

Exploring pedagogical strategies and methods to enhance music learners' improvisation skills at FET level

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in the study

CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, South Africa)
FET:	Further Education and Training
IEB:	Independent Examinations Board

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

It has been revealed by research that the learning of improvisation, while important in the development of overall musicality, is neglected in the music classroom (Jacobs 2010; Jansen van Vuuren 2011). Hart (2011:9) confirms this when stating that “many teachers neglect improvisation in music curricula” and for educators who do teach improvisation “it tends to make up a smaller percentage of classroom learning”. Moreira and Carvalho (2010) advocate that the incorporation of improvisational activities during teaching could promote further technical and expressive musical skills. Therefore this study proposes to explore different methods and strategies of implementing improvisation in the classroom to assist learners in acquiring improvisational skills.

“Improvisation is simply composition that is immediately heard rather than subsequently heard” (Rosenboom, 1996:2) and can play an integral role in developing learners’ overall musicality (Fairfield, 2010; Jacobs, 2010; Gordon 2011; Blair 2007; Kwami, Akrofi & Adams, 2003). If improvisation can be beneficial to the overall development of musicality in an individual, it is important that such a skill should be developed at school level.

Jansen van Vuuren (2011) found that improvisation in South African schools is a key area in need of special attention in terms of development. Jacobs (1996) indicated similar findings, reporting that South African educators expressed a need for more emphasis on improvisation. In a subsequent study by Jacobs (2010), this is again noted, stressing the importance of facilitating creativity in the classroom which can be done through composition and improvisation. Ormans’ 2002 survey of American schools revealed that only 3% of classroom time is spent on improvisation activities. Research clearly indicates a lack of improvisation in the music classroom both locally and internationally. Making

improvisation a priority in the music classroom can help ensure the future of music education (Wexler, 2012).

Research points out that the acquiring of improvisation skills has a variety of benefits contributing to the holistic development of music learners. As such, learning improvisation skills can assist learners in the following areas: music literacy (Kwami *et al*, 2003; Smith, 2010), performance ability (Spielberg, 2008; Moreira & Carvalho, 2010), technical proficiency (Moreira & Carvalho, 2010; Smith, 2010), aural ability (Bersh 2011) and general musicality and creativity (Fairfield, 2010). Most relevant to the current study is the characteristic which Guibalt (2004) identified, namely that improvisation can help learners gain ownership of the music that they are performing, which ultimately will help them have meaningful music experiences.

The benefits of improvisation highlight the advantages of incorporating it in the music classroom (Smith, 2010). Since the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement for Music in South Africa during 2003, a greater emphasis has been placed on creative activities such as improvisation, arranging and composition (Department of Education, 2003). Improvisation is listed as a curriculum outcome in both the CAPS¹ document and the IEB² curriculum. Although there is a greater emphasis on creative activities in recent curricula, studies indicate that there are definite shortcomings in terms of implementing creative development in the secondary school music curriculum, both nationally (Jacobs, 1996) and internationally (Smith, 2010). This causes a discrepancy which needs further investigation.

I chose the topic of improvisation since I am a practising musician and an avid improviser. Being able to improvise has helped me considerably in my

¹ CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement) stipulate policy on curriculum and assessment in the South African schooling sector. (Department of Basic Education, 2011). implemented for the FET phase in 2013 in all South African Government schools (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

² IEB (Independent Examinations Board, 2011), implemented by most private schools in South Africa.

professional career as a session guitarist, playing predominantly contemporary music. I am expected to improvise on a regular basis, both in the studio as well as during live performances. I have played for various successful South African artists including Farryl Purkiss, Michael Lowman, R.J. Benjamin, Natalie Chapman, Tailor, Zola, Cofield Mundi and Hot Water. I was expected to improvise while performing on stage for all of these artists and therefore realised the significance of improvisation as well as the importance of transferring this skill to my learners.

While doing preliminary research in six Gauteng secondary schools during 2012 (Lategan), the findings indicated that educators struggle to implement improvisation in the music classroom. Various difficulties and challenges regarding the teaching of improvisation to FET³ learners were identified. Furthermore, the investigation revealed that educators often neglect improvisation in the classroom, a finding which concurs with research conducted by Carver (2002), Jacobs (2010) and Jansen van Vuuren (2011). With this in mind I hope that this study can shed more light on the process of improvisation in FET music programmes, exploring possible methods and strategies to assist learners in acquiring improvisation skills.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Although the importance of developing improvisation skills in the music curriculum is widely acknowledged (Guilbalt, 2004; Smith, 2010; Wexler, 2012), focus in the application of the new CAPS curriculum has been on enhancing learners' exposure to a wide range of music styles, while relatively little attention has been paid to promoting learners' improvisation competence (Lategan 2012).

Since both the CAPS and IEB curricula require music learners to be able to perform improvisation as one of the learning outcomes in the FET phase, this is

³ FET (Further Education and Training): This acronym refers to the grade 10-12 phase of secondary school education in South Africa, leading to qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework. (Higher Education and Training Laws Amendment Act, 25 of 2010).

a matter deserving of attention. Research has indicated that learners often do not acquire these improvisation skills effectively in the music classroom (Jacobs, 2010; Kiehn, 2007; Lategan, 2012). Therefore, methods and strategies need to be identified and explored in order to assist learners to acquire improvisation skills.

Aebersold (2004) and Kiehn (2007) found that educators lack skills to improvise because of their own lack of training regarding improvisation. This leads to ineffective teaching strategies, since educators lack the confidence to teach improvisation to learners in the classroom (Jacobs 2010). The difficulties that educators experience regarding the teaching of improvisation have a direct influence on learners' progress and attitude towards improvisation. Darling-Hammond (2005) argues that learners reflect the attitudes and expectations of their educators. Smith (2010) confirms that educator biases about improvisation could impact negatively on learners' musical development. This problem is exacerbated by the absence of instructional material with regard to improvisation (Kiehn, 2007; Smith, 2010).

As can be deduced from the previous section, interrelatedness exists between learners and the education system within which they are embedded. Educators have a direct influence on the fostering and development of learners' improvisation skills. In this current study, I attended primarily to the development of improvisation skills with learners in the FET phase. The purpose of this distinction is to limit the scope and narrow the focus of the study, as the educators' approach toward the teaching of improvisation represents a field of study in its own right.

In the research I had a dual role of being the music educator sharing improvisation techniques with the learners, although my main role was that of researcher by closely observing the learners during this process.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question guiding this study is:

How can the use of pedagogical strategies and methods enhance the learning process of teaching improvisation skills to learners at FET level?

Secondary research questions that refine the pedagogical strategies referred to in the main research question are:

- In what ways do rhythmic techniques enhance the learning of improvisation skills?
- In what ways does the increased ability to analyse chord progressions enhance the learning of improvisation skills?
- In what ways does a technical grasp of a variety of scales (major, minor, pentatonic, blues, symmetrical, hybrid) contribute to the acquisition of improvisation skills?
- In what ways does the learning of sequencing techniques contribute to the development of improvisation skills?
- In what ways does the acquisition of fluent arpeggio skills enhance the learning of improvisation skills?

1.4 Aims of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate strategies and methods that can be taught to music learners to enhance their improvisation skills in an FET music programme. As both the educator as well as the researcher, I aimed to explore the different strategies and methods – including a repertoire of improvising techniques – to observe how learners respond to such techniques, documenting the learners' responses. The strategies and methods was organised in logical steps with the aim of providing support through scaffolding so that learners gradually obtain more independence during improvisation activities.

1.5 Research methodology

Various studies, including that of Jansen van Vuuren (2011), Jacobs (2010), Nevhutanda (2005) and Carver (2002), have touched on the concerns regarding the teaching of improvisation in South African schools. These studies highlight both the importance as well as the lack of implementation of improvisation in South African music classrooms. However none of these studies have done an in-depth exploration and investigation around the implementation of pedagogical methods and strategies for improvisation in the classroom. Therefore, this study is unique since it is designed to fill the knowledge gap in this regard.

In this study I am opting to use a qualitative approach because this will allow me to do an in-depth investigation of improvisational methods and strategies within the context of an FET music program. By using qualitative research methods I will be able to explore and explain the world of the participants within the specific context of improvisation (De Vos, 2002; Baxter & Jack, 2008). For the research design a case study seems to be the most appropriate. A case study design facilitates an inquiry into a real-life context (Yin, 2003) and it can be especially useful in an educational field to test “specific instructional strategy” (Mertens, 1998: 145).

The case study will consist of ten participants from a current FET music programme, through a purposive sampling strategy method, to take part in a series of ten lessons focussed on improvisation. The data collection strategies I plan to use will include semi-structured interviews, observations during the ten lessons, and audio recordings of the participants’ attempts at improvisation.

1.6 Trustworthiness of the research

Trustworthiness establishes the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Talbot, 1995). According to Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003), only when the experience of the participants is accurately represented, the research can be seen as trustworthy. The data from the observations and interviews will

be interpreted and verified using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model for trustworthiness:

1.6.1 Transferability

Transferability refers to evidence supporting the generalisation of findings to other contexts. Therefore the findings would also be applicable to others in similar situations (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003:38). Shenton (2004:70) however states that "the results of a qualitative study must be understood within the context of the particular characteristics of the organisation".

For this study, clearly detailed and in-depth descriptions of the participants' experiences will be given. This is done in order for the reader to determine if these findings are transferable to other situations (Holloway, 2005). Comparison of findings between the various data sources (interviews, observations and audio recordings) will also enhance the transferability of the findings (Sutter, 2006).

1.6.2 Dependability

Dependability has to do with the consistency of findings (Holloway, 2005). This can be established if similar findings would be obtained if the study were repeated (Sutter, 2006). Shenton (2004) suggests that the processes within the study should be reported in detail to enable future researchers to repeat the work so that they can gain the same results. Although this study will be conducted on a small scale in a particular context, it is envisaged that similar results will be obtained in corresponding situations with respondents at other FET schools in South Africa.

1.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research (Sutter, 2006). This is a strategy to ensure neutrality of the findings (De Vos, 2002). In trying to obtain a high level of confirmability, I will scrutinise related qualitative research on similar topics to concur findings and conclusions (Fairfield, 2010; Smith, 2010). I will make a conscious effort to remain as objective as possible and not to influence

results through my own perspective, although qualitative research will always include elements of subjectivity (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

1.6.4 Credibility

Credibility is when the participants recognise the findings of the research as their own experience (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). The findings should closely represent the truth of the participants' experience (Talbot, 1995). Credibility is the most important criteria when judging a qualitative study (Sutter, 2006). In using a qualitative case-study design for this study, I aim at providing a real-life representation of the participants' world in order to enhance the credibility of the research. Transcripts of the individual interviews will be shared with participants in order to confirm their responses.

1.7 Validity of the research

It is difficult to derive a single, fixed and universal concept for validity in qualitative research because the validity of each qualitative study is "grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects" (Winter, 2000:1). Therefore the validation of a qualitative study depends on the research approach taken by the researcher specific to each study. However, triangulation has been an authentic method to help ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Creswell and Miller (2000:126) define triangulation as "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study." Brannen (2004) confirms that triangulation is used to corroborate one set of data with another set of data.

In this study I will make use of methodological triangulation as suggested by Daymon and Holloway (2011), where two or more methods of data collection are employed. As already indicated, three methods of data collection will be included namely interviews, observations, and audio recordings.

Furthermore, the involvement of an impartial examiner to help interpret the data from the audio recordings should improve the trustworthiness of findings.

1.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher has a moral obligation to consider the rights of the participants who takes part in a study (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). Therefore throughout the study I will place the highest regard on the ethical rights of the participants. Only learners who are willing to take part in the research will be involved in data collection.

Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for persons during research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005:9). The principal of the school as well as all the learner participants and their parents received and completed letters of informed consent and assent (see appendix C, D and E) before the data collection commenced. The consent letter clearly states that all information disclosed in the interview as well as the recorded observational data would be solely used for the purpose of research and all information would be kept confidential. No information revealing the identity of respondents' will be disclosed in the dissemination of the research findings. Data collected will be stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and will only be used for research purposes.

1.9 Limitations of the study

As previously mentioned, this study's findings will be based on a single case study with FET learners from a private secondary school in Gauteng; therefore findings may not necessarily apply to FET learners from all secondary schools in South Africa.

The results of this study only pose to give a reliable representation of the perceptions of the limited sample of respondents that took part in the study. The findings however suggest possible tendencies in terms of pedagogical strategies and methods which could enhance music learners' improvisation skills.

1.10 Value of the study

Very little research exists on the topic of teaching strategies for music improvisation at primary and secondary school level (Rinehimer, 2012). Positive outcomes of the study will be that it could lead to the identification of methods and strategies capable of enhancing learners' capacity for improvisation at the FET level. Furthermore, examples of teaching methods and strategies will be tried out during the research process, which could provide music learners with confidence and enthusiasm to perform the improvisation activities which are part of the curriculum requirements. The methods and strategies identified from this study could help curricula designers sculpt instructional material that can be used to assist the presentation of music improvisation in the classroom.

1.11 Organisation of chapters

The study consists of five chapters. The chapters are arranged in the following format:

- Chapter one provides a general overview of the study. It introduces the research problem, research question and explains how the rest of the study will be conducted;
- Chapter two is a review of the literature based on the research questions asked in chapter one;
- Chapter three gives a detailed description about the research methods used in this study;
- Chapter four provides an in-depth analysis of the results obtained during the data collection process;
- Chapter five summarises the findings relating to the study's research questions and gives recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the literature review, the importance of cultivating creativity in the music classroom is highlighted, with emphasis on improvisation as a tool for this process. The benefits of improvisation as well as the responsibilities which educators have towards learners in terms of teaching improvisation, as advocated by the two main school curricula, are outlined. The approach of teaching improvisation assessment models for improvisation as well as the theoretical framework applicable to this study, are also explained.

2.2 The importance of cultivating creativity

The three creative activities that form part of the prescribed outcomes by both the CAPS and IEB curriculums are arrangement, composition and improvisation. This study focuses only on improvisation as a creative activity; however it does not undervalue the importance of composition and arrangement as means to stimulate and cultivate creativity in learners. New music and musical ideas emanate through creativity. In order to keep music relevant, current and vibrant, it is important for music educators to nurture creativity in learners. In his article, Wexler (2012) calls for music curricula that focus on enhancing the creativity of learners. Many educators, however, struggle to implement creative activities in the classroom because they do not know how to approach or implement creativity. Strand (2006) argues that even though educators claim to incorporate all outcomes of the curriculum, research indicates that educators spend very little time on implementing creative activities such as improvisation.

Spies (2001) assert that if we nurture creativity in learners, we are also preparing them for everyday life. Creativity does not only help learners to be more creative musicians; it has also become an important quality to possess for

an individual living and working in the twenty-first century. Pink (2005) contends that being able to think creatively is a key factor in social, personal and economic prosperity. Montuori (2003: 238) suggests that “improvisation and creativity are capacities we would do well to develop in an increasingly unpredictable, complex, and at times chaotic existence”. Jacobs (2010) mentions that learners experience enjoyment from taking part in creative activities, while Fairfield (2010) confirm that creative thinking has the potential to play an integral role in the development of learners’ musicality. Improvisation can be one of the keys to unlock the creative ability of learners in the classroom.

2.3 Improvisation as a tool for cultivating creativity

Johnston (2011:1) states that teaching improvisation has the potential to revive the levels of musicianship which was required from Bach, Mozart and Beethoven and it is the responsibility of the educator to assist learners in becoming creative citizens who can respond to the “shifting demand of the contemporary cultural field”. Several authors share Johnston’s belief that teaching improvisation in the classroom can assist educators in cultivating creativity in learners. Smith (2010:3) mentions “improvisation is a skill that can contribute uniquely to a learner’s musical experience and creative thinking”. Kwami *et al.* (2003) concur that teaching improvisation and concepts concerning improvisation help to cultivate creative thinking in learners.

2.4 Benefits of acquiring improvisation skills

Several benefits of the acquisition of improvisation skills have been mentioned in the background to this study, with references to Jacobs (2010), Gordon (2011), Fairfield (2010) Blair (2007) and Kwami *et al.* (2003). Gordon (2011:38) states that the “ability to improvise is best readiness for learning to read music notation”. In another study, McPherson (1995) found that there is a positive correlation between improvisation and the performance proficiency of learners. Improvisation assists learners to acquire an enhanced understanding of

elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm and form (Fairfield, 2010). Learners can understand theoretical concepts better when they use these concepts while improvising (Sarath, 2010). Improvisation can therefore play an integral role in the developing of learners' overall musicality.

Van Bilsen (2010) reports that the acquisition of improvisation skills is an aid which leads to learners with improved levels of motivation which can be very helpful in today's classroom. According to Berger (2006), improvisation allows for personal expression, giving learners an increased sense of ownership of the music that they are playing. When the music becomes the property of the musician, the musician develops a healthy musical identity and the music carries more meaning for the said musician (Guilbault, 2004). Rosenboom (1996:1) calls this the development of the "original musical voice". Dobbins (1980:41) summarises the phenomenon as follows:

Improvisation is an essential tool for initiating the process of discovering and developing the music within oneself. Nothing is more important for the future of music than the recognition, cultivation, and love of that process. For it is certain that if there is no real music inside us, the sounds that we make will remain no more than cheap, empty imitation.

Jacobs (2010:183) highlights some of the benefits of improvisation:

Listening and harmonisation skills are enhanced through improvising, creativity and ultimately self-esteem are developed which in turn enhance performance skills. Improvisation creates a communicational context that offers opportunities for social interaction with a group of musicians.

2.5 Responsibilities of the music educator in terms of improvisation

According to the learning programme guidelines of the Department of Education, the teaching of improvisation is the sole responsibility of the music educator and if it is not taught, the educator has neglected his/her responsibility towards the holistic development of music learners in secondary schools (Jacobs 2010).

Music educators should realise – and take responsibility for – the crucial role they play in developing the creative minds of learners (Gardner, 1993). According to Rosenboom (1996), educators struggling with the teaching of improvisation often approach it in such a way that learners find the idea of improvisation intimidating. He argues that improvisation should be taught as a normal, comfortable and acceptable part of music. Educators should encourage learners to improvise in as many ways as possible (Kiehn, 2007), since exploration which is carefully guided by the educator can help learners to develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of music (Kanellopoulos, 2007).

Smith (2010) notes that the educator’s perspective – including aspects of personal confidence, anxiety and attitude – influences what is taught in the classroom. Aspects which need to be considered regarding educators’ perceptions in teaching improvisation include:

- Improvisation requires development and practise; it is not a superpower or special gift (Brophy, 2002; Barrett, 2006; Woosley; 2012);
- Improvisation does not need to be complex (Smith, 2010);
- A classroom environment conducive to improvisation needs to be established (Johnston, 2011);
- Educators should improve their own improvising skills (Rosenboom, 1996).

2.6 Misconceptions regarding the teaching of improvisation

A common misconception that leads to educators neglecting improvisation is that educators regard improvisation as restricted for use when teaching jazz (Lategan, 2012). However, Saindon (2007:44) states that “[t]he art of improvisation can be applied to many styles and is definitely not limited to jazz”. Smith (2010:4) affirms this argument and puts the myth to rest by commenting that “[a] lack of experience in jazz improvisation does not disqualify teachers from using general improvisatory activities in instruction.”

Another misconception is that improvisation is an art that is limited to a small group of virtuosos. Woosley (2012:15) argues that, even though some musicians may have more natural improvisation abilities, this does not limit anyone from learning the art. In his view such musicians “may believe that they lack the ability to be creative. But, everyone has a unique musical story to tell”. Azzara (2002) agrees with this statement, remarking that all learners have the potential to improvise.

Educators cannot neglect the teaching of improvisation any longer because not only is it beneficial to the learners, it is also a curriculum requirement. Woosley (2012:3) recognises “that improvisation is not a simple form of music-making given only to certain individuals; rather, it is an art that must be studied and practiced”.

2.7 Further Education and Training (FET) curricula requirements in terms of improvisation

The two main curricula used in South African school music programmes are currently the CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement) and IEB (Independent Examinations Board). Both of these curricula require learners to be able to improvise. This section will focus on the requirements for improvisation as stated in the two curricula.

2.7.1 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The CAPS curriculum was introduced in January 2012 and is prescribed for all government schools in South Africa (Department of Basic Education, 2011). One of the aims of the FET Music curriculum is that learners will develop “creativity through improvisation and working with own music ideas” (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8). Further emphasis on improvisation is evidenced by the following skills which learners need to be able to master: “Rhythmic, melodic and/or harmonic improvisation according to chosen style, instrument and development of learner(s). Playing by ear any rhythm, melody or song” (Department of Basic Education, 2011:13). The skills as outlined in the

CAPS curriculum refer to all grades in the FET curriculum (Grades 10-12). However, in comparison to the detail provided by the IEB curriculum, the CAPS document is vague, not providing sufficient guidelines for educators and learners.

2.7.2 Independent Examinations Board (IEB)

The IEB curriculum is used by most private schools in South Africa. This curriculum also requires that learners should be able to improvise (Independent Examinations Board, 2011). The focus of the IEB curriculum is mainly on the following scales: major, minor, pentatonic, blues and modes (Independent Examinations Board, 2011: 28/18). The learner should be able to make use of these scales and improvise stylistically according to the genre. The curriculum also stipulates basic improvisation criteria from grade 10–12 that increases in difficulty. In grade 10, for instance, a learner should be able to improvise using a pentatonic scale over a non-modulating chord progression (Independent Examinations Board, 2011: 28/19). In grade 12, however, the learner should be able to use a combination of major, minor, pentatonic, blues and modal scales to improvise a solo passage over a non-modulating chord progression (Independent Examinations Board, 2011: 28/18).

The IEB curriculum is more detailed and specific in terms of its outcomes regarding improvisation when compared to the CAPS curriculum. There is also a natural chord progression in terms of the difficulty level from grade 10–12. This curriculum clearly outlines the requirements of learners in terms of improvisation and detailed explanations are given.

2.8 Approaches regarding improvisation in the classroom

Various authors have devised teaching approaches that could assist educators with implementing improvisation in the classroom. For the purpose of this study Carl Orff's Schulwerk approach and Kratus' developmental approach to improvisation will be explored.

2.8.1 Orff-Schulwerk approach

One of the most prominent pedagogy methods used to teach improvisation is the Orff-Schulwerk approach (Campbell, 2008).

Carl Orff (1895-1982) was a composer and later a music educator. He developed the Orff-Schulwerk approach to music education and has, since its inception, provided educators with an active and experimental model for music education (Johnson, 2005/2006). The approach is “one of the most adopted and successful musical teaching/learning approaches in the world” and revolves around practical music making (Cunha and Carvalho, 2011, 75-76). The Orff-Schulwerk approach is also one of the most prominent choices regarding the teaching of improvisation (Rinehimer, 2012).

Long (2013:6-7) sums up Orff-Schulwerk approach, toward the acquisition of improvisation skill, as follows:

- Observation: Learners must observe the educator actively doing something;
- Imitation: Learners must imitate the educator’s example;
- Exploration/Experimentation: Learners has to explore and experiment with the possibilities they were presented with;
- Improvisation/Creation: Learners have to extend what they have learnt to the point in order for them to start initiating their own patterns;
- Literacy: Learners have to be able to write down and interpret what they have created.

Long (2013) argues that the above steps can be completed in any order. It is also important to note that the Orff-Schulwerk approach is not limited to the use of the classroom percussion instruments, as developed by Orff (McCord, 2013), and can be used with any other instruments.

2.8.2 Kratus' developmental approach

Kratus (1990) believes that educators should provide focus, structure and sequence for the creative activities in the classroom. He has developed a model of improvisational development where each of the seven levels builds on the previous, but is linked to the learners' overall musical development. The seven levels are (Kratus, 1995: 27-38):

- I. Exploration
The level is considered pre-improvisational where the learner is still exploring with different sounds and has little control over their instrument.
- II. Process-oriented
Learners start to make more cohesive patterns and their improvisations show brief elements of structure.
- III. Product-oriented
Learners' improvisations show structure including tonality and meter. The learner can also start improvising with other learners at this level.
- IV. Fluid improvisation
The learner starts to think about the sound and what they want to create. The learner shows signs of technical proficiency at this level.
- V. Structural improvisation
The learner understands and can shape the overall structure of their improvisation. Attention is given to elements like the dynamics and flow of the improvisation.
- VI. Stylistic improvisation
The learner can at the sixth level correctly implement and embellish the melodic, harmonic and rhythmical elements of the style of music they improvise over.
- VII. Personal improvisation
Kratus (1995:36) states the following regarding this level:

Occasionally an expert musician will push the boundaries of a style so far that the initial style is no longer recognizable and a new style emerges. The new style establishes its own conventions that enable others to perform and listen to the music with meaning. Musicians who can break

new ground in their improvising have reached the seventh level of improvisation, called, personal improvisation. Very few musicians attain this level.

2.8.3 Conclusion on approaches regarding improvisation

Both the Orff-Schulwerk approach and Kratus' developmental approach can be suitable to implement improvisation in the music classroom. The Orff-Schulwerk approach is possibly more applicable to beginner improvisers as opposed to Kratus' developmental approach, which starts from beginner, all the way through to a very advanced level. A combination of both these approaches was implemented in the current research.

2.9 Assessment of Improvisation

According to Hart (2011), the purpose of assessment in music education is to improve instruction and to reveal individual differences in the classroom. Researchers advocate that assessment of improvisation should be as objective as possible and that objective assessment of improvisation is attainable (Azzara, 1993, Azzara, 2008, Hart, 2011).

Madura (2001:97) express, in her model for teaching stylistic improvisation, that informal assessment of creativity should happen at every stage of the process because it helps to "develop musical creativity throughout the improvisation learning process". The learners should be asked questions like:

- Was the improvisation stylistically appropriate?
- What did you like about the improvisation?
- What made it interesting or exciting?
- What aspects could be varied to make it more interesting?
- What could be added or deleted to create more drama or suspense?
- Did you enjoy the experience?
- If not, what could you do to make the experience more of an expression of yourself? (Madura, 2001:97)

Such questions were posed to the learners throughout this study in order to track the learners' progress as well as to make sure that the thoughts, emotions and opinions of the learners are observed as accurate as possible.

It is also important to consider other, more formal, improvisation assessment models and compare them to that of the IEB to see if there are similarities and/or differences.

Azzara & Grunows' (2006) improvisation assessment model mentions that the following elements should be considered when formally assessing improvisation:

- Related ideas in the context of the overall form should contain elements of unity and variety;
- Improvisation should demonstrate motivic development through tonal and rhythm sequences;
- Learner should demonstrate effective use of silence;
- Learner should demonstrate an understanding of tension and release through resolution of notes in the context of the harmonic chord progression;
- Learners should embellish notes and perform variations on themes;
- Learner should demonstrate a sense of musical interaction.

Patrice Madura (2001) bases her assessment of improvisation on the following three criteria:

- Tonal: intonation, correct notes, variety, originality, motivic development and unity;
- Rhythm: pulse, appropriate feel, appropriate figures, variety, originality, motivic development and unity;
- Expressive: appropriate phrasing, appropriate tone quality, variety in tone quality, variety in range, and variety in dynamics.

The IEB improvisation assessment rubric states the following criteria that learners need to comply with when improvising (a mark between 80-100% can be allocated to the learner if they comply with the description mentioned here):

- Fluency, pulse, metre and tempo: Fluent with a consistently steady beat. Suitable and sustained tempo;
- Phrasing and dynamics: Vivid phrasing and dynamics;
- Style: Stylistic flair and insight;
- Rhythm: Includes more complex rhythmic features on every beat (e.g. syncopation, dotted rhythms, rhythmic ostinato);
- Harmony, chord sequence: Uses variety of chords that are implied by the melody;
- Melody: Stylish embellishments effectively varying the given material. Use of scale fragments, melodic motives, intervals, sequences, or longer melodic passages. Changes are substantial and go beyond mere ornamentation;
- Unity and diversity: Improvisations differ from the originals in imaginative ways with respect to melodic contour and rhythm, but each is clearly based on the chords of the original. Maintains the listener's interest throughout;
- Performance plan: Clear plan as to how their performance will proceed. Musical cues are used to advantage.

Independent Examinations Board (IEB, 2011:36-37):

Compared to the improvisation assessment models of Azzara and Grunow (2006) and Madura (2001), the IEB improvisation assessment rubric is more thorough in its description of improvisation assessment criteria. The only aspects that the IEB rubric do not contain – which are part of Azzara and Grunow's (2006) assessment model – are the effective use of silence; understanding of tension and release; and demonstrating a sense of musical interaction. In my view, these aspects are valuable when assessing improvisation. The only aspect not included in the IEB curriculum, as noted by Madura (2001), is intonation, which is a valuable component worth considering when assessing improvisation. However the assessment criteria, as found in

the IEB improvisation assessment rubric,deems to be efficient when compared to the other two models of assessment described in this section.

2.10 Theoretical framework

The key characteristics which underpin the understanding of improvisation for this study, resonates closely with the philosophical approach to music education as exemplified by David Elliott. In his book, *Music Matters* (1995), Elliott developed what he called the *praxial* philosophy to music education. This philosophy centres on “actual music making and music listening in specific cultural contexts” (Elliott, 1995:27). In a later article, *Putting Matters in Perspective: Reflections on a New Philosophy* (1996), he argues that, during music education, the “product” or music performance should never be separated from the “process” of learning to perform the music. The music-teaching environment should promote and enable the actions of learners through interactive, goal-directed questions, dealing with issues and sharing knowledge in order for them to become reflective music practitioners. Elliott (1996:27) advocates for educators to teach musicianship that includes listenership “because musicianship is the key to achieving the values of music both during school years and after.” He also encourages educators to treat learners as apprentice musicians and to teach them how to solve musical problems in order for them to develop as musicians.

In terms of improvising, Elliot states that, along with performing, improvisation lies at the heart of musical practices. Improvisation is the link for learners to perform and compose in both a practical and social ways. Making music and incorporating improvisation “play an important role in establishing, defining, delineating, and preserving a sense of community and self-identity within social groups” (Elliot, 1995:173). He believes that if educators enable learners to actively as well as reflectively take part in musical practices, they can ensure the sustained development of self-esteem in learners (1996:28).

A praxial philosophy to music education therefore encourages educators to treat learners as apprentice performers. Allowing learners to actively take part in music making, by using tools such as improvisation and cultivating listenership, can result in learners with a higher self-esteem and a sense of community or belonging. Knowledge is shared while teaching the learners 'how to' solve music problems in an interactive manner.

Elliott (1996:31) summarises a praxial curriculum as follows:

The praxial curriculum centers on achieving self-growth and musical enjoyment in the thoughtful actions of artistic music making (of all kinds). Teachers and students work together to meet the musical challenges involved in authentic musical projects through reflective musical performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting. Music listening is directed, first, to the music being made by students themselves. Each musical work that students are learning to interpret and perform (improvise, arrange and so on) is approached as a "full course meal" – as a multidimensional challenge to be made artistically and listened-for intelligently in all its relevant dimensions (interpretive, structural, stylistic, expressional, descriptive, cultural). In support of artistic listening-in-context, carefully selected recordings are introduced parenthetically. Similarly, formal knowledge is filtered into the continuous stream of authentic music making and listening as needed.

The current study therefore links closely to Elliott's praxial philosophy because it focuses on active participation and involvement of learners in music making activities. Furthermore, this approach recommends that "formal knowledge" be integrated with the teaching strategy (Elliott 1996:31), providing learners with knowledge supporting improvisation skills which they can build on and experiment with. While verbal explanations about music provide learners with a conceptual understanding of music elements, it is rather the practical application of these concepts (Elliott 1995:75), which can lead to "intelligent engagement in music" (Martin 2005:167). This increases the learner's understanding of the underlying music elements, which in turn enhances the quality of the improvised performance. By actively engaging with music through performing, learners gain a "first hand, practical experience" of improvisation (Martin 2005:167).

Since a praxial philosophy advocates that learning is in large part a social activity, the interactive nature of improvisation in practice resonates with this approach because it generally includes other musicians (Moreira & Carvalho, 2010). Hallam (2001) agrees that improvisation usually involves the complexity of working with others. This implies that interaction takes place between the various musicians improvising together. Learners that improvise together can learn from each other through such interaction (Knauer, 2004).

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter the importance of cultivating creativity in music learners were highlighted. Teaching creativity in the classroom can assist the development of learners' musicality and in that respect improvisation could be a useful tool in cultivating creativity in learners. Developing improvisation as a skill does not only cultivate creativity but can also benefit the learners' reading skills, performance proficiency and understanding of the underlying elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm and form). Teaching improvisation leads to increased levels of motivation and helps learners take more ownership over the music that they play.

Both the two main school curricula for Music as a school subject in South Africa (Department of Education and IEB) stipulate improvisation as a requirement that should be taught in the classroom. Therefore it is the educators' responsibility to implement the teaching of improvisation in the music classroom. Improvisation is not limited to any genre of music and is also not reserved for only virtuoso musicians.

The Orff-Schulwerk approach and Kratus' developmental approach to teaching improvisation was discussed and a combination of the two approaches will be implemented in this study. Two models for the assessment of improvisation – that of Azzara and Grunow (2006) and Madura (2001) – was compared to the IEB assessment rubric for improvisation. In comparison the IEB rubric deemed

to be sufficient in assessing improvisation. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Elliott's praxial philosophy because this theory advocates practical group participation supported by sound formal knowledge.

In the next chapter the research methodology that was implemented in this study will be explained in detail.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the procedure of the conducted research is described with emphasis on the research approach, research design and research methods. The sampling strategy and the validation process will also be explained.

3.2 Research approach

The chosen research approach for this study is qualitative. Baxter and Jack (2008:544) describe a qualitative study as the “approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources.” Qualitative research can be used to gather, analyse and describe perceptions of respondents (Robinson & Savenye, 2004). De Vos (2002) notes that, in using a qualitative method, the researcher can discover and interpret the world of the participant/s. A qualitative approach was chosen because I intended to explore possible methods and strategies that could assist the learning process of teaching improvisation to learners in the FET phase.

3.3 Research design

I have chosen a case study as research design since it enabled me to explore the phenomenon of the development of improvisation skills with a small group of learners, and thereby to find a deeper understanding of this complex process. The case study is based on a certain ‘situation’ that I investigated; the situation being improvisation as an acquired skill in a FET music programme. Since the goal of the study was to establish parameters, “even a single case could be considered acceptable, provided it met the established objective” (Tellis, 1997:2).

I gathered the data using a variety of data sources. By doing this, the situation is not only explored through one lens but allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Yin (2003) confirms that the strength of case study data collection lies in the reality that the researcher has the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence, allowing for a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural perspectives.

The case study approach is “one of the most common ways to do a qualitative inquiry” (Stake, 2000:435) and “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003:2).

3.4 Sampling strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed because the participants in the case study were chosen through a non-random method of selection in order to generate “information-rich” cases (Patton, 2002:242). I selected ten participants from a current FET music programme at a private school where I teach to take part in a series of ten lessons focussed on improvisation. Participants were chosen according to the following criteria:

- They had to be learners in Grade 10, Grade 11 or Grade 12 who have chosen music as an FET subject;
- They should have obtained a Grade 4 music theory level or higher.

The final participants were ten Grade 12 FET music as subject learners from the private school where I currently teach. All the participants have obtained a Grade 5 music theory level or higher. Additionally they have all obtained a practical Grade 6 level or higher on their chosen instrument. On average the participants have been taking formal lessons on their chosen music instrument for ten years, the least amount being 8 years and the longest being 12.

Since the case study took place at a boys' only school, all the participants are male. However, they come from various backgrounds and cultures with different levels of music knowledge and experience. Table 1 provides information regarding the participants' music background.

Table 1: Participants' music background

Participant	Instrument	Genre of training: Classical music / Contemporary music	Years of formal music lessons
A	Guitar	Contemporary	9
B	Guitar	Contemporary	9
C	Piano	Contemporary	12
D	Piano	Classical	10
E	Violin	Classical	10
F	Violin	Classical	12
G	Violin	Classical	11
H	Alto Saxophone	Both	9
I	Trombone	Both	8
J	Electric Bass guitar	Both	10

3.5 Data collection strategy and research methods

The data collection strategies employed in the research includes semi-structured interviews, observations during ten lessons, and audio recordings of the participants while improvising.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews with individual learners

Making use of interviews to gather data is a research tool that is associated with the qualitative method of research (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Using interviews as a research tool is an effective way to investigate the perceptions of respondents (Kvale, 1996), and it enabled me to understand the perceptions of the respondents regarding the research questions (Robinson & Savenye, 2004).

As part of the semi-structured interviews with each of the ten participants, I made use of responsive interviewing techniques. This provided me with the

opportunity to develop questions over the course of the interviews as opposed to relying only on predetermined questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), thereby clarifying respondents' answers.

After the completion of the series of ten lessons, all the participants were asked to take part in one individual semi-structured interview in order to gather data about their thoughts, views, experiences and challenges regarding the improvisation lessons and the process which was involved. Each interview lasted approximately a half an hour. The interview data was audio recorded as well as written down by me as the interviewer to ensure that a true representation of the participants' views could be produced in the data analysis. After each interview, the participants were asked to verify that the transcript of the interview was an accurate reflection of their thoughts and views.

3.5.2 Observation schedule

A second means of data collection was observations. Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999:91) define observation as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting." As an educator in the classroom, I acted as participant observer and in support of this strategy, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:92) note that "using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method". Patton and Cochran (2002) describe observation as useful in distinguishing the difference between what people say and what they actually do.

Observations took place during the ten improvisation lessons which was each approximately an hour long. During the presentation of the lessons I carefully observed the participants. In each lesson I made observational field notes and afterwards used the field notes to complete the observation schedule (appendix B) that was drafted for each lesson. Aspects that were focussed on during observations included the participants' willingness to participate; level of

enthusiasm; interaction with others; and involvement with the music. These aspects as well as the participants' attitudes, responses and skills were all written down in the observation schedule.

3.5.3 Audio recordings

Lastly, I made audio recordings of the participants' attempts at improvisation. At the start of the case study each of the participants was audio-recorded, improvising over a chord progression as suggested in the Grade 6 syllabus of the Trinity School of Music. After the completion of the case study each participant was again audio-recorded improvising over the same chord progression. These recordings were then given to an external examiner who is an expert in improvisation. The examiner evaluated the recordings without knowing the identity of the learners, or if each improvisation was recorded initially or after completion of the lesson series. The evaluation of the improvisations was done using an IEB improvisation rubric. I then analysed the outcome of the examiner's evaluations, comparing the initial efforts of each participant to their efforts after the completion of the lesson series to determine if there was notable improvement in the ability of the participants to improvise.

3.6 Role of the researcher

In qualitative studies the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This implies that the data is mediated through a human instrument. In the case of this study I was the instrument through which the data was mediated. My role as researcher was also emic (Punch, 1998) because I took part as a full participant – as the music teacher of the learners – in the study. Therefore I acknowledge that my knowledge, perspective and subjectivity in the data acquisition played a role in the final findings of this study. Qualitative researchers should emerge themselves in the research environment because this brings them closer to a "real life" situation (Keegan, 2006). A real life situation enables the researcher to generate more relevant knowledge. Edwards and Kreshel (2008) confirms Keegan's view in stating that, because a researcher is not isolated, he or she can gain unique and useful insights.

Daymon and Holloway (2011:83) state that that no research is wholly neutral or objective:

Aspects of you – such as your values, background, expertise, theoretical and research preferences, and the extent of your emotional engagement with your participants – act as a filter through which you perceive the research topic and the data.

They argue that the subjectivity of a qualitative researcher is a valuable resource that enhances the credibility of a study. In that sense, being subjectively involved I attempted to approximate an objective truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Since I am an avid improviser myself and have investigated how improvisation is taught in secondary schools for my BMus Honours degree, I have a sound knowledge regarding this topic and can therefore enhance the credibility of the current research. The evidence in this study is a reflection of the phenomenon interwoven with the reasoned interpretation of the phenomenon (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

3.7 Method of data analysis

Data analysis is a challenging and creative process characterised by the intimate relationship between the researcher and the data generated from the participants (De Vos, 2002). In order to fully understand and comprehend the meaning of data, it should be scrutinised and studied intensively, reading or studying it as many times as necessary. Only then can the data be interpreted into meaningful research findings (Tesch, 1992). Data analysis must be a true representative of each participant's lived experience (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

I made use of Creswell's (1998:142) five-stage model of data analysis to analyse the data gathered from the observations and interviews. The five steps include:

- Collecting and managing data: All the data from the interviews and observations were captured on computer;

- Reading and memoranda: Data were read and re-read to obtain a complete overview, after which various themes were identified. Key concepts, various significant phrases and ideas were noted;
- Classifying: Various themes, concepts and ideas with similar meanings were grouped together. Colour coding was used in this process. Tables were created to give a clear representation of the various themes;
- Interpretation: Different possibilities for interpreting the information were considered during the process of providing meaning to the data. This assisted me to gain a holistic overview of all the data;
- Representing and visualising: A separate chapter is used to represent all the research findings. The findings of the interviews and observations are presented in a text format to provide a vivid description of what took place during data collection.

The preliminary attempts of the participants' improvisation via audio recordings were compared to the final attempts at the end of the data collection period to distinguish if the participants made any notable progress in terms of their improvisation ability during the data collection stage of the case study.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology, research processes and methods involved to obtain data in order to answer the research questions.

In total ten participants took part in a qualitative case study. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews, observations and audio recordings. The data from the interviews and observations were analysed using Creswell's (1998) five-stage model. The participants' initial and final attempts was recorded and examined by an improvisation expert.

In the next chapter the collected data from the case study will be discussed and analysed with the purpose of answering the research questions.

Chapter 4: Data collection and analysis

4.1 Introduction

Data for this study was captured using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observational field notes and audio recordings of the participants. In this chapter the captured data will be analysed with the purpose of answering the main and secondary research questions. In the data analysis I have strived – as a researcher – to give a true representation of the each of the participants’ lived experience (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

The chosen data analysis method is phenomenological analysis which is based on giving a detailed examination of the participants’ world (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Holloway, 2011). As explained in the previous chapter, Creswell’s (1998) five stage model of data analysis was used to analyse the gathered data from observations and interviews. I collected the data over a ten-week period and then carefully scrutinised it by reading and re-reading it thoroughly. While reading the data, notes were made, which helped with the classification of the data. It was then interpreted and represented, as reported in this chapter. To protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants, each has been assigned a letter of the alphabet (A-J). These letters will be used to refer to the participants throughout the rest of the dissertation.

4.2 Interviews with participants

Responsive, semi-structured individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the participants after the completion of the case study, which included ten lessons focusing on teaching improvisation skills and which was presented by me. Each lesson focussed on a specific aspect of improvisation as required by the FET music curriculum. In this section, the data gathered from the individual interviews are presented and analysed.

4.2.1 Background of participants in terms of improvisation

The participants in this case study consisted of ten Grade 12 learners from a private school in South Africa. The participants met the criteria as set forth in the sampling strategy (Chapter 3.4).

As explained in table 2 below, out of the ten participants, four are trained in classical music; three in contemporary music (which focuses mainly on funk, jazz, rock and blues genres); and three are trained in both classical- and contemporary music, although the last group played their practical exams in classical music only.

Table 2: Participants' music background regarding improvisation

Participant	Instrument	Genre of training: Classical music / Contemporary music	Years taking formal lessons	Previous training in improvisation
A	Guitar	Contemporary	9	Yes
B	Guitar	Contemporary	9	Yes
C	Piano	Contemporary	12	Yes
D	Piano	Classical	10	No
E	Violin	Classical	10	Yes
F	Violin	Classical	12	No
G	Violin	Classical	11	No
H	Alto Saxophone	Both	9	Yes
I	Trombone	Both	8	Yes
J	Electric Bass guitar	Both	10	Yes

The three participants with contemporary music training, as well as the participants that have received training in both classical and contemporary music, have received previous training in improvisation. The participants with contemporary training stated that improvisation is part of their curriculum. The participants that received training in both classical and contemporary music stated that they received some training regarding improvisation in the jazz ensemble in which they play. Three of the four participants with training in only

classical music stated that they have never received training in music improvisation, while one participant from this group stated that he has received some training.

Seven of the total group of ten participants indicated that they do not know what is expected of them concerning improvisation as required by the IEB curriculum for music as a subject.

4.2.2 Participants' perceptions regarding improvisation

In the final face-to-face interview with individual participants, they were asked to define improvisation in their own words. I could ascertain that they had a fair understanding of the definition of improvisation at this stage, which became evident from their responses. Five of the participants' answers included that it involves making music "on the spot". Two participants responded that it is making music with "no real preparation". Other answers included the following:

- Participant E: "To play music without a score or previous knowledge";
- Participant F: "The means in which you play a piece of unwritten music to what feels rhythmically acceptable";
- Participant H: "Making music without written music but rather with harmonies and ideas".

Defining improvisation as making music "the spot" closely relates to Montuori's (2003:244) explanation of improvisation:

To improvise means to draw on all our knowledge and personal experience, and focus it on the very moment we are living in, in that very context. It requires a different discipline, a different way of organising our thoughts and actions. It requires, and at its best elicits, a social virtuosity which reflects our state of mind, our perception of who and where we are, and a willingness to take risks, to let go of the safety of the ready-made, the already written, and to think, create, and 'write' on the spot.

Some of the responses regarding the defining of improvisation – such as playing music with "no real preparation" or "without [...] previous knowledge" –

clearly indicate some of the learners' uncertainty about this topic. Montuori's (2003:244) explanation indicates that when we improvise we draw from "all our knowledge and personal experience". When improvising, the improviser might not have heard or seen the music before, but he or she will use all prior knowledge and experience when executing an improvisation. De Menezes' (2010:10) statement concurs with the confused responses of some of the respondents:

This popularized representation of improvisation as synonymous with adhoc, chaotic, unprepared activity hinders the use of the word by improvisers, as they know how the activity requires training, preparation and focus.

Analysing the response of Participant H, "making music without written music", indicates that the participant does not see chord charts as written music. Even though chord charts do not constitute fully notated music scores, it still serves as a visually notated reference to assist musicians with their improvisation. Therefore even after the ten week lesson series, participant H's definition is still incomplete, indicating that the process of acquiring a solid understanding of improvisation skills is an ongoing one.

Participant J provided the most accurate definition for improvisation:

"Improvisation is creating something through your understanding of music on the spot".

When asked, all the participants agreed that improvisation is not limited to a specific genre of music. A very significant observation for me was the underlying depth of understanding which came from three of the participants who stated that all forms of music were originally a form of improvisation. Participant I summed it up as follows: "Improvisation is found everywhere and in all genres. The first ever music was improvised."

When the participants were asked if they think it is important to be able to improvise, eight participants agreed except participant E who remarked: "Not

really, people can get by in certain genres without improvising” and participant F noting: “Yes and no, depending if you want to do music as a career.” The participants who agreed on the importance of improvisation made some interesting comments that link to the benefits of improvisation as referred to in the literature review of this study (see section 2.4). Participant D mentioned that improvisation is “a constructive way to apply scales”, while Participant G answered on this question by responding that improvisation is a “practical use for what we learn in theory.” Participant J confirmed the importance of improvisation as a tool for cultivating creativity by stating that improvisation is an “outlet for your creativeness”. Participant B expressed that improvisation “forms a fundamental part of one’s musical ability”.

The participants, when asked what they find enjoyable about improvisation, highlighted more benefits of improvisation. Three participants mentioned that they enjoy the “freedom” which improvising allows them. Participant F confirmed that improvisation is a “practical use of theory”. Participant C said that improvisation provides an opportunity to “play music with others”. Participant D and participant concurred in their individual statements, responding that improvisation allows them to express themselves in a unique way.

During the individual interviews, it was noted that the participants all mentioned that improvisation could assist them in becoming better musicians. Three participants mentioned that improvisation could improve their “overall” musical ability and another participant referred to the opportunity which improvising creates in order to enrich his “understanding of music”. A similar response to a previous question was made by both participants D and J, mentioning that improvisation could assist them in understanding and applying their theoretical knowledge better. Participant B and H stated that improvisation could benefit their technical ability on their instruments. Participant F stated that, as a classical musician, improvisation could be beneficial because “it throws you in at the deep end, especially if you are used to always reading”. Participant J

summarised his view of improvisation as follows: “Improvisation helps people to be more creative as well as apply their theoretical knowledge.

Considering the feedback from all the participants, their perceptions regarding improvisation seem to be overwhelmingly positive. All agreed that improvisation is not limited to a specific genre; it can assist them in becoming better musicians; and all of them found it enjoyable to improvise. Eight of the participants agreed that improvisation is important. The participants’ feedback also highlighted and confirmed many of the benefits of improvisation as noted by various authors as exemplified in the literature review of this study.

4.2.3 Participants’ practical implementation of improvisation

The participants were asked how much time they spend on practising improvisation. Four of the participants said that they do not practise improvisation at all. Two of the participants answered that they do not spend much time practising improvisation and four replied that they spend up to an hour a week practising improvisation. All three of the contemporary music participants reported that they practice improvisation as opposed to only one of the four classical music participants who spent some time incorporating improvisation into their practising routine. One of the three participants that play both classical and contemporary music stated that they do not spend any time practising improvisation. None of the participants reported to spend more than an hour per week practising improvisation. The feedback of the participants provide some insight into what motivates learners to practise improvisation, and the data analysis seems to indicate that performing contemporary music involvement may be a contributing factor.

When the participants were asked if they would be able to implement improvisation and improvisation techniques into their practise routines, only one of the participants commented that he would not be able to so. Two participants

mentioned that they would be able to do this, but only to some extent. The participants with training in contemporary music made the following comments regarding the extent of implementing improvisation into their practise routine:

- Participant A: “I implement improvisation into all my pieces”;
- Participant B: “To a large extent because it is part of my syllabus”;
- Participant C: “I use it to help me understand my pieces better”.

Three participants mentioned that they would like to include more improvisation when practising scales. Participant H reported the following regarding the implementation of improvisation into his practising routine: “I will not be able to implement it very well because of a lack of exposure to improvisation.” This indicates that more time with focussed lessons – such as was implemented in the current lesson series – will be required for all participants to gain enough confidence with improvisation.

Table 3: Participants’ practical implementation of improvisation

Participant	Genre of training Classical music / Contemporary music	Previous improvisation training	Approximate time spent practising improvisation per week	Implementation of improvisation in practice routine
A	Contemporary	Yes	1 Hour	All the time
B	Contemporary	Yes	1 Hour	All the time
C	Contemporary	Yes	35 minutes	All the time
D	Classical	No	None	To some extent
E	Classical	Yes	Not much	When playing scales
F	Classical	No	None	Not at all
G	Classical	No	None	Very little
H	Both	Yes	None	Very little
I	Both	Yes	1 Hour	All the time
J	Both	Yes	1 Hour	To some extent

4.2.4 Participants experience in terms of previous improvisational training

The participants were asked how much class time their current instrumental music educator spends teaching improvisation and if they think this time is sufficient or not. Half of the participants reported that their current educators do not spend any class time teaching improvisation, which included all four of the classical music participants. Participant D stated: “No time is spent and I think I should learn more improvisation.” Participant H also receives no improvisation training during lessons and replied the following: “None, which is insufficient as I am not learning any improvisation”.

Three of the four participants, who do receive training in music improvisation during individual instrumental lesson time, felt that they receive sufficient time learning improvisation. Only Participant C, who receives improvisation training during instrumental lessons, felt that his educator should spend more time on teaching improvisation because he is “not confident when improvising yet.” Participant B, who also receives training in music improvisation during individual instrumental lesson time, reported that the fifteen minutes his educator spends each lesson teaching improvisation is sufficient. Participant I noted that the time spent on learning and improvising in the school’s jazz ensemble is sufficient.

4.2.5 Participants feedback on the case study’s series of ten lessons focusing on improvisation

In the face-to-face interviews, each of the participants had the opportunity to answer questions regarding what they enjoyed, what they did not enjoy and what difficulties they experienced as part of the series of ten lessons focusing on improvisation, which formed part of this case study. The participants were also asked if any of the content covered in the improvisation classes could be useful to them in their own playing and if there were any aspects that they felt should be changed or adapted regarding the content covered.

- Enjoyment of practical improvisation

Seven participants said they enjoyed the practical playing which they were able to do in the classes. Participant C stated: “I enjoyed practically improvising while learning”. During the interviews, five participants referred enjoyment using the scales while executing improvisation the classes. Two participants highlighted that the lesson on “where and how to use the major modes” was insightful. Other themes that participants found enjoyable included: analysing chord progressions; learning about various genres and improvising in those genres; as well as improvising as part of a group.

- Theoretical component covered during improvisation lessons

Three of the participants indicated that they found the theoretical component of improvisation less stimulating and interesting. Participant C stated that he did not enjoy the theoretical side but “understand the importance.” Two participants elaborated that some of the concepts related to theoretical aspects of improvisation, such as modes, were new and complex. One of the classical participants expressed that: “jazz was difficult for me as a classical musician”. Other themes that participants did not find particularly enjoyable included analysing; learning and playing the altered dominant scale; and modulating in chord progression. Two participants concurred that there was nothing that they did not enjoy.

This highlights the importance of motivating learners early in their instrumental training to gain knowledge and skills regarding improvisation. The experiencing of success while improvising, and the understanding of the structure of improvisation techniques behind the skill, is a great motivator and leads to confidence in practice. Learners should understand the importance of having a sound knowledge of music theory concepts as well as how to apply this knowledge in all aspects of their practical playing because “music theory explains why music is audiated, performed, read, written, created, and improvised as it is” (Edwin, 1997:145).

- Challenging lesson themes

The lesson themes that the participants did not enjoy and which challenged them most correlated with the aspects of improvisation which they found the most difficult. Four of the participants stated that understanding and using the altered dominant scale was the most difficult. Two participants mentioned that they struggled with the modes and another two reported that they had difficulty improvising over modulating chord progressions. Other problematic aspects regarding improvisation, as highlighted by the participants during interviews, were the understanding of some of the theoretical concepts.

- Implementing newly acquired improvisation skills

Nine of the participants' responses – regarding the implementation newly acquired improvisation skills into their own playing – were overall positive. Participant I replied that he would be able to implement all the content that was covered during lessons and added: “This programme was extremely beneficial to my playing and general understanding of music.” Another three participants agreed that they also would be able to implement all the knowledge and skills that was dealt with in the classes. Participant J in turn said that he would be able to implement “the modes as well as analysing of progressions”. The main themes that the participants mentioned regarding the question on implementation of improvisation skills included: sequencing of scales; major modes; the blues scale; analysing chord progressions; and understanding various genres of music better. Only one participant commented that he would not be able to use much of the newly gained skills seeing that he only plays classical music.

- Lesson content

Seven of the participants said they would change nothing about the lesson content or the way in which it was presented. Participants C, E and H gave positive feedback, expressing that they wished they had more time to learn improvisation. Two participants concurred in their responses, commenting that

the onus now lies with them as individuals to practise and spend time with the content of the improvisation lessons covered during the ten-week period. Participant J expressed that the IEB curriculum outcomes should be more specific and also made the following meaningful comment: “I wish I learnt improvisation from an earlier age, it would make it a lot easier.”

4.2.6 Concluding comments

At the end of every face-to-face interview the participants had an opportunity to comment on any additional information regarding improvisation that they still wanted to find out more about. Half of the participants were content with what was covered. What the other half of participants commented, however, provides important perspective of how they view improvisation as part of the curriculum. Two participants stated that they would have liked to dwell deeper into the improvisational approach required for different genres of music. Participant H expressed that they “just need to practise more”. Participant I said: “excellent lessons” and Participant J remarked: “I think these lessons equipped us way more than what is required by the IEB”. These positive comments reaffirm the importance of improvisation as part of the curriculum, and even more prominently, the significance of exposure and guided training to music learners regarding skills development for this music activity.

4.3 Observations of participants in focussed improvisation lessons

During the presentation of each of the ten lessons I carefully observed the participants in my role as researcher in terms of their attitudes; responses; and skills. Aspects that were focussed on in the data analysis include each participant’s willingness to participate; level of enthusiasm; interaction with others; involvement with the music; and lastly each participant’s ability to execute the various tasks regarding improvisation (strengths and weaknesses).

Each of the ten lessons focussed on different topics with the aim of improving the participants’ overall skill regarding improvisation:

- Lesson 1: Rhythmic improvisation;
- Lesson 2: Analysing;
- Lesson 3: Arpeggios;
- Lesson 4: Major Scales;
- Lesson 5: Minor Scales;
- Lesson 6: Sequencing;
- Lesson 7: Pentatonic and blues scales;
- Lesson 8: Major modes;
- Lesson 9: Symmetrical- and hybrid- scales;
- Lesson 10: Genres.

In this section the observations that occurred in each lesson will be described.

4.3.1 Lesson 1: Rhythmic improvisation

In the first of the focussed improvisation lessons the participants were required to improvise rhythmically and then notate their improvised rhythms on manuscript paper. The lesson started with the whole group clapping through a simple rhythmic subdivision chart as well as through variations of the chart (see the notation provided in figure 1).

$\text{♩} = 80$

6

10

13

16

19

23

25

Figure 1: Simple rhythmic subdivision chart

After clapping through the different variations of the provided rhythm subdivision chart, each participant had the opportunity to improvise by clapping a rhythm over a steady beat of two bars for which a metronome was set at 80 beats per minute. The learners' attempts were audio-recorded and played back to the whole group who then had to notate the recorded clapped rhythms.

All the participants were willing to participate in the lesson and the level of enthusiasm was quite high, with the exception of participant E who struggled with most activities in the lesson. The other participants especially enjoyed improvising by clapping various rhythms, while seven of the ten participants had no difficulty with improvising by clapping rhythms. The level of enthusiasm in the classroom was dampened when the learners had to notate the improvised clapped rhythms, since only four of the ten participants were able to do this effectively. This suggests that the other six participants have not yet developed their aural ability to the required level. Participant H interestingly enough, struggled with improvising a clapped rhythm but had no major problem with notating the pattern. The interaction between the participants was healthy and the flow between the clapped improvisations was smooth. Many of the participants gained ideas from other respondents' improvisations because there was a sense of repetition between the participants' clapped rhythmic improvisations.

Table 4: Lesson 1 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/ medium/ low:	Enthusiasm High/ medium/ low:	Interaction High/ medium/ low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	High	High	Improvising rhythm	Notating rhythms
B	High	High	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	High	Understood the concept	Improvising and notating rhythms

D	High	High	High	Improvising rhythm	Notating rhythm
E	Medium	Medium	Low	No real strengths	Struggled with concept and lost interest halfway
F	Medium	High	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses
G	High	High	High	Improvising rhythm	Notating rhythms
H	High	High	High	Notating rhythm	Improvising rhythm
I	High	High	High	Improvising rhythm	Notating rhythms
J	High	High	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses

4.3.2 Lesson 2: Analysing

In this lesson the focus was on understanding the basic principles of how to analyse chord progressions. Analysing chord progressions is an important skill to master when improvising (Stolz, 2013). The participants were firstly taught to establish the key centre of a chord progression and secondly to understand individual chord function within a progression. After the basic theoretical principles of analysing chord progressions were conveyed to the participants, they had to analyse chords according to the key centre and the function of the chord within the progression. The following score (Figure 2) was provided to the learners.

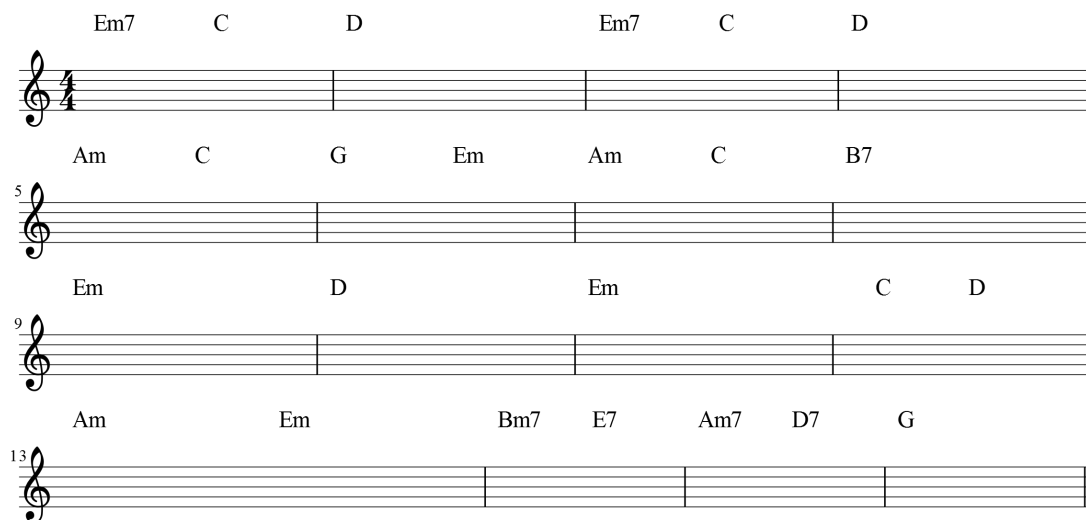


Figure 2 shows a chord progression for analysis in 4/4 time, consisting of four staves of music. The chords are as follows:

- Staff 1: Em7, C, D, Em7, C, D
- Staff 2: Am, C, G, Em, Am, C, B7
- Staff 3: Em, D, Em, C, D
- Staff 4: Am, Em, Bm7, E7, Am7, D7, G

Figure 2: Chord progression for analysing

All of the participants seemed to grasp the basic theoretical principles of analysing the functions of chords as well as the importance of being able to identify chord progressions. According to the IEB curriculum, only diatonic chord progressions are expected for improvisation purposes and the participants were all able to analyse diatonic chord progressions, the main reason for this being that they all have a solid music theory background (a level of Grade 5 Royal Schools theory or higher). However, half of the participants struggled when asked to analyse non-diatonic, modulating chord progressions. This finding implies that learners need more exposure and practise in analysing non-diatonic, modulating chord progressions to ensure that they master more complex analysing.

All of the participants participated and engaged in class discussions about the chord functions of the various sample chord progressions given to them. When faced with more complex analysing some of the participants lost enthusiasm. This is an important didactical finding, since it confirms that learners lose interest in activities if they are unable to master it. Therefore, the teacher needs to maintain a delicate balance by allowing for activities where learners can all

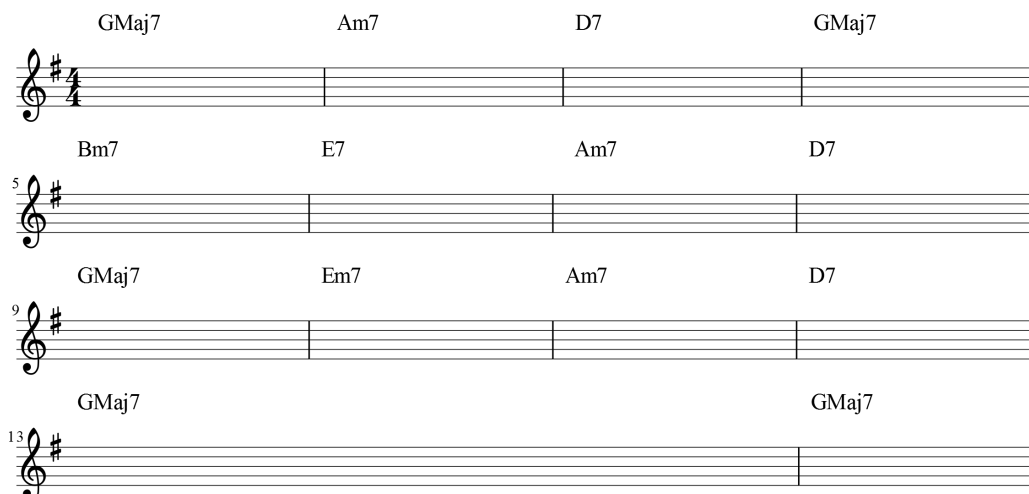
join in and participate, while providing enough challenge to stimulate continued interest.

Table 5: Lesson 2 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participati on High/ medium/ low:	Enthusiasm High/ medium/ low:	Interaction High/ medium/ low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	High	Medium	Analysing diatonic progressions	Analysing non-diatonic progressions
B	High	High	High	Analysing diatonic progressions and non-diatonic progressions	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	Medium	Analysing diatonic progressions	Analysing non-diatonic progressions
D	High	High	Medium	Analysing diatonic progressions and non-diatonic progressions	No real weaknesses
E	Medium	Medium	Low	Analysing diatonic progressions	Analysing non-diatonic progressions
F	High	Medium	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses
G	High	High	High	Analysing diatonic progressions	Analysing non-diatonic progressions
H	High	High	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses
I	High	High	High	Improvising rhythm	Notating rhythms
J	High	High	High	Improvising and notating rhythm	No real weaknesses

4.3.3 Lesson 3: Arpeggios

Most of the participants, especially the learners with training in classical music, have been using arpeggios when asked to improvise up until this point. Since arpeggios consist of the different notes of a chord, they provide the strongest melodic choices to use when improvising. In this lesson, triad (group of three notes) and tetrad (group of four notes) arpeggios were explained and all the participants played variations of these arpeggios together as a group. The participants were given a chord progression consisting of both triad and tetrad chords (see the notation provided in figure 3). They then had to analyse the chord progression after which a backtrack – providing a steady beat – was played where each of the participants had to improvise over the chord progression individually using arpeggios.



The figure shows a chord progression in G major, 4/4 time, consisting of 16 measures across four staves. The chords are: GMaj7, Am7, D7, GMaj7 (measures 1-4); Bm7, E7, Am7, D7 (measures 5-8); GMaj7, Em7, Am7, D7 (measures 9-12); GMaj7, GMaj7 (measures 13-16).

Figure 3: Chord progression for arpeggiating

All the participants engaged in playing the arpeggios and especially seemed to enjoy the group playing. Because arpeggios are a basic component of how music is structured from chord progressions and therefore an effective melodic choice when improvising, most of the participants were able to implement them with effective results. The weakness observed during this activity was that some of the participants did not know the notes of which chords are constructed, and as a result, struggled to implement the arpeggios fluently and effectively. Arpeggios can easily sound monotonous if it is not embellished both

rhythmically and melodically. Some of the participants struggled with embellishing the arpeggios. Another aspect which I observed was that most participants had problems in smoothly changing between different arpeggios.

Table 6: Lesson 3 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/medium/low:	Enthusiasm High/medium/low:	Interaction High/medium/low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	Medium	Medium	Understood the concept	Did not know chord notes
B	High	High	High	Effectively implemented and embellished the arpeggios	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment
D	High	High	High	Effectively implemented and embellished the arpeggios	No real weaknesses
E	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept	Struggled to change smoothly between chord changes
F	High	High	High	Effectively implemented and embellished the arpeggios	No real weaknesses
G	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept	Did not know chord notes
H	High	High	High	Understood the concept	Struggled to change smoothly between chord changes
I	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept	Did not know chord notes
J	High	High	High	Effectively implemented and embellished the arpeggios	No real weaknesses

4.3.4 Lesson 4: Major Scales

In this lesson the participants were taught how to use the major scale when improvising. Firstly, participants were taught how to use the major scale when improvising over diatonic chord progressions (see the notation provided in figure 4), and secondly, how to use the major scale over modulating, non-diatonic progressions (see the notation provided in figure 5).

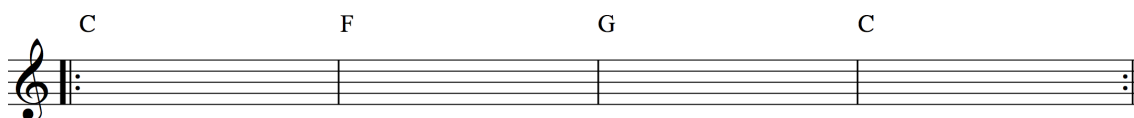


Figure 4: Chord progression for diatonic major scale improvising

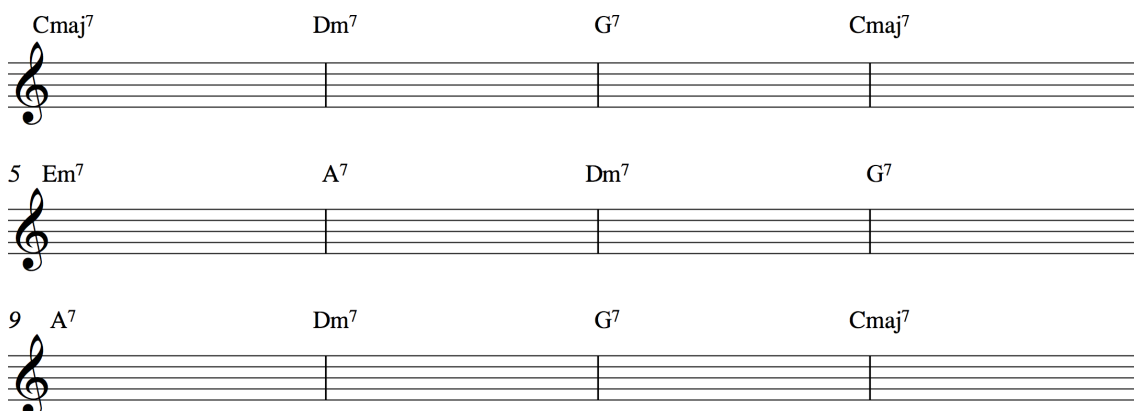


Figure 5: Chord progression for non-diatonic major scale improvising

Most of the participants were able to improvise by using the major scale over diatonic chord progressions, but it was evident that they found it more difficult to improvise in this method when modulating, non-diatonic chord progressions were involved. The main weakness was following the notated score and improvising at the same time. This is a skill that takes some practise. However, learners will be able to accomplish this technique with more ease if they know their scales better. This indicates that basic theoretical knowledge, combined

with dexterity in executing technical skills – such as playing scales – are vital components in mastering improvisation skills. In most cases it was evident that participants were unable to switch smoothly between various scales in modulating chord progressions. Participants also struggled to embellish the scales rhythmically and melodically over modulating chord progressions. Strengths that were observed during this activity was that, when participants struggled to improvise over the modulating chord progressions, they started listening to each other with more care. This was also the first time when the participants started bonding as a group and the interaction with each other was improving. This is a vital finding in the study, since it confirms two essential aspects of effective improvisation: listening to each other and interacting with fellow musicians. As mentioned in chapter 2, improvisation is often a group activity where different musicians interact and support one another. This creates joy and a unique bond between musicians, making the long solo road while practising and developing individual music skills worthwhile.

Table 7: Lesson 4 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/ medium/ low:	Enthusiasm High/ medium/ low:	Interaction High/ medium/ low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	High	High	Played well over diatonic progression	Following the score over modulating progressions; did not know scale structures
B	High	High	High	Played well over both diatonic and modulating progressions	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	High	Played well over diatonic	Struggled with following the score; embellishing scales over modulating progressions
D	High	High	High	Played well over both diatonic and modulating progressions	Struggled with embellishing scales over modulating progressions

E	Medium	Medium	Medium	Played fairly well over diatonic progression	Following the score over modulating progressions as well as embellishing scales
F	High	Medium	High	Played well over both diatonic and modulating progressions	Initially showed some insecurity
G	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept	Following the score, embellishing the scale over modulating progressions; did not know scale structures
H	High	High	High	Played well over diatonic progression	Following the score over modulating progressions
I	High	High	High	Played well over diatonic progression	Following the score over modulating progressions
J	High	High	High	Played well over both diatonic and modulating progressions	No real weaknesses

4.3.5 Lesson 5: Minor Scales

In lesson 5 the participants were taught how to use the natural- (**Aeolian**); harmonic-; and melodic minor scales when improvising. The theory behind the scales was revised and the participants played through each of the scales in a group. The participants then had the opportunity to improvise individually over diatonic chord progressions to each of the three minor scales (see the notation provided in figures 6, 7 and 8). At the end of the lesson the participants each had the opportunity to improvise over a non-diatonic modulating chord progression (see the notation provided in figure 9) which consisted of a combination of chords from all the minor scales taught in the lesson.

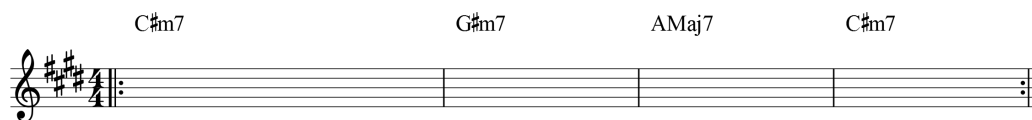


Figure 6: Chord progression for diatonic natural minor scale improvising

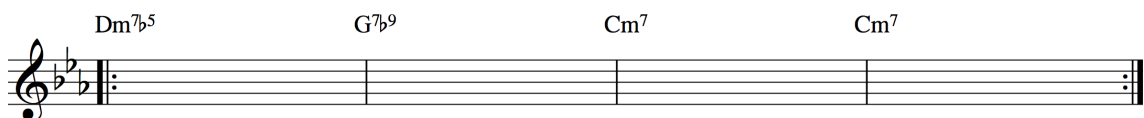


Figure 7: Chord progression for diatonic harmonic minor scale improvising

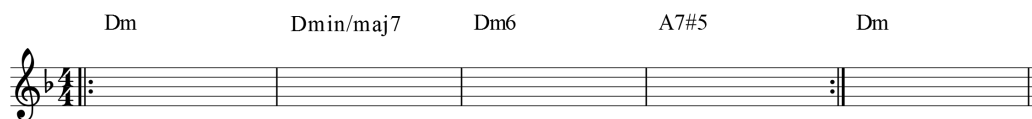


Figure 8: Chord progression for diatonic melodic minor scale improvising



Figure 9: Chord progression for non-diatonic minor scale improvising

A new approach was introduced in lesson 5, which involves group playing, and a rhythm section consisting of electric bass guitar, guitar and piano was formed that played the given chord progressions. Before starting the improvisation exercise, the participants had to analyse the given chord progressions as a

group. Over the backing played by the rhythm section, each individual had the chance to improvise over the chord progressions.

Most of the participants initially struggled in their first attempts to improvise with these scales over a diatonic chord progression, but their ability improved as the lesson went along. Playing as part of a group increased their confidence. It was also observed that the participants increasingly started listening to each other. The participants' ability to follow the score seemingly improved, however this is an aspect that needs constant attention and regular practise from all music learners in order to develop effective improvisation skills. The weak areas identified were that most of the improvisation did not show much diversity and the participants also found it difficult to match scale choices with chord changes.

Table 8: Lesson 5 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/medium/low:	Enthusiasm High/medium/low:	Interaction High/medium/low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	Medium	High	Medium	Played well over diatonic progression	Matching scales with chord changes; showing diversity
B	High	High	High	Followed structure well and showed progress	Changing between scales over modulating progressions
C	Medium	High	High	Showed improvement	Struggled rhythmically, no diversity
D	High	High	High	Showed improvement in all areas and improvised appropriately over chord changes	No real weaknesses
E	Low	Medium	Medium	Not showing improvement	Matching scales with chord changes following the score
F	High	Medium	High	Showed improvement as well as diversity	No real weaknesses

G	High	High	Medium	Played well over diatonic progression	Matching scales with chord changes; following the score over modulating progressions did not know scale structures
H	High	High	High	Played fairly well even over modulating progressions	Showing diversity
I	Medium	High	High	Showing progress	Getting lost in the form and not showing diversity
J	High	High	High	Played well with good intent, ideas and flow	No real weaknesses

4.3.6 Lesson 6: Sequencing

In lesson 6 the participants were taught various sequences with the purpose of providing them with tools to improvise by using scales in more creative ways. According to *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Lathan 2011), a sequence in music implies “the exact repetition” of a short melodic fragment, but on a different pitch level. According to Benward and Saker (2003:111-112) the characteristics of a sequence are:

- Generally two segments long (not more than three or four);
- Normally ascending or descending, but only in one direction;
- Segments continue by the same interval distance.

The sequences that were covered included sequences of three notes; sequences of four notes; sequences using intervals of thirds; and the ‘go-back-one’ sequence. Each of these sequence types are provided in the notated examples (figures 2-5).



Figure 10: 'Sequence of three notes' example



Figure 11: 'Sequence of four notes' example



Figure 12: 'Sequence in thirds' example



Figure 13: 'Go-back-one sequence' example

The participants played through the above sequence examples together in a group. The participants were then given a chord progression (see the notation provided in figure 14) to individually improvise over using the sequences that they have learnt and was again backed by the rhythm section playing the given chord progression.

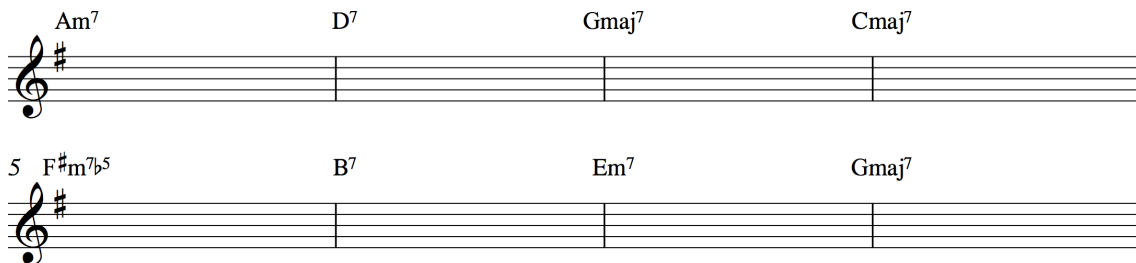


Figure 14: Chord progression for improvising using sequences

During lesson 6 the participants seemed to become more comfortable with their environment, their fellow participants and with improvising. Even though most of the participants found the sequences quite difficult to play, it seemed as if they were starting to enjoy the practical application of improvising more and more. Some of the participants were impressed with how these sequences can give a scale a new and refreshing sound. The most common weaknesses that the participants experienced were rhythmically embellishing the sequences. Some of the participants still did not know their scales, which then makes sequences – as an improvisation technique – very difficult to implement.

Table 9: Lesson 6 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participati on High/ medium/ low:	Enthusias m High/ medium/ low:	Interaction High/ medium/ low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	High	High	Enjoyed the group playing	Did not know scales
B	High	High	High	Fared well in implementing the sequences	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	High	Enjoyed the group playing	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment of sequences
D	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the sequences	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment of sequences
E	Medium	Medium	Medium	Not showing improvement	Struggled with the concept; Struggled with implementation of concept
F	High	Medium	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the sequences	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment of sequences
G	High	High	Medium	Understood the concept and implemented the sequences with some success	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment of sequences

H	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the sequences	Struggled with rhythmic embellishment of sequences
I	High	High	High	Understood the concept and implemented the sequences with some success	Did not know scales
J	High	High	High	Fared well in implementing the sequences	No real weaknesses

4.3.7 Lesson 7: Pentatonic and blues scales

The pentatonic scale is commonly used in elementary improvisation methodologies, for example the Orff Approach (Azzara, 2002). The reason why the pentatonic scale is ideal in this regard is because it does not contain any semi-tones. Therefore it makes improvisation satisfactory for learners and results in pleasing sounds, which encourages freedom from the fear of making mistakes (Long, 2013).

In lesson 7 the theory behind the major pentatonic scale (see the notation provided in figure 15); and the minor pentatonic scale (see the notation provided in figure 16) were explained to the participants. The participants played through the scales as a group and then were given chord progression (see the notation provided in figures 17 and 18) to improvise over. Each of the participants obtained the opportunity to individually improvise over a chord progression using the pentatonic scale and was backed by the rhythm section.



Figure 15: C Major pentatonic scale



Figure 16: A Minor pentatonic scale

C	F	G	C
---	---	---	---

Figure 17: Chord progression for major pentatonic scale improvising

Am	Dm	Em	Am
----	----	----	----

Figure 18: Chord progression for minor pentatonic scale improvising

The next part of lesson 7 focussed on the blues scale (see the notation provided in figure 19), and how it relates to the minor pentatonic scale. The form of a common twelve-bar-blues chord progression (see the notation provided in figure 20) was also covered. The participants again had the chance to individually improvise over a blues progression using the blues scale and were backed by the rhythm section.



Figure 19: A Blues scale

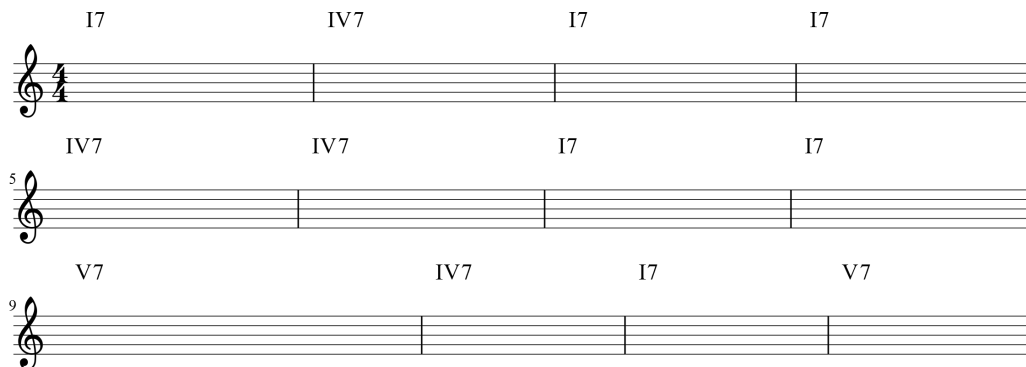


Figure 20: Common twelve-bar-blues progression

All the participants appreciated this lesson and did well in improvising using the pentatonic and blues scales. One of the participants remarked that he never knew how easy and useful these scales were. The participants thoroughly enjoyed improvising with the blues scale and after the lesson many of the participants were still talking about how much ‘fun’ they had. It was also observed that the participants found the application of the pentatonic scales insightful.

Table 10: Lesson 7 summary of learners’ participation

Participant	Participati on High/ medium/ low:	Enthusiasm High/ medium/ low:	Interaction High/ medium/ low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	High	High	High	Enjoyed the lesson and fared well with implementing the scales	No real weaknesses
B	High	High	High	Played well and asked insightful questions	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	High	Played fairly well and showed improvement in all areas	No real weaknesses

D	High	High	High	Played well with embellishment	No real weaknesses
E	High	High	High	Played fairly well	Struggled to follow progression structure
F	High	High	High	Played well with embellishment	No real weaknesses
G	High	High	High	Had fun and played fairly well	Struggled with melodic and rhythmic embellishment of scales
H	High	High	High	Played well with embellishment	No real weaknesses
I	High	High	High	Played well with embellishment and showed confidence	No real weaknesses
J	High	High	High	Played well with embellishment	No real weaknesses

4.3.8 Lesson 8: Major Modes

In lesson 8 the seven major modes were covered. The participants have to be able to improvise using these modes, and they also have to be able to write out these scales (Independent Examinations Board, 2011).

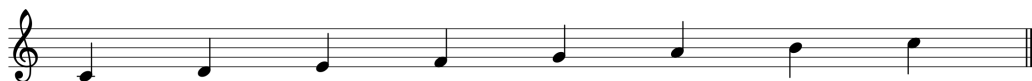


Figure 21: C Ionian mode (Major scale)

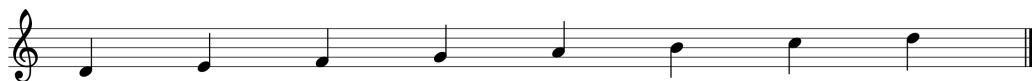


Figure 22: D Dorian mode



Figure 23: E Phrygian mode



Figure 24: F Lydian mode



Figure 25: G Mixolydian mode



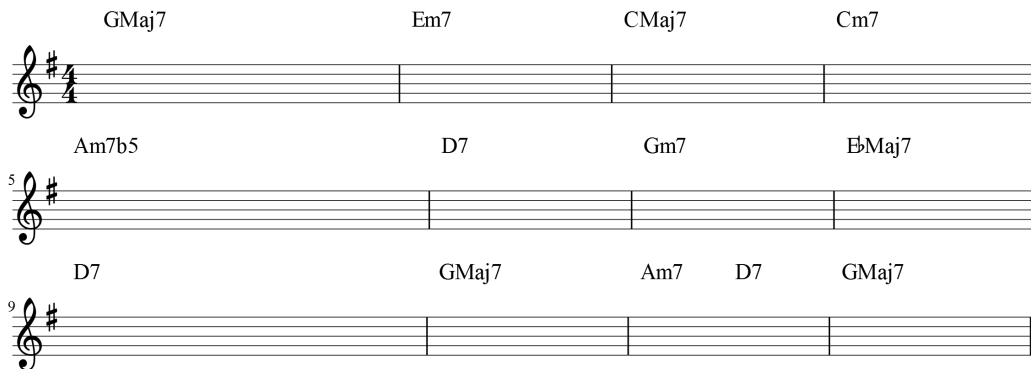
Figure 26: A Aeolian mode (Natural minor scale)



Figure 27: B Locrian mode

Each of the modes was theoretically explained to participants. The practical use of each of the modes was also explained. The participants then played through all of the modes together as group. The group was given a four beat count-in and they played through each of the modes ascending and descending. The main reason for this was to make the participants familiar with the sound quality produced by each of the different modes. At the end of the lesson, a modulating chord progression was given to the participants (see the score provided in figure 28). The group had to analyse the chord progression, after which each

learner had to improvise over the chord progression accompanied by the rhythm section, playing the chord changes of the provided progression.



GMaj7 Em7 CMaj7 Cm7

Am7b5 D7 Gm7 EbMaj7

D7 GMaj7 Am7 D7 GMaj7

Figure 28: Chord progression for improvising using modes

All the participants engaged in the theoretical explanation of the modes and some insightful questions were asked and discussed in the group. The main reason for this might be because the participants have to be able to write out the modes in their end year IEB theory paper. This also gave them inspiration to actually play the modes and use them while improvising. It is always easier to theoretically understand a scale if the practical use of it is also understood. It seemed like most of the participants understood the concept of modes at the end of the lesson. Most of the participants found it quite difficult to combine different modes, and to change between the different modes while improvising over the modulating chord progression. During their improvisation attempts, most of these changes were not fluent. It was also observed that many of the participants struggled to analyse the modulating chord progression. The Dorian mode was particularly intriguing to the contemporary participants and they were keen to explore improvising using this scale. The reason for this is that the Rockschooll syllabus – which the contemporary learners follow – requires of the learners to improvise using the Dorian mode from Grade 6 to Grade 8. The lessons therefore provided useful skills which could be applied in a different context.

Table 11: Lesson 8 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/medium/low:	Enthusiasm High/medium/low:	Interaction High/medium/low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	Medium	High	Medium	Engaged in the discussion	Struggled with implementing the modes especially over the modulating progression
B	High	High	High	Implemented the modes fairly well	Struggled with changing between different modes
C	Medium	High	Medium	Enjoyed the group playing	Struggled to implement more than one mode at a time
D	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the modes	Initially struggled to understand the concept
E	Medium	Medium	Medium	Engaged in discussion	Struggled to understand which mode to use and also with overall implementation
F	High	High	High	Implemented the modes fairly well and engaged in the discussion	Struggled with changing between different modes
G	Medium	High	High	Enjoyed the lesson and engaged in discussion	Struggled with analysing and need to work on technical proficiency
H	High	High	High	Engaged in discussion and played reasonably well	Struggled with changing between different modes
I	High	High	High	Engaged in discussion and played reasonably well	Struggled with changing between different modes
J	High	High	High	Implemented the modes fairly well and engaged in the discussion	Struggled to make changes between modes sound smooth

4.3.9 Lesson 9: Symmetrical- and Hybrid- scales

In this lesson symmetrical- and hybrid- scales were covered. Symmetrical scales are “scales constructed of a series of identical intervals” (Hellmer & Lawn, 1993:35). The lesson started out by explaining the theory behind the following symmetrical scales: the chromatic scales, the whole-tone scale, and the diminished and inverted-diminished scale (see the notation provided in figures 29-32). The participants then played through all of these scales together as a group. The group was given a four beat count-in and they played through each of the scales in ascending and descending fashion. The improvisational application for each of these scales was explained to the participants.



Figure 29: C Chromatic scale



Figure 30: C Whole-tone scale



Figure 31: C Diminished scale



Figure 32: B Inverted-diminished scale

The next type of scale that was introduced is the hybrid scale. Any group of pitches can be arranged and called a scale; these scales are mostly deemed hybrid scales (Hellmer & Lawn, 1993). The only hybrid scale that was covered in this lesson was the seventh mode of the melodic minor, otherwise known as the altered dominant scale (see the notation provided in figure 33). Many musicians identify this scale as the altered dominant scale because it contains all the possible altered extension tones of a Dominant 7th chord (Hellmer & Lawn, 1993). Again the theoretical and improvisational application of the scale was explained. The participants then played through the scale together as a group. The group was given a four beat count-in and they played through the scale in ascending and descending fashion.

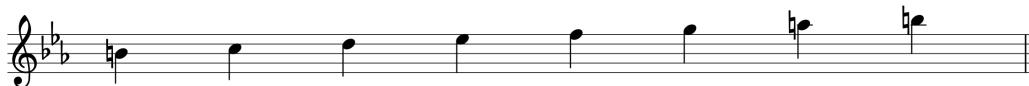
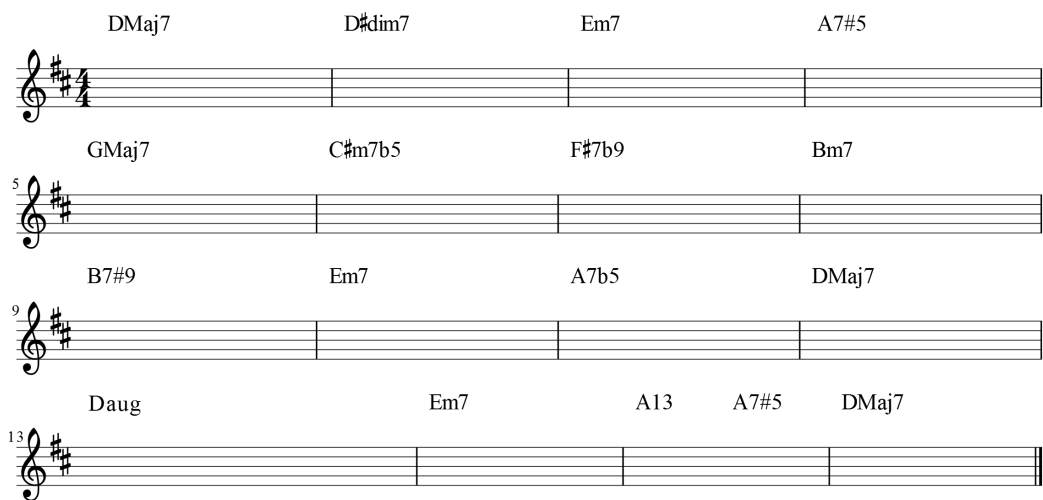


Figure 33: B Altered dominant scale

After all the symmetrical- and hybrid- scales were covered individually, the group of participants were given a progression that contained chords where these scales could be put to use (see the score provided in figure 34). The group had to analyse the chord progression and each individual was given the opportunity to improvise over the provided chord progression accompanied by the rhythm section.



DMaj7 D#dim7 Em7 A7#5
 5
 GMaj7 C#m7b5 F#7b9 Bm7
 9
 B7#9 Em7 A7b5 DMaj7
 13
 Daug Em7 A13 A7#5 DMaj7

Figure 34: Chord progression for improvising with symmetrical- and hybrid- scales

It is important to note that the IEB only require that the participants are able to write out the chromatic and whole-tone scales. Therefore, besides the theoretical understanding of the chromatic and whole-tone scales, the curriculum does not require theoretical or application knowledge of the scales covered in this lesson. This lesson was only to equip the participants with more tools to use when improvising. Two of the contemporary participants have covered some of these scales as part of the Grade 8 Rockschooll syllabus and they were more confident in practically using these scales. Most of the participants quite enjoyed improvising with the chromatic scale. The group also found the application and sound of these scales intriguing. However, the implementation of these scales is quite laborious and needs to be practiced continuously before they become an integral part of an improviser's repertoire. Most of the participants struggled with especially with the implementation of the whole-tone and altered dominant scales.

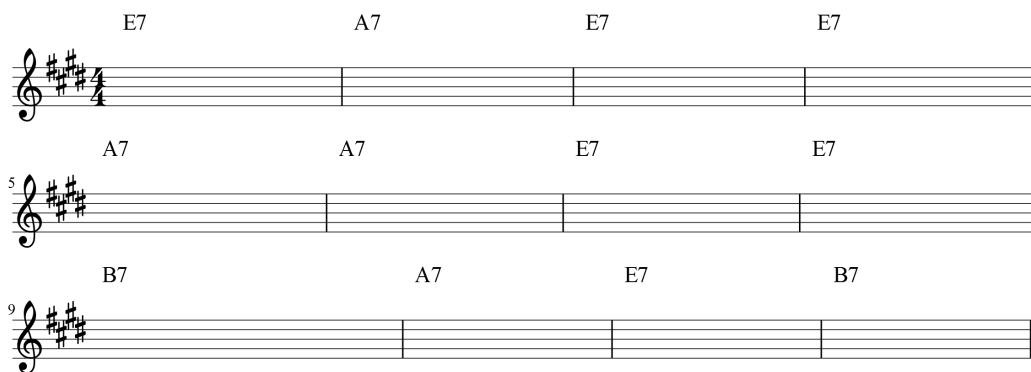
Table 12: Lesson 9 summary of learners' participation

Participant	Participation High/medium/low:	Enthusiasm High/medium/low:	Interaction High/medium/low:	Strengths	Weakness
A	Medium	Medium	Medium	Found the lesson intriguing.	Struggled to implement the scales.
B	High	High	High	Fared well in implementing most of these scales and really embraced the content of the lesson	No real weaknesses
C	High	High	High	Found the lesson intriguing and tried to implement the scales	Struggled overall with correctly implementing the scales
D	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the scales and wanted to know more	Struggled in implementing the altered and whole-tone scales
E	Medium	Medium	Medium	No real strength	Struggled with the concept as well as with implementation
F	High	Medium	High	Played the chromatic scale well and understood all the concepts	Struggled in implementing the altered and whole-tone scales
G	High	High	Medium	Found the lesson intriguing and tried to implement the scales	Struggled with the implementation and contextually understanding of the scales
H	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the scales and grasped the concept	Struggled with implementing the altered scale
I	High	High	High	Fared reasonably well in implementing the scales and grasped the concept	Struggled with implementing the altered scale
J	High	High	High	Play well and even implemented the altered scale with conviction and intent.	No real weaknesses

4.3.10 Lesson 10: Genres

In the last lesson, improvisation – with reference to various popular contemporary genres – was discussed. The focus of this lesson was mainly to help the participants understand that different genres require a different stylistic approach when improvising. The genres that were covered included: Blues, Jazz, Country, Latin, Funk and Rock. Because of the time limitation only a brief overview of each of the genres was discussed. In each discussion references were made to:

- The origin of each genre;
- Typical chord progression and chords used in each genre (see the notation provided in figure 35 - 40);
- Scales that are predominantly used when improvising in each genre;
- Rhythmical approach and feel when improvising in each genre;
- List of artists that are proficient improvisers in each genre.



The figure shows a musical score for a typical Blues progression in E major, 12/8 time. The progression is written across three staves, each containing four measures. The chords are: E7 (measures 1-2), A7 (measures 3-4), E7 (measures 5-6), E7 (measures 7-8), A7 (measures 9-10), E7 (measures 11-12), and B7 (measures 13-14). The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 12/8.

Figure 35: Example of a typical Blues progression

Amin7 D9 GMaj7 F#min7b5 B7b9 Emin7
 Am7 Ab7 GMaj7 CMaj7 Cmin6
 G7 F7 E7 Am7 D7 GMaj7

Figure 36: Example of a typical Jazz progression

A A D D
 E E7 A 1. A 2. A A E A

Figure 37: Example of a typical Country progression

A Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5




5 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5



B AbMaj7 Gm7 AbMaj7 Gm7



9 AbMaj7 Gm7 Fm7 F#m7 Gm7 G7#5



13 A Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5



17 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5 Cm7 Dm7b5 G7#5



21 Cm7 Cm7



25

Figure 38: Example of a typical Latin progression

A Bm7 E9 Bm7 E9

Bm7 E9 Bm7 E9

5

B A m9 Em7 Eb7 Dm7 F9 E9

A m9 Em7 Eb7 Dm7 G9 F#9

13

A Bm7 E9 Bm7 E9

Bm7 E9 Bm7 E9

17

Bm7 Bm7


21

Bm7


25

Figure 39: Example of a typical Funk progression

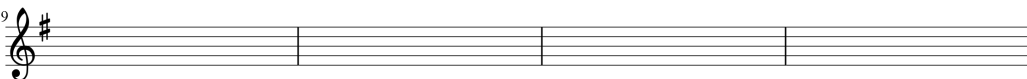
A E5 C5 A5 B5 D5




E5 C5 A5 B5 D5




B A5 C5 G5 G/F#




A5 C5 G5 G/F#



A E5 C5 A5 B5 D5



E5 C5 A5 B5 D5



E5 E5

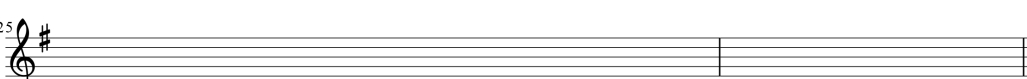


Figure 40: Example of a typical Rock progression

I originally planned that, after each genre was explained, the participants should be given an opportunity to stylistically improvise over a chord progression based on each of the genres covered. Due to a lack of time, this was unfortunately not possible. However, the participants could ask questions during each of the genre discussions. It was interesting to observe how the questions that were asked, revealed the participants' various interests in genres. The type of instrument that each participant played lead to questions related to the specific genre that the participants were interested in. For example, the guitar bass player was mostly interested in the Funk genre because the bass line in Funk music is usually quite riveting and complex. One of the violinists showed a keen interest in the Country genre because many Country songs feature violin improvisation, commonly referred to by Country musicians as "Fiddling".

The participants seemed to enjoy the discussion and some remarked that they wish they could learn more about the various genres.

4.3.11 Conclusion to the observation

From an observer's point of view, the focussed improvisation lessons deemed to be successful. The participants were actively engaged and the level of participation increased with each lesson, especially concerning group participation. The participants were more interested and involved in the practical aspects of the study compared to the theoretical aspects. This leads to the conclusion that it might be worthwhile to adopt an approach where practical participation is included from the beginning of each lesson. For example, participants could be asked to identify an improvisation technique which is demonstrated by the teacher by selecting from a choice of possibilities. There could also be notated examples from which participants could choose, challenging their music reading skills.

Many of the participants remarked that they enjoyed improvising in a group, especially when the rhythm section was introduced in lesson 5. The questions raised by the participants, in both the face-to-face interviews as well as in the group lessons, confirmed that they were intrigued and intellectually challenged by the content of the lessons. The participants' level of enthusiasm increased throughout the study as their eagerness to practically improvise increased.

In the first lesson focussed on rhythm only, the participants did not struggle when asked to improvise a clapped rhythm, however more than half of the grouped struggled with notating the improvised clapping. In terms of analysing, most of the participants had no problem analysing diatonic chord progressions but most struggled with analysing modulating chord progressions. Most of the participants found sequencing scales compelling. One of the learners remarked that they have to play sequences as part of technical syllabus requirements but never knew how useful these sequences can be when improvising. They

however struggled with some of the more complex sequence ideas and also with the rhythmical embellishment of the sequences.

Considering the variety of scales that were covered in the lessons (major-, minor-, pentatonic-, blues-, major modes-, hybrid- and symmetrically? altered-scales) the participants enjoyed implementing the pentatonic and blues scales. They could easily improvise using the major- and minor- scales over diatonic chord progressions. New concepts like the major modes, symmetrical scales and hybrid scales challenged their technical ability. The participants were quite comfortable in using arpeggios and grasped the concept as well as the practical implementation. Most of them struggled with improvising over modulating chord progressions as well as embellishing the scales or arpeggios, both melodically and rhythmically.

4.4 Results from audio recordings

At the start of the case study, each of the participants was recorded improvising over a chord progression on a Grade 6 level of the Trinity School of Music.. After the completion of the study, each of the participants was recorded again over the same chord progression. The recordings were given to an external examiner who is an expert in improvisation. The examiner evaluated the improvisations, not knowing the identity of the participants. He also did not know if each improvisation was recorded initially or after completion of the lesson series. The examiner used an IEB improvisation rubric to evaluate the improvisations.

According to the marks received back from the examiner, seven of the ten participants yielded better results on their second attempt. The most significant improvement was from Participant G who showed a 21% improvement on his second attempt. The largest decline from the first to the second attempt was Participant E who dropped 11%. It is interesting to note that both these participants (E and G) are classical music learners, and that both had very

limited exposure to or training in improvisation before the start of the focussed improvisation lessons. The marks of both these participants for their initial attempts are fairly similar. From the observation it is, however, clear that Participant G showed much higher levels of participation, enthusiasm and interaction compared to that of participant E. Although an inborn ability for improvisation does play a role, the research indicates that better interaction, participation and enthusiasm in lessons can yield better results and lead to more confidence and skill during improvisation activities.

The other two participants (B and D), whose marks showed a decline when their initial attempts are compared to their second attempts, both illustrated strong first attempt marks. Throughout the lessons they both displayed high levels of interaction, participation and enthusiasm. Both participant B and D are fairly shy and the pressure of improvising as well as improving might have been the reason for their decline in marks.

Other participants who have showed great improvement were participants A and C, whom are both contemporary music learners. This research might suggest that even learners who have had previous training and experience regarding improvisation can benefit from focussed improvisational lessons.

Table 13: Expert examiner's results

Participant	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Improvement	Decline
A	63%	78%	15%	
B	70%	68%		2%
C	42%	55%	13%	
D	69%	63%		6%
E	49%	38%		11%
F	52%	64%	12%	
G	48%	69%	21%	
H	46%	55%	9%	
I	72%	80%	8%	
J	67%	69%	2%	

4.5 Comparison of data

During interviews, many of the participants mentioned that they enjoyed the practical approach of the lessons. Observation also confirmed that the participants enjoyed practically implementing the content of each lesson, especially as part of a group. The enthusiasm, participation and interaction of the participants increased with every lesson and the interview data indicate that the participants' perceptions regarding improvisation were mostly positive. The only learner that was not positive was participant F. The main reason for this is probably that he feels that improvisation could not really benefit him as a classical musician. However, he still showed increased levels of interaction, enthusiasm and participation closer to the end of the lesson series as well as an improvement in marks. Although this participant displayed a healthy passion for music, he has had very little training and teaching regarding skills and knowledge of the concepts involved when improvising. I am convinced that, with earlier exposure to improvisation, he would have a more positive mind-set about the topic.

All the participants indicated that they understand the importance of being able to improvise. Some of the participants who were not enthusiastic about improvisation initially showed increased signs of interaction, participation and enthusiasm closer to the end of the ten lessons.

In terms of rhythmical improvisation the participants were mostly comfortable but struggled to rhythmically embellish new concepts like sequences, major modes, hybrid scales and symmetrical altered scales. Observations showed that major scales, minor scales and arpeggios were familiar to the participants. The participants stated that they enjoyed practically implementing these scales in improvisation, which some of them have, up until this study, never used besides playing the scales for exams and writing them out in music theory. The participants enjoyed improvising with the pentatonic and blues scales. The

reason for this is mainly because these scales are easy to use and always lead to pleasing sounds when applied over diatonic chord progressions.

Observations indicated that participants were intrigued and inspired to learn more about complex techniques such as sequences, major modes, hybrid scales and symmetrically altered scales. However, they struggled with implementing these scales, which was confirmed during the interview responses of some of the participants.

Participants struggled to improvise and analyse modulating chord progressions but does not have to improvise over modulating chord progressions in terms of the IEB's requirements for improvisation. All of the participants fared well at analysing diatonic chord progressions and some of the interview data confirmed that the participants would be able to use their analysing skills in future improvisational endeavours.

The results from the audio recordings showed that seven of the ten participants improved when comparing the second improvisation attempt results to that of their first. The analysed data from the observations, interviews and audio recordings mostly produced positive results regarding the ten focussed improvisation lessons used in this case study.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, all the research data was described, summarised and analysed and the results from the various data methods were compared to each other. Implications of the results, possible reasons for the outcomes, and recommendations for future research are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the research is given, the findings of the research is discussed in an effort to provide practical applications for this research, as well as suggestions for continued scholarly research in the area of improvisation and creative thinking.

5.2 Findings of research problems

In this section the findings from this case study will be discussed in relation with the research questions.

5.2.1 In what ways do rhythmic techniques enhance the learning of improvisation skills?

In the first lesson it was observed that seven of the ten participants did not have a problem to improvise rhythmically. In terms of transcription only four of the participants were able to correctly transcribe the recorded rhythmic improvisation. Throughout the rest of the case study it was observed that the participants struggled with rhythmic embellishment, especially when faced with new scales and concepts.

I started by doing rhythmic improvisation in the first lesson because in my experience of teaching improvisation I have found that learners forget that rhythm is as much part of improvising as melody. Improvisations can easily sound boring and monotonous if the improviser does not implement clever rhythmic embellishment. As soon as new melodic concepts are introduced, learners tend to forget to rhythmically embellish while using improvisation.

In a recent study, *The lost art of improvisation: Teaching improvisation to classical pianists*, Woosley (2012) also advocates that educators should start improvisation instruction by first focussing on rhythmic concepts and rhythmic embellishment. Similar to the findings from the current study, he also prescribes that the educator provides rhythmic motives and ask the learners to first copy them and then to embellish them. Woosley (2012:27) prescribes that only “when the student seems comfortable with rhythmic embellishments, it is time to add in actual notes”.

Woosley (2012) as well as Chung and Thurmond (2007) promote the use of notating to improve learners’ improvisational ability. Marolt (2004:439) states that: “Transcription is a difficult cognitive task and is not inherent in human perception of music, although it can be learned”. I taught ear training for four years at a tertiary music institution and can concur that many learners find it very difficult to notate melodies or rhythms that are heard aurally – it is a skill that needs regular practise.

Rhythm is an important element of music and therefore also of music improvisation. Learners need to be able to rhythmically improvise and rhythmically embellish melodic improvisation in order for them to become competent improvisers. All three of the assessment models, as found in section 2.9 of this study, state rhythmic embellishment as criteria for improvisation assessment (Madura, 2001; Independent Examinations Boards, 2011; Azzara & Grunow, 2006). Observations in this study showed that the participants easily forget the importance of rhythmic embellishment when improvising. Being able to improvise rhythmically and implement rhythmic embellishment is an important skill for learners to acquire and can enhance the overall improvisational skill of learners.

5.2.2 In what ways does the increased ability to analyse chord progressions enhance the learning of improvisation skills?

The aim of lesson 2 in this case study was to teach the participants the skill of analysing chord progressions. The learners were taught the theoretical principals of analysing chord progression and then were given the opportunity to practically analyse chord progressions.

None of the participants struggled with analysing diatonic chord progressions but half of the participants struggled with analysing non-diatonic chord progressions. Analysing chord non-diatonic progressions is however not an IEB requirement in terms of improvisation. Even though some of the participants did not enjoy the theoretical aspects related to analysing all of the participants understood the importance of applying analysing when improvising. Two of the participants, when asked what they would be able to implement into their own playing regarding the case study material, mentioned that they would be able to implement analysing chord progressions.

In an article about analysing chord progressions, Stolz (2013:1) mentions that improvising without being able to analyse leads to the following problems:

- Learners can only improvise diatonically;
- Improvised melodies lack harmonic direction;
- Improvised melodies does not resemble the original melody;
- Improvisations do not resolve to the guide tones.

As an active improviser I use analysing on every occasion that I improvise. Analysing the chord progressions helps me to understand the composer's reason behind harmonic choices (chord choices) in a piece. In understanding the harmonic choices, I can in turn choose appropriate notes in my improvisation to complement the piece. I also teach analysing to my learners and I have seen how their improvisations improve as their ability to accurately analyse chord progressions improves.

The importance of acquiring analysing skills when improvising is evident. Even if learners just analyse diatonic chord progressions, analysing still helps them to pay attention to specific chord function as well as understand how a chord fits into a specific chord progression (Stolz, 2013). Acquiring analysing as a skill can help learners to meet the improvisational outcomes of the IEB curriculum (Independent Examinations Boards, 2011) and is therefore an important skill to teach learners in the classroom.

5.2.3 In what ways does a technical grasp of a variety of scales (major, minor, pentatonic, blues, symmetrical, hybrid) contribute to the acquisition of improvisation skills?

Various scales were taught in the focussed improvisation classes. Some of the scales were familiar to the participants and some of the scales were unfamiliar.

In their interviews half of the participants mentioned that implementing the scales was one of the most enjoyable parts of the improvisation lessons. The participants easily implemented the familiar scales over diatonic chord progressions but struggled to implement these scales over non-diatonic chord progressions. They especially enjoyed the lesson on pentatonic and blues scales. The participants found the lesson on major modes insightful but struggled with practically implementing the modes into their improvisations. Seven of the ten participants struggled with implementing the symmetrical- and hybrid- scales but these scales are not a requirement of the IEB curriculum. From the observation and interviews it was clear that the participants found the lessons on modes and symmetrical- and hybrid- scales the most difficult lessons.

Three participants agreed that they would like to incorporate improvisation into their practise routine when practising scales and Participant D mentioned that improvisation is “a constructive way to apply scales”. Three participants

stressed that the lesson on modes was the most interesting lesson and that they would be able to implement modes into their improvisations.

I find practising scales tedious and if I did not use various scales when improvising, I would not practise scales at all. I try to make my improvisations as versatile and interesting as possible and in order to do that I need a big vocabulary of scales to help me use my unique voice when improving. Improvisation has therefore given me motivation to practice and teach a wide variety of scales.

According to the improvisation criteria specified in the IEB curriculum learners should be able to incorporate “major, minor, pentatonic, blues, and modes” into their improvisations (Independent Examinations Boards, 2011:18). It is therefore important to teach the theoretical knowledge and practical application of these scales to learners in order for them to incorporate these scales into their improvisations.

5.2.4 In what ways does the learning of sequencing techniques contribute to the development of improvisation skills?

In the sixth lesson the participants were taught various sequences and given the opportunity to implement the sequences practically while improvising. Woosley (2012:31) advocates that: “Sequences are excellent tools to help bring variety to an improvisation.” Both the assessment models of Azzara & Grunow (2006) and in the Independent Examinations Boards (2011) include sequencing as part of their assessment criteria.

In this study the participants’ comments confirmed Woosley’s (2012) sentiment that the implementation of simple sequences are tools that could make scales sound interesting and fresh. It was observed that the participants, who did not know their scales, struggled to implement sequencing into their improvisation.

Some of the participants remarked that they would definitely be able to implement sequencing into their future improvisations.

For me as an active performing improviser, I applied my experience and knowledge in a research setting to determine if the skills and knowledge which assist me, could also benefit learners. One of the most beneficial methods when improvising for me is sequencing, a tool that helps keep scale practising interesting. When I practise scales I rarely just practise them up and down the scale. I much rather implement or combine various sequences. Practising sequences in turn helps to keep my improvisations interesting. I teach these simple sequence techniques to beginner improvisers because it is a simple yet effective tool to make their improvisations sound interesting.

Teaching sequencing in the improvisation classroom is a tool that can assist learners with improvising. Seeing that sequencing is part of the IEB's assessment criteria it is an essential tool to teach to learners to benefit their improvisation ability.

5.2.5 In what ways does the acquisition of fluent arpeggios skills enhance the learning of improvisation skills?

In lesson three the participants were taught how to implement arpeggios into their improvisations. They were also given the chance to practically implement them in the focussed improvisation lessons.

It was observed that most of the participants, especially the classical learners, have been using arpeggios when asked to improvise up until this point. Arpeggios are a safe choice when improvising since there are specific notes belonging to each arpeggio or chord. This therefore limits the choice and the improviser cannot play 'wrong notes' if only notes from the basic chord or arpeggio are chosen. Most of the participants were able to successfully implement arpeggios into their improvisations and enjoyed practically

improvising using arpeggios. Larson (2002) advocates the use of arpeggios when forming melodic content for improvisations.

Using arpeggios when improvising can be very useful. In this regard I encourage my learners that, if they encounter a non-diatonic chord in a progression which they cannot accurately analyse, they should focus on playing only the notes of that non-diatonic chord in an arpeggiated manner. This is a practical way to assist them with difficult chord progressions.

Even though some of the participants struggled to implement arpeggios – because they did not know their arpeggio shapes – they enjoyed improvising with them. Some of the participants struggled to embellish the arpeggios and they will need to experiment and practise the arpeggios more in order for them to become fluent in using the arpeggios when improvising. Teaching arpeggios to students can enhance their improvisation ability, especially because of the safe choice that arpeggios offer when improvising.

5.2.6 How can the use of pedagogical strategies and methods enhance the learning process of teaching improvisation skills to learners at FET level?

The content of the lessons that formed the case study were derived from the IEB's improvisational outcomes and assessment module. The lesson content was structured in a way that each lesson topic served as a foundation for the next topic. All the lessons included theoretical instruction but were mostly based on the participants' practical implementation of improvisation.

In interpreting the findings of the secondary research questions it appears that the various methods and strategies incorporated in this case study can be useful to enhance the learning process when teaching improvisation skills to learners at FET level.

In their interviews, seven of the participants commented that they would change nothing regarding the content of the lessons and the other three just expressed that they wished they had more improvisation lessons. It seems that the practical approach to teaching improvisation, as followed in this case study, was successful because seven of the participants highlighted the fact that they enjoyed the practical playing in the lessons. It was observed that practically improving as part of a group increased their confidence. Nine of the participants said that they would be able to implement the content that was covered, in the study, into their own playing.

The results from the improvisation expert regarding the participants' improvisation recordings showed that seven of the ten participants fared better in their second attempt, after the completion of the lessons, compared to the results of their first attempt. Considering this result as well as the data from the observations and interviews, it deems that the strategies and methods that were implemented in this case study can enhance the learning process of teaching improvisation skills to learners at FET level.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

Future research could benefit from a study similar to this but changing the targeted population to learners from government FET schools and not private FET schools. Results from such a study could present different results because government schools follow the CAPS curriculum and not the IEB curriculum as most private FET schools.

A similar but comparative study gauging the implementation of improvisation methods and strategies could also be useful by linking the findings of implementation in government schools with that of private schools.

Another aspect that was not the focus of this study, but that was identified during the course of the investigation, is the notion that students feel scared,

exposed and intimidated when they have to improvise. The results of one of the participants specialising in contemporary music, who has more experience in improvisation than many of the other participants, indicated that he fared better in the first recorded improvisation attempt compared to the second attempt. This could be because he was feeling nervous, exposed or intimidated. It could also be that his initial head start was no longer applicable as other learners gained new skills, while he perhaps was not yet comfortable with applying all the new techniques. Performance anxiety, especially the pressure when performing in front of others, may contribute to problems regarding improvisation and needs further investigation.

Further research can be done regarding the development of improvisation skills at primary school level. Results from such a study can determine if early development in improvisation skills will lead to increased confidence and minimise performance anxiety.

Since this study used a small sample group as a qualitative case study design, it can be extended by using a larger population sample and by implementing a quantitative research design. The main threat to the results of the current study is that the sample may have been biased because I purposefully selected the participants and that the sample was small.

In this study it was noticeable that participants found it quite demanding to notate rhythms, even though they were all at an advanced music theory level. Research can be done to investigate if this is a general problem amongst music learners and if so, what the reasons might be for. Investigating learners' aural ability and linking it to their ability to notate rhythms as well as to their improvisation ability can deem useful results.

5.4 Conclusion

The research has identified various pedagogical methods and strategies that can be used to implement improvisation in a FET classroom. The results show that incorporating rhythmic improvising, analysing of chord progressions, sequencing techniques, the use of scales – such as major, minor, pentatonic, blues, symmetrical and hybrid scales – and arpeggios in focussed improvisation classes, could be beneficial in assisting FET learners to acquire improvisation skills.

It is disconcerting, however, that three of the ten have never received any previous training in improvisation, and that half of the participants reported that their current instrumental music educators do not spend any class time teaching improvisation. This highlights the problem that some music educators do not support and train their learners to attain the minimum improvisation requirements of the curriculum. The search to understand why improvisation skills are neglected should continue.

More in-depth research to streamline improvisation teaching in the classroom is needed to help learners develop improvisation skills. If we as educators neglect improvisation teaching, the learners are at risk of developing theoretical knowledge only that cannot be applied independently by them in a creative manner. Implementing creative development, through improvisation, in the classroom can ensure the development of holistically creative young musicians.

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Appendix A: Semi-structured interview schedule for participants

1. How long have you been studying music?
2. What music genres/styles are you currently being taught in?
3. Define the term improvisation in your own words.
4. Do you think that improvisation is limited to a specific music genre/style?
Explain.
5. How does your current music educator teach you improvisation in the classroom? Explain how he/she goes about teaching improvisation to you.
6. What is required from you in terms of improvisation to meet the requirements of the National/IEB curriculum? How did your educator make you aware of this?
7. How much time do you spend practising improvisation?
8. To what extent can you implement improvisational techniques when playing or practising your instrument/voice?
9. What problems, if any, do you have in terms of the way that improvisation is currently being taught to you?
10. How much time does your educator spend on teaching improvisation and explain why you think this time is sufficient or not?
11. How important do you think it is to be able to improvise? Motivate your answer.
12. What is it that you find enjoyable about improvising?
13. Which aspects of improvisation do you feel insecure about, or do you not feel confident to perform?
14. In which ways do you think improvisation can assist you in becoming a better musician? Why?
15. What elements/sections of this series of lessons did you enjoy the most? Why?
16. What elements/sections in the lessons did you not enjoy? Why?
17. What elements/sections about improvisation did you find difficult? Why?
18. What elements/sections from the series of lessons, if any, would you be able to implement in your own playing?
19. What additional information, if any, do you still want to find out about improvisation?

20. Which aspects, if any, would you want to change about the way improvisation was taught in the series of lessons?

21. Please add anything else you would like to say regarding improvisation as part of the music curriculum.

Appendix B: Observation schedules

Lesson 1: Rhythmic improvisation

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 2: Analysing

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 3: Arpeggios

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 4: Major scales

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 5: Minor Scales

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 6: Sequencing

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 7: Pentatonic and Blues Scales

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 8: Major Modes

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 9: Symmetrical and Hybrid Scales

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Lesson 10: Genres

Comments for individual participants	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
General group observations		
Patterns		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Other		

Appendix C: Letter of informed consent for principal of school



Music Department
Faculty of Humanities
University of Pretoria
Date: _____

Contact details of supervisor:

Dr D Vermeulen

Tel: (012) 420-5889

E-mail: dorette.vermeulen@up.ac.za

Researcher: (MMus student)

Jannie Lategan

Tel: 083 379 2201

E-mail: jannielategan@hotmail.com

Title of the study: Exploring pedagogical strategies and methods to enhance music learners' improvisation skills at FET level

Dear Sir

I hereby kindly request your permission to conduct research at the school regarding the teaching of improvisation skills to music learners in the FET phase. The research will involve ten learners enrolled for Music in the FET phase, who will be asked to attend ten lessons in improvisation, presented by me during after-school hours at the school. Each lesson will last one hour, and it will be arranged so as not to interfere with their normal school activities or extra-curricular programmes. I would furthermore like to interview each learner regarding aspects relevant to the lessons in improvisation which they have attended. These interviews should each last approximately 30 minutes. The lessons as well as the interviews will be audio-recorded.

The experience of music learners as part of this project is of critical importance to its success. The school's participation in the project, reaction to the project and views regarding the project will enable me to document solutions for issues relevant to improvisation in the secondary school curriculum.

All information disclosed in the interview as well as the recorded observational data would be solely used for the purpose of this specific research and all information will be kept confidential. Before the dissemination of data, the

learners' recorded views will be carefully transcribed to ensure that the data accurately reflect the views expressed in each interview, as well as accurately represent each learner's participation in the project. The school's and the learners' confidentiality will be respected and under no circumstances will the school's name or the learners' identities be revealed during the dissemination of the research. The school or any of the music learners may decide to withdraw at any stage without providing reasons to do so.

The recorded interviews will be stored digitally for a period of 15 (fifteen) years in the Department of Music of the University of Pretoria. According to the tradition of this type of study, participation is voluntary and no remuneration is offered for contributions made to this research project.

I undertake to share the outcomes of the research via e-mail after completion of the study. The findings of the research will be used for my Masters' dissertation, and for other research related publications such as scientific or lay articles, conference papers or radio broadcasts. It is my sincere hope that this research project will contribute towards streamlining important aspects of programme planning regarding improvisation and that each participant will benefit from a fountain of shared knowledge and creativity.

If you are willing for the school to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent.

I, _____, give permission that this research project may be implemented at the school and that the data collected may be used for the purpose of research and education. I am fully aware of the nature of the research and acknowledge that the school or each participant may withdraw at any time and that participation in this research is voluntary. The information that will be disclosed during the project is not regarded as being sensitive. The school's and music learners' confidentiality will be respected and the name of the school or the identities of the learners will not be revealed in the research. I understand that this research is for the development and promotion of improvisation in the secondary school curriculum in South Africa.

Principal of the school: _____

MMus researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent for parents/guardians of participants



Music Department
Faculty of Humanities
University of Pretoria
Date: _____

Contact details of supervisor:

Dr D Vermeulen

Tel: (012) 420-5889

E-mail: dorette.vermeulen@up.ac.za

Researcher: (MMus student)

Jannie Lategan

Tel: 083 379 2201

E-mail: jannielategan@hotmail.com

Title of the study: Exploring pedagogical strategies and methods to enhance music learners' improvisation skills at FET level

Dear parent/guardian

Your child is invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating teaching strategies for curriculum-based improvisation in a South African FET music programme. I hereby ask your kind permission to allow your child to take part in this research project which will consist of ten lessons in improvisation, presented by me during after-school hours at the school. Each lesson will last one hour, and it will be arranged so as not to interfere with your child's normal school activities or extra-curricular programme. I would furthermore like to interview your child regarding aspects relevant to the lessons in improvisation which he/she has attended. This interview should last approximately 30 minutes. The lessons as well as the interview will be audio-recorded.

Your child's experience as part of this project is of critical importance to its success. Your child's participation in the project, reaction to the project and views regarding the project will enable me to document solutions for issues relevant to improvisation in the secondary school curriculum.

All information disclosed in the interview as well as the recorded observational data would be solely used for the purpose of this specific research and all information would be kept confidential. Before the dissemination of data, your child's recorded views will be carefully transcribed to ensure that the data accurately reflect the views expressed during the interview, as well as

accurately represent your child's participation in the project. Your child's identity will not be revealed during the dissemination of the research. You or your child may decide to withdraw from the research at any stage without providing reasons to do so.

The recorded interviews will be stored digitally for a period of 15 (fifteen) years in the Department of Music of the University of Pretoria. According to the tradition of this type of study, participation is voluntary and no remuneration is offered for contributions made to this research project.

I undertake to share the outcomes of the research via e-mail after completion of the study. The findings of the research will be used for my Masters' dissertation, and for other research related publications such as scientific or lay articles, conference papers or radio broadcasts. It is my sincere hope that this research project will contribute towards streamlining important aspects of programme planning regarding improvisation and that each participant will benefit from a fountain of shared knowledge and creativity.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent.

I, _____, give permission that my child's responses to this project may be used for the purpose of research and education. I am fully aware of the nature of the research and acknowledge that my child may withdraw at any time and that participation in this research is voluntary. The information that my child will disclose during the project is not regarded as being sensitive. The identity of my child will not be revealed. I understand that this research is for the development and promotion of improvisation in the secondary school music curriculum in South Africa.

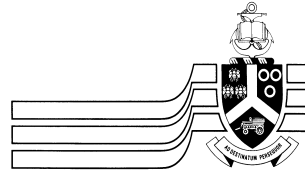
Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

MMus researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Letter of informed assent for music learner participants



Music Department
Faculty of Humanities
University of Pretoria
Date: _____

Contact details of supervisor:

Dr D Vermeulen

Tel: (012) 420-5889

E-mail: dorette.vermeulen@up.ac.za

Researcher: (MMus student)

Jannie Lategan

Tel: 083 379 2201

E-mail: jannielategan@hotmail.com

Title of the study: Exploring pedagogical strategies and methods to enhance music learners' improvisation skills at FET level

Dear learner

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating teaching strategies for curriculum based improvisation in a South African FET music programme. I hereby ask your kind permission to take part in this research project which will consist of ten lessons in improvisation, presented by me during after-school hours at the school. Each lesson will last one hour and will be audio-recorded. Times for the lessons will be arranged so as not to interfere with your normal school activities or extra-curricular programme. I would furthermore like to interview you regarding aspects relevant to the lessons in improvisation which you have attended. This interview should last approximately 30 minutes.

Your experience as part of this project is of critical importance to its success. Your participation in the project, reaction to the project and views regarding the project will enable me to document solutions for issues relevant to improvisation in the secondary school curriculum.

All information disclosed in the interview as well as the recorded observational data will be solely used for the purpose of this specific research and all information would be kept confidential. Before the dissemination of data, your recorded views will be carefully transcribed to ensure that the data accurately

reflect the views expressed in your interview, as well as accurately represent your participation in the project. Your identity will not be revealed during the dissemination of the research. You may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with the project or the interview, without providing reasons to do so.

The recorded interviews will be stored digitally for a period of 15 (fifteen) years in the Department of Music of the University of Pretoria. According to the tradition of this type of study, participation is voluntary and no remuneration is offered for contributions made to this research project.

I undertake to share the outcomes of the research via e-mail after completion of the study. The findings of the research will be used for my Masters' dissertation, and for other research related publications such as scientific or lay articles, conference papers or radio broadcasts. It is my sincere hope that this research project will contribute towards streamlining important aspects of programme planning regarding improvisation and that each participant will benefit from a fountain of shared knowledge and creativity.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent.

I, _____, give permission that my responses to this project may be used for the purpose of research and education. I am fully aware of the nature of the research and acknowledge that I may withdraw at any time and that my participation in this research is voluntary. The information that I will disclose during the project is not regarded as being sensitive. My identity will not be revealed. I understand that this research is for the development and promotion of improvisation in the secondary school music curriculum in South Africa.

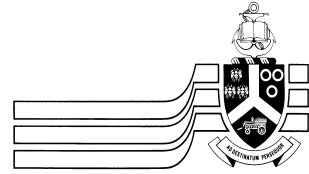
Music learner: _____

Date: _____

MMus researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Letter of informed consent for improvisation expert/external examiner



Music Department
Faculty of Humanities
University of Pretoria
Date: _____

Contact details of supervisor:

Dr D Vermeulen

Tel: (012) 420-5889

E-mail: dorette.vermeulen@up.ac.za

Researcher: (MMus student)

Jannie Lategan

Tel: 083 379 2201

E-mail: jannielategan@hotmail.com

Title of the study: Exploring pedagogical strategies and methods to enhance music learners' improvisation skills at FET level

Dear external examiner

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating teaching strategies for curriculum based improvisation in a South African FET music programme. I hereby ask your kind permission to take part in this research project which will consist of the evaluation of ten learners' improvisation attempts. I will record the learners' attempts at improvisation at the beginning of the research process, after which I will present ten lessons focusing on the development of improvisation skills. After the series of lessons, I will again record each of the ten learners while they do another improvisation.

Being an expert improviser, your role would be to assess the recordings of the learners' improvisation attempts. The learners' identities will not be revealed, and you would also not know whether the recordings were made at the outset or at the end of the lesson series. Your objective and unbiased assessment would be valuable to assist me in ascertaining the role of pedagogical strategies and methods in the teaching of improvisation skills. Your participation in the project will enable me to document solutions for issues relevant to improvisation in the secondary school curriculum.

All information disclosed in your assessments will be solely used for the purpose of this specific research and all information would be kept confidential.

Before the dissemination of data, your assessments will be carefully transcribed to ensure that the data accurately reflect your views. Your identity will not be revealed during the dissemination of the research. You may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with the project or the evaluation, without providing reasons to do so.

The data will be stored digitally for a period of 15 (fifteen) years in the Department of Music of the University of Pretoria. According to the tradition of this type of study, participation is voluntary and no remuneration is offered for contributions made to this research project.

I undertake to share the outcomes of the research via e-mail after completion of the study. The findings of the research will be used for my Masters' dissertation, and for other research related publications such as scientific or lay articles, conference papers or radio broadcasts. It is my sincere hope that this research project will contribute towards streamlining important aspects of programme planning regarding improvisation and that each participant will benefit from a fountain of shared knowledge and creativity.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent.

I, _____, give permission that my responses to this project may be used for the purpose of research and education. I am fully aware of the nature of the research and acknowledge that I may withdraw at any time and that my participation in this research is voluntary. The information that I will disclose during the project is not regarded as being sensitive. My identity will not be revealed. I understand that this research is for the development and promotion of improvisation in the secondary school music curriculum in South Africa.

Music expert/external examiner: _____

Date: _____

MMus researcher: _____

Date: _____