
Editorial

Much of the research in music education undertaken in Britain and in other countries has never been reported or shared with professional colleagues. Indeed, it may not be widely known that there is a substantial research activity in the colleges and universities of Great Britain alone. Professional sharing, through publication, widens the possibility of critical discussion, and sometimes even the replication of a study. Publication is an important test of the validity of work and of any underlying assumptions. The editors of the BJME welcome submissions of research articles, whether the methodology is empirical, historical, observational, or what is sometimes called 'action' research.

The articles in this Issue by Richard Addison and Kevin Thompson report *quasi*-empirical research undertaken in very different circumstances but both in areas frequently neglected by music education researchers in Britain; one project in the primary school classroom and the other a study of the group instrumental lesson.

To what extent Richard Addison or Kevin Thompson meet the usual criteria for empirical research is a matter of personal judgement, and a careful scrutiny of these papers will raise all kinds of questions about structured observations in classrooms and the evaluation of musical activities. Both articles reveal for us something of the 'classroom' observed, though they start from and leave us with very different educational and musical perspectives.

Some readers have problems with the terminology used by empirical researchers. In certain cases this may be the fault of the writer who has fallen into the habit of using jargon – unnecessarily specialised terminology. However, many research procedures do involve certain special techniques drawn from the social sciences, and there will inevitably be some technicalities if the researcher is properly to inform the reader, who in turn must be prepared to make some effort to meet the writer halfway. Clarity of communication is obviously the first criterion.

The empirical mode of research should not be seen as the only way of conducting systematic enquiry. The object of all research is to extend the boundaries of knowledge; to try to see a little further into the misty areas that surround the light of our present understanding, and in doing so one may need to remove some of the accumulated prejudice that tends to build up, as ways of

thought – so fresh and challenging when they were new – become cosily fixed or widely accepted as ‘traditional’. Research may challenge us simply by ‘searching out’ strongly held beliefs, and by scrutinising closely the basic *realities* of what we do.

Sometimes even a clear expression of ideas – particularly where it is concerned with such things as educational practice – may take on the essential spirit of research. By inviting us to review the accepted norms of practice – the reality with which we are familiar – writers may succeed in opening our eyes to ‘other realities’. For, if we are honest with ourselves, we all know how very easy it is to accept without question the artificialities of the classroom; to convince ourselves, for instance, that school is inevitably a microcosm of society, and to fall into the trap of believing that no matter what we offer to our pupils, it will have bearing upon life beyond school. A thoughtful piece of writing which does not take such things for granted, and which searches out first principles to set us thinking about our own work in relation to educational fundamentals, can be stimulating, even disturbing.

In this issue we print three articles each of which does, in some degree, challenge the conventional ‘reality’ of the school. Piers Spencer’s *Jazz in the Classroom* points us towards the potential which exists for fruitful musical relationships between jazz (‘its natural habitat is the night-club’) and the class music lesson. At the same time, Kipps Horn surveys activities in several of the community rock-music workshops which are springing up around the country and provides us with a thought-provoking view of an alternative, self-directed music education which, it would appear, could reflect deep-seated dissatisfaction with the ‘unreality’ of some school music teaching.

This line of thought is echoed in *Da Capo* by Phil Ellis, a very different kind of article in which we are reminded that the life of any institution easily becomes repetitious and routine, so much so that the system itself can prevent useful and sensible reappraisal. Although some may find the expression of these opinions controversial (the article is written in a semi-humorous vein), we should remember that it is *practice* which is challenged, and not people.

The title, *Da Capo*, could also be taken in another way; we might see it as a further indication of the importance of the speculative in our work as teachers, taking us ‘back to the beginning’ for a fresh look at what we do.