

Editorial

The papers presented in this special issue grew from a symposium on the topic of 'Informal Learning and Post-Compulsory Music Education' convened at the Reflective Conservatoire Conference, 2nd International Conference-Building Connections hosted by the Guildhall School of Music from February 28th–March 3rd 2009. In this symposium, scholars from many countries came together to give views on issues presented to post-compulsory or post-sixteen education institutions with the growing interest in informal learning in music education. As one of the most frequently cited academics in this field, and because many of the papers referred to her work, Professor Lucy Green has summarised the key debates she considers each paper to present and voiced her responses to these issues. Not wishing to duplicate Professor Green's work therefore, this editorial does not introduce the content of each paper but rather attempts to look to the bigger picture within which issues of informal learning and music education are located. It attempts to set the stage in a broad sense for the discussions which follow.

The Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), in 2008, asserted the need for member nations to reshape conceptions of learning to equip populations with the knowledge, skills and innovative potential required to compete in 21st century knowledge economies. This has led to the development and implementation of new forms of education embodying the concept that sociologist Basil Bernstein (2000) named 'trainability'. Bernstein defined trainability as the ability to skill and reskill in order to adapt to the changing demands of 21st century employment. What could be identified here is an increasing pressure to view education as a mechanism of production of exploitable human capital. In this view people are perceived as tools to advance the efficient economic functioning of the social system and as consumers of the products of the capitalist system. The ideals of a liberal education, or education for the whole person, could easily be lost within such an agenda. Moreover, the ideals of a democratic society could be lost in subservience to the all-pervading dominance of economic capital. I would suggest therefore that, more than ever, it is imperative to work towards modes of research and pedagogical practice that support a truly democratic school. Such a school does not surrender to corporate logic but rather endows its students with the capacity for critical reflection upon the 'givens' of their world, empowers them to see their futures as holding possibilities for change and gives them the skills to voice their opinions upon matters that concern them.

In this respect, it is helpful that the reshaping of conceptions of education has returned the focus of investigation once more to researching what goes on inside classrooms and between teacher and learner – in other words the process and the content of pedagogy (cf. the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) *Teaching and Learning Research Project* led by Professor Andrew Pollard; <http://www.tlrp.org/>). The potential of informal learning to contribute to social and educative goals has been recognised in this context. Informal learning, both as conceived of as an approach to classroom music pedagogy by Professor Green (2008) and in the various guises discussed by the authors in this issue, may present opportunities for music educators to counteract the dominant ideology at work upon education in many countries. Whilst still meeting or exceeding the outcomes demanded of teachers and students by state-imposed curricula and assessment, this approach to learning

and teaching might rekindle in many more of our students the deep and abiding flame of desire for learning music for no other reason than the pure joy of 'musicking' (Small, 1987). Perhaps they might also continue to engage in active music making for much more of their lifespan and perhaps their school music experiences might more effectively contribute to and complement this lifelong engagement with music, rather than acting as a thing apart.

The authors whose work is collected here have wrestled with the potential and problems of such a future. They have much to tell us about where informal learning in music education might develop next and some of the problems that those further along this road have encountered. Sometimes there are disagreements or discrepancies between definitions of what 'informal learning' means when applied to learning music. These in themselves are useful for the music education community as they point out areas that require clarification. I hope that this issue will contribute to the debate on this subject and help to move us forward as a community of scholars/practitioners. I would like to express my gratitude to the authors who contributed to this issue and to Professor Lucy Green. It has been a pleasure and an inspiration to work with you all.

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