The focus of this paper is on the interaction between teachers and children during lessons planned (by the teacher) to give children creative experiences. In the analysis of transcriptions of interviews with the teachers and the music lessons they taught it emerged that the use of questions was a significant feature of the teaching, and that the style of questioning did not clearly reflect the teachers' declared views of creativity.

In music, the tradition of training is deeply rooted in most education systems and cultures. It has only been the increased emphasis on composing in the English schools' curriculum in the past decade, which has created the need for teachers to look for alternative teaching styles; styles which, interestingly, they may be more familiar with in other subjects (creative writing, Art, Drama, investigative maths), but have never been properly considered in Music. In the past, the focus of the Music curriculum in primary schools has tended to be on providing a means of developing a sense of community through worship, festivals and concerts; and on fostering the musical abilities of the few, through performance. In this context, the specialist music teacher adopted the role of musical director. Music lessons were modelled on the rehearsal; and there was an emphasis on learning skills through training, which gave access to the music of others (and ultimately the Western European canon). None of this is very appropriate in the context of a curriculum which aims to promote learning through creative music making.

Although, in the late 1960's and 1970's there was much attention given to creativity in the arts, music lagged behind. Research done by Davies (1986) and Kratus (1989, 1994), has shown that creative activities are underused in music classes and teaching is more likely to focus on listening and performing. Paterson & Odam (1999) gathered evidence, over two years, from music classrooms (in secondary schools) in England. They found a similar lack of attention to composing but were able to gather evidence of specific good practice in teaching composing to older children and have disseminated this in an attempt to improve the quality and incidence of composing (NAME, 2000). However, little research has been done to investigate the creative work of younger children in schools (Glover, 2000). Previous research carried out by one of the authors (Dogani, 1998) found that there was a gap between teachers' thinking about creative music making and their practice. Swanwick has suggested that this may be related to the difficulty of explaining music in words (1979) and Ross (1998) alludes to the conservatism of music teachers and their apparent resistance to valuing children' music or adopting new teaching styles. We contest that the reasons are more complex than this and that there are a range of
factors which influence and affect teachers' theories and their ability to apply these, many of these factors are imposed by external conditions.

Aims of the study and research questions

This paper is based on the pilot study of a doctoral research project. The purpose of the main project is to understand teachers' thinking about musical creativity and its application in the classroom context. One outcome of the study will be to evaluate the impact of the research on the teachers involved. By investigating and reflecting on both student and teacher’s thinking and experience, it is hoped that answers to the following research questions will be provided:

- What are the teachers' theories about musical creativity?
- How do teachers apply their theories in practice?
- What is the impact on the teachers of their involvement in the study?
- How is children’s creativity developed in the light of the teaching they receive?

The research involves 9 music teachers from different English primary schools who claim they are interested in musical creativity. There is an important element of triangulation in the research that is designed to lend authority to the conclusions drawn and will provide a reliable and valid profile for each teacher. It is hoped that triangulation, a multidimensional way of gathering data (Robson, 1993) is to be achieved in the research through firstly talking to the teachers in order to realise the way they perceive musical creativity. Secondly, observation and video recording of their practice will demonstrate the way their theories are put into practice. Finally, by engaging them in a reflective conversation about their personal practice and that of another teacher (viewed on a video), it should be possible to appreciate their worlds from the way they analyse that practice. The teacher's world is understood not only from the way they speak about their practice, but also from what their school principal and the children say about it.

This allows the investigation of the teacher’s ‘theory about creative music teaching’ to be looked at from two angles/perspectives:
- At this point most of the reflective conversations with the teachers are in progress and the emerging data form an interesting picture of the teachers’ worlds.

Creativity

There is a great diversity of definitions of creativity in the literature. “The problems of definition lie in its particular associations with the arts, in the complex nature of creative activity itself, and in the variety of theories that have been developed to explain it” (NACCCE Report, 1999, p. 27). The aim of this paper is not to offer another definition but to see its place within teaching and learning.

The same report (1999) commissioned by the British government defined creativity as “Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value” (p. 29).

In relation to this definition, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) argues that creativity occurs within a sociocultural context. “It is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon” (p. 23). Accordingly, originality is relative to the context in which ideas are generated. In education the focus is on what is creative for the individual student in relation to their own and/or their peers’ past and present achievement.

Teachers need to be knowledgeable and experienced in recognising and valuing creativity in particular contexts, and understanding how to facilitate, support and guide children's potential in thinking or acting creatively. They need to know how to act as the “knowledgeable other” (Wood and Attfield, 1996, p. 61).

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) views creativity as operating between the domain, that is a set of symbolic rules that form for example the Arts; the field, that is the individuals who influence a domain with their ideas and products; and the individual who, with his/her ideas, forms part of the domain. This threefold way of viewing creativity is also adopted in the current research. The domain refers to Music, the field refers to the teaching practice of music, and the individual, the teacher and student who, with their knowledge and experiences are able to change their domains and fields.

Creativity in education

The NACCCE report (1999) defines imaginative and creative activity as a form of mental play. In the context of the primary school, playfulness and playing is a natural and ordinary characteristic of young children. One could argue that the process of schooling appears, in many cases, to focus on suppressing this. Play is seen as the opposite of work, and therefore has no place in the classroom from an increasingly early age. Yet, in all the literature on creativity, the idea of play is of central importance. Experimenting, exploring, improvising, taking risks, speculating, messing about, doodling are all necessary stages in creative
Assessment questions require remembering, recognising, assistance questions that often follows, is intuitive, or is stumbled upon. In teaching, the teacher acts as resource for skills and knowledge and a mediator between these and the child: matching tasks to learner’s needs and abilities but also challenging, problematising, or opening up new territory. This is where questioning is crucial.

**Types of Questions**

In *Creativity Across the Primary Curriculum* (2000) Anna Craft proposes three requisites for creativity: imagination; questioning; and playfulness. In discussing “questioning” she uses the distinction, proposed in *All Our Futures* (1999), between “imaginative-generative” and “critical-evaluative” questions. Gallimore and Tharp (1990) stress the need to distinguish between assistance questions and assessment questions used by teachers. The assessment questions are focused on the consolidation of new learning and on the teacher's needs in informing next steps in teaching. It is the assistance questions which generate thinking and new possibilities for the learner, thinking which might not take place without the question being asked.

Morgan & Saxton (1994) take this distinction much further in identifying categories within these two types.

- Assessment questions require remembering, recognising, identifying; showing understanding through explaining, describing, interpreting, comparing, associating.
- Assistance questions invite the application of knowledge in new situations, choosing, hypothesizing, speculating, testing, experimenting. They encourage and demand creative and critical thinking.

For the music teacher assessment questions are safer than assistance questions as the latter may lead to loss of focus, loss of control (noise) and may put the teacher in a weak position if s/he lacks confidence in subject knowledge.

Barnes et al. (1967, in Wragg, 1999) identified the existence of types of questions that are open and “pseudo-open”, that is questions that seem to seek many responses, but in fact demand the answer that is in teacher’s mind. “In these circumstances pupils frequently realise the kind of guessing game involved and scan the teacher’s facial and linguistic responses to help them grope towards the approved reply” (Wragg, 1999, p. 116).
A synthesis of all the categories referred to so far will be used in the analysis that follows

**Methodology**

For the pilot project, three teachers were invited to collaborate in the research. They were all teachers with specialist music training and working as class teachers and subject specialists in three different primary schools in England. The researcher arranged a meeting with each teacher at their school and conducted a semi-structured interview to elicit their views of musical creativity and to describe their own practice when teaching for creativity:

- Describe to me a typical music lesson of yours;
- How would you describe the way the children worked?
- What signs tell you that a lesson is going well?
- What sort of activities do you choose when you want the children to be creative?

These interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. On the same visit a music lesson was observed and video recorded. These lessons were planned by the teacher and exemplified their normal practice with the class when teaching creative music making. In every case (and this is typical) the composing activities were organised as group tasks with 4-6 children working together. The researcher’s notes and the video recordings provided the data for subsequent analysis. These methods have formed the basis of the main project, and have subsequently been refined and developed to include reflective conversations with the teachers.

**Initial findings: what the teachers said in interview.**

In this study - and at this stage, it is emerging that these teachers have absorbed knowingly or unconsciously a theory or theories of creativity. Their ideas about musical creativity tend to centre around how children engaged with activities rather than the outcomes: “Playfulness”, “exploration”, “independence” were all mentioned, but there were also many comments about the need for structure, frameworks, discipline and technique. This, as yet, seems to be an unresolved tension in the teachers’ minds. One teacher believed strongly that skills must come first, another teacher felt that the ‘outcome was secondary’ to the value of working together. Enthusiasm was considered to be more important than ‘good music’.

For these three teachers there was another kind of music education which they were very critical of and wanted to distance themselves from. This was the traditional instrumental and performance based approach which they had all experienced as learners themselves. They saw it as “inhibiting”, “formal”, a “club” which made children feel inferior, failures, and scared. This type of music education was associated with a preoccupation with the “polished” performance and “getting it right”, and had little to do with creativity. Whereas the language they used to describe their practice was full of phrases and words like “explore”, “opening doors”, “using children's ideas”, “feeding off each other’s ideas”, “see what happens” and “hands on”.

All three teachers were insistent about the importance of children and teacher listening carefully to each other; providing frameworks and models. They also made reference to the constraints of current policy and practice in school which forced them to become more rigid and formal; more didactic and with less emphasis on collaborative learning. Teaching styles promoted in the teaching of English and Maths were having a bad effect on how they taught the Arts.

**What questions teachers used whilst teaching.**

By analysing the transcripts of lessons in a detailed way, rapid exchanges of classroom interaction were identified that would otherwise be lost. However, the aim of this paper is not to do a linguistic analysis of those questions, or to judge the teachers from these. It is rather to let the details speak for themselves about the way the use of questions appears to affect the creative process.

The analysis of the use of questions has been developed after a series of attempts that are shown in order to gain a deeper understanding of the process.

**Attempt 1**

- From the first observation of Teacher A the questions she used during the lesson were separated into 2 broad categories: open and closed questions. Each question category was also analysed according to the meaning that it had to the specific context in which it was used. I.e. an open question that revises from the previous lesson, or leads to another dimension, or a closed question that
elicits specific information or understanding (see Appendix, Attempt 1).

- The number of closed and open questions used by the teacher in one lesson are presented in a percentage of 85% closed and 15% open questions.
- On many occasions the teacher was asking questions in order to tease out a specific answer, the answer that would be closer to the focus of the lesson. These questions were invariably ‘pseudo-open’ or closed. Examples will illustrate this:

**Example1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It starts and then it’s getting peaceful</td>
<td>How does it start at the very beginning? Is it going like rushing in?</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Is it crescendo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes it is quite gentle, but in terms of... volume, how would we describe it? What sort of volume is it?</td>
<td>Well, it does crescendo and it goes into the piece. But at the very beginning it is getting what?</td>
<td>Diminuendo</td>
<td>No that’s when it’s getting there. Now (looks to rest of the class) if it is crescendo, how does it start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(another child) Quiet</td>
<td>It starts quite quietly. And then it starts quite gradually to a crescendo.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example2** - questions in which it is more obvious what the teacher is aiming at.

(i) Eliciting opinion:

*Teacher:* Do you think that they were going really together?

(ii) Fulfilling teacher's expectations:

*Teacher:* Who do you think would be confident enough to move from the A to the B and then to the A again?

*Teacher:* Do you think we could do better if we could put the B part quiet?

(iii) Say 'Yes!' questions:

Now, what happens at the end? Does it go quieter at the end? It is quite a lively ending, isn't it? You can say then that it is slow and gentle?

It is quite noisy in the middle, isn't it?

**Attempt 2**

- Categorising the use of questions only by whether they are open or closed gives a very clear but unrefined picture of the use of questions by the teacher. In order to find a way of presenting the meaning that underpins the questions of the same teacher a literature search of finding ways of analysing questions needed to be done. The classifications developed by Morgan & Saxton (1994) helped in classifying the questions in relation to knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These are represented on a table (see Appendix, Attempt 2) that describes

  a. the category of question depending on content
  b. what this category means
  c. key words that characterise those types of questions
  d. typical examples of questions from the pilot study

**Attempt 3**

- Within “Questioning Techniques” are also included teacher’s verbal reinforcements or celebratory language e.g. “Yes”, “OK”, “Right”, “Well done”, “Brilliant”, “Excellent”; use of the mirroring technique as a way of repeating the child’s answer; and finally teacher’s non-verbal reinforcements: eye-contact, facial expression, body gestures, body positions.

**Discussion**

From the use of questions by these teachers it is clear that their overriding tendency is to ask assessment questions: to elicit what has been previously learned, to recall, and to analyse. However, it is important to notice that

a) Teachers used questioning as the main way of interacting with the children, and replying to questions was the principal way in which children contributed to the lesson

b) There is some evidence that the teachers used questions that aimed to challenge children’s thinking and also leading them in a new direction.
c) All kinds of questions were very closely related to the nature of the tasks.
d) The language of the questions was carefully selected in order to fulfill the aims of the lesson: give specific musical vocabulary to the individual or group, and help them to understand how to structure their ideas in order to compose.
e) The effect of these questions on subsequent activity was obvious during the process, as the children understood well the task set, what to include in their composing as well as completing the task in the time available.

Although it was not evident at the beginning, a closer look showed that they tended not to leave much time for the children to think about their answers, and often there was no constructive feedback for a response.

It was not easy to see evidence of independent musical thinking, and there were very few occasions when teachers asked questions about how children felt about the music they were creating or listening to. There were no occasions when children asked questions of the teacher.

The extent to which closed questions were used was surprising. It is important to search the reason behind this: is it because it is easier to teach in this way? Is it because the teacher can control the situation better within the time and space limits? Or is it because teachers believe that certain skills and consequently a way of thinking have to be transferred to the children and this is seen as the best way to do it?

**Conclusion**

“A good question generates silence filled with thought - good questions lead to loss of control and are time consuming” (Morgan and Saxton, 1994, p. 24). Good questions, in creative music activity are likely to generate sound after silence. After the question that teachers asked in these music lessons, there was no silence but an immediate answer or another question to fill the silence.

In successful music teaching and learning the answers should ultimately be musical rather than verbal, and problems solved through “thinking aloud”, which in music is improvisation. Especially when working with young children, ideas and “answers” are sounded rather than internalised.

There are still many teachers who believe that they have no role to play in their students’ creative learning and are confused as to what they can or should be doing to foster creativity in the classroom. The management of group work in music, of setting tasks and providing frameworks is well-absorbed amongst teachers in English schools. What is less established is the teachers' understanding and skill in moving things on in musical ways. Teachers are more comfortable telling than listening and responding. And if it is not appropriate to tell, as in composing tasks, then the only option is to step back and let it happen: stimulate, resource (and monitor where necessary), and hear what happens. There is also evidence that teachers tend to steer clear of the affective domain in their teaching and will tend to focus on the cognitive and psycho-motor aspects of learning and behaviour. Teachers will talk about enjoyment and pleasure but rarely refer to more complex or “negative” feelings which might be evoked or exploited in creative work. This has a direct impact on the quality of the musical experiences which take place in primary school.

There is clearly, then, a need to explore ways in which teachers can engage and interact with children's creative, musical thinking. Conversation and dialogue, which mediates learning, are more productive than interrogation. The ways teachers use questions will directly affect the quality of thinking and learning which take place. Teachers need to question the process during the educational practice. They need to question what is going on here? as well as questioning the children in order to help them realise what they are doing. This sort of questioning could then help the children to ask questions on their own terms, to find the questions to ask about their emerging work.

This brings us to the need for a greater focus on reflective practice. The ultimate aim for the teacher should be to help children become reflective practitioners in their own right.

We hope that through this research the teachers will arrive at a greater understanding of the hidden or private questions that ultimately inform their own practice. In other words, that the questions they are asked to consider in conversation with the researcher will give rise to greater awareness of the kind of questions they might ask of students in their music teaching. By teachers asking better questions of themselves and of their practice, it is hoped children might have the space to think musically and be able to find their own creative voice.

**References**


Glover, J. (2000) 'This is my composition': individual composing pathways in primary and middle years music, unpublished paper presented at the conference (July 2000) of the *National Association of Music Educators*, Bath Spa University, UK.


Swanwick, K. (1979) *A Basis for Music Education*. Windsor: NFER.


**Appendix 1**

**Attempt 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Question Category</th>
<th>Content of question / Teacher 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>revises</td>
<td>Last time what did we do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leading to a new direction</td>
<td>Now, do they play the same tune with the same instruments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenges children's critical thinking</td>
<td>What did A made you think of? What kinds of things did you write down?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assures understanding</td>
<td>How are you going to make sure that they know what to play?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>recalls memory</td>
<td>who can remember how the third bit went?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assures understanding</td>
<td>Alright? Ok? Right? What we are going to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>requests understanding</td>
<td>So, when we are singing can you stand up with us but you won't sing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leading to a new direction</td>
<td>I have to let the beaters bounce. Can you see that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenges deeper understanding of musical notions</td>
<td>The B part goes a bit quicker doesn't it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repeats instructions</td>
<td>What if it had a different beat, maybe a bit quicker?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eliciting opinions</td>
<td>What sort of trumpet? Do you know that trombone slides like this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increases children's concentration</td>
<td>Why (that instrument is called glockenspiel)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

176 Konstantina Dogani and Sarah Hennessy
Can you stand straight so that you make a really nice sound?

Guess what I’m thinking

Teacher’s expectations

Who actually thinks that could do that, can move along the cards and show us where we are?

What we could do that the changes will not be quite well?

Say ‘Yes’!

Now, what happens at the end? Does it go quieter at the end?

It’s very quiet ending, isn’t it? … it starts quietly and throughout the price it gets louder, isn’t it?

It is quite noisy in the middle, isn’t it?

Asks something politely

The other could you pass a sheet to the other?

Asks for participation

[152] Who else have put that?

[169] Can anybody think and say? Anybody got an idea?

Interested on children’s perspective

[288] What if Helen shows you where to play and you play where she pointed?

---

Question Category: knowledge remembering

... require application: solving

take what is already learned and apply it to other situations

whom would you choose?

what would happen if...?

if... how can...? what examples...?

how would you...?

We will play A and then B and then what?

... encourage analysis: reasoning

support arguments/opinion s through organising ideas

why? what if...? what was the purpose? is it a fact that...? can we assume that...?

Why do you think he did that? Why didn’t he start with a low instrument? Why did he end with it?

... invite synthesis: creating

connect elements through expressing original & creative ideas

how could we/you...?

how can...? what if...? I wonder how...? do you suppose that...?

How are you going to make sure that they know what to play?!

How could I remember what notes to play?!

What if Helen shows you where to play and then play where she pointed?

... promote evaluation judging

Look at evidence and establish

Which is better...?

Would you agree that...? Would it be better if...?

Does it matter if...? What is your opinion...? Were we/you/they right to...?

Do you think we could do better if we could put the B part quiet?