

What happened when I introduce music to aid transition into learning?

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Group 1F

Rationale

During this practitioner enquiry I wanted to look into transitions into learning and a way to get the class settled and ready to learn. I decided to look at settling the class and making sure they are ready and calm to work by introducing music.

Music is often used during studying so it was hoped that this could enhance concentration during the start of lessons. Music has been found to have marked improvements in performance for young people categorised as “stimulus seeking” and “over active” (Bloor 261-274). Therefore, in settling the class it is these young people which will find it most challenging to be quiet so music could provide the transition between getting to the class and being ready to work.

Aims

The aim of this project was to investigate if there was any improvement to concentration whilst music played during the starter task. Furthermore, it is hoped that this impact during the starter task results in the class being more ready to learn throughout the rest of the lesson.

Methodology

This practitioner enquiry was carried out with the same S2 class two periods a week for four weeks. Their timetable meant that they have Art period 1 on a Tuesday and Period 7 on a Thursday. Evidence was gathered through: exit pass slips at the end of lessons; an evaluation at the end of the 4 weeks; feedback from conversations with pupils and personal observations. The music played for 8 minutes during the starter task, which provided the time to complete the started task and allowed them time to settle into the class. The music chosen was classical and jazz as it was felt that music without words would provide less distraction for the pupils. Jazz music played for the first two weeks and classical played for the last two weeks. This was to provide some evidence as to whether the genre of music impacts on the concentration of pupils.

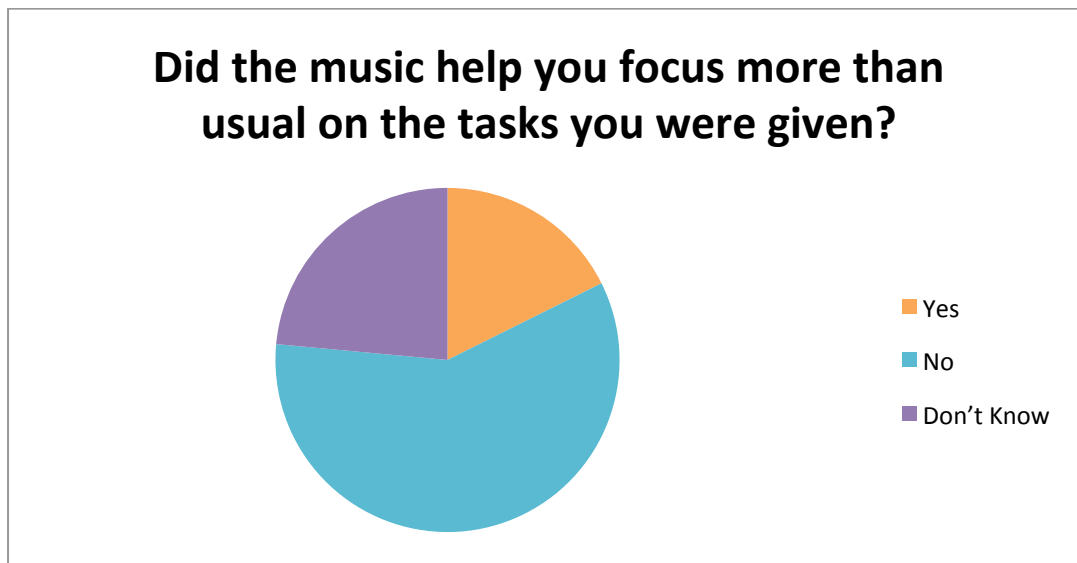
Findings

53% of pupils identified as 7-10 on a scale of how concentrated they felt. This shows that over half the class can identify that whilst the music was on they were concentrating. Feedback from the questionnaire had various reasons for this focus during the music: one student found the music “relaxing” and another stated “music always helps me concentrate”. However one pupil who circled 10 gave the reason that they “work the same as always” and another student who marked 9 stated “I already focus.” These results show that the music has had limited impact on the focus of the class and for some has made no difference at all.

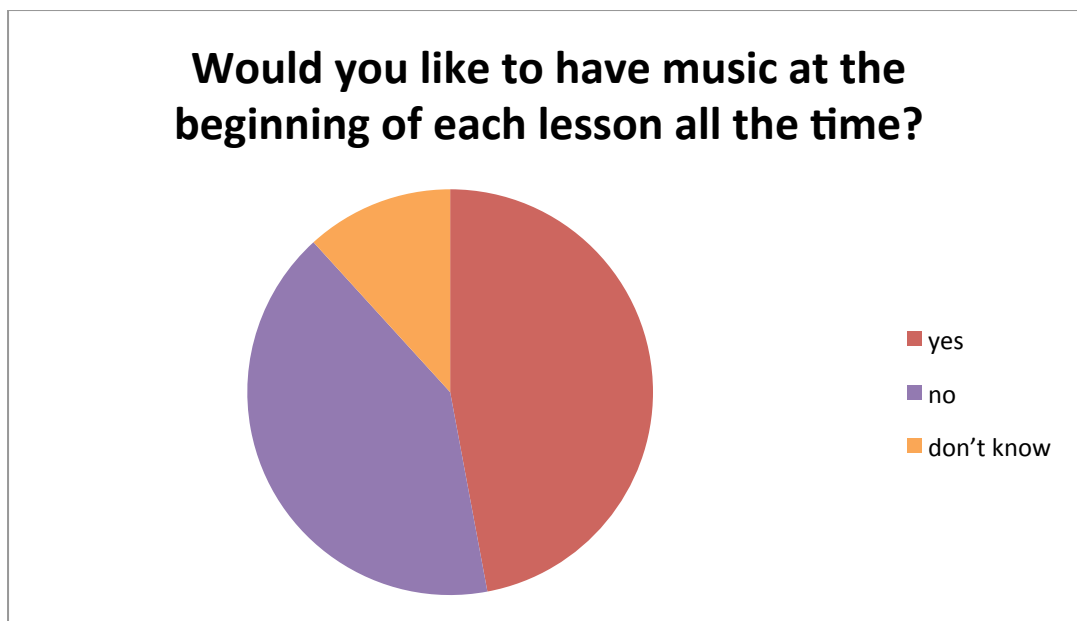
Furthermore 20% of the class stated that the music was distracting, which could have negative impact on focus and therefore the quality of their work.

Overall 59% of the pupils within the class felt that the music did not help them focus more than usual on the tasks they were given (see Fig.1). However when asked if they would like music at the beginning of all lessons 47% of the class said they would. Reasons given for this were “it’s fun”, “I work better/faster with music”, “because it is calming” and “If it is not classical or jazz I would enjoy having music playing.”

(Fig 1)



(Fig 2)



Through exit pass slips data was gathered Pupil A stated: “it helped improve my concentration, but it would help if we could listen to our own.” This desire to choose the music was echoed in 17/18 feedback. This was further demonstrated in conversations with pupils as they had no interest in the jazz or classical music and asked for chart music or to listen to the radio.

Conclusions

The findings suggest very little improvement on the concentration of the class through the introduction of classical and jazz music. Due to the short time frame of this research it is difficult to make conclusive statements from the evidence. Pupils did show some interest with having music playing, however they would like a personal choice through the use of earphones or the radio to provide current chart music. For some pupils the music actually made them distracted, having the opposite effect of the aims of the project. However, Wilkinson (2013) stresses that: “there needs to be music in classrooms during silent reading and quiet study times! Music in the workplace has been shown to raise performance levels and productivity by reducing stress”. However Holding (2014) states it’s a “clichéd notion” that listening to classical music has any impact on learning and that the use of classical music and studying is linked to the “Mozart Effect” which was essentially a marketing tool for music selling. Therefore the feedback from the young people to listen to their own music may have more benefit than the use of classical or jazz music.

Implications for future practice

The use of music has had some benefits within the classroom therefore it is worth exploring some of the options which have been provided by the pupils, mainly exploring other genres of music and the use of earphones. It could be possible to find links between the genre of music and classwork, making connections between art styles and music of certain eras. This could set the tone for lessons, providing an insight into the culture when certain artworks were created. It would have benefitted this research to include more study into pupils working in silence and the results with music to provide a clear comparison. I will continue to use the music at the start of the lessons to see if the class will benefit from more time to embed this into their routines. Furthermore, it might be enough to simply play the music whilst they arrive to class, come in and get their work ready rather than use it whilst they work.

Bibliography

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