**School D teacher interview transcript Miss Lewis (ML) – part 1**

Researcher (R) – Okay. So can you talk me through your MF journey as such, so when did you start to become involved with it, and…?

ML – Right. So with the organisation itself, I started to become involved last year. And I hadn’t got involved with it before because I felt I was doing MF kind of things anyway. But as we mentioned earlier, it was having the confidence, and knowing that this worked for other people, and then to go and get involved and to meet some other people that were doing MF that I then got stuck in. So, before Christmas last year, I got in touch with XX – I think they’re just XX actually, in XX, and I just contacted their Head of Department and said ‘I’ve noticed your website, it looks amazing, you’re doing some great work and you do MF. Could I come and visit you with some students and just see how you go about making music in your classroom?’ And then whilst I was there, observing their practices, XX, Head of XX for MF, she happened to be turning up that day because they had somebody else in who was teaching the MF approach. So we really got an amazing day. Just not as a course, but seeing a school department in action. Then I got chatting to XX, and then XX invited me to be a XX and said ‘you know, we just need you to be enthusiastic, blog about it and you get to hear about pilot schemes and things’, and I thought ‘well this all sounds brilliant. I like this approach. I feel more confident after having seen it working in a school. I’ll do that’.

R – Okay, did you become a XX on that day?

ML – (laughs) Yes I did!

R – Okay, wow.

ML – I think it was my enthusiasm for it. Yeah. I was so excited by it all that I really got into it and got chatting to her about what I wanted to do. And she said ‘well you’re the ideal person to be a XX for this, you know. If you’d like to do it, can you go home and do a blog instantly, and I’ll add you to the XX site.’ So I didn’t really exhaust it - it was a horrendous video of me now - under XXs on the MF website - and I’ll have to find her a better photo or something, because it clearly, clearly was me at the end of an exhausting day, but one that was saying ‘wow, this was brilliant, really loved seeing what they had to do’. So yes. I did. (laughs).

R – So did you know much about MF before? Had you looked on their website before XX?

ML – I had been on their website and I’d also been across… Before I started at this school, so… I suppose my journey starts a little further back actually, now I think about it. I was employed to start in the September of the year before last, and I’d had a look around and assessed the department, and just in my head was thinking ‘this is a school where MF could work’, from what I knew about it and my vague sort of awareness of it, I thought ‘that’s a school that’s got MF stamped all over it’. So I went and visited… what’s the name of it? It’s in XX. XX I think it’s called. In XX. He’s been using the MF way for years. So I said ‘can I come across and see what you do?’ So I started there. He then gave me a MF big file of various different things. And I came away from there with some just sort of some burgeoning ideas, and what to me was important was that we should have enough instruments that they could all form bands, because what had seemed to work successfully for him was they all formed bands in their classrooms. So the first thing I did when I started here - before I even started here - I’d written my bid for some curriculum fund money, and I made sure that we had enough set up for five bands, so we could have five drum kits. So I salvaged a couple of the drum kits that we had remaining and made the best of them, and then I bought three new drum kits, and then made sure we had five bass guitars, five electric guitars, there was enough keyboards here already. And just set it up so that I knew at the very least, I could do this informal learning. I didn't know how at the time I was going to do it, I just thought ‘I’m getting resources in, I’m going to pitch it, see if I can get the money’, I did get the money, and then I just sort of got on with it and worked out what I needed when and how.

R – So what made you contact XX and XX? Did you know they were XXs or…?

ML – I knew XX from when I trained at XX University, because that was something that the training department there had talked about – XX’s use of MF. So I got in touch with XX University and said, ‘who do I need to get in touch with’, and I just went over to them as a result. And then XX – I’d been researching something to teach. Can’t think what it was, but I was just looking up teaching something new… Oh no! I think I’d been researching something on the MF website, and then there was a download from the website of a poster that a school had said ‘use our poster if you wish’. So I downloaded this website, this poster, and on the bottom of the poster was their website address. So I thought ‘oh, I’ll go and look at that then, it seems exciting’. Then I was blown away by all the things they were doing. They’re a five person department, and I thought ‘well I want to go and… how are they doing that?’ and they had something like 60 per cent of students in their school learning a musical instrument. And they provided lessons for free. And I thought ‘well this, you know…’ and their school results were amazing. And I just thought ‘well this is a real working example of a school that is taking music seriously, giving them the funding they need to make it happen. I need to go and see this to gather evidence to get what I need here.’ Which is why I did it. Now I haven’t necessarily achieved all the funding I wanted since (smiles). I have put my case forward, but I did come away so enamoured with what they were doing. I came away feeling a little bit daunted as well, thinking ‘well how am I going to get to do all of this.’ Because it was just all so invented. It was all so there. They were just… it just happened. And I just thought ‘well I want this to be the best music department in the area. I want students to come here because they know they’re going to really enjoy making music and make progress in music, even if they don’t have the good fortune to be able to afford to pay for lessons themselves. Because we are in probably the most deprived area, and I just thought ‘well this needs to happen - we can engage students through their love of music.’ And the idea being that it was their choice of music too. Not music that was being imposed on them. So, a lot of my stuff, I’ve tried to find out from them what they like, or just put music to them that I know they’ll enjoy. So they really took to Stand By Me last year. They really got involved in wanting to work out how play the bass line and sing along – all the different things. Yeah, yeah. I’ve finished talking for that bit.

R – Okay (both laugh). So what made you think that this would be a good school to do MF in when you saw the department?

ML – I think it’s because they seemed starved of music. They weren’t engaged with it. They didn’t do anything musical. I can’t obviously give a clear picture of what the lessons were like before – I wasn’t here, and it’s a one person department, now grown to two, which we’re going to. But they just didn’t seem to have any interest. Everything was a mess and they didn’t seem to care about taking part in music and wanting to play music, and they didn’t have any opportunities for performing music. And the work they had been doing though, in whatever skill level, was doing a track by Cee Lo Green. I thought ‘well they do enjoy their pop music’. But I could just see that they wanted something to engage with. And what I found in the cupboard and what I’d binned stacks of… in fact I’ve kept some as a punishment folder (both laugh) – I’ll show you this. If they’re not able to be quiet and listen when they need to listen, because they’re here to hear before they can go and play… (shows R worksheets photocopied out of book). There were stacks of these in the cupboard. I mean there were sets of 30 of every single one of these. They obviously got used at some point in this school’s life.

R – I recognise those. The worksheets and the questions.

ML – Oh my Gosh. And I just thought ‘well if this really is their experience of music, no wonder why they’re not engaged with it.’ So I kept one of each, and I binned the rest, and what happens is, if they’re not able to hear other people performing or to listen to the instructions in the first place, if they’re really persistently disrupting the lesson, then I just move them to the desk by the window and I give them a worksheet, and say ‘here you are. You can learn about music by writing and reading about it, or you can participate with us, making it, with your friends.’ And then it becomes quickly apparent that actually, they’re having a really good time whilst learning at the same time.

R – So it’s quite effective then.

ML – Yes! Yes, I very rarely have to get it out. And I don’t like to, because it’s the worst… to me, it’s the worst thing ever as a way of learning, but yeah…

AM - …You have to have a Plan B.

ML – Yes. Exactly. If they really aren’t able to come round to my way of thinking in that moment, then at least I’ve got something there. I’ve got lined paper, ‘off you go, then I can carry on teaching and speak to you in a minute about what your choices need to be.’ Yeah.

R – Sure. Okay. So had you taught MF before you became a XX and before you visited XX, and all these places?

ML – (long pause) I… well like I say, I suppose I had, because I think it’s naturally my way to do that ‘go and work things out for yourself’ – the informal learning approach (laughs). So I had in a way, without being specific, what’s the word… a different work to specific, but without being really clear that we were doing MF. Whereas now, I tend to talk about it as a way of doing something more, and acknowledge that MF exists as an organisation, as a way of teaching and learning. And, it’s got a wealth of resources out there for you to go to. I always think I’m cheating if I use someone else’s resources, I’m very much someone who likes to write their own, and feel I’ve done the work. So I was coming up to this term, and I was just thinking… I’d been re-planning and I was thinking ‘what’s the best thing to move on to next. What’s going to help them make progress, in a meaningful way’. And I’m always re-planning my curriculum before I’ve ever finished it. I never feel quite happy with where I’m at. I always think I should be doing something better. And then this pilot opportunity came up, and so I expressed my interest by emailing for the opportunity. And then when it came through saying ‘yes, we’d like you to be a part of our pilot’, I thought ‘oh wow, okay’. So there I was, thinking I could just use some of my other schemes of work I had up my sleeve, and then I was like ‘oh well, now I’ve got to go away and do a bit more work over half term.’ But I got really into it, and I find with MF, I engage much more in the skills that I find threatening. So having to do something by ear – my playing by ear has improved enormously. Just I love it, and - ‘wow, you’ve just gone straight to the keyboard XX and managed to do this, and demonstrate it accurately’ – or, I’m not worried when I get it wrong, whilst I search around in front of them, trying to work out where the next note came from, or whatever, or just… I speak more confidently about music, because I am - I feel I’m getting a better understanding myself, through this approach of teaching. Yeah.

R – The pilot scheme – what input do you have? Do you trial resources and give feedback, or are you developing them?

ML – Yes. So we are asked to write a scheme of work using the resources. So, you can use the resources however you want, but you write a scheme of work, and then submit that to MF after. So they’re working in collaboration with XX. And then we have to just talk about it on social media. So I think it’s about expanding the profile of their work together – those two organisations. Yes – and be prepared to blog about it, yeah, talk about it on social media, and maybe there’s some interview that follows up. I can’t recall. It’s all in an email somewhere, the expectation.

R – So the resources you’ve been provided, is that the PowerPoint as well?

ML – No, I made the PowerPoint. Yeah. So I went away… So the PowerPoint is my plan, if you like. I went away and thought ‘how’s this going to work?’ And this school uses a TEEP bubble. Have you ever heard of TEEP? So, I wonder if I’ve got that… It’d be useful for you to know that. (Goes to look for a sheet with TEEP explained). So it’s basically just everything you would do in planning anyway, but it puts it into a really clear cycle, where you have a cycle of planning is (reads off sheet…) prepare, outcomes, then you have construct, apply, review. I feel like I’ve missed out one of the things. Let’s have a little look. It’ll be on one of these charts somewhere.

R – I remember you had that as your headings on the PowerPoint, didn’t you?

ML – Yes. Yeah. So prepare for learning, pre-learning outcomes, present new information through the senses, construct, apply to demonstrate, review. So, there’s a sort of cycle. Every time you go through this cycle, that’s the process you follow. And for most subjects, they’re thinking about this in terms of one lesson. How they’d get through that in one lesson. And for me, to be given… ‘I can’t do that in one lesson, every lesson. Music doesn’t get learnt like that’, and then they said ‘oh, no no, the purpose of TEEP is that that cycle is however long you need the cycle to be. Wherever you are within that cycle.’ So what I worked out for me is that, well, we talk about the preparation beforehand and we look at what the outcomes are going to be, that overview, and then we had the whole senses of listening together, practicing together, what it was, to hear and sing back. And then they go off into the construct phase. And so the construct phase, in their case, is going to be four, five weeks long, where they just simply go away, and now practice the skills they’ve been demonstrated in the new information. And this new information bit, that’s for them to then follow their senses, assess each time what’s going to be new for them that week. So they’re left in control of what is new for them - have they really made it, can they do what’s been asked of them before they move on. So then the review step comes in every lesson. So there’s new information and review, construct – you’ve got a sort of mini cycle going on within it. And it was just to make people think more clearly about their planning in the bigger picture, and where they’re going to. And I have found that useful. We were given loads of resources we could use - ‘perhaps you want to try this tactic and this tactic’, and I thought ‘well yeah, we’ve heard all those tactics before’. It wasn’t *that* I needed so much. What I wanted was MF, and how I could make that work with TEEP. So I’ve managed to combine that as a planning method. So that’s my overview of the term, and then I MF it in terms of the way it works.

R – Okay. So is that a school initiative?

ML – Yeah, this is a school thing. So TEEP is a national thing, I think it stands for something… (R – I can look that up). And they’re a national… It’s no different to teacher training, when I was at… I was thinking ‘well you’re a teacher, you’re just telling me everything I’ve learnt in my PGCE eight years ago. I’m not hearing anything new here.’ But there is something about the way they present this. And they want the whole school to follow this, so that it makes sense to students, where they are in their own learning cycle. But I thought ‘well I can buy into that’. I don’t think every classroom should look the same. I don’t think we should all be doing things exactly the same way. I think this cycle has to look different for every single subject, how it’s pertinent to that subject. Which is why I had my little beef to begin with. Well I was like ‘I’m not entirely happy with this’. And then once I began to understand that ‘no, for music, that’s okay, construct can be four or five lessons’ – ‘oh, that’s all I…’, so long as… My ethos for teaching music… then it’s encouraged me to think more. Probably too much, but…

R – Okay. I think whilst we’re on the topic of the school, can you describe the philosophy of the school, and how does music, or MF fit into it?

ML – Ooh, right. I think the philosophy is that there’s a belief that every child can achieve. So I think in the local area, there’s a sense of low achievement, low aspirations, and this school firmly believes… it’s called every child knows… there’s loads of things around the room. They’ve got the XX School way. This was written with the student council. So this poster came about out of what… really aspiring to be something. And how the MF… I left them to get on with it, because it seems that it is trusted that this music department’s gone from nothing to buzzing. In my current Year 11, I have three students. In my current Year 10, I have nine students. My current Year 9, so that’s the lot that have chosen it since I started, there are 34 students. So, I don’t think that’s purely me. I’m not going ‘wooh, look how clever I am’. I think there’s a peak and trough with when they choose music. There’s a trend for choosing music and then there isn’t. I’ll take the credit for half of those numbers. But I think it’s definitely the MF approach that’s got them all engaged, because before, they didn’t go to the practice rooms to make music – they went to doss. They go to practice rooms now, and on the whole, I think you’ll find the mainly making music when they’re in there. And that’s exciting. And then when they come to me at the end of the lesson and go ‘oh, can I take this home, can I go to…’ it’s like, brilliant. Even in a lesson like today where I thought ‘oh, that didn’t go as I’d planned, but they still came up, and they still wanted to know more’. I thought ‘it’s working’. And I definitely think they’ve recognised that this works, and they’re happy for me to get on and let it work. Because they’re… there’s a whole school policy on marking and on grading etcetera. And I just said ‘look, it doesn’t suit music. It doesn’t suit what I want… I don’t want them to be writing a single thing in KS3. I want them to be exploring music through making music. And the more we sit down and try and write about music, or write answers, the less we actually engage with it and understand what’s going on.’ And that’s been embraced. So I feel very supported in my use of it. Yeah. Funding prevented me from going to the Music Revolution Conference, which I really wanted to do, but they had given me a lot of support last year, so I kind of had to suck that one up.

R – Okay, so by support last year, you mean financial support, or…?

ML – Yep. They let me go to XX. I said ‘I want to go to XX for a day. I want to go to this school, can I have a day off to do it?’, ‘yes you can have a day off to do it.’ ‘I want to go and do this MF course, can I go and do it?’, ‘yes, you can go and do that.’ ‘I want to go, you know…’ I was given everything I wanted really to make a start with it.

R – Okay, so music is valued here?

ML – I would definitely say it’s valued here.

R – Okay. You mentioned before about… especially about the TEEP, that you don’t think that music should be the same as other subjects. How do you think music is different from other subjects?

ML – I think because it’s so open-ended, in that what is right for someone, is not right for the next person. So for example, with the composition, which is my biggest bugbear, trying to teach that in a way that’s useful. Yesterday, students will say to me, they… I said ‘right, go and make your own chord progression in’, and she put her chord progression in she went ‘is this right?’, and I said ‘well, there is no right or wrong to this. Do you like the sound you’ve created?’ And that very notion that they want to know if there’s a right or a wrong is just what makes music so very indifferent. Because they are making their own music, and yes we have theoretical rules that we, you learn and break and make new music, but that idea that you don’t have to get this right or wrong. Yes, if you listen to a piece of music, you’ll know if it’s in 4/4 time or if it’s in 3/4 time. Those are yes, no answers. But when you’re making music, when you’re performing music, that idea that in one lesson, we could go through prepare – ‘today we’re going to go to learn a song. Two – okay, so in this song, we’re going to make sure that we have sung loudly and quietly at the appropriate times, and in tune and in time.’ You wouldn’t be musical if you then… if I mean there were nothing musical in lessons if you then treated it in that formula. What I’ve tried to do is to take it and think ‘how does this treat the overall process’. So that’s how I find it different, is there’s no right or wrong. Yes, we don’t have as many things of ‘you’ve learnt these facts, and then you regurgitate them.’ Now I might be doing other subjects down. Obviously I don’t know other subjects well enough to say exactly what it is they do. But certainly they involve desks, they involve sitting in rows, and when they mark they have these lovely mark schemes where the students can tick themselves whether they’ve achieved this, this and this. And if I had a mark scheme that did that, I’d be worried that it won’t be creative enough. It’s the creativity that’s important to me in music. And we can mark whether they can play something in time or not – ‘yes I’ve done that, yes I’ve done that, yes I’ve done that’. But if they’re creating something, I don’t want them to go ‘I sang with expression. I sang loudly. I sang…’ – I don’t… that takes away music for me.

R – Okay, so it’s the assessment side of thing which quite different, as one aspect?

ML – Yes, yes, yes. And that always challenges me – the assessment (both laugh). Yes. So, what I took from XX, and I’ve made it into my own poster and adjusted it a little bit (walks across room to retrieve poster from classroom wall) - they had sort of four areas that they look at. So, this idea of controlling sounds that you’re creating, developing, reproducing and listening. And that’s what they wanted their Year 7 students to be able to do by the end of Year 7. And then I’ve got the same sheet for Year 8. And I just thought… I don’t want them to get anymore hung up than ‘can they do these things in this way’. And that’s how I leave it. We just talk about… every now and then, I’ll refer to it and say ‘oh look, in controlling sounds, you should be able to do this, and through this unit of work, you have achieved that.’

R – So if they can do this listening, applying knowledge and understanding, they’re a three, and as they move up they’re a five?

ML – No. That is confusing down the side. These are all the things they’re expected to do in Year 7, and if they’re working towards it they’re a three, and if they’re achieving all those things, they’re a four, and if they’re doing better than all of those things, they’re a five.

R – Okay, so they’re not separate components?

ML – No. They’re separate comp… But yeah, that’s not really… that’s not a four. That does look confusing. It’s always worried me, but yes.

R – So you have your different assessment, and you don’t have to have a whole school assessment system?

ML – No. We do have a whole school system, of they’ve all got a target and they need to be working towards their target. I treat that as… it’s rather unscientific, I just think ‘well are they doing what I need them to be doing’. If they’re doing what I need them to be doing, then they’re meeting their target. If they’re not quite doing what I need them to be doing, then they’re working towards their target. And if they are doing really well and they’ve gone beyond what I expected, then they’re working above they’re target. And that’s the way I just relate it across, because I just… the numbers thing correlate for me with this. And again, I actually got in touch with my old University again, and said ‘look, I’m really struggling with assessment grades at the moment. This school’s got these targets and they’re really high, and I don’t feel justified in giving this grade. Even though I know it doesn’t mean they are this grade, I just… it still doesn’t make sense to me.’ And then we actually, in the following year, had a changing of the boundaries. People recognised that the targets were too high, and it was like ‘oh, thank goodness for that’, because that’s crazy. And even now I think some of the things are too high. But unless they’re going to choose the subject, that whole grade thing that everyone’s expected to achieve – that’s not real anyway. It’s just not real. How can you put that number and say whether that big of music performed like that is that or isn’t like that. I don’t know. That’s the thing with music.

Break time – completion of interview part 1. Continued in interview part 2.

27.26