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Editorial

The extent to which musical learning takes place beyond the school curriculum presents a challenge to music teachers, requiring them to frame their classroom activities within the broader context of their students' diverse musical interests and experiences. At times, young people's self-directed musical education has been held up as a criticism of institutional approaches: the often-quoted comment from the 1963 Newsom Report that 'out of school, adolescents are enthusiastically engaged in musical self-education' was contrasted at the time with the view that classroom music was becoming increasingly out-dated and irrelevant – a charge that subsequent generations have also been called to answer.

In the first paper of this issue, Göran Folkestad takes stock of developments in 'formal' and 'informal' musical learning, proposing a continuum between these two approaches, and questioning the extent to which informal learning can take place within the remit of formal music education. Folkestad calls for a global perspective in considering the roles and relevance of musical education, and so introduces another theme for this issue: the balancing of local and global perspectives in delivering an effective music curriculum.

In their survey of pupil attitudes towards music education in Hong Kong, Taipei, and Shanghai, Wai-Chung Ho and Wing-Wah Law found a preference for Western music over traditional Chinese music, suggesting that globalisation might be a euphemism for Western cultural dominance. However, Ho & Law argue that local political and social movements challenge this interpretation, and that as music educators we should view globalisation and localisation as dependent processes, by no means exclusive of each other. Music classrooms can be seen as sites where these connections might be explored. Their paper has a geographical connection with Angela Lee's historical investigation of the influence of government policies and of Christian missionaries on the music education of the aborigines in Taiwan. We might term this an example of what Michael Mark calls 'music education for religious conversion'. Certainly there are implications stemming from this paper concerning imperialism and the fostering of cultural identity. The resolution of global and local claims on the curriculum is far from simple.

Within the framework of questions stimulated by Folkestad and Ho and Law's papers come a number of studies of specific educational contexts which are geographically disparate and also vary in their institutional distance from a 'formal' curriculum. Felicity Baker and Elizabeth Mackinlay present a fascinating study of lullaby education for first-time mothers. They found that so few lullabies are generally known these days, and their programme was able to expand this repertoire, in addition to numerous other benefits. Continuing the focus on singing, Esther Mang's paper looks at the influence of age, gender and language on children's singing competence. Her informants were Cantonese speaking, and she found that both gender and language had a significant influence on singing competence. Again, we are presented with a reminder that cultural context strongly affects children's musical learning, with what happens in schools inevitably shaped by the experiences and enculturation of life beyond the classroom.

For Joan Russell, who recounts her experience of conducting Dalcroze workshops in Cuba, boundaries and borders are there to be crossed, and she demonstrates this in her moving account of the musical and social transformation that occurred during a recreation of an Israeli blessing. Finally, Natassa Economidou Stavrou offers her perspective of children's experience of music in Cyprus primary schools, painting a familiar picture of the gap between the 'official' and the 'received' curriculum, with an apparent lack of engagement on the part of curriculum developers and teachers with children's actual musical preferences.

The international flavour of this issue illustrates the universality of the challenges facing music educators; namely how to make the music curriculum accessible, relevant and engaging in a world where traditional educational boundaries – if they ever really existed – are being eroded by the informal learning opportunities afforded by technology and other resources. The papers presented here offer some global questions with some local answers, and collectively illustrate the contribution that philosophical and empirical approaches have to make in generating a shared understanding of what it means to learn and teach music.

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