1. **Assessment Component One - a written assignment (2682 words)**

Harmonizing Pedagogies: Formal and Informal Methods in Youth Voice Lessons
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As a former voice performance major with a predominantly informal musical background, my transition into the rigorously structured environment of university-level music education was difficult to be successful in. This personal experience has propelled my research into finding a balance that preserves the creative ideals of informal learning while adequately preparing students for formal music education. In this literature evaluation I aim to explore the equilibrium between formal and informal teaching methods in children's singing lessons, a subject that has seen limited focused research. Informal techniques, known for their role in cultivating spontaneity and musical expression, offer learners the freedom to explore music in an unstructured manner, enhancing enjoyment and creative expression (Folkestad, 2006). Alternatively, formal methods emphasize structured skill development such as reading sheet music and understanding musical theory, which are crucial for academic and professional music advancement (Green, 2006). These methodologies, while often viewed as polar opposites, are not as distanced as they may seem. The integration of both can provide a more rounded musical education that fosters both technical proficiency and creative freedom. In this look at the literature, I show that a flexible, hybrid approach tailored to individual learning styles and preferences is crucial in maximizing educational outcomes in music. Navigating this balance effectively can equip educators to foster environments that nurture musical autonomy, creativity, and enjoyment among young learners.

Defining Formal and Informal Teaching

Formal and informal teaching methods represent distinct approaches in the broader field of education, each with its own characteristics and objectives. Formal learning is defined as structured and intentional, with previously defined objectives aimed at acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies. And in the case of informal learning, it lacks organization and specific learning outcomes, often occurring through experiential means (OECD, 1995) (Macià & García, 2016) (Callanan et al., 2011).

In the context of music education, the concepts of formal and informal teaching are somewhat disagreed upon in the academic field, specifically around what rigidly defines informal teaching. Rodriguez (2009) argues that even in informal settings, there exists a certain degree of structure, although less rigid than formal instruction. Activities such as copying recordings, improvising, and performing still involve steps and learning strategies negotiated between teachers and students. Whereas Folkestad (2006) argues that the mere presence of a teacher in a learning setting places the method of the instruction squarely in the formal side of things. Generally speaking, the loose constructs of informal teaching, and the approach the research indicates most teachers are comfortable with, is as follows: The teacher implements a more hands-off approach, allowing students to take control of their learning experiences. Teachers in informal settings establish ground rules and initiate tasks, but then step back to observe and take note of perspectives and self-set goals. They act as facilitators and musical models, offering guidance only when necessary, and asked for, fostering a collaborative learning environment (Cain, 2013).

Formal teaching, on the other hand, is characterized by planned instruction within formal institutions, following a predefined curriculum and assessment criteria. It is teacher centered and sequential, aiming to systematically standardize learning outcomes. Students are expected to meet predetermined objectives set by the teacher, often within a regulated classroom environment (Ng, 2018) (Zhang, 2022). In the context of the voice lesson, an example would be the Royal Conservatory of Music grade levels.

In music education, formal pedagogy emphasizes sequential skill development and loyalty to curriculum standards. These standards are typically found in traditional classroom and conservatory settings (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2024). Students are guided through structured lessons, focusing on notation, theory, and technical proficiency, with the aim of meeting predefined learning objectives (Rooney, 2016). Despite the differences between formal and informal teaching, the boundaries between the two can sometimes blur, especially in music education, as Patterson (2015) states that music history is rich in aural tradition as well as written notation, which could be considered the meeting of both styles. Informal learning practices, rooted in social constructivism, encourage collaborative interactions and shared musical experiences among students. This social aspect of learning is essential in fostering a sense of ownership and connection with music (Derges, 2022).

Formal and informal teaching methods offer unique approaches to music education, each with its own benefits and challenges. While formal instruction provides structure and systematic

learning, informal teaching fosters creativity, autonomy, and social interaction. By understanding the nuances of both approaches, music teachers can tailor their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students effectively. Using these understandings of the terms, how then do we approach blending them, and what advantages and disadvantages do they offer?

Musical Autonomy and Enjoyment

Formal teaching, as we have characterized by structured skill development in one facet, serves as a vehicle for enhancing students' musical autonomy through things like the independence of reading sheet music. This structured approach, although valuable in giving technical proficiency and theoretical knowledge, often falls short in passing on the joy and spontaneity that can be present in music making (Green, 2006). Alternatively, informal teaching methods are celebrated for fostering creativity and enjoyment, offer students the freedom to explore and express themselves musically in a non-judgmental environment (Folkestad, 2006).

Green (2009) states that he difference between formal and informal teaching becomes noticeable in classroom dynamics, where students show a strong tendency to embrace uninterrupted musical flow, negating conventional notions of start-and-stop protocols prevalent in formal settings. This fluidity in musicality can underscore the inherent pleasure from continuous engagement but also raises questions regarding the pedagogical aims and outcomes associated with informal music-making experiences. Students' testimonials further speak to the transformative impact of informal music learning, with expressions of enthusiasm, enjoyment, and a sense of personal fulfillment throughout their reflections (Green 2006). Zhang (2022) suggests that formal teaching is required to efficiently pass information to large groups of students, due to its structured nature, and that informal teaching is better suited to small groups as it requires more individual attention to ensure desired outcomes are met. One could draw the conclusion that a one on one situation like a voice lesson, could be the perfect situation to pilot informal learning if one is unfamiliar with it.

In essence, the pursuit of musical autonomy and enjoyment in education necessitates a delicate balance between formal and informal teaching methodologies. While formal instruction provides a structured framework for skill development, informal learning experiences offer students the freedom to explore and express their musical identities authentically. By embracing the similarities instead of the differences between these pedagogical approaches, educators can

cultivate a vibrant and inclusive learning environment that nurtures students' musical autonomy, creativity, and enjoyment.

Learning Style and Strategy

In the realm of music education, the concepts of learning style and learning strategy come out as pivotal factors influencing the effectiveness of formal and informal teaching methods. This section of my research evaluation looks heavily at the work of Lucy Green, a leader in the field of informal music education, specifically a 2010 pilot study on young instrumentalists learning styles and learning strategies. Over decades, scholars have engaged in much discourse surrounding cognitive style, learning style, and learning strategy, resulting in an abundance of theories and models (Green, 2010) (Riding & Mathias, 1991) (Kozhevnikov, 2007). Although there are some subtle differences, the consensus among researchers is that learning style encapsulates an individual's hard-wired approach to learning, independent of external factors such as intelligence or motivation. It is a fundamental aspect of the student's cognitive makeup, remaining relatively constant throughout their life (Green, 2010).

Learning style and strategy, although interconnected, serve distinct purposes in the learning process. Learning style is how individuals naturally acquire knowledge, whereas learning strategy involves the deliberate implementation of frameworks to align with one's learning style. Classical music pedagogy often neglects the consideration of learning style, favouring a standardized approach devoid of individualized learning strategies (Green, 2010). Leaver et al. (2005), furthers this by saying one must also consider sensory preferences, cognitive style, and personality type.

In the pilot study conducted by Green, exploring musical learning styles and strategies, students engaged in instrumental lessons characterized by varying teaching approaches (Green, 2010). Notably, the study revealed a divergence in students' responses to classical and contemporary music selections, highlighting the influence of learning style on instructional outcomes. Despite initial exposure to classical melodies, students displayed consistent learning strategies across diverse musical contexts, underscoring the enduring nature of individual learning styles (Green, 2010). What can be inferred from this is, regardless of music genre, learning style is consistent. Meaning, the strategy chosen should reflect the learning style, not what we care preconceived to be attached to the genre.

Furthermore, the alignment between teacher and student cognitive styles emerges as a critical determinant of effective instruction (Green, 2010). Mismatched cognitive styles may impede the learning process, emphasizing the importance of fostering a cooperative teacher-student dynamic conducive to optimize learning outcomes.

However, there are some questions raised by this pilot study. The most notable one being: Green introduced a small percentage of the students participating to classical music before everyone else. Thus colouring the results of the study. The motives of the choice to do this is not clear. Green states that 3 of the 14 students in the study were given a classical piece for the first lesson, while the other 11 were given a pop/funk piece, that the former 3 moved to after the first lesson. It is not clear why Green chose to do this, as she moves all of the students to classical works later on in the study, together. Having been exposed to the classical piece before the pop/funk, could have changed their strategy to approaching the latter piece.

Despite the challenges in Green's research, the exploration of learning style and strategy illuminates the nuanced relationship between pedagogical approaches and individual cognitive predispositions in music education. Recognizing and accommodating diverse learning styles are essential for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments, wherein students' unique strengths and preferences are embraced and leveraged to facilitate meaningful musical experiences.

Music Literacy and Core Practical Skills

In exploring the impact of formal and informal teaching methods on music literacy and skills, it's essential to recognize that each approach offers unique advantages and limitations in developing well rounded musicianship. Formal teaching primarily enhances music literacy through structured instruction in notation and music theory. This methodological framework ensures that students develop a solid foundation in the technical aspects of music, which is crucial for understanding and interpreting written scores and for academic studies in music. There is very little research I have found on how to teach something like music literacy, in any degree of an informal approach.

Conversely, informal teaching methods excel in nurturing practical skills through experiential learning and improvisation. These approaches emphasize learning by doing, which is often more engaging for students and closely mirrors real-world musical practices, in most genres except for European classical. By focusing on playing by ear and improvisation, students can

develop a more intuitive understanding of music, which is particularly beneficial for genres that prioritize spontaneous musical expression over strict adherence to written scores (Folkestad, 2006). However, as (Jenkins, 2011) notes, relying solely on informal learning can keep students within their musical comfort zones, potentially hindering the development of a diverse musical repertoire and understanding. Without the broader exposure provided by formal education, students may find their creative outputs are not as rich or mature, reflecting only the mass tastes to which they've been exposed (Ng, 2018).

In 2022, Julie D. Derges conducted a study on 13 elementary aged music students (Derges, 2022). In comparison to Green's stages of informal music learning, this most closely resembled the first, "dropping pupils into the deep end" (Green 2016). The students chose their own songs, and in groups created an original a capella arrangement. Some of Derge's findings included students finding interest in many facets of the music, including the "background noise". It is later noted that although they were able to identify things they were hearing, they did not have the language terms to articulate it. Perhaps this is where a slightly more formal approach could be taken, and the music teacher could explain to the student(s) the terms they are searching for, so they can better articulate their motives and rationale. Derges also noted that the group discussed and came to a consensus on things like diction, for example the pronunciation of the word "deny" in Meghan Trainor's "Lips Are Movin" "You can buy me diamond earrings and deny-ny-ny, ny-ny-ny, deny-ny/ But I smell her on your collar so goodbye-bye-bye, bye-bye-bye" (Trainor & Kadish, 2014). Finally, Derges states that the through line, the bow that ties up the learning of informal learning, is critical reflection (Derges, 2022). This allows the teacher to further explain some of the terminology for things they noticed and experienced, and to contextualize their wide exploration in service of a more narrow goal.

Effective music education would ideally integrate both strategies to accommodate different learning styles and objectives, allowing students to develop a well-rounded musical skill set that includes both literacy and practical proficiency (Folkestad, 2006). Further research must be done on how to teach formal aspects of music, like notation and literacy, in a less formal way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between formal and informal teaching methods in music education reveals a dynamic spectrum rather than a binary choice. The juxtaposition of these approaches contextualized in children's singing lessons, as explored through this literature evaluation,

highlights the potential for a hybrid methodology that respects individual learning preferences while meeting pedagogical objectives. Both structured formal techniques and fluid informal practices have their strengths, but neither should be exclusively relied upon to cultivate a well-rounded musical education for any instrument, including the young singer. For example, the integration of formal methods like notation reading with informal techniques such as choosing songs or improvisation can enhance both musical literacy and expressive creativity (Folkestad, 2006, Green 2006)

This balanced approach also addresses specific needs of various learning styles and strategies to fit those styles, accommodating the individual's innate cognitive predispositions while fostering a safe learning environment (Green 2010). The findings of the research offer the importance of flexibility in educational methods, suggesting that educators must adapt their strategies not only to the content being taught but also to the diverse capabilities and aspirations of their students.

Ultimately, the goal of music education and voice teaching should be to empower students with the skills and confidence to explore their musical paths, whether through formal study or informal practice. By embracing a pedagogy that combines the strengths of both formal and informal learning, educators can support the development of musically autonomous young musicians who enjoy their practice and performance. Further research into innovative teaching strategies, specifically for the voice and in the context of private lessons, is needed to continue to guide our understanding and implementation of effective music education that bridges the gap between these two traditionally opposed methodologies.

Strategy

There are a few examples of how to implement both styles of teaching in the voice lesson. One might implement the strategy of keeping the formal aspect by doing relevant scale exercises in the keys of the song chosen. Also, by naming notes in the song's sheet music, and identifying the key signatures and time signatures, things like classical posture and breath could also be noted. One could also simultaneously implement informal strategies, like allowing the student to choose which song they want to work on, in the name of enjoyment. Also, allowing them to sing the whole song through at the beginning without teacher interruption, to aid musical flow. Both strategies are present in this case, allowing for a potentially well-rounded experience for the young singer.

In another facet, one could implement a strategy that is more consistent with Contemporary Commercial Music, while working on a classical voice piece. For example, learning Già il sole dal Gange by listening to a recording. Depending on the voice teachers' preference it could be a vocal recording, vocal melody recording played by piano, or a recording made by a program like Sebalius. This strategy could be implemented to make classical music less intimidating, using an aural method the voice student may already know, instead of diving into the deep end with notation. This could serve as the first step on a pathway to a more formal and conventional approach to learning classical voice music.

Another possible approach, is one could implement a varying level of what constitutes formal and informal based on the student's eventual goals. If the student has no interest in music as higher education at a degree level, or they are not interested in qualifications like Royal Conservatory of Music grades, the best approach may be a largely informal one, to maximize creativity and enjoyment. Alternatively, if those are the student's goals one could dedicate a small portion of the lesson to informal learning, such as improving vocally over the piano score for the piece the student is working on, to foster creativity and musicality.

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2. Assessment Component Two - reflective review (1626 words)

Critical Reflection

The MacLean's weather model greatly appealed to me as I frequently think in metaphors and analogies. This was a very straightforward way for me to utilize a reflective practice method.

Sunshine: What went well?

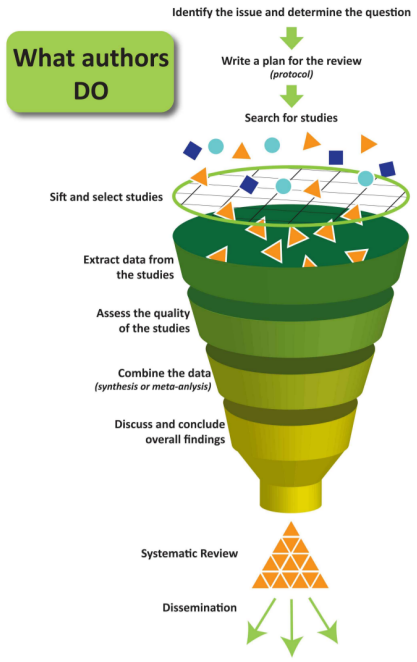
There seemed to be an abundance of research within the last 20 years pertaining to informal learning in music. The most recent study I found being one conducted in 2022 and published last year in 2023. I also found that the research mostly supported my incoming view of the topic, concluding that it is indeed a mix of formal and informal approaches that best serve the voice student. I was very open to changing my opinion, but the research tended to agree that both areas had their strengths, and work best when used in some capacity in tandem.

Rain: What didn't go so well?

I could not find a single resource pertaining to the voice as an instrument specifically. One study by Derges, where she follows a few groups of elementary aged children, they primarily sang, with some body percussion. (Derges 2022) This was the closest I could get to any vocal evidence. Derges also concluded that singing could be a good introduction to informal strategies, however, nothing on using these strategies to teach voice as its own instrument. I also couldn't find Lucy Green's primary instrument of study in her undergrad. Her degree was music education, one would still need at minimum an applied study. She has stated she has taught piano and also that she has sang in some operas as leads, which leads me to think she could have had voice as an applied study. The reason I wonder this, is that she is the leader in the field of informal music teaching, and yet she has done absolutely no research on the voice as an instrument and how that differs to teaching informally on an instrument. Her instrument would inform her lens of practice, which was very lacking in this area. However as I said she wasn't the only researcher lacking in findings in the area of the voice. It was a trend I found across the board.

Fog: Was there a point where you got lost and didn't know what to do? What couldn't you see?

When I had all the literature, I was very overwhelmed on how to start breaking it down, and fitting it into the categories and framework Claire and I had hypothesized. In retrospect what would have been a better approach is to form a broad thesis, or area of interest and then get all the research I can. After that, culling the research I do not end up needing when narrowing the thesis. The approach would then look more like a funnel approach. As seen here in the figure provided by Toronto Metropolitan University.



That would be a better method to what I ended up doing for this assignment, which was making the outline too specific from the beginning, and finding research to try and support the narrow questions, which was very difficult and in the end probably more time consuming.

Thunder: Sometimes, it can be difficult to think about what you would do or recommend because so many other people are all talking at once and drowning out your thoughts. Has that happened? (Was there any thunder in this situation?) What couldn't you hear? (Is anyone's voice missing?)

The primary voice missing in this area of research is that of the voice teacher, as I stated above. Voice and singing are a large part of music as a subject and our voices have been primarily ignored in this field. I have taken an improvisational music class as a singer, and from what I observed it was a very different class than that of an instrumentalist. An instrumentalist has a finger position, and perhaps a mouth shape as well, and then they have formed a specific note,

whereas the singer must pull that note out of their minds. This is a vastly different experience between both paradigms, and voice is an area that informal teaching deserves to be studied.

Lightning: What came as a surprise?

The most surprising element of the research journey, was (Ng 2018) and what they had to say about a third more moderate method in the middle of formal and informal, which was the non-formal. This was the first time in my research I had come across this term. It was interesting to find something that described a word for exactly the concept I was trying to research.

Wind: What came as a surprise?

One thing that nearly made me veer off course was the amount of literature on teachers feelings about implementing informal strategies. I ended up sticking to my thesis and only speaking on what was the best approach for the students, however there is ample research on the teachers opinions on the framework as well (Cain 2013)

Storm: In some situations, there is such a lot of conflict that things become very 'stormy'. Were there stormy conditions? If so, what? How did you weather the storm?

There was great conflict in even defining what informal teaching is. With formal teaching, everyone seemed to come to a consensus very quickly. For some (Green 2006, 2010, 2016, Cain 2013, Derges 2022), informal teaching must be haphazard, with limited teacher direction, and primarily aurally based. However according to (Folkestad 2006), the mere presence of a teacher in a music learning scenario, equates it immediately to a formal distinction. This was a more extreme view based on the literature I have reviewed, but it does represent the discourse in the field, and how the term informal teaching, struggles to be contained by a rigid definition.

Personal Development Plan

Objective	Action
Why am I doing this course?	Enrolling in this course deepens my commitment to refining my teaching skills and expanding my knowledge of vocal teaching. My undergraduate degree in performance exposed me to a few teaching methods, each delivering varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, some methods proved detrimental, causing both vocal and psychological harm. Recognizing the responsibility I have in my chosen path of guiding young singers, I am driven to equip myself with as many tools as possible of proven voice teaching techniques. By utilizing a diverse range of approaches, I aim to ensure that my future students receive personalized instruction tailored to their unique needs and goals.
What is the direct benefit to me?	Immersing myself in this program has shown me numerous facets essential to achieving my ultimate goal of a flexible, student centered teaching strategy. From fostering a youth approach to performance coaching, to researching the nuances of pedagogy for developing voices, and addressing critical aspects such as vocal hygiene for young singers, the program has provided invaluable insights. Also with much excitement I hope to explore other topics related to youth like the transgender voice. As someone who has grappled with impostor syndrome in the realm of vocal coaching, acquiring this wealth of knowledge serves as a powerful weapon against self doubt. Armed with a diverse toolkit of teaching methods, I am empowered to create a nurturing learning environment where students of all backgrounds can thrive, and on a personal note, silencing the doubts of my inner critic with concrete expertise.

Objective	Action
1. Find and enroll in an online intermediate theory course, or 1 on 1 tutor	Recognizing the pivotal role of music theory in effective formal teaching, I am committed to revisiting and enhancing my music theory knowledge. Despite completing my undergrad studies, my theoretical knowledge has been lacking due to inconsistent practice. By enrolling in an intermediate theory course or securing personalized instruction, I aim to hone my ability to impart this essential knowledge to my future students. This endeavour not only represents a commitment to personal growth but also underlines my dedication to providing a comprehensive musical education to those I teach. Enrol by July 1st, 2024
2. Read Lucy Green's book	To deepen my understanding of informal teaching methods, I am excited to dive into Lucy Green's most recent solo book, "Hear, Listen, Play!: How to Free Your Students' Aural, Improvisation, and Performance Skills." Green's insightful exploration of improvisation, aural learning, and informal teaching approaches will likely enrich my wider pedagogical knowledge. By incorporating her methods into my own practice, I aspire to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment where students feel empowered to explore and express themselves creatively. Read by: September 1st, 2024
3. Watch 3 videos on developing voices in the VSC library.	Recognizing the ever-changing nature of vocal development in young singers, I am eager to deepen my understanding of the physiological aspects of voice training specifically for youth. Beyond refining coaching techniques, it is essential to inform my instruction with the physiological realities of young voices as they evolve and mature. By immersing myself in the VSC library's resources on developing voices, I aim to cultivate a holistic approach to vocal instruction that addresses both the mental and physical dimensions of young vocal development. Watch by: June 1st, 2024

Objective	Action
4. Reach out to other music teachers that have opened their own schools to see what I can learn from their experiences	Hoping to realize my dream of establishing a successful music school for youth, I recognize the valuable insights to be gained from community connections I know who have also opened music/dance/and arts studios. By reaching out to fellow educators who have successfully established their own schools, I seek practical knowledge and firsthand experiences to inform my own potential business practises. These meetings offer a unique opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of others, equipping me with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of launching and managing my own studio. Schedule all meetings (3) by June 15th, 2024