Group Music Composition Towards Creative Thinking

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ABSTRACT

Music composition and improvisation has been one of the driving forces for creative thinking in the schools’ music curriculum. It is seen as a potential avenue to exhibit one’s development of music knowledge as well as an important catalyst to the learning of 21st century competencies. Although the justification for including group music composition rests on these assumptions, there is still little research to date investigating the nature of group music compositional activities in music lessons in Singapore classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to find out the potential issues arising from group music composition activities for secondary two pupils. The Singapore context provided a unique opportunity to observe lower secondary school pupils who had little or no prior experience with music composition within an educational setting. The qualitative methodology used included observations, interviews with teachers and pupils, and analysis of works, which led to the construction of two case studies, two groups each from an Express class and a Normal Technical class.

Analysis of the two case studies revealed the following: 1) pupils often depended on familiar resources and had little exploratory initiative to exploit the material’s potential; 2) the works of the pupils seem to be much affected by group dynamics, social skills; 3) the teacher’s pedagogical practices such as storyline and classroom management influenced the pupils’ thinking processes during the music compositional task; and 4) pupils discovered more about themselves and adapted to enable the groupwork to
progress more smoothly. The study concluded that although these pupils were new to
creative work in music, most of them were capable of producing many sound ideas
through their group discussion. With adequate guidance and relevant and timely
feedback from the music teacher, the pupils could be more meaningfully engage in
creative tasks, developing creative thinking and critical thinking skills.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Music composition and improvisation has been a part of the schools’ music curriculum in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Singapore since the late 1960s. (Swanwick, 1999, p. 27) In the 1990s, curricular initiatives in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States have stressed the importance of fostering creativity and, specifically, composition, in the music classroom. (Kennedy, 2002, p. 94) This strong need to foster creative-thinking in classrooms is highlighted in a Straits Times article in 1982 stating that “creativity is not luxury, but one of the most necessary tools parents and schools can provide”. (Anderson, p. 6) The notion of fostering creativity is not new to the Singapore education system. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education, Singapore, urged teachers in schools to “move away from rote-learning to encourage more creative work and a lively intellectual environment” (Osman, 1987). Creative-thinking could be developed through classroom activities. It is important to promote creative-thinking in schools as it is pertinent to the pupils’ cognitive development. After a few decades, the importance of creative-thinking has not diminished. In fact, creative thinking skills have become more crucial for a child to develop in order to cope with the challenges and changes in the 21st century.

To better prepare our students to thrive in a fast-changing and highly-connected world in the 21st century, the Ministry of Education, Singapore, has provided an important impetus in search for broader and more varied curricular content. A press release on March 9, 2010 emphasized the need to enhance the learning of 21st century
competencies. The new framework for 21st century competencies set to “better position our students...in a globalised world, our students need to possess life-ready competencies like creativity, innovation, cross-cultural understanding and resilience.” (Ministry of Education, 2010) The need to promote creativity among our pupils is crucial and pragmatic.

The Renaissance City Plan III, which was drawn up in 2008, suggests the nurturing of arts and culture in developing a culturally vibrant society, giving Singapore a unique national identity to distinguish Singapore from other cities around the world (Ministry of Information Communication and the Arts, 2009, p. 14). So, in order to develop a culturally vibrant society, there is a need to nurture young Singaporeans’ interest in the arts. Recently, our Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, in the opening address at the opening of the Singapore Teachers’ Academy for the Arts, pointed out two broad focuses for music education in Singapore. Firstly, he explained the potential of infusing cultural sensitivity by raising pupils’ awareness of their personal, social and cultural identity and secondly, to create shared experiences and foster shared identity among our pupils through music lessons. (Ministry of Education, 2011) Besides cultural sensitivity, he also highlighted other benefits of having art and music lessons where

“art and music are particularly suitable to nurture such qualities in our students. ... Through art and music, students learn to be expressive, imaginative, creative and culturally sensitive” (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Thus, music activities like composition and improvisation can provide ample opportunities for developing students’ self-expression, creative thinking and cultural
sensitivity. The policy documents cited earlier is intended to evidence the need for creative thinking through creative activities such as group music composition and suggest the need for the study.

Promoting creative thinking has been in existence in the general music curriculum and syllabuses (Ministry of Education, 1992, 2002, 2008). It aimed primarily to develop creative expression through music composition. In principle, music composition activities should have been quite frequently conducted in our music lessons.

For about two decades, one would expect the teaching of music composition to be embedded quite deeply in the music curriculum as every pupil would have had opportunities to compose. In Singapore, it would seem more typical that pupils may not have as much experience in music composition within their General music programme as one would have thought. This could mean that the school music lessons or pupils’ personal experience outside the school do not provide them with opportunities to compose. So, the students may not be aware of what music composition is. On the same note, Martin (2002) also echoed, “Singapore students, even at tertiary-level, have little or no prior knowledge of compositions...” (p. 4) as music composition lessons could often be replaced with other music activities. Furthermore, the study of compositional processes has not been well researched in 1980s. Sloboda (1985) noted that “composition is the least studied and least well understood of all musical processes” (p.103). The initial limited research on music composition could attribute to the lack of
familiarity with the processes of music composing among the music teachers, hence avoiding dabbling into music compositional tasks in the music classrooms.

The compositional processes can be complex and not all composers go about their music compositions in the same way, so it could be a constraint by which music compositional tasks are shelved aside in the music classroom.

To complicate the problem, music teachers may not be able to understand the pupils’ potential to compose, hence the pupils are not developed to the fullest as they are not receiving enough support and guidance during music-making. A pertinent observation made by Glover (2000) suggests

*Room has been made for composing in schools as part of the music curriculum, in principle at least. Paradoxically, however, it does not always follow that the composing activities children are given acknowledge, support or build on the kind of self-reliant music-making they are capable of. One of the reasons for this is that we, as adult members of the wider community, have only a rather vague sense of children’s music-making capabilities.* (2000, p. 2)

Music teachers seemed to have inadequate training during pre-service in the teaching of music composition. As the music teachers are unfamiliar with the teaching of music composition, students’ exposure to such activities remain elusive. Kennedy (2002) pointed out that “that (teaching music composition) causes many persons, and
especially teachers, to avoid stepping into what they deem as uncharted waters.” (p. 96)

If the music teacher is not adequately trained to teach or lack musical background, the pupils are not given correct guidance. Music composition lessons would not be able to foster any musical learning, let alone creativity.

Another difficulty music teachers might face is the opened-ended and complex nature of music composition. Martin (2002) highlighted that “music composition is a complex and multifaceted practice...” (p. 3) Music composition is complex because it embodies the composers’ musical experiences and social interactions within their culture, making it a unique personal experience for the composer. In addition, the listeners bring in their set of understanding when listening to the composition. Gromko (2003) also remarked that “the interpretations of the composition are multiple and open for negotiation”. (p. 73) Such open-ended nature complicates the thinking process in music composition.

Other than not knowing how to teach music composition, music teachers may not be aware of the role of composing and improvising in the General Music Programme. To understand the significance of music composition, teachers could start by examining the General Music Syllabus’s aims and learning outcomes. With clearer understanding of the syllabus and its purpose in teaching music composition and improvisation, the music teacher would have a better understanding of the importance of music composition to a child’s aesthetics development.
1.2 General Music Syllabus

In both the 2002 and 2008 General Music Syllabus, one of the explicit aims was to develop creativity and critical thinking skills through composing individually or in groups and also develop “an open mind for local and global cultures”. (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2008)

Keeping in mind globalisation trends and the need to develop cultural sensitivities and personal identity in our pupils, the General Music Syllabus was set to achieve the following aims: firstly, to develop creative expression “through creating music, singing and playing instruments (as) students learn to express themselves creatively in different modes.” (Ministry of Education, 2008) Secondly, the syllabus intends for pupils to be able to discern and understand music from various cultures and of various genres and understand the role of music in their daily lives. Understanding music in its socio-cultural context should be used as a means to nurture cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. The third aim was to provide a basis for our pupils to develop an informed and life-long involvement in music.

The 2008 general music syllabus is organised around six objectives that describe the music skills and knowledge students should acquire. The six objectives include: i) to sing and play melodic and rhythmic instruments individually and in groups, ii) to create and improvise music, iii) to describe and evaluate music through listening, iv) to develop understanding of music elements/concepts, v) to discern and understand music from various cultures and of various genres and lastly, iv) to understand the role of
music in daily living (MOE, 2008). In all objectives, the learning outcomes have been designed in a progressive manner over five stages.

The “creating” component in the objectives of the general music syllabus aims to build up pupils’ creative ability during the child’s primary and secondary education. This is focused in Outcome two, that is to create and improvise music.

1.3 Defining Creativity

Creativity, as defined by Torrance, is described as

“the process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements, something askew; making guesses and forming hypotheses about these deficiencies; evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses possibly revising and retesting them; and finally communicating the results...a natural process”. (as cited in Reimer, 2003, p. 108)

This definition suggests that ‘creativity’ is a process that comprises thinking and doing, not just a stroke of luck. Reimer highlighted that the definition of creativity here “allows it to be something all people have to some degree, and as constituted of particular, identifiable ways of dealing with one’s world, provides a role of education.” (2003, p. 108). He also explained that all humans are capable of being creative to a certain extent and are capable of improving their creative thinking if they are helped to do so. (2003, p. 109) Creative thinking could be encouraged by educational
interventions. Through schools, music education can help pupils to encourage creativity to a certain degree by engaging the learners with music activities which promote creative thinking.

**Creativity in Music Composition**

To determine if a music composition is creative, one should consider not just the product but the processes involved in the creation as well. A composition designed to demonstrate the learner’s understanding of a specific technique is technically proficient but not necessarily creative. As Elliott (1995) elaborated, “While every form of music making can be creative, not all instances of composing, arranging, improvising, performing, and conducting are automatically creative...” (p. 220) Hickey (2003) explained that “the creative product is the tangible result of the creative-thinking process ...and it meets both criteria of originality and aesthetic appeal.” (p. 35) Only then, the music composition would be seen as successful. Other than having an end-product, equal emphasis should be placed on the creative process. Cheyette stated that “it is rarely that we could infer or imagine the process, the struggle, the imagination, frustrations, endurance that went into the product...Creativity as process is important not because the product of each moment is such a gem but because the process is the essence of life itself”. (1969, p. 218) So the creative process is important as it involves a series of complex thought processes. Educators need to also look into the various factors that come to play in the process of creativity, so as to encourage it during the lessons.
When a teacher conducts a music composition activity in class, one of the important issues to consider is the assessment and evaluation. There are many ways to evaluate creativity in a music composition and designing and administering a set of assessment rubrics is just one way to assess creative thinking. Yet, there are still problems with assessment. Byrne (2003) pointed out that “the current methods of assessment place an emphasis on the completion of products or artefacts and are, therefore, summative in nature, thereby missing the original point of including inventing in the curriculum.” (p. 279) So it is important for the music teacher to observe creative processes and interactions emerging during the pupils’ discussions as well to assess the creative project more accurately.

Creativity in Social Context

To explore further the concept of creativity, we need to know that creativity needs to be culturally and socially acceptable within one’s culture. Reimer (2003) explained that “one is being creative when demonstrating qualities one’s culture considers creative.” (p. 109) So the people in the same culture must be receptive to the creative idea. Interestingly, on the same note, Howard Gardner also defines a creative person as “a person who regularly solves problems, fashions products, or defines new questions in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting”. (as cited in Reimer, 2003, p. 104) In music making, the final product is only considered creative only when it fulfills its requirement to be musically creative within a culture.
In recent literature on creative thinking, Webster identified the importance of musical imagination or musical imagery. He explained that “the ability to internally imagine sound meaningfully is not only important for music achievement and convergent tasks but also critical for creative thinking ability and specifically for divergent tasks”. (1990, p. 23) Here, he described the convergent tasks as “tasks designed to yield a single right answer” and divergent tasks as “tasks which several answers are possible”. Divergent tasks encourage musical imagination and creative problem solving. In music composition, creative efforts could be observed by the amount of time invested in creative imaging by translating creative musical ideas or intended image or emotion to be conveyed by the composer into sound representation, originality and the flexibility in terms of musical expression through germination of compositional ideas, dynamic or tempo or pitch variations. In addition, divergent thinking also allows different perspectives, which Stephens (2003) explained, that encourages diversity of expression which help the student develop a personal voice rather than to emphasize only convergent or conformist approaches. (p. 121) The teacher has to accept different relevant perspectives and at the same time, encourage pupils to develop their personal voice.

**Enabling conditions** are basically non-musical factors. The first factor is motivation and it could be intrinsic or extrinsic. The second factor is the subconscious imagery. Webster explained that it is “the presence of mental activity that occurs quite apart from the conscious mind and that may help to inform the creative process during times when the creator is occupied consciously with other concerns. (1990, p. 24) Such inspiration-like sparks of ideas help in forming compositional ideas. The third factor is
the creator’s personality such as risk-taking, openness. This set of identifiable traits belonging to creative people could influence the creative process. The last enabling condition is the environment. The environment contains many characteristics that influence creator’s work and creativity. Some aspects of environment influence are family, financial support, peer pressure and many others. These non-musical factors would mingle and influence the musical skills through the creative process.

The central core features the thinking process. The four stages in Wallas’s model are featured in the core of Webster’s model of creative thinking (1990). To understand the thinking process, I will explain the four stages: preparation, in which the composer think and seek for relevant materials and ideas for the creative product, incubation, unconscious reflection of the problems while being away from the creative problem, illumination, which is the identification of the possible solution; and the verification, the final stage which formulates, tests, refines the solution and the final product is created (Webster, 1990, p. 24).

On the whole, this model of creative thinking shows the different factors contributing to the development of creative-thinking. In Webster’s (1990) model of creative thinking in music, there are three main themes to creative thinking. Firstly, the notion of musical imagination with sounds and divergent thinking are important in the creative process. Secondly, both the enabling skills and enabling conditions influence the central core of the thinking process. The last theme is the central core of creative thinking. With the three themes coming to play, creative thinking could occur while making the creative products like composition, performance or analysis. Music teachers
should develop the enabling skills and promote positive conditions to help pupils to develop creative thinking through creative like music composition and performance.

While Webster’s (1990) model on creative thinking in music focuses on the students’ creative processes, the teacher’s teaching processes to promote creativity are also crucial. To understand better about what the teacher’s role is and how he or she promotes or curtails the children’s creative thinking, Wiggin’s frame for understanding children’s compositional processes is considered as it discusses the compositional processes of the pupils as well as the teacher’s role in a compositional task (2003, p. 142). Wiggins discussed about the teacher’s role and how a teacher could design and conduct an effective music compositional task. She also highlighted some issues pertaining to the crafting of a music compositional task which are important to consider before embarking on a music compositional task.

1.4  Purpose of the study

To prepare pupils for 21st century work challenges, Singapore schools focus on developing skills that are associated with learning, interpersonal skills and creative thinking (Ministry of Education, 2011). The emphasis of these crucial skills is embedded in the school curriculum and activities. In line with the educational goals in developing such soft skills among our pupils for a future economy fuelled by innovation, the study is timely in determining the possibility of music composition as a creative and social tool in the lower secondary music curriculum in Singapore. It is hoped that an awareness of the results of the study among teachers and music educators would create
interests in using music composition in music classrooms and promote future research in the area locally. The study also hopes to contribute to the existing literature of using sound exploration and composition in the teaching of music.

1.5 Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to: i) examine how group music composition can allow musical concepts and elements to be learnt by a group of lower secondary pupils and, ii) how the musical background, pedagogy and practices of a non-specialised music teacher can influence the way with which group music composition tasks are conducted and facilitated.

From the purpose, the following research questions emerged:

1. What are the musical and social skills developed through group music composition activities and what are the processes involved in group music composition activities?

2. What are the pedagogy and practices employed by a non-specialised music teacher in the conduct of group music composition activities?

3. What are the implications for teaching group music compositions in a Singapore classroom?
The introduction in this chapter has established a working definition of creative thinking in the context of the current study and set the guiding principle for the methodology selected. The review provided the background for the study and point to the need to investigate the creative processes and products of lower secondary school pupils engaging in music compositional activities in Singapore. The study is naturalistic in its setting being conducted in a normal school environment. The study would examine pupils’ responses to a compositional activity through their creative processes and products by using researcher observations and recording devices. The information would be gathered from the pupils, teachers and other stakeholders to interpret findings.
Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Rationale for design

It has been noted from the introduction in Chapter 1 that a number of studies investigating the observations of the creative processes and products of children during music composition lessons are conducted to unfold the compositions’ layers of meaning to the children. Gromko (2003) highlighted that “assessing the composition’s goodness requires an investigation into the various layers of understanding that have contributed to the composition’s creation, its performance, and its comprehension”. (p. 74) In this way, the analysis of the creative processes and products, as well as the interpretations, would be more reliable and objective in understanding our pupils’ creative thinking processes.

To seek for fuller understanding in a qualitative study, the researcher needs to bring in the experience of others. Stake (2010) pointed out that “Actually, much good qualitative research greatly involves the thinking of others as data and interpretation...qualitative descriptive of how things work relies heavily on personal experience”. (pp. 67-68) So, the researcher would need to have face-to-face encounters with the activity and interviews arranged to learn more about the experience of the participants.

This study is intended to understand more about secondary school’s pupils’ creativity through group music making in music classroom. The context, which has bearing on the processes of creative thinking, requires us to be aware of its influence
over the natural setting of the classroom. Qualitative researchers believe that qualitative research “strives to be naturalistic, to neither intervene nor arrange in order to get data... (so) holistic more than elementalistic, not reductively analytic”. (Stake, 2010, p. 15) Being holistic, it means that the researcher has to face natural constraints and limitations like time constraints during lessons, unexpected responses and behaviour from pupils and teacher’s teaching style and practices by looking at the interactions between the pupils and teacher, the pupils’ thinking processes and products (home-made instruments and music compositions) and others. By allowing these natural constraints to set in, we are studying how music compositional processes foster creative thinking under a more “real-life” situation.

Surely, we acknowledge the occurrence of critical thinking processes of pupils and are aware of the presence of critical thinking skills applied by the pupils during the course of group decision making and formulation of musical ideas during the project. However, the researcher has chosen to focus in on the creative aspect of the thinking processes in this study.

This study is not intended to determine any causal relationships but to understand the group music compositional processes involved in creative thinking and its implications in a Singapore classroom so as to both inform the music teacher and raise pertinent questions for further study.
2.2 Sample

The sample is taken from 2 secondary two classes (around 14 years) of a neighbourhood\(^1\) secondary school. Each class has an average of 40 pupils. All classes are taught by one music teacher, Mrs Linda Tan (a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the music teacher).

2.3 Student’s general classroom and music background

The two secondary two classes come from the two different academic streams (Express and Normal Technical Stream\(^2\)), so the classes chosen for “Music I Can Make” will be 2E1 (Express) and 2T1 (Normal Technical).

2.4 The music teacher

Mrs Linda Tan completed her Postgraduate Diploma in Education from National Institute of Education, Singapore in 1997. She is a non-specialised music teacher as her first teaching subject is Geography and Music is her second teaching subject. She has a Grade 8 certification for Piano with the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music

\(^1\) A typical school which produces average results and is not one of the top-notch schools in Singapore.
\(^2\) The Express stream is somewhat similar to seventh grade through tenth grade in the American system and the pupils would take their GCE “O” level examinations (Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education) at the end of their fourth year. The Normal Technical stream is somewhat similar to seventh grade through tenth grade in the American system and the pupils would take subjects of a more technical nature, such as Design and Technology. They would take their GCE “N” (Technical) level examinations (Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education) at the end of their fourth year.
(ABRSM). Mrs Linda Tan has been teaching general music in secondary schools for 11 years and has mostly been teaching general music to the lower secondary school pupils. She is the only music teacher in the secondary school.

2.5 Overview of the composition project – “Music I Can Make”

Project “Music I Can make” focuses on exploring creative music composition processes. The teacher would launch the project in Term 1 of 2012 (first week of January to end of February) within the general music curriculum, i.e. one ½ hour lesson each week over a duration of 9 weeks. A compositional theme, “On the way to school” will be given to the pupils. The first lesson would be used as an introductory session to inform the pupils about the compositional project and confirm their music groupings. In addition, to inspire them to compose, a video comprising of two performance excerpts of percussive musical groups would be shown to the pupils. Pupils would also be required to complete a survey on their background and their attitude to better understand their prior musical knowledge. (Appendix 4) The next two lessons would introduce the pupils to elements of music like form, rhythm, tempo and dynamics, so as to form building blocks for their music composition task. This aims to develop in pupils sufficient understanding of the concepts being taught to enable them to operate with a reasonable level of independence to compose a piece. After understanding the key concepts of music elements, the pupils would compose their music in their groups. The music compositions should reflect their journey to the school. The pupils would be encouraged to be innovative in the choice of instruments, such as untuned percussion,
homemade percussive instruments, or even body percussion. At the end of the project, the pupils would perform their group music compositions in class. This project does not require the pupils to have any prior knowledge.

Although the pupils would be taught musical elements such as dynamics, tempo and rhythm creation before embarking on their music compositional task, unique ideas and new concepts like using objects to create the desired sound representations from the pupils are very much encouraged. Diverse needs and prior knowledge of the pupils should also be considered carefully. The teacher may encounter issues in getting her pupils to compose if the pupils do not know how to get the project started. Hence, the teacher would introduce some musical elements to the whole class so as to assist the weaker pupils to get them started with their project. Pupils who are more confident in composing could come up with new or complex ideas for their group composition.

2.6 Design of main study

The study has established the main design as a case study. The case study is chosen as the research method for this study because detailed information about the groups could be analysed to understand more about the groups’ dynamics and individual group exchanges. The rich data such as the groups’ interaction, body languages and nuances of what is happening during the project could be analysed to give a clearer picture of what is happening during the pupils’ discussion. Data collected
from the fieldwork would form the analysis and research questions would be included in the plan to better focus data collection and data analysis.

2.7 Data collection

Gaining credibility and trustworthiness of the study is an important aspect of qualitative research. In order to do this, Saldana (2011) explained that “...we (researchers) collect sufficient evidence to document the patterns, categories, and meanings...(and) this documentation helps us to systematically and credibly examine, extract, and construct from the complexity of living its essences and essentials...”. (p. 31) To establish credibility and trustworthiness, I would use various and varied methods of data collection. Saldana (2011) also pointed out that “data gathered from different sources will better guarantee a spectrum of diverse perspectives for analysis and representation.” (p. 76) Furthermore, multiple data-gathering methods enable different viewpoints and Stake (2010) pointed out that “it may make us more confident that we have the meaning right, or it may make us more confident what we need to examine differences to see important multiple meanings”. (p. 124) In this way, the evidence gathered would then enable us to examine and make more credible and trustworthy interpretations. However, it is quite impossible to avoid such bias completely as the researcher was involved in the crafting of the teaching materials. One should be aware of researchers’ biases and recognize its inevitability for bias to set in during the data collection process.
2.8 Sources of Data

Several types of evidence are gathered for the case studies. Saldana (2011) explained that studies incorporating many methods could “gather broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of an analysis”. (p. 31) This study has for its data collection, interviews, researcher observations, teacher observations, students’ interviews, physical artifacts and students’ surveys.

1. Open ended interviews and focused interviews

The questions would generally be open ended to elicit and stimulate more responses from the interviewees. Saldana (2011) pointed out that “available time during interview is most often limited, so every question asked should serve some purpose towards the research agenda”. The interviews conducted between the researcher and the students would provide more information about the group’s attitude and dynamics and the compositional processes when crafting their group music compositions. For this study, 2 fixed groups for 2 classes would be tracked throughout the project so that there is a clearer understanding of the development of the pupils’ social and musical skills towards creativity. The fixed groups for tracking would mean that the same group of pupils would be video recorded and interviewed for the entire project. Video recording the pupils’ interviews would be done to assist in data analysis. Open-ended interviews would be conducted with two fixed groups from each class to maintain consistency in data-collection procedures. After the first performance, the selected groups would be interviewed after lesson 5 or 6 to allow the
researcher to gain more insight to the pupils’ compositional processes (Appendix 6). Another interview would be conducted after the final performance to learn more about their compositional processes and their overall impression of the project. (Appendix 6)

The interviews conducted with the music teacher would shed light on the teacher’s attitude towards creative thinking and clarify questions and doubts that the teacher could face in the project. During the preparation stage, the researcher would conduct an interview with the teacher to understand her understanding of creativity and her attitude on conducting music compositions in her lessons. In addition, after-lesson interviews would be conducted to allow the teacher to share the lesson outcomes and her reflections. With the video-recording of lesson, the teacher is able to review her lessons before the interview session to formulate her own observations with the researcher. During the interview sessions, audio taping the teacher’s interview would be done to assist in data analysis. (Appendix 5- Interview questions for teachers)

2. Researcher observations

The researcher would be taking running field notes for all music lessons. The researcher would not interfere in the running of the lessons but is an external observer with minimal interaction with the music teacher and pupils during the music lessons. By participating in the activity, Geertz (1988) pointed out that
“we (researchers) are too quick to presume that we have not altered their experience by being there”. (as cited in Stake, 2010, p. 94) After each class session, running field notes would be transcribed and the video recordings would be recorded into a journal format. Stake (2010) highlighted that the researcher must know “what is happening, to see it, to hear it, to try to make sense of the recording”. (p. 94) Making sense of the recording is very important in formulating more reliable interpretation of the happenings.

3. Teacher observations

The music teacher provides the teacher-perspectives on the conducting of the music compositional lessons, pupils’ responses during the class as well as some of the homemade instruments and the composition presentations of the pupils. The input from the music teacher on the pupils’ understanding and thought processes are collated through recorded informal interview sessions. To a certain extent, the teacher was suggesting a particular structure in pupils’ music compositional process. She uses ‘storyline’ as a pedagogical tool to allow pupils to better understand how to develop their group music compositions during the project. As she facilitates groupwork, the music teacher would ask pupils if they have developed a storyline, reinforcing her suggestion in thinking that the ‘storyline’ suggestion would make composing easier for the students who might be struggling for ideas.
4. Audio and Video Recordings

The researcher made audio and video-recordings of the participants as they engaged in the project. One video camera would be placed at the back of the classroom during each music lesson to have an overview of teacher-pupil interaction. Two video cameras would be also placed near the groups to capture pupil to pupil interaction, pupils’ compositional performances and any general observations that could have been left out while observing. The pupils’ reactions and gestures are also able to be recorded by the two video cameras. The recording might not be very clear and the inaudible sounds from the composition performances and soft interaction between the pupils may not be easily deciphered and heard during transcribing. So, two audio recordings would be placed within the two fixed groups for the whole project to record all verbal interaction within the group during the discussion, rehearsal and performance. In this way, it allows the researcher to do cross checking and review the responses. It also helps in eliminating any missed observations during the lesson.

5. Physical artifacts

The artifacts include the homemade instruments and the music compositions from the pupils. Video of the first performance and the final composition presentations of each group would be attached in the appendixes.
6. Background data

Background data consists of the size of the class, pupils’ co-curricula activities (CCA), their musical background, interest and other related information about school and the pupils’ personal information. These data would be collected through the pupil survey at the beginning of the project and school archival records.

The following table indicates the relationship between the sources of evidence and the study’s research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of evidence (research questions addressed)</th>
<th>Data Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Open ended/focused interviews (1,2,3)</td>
<td>Student interviews, teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Researcher Observation (1,2,3)</td>
<td>Researcher journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher Observation (1,2,3)</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Physical Artifacts (1,2)</td>
<td>Videotaped pupils’ compositions, performances, home-made instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Background data (1)</td>
<td>Students’ survey, School archival records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The research questions were: 1) What are the musical and social skills developed through group music composition activities and what are the processes involved in group music composition activities? 2) What are the pedagogy and practices employed by a non-specialised music teacher in the conduct of group music composition activities? 3) What are the implications for teaching group music compositions in a Singapore classroom?
2.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis deals with data collection and analyzing data to formulate findings. Stake (2010) explained that “coding (classifying, sorting) is a common feature of micro research and all qualitative analysis and synthesis”. (p. 151) Data analysis requires sorting all data sets according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study and the qualitative researcher makes his or her interpretations. (Stake, 2010, p. 151)

Descriptive coding would be employed to sort data. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined descriptive codes as primarily nouns that simply summaries the topic of a datum. (as cited in Saldana, 2011, p. 104) Saldana (2011) highlighted its usefulness when one has different types of data gathered for one study and this approach could be used for initial analysis which the data could be clustered into similar categories to detect patterns as frequency and interrelationship. (p. 104) As an example from the current study, there is always a pertinent issue of establishing leadership and resolution of conflicts as seen during numerous sessions of classroom observations. So this issue is selected to become an area to be further analysed.

As a preparation for analytic memo writing, data could be categorised in themes to form “think pieces”. Saldana (2011) explained that “analytic memo is a “think piece” of reflexive freewriting”. (p. 98) He also elaborated that “memos are opportunities to reflect on...since writing is analysis, analytic memos expand on the inferential meanings of the truncated codes and categories as a transitional stage into a more coherent narrative.” (p. 102) Only then data collected would interrelate and form concepts for interpretations. During the pupils’ group discussions during the lessons, the idea of
using “storyline” was frequently used by the music teacher to guide the pupils in working out the form for their music compositions. To the music teacher, using “storyline” means thinking of a short story would help pupils in setting the form as in having a start and the ending for the story. As the project progressed, the video recordings of the lesson and teacher interview sessions contain the notion of “storyline” and it becomes one of the codes as a pedagogical tool for the music teacher to teach form. So it was observed that the music teacher used storyline as a facilitative tool to teach the building blocks, guided the pupils to think of storyline to develop their creative products and used it as an assessment criterion. Hence, the creative processes and products are much driven by the code, storyline, needed to be analysed for better understanding.

**Triangulation** is used by researchers for gaining reliability in the data and interpretations. By increasing care in gathering data and interpreting them, Stake (2010) explained that “it (triangulation) may make us more confident that we need to examine differences to see important multiple meanings”. (p. 124) One way of triangulation is to make use of multiple data-collection methods. With the multiple data-collection method, different interpretations by different observers could be checked for consistency. Data from the six sources indicated earlier were examined for consistency to decrease the risk of bias. Other than the researcher, the music teacher conducting the project was involved throughout the data analysis procedure and also provided “another pair of eyes” to interpret the most important data for possible alternative explanations.
**Product analysis** consists of the analysis of the pupils’ music compositions (video recording presentations). The analysis of the creative product needs to be consistent in its approach. A rating scale specifying descriptors (Appendix 13), which is adapted from Hickey (1999), would be adopted to assess the pupils’ music compositions. Hickey (1999) explained that “these descriptors will make a kind of yardstick that teacher can lay against each student’s work to evaluate his or her performance in a particular area”. (p. 27)

### 2.10 Preparation for the project

The preparatory sessions, including the interview with the teacher would be conducted in December 2011. The purpose of the preparatory sessions would be carried out to establish:

1. Teacher’s musical background, compositional experience and her expectations for this project through the interview with the teacher. (Appendix 5-Interviews with teacher)
2. Research participant information and consent form for teacher. (Appendix 1-Research Participants’ Information and Consent Form for Teacher)
3. Clearer understanding of the project by coaching the teacher on how to conduct the whole project. (Appendix 3-Instruction Sheet for teacher)
4. Appropriate questioning techniques and feedback strategies for conducting the project. (Appendix 3-Instruction Sheet for teacher)
5. If the time frame for each activity in the project is sufficient for pupils to discuss, rehearse and perform.

6. The positioning of video recorders and recording devices to achieve proper perspectives of student-teacher interactions and pupils group discussion processes.

7. Any other outstanding problems that may be overlooked in designing the project.

2.11 Lesson Outline for the ‘Music I Can Make” project

Lesson one (term 1 week1)

Pupils would be shown a video montage of two percussive groups (The Blue Man Group and Nanta) as motivation. A short introduction write-up of each group would be given to pupils to highlight the uniqueness about the musical groups in the montage, for instance using everyday objects, movement or sound effects to make music. (Appendix 8- Write-up of the musical groups) The teacher would explain to pupils the possibility of making music by using objects and sounds around them. She would then introduce pupils to the task, its parameters and its outcomes and purpose. (Appendix 7-Task Worksheet, Appendix 13- Assessment Rubrics) The teacher would explain the details of the project and explain how it would be beneficial to them. Pupils would also form their groups of 6 or 7 for their next lesson. The pupils’ survey would

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3 Blue Man Group is an organization which produces theatrical shows and concerts featuring experimental music, comedy and multimedia; recorded music and scores for film and television programmes. All performances star a single trio humanoid characters called Blue Men, played by actor-musicians who all wear bald caps and blue makeup.

4 Nanta is a popular South Korean musical. The show involves acrobatics, magic tricks, comedy, and pantomime and audience participation. The performance is almost non-verbal. The very few words which are spoken are in English.
be conducted to understand the background information on the pupils’ prior musical knowledge in school and at home as well as their working attitudes, motivation level and habits. (Appendix 4- Survey for pupils) In addition, the teacher would also distribute the research participants’ information and consent forms to the pupils, so as to obtain consent from the pupils to participate in the study. (Appendix 2- Research Participants’ Information and consent Form)

Lesson two

As part of the teaching of the building blocks to music compositions, the teacher would first show the “Stomp” video to teach form. This video aims to inspire the pupils and encourages them to be creative and at the same time, easing them into the compositional task. They would view the video and complete the worksheet on form. (Appendix 9- Form Worksheet) The teacher would explain the concept of form and its importance in structuring music compositions. Next, as part of the second building block towards music compositions, the teacher would show a video of ‘The Blue Man Group’ who make use of daily objects as percussive instruments to create music. They would view the video and complete the worksheet on “Musical Concepts”. (Appendix 10- Musical Concepts Worksheet) Pupils are required to fill the boxes up to do quick notes on the development of the music such as instrumentation, dynamics, tempo and texture. The pupils would view the video excerpt twice to confirm their answers. The teacher would go through the “Musical Concepts” worksheet as a class. Simultaneously, the video would be played as the teacher goes through the worksheet to ensure

5 Stomp, a percussive group originating from Brighton, UK, uses the body and a variety of everyday percussion instruments to create a physical theatre performance.
understanding. The teacher is to emphasise the importance of the thinking process in music composition and the need to have a good start and end to a piece of music.

Lesson three

For the third building block to music composition, the teacher would then teach rhythm making by using the worksheet “Putting rhythm together”. (Appendix 11-Rhythm Worksheet) The teacher would split the class into 4 groups and each group would take on a rhythmic part as given in the “Putting Rhythm Together” worksheet. The teacher would coach each group to perform their parts well. All would play together to understand the concept of different rhythmic patterns coming together. After this is done, they would create their rhythmic patterns by filling up the second part of the same worksheet. This time, one of the pupils’ rhythmic patterns would be written on the board and that group he/she belongs to would use the new pattern. The other 3 groups would play the same patterns while that group would play the newly created pattern by their peer. Once the concept of rhythm-making is grasped, the teacher would encourage students to discuss among themselves some general ideas they have for their group music composition next week.

Lesson four

Pupils would continue to practice in groups on their music composition. The teacher would make her rounds to assist the pupils when needed. The teacher may need to remind the pupils on the importance of having a form for their composition. The
teacher would provide feedback and provide general ideas for improvement when required. Feedback should be open-ended enough to permit considerable flexibility and creativity. The teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required. Meanwhile, each group is required to fill up the checklist to ensure their readiness to perform for the next lesson. (Appendix 12- Are You Ready To Perform?)

Lesson five

All groups would perform their music compositions for the music teacher and their peers to listen. The music teacher, together with the researcher, would do ratings for the group based on the rubrics. (Appendix 13- Assessment Rubrics) The rubric consists of musical components such as tempo, aesthetic appeal, dynamics, creativity etc. After the presentation of the creation, the teacher would give positive and constructive feedback to the group. She needs to be careful to provide honest feedback without hurting the confidence of the group. Negative remarks should be avoided and the teacher should not suggest her ways of improvement, but only to provide general guidelines or areas to look into so that there will be no hampering of creativity from the pupils. The groups would be asked to refine the product.

Lesson Six

In this lesson, the remaining groups who have not performed in the previous lesson would perform for their peers and music teacher. The remaining time would be
for students to refine their compositions in their groups. Modifications would be done to the creative product. They would rehearse their modified music compositions. The teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses and to provide assistance when required.

**Lesson Seven**

The pupils would be in their groups, finalizing their final performance. The teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required. Prior to their final performance, each group is required to fill up the same checklist to ensure their readiness to perform for the next lesson. (Appendix 12- Are You Ready To Perform?)

**Lesson Eight**

In this lesson, the pupils would perform their compositions for the second time. For this time, the group music compositions would have undergone some modifications after the discussion between the group members. The groups would present their compositions in class and the music teacher, together with the researcher, would evaluate the groups for the second time. The teacher would provide feedback and praise any improvement made. Encouragement should be given to the groups who tried but were not successful. The researcher and the music teacher would do ratings for the group based on the same rubrics. (Appendix 13- Assessment Rubrics)
Lesson Nine

In this lesson, the remaining groups who have not performed in the previous lesson would perform for their peers and music teacher. Evaluation and feedback would be given to pupils by the teacher. Ratings would also be done using the same rubrics. (See Appendix 13- Assessment Rubrics)

2.12 Limitation

The music teacher was not able to conduct the final performance session due to unforeseen circumstances. The lesson was taken over by a trainee teacher. Furthermore, the lesson plans were not carried out as planned as the teacher adapted the worksheets and the teaching of the building blocks during her teaching. One of the music lessons was also cancelled as it fell on the school’s Sports Meet, hence the pupils had one session lesser to plan for their group music compositions. In addition, as this was the first time for the pupils did groupwork in their music lesson, they faced difficulties working in groups to discuss and compromise in making compositional decisions. This could be due to their lack of experience and exposure to cooperative learning.
Chapter 3: Vignettes of an Express class, 2E1

3.1 Background of students

All pupils of 2E1 were streamed as Express (Four-year course) since they were in secondary 1. The Express stream is somewhat similar to seventh grade through tenth grade in the American system and the pupils would take their GCE “O” level examinations (Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education) at the end of their fourth year. There were 37 pupils in the class with 31 Chinese pupils and 6 Malay pupils. Most of the pupils live in HDB (Housing Development Board) government flats. As most of them live near the school, many of them walk or take the LRT (Light Rail Transport) to the school.

It was the first time that the pupils saw the using of video cameras and recording equipment around the classroom for research purposes by other external parties. During the groupwork for the first few sessions, they appeared to be uneasy with the recording equipment around them. During the group interview, they voiced their discomfort about being recorded. From about the fourth lesson onwards, the pupils appeared less self-conscious and the group would sit around the microphone automatically without the teacher’s reminders at the start of the lesson. They would also remind their group members to sit closer to the microphone to allow better recording quality.

It was reflected in their survey that their attitude for learning to compose was lukewarm. Although the pupils generally believed that they did not need music
background to be able to compose music, they felt that learning to compose music in music lesson was not important to their learning. They did not seem to know how music composition could benefit them.

A quarter of the class joined performing arts groups in the school or had some formal piano lessons before. In the first tracked group, which consisted of 7 pupils, one member had learnt the violin before and stopped when she was in her primary school and three members were in the school’s performing arts CCAs like band and handbells ensemble. At the time of the project, the three pupils had been involved in their respective performing arts groups after school every week. Another tracked group consisted of 6 boys. The group has one member who had learnt the piano before but stopped his piano lessons when he was in his primary school. The rest of the group members had no prior musical training before.

3.2 Observations about the environment

Student responses

Throughout the entire process, it was observed that the students were attentive and quiet during the teacher’s lessons and activities carried out. There were no disruptions to the lessons and the pupils constantly paid attention in class. Only a handful of vocal ones contributed their answers when the teacher asked questions. The pupils were comfortable with their own groups as they selected their group members from the beginning. In Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003), behavioral traits such as the pupils not wanting to respond to the teacher’s questions could signal that the
pupils were not as intrinsically motivated as the pupils expressed their lack of interest in music composition as they felt it was not important to learn such skills. Without motivation as an enabling condition, it would not be easy to engage pupils effectively, let alone promote creative thinking skills. (Webster, 2003)

The pupils were aware of the space constraints in the music room, hence keeping their noise level and sound exploration down to prevent disturbing other groups. The pupils showed consideration for other groups as they reminded their group members not to make too much noise during the rehearsals. This contributes to the creation of a conducive environment to aid in the group creative process.

Throughout the whole music composition project, the teacher had to constantly encourage, persuade the pupils to begin their discussions and rehearsals, and urging them to progress faster. The groups also showed reluctance when the teacher informed them about having to perform. Almost all instruments that the pupils brought were objects, not home-made instruments. Furthermore, the group members told the researcher during the interviews that they were very busy with their schoolwork and had to prepare for upcoming examinations of other academic subjects, hence had no time to make instruments or meet up for discussions. This could be a reflection of their attitude towards music lessons, which in turn, has implications on their motivation that could influence the creative process.
3.3 Teacher’s approach and responses

Mindset

During the preparatory session, the teacher expressed her openness to the idea of teaching music composition to her classes. While she had not composed any music before, she expressed her willingness to try out teaching group music composition and believe that teaching group music composition could allow more sharing of ideas and promote creativity among the pupils. In addition, the music teacher was frank to admit her apprehension and worry due to her inexperience in handling music compositional tasks. Hickey (2003) highlighted that “music teachers without composition experience may not initially be able to do what an experienced composer can do for a young composer.” (p. 41) However, by doing more compositional activities, the music teacher would be more experienced and be a better facilitator over time. Definitely, the benefits and satisfaction of teaching music compositional task outweigh the initial temporal challenge of working out effective facilitation in music compositional lessons. The confidence of the music teacher for the project grew as the project unfolded.

Musical knowledge

In the preparatory session, the teacher clarified some of the musical concepts with the researcher before starting the project in January 2012. Musical concepts like form and texture were clarified to ensure better understanding between the researcher and the teacher. The music teacher expressed her apprehension in some musical
concepts like texture and rhythm creation. These observations reflect the teacher’s inadequacy in musical knowledge and lack of confidence in conducting a music compositional lesson.

Although we know that limited musical knowledge of the music teacher could impede the introduction of music compositions in class, the music teacher should not be deterred to teach it in class. By allowing pupils to explore musical ideas in a music compositional task, we, as teachers, are given an opportunity to understand pupils’ musical thinking better. (Wiggins, 2003, p. 141) If music teachers avoid introducing music composition in class, teachers are not only depriving the pupils the opportunities for exploration but also missing the chance to understand pupils’ perspectives in music compositions. The teacher could learn from the students’ music compositional decisions, hence gaining more experience for future music compositional projects. In a nutshell, while the music teacher may not have adequate musical knowledge, the teacher must remain open-minded to many possibilities in a music compositional class. The music teacher need to be receptive to many ideas and instrumental possibilities brought by the pupils and he or she must allow for creative ideas to flow and not curtail or dampen the creative sparks of the pupils.

Lessons

At the start of the project, the teacher explained the task clearly to the pupils and repeated the general deadlines they needed to meet in their groupwork before the pupils began their discussion. However, she did not explain the rationale of doing the project
to the pupils as planned during the start of the project. This could be one of the factors which contributed to the pupils’ lukewarm attitude towards the project. Wiggins (2005) emphasised the need to talk with pupils about what they would be doing and why they need to do it as “it is an invaluable part of empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning”. (p. 37) As the class was very well-behaved and some were quite proactive in answering the teacher’s questions, the teacher asked pupils questions as a class to check their understanding when going through the building blocks. The teacher always reminded pupils of what they learnt in the previous week to concretise learning of the musical concepts. She also frequently checked pupils’ understanding before proceeding to the next activity.

Supportive Environment

The music teacher ensured she went round to all groups during each group discussion session. She was very encouraging to all the groups and showed effort to guide the pupils to explore the sounds and things around them to create more ideas. In the teacher’s interview in lesson 5, the music teacher pointed out that the groupwork activities allowed her to elicit open communication between her and the groups as she could “go to each group to talk to them, to give them personal attention ...to discuss a little bit from what they want, this groups’ idea if I bring forward to another group is good too.” She found it less stressful and draining as compared to addressing the whole class. Sharing of ideas between her and the group set a positive classroom tone, making it personal and inviting for pupils to share their ideas with their group members and the teacher.
Although the music teacher’s tone was kind and inviting, the teacher’s facilitation process also affects the supportive environment for music composition. The teacher’s facilitation was largely centered on the storyline and how the each musical part could represent a character in the storyline. As a result, the pupils were not able to think of other creative ways to compose. There is a need for teachers to foster a more supportive environment for pupils to generate more creative music ideas for their music composition project.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the teacher was not able to conduct the final performance session. The last lesson, which was the performance assessment session, was taken over by a trainee teacher. During the last session, the trainee teacher did not provide opportunities for the pupils to evaluate their compositions after each performance. Without constructive feedback, the pupils may not know what worked well and what needed improving. During the presentations, the trainee teacher’s tone was generally strict and sometimes harsh and there were isolated instances where she sounded rushed and impatient to finish up the groups’ presentations. Some pupils from a group commented that they were hurried to start performing. That group of pupils also felt unhappy with the trainee teacher that they were not given time to complete their performances as the teacher interrupted their performance by addressing the class before their music composition ended.
3.4 The creative process

The compositional processes of the students were documented by the researcher during in-class observations, audio and video recording of each session and 2 interviews with two specific student groups after the fifth lesson and after the last lesson.

During the first few lessons, the pupils were enthusiastic to see the creative ways to make music and learned about various musical concepts through the teacher’s explanation and the video excerpts of Kitchen Stomp, Nanta and Blue Man Group. The pupils watched with interest and some moved to the catchy rhythms of the recordings. Pupils were observed with smiles on their faces while watching. Some were discussing the video excerpts and made several comments. As the teacher paused the recording, one pupil said,

"Haven't watched finish, you know?"

All these responses showed that the pupils were interested and motivated by the video. The teacher attempted to draw attention to the home-made instruments while screening the video on Stomp by asking the class what those instruments were made of and how they decorated their instruments to make it attractive.

She also tried to focus pupils on the three musical concepts: form, dynamics and speed by asking them to focus on the musical elements. In line with Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003), the teacher worked on the enabling skills such as the range of
musical expression in terms of dynamics, tempo and pitch and recognizing rhythmic patterns. Webster (1990) believed that “these formed a set of enabling skills that allow for the thinking process to occur (and) these skills form the basis of musical intelligence and interact with the thinking process in a rich variety of ways.” (p. 24) The teacher also explained briefly what these concepts were all about in the first lesson and started to narrow in on each musical concept during the subsequent lessons. As the teacher asked the pupils questions about what dynamics was, one pupil readily answered,

“How loud.”

This suggests that the class was able to understand the musical concepts which the teacher introduced and hence, equipping them with enabling skills for their music compositional task.

Teacher’s pedagogical competency

The music teacher plays a significant role in deciding the pedagogy and practices in class, setting directions for the pupils. The teacher has to be able to craft a composition task which is challenging yet not overly demanding to “give pupils the chance to explore and create something within their own boundaries, (which) will stimulate creative thinking”. (Hickey, 2003, p. 42) Other than the design of compositional task, Wiggins (2003) stressed that the degree of “the teachers’ support of student work and the teachers’ decisions made on classroom environment, time allotment, social issues and groundwork laid prior to composing and the pupils’
musical-cultural experience” (p. 162) could affect how the music teacher teach. So it is important for the teacher to be aware of these influences when crafting or conducting a music compositional task.

The music teacher incorporated the musical concepts when she felt that the pupils were clear about the rhythmic patterns, she started to include dynamic and speed contrasts to integrate the musical concepts with the clapping of rhythmic patterns in the worksheet. Systematic way of introducing the musical concepts as building blocks and putting all concepts together by clapping the rhythmic patterns provided in the worksheet reinforced the pupils’ learning. The pupils were very enthusiastic about the rhythm playing and clapped to the pulse given by the teacher. The teacher then introduced the concept of echoing and layering to add more variety to the rhythm playing exercise.

Wiggins (2005) suggested some ways for teachers to scaffold students performance by providing models to show “what professional composers do to solve compositional problems…understand the options available to musicians and the tools they use to carry them out” (p. 39) or “providing accompaniment or counting a difficult measure aloud to help pupils to get through the passage without stopping” (p. 40) Such pedagogical strategies could help in scaffolding which might help the pupils in formulating and consolidating their ideas for their creative task. As the music teacher did not demonstrate these strategies during the lessons, the pupils were initially lost and took a long time to understand what the teacher wanted them to do, hence the pupils wasted a lot of time on fruitless discussions.
During the fieldwork, the music teacher showed some home-made instruments to motivate pupils to come up with similar home-made instruments. During the interviews with the pupils, the groups pointed out that more videos other than the Blue Man, Nanta and Stomp, could be played and past performances by other pupils could be shown during the lessons, they could be inspired further to make their own musical instruments and come up with more interesting musical ideas for their music compositions. This could mean that the pupils needed more guidance from the teacher before they start on their music compositional task.

It is important to hand-hold weaker pupils but the teacher must be aware that the stronger-ability pupils should be given opportunities to develop their own ideas. By being overly protective of pupils or giving limited opportunity and support for creative ideas from pupils, the teacher becomes a hindrance. In Group 4 of 2E1, the group was very proactive and creative in coming up with sound effects independently but had to later create a storyline to meet the teacher’s requirement of having a storyline. The teacher’s expectation of the storyline used up some of the time during group discussion, which could be used for more idea generation. The teacher may sometimes face a dilemma of how far the variables and parameters or frame should be stretched.

**Storyline as a teacher’s tool for scaffolding**

The teacher’s concept of “storyline” acted as a pedagogical tool for her to teach music composition. She assisted the pupils on ideas for their storylines. To provide the assistance to pupils, the teacher explained that using the term “storyline” is easier to
help pupils to understand form. She felt that the linear progression of ideas depicting the journey to school formed the structure of the musical composition essentially. The teacher also elaborated to the pupils the importance of having a beginning and an ending and a storyline within the music composition they are to create.

*Tr:* When you design a performance, you must have some form or a structure, like a plan. So our theme is “on the way to school”. So do you think you want to show on your way to school? That will be your form, your plan. You must have a beginning and ending and a storyline. (Lesson Observation 2, 2T1)

Through a storyline, they would come up with characters and the characters will be represented by various rhythmic patterns alongside with concepts like dynamics and tempo changes to develop the “story”. The teacher also went into the association of the character to rhythmic patterns and discussed the possibility of creating certain rhythmic patterns to represent a certain character like in the Stomp video excerpt.

*Tr:* By getting the big picture, they have a structure. From the structure, they can go into the details. Then they can play around with the dynamics, rhythm, in order to express what they want to show. (Lesson 3, teacher’s interview)

As the music composition is based on a story, the teacher felt that it would be easier for pupils to understand the concept of form.
Tr: To me, storyline and form are the same. The form is the starting and ending, the middle got something. For me, for them to start and end, if I ask them to think of a story, it can be easier. I think when they have a story; they would translate the story into rhythms...the story gets more exciting and they can get faster and louder. So I hope by that, they can visualise something like that... I just naturally use the term “storyline”.
(Lesson 5, Teacher’s interview)

Tr: They (pupils) verbally told me the storyline because I asked them that “you may want to tell the class what each sound or each character represents, otherwise people would be wondering who and where.” (Lesson 6, Teacher’s interview)

The teacher seemingly kept the option open for the pupils who did not use storyline to compose. Although the idea of using storyline is not made compulsory for all groups to employ, this became a criteria set by the teacher and the trainee teachers at the later stage of the project during the group performances. Hence, all groups’ music compositions are similar as the teacher used the storyline as an example and used it as a basis during the group facilitation process. If the teacher did not use storyline as a pedagogical tool, the various group compositions could possibly turn out differently and more creative ideas might emerge with more creative space given to them.

When the pupils faced difficulty in idea generating during the process of music composition, the music teacher guided the pupils by using the storyline as a starting point and progressed into musical ideas and instrumental exploration. Under the guidance of the teacher during the group discussions of all groups, the pupils were
tasked to link their musical ideas together into a coherent whole. As the theme is “On the way to school”, the teacher probed possible sound effects or events that the pupils could see or hear on the way to school.

*Tr: I want to broaden that...So I actually inject the ideas that it is a CCA\(^6\) day and on the way to school, you pass by a Malay wedding...I gave ideas like that. (Lesson 6, Teacher’s interview)*

*Pupil: It was the teacher who gave us the idea. (First students’ interview)*

However, in one of the fixed groups (group 3, 2E1), the group did not understand the teacher’s concept of “storyline” initially and spent a few discussion sessions during music lessons allocating acting roles among the members and faced difficulty in getting the members to agree to act out the story. The group only started thinking of ideas for their music composition during lesson 5, but had issues agreeing with each other’s ideas resulting in ideas being selected. When the teacher approached the group, the group did not bring up this issue and carried on discussing the logistics of sitting down during performing, the possibility of using music stands and setting the time to meet outside school to continue their discussion. In lesson 6, the group explained their difficulty to progress to the teacher as the members resisted strongly to acting out their parts. The teacher clarified that no acting was needed and explained that they could make sounds to represent the storyline. The teacher guided the group on how

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\(^6\) Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) are non-academic activities which all pupils have to take part in. It is an integral part of our students’ holistic, well-rounded education. They help nurture in students qualities such as resilience, tenacity, confidence and perseverance, which prepare them to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world. ([http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/secondary/cca/](http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/secondary/cca/))
to make sounds to represent the characters and the flow of the story. In lesson seven, the group did a short rhythmic performance using call and response. The group was unable to explain how the performance related to the theme and how the group performance formed a coherent form or storyline. The facilitation process in lesson 5 could be more effective if the teacher gave constructive feedback to pupils about their selection of musical ideas and ironing out any potential leadership issues, hence avoiding time wastage in their creative process.

It was only during lesson 6 when the pupils sought help from the teacher to resolve their conflicts did the teacher started to guide the group more closely in terms of sound effects they could use and the storyline.

**Time for group discussions**

Due to time constraints, the teacher skipped the rhythm-creating exercise and moved on to discuss ideas for pupils’ music compositions which included the association of a character or sound effect to a rhythmic pattern like in Stomp. By omitting the rhythm creating section in the worksheet, the pupils did not have the opportunity to create their own set of rhythms, depriving them the chance for “imaginative problem solving with musical sounds which is important in the creative process”. (Webster, 1990, p. 23) Though the teacher knew the importance of rhythm creating, she explained that she wanted the groups to have more discussion time due to time restrictions.
Tr: My thinking was maybe they need time to talk. And looking at the time, there isn’t much time to settle down. That’s why I had to skip that portion...And one of my objectives is to really sit in groups and start to talk a bit. (Lesson 4, Teacher’s interview)

Due to the cancellation of a planned lesson due to the School Sports Day, the teacher explained that she ran out of time to allow pupils to generate ideas, firm up their musical compositions and give timely feedback to them. She stressed the need to give pupils time to prepare their music compositions. During the commencement of the project, there was a lack of time for pupils to come up with creative musical ideas for their products as the project was shortened by one lesson.

Tr: This is the part when we really need to give them time. And I personally think that two weeks may not be enough. There are too many groups and only one person to handle...Students will only refine when you give feedback. And to give feedback, they must be ready, at least for the first round. (Lesson 4, Teacher’s interview)

Due to the shortage of time, the teacher constantly went to the groups to check if they were ready for performance. It was observed that the pupils felt hurried in making decisions about their ideas each time the teacher prompted. The teacher said,

“I think by giving them...pushing them next week that I want to see something is pretty effective...don’t give them too much time.”
Hence, the teacher believed that a longer time frame is needed for this project as the pupils needed more time to brainstorm for musical ideas. Similarly, in Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003), he emphasised the need to have sufficient time for creative thinking to occur. So there is a need to have more time for pupils to think of creative ideas for their music composition task. Furthermore, as the teacher was worried about the lack of time, she pressured the groups to come up with their first performance. Hence, the space for pupils to explore ideas for their musical compositions was shortened.

In addition, the teacher also observed some groups were aimlessly chatting and not focusing on the task. There could a few possible reasons for the pupils’ restless and aimless discussions. It could be due to lack of sufficient scaffolding as the pupils were unsure of what to do for the compositional task. Another reason could be that much time spent on classroom management, leaving little time and space left for group discussion. This could suggest that the facilitation process of the teacher needed improvement.

Although we understand the strong need to allow time and space for pupils’ exploration and experimentation to create a musical composition, we have to acknowledge that the time for this project was very short and we were even more hard pressed for time when one of the music lessons had to be cancelled due to the school’s Sports Day. There was no possibility of expanding the music lesson time during the commencement of the project. Working through the project in constrained time was difficult and choices of what was to be discarded or replaced had to be made.
Having more time for discussion does not necessarily bring success in group music composition. Good facilitative skills of the teacher also contribute to the success of conducting music compositions in class. The music teacher needs to facilitate the groupwork effectively by allowing pupils time to explore and evaluate sounds and musical ideas. During the facilitative process, the music teacher encourages creative musical ideas from pupils and guides the pupils to think like the way how music composers compose. Music composition allows the composer time to reflect on the musical ideas produced and to evaluate and modify those ideas (Kratus, 1991, p. 48). Hence, time must be given to pupils to explore sounds and instruments at the beginning of the compositional task. The “messy” noises that the pupils engaged in trying out the instruments are actually evidence of musical exploration towards music compositions. In this stage, Wiggins described that “it is clear that what may appear chaotic is actually musical thinking in action where students are ‘trying out’ or ‘finding’ their ideas on instruments, judging their merit, and then either adopting or discarding them”. (2007, p. 457) Here, Walker described that “...free exploration of sounds in the classroom and the inevitable noise is called “creative fallout”. (1984, p. 116) The creative fallout may sound disorganised but the exploratory noises which pupils play repeatedly help them to decide to accept or discard the usage of the instrument or the motif they play. Wiggins stated that “this reflection on the potential contextualization of ideas is what provides a basis for their acceptance or rejection, whether by individual or group. It also sparks development of ideas within the frame of the context...”. (2007, p. 461) Hickey also echoed a similar viewpoint that “we should encourage think time by giving students opportunities to not only to be away from their creative tasks but also to revise projects over time.” (2003, p. 33) So the music teacher has to facilitate the groupwork by
guiding the groups in revising, editing and extending or even rejecting of certain musical motifs for their group musical compositions.

During one of the rehearsals prior to performance 1, group 4 from 2E1 came up with four rhythmic layers. (See VCD recording 1) During the beginning of the discussion of the final performance day, the group continued with their idea generation, exchanging instruments with one another to explore and experiment with sounds. For the first layer, a constant pulse was played by a group member. Another pupil created “1-3-4” rhythm using his spade (A gardening tool which the pupil brought from his home). He tapped a pattern consisting a dotted crotchet, a quaver and a minim. The boy explained that his inspiration to create his “1-3-4” rhythm came from the first section of “Putting Rhythms Together” in the rhythm worksheet earlier which the teacher used to teach the class. He explained that this rhythmic pattern has a “long-short” effect. The constant pulse and rhythm sparked off the rest of the group’s creativity and enthusiasm to add on to the rhythmic layer. While a pupil provided a constant pulse using his spade, the rest of the members experimented with the instruments and rhythms to match the rhythm.

Pupil 1: I was thinking of La la la la la. Either this one (bag) or this one (shaker) is the footsteps. (Demonstrating a constant pulse, instead of Pupil 2’s 1-3-4 rhythm-One dotted crotchet, a quaver and minim)

The third layer was later played by the hitting of the cardboard box on the floor to represent the rain and wind. It was to be played after the entrance of the first and
second layers. The addition of the thunder by the squashing the plastic bag were to form the fourth layer. The group proceeded to add adding on the tempo and dynamic changes to make the interlocking rhythms more interesting. The group had already come up with a structure for their group music composition.
The rest of the lesson was spent on refining the entrance and exits to the composition and the precision of the group members to enter to play their part and to exit the piece accordingly.

*Pupil 5: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 (Counting loudly for the entrance of Pupil 2’s 1-3-4-rhythm)*

*Pupil 2’s rhythm entered with his 1-3-4 rhythm.*

*The group started to count loudly to get ready to start. After counting to 12, 2 pupils playing the shaker representing the rain joined in.*

The group seemed to be focused on creating the rhythms and its representations in the storyline. The instrument allocation seemed to be secondary as the instruments were swapped around during the rehearsals, so that every member could explore the instruments.

One of the students in the group pointed out during the informal interview with the researcher that music composition was important as it “stretches our imagination further”. The group told the researcher that the sounds of their music composition were random and as long as they liked it, they would add it in. They would then link it up with a storyline. To most of the pupils, they seemed not to know the benefits of music composition as they were just trying to meet the teacher’s expectation on using storyline for their creative product.
Researcher: You all have a storyline?

Leader: Yes, we suddenly come up with a storyline.

During the first performance for the teacher, the group explained what the storyline was and the teacher clarified what the instruments represented. The group had a good start but the tempo became unstable towards the ending, causing the performance to come to a halt as everyone looked at each other, unsure of when and how to stop. When asked about their first performance, one of the pupils pointed out, “Ok lor. Too messy.”

The teacher gave general feedback to the group such as fine-tuning the ending as the ending was unclear. In addition, she also pointed out the importance of cueing to synchronise the playing. After the teacher’s feedback, the group worked on neatening the timing, finalizing the sequence of sounds and searching for the sound that best resembled thunder. After the first performance, the group appeared to be more focused and at the same time, worried about the up-coming performance. A few of the pupils unconsciously brought in music technical words like “bars”, so some of the group members were unhappy and felt left out. However, the group was sensitive to their other friends’ difficulties in understanding the technical terms and attempted to explain to them what those technical terms meant. The group continued to work on the synchronisation of the pulse fluctuation by rehearsing throughout the lesson. One of them exclaimed,
"Hey! Can you speak English? I never learnt music before.

For the last discussion session before the final performance, the group was still in the preparation stage of the thinking process in Webster’s model of creative thinking in music (2003). The group was playing with sounds and discussing the ordering of sounds, about which sounds should begin and end the composition. Some members were exploring with their hands to make sounds of the thunder.

Group 3

For group 3, they took a longer time to understand the task requirement and to settle group disagreements on the leadership. The group was submissive under a domineering leader. The group was not focused and squabbled at times, hence wasted a lot of time on resolving conflicts, instead of brainstorming for ideas. Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003) suggests that personality is one of the variables that affect the creative thinking process. Having a domineering character in the group would influence the social condition within the group, affecting the social fabric of the group.

After the intervention and clarifying the task by the teacher, the group became clearer and more focused. They started discussing about the instruments and the sound effects which could be heard on the way to school. The group also pointed out that they used the pulse as a start and they would then add in the rhythms. They also planned to include the tempo changes and worked on the storyline for their group music composition.
Group 3 in 2E1 was more critical in thinking about the timbre of the sounds. The group rejected many sound ideas because they could not find appropriate instruments to represent the sounds they want to represent. At the beginning of the project, the group explored with their water tumbler, hitting their fists and files on the floor to locate a suitable pulse for the piece. During the first interview, one boy emphasised,

“Very dark and low sound beat...To get the bass first.(Nodding furiously) ”

“Because I think that footsteps should not have that shh shh shh sound. It is very weird.”

During the second interview after their performance, the group decided to focus on the beats as they could not find good representations from the instruments they explored. The group also expressed the importance on settling the pulse as they could play with the tempo changes. One of them explained,

“...we want to focus on the beats, not these (instruments to imitate the sound effects).”

In the last interview with pupils, the two groups expressed the need to have more time for them to improve their music composition, such as synchronisation and seeking for more creative sounds and instruments. One of the groups highlighted that music composition could be fun and creative if more time was given.
Musical leader: It is not that bad, we did a lot during the short period of time. If we were given a lot of time, we will work on the synchronising of beats or on the development on the pounding of rhythmic patterns.

Another: Because all the sounds are similar, we can add more instruments to make more different sounds. (2E1 Group Three Pupils’ interview two)

The two quotes from the pupils also indirectly showed the pupils’ awareness of rhythmic variety and the musical element of timbre. The pupils expressed the need to synchronise their respective parts better and develop different rhythmic patterns, perhaps thinking about interlocking rhythms. This could signal that the pupils may develop a better understanding of specific music concepts through their self-evaluation.

It is interesting to observe how the two groups resolved their personal conflicts. Both groups agreed that the project allowed them to understand their group members better. They highlighted the importance of listening and being objective. They also learnt to negotiate and compromise. This echoes Hargreaves’ viewpoint on how one’s behaviour and development are influenced by the social-cultural environment. (2003, p. 153) Behavioural changes in the pupils are the results of compromising and gaining peer acceptance.

In 2E1 group 4, there were some verbal disagreements during the interview and groupwork but the group was able to overcome the conflicts and continued with the discussions. The group was very frank about each other’s shortcomings and they pointed out that the group leader needed to listen to them more and talk a little less. For
the subsequent lessons, the leader was quieter and listened more to her members’ inputs. The group leader was receptive to the group’s feedback and revealed in the first interview with the researcher that this was one of the reasons why she was reluctant to change to another group as she was not sure if the other group would tolerate her character. In general, this group displayed very positive group dynamics throughout the groupwork and working closely as a group could be a reason why they were able to move faster as compared to the other 3 groups.

**Groupwork as a teacher’s tool for scaffolding**

Groupwork enables scaffolding. According to Wiggins, she defines that “scaffolding is a concept that has roots in social constructivist learning theory... (pupils) doing more than what they can do independently… (through) the support of others in the learning environment (peers and teacher)” (2005, p. 40) The teacher would carefully craft the music task to challenge the pupils to ensure pupils are learning something new. By not interfering their group, the teacher could allow the pupils to discuss and make music compositional decisions as a group. So, scaffolding allows students to perform tasks that would normally be slightly beyond their ability without the assistance and guidance from the teacher. Wiggins stated that “the social and musical support structures of the classroom actually enable learners to operate at a higher level of competence than they may be able to achieve on their own”. (2005, p. 40) To achieve that, pupils could be engaged in group work in which social interaction becomes one of the important elements in a child’s learning.
Through social interactions during groupwork, the pupils could generate ideas through negotiation, improvisation of some ideas or musical experiences they had previously or the musical skills they learnt and piecing them together. As a part of the self-learning process, the opinions and ideas of peers and teacher shared indirectly create the social fabric of the group and set the dynamics of the class. Wiggins explained that “as pupils work together towards a common goal, they can fill in gaps in one another’s understanding, enabling the overall competence of the group to move forward”. (2005, p. 41) Throughout the group music compositional process, they make decisions, as a group, about what instrument and material to invent, use, revise, extend or discard based on the group’s vision or intent. Wiggins explained that “as students invent material and make decisions about how it will fit together, their understanding of the parameters of a compositional assignment and of music grows”. (2005, p. 41)

**Social Fabric of the peer group**

The social fabric of the peer group is crucial in influencing the creative process, especially in group music composition. Some of the factors affecting the social fabric of the peer group are the choice of grouping and the interactions in groups.

The choice to choose their own work partners influences the social fabric as there is a certain level of familiarity if the pupils are to choose their group members. Miell and MacDonald (2000, as cited in Wiggins, (2003, p. 161), suggested that
“(friends)...established shared knowledge and pattern of interacting allows them to anticipate each other’s ideas, draws on experiences they have shared...non-friends have to establish a way of working with each other before they can begin to establish a shared view of what the task is and start to compare their views about it.” (p. 365)

Hence, by allowing pupils the freedom of choice of their desired groups, the teacher allows positive dynamics to set in. Positive group dynamics could be seen in some groups. While moving around during the groupwork, the teacher observed how the groups worked through social interaction, negotiation, using the musical concepts. Through groupwork, the pupils discovered gaps in understanding creating a need to clarify doubts with the teacher. The members were ready to guide each other, especially to those without musical background. In 2E1 group 4, the group displayed positive group dynamics as showed patience to other members within the group.

(Group discussed the timing of the silence and the entrance of instruments after the pause.) First pupil: Silence is after four bars after fast section...
Second pupil: Hello! Mr Non-Musician here! (Second pupil looked frustrated. One member explained to the second pupil.
Third pupil: Tell him one more time. (Looking concerned. The member explained patiently to the second pupil again.) (2E1, Group 4, Lesson Observation 7)

From the quote above, the group showed patience and sensitivity towards other members within the group as they were willing to explain again to clarify their peer’s understanding.
a) Caring for each other

Being in their friendship groups, the pupils were more concerned about each other’s feelings. Group 4 discussed the issue of having a notational plan to help some of them to perform better. During the first interview with that group, majority of the members expressed that score was not necessary. However, the group came up with a notational plan to help the weaker members despite their initial reluctance to come up with any score or plan. Having positive group dynamics within the group made the group more sensitive to their peer’s needs as they showed more care for their peers. So during the final performance, they drew up some notation plan of their composition to help their peers to “play and memorise” more successfully.

b) Praising each other

Peer recognition of each other’s strengths or talents could enhance the social fabric, making the environment more conducive for groupwork. The positive group dynamics propelled the group to work together more cohesively. One of the groups openly praised one of their members as “talented” and “optimistic” during the first interview with the researcher and they pointed out at the second interview that the teamwork was their group’s strength.

The interactions between the groups and within the group would affect the social fabric of the peer group, which is a crucial factor in influencing the students’ processes and their music compositions. Wiggins (2003) explained that “the nature of verbal, musical, and physical interaction that takes place within small groups or between pairs
who are working together to create original musical ideas impacts both student process and product.” (p. 160) During such ‘interactions’ in group work, Wiggins (2003) pointed out that “one of the initial decisions is determining each individual’s role in the work in progress. This decision is often personal... sometimes influenced by the nature of assignment...” (p. 145) When role allocation takes place in groupwork, Wiggins (2003) stated that “when students collaborate, the nature of their independent work within the group is defined not only by their musical role in the piece but also by their social role in the group.” (p. 145) It is possible that aggressive students emerge as leaders and others as followers or pupils having interesting musical ideas to emerge as leaders, even though they do not seek such a role. It is found that “the pupils would challenge each other’s musical ideas and often new musical concepts emerge as students defend their original ideas or seek to reach compromise.” (Wiggins, 2005, p. 160) Disagreements arise due to conflicting visions of group members being unsure of what to do with the ideas they have. Through negotiation and self awareness and management of their emotions, the groups realigned the vision again and moved on to the task. In group 3 of 2E1, the group leader was controlling the whole group and rejected other members’ ideas initially. Only after the first interview with the researcher and the teacher’s intervention, the domineering leader became more subdued and more willing to listen to his group members’ ideas.

c) Socially-acceptable music compositions

Interestingly, Wiggins also pointed out that students who are composing alone in non-collaborative work want to invent something that will be socially acceptable to
their peers. (2005, p. 160) This emphasises the importance of social acceptance as a young composer and a perceived creative product. During the group discussions, one of the group’s musical leader looked around at the groups around him. He tried to seek for inspiration and new ideas from other groups.

Musical Leader: Hey! That group has something. We can copy them. They have shakers. (2E1, group 3, Lesson Observation 5)

Musical Leader: (Pointing at the neighbouring group) Shh...listen to the beat. Actually their beat is not bad. The sound is nice to hear. (2E1, group 3, Lesson Observation 5)

By getting ideas from other groups, his group would not be left behind or left embarrassed when they performed their group music composition. The pupils would aim to create something that would be socially acceptable to their peers. Group 3 revealed that the group was lagging behind when they compared their group with other groups in the class. One of them said,

“The interview is like a reflection. Whether we have done enough or not. At the first interview, we found that roles not decided. We agreed on the beat, but we haven’t decided what beats. Who to do what, haven’t settled. What to play, also haven’t settled.” (2E1, Group 3, Second Pupils’ Interview)

It was only after the teacher’s stepping in and the first interview did the group try to put aside their differences and unhappiness and continue to discuss the
chronological order of the various entrances. The passive members were more proactive as they explored the sounds using parts of their hands to hit the floor and played an interlocking pattern together.

d) Conflict management through negotiation and group behavioural changes

The presence of group dynamics could help pupils to negotiate better. In 2E1 group 4, the group dynamics was very strong as the group members were very close to each other. The group members were also open to their peers’ criticisms and willing to change for them. In one group, two members quibbled with each other but made up almost immediately without bearing any grudge, to get on with their group discussion. In this group, the leader was initially quite domineering and her tone was occasionally harsh and directive. After the group’s truthful feedback about the leader’s shortcoming, the group leader mellowed down and confessed that her domineering character made her reluctant to join another group who might not tolerate her shortcomings. She also admitted to her own shortcoming when asked what she learnt from this project by reflecting the need for her to listen more. Furthermore, they also pointed out the leader’s behavioural change after the first interview with the researcher. A few members expressed that they were happier as the whole group “listened more” at the later stage of the project as compared to the first interview they had with the researcher. All of them stated that they loved to be in the group and would not want to change their grouping.

In the same class, another group, Group 3, grappled with group conflicts throughout the groupwork. Group 3 had a tough start as they needed the teacher to
counsel them and guide them for the idea generation. The group’s disagreement on each other’s ideas and unwillingness of some members to contribute sparked much dissatisfaction among the group members. In addition, the presence of a dominant social leader who was not able to direct the group in a positive direction stagnated the group’s progress. It was possible that the aggressiveness of the social leader allowed him to emerge as a leader due to his powerful social role in the group. Although one of the members who voiced out his desire to be the leader tried to provide many relevant and useful musical ideas for the group to use at the beginning of the project, he was ignored. This could imply this musical leader’s lower social ranking within the group. Due to the lack of social power, the musical leader faced much disappointment and anger while trying to motivate and guide the group. The teacher emphasised to the groups that they needed to be objective and they needed to compromise. After the teacher’s intervention, the group appeared to be able to compromise a little better and to put aside their differences to focus on the task. During the first interview, they pointed out the importance of persuasion and negotiation in groupwork;

*Musical leader: We must also look back at ourselves. Whether your suggestion is too difficult to do... Don’t allow a little quarrel (to) affect.*

*All: Ya! (2E1, Group 3, First Pupils’ interview)*

Although Group 3 tried to resolve the conflict after the first interview, the group was getting increasingly frustrated with the existing leader (social) as he was not able to guide them and he was finding fault with everyone during the third session of groupwork in lesson 6. It was clear that the group was upset with the leader and
frustrated with the progress of the project. The shift in leadership was the turning point for the group in the last discussion lesson as the social leader compromised and allowed another member to take over. He said,

*Social Leader: I got no idea how to lead.*

*Pupil: You are not the leader.*

*Musical Leader: Let’s say I do this. (Demonstrating a rhythmic pattern)*

*The group continued to work on their rhythms.* (2E1, Group 3, Lesson Observation 7)

Generally, the group learnt social skills of negotiation to manage conflicts. From this groupwork activity, behavioural changes in the pupils could be observed. In the second pupils’ interview with the researcher, the group stated that their relationship had improved as the group could communicate better as they share ideas together and learnt to control their emotions. One of them also mentioned that they also learnt the importance to negotiate and to compromise.
3.5 The creative product

Home-made instruments

The instruments that the pupils found and made were many and interesting. They used metal drink cans filled with green beans, files, pens, a mineral water bottle, storybooks, an umbrella, plastic water tumblers, cardboard box, felt cloth, a plastic bag, some dried leaves, crushing of a piece of paper and even a spade.

The pupils came up with original and creative ideas. Some of them came up with different ways to hit the floor with their hands to represent different characters in their music compositions. They even use a felt cloth to mute the spade’s hitting sounds to create a different timbre. The more innovative ones tried to hit the objects at different parts to create different sounds. The objects they used for sound making were many, but most of the instruments were not made. This may be due to a lack of time as mentioned by the groups.

Performed compositions

Group 4 (first performance)

During the first performance for the teacher, the group was still discussing before they were asked to begin. The group explained their storyline to the teacher by giving the sequence of the instruments to represent the development of the storyline.
(See VCD recording 2) It started with the hitting of the floor with their hands at a constant pulse and the group’s 1-3-4 rhythmic pattern entered. After the entry of the 1-3-4 rhythm, the shaker came in and the whole composition started to speed up. The piece became unstable and the performance stopped as everybody looked at each other, unsure of when to stop.

The teacher gave suggestions to the group and guided the pupils to pay more attention to their composition’s ending. She also pointed out the importance of the cueing for all to be ready for the ending of the music composition.

Group 4 (Revised performance)

During the final performance, the sounds of the spade were replaced with the thumping of the books on the floor and the addition of 1 shaker to replace the plastic bag as an alternative sound source. (See VCD recording 6) The plastic bag was removed as the group felt that it was too soft, so it was not a good instrument to be used. The group explained that with the additional shaker, it would increase the volume of the shakers, which represented rain. The footsteps, as planned and rehearsed, were played by the thumping of the water bottles.

Using the concepts that the teacher taught, they incorporated tempo and dynamic contrasts and created rhythmic layers. The sets of rhythms were played repeatedly. With the help of the storyline, the group created a character who was going to school and met other friends along the way. With the different footsteps of the main character and the
friends and the main character’s heartbeat, the piece began with two basic rhythmic layers. Each layer was played by two or three members. The entrance of the rain and thunder triggered the fast tempo of the piece as the character and his friends started to run to the school. As the rain intensified, the piece reached its climax. The tempo and beats then slowed down to represent the character and his friends reaching the school. Not being late, the heartbeat of the main character and footsteps slowed down as they reached the school. At the end, only the shakers played as it represented the drizzle that was still going on after the character and his friends reached the school.

On the whole, the group had synchronised their playing quite well and did the speed fluctuation and dynamic changes neatly for their final performance. The trainee teacher, who was covering the teaching duties for the music teacher, commented that the group had put in some effort to make their shakers and attempted to use musical concepts in their performance. She told the group that they could make their group music composition more interesting by having a more interesting climax.

There was an improvement between the first and the second version of group 4’s composition. The revised version was better-rehearsed in areas like the tempo changes and the sequence of entrances. With the straightforward and coherent storyline, the members were able to play their parts well and were able to synchronise with each other too.
Group 3 (first performance)

During the first performance for the teacher, the group was still discussing before they were asked to begin. The group explained their storyline to the teacher by giving the sequence of the instruments to represent the development of the narrative. (See video recording 3) A solo rhythmic pattern was played and this was followed by the rest of members playing an echo of the same rhythm. The group did two sets of call of response to demonstrate to the teacher. As the group had not finished their planning for the composition, they explained to the teacher they would add one more set of rhythm and the tempo would increase along the way. The teacher reminded the group not to use only one musical concept and develop the storyline of their group music composition.

Group 3 (Revised performance)

For the final performance, the main character is represented by four components; the heartbeat, the breath, and the footsteps from the main characters and his friends which were represented by the four layers. (See VCD recording 7) The music composition started with a set of rhythm played by the sounds of a water tumbler hitting the floor. This represented the breath of the main character. The second layer (heartbeats) entered with a constant pulse by the player hitting on the floor. The third layer played by 2 group members (character’s footsteps) entered. After the three components of the character (breath, heartbeat, and footsteps) were introduced, the two members would enter the piece after the leader’s signal to enter. This formed the fourth
layer which represented the two friends whom the character met on the way to school. One of the friends was represented by the hitting of the umbrella on the floor to represent his footsteps. And the other was represented by the poundings on the floor. The group explained that to differentiate the different characters, they pounded the floor differently using the different parts of their hands to show the different characters. All layers played the same set of rhythm in ostinato throughout. At this juncture, the piece reached its climax as it increased its tempo as the characters were late for school. Tempo fluctuations were introduced to represent the character’s changed walking speed as he crossed the road. At the end, the tempo slowed down and the piece faded off as the character reached the school.

There was a marked difference between the first and revised version of group 3’s composition. The revised version is longer and had a storyline to back the form of their music composition. The revised version had more musical ideas and was more rehearsed in terms of tempo changes and has a better developed-structure as compared to the first version. Due to lack of time to rehearse, the performance at certain points appeared unstable and random-sounding. Despite some messy sections of the revised performance, it was a complete and coherent piece of music.

3.6 Analysis of the creative product

It is important to note that the creative products (home-made instruments and music compositions) revealed that the pupils made use of their prior experiences of their lives to leverage on to complete the music compositional task. In Webster’s model of
creative thinking (2003), it could be classified as “musical aptitudes” as these are “individual skills that are subject to influence by the environment during the early years of development and possibly into early adult life”. (p. 24) The social context played an important role in the composer’s compositional processes. One of the groups’ music compositions was influenced by the Japanese variety shows that they watched during their free time. The group’s music performance started with a Japanese student taking a train to the school and sound effects like man’s shouting to sell packed lunch and sounds of the trains. So the pupils have their unique musical knowledge and experience and compose what is meaningful to them.

In the groups, the pupils also brainstormed for musical ideas based on their experiences on the way to school and shared a consensus what should be included in their group music compositions. There were a few groups who approached the theme differently and uniquely. One instance was a performance about a trip on the train to school and it used singing, drama, piano and flute playing and a jingle to depict the journey to school. With the help of existing prior knowledge, the pupils enhanced their music compositions by evaluating and editing the musical ideas. So in the center of Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003), the pupils entered the process of evaluating and editing their music composition, which was known as the verification process. This verification process was connected to the enabling skills and conditions. For the music compositions, playing fluctuating tempo was a common element in all the groups’ composition. Being late for school and rushing on the way to school were some of the common ideas from the pupils. Unique ideas from the composition were little and the groups comprehended the theme literally and saw it as the journey to school in the
early morning, hence finding it difficult to introduce interesting sound effects to their compositions. Musical imagination seemed to be lacking here. As mentioned by Webster, he stated that “imaginative problem solving with music sound plays an important role in the creative process...”. (p. 23) Enabling skills seemed to be lacking and needed to be emphasised more to get them to think creatively in this task.

Both groups generally shared similar ideas to improve on their first performance of their compositions, the pupils explained that they would improve on synchronising their playing by confirming the chronological order of instruments, neatening the entrances and exits of the rhythmic parts individually and in combination, better coordination in dynamic and tempo changes and rehearsing repeatedly to perform better. They also mentioned the possibility to include or abandon sounds ideas or instruments for the final performance.

Most of the revised performances were similar to the first performances. Most of the groups did not change much or introduced big ideas to their compositions. It could indicate the groups’ satisfaction with their group music compositions and their unwillingness to disturb the complete piece. During the second interview with them, the groups revealed their reluctance to modify their pieces as they found it satisfactory and they did not see the need to improve on it. The pressure to perform to the class propelled them to polish the piece so that their compositions would be complete and better coordinated. This could reflect the importance of peer pressure in music performances, especially to the pupils of this age.
On the whole, the music teacher’s facilitative processes are not in place as the teacher did not provide sufficient guidance in helping the pupils to craft their music compositions. Better classroom management from the teacher is also required to set the classroom tone for better learning. To guide the pupils better, the music teacher needed to understand more about the pupils’ ideas and intentions of their creative products before discussing the specific details. (Wiggins, 2003, p. 153) Although she guided all groups on the use of storyline as the form for their music compositions, more teacher support to help pupils to work through the details would be helpful for the weaker groups.
Chapter 4: Vignettes of a Normal Technical class, 2T1

4.1 Background of students

All pupils of 2T1 were streamed as Normal Technical (Four-year course) since they were in secondary 1. The Normal Technical stream is somewhat similar to seventh grade through tenth grade in the American system and the pupils would take subjects of a more technical nature, such as Design and Technology. They would take their GCE “N” (Technical) level examinations (Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education) at the end of their fourth year. There were 37 pupils in the class with 15 Chinese pupils, 21 Malay pupils and 1 Eurasian. Most of the pupils live in HDB (Housing Development Board) government flats. As most of them live near the school, many of them walk or take the LRT (Light Rail Transport) to the school.

The pupils were used to groupwork but it is the first time seeing video cameras and recording equipment around the classroom for research purposes by other external parties. During the first few sessions of the groupwork, they appeared to be uneasy with the recording equipment around them. As mentioned by Webster (2003), he stated the importance of the creator’s working conditions on the creative process. So by getting used to the presence of the recording devices, the environment may become less threatening and more conducive to aid in the group creative process.

It was reflected on their survey that their attitude for learning to compose was quite positive. Although the pupils generally felt that music composition was not
important to them, they were receptive to the idea of learning music compositions during their music lessons. Unlike the Express class, the Normal Technical class felt that they needed music background to be able to compose music. It could be their perception that one needed musical background or certain amount of expertise to compose music.

About eight pupils in the class joined the performing arts groups in the school or had some formal music training before. The first tracked group consisted of 6 pupils and had one member who joined band previously in his primary school. The rest of the group members had no prior music training. Another tracked group consisted of 7 girls. All the group members had no prior music training.

4.2 Observations about the environment

Student responses

Throughout the entire process, it was observed that the students were active and vocal with their thoughts. In general, the pupils took about ten minutes to settle down at the start of each lesson. About a quarter of the class had the tendency to shout unnecessary comments and walk around without the teacher’s permission even when the teacher was teaching. The pupils were inattentive to the teacher during her teaching and instructions. Some pupils also took the opportunity to play or chat with each other during teacher’s teaching or instruction-giving, causing the teacher to pause her teaching to lecture or stare at these pupils. Some would be engrossed in their own
conversation while the teacher was teaching. The group discussions were noisy but manageable. Occasionally, there was a group or two who might refuse to cooperate. In one instance, the group of boys refused to obey the teacher’s instructions. A rowdy and disruptive class would impede the pupils’ learning process as the class was chaotic and out of control.

The teacher allowed pupils to voice out opinions and she also asked many questions to elicit students’ responses during the teacher-guided lessons on the building blocks. Usually, many of them would shout their opinions or answers to the teacher’s questions. The less rowdy ones would chat quietly among themselves and appeared unfocused at times. In Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003), a part of the environment defined the working conditions. If the class discipline is disorderly and uncontrolled, it could be a deterring factor for effective classroom teaching.

During the performance, the pupils were attentive to the groups’ performances at the beginning and started to discuss or comment when the performance was reaching the end. Sometimes, their reactions and comments were distracting the performers, so, the teacher had to stop them from disturbing the various groups’ performances. However, the class still showed their support for the groups’ performances by their spontaneous smiles and applause. Teacher classroom management skill remained as a crucial factor to allow any learning to take place.
Teacher responses

Class management by the Two Trainee Teachers

The trainee teachers believed that the pupils, regardless of Normal Technical or Express streams, had short attention span and they were not proactive in their learning, hence relied on teachers’ coaching very much.

Trainee Tr 1: More for 2T1, but for Express classes, I find them as challenging. So maybe it is because they are young. Too much energy to spare and they can’t sit still to listen. So listening and observing and trying to imitate, I don’t think it works. (Trainee teacher 1’s interview during lesson 4)

Trainee Tr 2: I am sure they are not talking. (Not discussing about the project)...They didn’t and I know they are never going to do it...2N2 is not the motivated kind. (Trainee teacher 2’s interview during lesson 7)

The two untrained teachers explained to the researcher that the teachers must be firm and have to coach the pupils closely as the pupils, they believed, would not work on their music compositions by themselves. So they practiced very close monitoring on the pupils’ progress. This impacted the classroom environment as the pupils were observed to be very quiet and tense during the lessons.
The music teacher

The music teacher had indicated in the interviews that she considered the noise level in the class high and felt that the pupils could be rowdy at times. She also highlighted that a handful of boys could be uncooperative and defiant sometimes.

Class Management by the Music Teacher

Class management is a crucial factor to create a conducive environment for successful completion of the group music compositional task. The teacher needed to introduce appropriate disciplinary measures at times to as the teaching or the facilitation process would not be disrupted. During the term of the project, the music teacher dealt with many disciplinary issues like pupils eating during the lessons, pupils’ rude behaviour and resistance to follow the teacher’s instructions. The teacher continuously aimed to strike a balance between being firm to irresponsible pupils and yet, maintaining a supportive and encouraging classroom environment to stimulate creativity. The music teacher seeks to see pupils displaying responsibility in their work and in the filing of the worksheets in their music files. Such classroom routines could help to enforce discipline, hence creating a more positive environment for learning. Although the teacher tried to enforce discipline in class and at the same time, encouraging creative ideas and responses for the task, she was constantly being interrupted by disruptive behaviours from the pupils. These indicators could signal that the pupils were not as intrinsically motivated as they showed little interest in music compositions even though they expressed their receptiveness in the pupils’ survey.
During the first interview with the teacher, she told the researcher that she hoped to see the pupils becoming more responsible. As part of the disciplinary measure, the notion of “heart” was mentioned as she wanted the pupils to practice empathy and understanding in class to deter unacceptable behaviors.

In lesson three, she explained that she was not able to complete the lesson due to discipline issue. She expressed her desire to see responsible actions in the pupils by appealing to their “brains and hearts”. To maintain discipline, the teacher lectured the pupil by identifying the mistake and explaining the reason why it was wrong and her rationale for rejecting that behaviour. She also pointed out that she had to make difficult decisions during lessons whether to let the disciplinary problem go or to tackle it despite facing time constraint.

Tr: Partially because of time and partially distracted by discipline issue, I think this lesson I really spend a bit of time trying to discipline the students... I am probably going to warn them or just appeal to their sense. Appeal to their heart.

The teacher explained that she really wanted to open up to them and she felt that the noisy pupils could be creative but bored during the lesson. So she believed that by appealing to the students, she might get more cooperation from them. In lesson four, two groups from 2T1 were not cooperative during the rhythm playing. And the teacher expressed disappointment in those students.
Tr: You are just... NOT... NOT... don’t want to put in the heart to do... I’m so disappointed that you are not cooperative... It is very difficult and I don’t like. And I don’t like. (Staring at them) If every student is like that, I think it is very unpleasant to be with you all. (Lesson 4)

The teacher was reluctant to take on more drastic disciplinary measures as she felt that the difficult groups could be creative, though inattentive, and punishment could hinder them from coming up with a creative musical product. It was clear that the teacher preferred the softer approach in teaching and classroom management which aims to encourage creativity among pupils, including the difficult ones and allows pupils to learn from their mistakes through reflection. Towards the last part of the project, the teacher declared that she was going to let the disciplinary problem go and focused on the group performances for the last lesson.

Tr: I was thinking if I should let go. There was a boy and he was eating in class. I actually spent five or ten minutes just to talk to him... You know, it is just on him for ten minutes of my precious time. That’s why I was thinking to just let it go. (Lesson 7, Teacher’s interview)

In addition, the teacher also made a decision to exclude some pupils from their groups towards the end of the project as the pupils did not participate in their respective group discussion. The affected groups informed the teacher about their unhappiness over some dormant members in their groups. Although the teacher did not mention disciplining those dormant members, she decided to exclude them from the group, so as
the group could continue with their groupwork and performance without the burden of having those inactive members.

4.3 Teacher’s approach and responses

The teacher guided the class in the same way as 2E1. She discussed the different musical concepts to the class and explained what they meant before showing them the video clips. During the video screening, the teacher made sure that the pupils were able to view the video clearly. The teacher tried to explain slowly and repeated to ensure better understanding of the musical concepts. She also frequently checked the pupils’ understanding before proceeding to the next activity. The teaching of the few musical concepts by the teacher was also progressive and tailored for the pupils for easy understanding. The pupils were also in their friendship groups, tapping on their group dynamics to enhance the idea generation. Wiggin (2005) pointed out that “the social and musical support structures of the classroom actually enable learners to operate at a higher level of competence than they may be able to achieve on their own...”(p. 40) Hence, those teaching strategies employed by the teacher formed part of the teacher’s approach for teaching group music compositions.

The teacher also showed adaptability in her teaching approach during the project. At the beginning of the project, the teacher did not want to give them too much guidance, making it as open-ended as possible. She explained to the researcher that as this class had prior knowledge of STOMP and rhythm playing, she was more willing to allow lesser guidance for the task to allow them to explore. Lum, Ng and Tai (p. 4) in
the case study “Composing as Life Expression: A Way Forward in Facilitating Group Music Composition and Performance in a Secondary Music Classroom” stated that composing allows “students’ voices to be heard, giving them a chance to explore and examine their personal, group and musical identities...” Opportunities to compose for pupils have to be given to express themselves. In the fieldwork, the music teacher pointed that she had to give “some faith in the students’ creativity” by believing in the class that they are capable of coming up with creative ideas during the fourth lesson observation.

**Adaptability in teaching**

Towards the second half of the project, the teacher expressed her apprehension as she felt that the pupils, especially the Normal Technical class, were not sure what to do. In order to meet the learning needs of the class, she started to toss ideas more freely for pupils to select and adopt during the later stage of group discussions, hence giving closer guidance to help these pupils. This change in her scaffolding approach to meet the needs of the class may be reasonable as Hickey (2003) explained that “the best way to create a supportive and nurturing creative environment is to mix up all possible conditions when teaching”. (p. 45) The teacher’s adaptability is important as every pupil and class are different and may require different appropriate teaching strategies. Sherman (1991) highlighted that “…in the proper environment and with the proper guidance and support, it (creativity) can flourish and grow.” (p. 7) He explained that the teacher could encourage the “proper” environment by establishing the conditions in classrooms, and they could stimulate it and to a certain extent, guide it. (Sherman, 1991,
By being adaptable in her teaching approach, a good music teacher would show sensitivity to the various conditions in classrooms.

**Setting parameters**

Before setting a group music compositional task, the music teacher needs to decide what types of parameters for the compositional task and how broad she wants the parameters to be. Some teachers might design restrictive parameters during a compositional task. One of the main constraints is music teachers face a sense of inadequacy due to not knowing all that they might wish or even need to know. Wiggins mentioned that “it is likely that you (music teachers) had little or no opportunity to compose or improvise original music in your general music classes”. (2001, p. 84) This meant that the music teachers may have limited experience to experience the process of music composition. Furthermore, the open-ended nature of music composition increases the challenge of conducting composition in music classes. The teacher could not be sure what the students’ responses and their compositions would be and how the compositions could be further developed. Reese (2003) explained that “there are many ways to fulfill a composing assignment and unpredictable composing problems and possibilities to take into account with each student”. (p. 212) The open-ended nature of the compositional task causes the teacher not able to predict or know students’ responses and how to develop their compositions. As a result, the teacher set more restrictive parameters in the compositional task to make the lessons more manageable and predictable for them.
On the contrary, to compose anything one wants could be a daunting task for many people as one may find it difficult to decide where to start the composition. An open musical assignment with no parameters given and lack of guidance from the teacher could likely result in music that is unorganized noise. Stephens stressed that “freedom does not come from the absence of guidelines or rules, but through the establishment of clear parameters within which decisions can be made”. (2003, p. 129)

It is crucial for the music teachers to strike a balance in providing appropriate parameters and guidance without hindering the pupils’ creativity or obstructing the necessary time and space needed for pupils’ creative exploration. The absence of an effective facilitative process from the teacher would not enable pupils to appreciate the significance of music compositions.

During the project, the teacher understood the importance of giving freedom to the pupils to compose in this project. She encouraged the pupils to explore musical instruments and things around them, allowing the opportunity for free play. Handphones’ ringtones were explored by the students as sound effects for the music composition. The teacher resisted in giving suggestions to pupils on what cues or solutions could be made and harnessing the pupils’ creativity by encouraging autonomy. She avoided giving her solutions to pupils while they work at producing the creative musical results. Hence, her facilitative process centered on the use of storylines in the group music compositions and the using of musical ideas to represent the characters.

After conducting a few lessons, the teacher was apprehensive about the academically weaker class such as a Secondary 2 Normal Technical, who might not
produce anything under such broad guidelines. During the sixth interview with the teacher, the music teacher also expressed her insecurity when dealing with the students’ responses and their compositions would be and how the compositions could be further developed. She observed that the pupils, specifically in the academically-weaker class, seemed to be undecided on their music compositions. She appeared to be at dilemma, uncertain if she should intervene and the extent of guidance to be given.

_tr: I am asking whether they are technical students, by giving them such as a big space, I am not sure whether their ability...because usually for T students, we give them very structured... Shall we just go ahead and even in the end of the day, they cannot produce anything?” (Lesson 4)_

She pointed out to the researcher that if she were to do it again, she would consider giving the pupils more parameters to guide them. For instance, she would give them to a shorter time, like one minute, as compared to the project which is one and half minute. She also might set a story to allow the pupils to play with the sounds only. She explained that she would give them a structure and the pupils work around in the structure, hence more guided. As a result, the teacher believed that setting more restrictive parameters in the next compositional task to make the lessons more manageable and predictable for both the teacher and pupils.

_tr: I am thinking if I were to do it again, I would restrict them to a minute...I may even set a story. Or let them play with the sounds only. That means I give them some_
structures and they play around with a structure. So the starting and ending points are
more guided. (Lesson 6)

It is important to note that the teacher believed that the pupils’ difficulty in
completing the creative task was due to insufficient parameters. Given the time for
group discussion sessions during music lessons, the teacher did not make use of the
chance to steer the pupils the different creative ways to approach the music
compositional task or encourage pupils to make decisions by allowing room for variety
and creativity in pupils’ compositional experience. Most of the time, she asked for the
storyline of the group’s music composition and did not go beyond the concept of form.
She went to all groups to check for their storylines and channeled them to think in that
way, hence created similar music compositional products.

On the whole, the issue of setting how many and what kind of parameters is very
much dependable on the teacher’s classroom management, the teacher’s facilitative
style and the time and space permissible during the music compositional task. The
whole idea of tightening and loosening is very much dependable on the situation and the
teacher’s competency, experience and confidence level. Only through practicing and
trial and error, the teacher would then gain experience and confidence to know what
kind of parameters and how many parameters work best during the situation.
Feedback from teachers

Teachers’ feedback is important in order to form positive experience to enable future compositions. Music teachers should be honest with pupils about what counts as musical creativity, rather than to declare that everything his or her pupils do is automatically creative, then the teacher has nothing to teach at all. Even if they do not meet the set parameters of the teacher, they would not be discouraged and their compositions would not be put down. Constructive and encouraging feedback by the teacher would be given to pupils. Wiggins encourages the notion of a “community of music learner where the ideas of all community members are valued”. (2005, p. 37) Setting positive forthcoming classroom tone is important to elicit open communication between pupils to pupils and teachers to pupils. Wiggins suggested that “teachers often begin lessons by talking with students about what we (teacher and pupils) will be doing and why is it important...”. (2005, p. 37) By doing this, little time is spent but it is an important step of empowering pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning more about the task and rationale help them to understand its benefits and purpose and hence, they would value the process more in which they are going to engage.

By understanding the significance and benefits of the creative task, they could be more motivated to do well in the music compositional task by learning from one another. Davidson (1991) stated that “an open environment allows students to draw on the advice of others.” (p. 61) In this way, pupils would also be receptive to the teacher’s and peers’ feedback, and eliminates potential hostility or defensive behaviour. So, the
teacher also should always give constructive evaluation which is pertinent to pupils to revise or extend their work. Wiggins pointed out that “students need to feel that their ideas are valid and important in order for the experience to enable future work”. (2001, p. 110) However, she also highlighted that “(teacher) criticizing and altering student work can give students the impression that they are composing music for the teacher-and not for themselves. They tend to lose ownership of the work, which is a critical part of the importance of engaging in compositional process in the first place”. (Wiggins, 2001, p. 110) Music teachers should avoid editing their work or taking over while they work at producing creative musical results or pass some sweeping and judgmental remarks on their works.

A good teacher could harness the pupils’ creativity by encouraging autonomy, avoiding excessive control of their activities and respecting their individuality. Rather than recommending what should be changed, the teacher should understand the rationale for pupils’ compositional decisions. In addition, the teacher is encouraged to use musical groups’ recording to class so as they could understand the decision musicians make and the rationale behind it. Wiggins (2005) stated that “the more students understand about the kinds of decision composers and performers make and the reasons they make them, the more they understand how to make similar kinds of decisions when asked to compose on their own”. (p. 40) In this way, these models provide a useful guide for the compositional task and equip the pupils with skills to attempt music compositions by themselves in future.
In this eight-week project, the music teacher revealed her worry about her quality of feedback to pupils. As she discovered that the pupils were unsure of what to do for the task, she went to every group to check their understanding and repeated her instructions to ensure pupils’ understanding. The teacher went to a few groups every music lesson to check their progress and guide pupils on their storylines to generate ideas for their music compositions. Generally, the teacher avoided evaluating the “correctness” of the students’ responses as she was not sure how to give constructive feedback. During the post-fieldwork interview, she also highlighted that the weaker class like 2T1 needed closer guidance despite having prior knowledge of rhythm playing last year.

Adequate and constructive feedback from the music teacher and trainee teachers were lacking as the pupils were not able to draw advice from the teacher. Wiggins (2001) also reiterated that “the students need to feel that their ideas are valid and important in order for the experience to enable future work.” (p. 110) The lack of feedback could be linked to the lack of compositional experience of the teacher as Reese (2003) pointed out that “teachers need to experience firsthand the thinking and feeling process that their students are undergoing in order to give constructive, useful responses.” (p. 217) It would be quite difficult for a teacher to teach music compositions if she has not gone through the compositional decision-making processes.
4.4 The creative process

The compositional processes of the students were documented by the researcher during in-class observations, audio and video recording of each session and 2 interviews with two specific student groups mid-point through the project and after the last lesson.

During the first few lesson, the pupils were exciting to watch the video excerpts of Kitchen Stomp, Nanta and Blue Man Group. During the first lesson, the teacher wanted the pupils to consider using recycled materials for their instruments. She used the video excerpt “Drumbone” from The Blue Man Group and brought in the idea of using materials. By doing this, the teacher hoped to interest the pupils to make interesting home-made instruments for the music composition, developing some of the enabling skills in the pupils for creative thinking in Webster’s model of creative thinking (1990).

The pupils were very excited to view the second video excerpt “Stomp Out Loud- Kitchen”. Pupils were observed with smiles on their faces while watching. There were several interesting comments made by the pupils. One of them remarked,

“This is what we did last year. (Demonstrating the clapping to her group)”

The teacher attempted to bring in what form was by asking the pupils how the piece began and ended but she did not elaborate how the musical elements are used in the storyline. She pointed out the shouting of the head chef at the beginning and the
ending of the piece and did not elaborate at all. She went into explaining more about the
tempo and dynamic contrasts in the video recording. She geared the pupils to think in
storyline, in a way that she perceived to be easier for them to understand.

During the second lesson, the teacher showed a video recording of Nanta. She
wanted the pupils to understand the concept of texture. In the video, she pointed out to
them the possibility of playing in unison or solo-playing in brief. The video was then
played. The pupils watched with interest and some mimicked the actions of the
performers in Nanta video. Some pupils were seen bobbing their heads to the catchy
rhythms of the recordings. It was clear that the pupils enjoyed and could relate to the
Stomp video as they had knew about Stomp from their last year’s rhythm playing
enrichment programme. The Stomp experience that the class had last year could
contribute to the pupils’ aptitudes in Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003),
which could form their prior knowledge for the groups to compose and aid their process
of creative thinking.

In the third lesson, the teacher told the pupils the textural possibilities such as
playing the same rhythms in unison, echo playing or different rhythmic patterns playing
together which could be introduced into their music compositions. The teacher asked
simple questions on the instruments used, the dynamics and tempo to answer the
questions in the worksheets. She did not lead the pupils to think the why those decisions
were made. Wiggins (2005) pointed out that the teachers needed to ask questions to
guide the pupils into understand “the kinds of decisions composers and performers
make and the reasons they make them”, so that it would influence the pupils’ thinking
and musical decisions. So it is important to ask the “whys” and “how” questions to trigger thinking in terms of depth, hence better-modeling the thinking process of the composers and the performers.

In lesson 4, the music teacher went through the various rhythmic exercises. While she went through the rhythmic exercises, musical concepts like dynamic, tempo and texture were infused into those rhythms. Although the class tried the exercises, they were generally very noisy as some were chatting and others would be clapping inaccurately. A lot of time was spent on tidying up the rhythm exercises and disciplining the class. Due to time constraint, the teacher had to skip the rhythm creating exercise as she felt the class needed more time to discuss in their groups. So, the teacher quickly mentioned briefly to the class to think about their journey to school, their mood or any interesting happenings on the way. Without elaborating too much, the teacher started the class on their groupwork.

During the groupwork, the teacher moved around to listen to pupils’ discussion and made sure that pupils were on task. She explained the task to the groups individually as most of the groups clarified with her what they needed to do. The pupils were also reminded to tap on their prior knowledge of the rhythm playing programme that they had last year.
Group 3

Some interesting comments by the pupils in Group 3 during the groupwork and during the interviews with the two fixed groups were observed. The discussion was largely exploratory as the pupils tried to look for appropriate instruments to create the ideal representative sounds. This was known as the preparation stage in Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003) as the group thought and seek for relevant materials and ideas for the creative work. Through the process of exploration, they experimented with the instruments, the timbre of the sounds produced and the tempo to fit their storyline. For this group, they first started setting the pulse and instruments. With these in place, they looked for more sound effects to represent their journey to the school better. They explained that they would test the instruments out first. One boy said,

“We can use dustbins and use some mop sticks for the drums.”

Another group member highlighted,

“We test the thing out first. Then we do the whole thing...

During the first interview with the pupils, the group told the researcher many sound ideas they could use such as the ringing of the bell, drumming on the pail, chopsticks for the tick tock of the clock. However, the group was not able to articulate how they could put those sounds together into a music composition. They explained that they would use the storyline approach, as suggested by the teacher during the group
facilitation process, to gel those ideas together. However, they had not worked out the
details yet. The group emphasized the teacher’s suggestion of using the storyline was
very important and useful. The teacher’s guidance on storyline helped this group a lot as it helped in the group’s idea generation and their music composition’s development. It could be due to the limited suggestions given by the teacher. As the teacher did not suggest other ways of approaching the compositional problem during the groupwork, the pupils adopted storyline as the approach to construct form as there was limited support given from the teacher during the facilitative process.

Group 4

In group 4, the group was also very forthcoming with their ideas during the group discussion. Two members of another group were observed to be playing an imaginary kompangs in the air. They were thinking of suitable instruments and storyline to develop their music composition. The group, which consisted of all Malay girls, decided to use kompangs in their group music composition. One pupil was heard saying to the other group members,

“Hitting kompangs is like spattering water on the cheeks.”

Another pupil sang,

“When you wake up... (clapping her hands like dikir barat style)”
The group suggested many ideas to be included for the music composition but compositional decisions were still lacking after four sessions of discussion. The teacher highlighted to the group the need to have an informal leader to guide the group in making compositional decisions. Similar to group 3 in the same class, they had ample musical ideas but there was no compositional decision like selecting the sound ideas and putting it into a coherent whole. It was only until the last two sessions of the groupwork, the group became more focused and started finalizing their music composition. As some group members knew how to play the kompangs, they coached their group members in lesson 7 to play the instrument and the sets of rhythms used in their music composition for their performance.

In this group, one interesting aspect of their music composition was the unique callings used. The call “Eh Eh Eh Eh Ah...” was used by the group as a signal to enter or the change of tempo. The members explained that it was a calling used in dikir barat. They saw it elsewhere and decided to incorporate into their performance. One pupil explained,

“The recent use of it is in dikir barat. We saw in dikir barat.”

When asked the uniqueness of their music composition, they looked proud and one group member said,

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7 Dikit barat is a musical form, native to the Malay Peninsula, that involves singing in groups. It may be performed either with percussion instrumental accompaniment or with no instrument at all. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dikir_barat)
“Unique...it uses modern and Malay traditional rhythms.”

It was clear that group 4’s music composition was largely influenced by the pupils’ cultural context. The infusion of callings in dikir barat and Malay traditional rhythms were clearly embedded throughout the group’s music composition.

**Cultural context**

In terms of teaching, the teacher needs to consider the context of his materials and the background of the pupils. Whether it is of familiar context as the pupils’ cultural context could help him to facilitate the lesson better and clearer understanding due to prior knowledge from the pupils could be achieved. Pupils could have rich and unique experiences in music making or listening. Campbell pointed out that “students themselves can be tapped for musical cultures they know, too, for they are not blank slates but experienced listeners, and quite possibly performers, too.” (2004, p. 15) This view is also shared by Wiggins that “in actuality, students bring to our classrooms an enormous amount of musical knowledge of our culture gleaned from living within that culture...(and) creative experiences enable students to articulate and share what they know and understand about music...” (1999, p. 31)

It was evident that the cultural context influenced the idea generation for the groups’ music compositions during the group discussion. In 2T1, group 4 consisted of all Malay girls. They used a typical call “Eh Eh Eh Eh Wah...” in Malay, which is used in dikir barat performance, as a signal for other instruments to enter the music
performance. Furthermore, they also used the Malay traditional rhythms in their music composition.

*One pupil:* Recently, *dikir barat* also used the “Eh Eh Eh Eh Ah...”.

*Pupil:* We saw in *dikir barat*. (2T1, Group 4, Second pupils’ interview)

So by embracing the Malay traditional rhythm and callings from *dikir barat*, it was evident that the influence of the Malay culture influenced their creative process and music composition.

**Social context**

The social context, which Wiggins (2003) explained, is made up of the social influences that impact their work progress. (p. 157) Enhancing the social fabric of the peer group could improve motivation of the groups and this forms part of the enabling conditions for creative thinking. (Webster, 1990, p. 24) One of the ways to enhance the social fabric is to allow friendship groups, rather than the teacher-assigned groups. Hence, positive group dynamics could foster creativity in music compositions if the teachers are conscious of the impact and make full use of it to stimulate creativity.

For this project, the choice to choose their group was given to the pupils. This could influence the social fabric of the group as there was a certain level of familiarity as they chose each other. The music teacher allowed the pupils to form their groups to form positive dynamics to set in for the pupils to work in. She felt that she would like
them to form their own groups to make them comfortable and indirectly encourage them to share their ideas with the group members they found more comfortable to be with.

*Tr: I am going to let it go and let them form their own clicks or whatever that they are comfortable with...they have their ideas and they are formed in their own comfortable groups.* (Lesson 2, Teacher’s interview)

Despite allowing friendship grouping during the project, there were still problems in some groups because of uncooperative team members. Although the group was given the freedom to form their group, they reluctantly accepted a boy into the group after some persuasion from the teacher. During the rest of the discussion sessions, the new member was still not committed to the group and kept talking to a member of the group. The rest of the group would focus on developing their group music composition, ignoring the two distracted members.

In first interview with the researcher, one of them confessed that he was not happy with the two uncooperative boys. He mentioned that the group was reluctant to accept one of the boys as that boy was lazy and was full of excuses when doing groupwork. He pointed out that the group had “no choice” but to accept the new member because the teacher said so.

During the second half of the project, they also informed the teacher about the uncooperative boys. The teacher encouraged the group to carry on without those boys.
Despite having a little problem with the two members, the group ignored them and carried on with their discussion. The group’s dynamics generally were strong.

**Storyline**

At the later stage of the project, group 3 crafted their music composition by putting sounds effects into the microscopic details of waking up late for school such as planning the sounds of brushing their teeth, walking and closing the door. The teacher suggested to them to stop their planning when their character in the storyline left the house for school. The teacher told them,

“*He runs out of the house and enough already. No need to go all the way to school*”

The group clarified that they fit those sounds in as part of their storyline. It was clear that there was a disparity in the understanding of the term “storyline”. The group’s interpretation was a very detailed chronological development of the character being late for school, whereas the teacher wanted the broad development of the story. Surely, the term “storyline” was ambiguous and open to different interpretations, hence this would in turn affect the music compositional processes and the product.

On the whole, the compositional processes for both groups were similar because of the way how the teacher facilitated the group discussions. The two groups would come up with a storyline and explore the different objects or instruments they brought
and decide on which instruments would be used by listening to how well the instruments resembled what they wanted to represent in the story.

4.5 The creative product

Home-made instruments

The instruments that the pupils found were a few. They used a few pairs of chopsticks made from different materials (wooden, metal), hitting the pen on the floor and the dragging and tappings of the chair.

Sound Representations

The pupils came up with original and creative ideas. Some of them came up with the idea of using chopsticks made from different materials to represent the different sound effects like the heartbeat of the character and the tick tock sounds from the clock. They also used body percussion such as stamping on the floor, hand-clapping and even vocal calls to inject vibrancy to their performances.
Performed compositions

Group 3 (first performance)

During the first performance for the teacher, the group explained their storyline to the teacher by giving the sequence of the instruments to represent the development of the storyline. (See VCD recording 4) It started with the hitting of the floor, alternating with the hitting of the pens hitting. The alarm clock entered, doing a rapid hitting pattern on the 2 pens. While the piece was being performed, the informal leader explained the meanings of the sounds. They informed the teacher that they would put in the cooking sounds but appeared unsure and confused as they did not finish planning. However, they described to the teacher that after the sounds of the cooking, they would also introduce the sounds of showering and the piece would accelerate as the character was late for school. They told the teacher that they did not have enough instruments and the teacher offered her instruments to let them explore.

The teacher told the group to stop planning when the character left the house for school. She explained to the group that the music composition had many ideas and there was no need to extend further. The music teacher told the researcher during the interview on seventh lesson that the group had different sounds to represent the story and she found it “dragged too long”. She was worried that the group could not handle it as it got too complicated if she did not stop them. The teacher did not explain to the group why she wanted them to stop planning at that specific point and one of the group members tried to point out that it might not meet the theme if they stopped planning
there and the group had done some planning already. Without explaining why, the teacher reiterated the point of the composition she wanted them to stop and told them to think about how to end off by representing the character walking out of the door to school.

Group 3 (Revised performance)

During the final performance, the members were still discussing between themselves in front of the class. With the teacher’s prompting, the performance started. The scrapping of the chopsticks, representing the heartbeats of the character and an alternating tapping rhythm on the chair, which represents the clock, formed the start of the music composition. (See VCD recording 8) After 5 seconds, the rapid hitting on the pens was hit, resembling the ringing of the alarm clock. As the sounds of the alarm clock disappeared, the tapping on the chair and the scrapping of the chopsticks were playing some random sounds while accompanied by some unclear stamping on the floor by another member. The tempo became faster as the character realized he was late and the piece ended off with a slam of two chairs. The leader then explained that it was the closing of the door as the character left the house for school. The class applauded for the group’s performance.

There was clear improvement between the first and the second version of group 3’s composition. The revised version was better-rehearsed as the group seemed to be more familiar with the tempo changes and the sequence of entrances. Although the piece was unstable in the middle of the composition, they persevered to finish their
performance. With a straightforward storyline, the members were able to play their parts quite well and were able to synchronise with each other too.

Group 4 (first performance)

During the first performance for the teacher, the group used the teacher’s instruments and their kompangs to play. The whole group played a set of rhythm (from rhythm playing enrichment programme) by using the different percussive home-made instruments and their kompangs. (See VCD recording 5) The group played ostinato while experimenting with the teacher’s shakers. As the planning for the whole piece was not completed, the teacher guided the group by pointing to them the importance to decide the roles of the members and the sequence of entering the music composition. She asked,

“How are you going to end? Who is going to give the signal to end?”

There was no reply from the group. Some of them nodded, implying that they understood what the teacher meant.

Group 4 (Revised performance)

The final performance was not a complete one. (See VCD recording 9) The music composition used two types of rhythmic patterns (modern- from Stomp, traditional Malay wedding rhythm). The first pattern was used with different entrances of the
kompangs, playing a syncopated rhythmic pattern. With the help of the “Eh Eh Eh Eh Ah”, it signaled the development of the music composition. A typical traditional Malay wedding rhythmic pattern by the clapping of the hands would enter. The music composition broke down at this point and the group members were unable to carry on due to coordination problem among the members. During the second interview with the researcher, the group explained that they planned to include the quickening tempo to represent the character being late for school after the traditional Malay wedding rhythm. The callings would be the signal for the quickening tempo. However, the group was not able to coordinate their playing. The group confessed that they had not worked out the ending yet as they had no time to rehearse.

Although the group did not finish performing the whole piece, there was a marked difference between the first and revised version of group 3’s composition. The revised version is longer and had a storyline to back the form of their music composition. The revised version had more musical ideas and had plans to use tempo changes and has a better-developed form as compared to the first version. Despite some messy sections of the revised performance due to insufficient rehearsals, it has a complete and coherent structure.

4.6 Analysis of the creative product

The groups had similar sound ideas with many groups. The quickening of tempo was triggered by the notion of being late for school. In fact, the trainee teacher commented during the presentation session in lesson 8 that all groups shared the similar idea (being late for school). The storylines of the groups seemed to be revolving around
similar events. Similarly to the 2 groups in Express, they also lacked musical imagination. Imaginative problem solving skills, as mentioned by Webster (2003), seemed to be absent. Enabling skills needed to be emphasized more to allow them to think more creatively.

The music teacher’s facilitative processes could be better in place if the teacher provide sufficient guidance in helping the pupils to craft their music compositions. The music teacher needed to understand more about the pupils’ ideas and intentions of their creative products before discussing the specific details. (Wiggins, 2003, p. 153) Although she guided all groups on the use of storyline as the form for their music compositions, more teacher support such as constructive feedback to help pupils to work through the details would be helpful for the weaker groups.

On the whole, most of the revised performances were much better than the first performances. Some groups may be unable to perform yet but the group’s planning of their composition, for instance the meanings of the sound ideas and its sequence were lucid and quite complete. The groups expressed that they faced time constraints and would conduct more rehearsals to polish their group music compositions if they were given more time. It could be attributed to the groups not being clear about the task requirement and lack of adequate knowledge of these enabling skills as mentioned in Webster’s model of creative thinking (2003).

The groups also revealed their reluctance to modify their pieces as they found it satisfactory and they did not see the need to improve on it. Even the group who did not
complete performing their composition did not want to continue to rehearse their piece.

It could be due to the lack of feedback as the pupils were not able to draw advice from the teacher. Wiggins (2001) also reiterated that “the students need to feel that their ideas are valid and important in order for the experience to enable future work.” (p. 110) Without constructive feedback, they would not value their group music composition as they did not know what ideas they had were good and valid. They appeared to be uninterested and not looking forward to modify it to make it better. They also did not discuss before the lesson. And there were many instances where the groups were not focused and were doing other things while the teacher was teaching or giving instructions. This could be a reflection on the attitude and importance pupils placed on the task.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications

The present study observed and analyzed the creative processes and products of Secondary Two pupils in a general music class setting who were engaged in group music composition activities. Pupils’ creative processes were observed through the way they explored sound with their instruments, structured musical forms, created different musical ideas and pieced up the sound composition together. The products were reflected in the objects and home-made instruments they brought and performed music compositions. The context in which the pupils were working in, was also considered, to provide a fuller understanding and significance to the study.

5.1 What are the musical, creative-thinking and social skills developed through group music composition activities and what are the processes involved in group music composition activities?

The performed music compositions from the project highlighted the pupils’ use of their prior musical knowledge, understanding of musical concepts and skills in creating and structuring their compositions. One of the groups used the Stomp rhythmic pattern from their music enrichment programme the year before in their music composition while another used musical instruments like flute and piano to add melodic interest to their music compositions. Another group, which had many members with formal musical knowledge, was able to develop their musical work faster as compared to other groups in the class. The music teacher was impressed by a group’s creative ideas as they set their storyline based on a train ride to school in Japan. The teacher
found this concept very interesting as it was unusual and the group also introduced a lot of instruments such as the flute, the piano and incorporated drama and hand gestures. In general, all groups in the classes used a range of musical concepts in their work including dynamic and tempo contrasts, repetition and imitation, call and response and ostinato. The composition project affirmed musical knowledge and skills that the pupils have been learning and helped pupils to use these musical skills actively in the music compositional process. The project also provided an opportunity for pupils to create something for themselves, putting in expression through the sound ideas.

The group creative process encouraged pupils to use their social skills when they were creating and structuring their compositions. All pupils exhibited certain level of creative thinking during the group discussions. The groups’ dynamics and nuances in the conversations could be observed during the group discussions. All groups highlighted the importance of teamwork and learnt the need to negotiate and compromise with their group members during the group discussions. During the interviews with the pupils, all tracked groups mentioned that they learnt “teamwork” and “cooperation” during the project. They explained that the group members listened more to one another and some of the domineering characters also mellowed as the project developed. The changes in the group members’ behaviours during the course of the project allowed them to communicate their viewpoints and ideas better, hence worked towards a common goal of producing their creative products. Within the music curriculum in the school, the composition project provided an opportunity for students to understand the self in relation with others and helped the pupils in the negotiation and
management of conflicts during the music composition process. At the same time, the project also provided a supportive environment for pupils to develop their musical skills.

There were three main observations that were significant in most of the groups who participated in the music compositional project.

5.1.1

The students decided on a particular sound they intend (like the rustling of leaves) before exploring materials and timbre to fit with the sound chosen. For instance, according to the theme of the project and the storyline they decided, they would want the rustling sounds of the plastic bags to represent the rain or the pounding of the parquet floor to imitate the running footsteps. To match the sounds, they would explore the different materials like the wooden and metal chopsticks, hitting cardboard box and metal cupboard door, shaking the green beans-filled aluminum drink cans in a different way to depict the intensity of the rain. As long as the “right” sound is found and agreed by the dominant leader and the group members, it would be used during all rehearsals. The group would start to layer in another sound.

5.1.2

All the tracked groups composed their music compositions based on a structure or form which was decided by the group before arranging the sounds. The pupils thought of the form based on the storyline before they further explored the sounds and musical elements.
Once the storyline was more-or-less set, the group would start to seek for appropriate sounds to best imitate the sound effect for the music composition. They would explore the sounds by making sounds from the things around them. The sounds would be played to all in the group for approval. If the sound is rejected by the dominant leader or some members, the group would search for another suitable sound.

Surely, the groups’ approach on deciding the form before the selection of sounds and musical elements was very much influenced by the researcher’ crafting of the music compositional task and the teacher’s input on the task before the task commenced. The introduction of the three building blocks (form, dynamics, tempo) set the criteria for the pupils to think in that direction. Any other rhythmic enhancement or melodic embellishments could be added only after the three taught-concepts were infused within their music compositions.

When the sound effects and the method of playing were discussed, the group would start playing with the tempo and dynamic contrasts to suit the mood development of their storylines. After these were considered, they would start their refinement process by synchronising, layering and working out the specific timings for the agreed sound effects.
5.1.3

It was observed that all the groups that were interviewed had a common characteristic in their decision-making process in the music composition project. There was a dominant leader in almost all the groups and in one of the groups, the group required more time to finalize their ideas as all of the members, though contributed many ideas, were reluctant to lead the group. The group leader started to gather the group’s ideas and guided the group to come up with the final product after the feedback from the teacher and the first interview with the researcher.

In other groups, there was a dominant leader in each group to suggest the sound ideas, the sequence of the music compositions. The members in the group would then decide whether to accept the idea. Usually they would have no objection and accept the dominant leader’s suggestion willingly. Occasionally, the dominant leader would also ensure all members contributed actively and remind the passive members to participate more actively in the group discussions. Hence, the dominant leader usually had his or her ideas included in the group music composition. The group members’ conformity is a common characteristic in the pupils’ creative process. As Gromko (2003) explained that “the more experience each child accumulated as composer, performer and listener, the more likely the participants in the group projects were to practice negotiation, rather than control and submission.” (p. 88) Being the first time doing a music compositional task, it seems common for the leader to exercise strong control over his peers when making compositional decisions.
5.2 What are the pedagogy and practices employed by a non-specialised music teacher in the conduct of group music composition activities?

The teacher used storyline to trigger ideas as the basic construct for each composition. During the teaching of the building blocks, the storyline approach was used as a tool to construct form for the music composition. The pupils were taught to think how they wanted to craft their story first. Once they formed the concept of their storyline for their form, they could seek for sounds and introduce the musical concepts such as dynamic and tempo contrasts for the music compositions. During the group discussions, the teacher also expressed her desire to know about the groups’ storylines by asking the groups to tell her their storylines before performing. This was to help to understand the association between the sounds and the narrative meanings behind them, hence making sense of the pupils’ group music compositions. The music teacher also revealed during one of the interview that she used the storyline as an approach to assist the pupils to think of ideas faster and easier. Usage of storyline as the form was prevalent in almost all the groups’ music compositions for both classes. Only one group in the Express class explored the sounds and rhythms first before creating a storyline to fit their rhythmic composition. The teacher also strongly recommended the classes to explain their storylines before presenting during the final presentation. So the approach of using the storyline was a significant pedagogical tool for the teacher to teach form to her pupils. Definitely, the crafting of compositional task by the researcher and the teacher also influenced the direction of the project as the musical concepts like form were introduced during the initial lessons. This had, to a great extent, affected how the pupils tackled their music compositional task.
It was observed that the teacher competency had a strong influence in the pupils’ compositional processes. The teacher’s musical knowledge and experience in music compositional activities influenced her way of teaching in the project. It was the first time she conducted a compositional project in the music classroom. She also had not composed before and had little prior knowledge of what compositional processes involved. Reese (2003) explained the need for teachers to “experience firsthand the thinking and feeling process that their students are undergoing in order to give constructive, useful responses”. (p. 216) Hence, her inadequacy in understanding the compositional processes and experience in facilitating a group music compositional class posed a challenge to her in giving useful feedback or responses during the group facilitation sessions and the final performance sessions.

The music teacher was able to carry out each task with the pupils but stated that she was apprehensive about the kind of comments she was supposed to provide the pupils with during the groupwork and after first performances of their compositions. The teacher also commented that the project provided little parameters and perhaps, needed more parameters to guide the pupils better. She felt that the pupils were lost initially but they got better after a few lessons. She expressed that she was not too confident in conducting such activities.

The music teacher also observed that most of the groups were interested in the composition activities and was impressed by the creative products that they came up with. These products included the use of dance, drama, instrumental playing and
everyday objects for music making. The project allowed creative expression among the pupils and musical sensitivity, for instance timbre sensitivity during the music compositional task. The project also exposed the pupils to the possibility of making music from the things around them and raised their awareness and sensitivity to their surroundings.

5.3 What are the implications for teaching group music compositions in a Singapore classroom?

1. From the findings of the study, group music compositional activities would provide a platform for pupils to apply the music skills and knowledge that they have been learning into their creative products. The group music compositional activities allow pupils to use their ideas imaginatively to craft a music composition by themselves and give them an opportunity to express themselves through the creative product. The pupils, without much intervention from the teacher, were able to come up with their group music compositions and hence, boosted their confidence and esteem. Surely, more of such activities should be carried out in the music classroom.

2. As indicated from the study, other than the musical skills, the pupils develop self- awareness during the groupwork as they voiced out their viewpoints and ideas which represent their musical experiences, personal
preferences, expectations and attitudes. The pupils are given the opportunity to reflect what they really like and want in their music composition, hence understanding more about self and identity. The notion of identity and voices is valid as the pupils create what is meaningful to them on their own terms. Although their ideas may not be adopted by the group due to the presence of a domineering leader in the group, they had somehow thought through some musical ideas that seemed were important and meaningful to them. Hence, the pupils would develop personal awareness and their personal identity through the processes of group music compositions. So through constructing meanings from pupils’ own musical experience and constructing their music compositions, the pupils are able to “construct knowledge of themselves (self-identity), as well as their culture (group-identity)” (Barrett, 2003) In the case of group 4 of 2T1, the all-Malay group was able to incorporate their culture by including the distinctive features of Malay music. During the decision making process of selecting musical ideas for their music composition, the group would definitely think about their music culture and their identity before they made any music compositional decision for their groupwork.

3. The pupils also learnt conflict-management skills from peer to peer interactions. Pupils engaged in the discussions to generate ideas for their compositions would have to present their ideas to the team members, convince and persuade their group members to accept their ideas. If some
of the members disagree, they had to learn to listen and understand the reasons for the rejections, while coping with feelings of anger and rejection. Interpersonal and self-management skills such as managing of emotions, negotiation and compromising are learnt during the project. This is particularly significant in group 3 of 2E1. The group had reflected that they needed to compromise and listen to each other in order to allow the groupwork to be successful. From the group music compositional activity, the groups learnt the need to have conflict-management skills to accomplish the compositional task.

4. As observed from the study, the pupils were able to seek and produce many sound ideas through their discussion. One of the main purposes is to allow the pupils to come up with creative music or sound ideas for their music composition to develop their creative thinking skills. Hence, time must be given sufficiently for creative thinking to set in. Creative thinking is more likely to occur when “they are given sufficient uninterrupted time”. (Wiggins, 2003, p. 157)

5.4 Implications for Further Research

The research findings from the study prompted several questions that need to be addressed to further understand the creative processes of pupils in the lower secondary level in Singapore. These findings would be also useful in informing the curriculum planning and teaching strategies of teachers towards the effect teaching of creative
thinking and the teaching strategies of teachers towards promoting creative thinking in a
general music classroom.

1. As noted from the current research, the music compositional processes
seems to suggest that the pupils were capable to engage creatively in the
thinking process through exploration of sound ideas, sequencing and
performing their musical products. A focus on the evaluation could be worth
investigating on. Further research questions can include:
   a. What are the effects of peer evaluation on their group music
      composition?
   b. What are some of the possible strategies to promote constructive
      evaluation of music compositions in pupils of different streams?

2. The focus on the teacher’s competency to teach is one of the main
consideration in the current study and DeLorenzo’s findings (as cited in C.
H. Lum, 2000, p. 157) which suggest the need to look into the teacher-
training and music curriculum planning through the following questions:
   a. What are the possibilities of creating a music curriculum which
      embraced the objectives of developing the pupils socially and
      musically?
   b. What are the areas to develop the teacher’s competency in teaching
      music composition to lower secondary school pupils?
5.5 Conclusion

Although this study and others (Webster, 1990, p. 23) suggest that musical imagination is the crux to accomplish creative tasks, it is also clear that non musical factors like the teacher’s facilitative skills, time factor and pupils’ social skills could affect the process of creative thinking and the creative product. More focus may be better placed on the quality of the teacher’s facilitation process and the development of positive group dynamics within the group as well as the influence of time on the pupils’ compositional process and the product.

A trained music teacher cannot guarantee the success in teaching group music composition. Facilitative skills of the teacher are crucial for guiding the pupils in the process of music composition and the completion of the musical product. The factors that would influence the teacher’s facilitative process are the use of storyline by the teacher as a pedagogical tool; the teacher’s pedagogical competency and her content knowledge; the classroom management skills and the quality of the feedback. From this project, the way how the music teacher facilitated the groupwork had a direct impact on the way how the groups compose their music. Using the storyline to teach the musical concepts during the first few lessons and as a means to aid pupils in constructing the groups’ music composition, it indirectly steered the pupils to think only in storyline and using instruments to represent characters in the storyline. The storyline even became one of the assessment criteria as a basis of a good piece of creative work. At the end, most of the group music compositions were similar in nature in terms of sharing similar
storylines. Hence, the teacher’s use of storyline as a scaffolding tool restricts the breadth of the different possibilities of music compositions and limits the exploration of musical ideas as the pupils only composed in the way what the music teacher wanted.

Surely, the teacher’s content knowledge and pedagogical skills would also affect the quality of the facilitative process would be like. With adequate content knowledge and pedagogical skills of the teacher, the teacher’s feedback would then be useful to guide the pupils to make their compositional decisions. In this way, the pupils would be equipped with sufficient skills to compose a piece and allowing them to reap the benefits and joy of group music composition.

The teacher’s classroom management skills are also one of the factors to effective learning. With effective classroom management, lesser time would be spent on disciplining the pupils and getting the pupils on task, hence utilizing the time for teaching and learning.

In addition, sufficient time must be given for the pupils to generate and select musical ideas, to select and modify their musical pieces. This is especially important in groupwork as they need to discuss and negotiate among the members which ideas to be selected. However, the quality of the facilitation process of the teacher remains more pertinent. Quality facilitation requires three components. They are good classroom management skills, time management and adequate content knowledge. Good
classroom management skills are needed to create a good learning tone. Adequate content knowledge of the teacher would allow better scaffolding and feedback on the students’ works. Time management is also crucial so that the time spent on the compositional task is meaningful and productive. Even if more time is given for the pupils to discuss, it would be futile as the time is not utilized properly on guiding the pupils meaningfully for the music compositional task.

Social skill of the pupils is also important for a successful group music composition task. Lum, Ng, and Tai (2012) also pointed out the music composition is a form of “social exercise, an exercise that is...part of the social living experience, where social play and redundancies abound...” (p. 4) Being a group music composition task, it is clear that relationship management from pupil to pupil or teacher to pupil is an important factor to influence pupils’ learning. As suggested by Lum (2012), pupils’ social interaction, negotiation, musical skills and experiences would interplay and form their creative music composition. With these factors coming together, group music composition activities would be much better situated to allow students to experience composing more successfully.

On the whole, the interactions between the teacher’s facilitative skills, time factor and pupils’ social skills influence the process of creative thinking and the creative product. In this study, the music teacher did not have any prior experience in composing or running any music compositional activities before. It was commendable that she managed to facilitate the group music composition project in two classes successfully.
despite her initial fear and lack of confidence to conduct music compositional lessons. She mentioned putting in more parameters for pupils if she is to do another music compositional task again. This may seem contradictory to the literature review on the importance of allowing space and time for creativity. Surely, space and time are crucial for creative thinking to occur. However, the music teacher’s point of view is still valuable and relevant. Her point of view came about because of her reflection in coping with several issues during the seven music lessons. During this project, the teacher was given a chance to try teaching a group music composition which she would not dare to try out by herself previously. This was already a big step for the music teacher to exit her comfort zone to try to do music composition in her music lessons. Hopefully from this project, the music teacher would try another music compositional project with her pupils and experiment on what works best for her and her pupils.

From the current study and the review of the literature, there are many benefits for conducting group music compositional tasks. These activities work towards fostering creative thinking and critical thinking in the general music classroom in the short run. It is noted however, no long term study and programme has been implemented to determine if a prolonged experience in more creative group music composition tasks will lead to the development of creative thinking and critical thinking skills in pupils. Longitudinal studies of this nature will be significant in its implications for teaching and practice.
Research Participant Information and Consent Form (For Teacher)

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: Group Music Composition Towards Creative Thinking
Researcher and Title: Teo Phin-Phin Clara
Department and Institution: Visual & Performing Arts, National Institute of Education
Contact Information: 90073486

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

☐ You are being asked to participate in a research study of group music composition towards creative thinking. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are the subject teacher in the school and has taught the pupils for the last one year.

☐ From this study, we hope to learn how group music composition foster musical concepts and elements and the effects of group music composition in music lessons in Singapore classrooms. We also hope to learn about the influence of the background, pedagogy and practices of the non-specialised music teacher on a group music composition task.

☐ In the entire study, 81 people are being asked to participate. (2 classes and a teacher)

☐ Your participation in this study will take about ten weeks.

2. WHAT YOU WILL DO:

Overview of the composition project – “Music I Can Make”

Project “Music I Can make” focuses on exploring creative music composition processes. You would launch “Music I Can Compose” project during Term 1 2012 (first week of January to end of February) within the general music curriculum, i.e. one ½ hour lesson each week over a duration of 9 weeks. A compositional theme “On the way to school” will be given to the pupils. The first lesson which would be used as an introductory session to inform the pupils about the compositional project and confirm their music groupings. In addition, to inspire them to compose, a video comprises of two percussive musical groups would be shown to the pupils. The first lesson which would be used as an introductory session to inform the pupils about the compositional project and confirm their music groupings. In addition, to inspire them to compose, a video comprises of two percussive musical groups would be shown to the pupils. Pupils would be also required to complete a survey on their background and their attitude to better understand our pupils. The next two lessons would introduce the pupils to elements of music like form, tempo and dynamics, so as to form building blocks for their music composition task. This aims to develop in pupils sufficient understanding of the concepts being taught to enable them to operate with a reasonable level of independence. After understanding the key concepts of music elements, the pupils would compose a piece in their groups which reflects their journey to the school. The pupils would be encouraged to be innovative in the choice of instruments, such as untuned percussion, homemade percussive instruments, or even body percussion. At the end of the project, the pupils would perform their group music compositions in class. The study is based on natural classroom environment with pupils working with you. This project does not require the pupils to have any prior knowledge.
Preparation in December 2011

The preparatory sessions, including the interview with the teacher would be conducted in December 2011. The purpose of the preparatory sessions would be carried out to establish:

1. Your musical background, compositional experience and your expectations for this project through the interview with the researcher.
2. Clearer understanding of the project by coaching you by the researcher on how to conduct the whole project.
3. Appropriate questioning techniques and feedback strategies for conducting the project.
4. If the time frame for each activity in the project is sufficient for pupils to discuss, rehearse and perform.
5. The positioning of video recorders and recording devices to achieve proper perspectives of student-teacher interactions and pupils group discussion processes.
6. Pupils’ survey on the pupils’ prior musical knowledge in school and at home as well as their working attitudes, motivation level and habits would be conducted during the first lesson of the project.
7. Any other outstanding problems that may be overlooked in designing the project.

Lesson Outline for the ‘Music I Can Make’ project

Lesson one (term 1 week1)

Pupils would be shown a video montage of various percussive groups (The Blue Man Group and Nanta) to inspire the pupils. A short introduction write-up of each group would be given to pupils to know the uniqueness about the musical groups in the montage, for instance using everyday objects, movement or sound effects to make music. You would explain to pupils the possibility of making music by using objects and sounds around them. You would then introduce pupils to the task, its parameters and its outcomes and purpose to pupils. You would explain the project and explain how this project would be beneficial to them. They would also form their groups of 6 or 7 for next lesson. The pupils’ survey would be also conducted to understand the background information on the pupils’ prior musical knowledge in school and at home as well as their working attitudes, motivation level and habits.

Lesson two

As part of the teaching of the building blocks to music compositions, you would first show “Stomp” video to teach form. This video aims to inspire the pupils and encourages them to be creative and at the same time, easing them into the compositional task. They would view the video and complete the worksheet on form. You would explain the concept of form and its importance on the structure of music compositions. Next, as part of the second building block towards music compositions, you show a video of ‘The Blue Man Group’ which make use of daily objects as percussive instruments to make music. They would view the video and complete the worksheet “Musical Concepts”. Pupils are required to fill the boxes up to do quick notes on the development of the music such as instrumentation, dynamics, tempo and texture. The pupils would be allowed to view it twice to confirm their answers. You would go through the “Musical Concepts” worksheet as a class. The video would be played while going through the worksheet to ensure understanding. You need to emphasise the importance of the thinking process in music composition and the need to have a good start and ending for a piece of music.
Lesson three

For the third building block to music composition, you would then teach rhythm making by using the worksheet “Putting rhythm together”. You would split the class into 4 groups and each group would take on a rhythmic part as given in the “Putting Rhythm Together” worksheet. You would coach each group to perform their parts well. All would play together to understand the concept of different rhythmic patterns coming together. After this is done, they would create their rhythmic patterns by filling up the second part of the same worksheet. This time, one of the pupils’ rhythmic patterns would be written on the board and that group he/she belong to would use the new pattern. The rest of the 3 groups would play the same patterns while that group would play the new created pattern from their peer. Once the concept of rhythm-making is grasped, you would encourage them to discuss among themselves some general ideas they have for their group music composition next week.

Lesson four

Pupils would continue to practice in groups on their music composition. You would make your rounds to assist the pupils when needed. You may need to remind the pupils the importance of having a form for their composition. You would provide feedback and provide general areas of improvement when required. Feedback should be open-ended enough to permit considerable flexibility and creativity. You need to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required.

Lesson five

All groups would perform their music compositions for you, the researcher and their peers to listen. You, together with the researcher, would do ratings for the group based on the rubrics. The rubric consists of musical components such as tempo, aesthetic appeal, dynamics, creativity etc. After the presentation of the creation, you would give positive and constructive feedback to the group. You need be careful to provide honest feedback without hurting the confidence of the group. Negative remarks should be avoided and teacher also should not suggest her ways of improvement, but only to provide general guidelines or areas to look into so that there will be no hampering of creativity from the pupils as they would not be worried for not changing according to what we want. The groups would be asked to refine the product.

Lesson Six

In this lesson, the remaining groups who have not performed in the previous lesson would perform for their peers and us. The remaining time would be in their groups to refine their compositions. Modifications would be done to the creative product. They would rehearse their modified music compositions. You need to observe pupils' responses and to provide assistance when required.

Lesson Seven

The pupils would be in their groups, finalizing their final performance. You need to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required.

Lesson Eight

In this lesson, the pupils would perform their compositions for the second time. For this time, the group compositions would have undergone some modifications after the discussion between the group members. The groups would present their compositions in class and you, together with the researcher, would evaluate the groups for the second time. You would provide
feedback and praise any improvement made. Encouragement should be also given to the groups who tried but not successful. The researcher and you would do ratings for the group based on the same rubrics.

Lesson Nine

In this lesson, the remaining groups who have not performed in the previous lesson would perform for their peers and you. Evaluation and feedback would be given to pupils by you. Ratings would also be done using the same rubrics.

3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of group music composition in music lessons in Singapore classrooms by learning what musical and social skills developed and the processes involved in group music composition activities. We will learn about the influence of the teacher in the conduct of group composition activities and the implications for teaching group music compositions in a Singapore classroom.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

The data for this project will be kept confidential.

All teacher’s interviews (including the preparatory sessions with the teacher in December) and pupils’ group interviews would be audio-recorded.

1) The input from the music teacher on the pupils understanding and thought processes were received. The input is collected through informal interview sessions through audio recordings.

2) Two audio recordings would be placed within the two fixed groups for the whole project to record all verbal interaction within the group during the discussion, rehearsal and performance. In this way, it allows the researcher to do cross checking and review the responses. It also helps in eliminating any missed observation during the lesson.

Teacher’s classroom teaching for all lessons would be video-recorded.

1) One video camera was placed at the back of the classroom during each music lesson to have an overview of teacher-pupil interaction, pupil to pupil interaction, pupils’ compositional performances and any general observations that could have left out while observing. The pupils’ reactions and gestures are also recorded.

2) This is to help in transcriptions of the lessons for analysis and video recording pupils’ compositions, performances and home-made instruments.

3) Video-recordings also allow the researcher to know what is happening in class, to see it and to hear it and to make sense out of it. Only then, the researcher would make a more accurate interpretation of what is happening when editing the transcript.

4) Video-recording of all lessons could duplicate for you before the interview to assist you in formulating your observations during the interview sessions with the researcher.

5) Video-recording of the two fixed groups’ interviews to help researcher to see who is talking, pupils’ body language and facial expressions.
I would keep all video and audio recordings locked so that only I have access to it and all recordings would be disposed off once the project is completed.

1) I agree to allow my identity to be disclosed in reports and presentations.
   Yes / No Initials________________

2) I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.
   Yes / No Initials________________

6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

   Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.

   Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in
   ○ the quality of any services you may receive.
   ○ benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

   Whether you choose to participate or not will have no affect on your grade or evaluation.

7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:

   You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

   If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as operational issues, how to do any part of it, please contact the researcher (Name: Teo Phin-Phin Clara, Tel: 90073486, email: clarateo@gmail.com).

9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.
   Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

________________________________________     _____________________________
Signature                                                                      Date

Name: ______________________________
Research Participant Information and Consent Form (For Pupils)

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: Group Music Composition Towards Creative Thinking
Researcher and Title: Teo Phin-Phin Clara
Department and Institution: Visual & Performing Arts, National Institute of Education

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
You are being asked to participate in a research study of group music composition towards creative thinking. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a pupil in that selected class.

From this study, we hope to learn how group music composition foster musical concepts and elements and the effects of group music composition in music lessons in Singapore classrooms.

In the entire study, 81 people are being asked to participate. (2 classes and a teacher)

Your participation in this study will take about nine weeks.

2. WHAT YOU WILL DO:

Overview of the composition project – “Music I Can Make”

Project “Music I Can make” focuses on exploring creative music composition processes. You would take part in “Music I Can Compose” project during Term 1 2012 (first week of January to end of February) within the general music curriculum, i.e. one ½ hour lesson each week over a duration of 9 weeks.

The first lesson would be used as an introductory session to inform you about the compositional project and confirm your music groupings. In addition, to inspire you to compose, a video comprises of two percussive musical groups would be shown to you. You would be also required to complete a survey on your background and your attitude towards music composition.

The next two lessons would introduce you to the elements of music like form, tempo and dynamics, so as to form building blocks for your music composition task. This aims to develop in sufficient understanding of the concepts being taught to enable you to operate with a reasonable level of independence in the compositional task.

After understanding the key concepts of music elements, you would compose a piece in your group. You would be encouraged to be innovative in the choice of instruments, such as untuned percussion, homemade percussive instruments, or even body percussion. At the end of the project, you would perform your group music composition in class. This project does not require you to have any prior knowledge.
3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

You will understand the processes involved in music composition and at the end of the project, you would compose a music composition in your group.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

The data for this project will be kept confidential.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will remain anonymous.

In each class, two selected group interviews would be audio-recorded.

1) Two audio recordings would be placed within the two fixed groups for the whole project to record all verbal interaction within the group during the discussion, rehearsal and performance. In this way, it allows the researcher to do cross checking and review the responses. It also helps in eliminating any missed observation during the lesson.

Classroom teaching for all lessons would be video-recorded.

1) One video camera was placed at the back of the classroom during each music lesson to have an overview of teacher-pupil interaction, pupil to pupil interaction, pupils’ compositional performances and any general observations that could have left out while observing. The pupils’ reactions and gestures are also recorded.

2) Video-recording of the two fixed groups’ interviews to help researcher to see who is talking, pupils’ body language and facial expressions.

I would keep all video and audio recordings locked so that only I have access to it and all recordings would be disposed off once the project is completed.

I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.

Yes / No (pls circle) Initials____________

6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.

7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:

You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.
8. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS
If you have concerns or questions about this study, please inform the music teacher as soon as possible.

9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.
Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________           _____________________________
Signature                                                                                       Date

Name: __________________________________________

Relationship: Parents / Guardian (Pls circle.)
APPENDIX 3

**Instruction sheet for the music teacher**

1. **Realistic Expectation**
   
a. Do not assume pupils have no or little musical knowledge in them. They have their unique experience to compose what is meaningful to them.
   
b. Teacher to provide opportunity for them to compose, guide and support when creating their compositions.

2. **Creativity cannot be taught. So teacher could encourage, stimulate and guide them to be creative.**

3. **Positive mindset**
   
a. Although they have little or no experience in music composition, they can still create music.
   
b. Do not evaluate the ‘correctness’ of the students’ creative work.

4. **Give sufficient time.**
   
a. Pupils need time to generate ideas, to revise and alter their work.
   
b. Inevitable messy noise should be allowed as they are trying out the sounds and deciding to use or discard the instrument or musical motifs.

5. **Create positive learning environment.**
   
a. Talk with pupils about what we will be doing and what they will be learning and why it is important in their learning.
   
b. Encourage cultural context- lyrics, instruments, composers to be linked to their cultures if possible.
   
c. Tap on pupils’ experience and contexts to help them understand better.
   
d. Encourage positive environment through social context- positive peer learning, reduce hostility or defensiveness to other’s suggestions, peer pressure to complete the task

6. **Setting parameters**
   
a. Broad parameters allow pupils to make decisions, yet reduce insecurity they might experience if not given guidelines.
   
b. Broad parameters like start with overall style, texture or form.

7. **Types of notation**
   
a. Notation may be just enough to remember the piece, not to be followed closely during performance.

8. **Teacher’s feedback**
   
a. Must be honest with pupils
   
b. But no criticism and altering their work.
   
c. Find out pupils’ intent before giving any suggestions
   
d. Constructive evaluation is important to encourage autonomy and respecting their individuality.

   **e. Common Problem 1: We dun know how?!**
   
   Eg. Pupils: We can’t think of anything.
   
   Tr: Can you show me what you do have?

   **Common Problem 2: Speed fluctuation**
   
   Eg: Tr: Is it always appropriate to take a piece and speed it up or slow it down?
   
   Would you have a reason for deciding to do that?
9. Teacher’s pedagogical competency
   a. Aware of social context
   b. Provide timely and useful feedback.
   c. Scaffold to pupils. E.g. Provide accompaniment, or counting a difficult measure
to help pupils get through the passage without stopping.
10. The influence of social fabric of the peer group
   a. The choice to choose their own work groups is given to pupils to take
advantage of their rapport.
   b. Group work may create informal comparisons. This is normal as they could
overhear other group’s discussion and avoid mistakes made by others.
11. Open-ended questions
12. Introduce the task by telling what the task is about and how it can benefit pupils.

Preparation session/s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Things to do</th>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2011</td>
<td>8. Teacher’s musical background, compositional experience and her expectations for this project through the interview with the teacher. (Appendix 5- Interviews with teacher)</td>
<td>1. Direct Observation- Audio Recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Research participant information and consent form for teacher. (appendix 1)</td>
<td>2. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Clearer understanding of the project in the music teacher by coaching the teacher on how to conduct the whole project. (Appendix 3- Instruction Sheet for teacher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Appropriate questioning techniques and feedback strategies for conducting the project. (Appendix 3- Instruction Sheet for teacher)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. If the time frame for each activity in the project is sufficient for pupils to discuss, rehearse and perform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The positioning of video recorders and recording devices to achieve proper perspectives of student-teacher interactions and pupils group discussion processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Pupils’ survey on the pupils’ prior musical knowledge in school and at home as well as their working attitudes, motivation level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and habits would be conducted during the first lesson of the project. (Appendix 4-Pupils’ survey)

15. Any other outstanding problems that may be overlooked in designing the project.

**Lessons Outline (2/1/2012-2/3/2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Things to do</th>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>1. Pupils would be shown a video montage of various percussive groups (The Blue Man Group and Nanta)</td>
<td>1. Background Data -Pupils’ Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. A short introduction write-up of each group would be given to pupils to know the uniqueness about the musical groups. (Appendix 8)</td>
<td>2. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The teacher would explain to pupils the possibility of making music by using objects and sounds around them.</td>
<td>3. Teacher’s Observations- Tr interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Teacher to distribute the task sheet. (Appendix 7) She would then introduce pupils to the task, its parameters and its outcomes and purpose to pupils.</td>
<td>4. Direct Observation- Audio &amp; Video Recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. They would also form their groups of 6 or 7 for next lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The pupils’ survey would be also conducted to understand pupils and narrow the 2 fixed groups per class to track for the project. (Appendix 4-survey to pupils)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>1. The teacher would first show “Stomp” video to teach form.</td>
<td>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This video aims to inspire the pupils and encourages them to be creative and easing them into the compositional task.</td>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Tr interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. They would view the video and complete the worksheet on form. (appendix 9)</td>
<td>3. Direct Observation- Audio &amp; Video Recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher would explain the concept of form and its importance on the structure of music compositions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Next, the teacher to show a video of ‘The Blue Man Group’ which make use of daily objects as percussive instruments to make music.

5. They would view the video and complete the worksheet “Musical Concepts”. (Appendix 10) Pupils to view it twice to confirm their answers.

6. Pupils are required to fill the boxes up to do quick notes on the development of the music such as instrumentation, dynamics, tempo and texture.

7. The teacher would go through the “Musical Concepts” worksheet as a class. (Appendix 10) The video would be played as the teacher goes through the worksheet to ensure understanding.

8. Teacher to emphasise the importance of having a good start and ending for a piece of music.

Week 3

1. For the third building block to music composition, the teacher would teach rhythm making by using the worksheet “Putting rhythm together”. (Appendix 11)

2. The teacher would split the class into 4 groups and each group would take on a rhythmic part.

3. The teacher would coach each group to perform their parts well. All would play together to understand the concept of different rhythmic patterns coming together.

4. After this is done, they would create their
rhythmic patterns by filling up the second part of the same worksheet.

5. Teacher to choose one of the pupils’ rhythmic patterns to be written on the board and that group he/she belong to would use the new pattern.

6. The rest of the 3 groups would play the same patterns as allocated previously while that group would play the new created pattern from their peer.

7. All to play the rhythms together.

8. Once the concept of rhythm-making is grasped, the teacher would encourage them to discuss among themselves some general ideas they have for their group music composition next week.

| Week 4 | 1. Pupils would continue to practice in groups on their music composition. |
|        | 2. The teacher would make her rounds to assist the pupils when needed. |
|        | 3. The teacher to distribute the checklist for the group to fill up to ensure their readiness to perform for the next lesson. (Appendix 12) |
|        | 4. The teacher may need to remind the pupils the importance of having a form for their composition. |
|        | 5. The teacher would provide feedback and provide general areas of improvement when required. |

| 1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals |
| 2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews |
| 3. Direct Observation- Audio & Video Recordings |
6. Feedback should be open-ended enough to permit considerable flexibility and creativity.

7. Teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>1. Performance 1 for all groups to perform.</th>
<th>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Researcher and music teacher would do ratings for the group based on the rubrics. (Appendix 13)</td>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. After the presentation of the creation, the teacher would give positive and constructive feedback to the group.</td>
<td>3. Direct Observation- Audio &amp; Video Recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Teacher also should not suggest ways of improvement, but only to provide general guidelines or areas to look into.</td>
<td>4. Physical Artifacts- video recording of pupils’ compositions, performances and home-made instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The groups would be asked to refine the product.</td>
<td>5. Focused interviews- students’ interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>1. Performance 1 continuation for the remaining groups to perform.</th>
<th>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The remaining time would be in their groups to refine their compositions.</td>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Modifications would be done to the creative product.</td>
<td>3. Direct Observation- Audio &amp; Video Recordings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. They would rehearse their modified music compositions.</td>
<td>4. Physical Artifacts- video recording of pupils’ compositions,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses and to provide assistance when required.</td>
<td>1. The pupils would be in their groups, finalizing their final performance.</td>
<td>1. Continuation of Performance 2 on the remaining groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The teacher needs to remind the pupils to fill up the checklist for the group to ensure their readiness for the final performance in the next lesson. (Appendix 12)</td>
<td>2. The teacher needs to remind the pupils to fill up the checklist for the group to ensure their readiness for the final performance in the next lesson. (Appendix 12)</td>
<td>2. Evaluation and feedback would be given to pupils by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher needs to observe pupils’ responses in their group interactions and to provide assistance when required.</td>
<td>3. Teacher would evaluate the groups for the second time using the rubrics. The teacher to distribute the checklist for the group to fill up to ensure their readiness to perform for the next lesson. (Appendix 13)</td>
<td>3. Ratings would also be done using the same rubrics. (Appendix 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
<td>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
<td>1. Researcher’s Observations- Researcher journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews</td>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews</td>
<td>2. Teacher’s Observations- Teacher interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Focused interviews- students’ interviews</td>
<td>5. Focused interviews- students’ interviews</td>
<td>5. Focused interviews- students’ interviews</td>
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Performances and home-made instruments.
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<tr>
<th>&amp; Video Recordings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Physical Artifacts- video recording of pupils’ compositions, performances and home-made instruments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey for pupils (Lesson 1)

Personal information

1. Name: __________________________________

2. Class: _____________

3. Gender: F / M (Pls circle)

4. Race: Chinese / Malay / Indian / Other: _____________ (Pls circle)

5. Do you have any formal music training (learn piano, violin, electone etc):  Yes / No

   If yes, which grade, examination board and school: _________________________________

6. Are you in one of the performing arts CCAs in school (eg. Band, Choir, Handbells, Drum
   Ensemble)? Yes / No

   If yes, which CCA? _________________________________

7. Are you in any musical group outside school? Yes / No

   If yes, which grade, examination board and school: _________________________________

8. Have you written a song before? Yes / No

   If yes, which school or who taught you: _________________________________

Music lesson-related questions:

9. If the teacher is to teach me how to write music, I will try my best to learn. Yes / No

10. I think learning to write music in music lesson is important to me. Yes / No

11. We need to have some music background to be able to write music. Yes / No

12. I hope to have music writing in my music lessons after this project. Yes / No
Interview questions guidelines for the music teacher

Before music lessons commence

1. Have you ever composed before? Can you share your experience with me? If no, do you think composition is important to musical learning process?
2. Do you have any experience in teaching music composition before?
3. Do you have confidence to teach music composition to your pupils?
4. If you were to teach music composition to your pupils by yourself, how would you teach it?
5. How can we promote creativity in classrooms?
6. Do you think your pupils would be able to compose music? And what skills do you think they need?
7. Talk about the feasibility of conducting music composition in the General Music lessons?

Interview questions for the music teacher after every music lesson

1. How do you feel about the lesson?
2. Do you feel more confident to continue with the project?
3. Did the lesson go well as planned?
4. Tell me about any section of the lesson that you find it satisfactory.
5. Were there any problems you faced at any point of the lesson?
6. Have the pupils learnt anything from your lesson?
7. What have you learnt after this lesson?
APPENDIX 6

Pupils' interview questions guidelines (2 interview sessions-During mid and end of project)

1. How did you feel when you learnt from your teacher that you are going to compose?
2. How did you going to decide the sounds of your composition?
3. How did you compose the piece?
4. How did you combine the sounds?
5. How did you begin and end the composition?
6. What is interesting about your composition?
7. Did you enjoy working together with your friends in this task?
8. Do you like to compose again?
9. What have you learnt from this project?
10. Any recommendations for the teacher to help you to learn music composition in music lessons?
MUSIC COMPOSITION TASK (9 WEEKS)

In groups, create a music composition in your group of 6-8 of about **one and half minutes**, displaying the elements of music you are taught. (tempo, dynamics, form) The instruments must be percussion (tuned or untuned). You are encouraged to create any sound effects or movement to enhance your group music composition.

For the next few lessons, the teacher is going to teach you some ways to write a music composition. Just remember a good composition has a good start and a good ending. From lesson 3 and 4, you would work in your groups to discuss and rehearse your piece of music. By lesson 4, your group should be quite clear how to perform your group composition. Remember to fill up your checklist to make sure your group is ready for group performance in lesson 5.

During lesson 5 and 6, all groups would be given a chance to perform the music composition. The teacher would give you feedback and the groups could improve on the music composition to make it better for the final performance.

For lesson 7, all groups would go back to their compositions to modify so that the group performance would be improved further for the final performance.

For lesson 8, it is ShowTime and all groups would present their compositions for the last time. By then, your group composition should be even closer to PERFECTION!

**JUST RELAX AND LET YOUR CREATIVE SPARKS FLY**
**It’s Time To Know More About Us!**

**Blue Man Group**

The Blue Man group is a trio (3) of performers who all wear a blue ‘skin’. They first started in US and now perform all over the world. The “Blue Man Group” is a unique theatrical performance of music, comedy, visuals (art) and science. They are creative, artistic and funny and desire to create and express or transform something in their shows. They use bubblegum, marshmallows, cereal, and paint in their shows and even use water pipes to make music.

There are a number of different themes found in various Blue Man performances. These themes include:

- **Science** and **technology**, especially the topics of plumbing, human sight, information overload (too much information given at one time) and the Internet.
- **Innocence**, as when the Blue Men appear to be surprised and perplexed by common artifacts of modern society or by audience reactions. The Blue Man sees the world with childlike wonder. He sees everything like he is seeing it for the first time.

**Nanta**

Nanta is a popular South Korean musical. In English the show is also known as "**Cookin’**". It premiered in October 1997 in Hoam Art Hall in Seoul.

The musical has a simple back story of three cooks attempting to finish preparing a wedding banquet within a strict time limit while the manager installs his incompetent nephew among the kitchen staff. The show involves acrobatics, magic tricks, comedy, pantomime (art of conveying emotions, actions, feelings using actions without speaking) and audience participation. The unifying element throughout the musical is the use of traditional Korean samul nori music, which in this case in performed with improvised instruments, such as cutting boards, water canisters and kitchen knives. The performance is almost completely non-verbal. The very few words which are spoken are in English.

**STOMP**

STomp is created in United Kingdom in 1991. STOMP performance has no words – everyone can understand it. It has little or no melody in the traditional sense, so it doesn’t matter if your taste in music is jazz, classical, dance or pop. STOMP is about rhythm, which is common to all cultures. Everyone knows rhythm, if only from the beating of their own heart – it is the basis of all music. STomp uses a variety of everyday percussion instruments in their shows.
**APPENDIX 9**

**WHAT'S THE FORM? (For Teacher)**

Fill in the boxes to describe the development of the piece. Do use these concepts in the box:

1. **Timbre** - things used to make music
2. **Tempo/ Rhythm** - Fast/Slow, Ostinato (Repeated pattern)
3. **Form (Structure)**

- **Start of the piece** - Man's shouting
  - **Tempo/ Rhythm**: Steady beat / ostinato
  - **Dynamics**: Forte (Loud)
  - **Instruments/ Things they used**: Pots and pans clanging, freezer door slamming, chopping, water spraying, throwing pots into the bins

- **Waitress shouting (0.33-0.40)**

- **Man's shouting. (1.10)**
  - **Tempo/ Rhythm**: Steady beat/ ostinato
  - **Dynamics**: Forte (Loud)
  - **Instruments/ Things they used**: Chopping faster, hitting pots and pans faster, slamming plates and pots on table, ice smashing, blender sounds (0.48)

- **Silence (0.45-0.48)**

- **Tempo/ Rhythm**: Getting faster, accelerating and exciting, ostinato
  - **Dynamics**: Fortissimo, very loud
  - **Instruments/ Things they used**: beating pots and chopping (1.11)

- **Silence (1.47)**

- **Tempo: getting faster**
  - **Dynamics**: Fortissimo, very loud
  - **Instruments/ Things they used**: beating pots and chopping (1.49)

- **Man’s shouting to stop music (1.59)**
What's the Form?

Fill in the boxes to describe the development of the piece. Do use these concepts in the box:

1. Timbre - things used to make music
2. Tempo/Rhythm - Fast/Slow, Ostinato (Repeated pattern)
3. Form (Structure)

Start of the piece: Man’s shouting

Tempo/Rhythm: 
Dynamics: 
Instruments/Things they used:

Waitress shouting (0.33-0.40)

Man’s shouting (1.10)

Tempo/Rhythm: 
Dynamics: 
Instruments/Things they used:

Silence (1.47)

Tempo: getting faster
Dynamics: Fortissimo, very loud
Instruments/Things they used: beating pots and chopping (1.49)

Man’s shouting to stop music (1.59)
Musical Concepts (For Teacher)

Fill in the boxes to describe the development of the piece. Do use these concepts in the box:

4. Timbre – instruments /things they use
   - dynamics (Fortissimo-Very loud, Forte-Loud, Piano-Soft, Pianissimo-Very soft, Getting softer/louder)
   - Texture (Homophonic- in unison, polyphonic- different melody together, imitation- echo)

5. Tempo/ Rhythm- (Fast, Slow, Getting faster, getting slower)

---

Pipe One: Constant beating, 2 notes (F & A), gliding between two notes (4.05), piano

Dynamics: Getting softer/ pianissimo as Pipe Two is being introduced. (4.43)

Pipe Two: constant beating, 3 notes, gliding up and down, C-A-C-D

Piano (4.48)

2 pipes joined together: 4 notes, getting louder, G#-F#-G#-F#-E-F#,

(6.15)

Band with drums -false start, theatrical effect, playful performers joining pipes.

(5.16-6.14)

Pipe 1 and 2 (separated): played together, playing their 2 notes each, playing their 2 notes each, getting louder

(5.03)

Loud drum signal while rest continue to play.

(6.44)

Band joins in, homophony, Band imitates the pipes, playing unison, 4 notes, G#-F#-G#-F#-G#-F#-E-F#, 2 times, forte and fast throughout.

(6.29)

Imitation of previous passage, G#-F#-G#-F#-G#-F#-E-F#, playing unison, 4 notes, 2 times, forte

(6.46)

The Ending: Beating of drums and pipes in unison to finish off.

Fortissimo

Climax: Polyphony between pipes and electric guitars (dialogue),
   All instruments loud,
   Guitar screeching, pipes playing the same, echo effect, fortissimo

(7.05)

Polyphony- dialogue bet pipes and guitar, played by electric guitar, shakers and pipes. Same melody but played faster, G#-F#-E-F#, 3 times.

(6.59)
Musical Concepts

Fill in the boxes to describe the development of the piece. Do use these concepts in the box:

1. Timbre - instruments / things they use
   - dynamics (Fortissimo - Very loud, Forte - Loud, Piano - Soft, Pianissimo - Very soft, Getting softer/louder)
   - Texture (Homophonic - in unison, polyphonic - different melody together, imitation - echo)

2. Tempo/ Rhythm - (Fast, Slow, Getting faster, getting slower)

Pipe One: Constant beating, 2 notes (F & A), gliding between two notes (4.05), piano

Dynamics: Getting softer/pianissimo as Pipe Two is being introduced. (4.43)

Pipe Two:

Pipe One and Two (separated):

Band with drums - false start, theatrical effect, playful performers joining pipes. (5.16 - 6.14)

Loud drum signal while rest continue to play. (6.29)

The Ending: Beating of drums and pipes in unison to finish off. Fortissimo

Climax:

Polyphony - dialogue between pipes and guitar, played by electric guitar, shakers and pipes. Same melody but played faster, G#-F#-E-F#, 3 times. (7.05)
APPENDIX 11

Name: __________________________ (               )                                      Class: ______________

Putting Rhythms together!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns/Pulse</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Basic Beat</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stairs pattern *</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feet-stamping pattern</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Finger-snapping pattern</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Stairs pattern imitates the footsteps when one is climbing the stairs.

Take note:  • = Silence,  R = Right Hand,  L = Left Hand

Let’s Groove!

1. Create by inserting the boxes with rhythmic patterns that you like.
   You can use these rhythms below or modify it.

2. After filling these boxes up, let us play your rhythm with patterns 1-3 (above) together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern/Pulse</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fill in the boxes</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>L-R</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The End
Are you ready for your performance?

Group members’ full names and index numbers:
__________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Class: __________________

Group Composition checklist

Put the tick (✓) against each component that your group has accomplished:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>1st Performance Tick (✓)</th>
<th>2nd Performance Tick (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Each member has a rhythm instrument to play.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The composition has a definite structure. (eg. binary, ternary etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The composition has a good start and a good ending.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All group members know what to do during the performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We use a variety of rhythmic patterns to create our music composition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We use dynamics contrasts (different louds and softs) to make the music composition expressive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We use different textures in our composition.  (eg, homophony, polyphony, imitation etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We coordinate well as a team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We are able to keep a steady tempo throughout the performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Presentation Assessment Rubrics

**Name(s):** ____________________________________________

**Class:** Sec 2 __________

## Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
<th>Terrific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aesthetic Appeal</strong></td>
<td>(0-2m)</td>
<td>(3-4m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not present an effective general impression. Musical ideas do not hold the listener’s interest.</td>
<td>Includes at least one interesting musical idea. Yet, the overall impression is not aesthetically effective.</td>
<td>Includes some interesting musical ideas. The general impression is pleasant and moderately effective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
<th>Terrific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musical idea is familiar or a cliché. No variety or exploration of music elements (range, timbre, dynamics, tempo, rhythm, melody)</td>
<td>Music idea is neither familiar nor a cliché. However, there is no development, variety, or exploration of musical elements.</td>
<td>Involves some original aspect(s) or manipulation(s) of musical idea(s). Explores and varies at least one musical element.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dynamics (loud, soft etc)</strong></td>
<td>No dynamic change throughout the performance.</td>
<td>Show mild effort of a dynamic change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tempo (fast, slow etc)</strong></td>
<td>Is erratic. Does not make musical sense for the piece overall.</td>
<td>Is stable but does not have any variety or does not make musical sense for the piece as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timbre (Suits the instrument)</strong></td>
<td>Is outside the practical range of the instrument and is beyond the technical grasp of players of this level player. Or the percussive instrument is not able to produce any sound effects during the performance.</td>
<td>Is within the practical range of the instrument but includes too many difficult passages for players of this level or the percussive instrument are able to produce minimal audible sounds effects during the performance. Makes an effort to incorporate it into the performance, but not convincing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Composition lacks overall completeness. Attempts to use but unsuccessful. Fails to use musical elements to organise musical ideas or form.</td>
<td>The form is present, but may not be clear. Uses at least one musical element to organize the musical ideas and overall form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The group generally appears disinterested and refuses to discuss anything most of the time. No rapport seen and at least half of the group show unhappiness to work together. The group’s music composition is unpresentable.</td>
<td>The group shows limited interest in the music project throughout or shows interest only at the beginning of the project. Disagreements between members are resolved but the group shows signs of reluctance to move on.</td>
<td>The group shows interest throughout the project. The members discuss and suggest new ways to make their group composition better. Disagreements between members are resolved amicably and the group members are willing to help each other out when requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Hickey’s (1999) “Assessment rubric for a melody with two musical ideas
List of Reference

Glover, J. (2000). Children composing, 4-14


