Chapter 9
Creative Musical Practice in an Educational Context

Anna Linge
Kristianstad University College, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This chapter is based on the author’s doctoral thesis. She provides an account of a project on creativity in music education, more specifically a musical classroom for developing creativity. The aim of the study is to find examples or mechanisms of creative pedagogy. This study complements the current tradition for studying methods in teaching and learning music. Creative, prescriptive, and communicative designs of teaching and learning interact during sessions of music making. The empirical findings enable a discussion of the conditions that define creative music making as art and/or play as a socio-cultural activity.

INTRODUCTION

My interest in research on creative education is based on personal experiences as a music teacher - that is, through education and practice. I started investigating music making practices by considering why and how creativity and motivation took place in teaching and learning of music. According to Craft (2003), education should plan for creative activity to take place (Linge, 2013). In current organization of teaching, teachers can be very creative during the planning phase, far more so than during application and/or evaluation. Education should support creative thinking and skilled performance, for example by means of border-line crossing exercises and surprising activities. Schools are supposed to foster creative ability by means of risk-taking, collective intelligence, fantasy and cooperation (Hargreaves, 2004; Robinson, 2010). Creativity can be found at many levels of educational practices, fulfilling several functions. The fact that schools prepare students for creativity later in life shows the need to define types and levels of creativity.

The term mini-c, where the ‘c’ stands for creativity, is connected to creative ability in students that develop socio-culturally at school. In contrast, the term Pro-C defines creativity which develops through practice-oriented environments. Valuable contributions to participatory learning happen outside schools (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Creative competency defined as expertise at many levels under labels such as little-c and Big-C (Kupferberg, 2003; Welch, 1998). The col-
lective historical development of music education differs from the development of creative ability in the professional artist. Individual perception of the mission of an activity and the situated context influence the development of creative activity.

BACKGROUND

Music education focuses on dealing with efficient methods as means to achieve fixed moral ends and technical skills. For a long time musical literacy was considered a measure of how to interpret the concept of musical works of art correctly (Goer, 1992; Green, 1997; Small, 1998; Wolf, 1987). This stand meant that musical activity developed from being a basic social skill to becoming an object of art expressed through the musical text or sheet music. The current shift into post-modernity or pre-modernity means that functions that used to hold modernity together erodes and fall to pieces (Carr, 2006). In music education, the shift could become fruitful because people emphasize and adopt a genuinely natural attitude towards musical interaction. For example, Green (2008) and Regel-ski (2007) found such development in traditional African music making (Kwami, 2001; Westerlund, 2002). Green (2008) found sociologically relevant informal learning processes going on and expanding musical acculturation outside school.

It is reasonable for music education to encourage creative ‘knowledge-in-action’ (Elliot, 1995) and defining music as activity-based musicing (Small, 1998). This would be a wise move for students, musicians, audience or staff in any interactive context. The role of the teacher will shift from transmission of knowledge to flexibility and creativity. For this to happen, musical practices must find ways to stimulate reflection because only then teachers can become aware of things they need to change. But even so, music educators catch sight of things they consider relevant in relation to their perceived mission. They see how teaching fills a social function and also satisfies needs like creativity and flexibility. Practice-related problem solving innovation requires new ways of thinking and acting (Regelski & Gates, 1999; Popov, 2014). One way to deal with challenges is to reflect on relations between developmental practices and theoretical development. Reconciling qualities and relations between practice and theory, however, is a classic problem frequently discussed in the educational literature. Finding the form of meeting in music making could benefit from reflection on both. Practices developed through an advanced course provide an opportunity to develop teaching and learning processes that will eventually strengthen existing experience and development of the students’ autonomy. Ax and Ponte (2008) say: “The environment gives form to the teacher to develop skills towards a profile of routine or improvisation. The complexity of the task and the need of change make more use for flexibility and improvisation.” Through critical reflection, teachers challenge the taken-for-granted way of doing things, providing access to their professionalism as teachers and musicians.

A relevant objective for research is to explore phases in music educational practice that make the creative teaching didactically explicit. This is a combined effort at understanding the music teachers’ knowledge and validating this author’s ability to make correct observations. Clarity of approach is crucial because music education suffers from a sad history of regarding music making as a stabilizing cultural transmission and conservation of a limited number of qualities (Jorgensen, 2003). Critical music teacher researchers like Regelski (2009) deplore the fact that people consider music education to be an independently valuable activity. It is important to see that individual music teachers are unaware of how their curricula is rooted in collective practices. Music education as a social phenomenon is just as often separated from the surrounding context. Therefore it is important to understand how music defined as both a phenomenon and an activity flourishes in many social practices. Music education serves different