

EDITORIAL

## Editorial

Over the past few months, we are delighted that Cambridge Core has very generously offered free access to a broad range of articles for a very special initiative for teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown that has been in place since the start of 2021 and only recently lifted. Curated by Dr Steven Berryman, a ‘blogging project’ has generated a huge amount of interest in the 11 articles selected by us, as editors, and Steven, with a new article being the focus each week. Using these articles as a stimulus, nearly 50 teachers from around the world offered their reflections and perspectives on topics such as composing and improvising in the classroom, singing for mental health and wellbeing, formal and informal learning situations, the ‘good enough’ music teacher and inclusion. There have also been thousands of additional views of these articles during the project, suggesting that whilst not all teachers want to share their views and perspectives in writing, such an initiative can generate interest and momentum. The blogs are compiled on the Music:Ed website. We are delighted that the 11 articles are free to view for the rest of the year, thanks to the continued generosity of our friends at Cambridge Core.

It has been a real joy to read the insights and perspectives from teachers working in different settings and highlights the importance of access to scholarship for teachers at all stages of their career. As music teacher David House from Colyton Grammar School in Devon wrote: *‘to my mind this type of reflective engagement is worth more than many courses, and in addition to the process itself it has enabled me to communicate with many fellow teachers from near and far.’*

This is a significant point. In England at least, music teachers are increasingly training ‘on the job’ and some have little or no access or need to explore or critique the rich history of music education research as part of their training. This is reflected in the lack of time on ITE courses for matters appertaining to the history of music education, and how we come to be where we are regarding both pedagogy and curriculum. Indeed, the very contents of this eminent journal itself can be a foreign country to some English music educators. This is not due to wanting teachers to be kept in darkness, but to centralised moves towards a privileging of the present, and a possible governmental distrust of education academia as a whole. To have seen so many music teachers reading the past papers from this journal, and then taking the time to comment on them has been significant. The access data from the CUP website show that the papers themselves have been read on numerous occasions, by a large number of individuals, which is pleasing to note. Of course, what would be good to know too, but the subject of a different investigation, is what difference the journal articles have made to professional practice, but we can hope that that is a longer-term endeavour.

Moving on to this current edition of the British Journal of Music Education, it includes six excellent and diverse articles relating to different age phases. It opens with a challenging piece from Susan Young, exploring *‘how neoliberal economic discourses and techniques have profoundly influenced the way that music education in early childhood has developed in recent years in the UK’*. The article investigates *‘two dominant models of practice that have been shaped by market thinking; the private music session (the “branded product”) and short term, stand-alone projects funded by charitable organisations (the “funded project”)*. Young raises some very pertinent points about skewed values and priorities in early childhood education that resonate right across UK music education. She challenges us to forge new pathways in which strong pedagogic knowledge and

experience from highly skilled professionals and academics is recognised and valued, placing the best interests of the child above all else.

We stay in pre-school education for our second article, in which Melissa Bremmer explores the pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) of Dutch pre-school teachers in relation to facilitating rhythm skills in pre-school children from an embodied cognition perspective. The article encourages a broader understanding of PCK in pre-school settings. It explores and promotes multimodal ways to know and recognise embodiment in many different ways as central to this.

We are delighted to welcome an article from Thailand in this edition. Vitchatalum Laovanich, Yoothana Chuppunnarat, Monsikarn Laovanich and Skowrung Saibunmi document some of the enablers and challenges to the growing interest in music education in Thailand's schools over the past few years. It points out a lack of research in the area of resourcing and facilitating music education in Thailand and the article is an important contribution to opening up this area of investigation. It is also interesting for us as global music educators to think about aspects of the practical suggestions made in supporting and promoting music education in Thailand and the parallels that are apparent with challenges and potential solutions in other areas of the world, including the UK.

Adam Whittaker's article "*Teacher perceptions of A-level music: tension, dilemmas and decline*" presents the results of a nationwide survey of A-level music teachers in England and Wales, following the relatively recent changes to specifications. It explores perceptions of the appropriateness of the qualification for young people and the preparation that it offers for studying music in higher education, as well as touching on issues of inclusivity and access to higher-level study. Through considered research, the article draws out the distinctiveness of this qualification and sounds the alarm bells for the continued access to qualifications and the support that young people need in order to continue to be able to engage in music education in further and higher education when significant barriers remain in place.

Our penultimate article draws upon data collected in an Australian high school context, exploring the role of authentic learning in high-achieving school music programmes in New South Wales and the ways in which this might mirror professional practice. Rachel White's study uncovers many interesting aspects of the musical learning processes taking place in schools and the learner-centred approaches described, with a focus on process, purpose and making meaning provide an antidote to the direction of travel for those of us currently involved in curriculum music education in England.

We round off this issue with an exploration of the '**Processes of academisation in higher music education: the case of Sweden**'. Karin Johansson and Eva Georgii-Hemming's case study explores meanings assigned to academisation and issues of agency in higher music education and the impact that the process of continual change since the 1999 Bologna Agreement has had.

In the current climate of COVID-19 lockdowns, and the difficulties of seeing friends and loved ones, we hope that music education will continue to be a beacon of togetherness, and that the days will soon return when we can make music in the same rooms and spaces as each other, and that the joys of music learning and music making can once again be experienced by all our young people, learners and musicians of all ages.

Take care, everyone.

MARTIN FAUTLEY AND ALLY DAUBNEY