

Compositional Teaching Strategies through the Lens of Peter Webster's Model of Creative Thinking in Music

INTRODUCTION

While the music curriculum in Singapore emphasises Listening, Creating, and Performing, it is observed that there is a neglect of music composing in classrooms. Students often engage in superficial composing activities by rearranging pre-determined notes, lacking critical thinking and exploration of their creativity. This contrasts with the curriculum's aim of nurturing creative expression through composition.

OBJECTIVE

This educational research project aims to deepen my understanding of compositional teaching strategies through the lens of Peter Webster's Model of Creative Thinking in Music.

METHODOLOGY

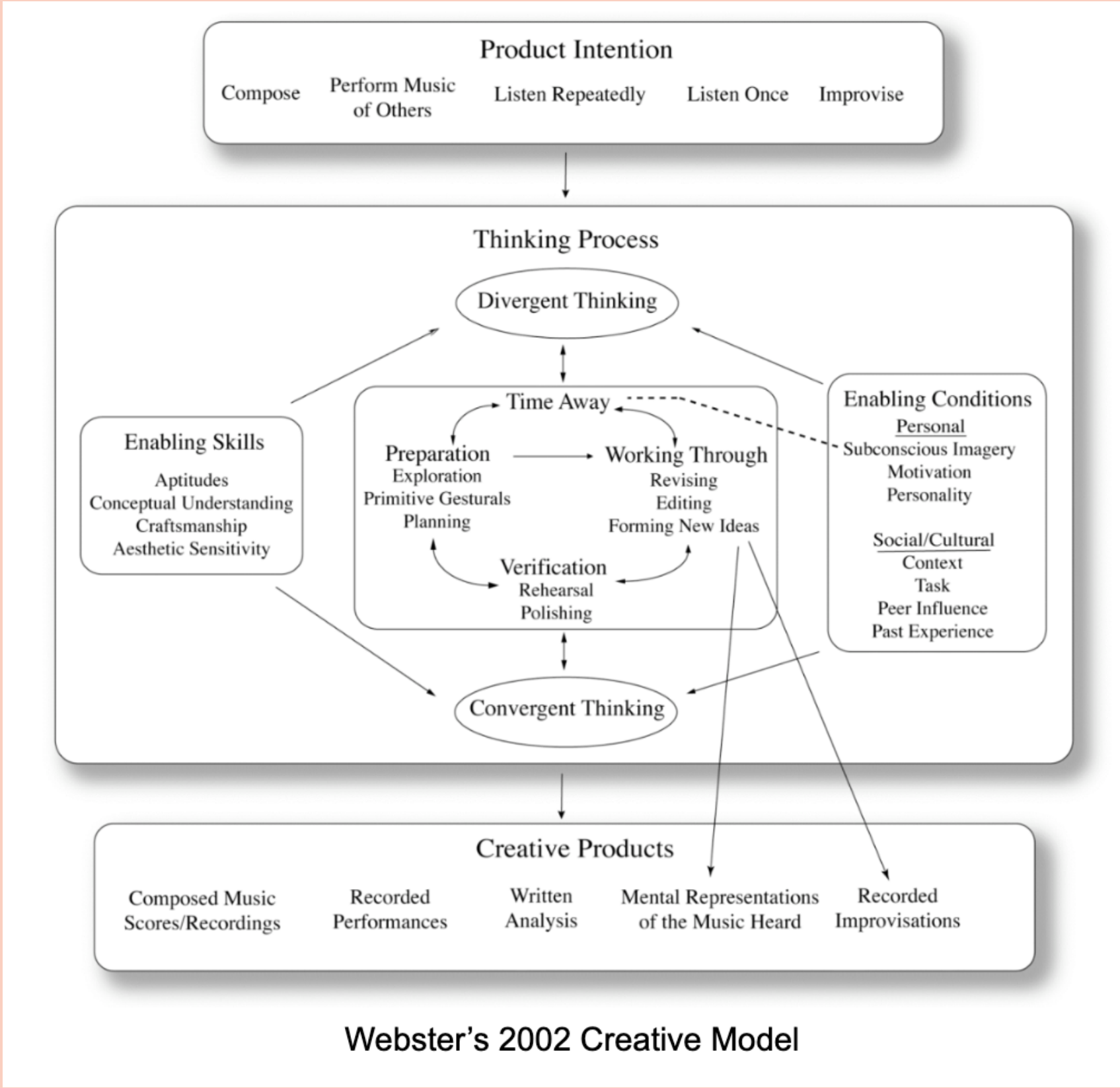
Model Selection: Peter Webster's Model of Creative Thinking in Music was chosen for its theoretical soundness and practical applicability.

Literature Selection: A search was conducted in academic databases for articles applying Webster's model to musical composition teaching strategies. Initial database findings were refined and expanded through further analysis and more resources were from the NIE library and STAR resources, yielding 9 articles and 6 lesson plans for the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of an overview of:

1. Webster's model
2. Compositional Teaching strategies from international case studies and local lesson plans



Webster's 2002 Creative Model

Analysis

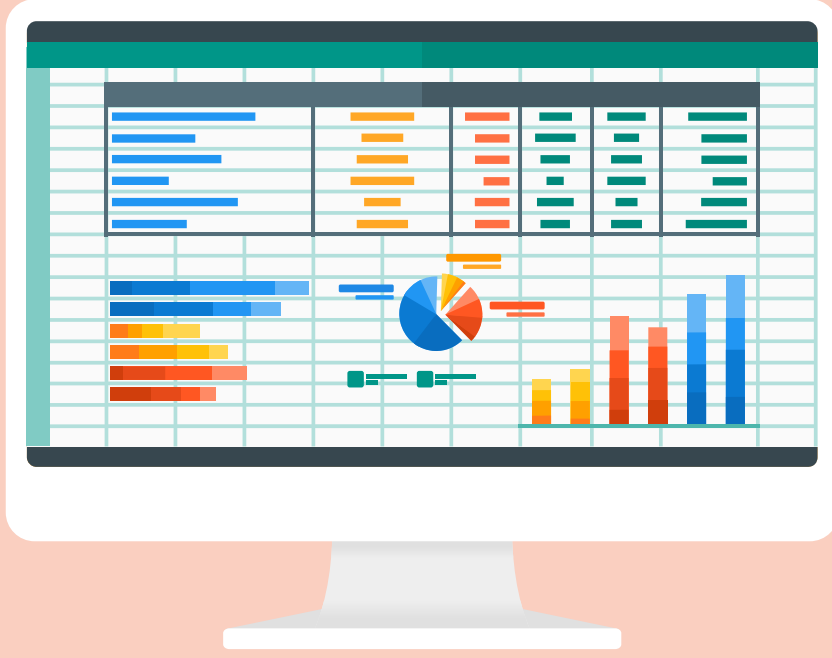


STAR RESOURCES

INTERNATIONAL

CASE STUDY

Organisation of Themes



Teaching strategies are organised into the following categories:

1. Strategies Supporting Divergent and Convergent Modes of Thinking
2. Strategies Addressing Enabling Conditions
3. Strategies Supporting the Development of Enabling Skills



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies Supporting Divergent and Convergent Modes of Thinking

Convergent thinking strategies predominantly fall under the approach of "verifying musical ideas through performance"

- May lead to prioritisation of instrumental techniques before delving into composition

Good variety of divergent thinking strategies but some differences in strategies used locally vs internationally

- Strategies such as extended thinking and providing multiple alternatives based on the analysis of students' works
- Can be attributed to time constraints, suggests a need for a deeper examination of the trade-offs between covering content breadth or depth in content.

Strategies Addressing Enabling Conditions

Local strategies seem to emphasise "peer influence" factors

- Could stem from the unique challenges posed by large class sizes of 35-40 students in a typical Singapore classroom
- However, may inadvertently sideline individualised learning experiences

Difference in "task" factors strategies employed locally vs internationally

- Distinction lies in the teacher-directed nature of the Singaporean approach compared to the student-dependent nature of the international one
- A phased approach aids teachers in planning and cultivating the necessary skills for students to take on more independent roles in the learning process.

Strategies Supporting the Development of Enabling Skills

Absence of strategies for developing aesthetic sensitivity in both international and local sources

- A potential oversight in addressing the emotional and expressive dimensions of music composition
- Crucial in nurturing students' ability to shape sound structures emotionally

Local lesson plans boast a variety of strategies focusing on the development of craftsmanship, unlike international sources.

- Some are focused on the craftsmanship of composition while the others cover the craftsmanship of basic performance skills of playing on the instruments
- holistic approach to developing students' musical skills, addressing not only compositional skills but also fundamental performance skills.

CONCLUSION

Compositional strategies employed in Singapore exhibit a holistic approach, addressing not only compositional skills but also delving into performance aspects. This approach reflects the well-rounded nature of the Singapore music syllabus. While the holistic strategies cover a broad spectrum of musical elements, there is a tendency to prioritize breadth over depth in compositional tasks. This inclination may result in a potential oversight of cultivating aesthetic sensitivity and the further development of compositional ideas. The emphasis on covering various aspects may inadvertently sideline the exploration of musical depth and the intricate nuances that contribute to the richness of compositions, resulting in the compositional tasks coming off as being "superficial" as mentioned in the introduction

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