this can, and should, replace live performance, however it now brings the possibility to areas we would have struggled to have access, particularly useful when working in the rural countryside or in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean as I have in my last two teaching posts.

In the nine years I have been teaching both subject specific and general teaching have changed with the development of technology. Exam specification in music have changed to allow 'technology' instead of instrumental performances, impacting the level of technology which students are expected to know at lower levels/grades. Technology has moved from an add-on, or additional, to compulsory, and music technology labs from a novelty to an expectation. Whilst music technology software and hardware are still a niche market, students can now produce quality recordings using smart phones and tablets (many of which students already have) with no need for extra software. My teaching of music technology has moved from teaching students who knew nothing about the process almost 10 years ago to students who have already had informal experience, whether that be recording their own music and band using apps such as GarageBand, creating loops with free DJ software or exploring recording themselves using free open source software such as Audacity or as part of video editing software. Through these developments therefore my teaching has moved from simply teaching students how to record and shifted to exploring with students how to create 'good recordings' and

the editing process, something many students have yet to explore. Students are used to instant gratification; they record sound or video and instantly upload to Soundcloud, YouTube or social media. Therefore my whole approach to music technology has had to change to match this. More generally my teaching style has also changed, moving from a mix of written and performance activities with the aid of a blackboard/ whiteboard and occasional projector with customary PowerPoint to iPads, interactive whiteboards, Apple TVs, the ability to beam video and sound to a number of rooms from a variety of devices all the way through to interactive QR codes and displays featuring augmented reality. There is a need to keep 'students engaged', activities to be short and have overall high impact. Even in terms of admin systems developments have been made over the short time frame; online registers and monitoring systems, learning platforms and more. I for one have always 'tried' to embrace changes and developments, but with each new development there is clearly a learning curve and exploration before new ideas and techniques can be put in place.

There have been a number of key moments which have impacted my realisation of the level of impact technology has on teaching. Recently a colleague offered to run an informal session exploring how he was beginning to incorporate augmented reality into his lessons. A few years previously I had explored the use of QR codes embedded within printed resources as a way of embedding audio and video into projects for when students wanted access to them. For example on a score for performance I would include a QR code which when scanned linked to a YouTube video of a professional performance of the same piece. Students could them use this is a number of different ways, from listening to the performance and following with the score to rehearsing with the performance as a backing track. To me this capability was mind blowing, I could literally bring music, displays and posters to life. At this time students were just beginning to have access to smart phones, however network access became an issue and few students were able to use the interactive content, it seemed I was too far ahead of the times! This was a shock to me in some ways, I discovered that I had moved ahead with technology in a way I thought the students would be excited in, without stopping to ask the students themselves. During the session ran by my colleague into augmented reality I was reminded of the excitement I had first come away with for QR codes. The concept was initially the same, except instead of using a 'barcode' for students to scan we could now use any 'unique' image as the trigger. This time however my school environment is further along to embrace the technology. Students use IPads, IPods, smart phones and tablets on a daily basis on the school network and we have a one-to-one laptop/tablet programme. Network access was no longer an issue and students (through the trailblazing path of my colleague) already used to scanning images to find out 'what it did'. I describe this moment for a number of reasons, firstly the application of this technology in the performing arts is incredible, and as anything can be layered over the trigger, options are literally endless, secondly it serves as a reminder to me that there needs to be a significant exploration of technology before it can be put in place, if the user is not intrigued or engaged to interact with the content then it will not be used, thirdly the provision and infrastructure must be in place for the use of technology to ensure its successful implementation.

More generally the development of web 2.0 technology over the internet has shifted the internet from a place of information to one of interaction, dialogue and investigation. I now routinely use the internet to discuss styles of music, create shared workspaces and develop interaction globally. About

9 months ago I stumbled across a use of web 2.0 technology I had not seen before, a developer had created a web based music sequencing program which incorporated a social media type platform. This allowed users to record tracks in layers like a standard sequencer but collaborate with users globally to create their music. For instance a user in the USA could lay down a guitar track, before opening up to the forum for a drummer to add their line, which is seen and recorded by a user in Australia, who then finds a vocalist in China. This was even taken once stage further by allowing users to watch and listen in realtime to their work across the globe, allowing students within the classroom environment to potentially learn from professionals (who use the site for recreational use) around the world in terms of recording techniques, mixing, performance and more. Clearly with the development of these types of interaction the scope is endless, and with user involved in a project there is also a continual need and demand for development. Whilst I have my concerns about the open use of social media type platforms in the classroom it opens many doors to new experiences for our students.

I am excited at the possibilities and prospects which are becoming possible and have found the resources through this unit, and particularly the PBS video *Digital Nation*, fascinating. Personally I can make connections to a number of the arguments raised, but I can see pros and cons from either side of the debate. One particular quote stood out to me through the film and summarises my thoughts throughout, "Technology isn't good or bad, it's powerful, and it's complicated. Take advantage of what it can do, learn what it can do, but also ask, what is it doing to us?" I'm struck by the differing opinions shown throughout and the almost black and white need for an answer. Why does technology need to be good or bad? Who makes this judgment? What about moderation and the 'middle ground'? As alluded to in the film the research is not available to make these judgments. As quickly as research is carried out into the use of technology in education, technology changes and develops leading behind the research in its wake. As a teacher I am used to the issue raised by Harvard professors regarding students writing in paragraphs with a lack of flow or connection throughout in essays, however I am also guilty myself of this same issue. Even in writing this essay for this class I have written a section at a time. Is this a problem through? Could it be classed as good planning to break down a question into manageable chunks? Many of the negative arguments from the documentary seem to focus on the decline of reading and detriment to 'learning'. However just like many other of the issues raised this asks more questions to me than it answers. The argument focuses on reading as the best way to learn, but how do we know this? In order to even start to answer the question we need to establish what 'reading' is. Do we mean the classics and text heavy non-fiction? A hard-back book (and if so where does the kindle revolution fit?), as discussed in *Literacy debate: R U really reading?,* why can reading on the internet not be classed as 'reading' or 'learning'? Depending on this definition it can be argued that we now read more than ever before, our styles of learning over human evolution have always changed and we have always evolved. From the aural tradition to print (resulting in the loss or decline of the memory), to today's technology. It could also be argued that with the introduction of 'hypermedia' we are actually learning on a higher level, with the ability to learn in new ways.

Autobiographical enquiry clearly has its limitations, by reviewing your own practice and experiences there is only one viewpoint to draw from. Readings, research and other outside thoughts can challenge and question your beliefs and experiences but without discussion it is impossible to share

ideas. However, through the work of Vivian Paley and the investigation of her journaling technique during this class it is also clear that review and reflection can be highly beneficial. Writing this report, especially the section on key experiences, has led me to question my own practice and reflect on how I can continue to develop my work in the classroom, and the resources in this unit have proposed new questions for me to look to answer or simply explore (if there is no clear answer) in the future.