

Editorial

In the UK at the moment a debate is taking place concerning the place of knowledge in the curriculum. This is being conducted with reference to all subjects currently taught in schools. In England (because each part of the UK has its own National Curriculum), music has not escaped from this debate, and the revised version of the National Curriculum, on which consultation has just ceased, contains a new phrase, wherein pupils are required to 'listen with discrimination and judgement to the best in the musical canon' (DfE 2013). This has caused considerable anxiety amongst English music educators. What is the canon? Who and what should be on it? Does my canon look like your canon? It has led to arguments concerning what Lydia Goehr (1992) referred to as 'the imaginary museum of musical works', with many teachers claiming their pupils do not inhabit such a museum, but engage with the vital, living, here-and-now of their own music in their own lives.

But what the Government-fuelled debates can miss is that in music education the very construct of *knowledge* itself is problematic. Philpott (2007) directs our attention to a number of different knowledge types in music education. Drawing on the work of Reid (1986) Philpott identifies three different knowledge forms: 'knowledge about', which is factual knowledge, 'knowledge how', such as knowing how to play an instrument, or distinguish between sounds, and 'knowledge of' which is knowledge by direct acquaintance. Many of these nuances are invisible in the current debate, which tends to privilege 'knowledge about'. For example, David Green, writing in the on-line edition of *The Spectator*, talks of 'those educational theorists who have argued that teachers shouldn't think they have the authority to instruct – they shouldn't be doing anything so old-fashioned as passing on knowledge' (Green, 2013). This notion of teachers not being concerned with knowledge seems to be an example of a 'straw man' argument when it comes to music education: do we meet teachers who report that they do not want their pupils to know about music, know how to play it, or be involved with knowing of its generation and performance?

What has emerged as a dichotomy in many such debates is that of a 'skills versus knowledge' positioning argument. For example, the BBC interviewed the Head Teacher of a new Free School in London, who said:

The curriculum at the moment in primary schools is often referred to as a skills-based curriculum – but I think it's much better to refer to it as a content-lite curriculum . . . We are developing a curriculum that specifies the knowledge that we think children need to know to develop these skills. (BBC, 2013)

In music education many would argue that skills are not acquired at the expense of knowledge, they *are* a type of knowledge. In the UK, this renewed emphasis on knowledge acquisition has come from the works of the American retired English literature professor, E.D. Hirsch, who produced a book entitled *Cultural Literacy: What Americans need to Know* (Hirsch *et al.*, 1987), which contains, inter alia, a list of things represented by the title. Which takes us back to the notion of a canon of great musical works. Now, of course

it would be possible for such a list to be produced, but as Shepherd *et al.* asked, back in 1977, 'whose music' (Shepherd *et al.*, 1977) would be on this canon? The disenfranchised youth of the inner-city, recently motivated by *musical futures* approaches? The urban multicultural bhangra bands? The suburban kids rehearsing their covers band in a garage? 'Whose music?' becomes 'whose canon?'

All of which takes us to another perennial issue in music education. We have long been used to a curriculum built on the triple axes of skills, knowledge and understanding. It is very difficult to make progress in music without acquiring skills, indeed, Hallam and Bautista go so far as to declare: 'Expertise depends on the acquisition of skills' (Hallam & Bautista, 2012, p. 661). But as they also go on to observe, 'The development of procedural skills and the acquisition of knowledge in most domains are inextricably linked' (Hallam & Bautista, 2012, p. 661). So, we know that skills need to be developed, and that these lead to concomitant developments in knowledge, which in turn, we hope, will lead to deeper understanding. All of which means that in music education the skills versus knowledge dichotomy is a false one, as both need to be fostered. Instruments – classroom or otherwise – need to be played, songs will be sung, recordings and live music listened to, and discussions had. Maybe, as in so many other areas, music education is already well ahead of the game, we just need to be more effective in pointing this out to those in power! Music is not just peripheral to a good education, it lies at its heart.

Although this editorial has been about events in England, on this occasion, we know that all over the world not dissimilar discussions are being had. We also know the *BJME* is at the forefront of many of these, and that it is through these pages that many issues concerning knowledge, skills and understanding are brought to the world's attention. We know too that a twenty-first century pedagogy is needed for these, and that again *BJME* is at the cutting edge of teaching and learning developments in many spheres. We look forward to taking these discussions forwards, and maintaining and focusing our attention onto those things which really matter.

All of which is well-exemplified in the current issue of the journal, where we open with a paper by James Garnett and his exploration of the competing paradigms of behaviourism and constructivism in music education. Here, Garnett examines the ideological distinction between paradigms of musical training that focus on learning specific musical behaviours on the one hand versus developing an understanding of music on the other. Undoubtedly, the differences are far less bounded than might first appear. Notwithstanding behaviourist or constructivist approaches, Liz Mellor considers the relationship between singing, health and well-being as a group process and identifies important implications for pedagogy in music education. How groups collaborate is again a key theme in Heidi Partti and Heidi Westerlund's case study of an innovative approach to collaborative composition amongst a widely distributed group of composers with hugely varying levels of expertise. The authors' approach to the inquiry, using the perspective of learning in a 'community of practice', as a heuristic frame provides powerful insights on the collaborative process.

Influences on students' development are explored by Katie Carlisle in secondary school settings, and by Ryan Daniel and Julia Bowden in exploring piano learning at intermediate level. In Carlisle's paper, the formative influence of the teacher on student experience of the social-emotional learning climate in secondary school is detailed through the study of schools in Canada, whilst Daniel and Bowden draw attention to the influence of repertoire,

amongst other matters. Although the phenomenon of drop-out at intermediate piano level is widely observed, the authors bring fresh insight to this crucial juncture in students' development. In contrast, Jane Oakland, Raymond MacDonald and Paul Flowers explore the identities of professional singers whose music careers were disrupted by a reduction of opportunities coupled with the onset of age. The experiences of renegotiation of new identities are sensitively traced in this study. Finally, in a longitudinal, collaborative case study, Karin Johansson relates the interaction between a teacher's and her undergraduate students' intentions, highlighting how problems and learning obstacles experienced in one-to-one teaching may be redefined and used as new learning options, thus providing space for wider development for all involved.

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