Chapter 16

MusicWorks: Supporting Students’ Musical Career Paths Through Technology-Enhanced Authentic Learning

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ABSTRACT

Musicians work with, and around, various forms of technological media and resources. In today’s professional environment, musicians face multifaceted work that may include teaching, performing, marketing, promoting, recording, or composing. The musician as entrepreneurial learner becomes a key focus for authenticity within their learning. Music educators, music professionals, and musicians of all ages need to navigate key career choices along their career paths which can be supported by authentic approaches to learning. This chapter explores how enterprise pedagogy and entrepreneurial pedagogy (i.e., authentic learning experiences) provide opportunities for students to reflect on, and prepare for, the likelihood of multiple jobs and roles in their upcoming career paths. Podcasting as an authentic learning tool is explored through the development of MusicWorks, a podcast series giving voice to the multiple career paths of industry and educational leaders in music.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century is defined by technological innovation; in particular, developments in digital communications allow for the real-time online sharing of live and pre-recorded audio and video, and transform communication, collaboration and education. These new opportunities for connecting and learning are

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profoundly impacting the future life and work experiences of students. Dialogues regarding how higher education programs prepare students to transition into their life and work after university are becoming key topics within an ever-changing higher education landscape, which includes complex challenges around globalization and internationalization its impact on student experiences (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2019), and UK students seeking to understand funding implications of a pending Brexit (Lay, 2019; MacPherson, 2016).

The challenges facing higher education go beyond the classroom. How students are prepared for their future work become integral to the development of the curriculum and choice of pedagogy deployed in its delivery. Approaches to teaching and learning should take into account typical career pathways and the roles and work patterns that exist now and that may exist in the future so that students might plan for and achieve their goals. How to deliver that most effectively is one of the paramount questions for higher education professionals working today.

Music careers, as is common in many sectors of the Creative Industries, including visual and performing arts, video games, film and television, are rarely the result of a well-defined career pathway. Often, they are unique formations based on a sense of vocation, on the consequences of personal choices, and of happenstance. Music careers are also dependent on the development of technologies linked to the recording, production and creation of music, and these have undergone fundamental and transformative change in the last two decades. As such, the creation, dissemination and transmission of music has changed dramatically in a very short space of time, and this can be seen most directly through the impact of MP3 files and online music streaming on traditional music sales (Alexander, 2002). The music industry has experienced a significant upheaval which has disrupted its core income streams from royalties and copyright. It is, of course, possible for musicians to create, produce, market and distribute their music without the need of a record company. However, this intense pace of innovation and diversification that has made it difficult for higher education to adapt and provide credible and focused support for students.

For music educators, this issue of positioning students for future careers is extremely pertinent. Professional musicians are now expected to upskill themselves in ways that extend well beyond the traditional notions of musicianship and performance practice found in higher education music programs. In essence, musicians must balance advancing their performance craft while exploring various ‘jobs’ to attain, and maintain, their musical livelihood. Often unconventional, the circuitous routes to attaining career goals in music do not fit into a traditional education model of learning one’s instrument and then building a singular career from music performance.

Music graduates often have career paths that are non-linear. They often engage with professional skills that go well beyond the formal learning experiences within a typical music degree (Brook & Fostaty Young, 2019). Now, more than ever before, it is critical that students prepare themselves with entrepreneurial and enterprise knowledge and skills. As suggested by Allen (2019), such an approach can support “multiliteracies pedagogy of situated practice” (p. 139). Further, the use of free and user-friendly online technologies enables peers to share their interests while allowing music learning to be delivered in ways that are motivational to students (Ruthmann & Hebert, 2012), thus making learning attractive to the next generation of learners. While it is necessary to be cognisant of both the challenges and opportunities that technology affords (Johnson, 2018), the use of this medium for the development of music, music education and entrepreneurship within music careers warrants further exploration.

This chapter will outline three key aspects of technology-enhanced music learning. First, the need for musicians entering the industry to develop enterprise learning and entrepreneurial skills is discussed, specifically as a means of addressing rapid technological change and the resulting innovation and career