

Assignment 6: Evaluate and develop own practice in relation to specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities using reflection and feedback.

The specialist delivery techniques I used at Golden Girls WI encouraged exclusively female learners to engage with music technology and electronic music through using:

- Feminist theory to explore musicological concerns and gender biases in the field.
- Positive discrimination to present female pioneers of electronic music as motivational female role models.

I define advanced learning activities as female only kinesthetic activities, which encourage female learners to take leadership positions, which develop assertive, experimental, and risk taking approaches to working with electronic music. Michael Gurian defines risk taking as an area that is deficient in female educational participation, but tends to be dominant with male learners. My activities are defined as advanced as they are pitched at adult learners in the 20-50 age group, I am assuming many women in the group have obtained university level qualifications and re-enforce the activities through a higher education lecture style format (drawing from cultural theory).

I am currently in the process of training to become a fully qualified teacher. In the future I hope to teach music technology in a further education context. In both of my music technology teaching placements all of my learners have been male. The speaking engagement at the WI has helped me:

- Gain experience in teaching female learners, so far my experience has been overwhelmingly male!
- Devise specialist delivery techniques and grassroots strategies to increase female involvement in a male dominated field. In future teaching roles I could promote female only music technology classes after school or in lunch breaks to increase participation.
- Devise inclusive advanced learning activities that can capture my learners interest, leading to prolonged educational engagement (and hopefully less female learners dropping the subject)
- Use specialist delivery techniques to identify female role models and appropriate feminist theory as a way to engage my learners.
- Learn how to relate and encourage achievement in female learners.
- Devise specialist delivery techniques that inclusively engage non-musicians and musicians alike through working with sound rather than music.
- Liaise, plan, structure, deliver and promote my own independent artistic workshops outside of mainstream educational provision to complement my core paid teaching.

My research has inspired me to devise girl friendly teaching methods for co-educational classes, through:

- Calling on young men and women equally in class.
- Making the classroom a more pleasant environment for women by doing anti-sexist work with boys.
- Find out through primary research what and how female learners want to learn. Subsequently redesign materials in a more girl friendly way.

Advance Learning Activities and Feedback

Pauline Oliveros: Sound fishes

One of my advanced learning activities involved re-enacting Pauline Oliveros's Deep listening aleatoric music piece Soundfishes. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder. The piece takes the form of a chance music aleatoric score. I projected the instructions on the wall via PowerPoint and explained the ethos of the piece. The instructions are as follows:

"For an orchestra of any instruments.

Considerations

Listening is the basis of sound fishing

Listening for what has not yet sounded- like a fisherman waiting for a bite.

Pull the sound out of the air like a fisherman catching a fish, sensing it's size and energy- when you hear the sound, - play it.

Move to another location if there are no nibbles or bites.

There are sounds in the air like sounds in the water.

When the water is clear you might see the fish.

When the air is clear you might see the fish.

When the air is clear, you might hear the sounds."¹

I distributed two rocks to everyone's tables before members arrived (to save time distributing rocks to learners during the presentation).

After the piece I got various learners to explain how they made their sounds. I asked for a show of hands to gauge the usefulness of the piece and was satisfied by the positive response.

The Advanced learning activities could be improved by getting women after performing the activity to verbalize what they have learnt to other women. This would make the activities more inclusive and give participants a greater sense of shared achievement.

Questioning

My talk incorporated directed questioning to draw out artistic meaning. One advanced learning activity involved the audience identifying how Delia Derbyshire communicates the experience of aging in the piece 'Time on our hands'. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

Audience members correctly noticed how the piece references the human body through the heartbeat. Learners also noticed that the piece referenced the sentiment of the text that 'time seems to pass quicker as you get older'. This piece was designed to appeal to the more mature members of the WI who may have experienced similar phenomena. The questioning was successful because its aims were simple and achievable.

I found the more abstract interpretative questioning in the analysis of the 'O Superman' piece less successful. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

Despite giving the audience the background information about the piece referencing the Iran/Contra war. No audience members were able to make the symbolic link of Superman symbolizing America in the piece. This activity largely fell flat because the delivery was rushed, some members might not have been able to read the text from where they were sitting (text was quite small) and the piece was pitched at too advanced a level for the group (many may have not analyzed a poem or lyrics since English GCSE's). In future I shall provide more background information, make text bigger and provide handout's that learners can read at their own level. By getting learners to read the lyrics together in pairs more active discussion could be encouraged. More time allotted to activity would ensure greater success!

The use of questioning encouraged critical non-passive learning and helped women take ownership of feminist ideas (rather than have a male dictate what he defines as feminism). Many studies have suggested that women excel in communicative verbalizing skills and incorporating this into my presentation was a way of boosting learner confidence and playing to gendered strengths.

Questioning helped cement the inclusive agenda and ethos of the WI (because the WI was originally conceived as an arena for women to debate and discuss the issues of the day). The use of questioning did give the talk a sense of classroom formality, which perhaps was slightly inappropriate in this less formal environment.

Reflecting on oral feedback

The presentation helped raise my profile locally as well as introduce me to some unexpected contacts in a diverse array of fields. There was much heated discussion after the presentation. My audience seemed engaged by the topic. They were keen to discuss it amongst their friends.

It is customary for speakers at WI engagements to accept questions from the audience after a presentation. This gave me an excellent opportunity to take up a dialogue with my learners and gauge the effectiveness of my presentation. The feedback I received from learners both after and during the Q & A reflected the complex and unpredictable way learners can identify with a speaker (in an interdisciplinary context):

- A learner from a music therapy background asked me about the healing potential of Kaffe Matthews sonic bed project. A healthy dialogue was opened up and a discussion about the holistic nature of sound.
- Another learner from the Sonic Arts Department at the UEA asked me about laptop music and the local scene.
- A music teacher expressed an interest in introducing elements of the electromagnetic advanced learning activity into her future lessons. I recommended her an appropriate book to support the learning from the handouts I provided.

Generational divides

The more mature women in the audience seemed to prefer the work of early BBC Pioneers such as Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram rather than the more contemporary artists (due to the inherent musicality of the era).

Conflict resolution

The researcher Lyn Yates discusses the problems of introducing role models into girl friendly schooling below:

“The problem is that these strategies can take the form of fairly crude propaganda, propaganda that does not take account of or connect with the current realities of the students. It is schooling trying to preach to its students about what is best for them. Such approaches often fail to take account of why boyfriends and their views, and the prospect of marriage and babies, are so much more powerful an immediate reality; nor do they always see the class division between students and the glossy figures portrayed.”²

The reason proposed for this disconnect is that:

“Sociological studies which produce further understandings of what life is like for girls at school often circulate in a different world to those concerned with doing something to produce change through education.”³

I echoed this disconnect in my presentation. Although I had conceived all of my female electronic music pioneers to be healthy role models, my own personal taste did not always reflect the sensitive lived realities of female experience. One learner claimed that the so-called pioneers Chicks on speed

and Marina Rosenfeld were not appropriate feminist role models because their work enforces traditional femininity (rather than challenges it).

The learner disliked the piece by Marina Rosenfeld in which 17 untrained women play guitars with nail polish bottles (which she dubbed “retarded”).

Marina realized the sonic potential of Nail Polish bottles whilst experimenting with prepared guitar techniques in her music space (using earrings, pencils, etc.)⁴ Different brands of nail polish provided different sonorities⁵. Each had different shapes and textures, providing an almost built in timbral variation⁶.

Marina Rosenfeld explains:

“Of course, with the all-female orchestra there is also a feminist reading, a kind of recasting of that most phallic instrument. I was originally attracted to the over determined, almost comical masculinity of the guitar; perhaps that’s why I felt compelled to match it with so many ‘anti-masculine’ accouterments, from ruffly shirts to nail polish in a rainbow of pinks and oranges and reds.”⁷

We had a heated public debate in which I defended Marina’s work as socially useful grassroots music making. Marina’s work increases female confidence in making music regardless of previous ability or skill. I explained that Marina enjoys working with women, as she believes them to be good communicators and more sensitive ensemble players than men. I explained that the challenge for women is to reach beyond this, to become as technical and skilful as any man.

DJ Giulia Loli discusses the tension between punky grassroots action and technological competence below:

“I’ve been disappointed time and time again with the type of feminist, affirmative action that allows opportunistic assholes or undedicated slackers to get over with minimal technical requirements. I know there are fiercely skilled women out there and I am excited and positive about that. What I’ve seen more of lately though is coquettes with drum machines and turntables or even guitars, which they barely know how to use (with no visible attempts at pushing past necessary learning curves). My three year old can tap out a hot beat on my SP (and sequence it!) better than some get overs out here. No, I want to see woman with the life or death fire holy spirit for this!”⁸

The learner also took objection to the work of Chicks on Speed. Dismissing the shoe guitar as “patronizing s***”. These objections obviously come down to issues of personal taste and subjectivity; it is questionable how accountable I can be as a curator for the views and opinions of the musicians I am representing. It is farcical to suggest that this individual learner represents the complex identifications of all women, and all feminists. The scope of my presentation was clearly to celebrate women, not too be-little or mis-represent female electronic music making in any way.

The learner clearly enjoyed a debate, and it is hard to tell how much of the aggression was “testing” and showing off in front of her peer group. Aggression nurturance is something that needs to be fostered in women as much as it is in men. It is healthy that the learner used the talk as a forum for her experience, and I respected her right to freedom of speech. If anything this strong reaction to my work proved the power of the presentation to open up debate (which is no bad thing at all!). Many members of the audience were publically embarrassed by her outburst (including the WI president who apologized to me after the session), so I did what I could to protect her dignity.

The conflict between the pupil and myself taught me about the importance of conflict resolution in the student teacher relationship. My pupil felt slighted by representations of women she did not see as favorable. The role of the teacher in this situation is to defuse possible misinterpretations through rebuilding trust and understanding. Gurian explains that students can react strongly due to a need to look good in front of their peers⁹. Gail, a Hickman Mills teacher says that if you call a student down “in front of his peers, his posse, his homies, you need to be prepared for war”¹⁰. Gurian explains that:

“Studies show us that when a teach and student enter a conflict, the boy tends to use a louder voice and fewer words, while the girl favors more words. The intention of the hurt student, whether male or female, is the same: to return the self to a position of respect in the face of lowered peer respect, and to do so by attempting to dominate or defy the instructor, who is perceived as the betrayer of the respect and the bond”¹¹

Gurian recommends in tense moments of ego conflicts to apologize to the student, which will sometimes elicit a student apology (which can be effective if the instructor has the respect of the other students)¹². If the teacher does not have the respect of other students, find bonding activities which can rebuild trust in the class¹³.

Reflecting on questionnaire feedback

To effectively evaluate my specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities I designed a feedback questionnaire, which participants filled in after the presentation (see template in Assignment 6 folder). Out of an estimated 50-60 learners I received 20 feedback forms returned and completed (see Completed Feedback Forms in Assignment 6 folder for evidence). Although the results do not give a complete picture of learner satisfaction, they do give a useful insight when considered within the wider context of the WI group as a whole. The questionnaire format had the advantage of being cheap and easy to distribute on learners tables. The medium was anonymous enough for my learners to express themselves without worrying about hurting my feelings, or any sense of social awkwardness.

The questionnaire aimed to establish:

- Whether participants had benefited from the lecture and how.

- Whether the delivery methods and resources helped participants learn and how.
- Whether working in a single sex environment was helpful and participants found the experience welcoming and inclusive.
- Whether the presentation inspired learners to take up a new hobby.
- Whether the presentation introduced learners to any music they have not encountered previously, or encouraged them to seek out any new music.
- Whether the presentation challenged positively or negatively any preconceptions about gender.
- What things learners like best about the presentation?
- What areas needed developing or improving and what changes could be made.

The questions were structured to encourage open answers so I could receive detailed helpful feedback. Some of the questions are slightly biased and leading like 'what things did you like best about the presentation?'. The bias of such questions is often neutralized through balanced overall questioning. For example, the questionnaire later asks about 'things that needed improvement'.

How did participants benefit from the lecture?

The feedback revealed that I should have done more initial feedback to gauge what my learners could bring to the session. The women of the WI were a credit to the institute and the answers reveal a literate educated and progressive demographic, which counter the negative dominant stereotypes perpetrated by the mainstream media. Pitching my talk at university level was a brave move, which was rewarded by the thoughtful and considered feedback, which I received from the institute. It is important to never underestimate your learners whatever context you are teaching in!

It was clear from the majority of feedback forms that many participants had not encountered electronic music before, and many expressed that their views had been broadened as a result. The forms demonstrated a keen willingness to engage with the work, many learners communicating further insights into the artists and work covered.

Half of the completed feedback forms mentioned that they found the talk interesting. As a teacher it is hard to know what seemingly random things resonate with your learners. At least three learners highlighted Delia Derbyshire's concept of Music as Math's, this demonstrates to me that you can engage with learners on levels that you yourself can't anticipate. Although many learners did not buy into the feminist agenda of the presentation, there will be some who will latch onto details, which you yourself thought largely to be inconsequential. The reason for this is due to the widespread appeal of the WI, it appeals to women from wildly different sectors of industry, social class and background. Future feedback questionnaires will explore profession and social class to a greater extent; luckily many learners were keen to tell me about this without even asking!

Sadly the participants that did not benefit from the presentation often did little to verbalize their dissatisfaction. So I am left to speculate.

Two forms were handed back with bare monosyllabic responses. One anon learner was particularly blunt and caustic. When asked 'what things did you like best about the presentation?' she replied: 'Nothing'. In response to 'where they're any areas that needed developing or improving?' she replied: 'all of it'.

Another anon learner in response to 'Did this presentation inspire you to take up a new hobby' replied somewhat defiantly 'Definitely not'

In reply to 'Where there any areas that needed developing or improving?' she wrote 'I'm sorry, but I didn't like it at all'

These negative comments from the two anon learners must be acknowledged. Some learners work through the trauma of male oppression by sadly lashing out on the very people that are trying to help them! It would be unwise to focus too heavily upon these deviant comments, as the overwhelming impression of the remaining 18 feedback forms was largely positive, with varying degrees of constructive criticism.

To what extent did the delivery methods and resources helped participants learn and how?

In the future I wish to teach in both a formal lesson scenario and in an informal workshop context. When working in more informal settings I must show more sensitivity to context. When asked 'Where there any areas that needed developing or improving? If you could make changes to the presentation, what would you do?', an anon learner (44) suggested using 'Not so much content- too much to take in- wanted to be entertained as well as informed- felt too much like a lesson'.

Twelve out of twenty learners expressed that the varied use of multimedia elements such as video and sound aided their comprehension and learning experience beneficially. This has become a signature feature of my teaching style, and I hope to continue with this approach in the future.

Because of my focus on gender I was blind to other important factors, which can act as barriers to my learners. Szara (39) mentioned: 'I found PowerPoint and speaker hard to follow due to a type of dyslexia'. In informal learning environments these things can easily go unnoticed, and I will make more efforts in future lessons to cater to the learning needs of my group.

Did participants find working in a single sex environment helpful? Was the experience welcoming and inclusive?

10 out of 20 surveyed learners found working in a single sex environment helpful in this learning context, 8 learners were indifferent and 2 learners found the experience negative. So although there is some personal

disagreement about the benefit of single sex learning, the experience statistically can be interpreted as mostly positive. Claire commented the experience made it 'easier to join in and not worry about what people thought'.

Szara believed the experience was beneficial as 'she did not feel inferior' if she 'did not know a technical word'.

Anon learner (44) who was indifferent to the single sex environment claimed, 'It wouldn't bother me who was in attendance as I don't feel men or their music a threat 😊'

Did the presentation inspire learners to take up a new hobby?

Out of 20 surveyed participants, 4 of 20 learners claimed they would like to take up electronic music as a hobby as a result of my presentation.

Many of my learners had hidden musical talents, which I could have brought out more with more pro-active initial assessment. In response to 'Did this presentation inspire you to take up a new hobby?' Ella (22) writes:

'Yes- I make digital music on a computer but after hearing you talk I would really like to make my own instruments and play around with circuit bending'

Rebecca Musk (26) in response to the same question, claimed:

'I already have an interest in music and percussion 😊'

My research revealed that many learners are not inherently musical. Music needs encouragement from an early age.

Eleanor (22) comments in response to "Did this presentation inspire you to take up a new hobby?"

'Not particularly-no reflection on the quality of the presentation, just not musical!'

Whether the presentation helped learners to seek out any music they have not encountered previously, or encouraged them to seek out any new music.

12 learners indicated that the presentation had introduced them and sparked an interest in seeking out new music. 5 learners reacted negatively. 3 learners expressed indifference. A split response, that reveals my presentation to be mostly well received by my learners.

The feedback suggests that there were sections of the audience that were polarized by the presentation. This is perhaps due to the challenging nature of the music. One anon learner was clearly dismissive of some of the more experimental music, in response to 'Has This talk introduced you to any music you have not encountered previously?' she writes:

'No- I went to art school and far too many boys spent time making noise'

Some learners did not like the music covered but were still positive about the presentation. One anon learner comments:

'I have learnt that I don't really like electronic music but as I didn't know what it was before this is useful to know'

One Anon learner in response to "Has this talk introduced you to any music you have not encountered previously? Or encourage you to seek out any new music?"

'Music is not my thing- my family think me odd as I avoid music as much as possible'

The artists that were the best received were the early BBC Radiophonic pioneers such as Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram. Women could relate to the career struggle these women faced (in less enlightened times) and could picture them as role models.

Did the presentation challenge positively or negatively any preconceptions about gender?

Most participants were on the whole were extremely positive towards the talk and the feminist outlook engaged many. A viewpoint which mirrored their own personal value system. Sarah Copeman (52) a history graduate who specialized in gender studies at university enthused about the presentation. She draws reference from her own discipline and explains how she related to the subject matter through the feminist angle:

'Fascinating content- learnt so much. The concept of female inferiority is a demeaning thread that goes way back to medieval era- evidence in the writings on St. Jerome (I think?). Certainly apparent in early modern medical texts that try to explain human conception and in Jakob Kremer's *Mallen Maleticarum* (treatise against witches). Basically, the human male fetus = perfection and the female an imperfection...Content varied and interesting. Resources- very good. Because you chose women as your focus, I would always listen.'

Lizzie (33) who works in the music industry in an all female collective found the presentation affirmed her feminist values:

'I found it really interesting and inspiring. I work in an all-female environment which is rich in sound (all electronic- you'd love it) and it really inspired me- re, what women are capable of- especially 60+ years ago'

Other users were more dismissive about the feminist agenda. An anon learner writes in response to "Has this presentation challenged positively or negatively any of your preconceptions about gender?":

'No- Some men and some women will always choose to push the boundaries of art and music. It is do with their minds, not their genitals'

Out of 20 surveyed participants, 9 learners felt the presentation positively challenged their preconceptions of gender. 5 thought the presentation did not challenge preconceptions. 6 learners were indifferent. A polarized response but one that suggests the presentation was useful rather than detrimental to the feminist cause of my learners.

It is clear from the feedback that different women have related to the presentation in different ways. Ella (22) writes:

'It's made me think more about the sounds and how different genders might sound different'

When Lizzie (33) was asked whether the presentation challenged positively or negatively any of her preconceptions about gender she said:

'Well, I always knew women where amazing'

Szara (39) when asked 'Has this presentation challenged positively or negatively any of your preconceptions about gender?' replied:

'Positively. It is hard enough now with gender roles and masculine environments let alone how Daphne and Delia had to cope and prove themselves'

Anon (44) who was indifferent to the gender aspect of the presentation claimed that my talk 'didn't prove anything- If I had listened to it was not gender driven by it's sound- I wouldn't say it was "feministic" at all'.

Other women interpreted the presentation more negatively. Sarah Copeman (52) claimed the presentation 'Reaffirmed all the negative stereotypes (because I've studied History, especially women and gender history). So, not a surprise to me that women artists/musicians have not received due recognition'.

To some extent there were aspects of the presentation that confirmed negative stereotypes. The discourse about men and electronic music focused on electronic music and it's association with war and sexual domination. The closing piece from 'Extreme music from women' was entitled 'Stiletto Nights', which evoked ideas of excess and laddette culture. My point was not to accept all female music making on face value, to point out the dangers of aping flawed male models and to consider whether aggression is a natural form of expression for women. I think it is important to look at feminine expression objectively, problematic pieces can reveal things about ourselves which blind validation often alludes.

What things learners liked best about the presentation?

Anon learner (44) commented that she found 'sitting still for ages' challenging, this suggests that more advance learning activity focus is needed. Five out of twenty learners praised the advanced learning activities to be the favorite parts of the presentation. In the future I will try and speak less, and focus on more audience interaction when conducting workshops.

What areas needed developing or improving and what changes could be made?

The general consensus amongst nearly all participants was that the presentation went on for too long. Many learners suggested further editing and others suggested focusing on fewer composers in more detail. These suggestions will be worked into future edits of the presentation.

Conclusion

Through written and oral feedback I was able to gain a very detailed picture of the strengths, and areas of development on my specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities. An effective use of multi-media can help promote the cause of worthy female musicians, but a focus on non-commercial material can also polarize learners who are not ready for challenging content. Positive action (in non-mainstream settings) will only attract a small minority of the audience to take up electronic music as a hobby due to an audience's inherent musicality. My lack of editing is becoming a barrier to learning, and I must address this in future teaching contexts. Focusing on feminism as a basis for specialist delivery techniques has been revealed to be polarizing. Although my specialist delivery techniques aimed to unite feminists rather than divide them, many learners showed natural allegiance to either difference or essentialist philosophies. Essentialist feminists tended to deny differences in the sexes in their feedback, and showed the most resistance to the specialist delivery techniques (which were based on assumptions of gender difference). Subtler re-enforcement with more of an essentialist outlook (focusing on what unites rather than divides the sexes) might broaden the appeal of my teaching to all learners.

I was encouraged by the positive constructive criticism, which has motivated me to apply these ideas in a mainstream educational context (in a toned down form). As researcher John Pratt notes:

"Schools cannot become more girl friendly unless teachers work to make them so. At present the two sexes are channeled into separate life routes with distinct styles of socio-personal development geared towards work and careers rigidly demarcated by gender"¹⁴

The negative feministic feedback has made me more sensitive to the crisis of representation in female music making. I shall choose my practitioners more carefully in future sessions.

Although my research and delivery has been 'girl centered', there is a definite case for focusing on the plight of male learners who are statistically more

prone to extra special needs support. Whilst working in co-educational settings I must treat all learners equally and fairly to help my learners achieve their full potential.

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