

MUS 782

Discussion 5 – Jorgensen Article

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In the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, the most known thinkers/writers in Music Education Philosophy were Bennett Reimer, and David Elliott. Read the article by Dr. Estelle Jorgensen and express your understanding of the early years of music education philosophy.

Jorgensen discusses how she created a society called the International Society for Philosophy of Music Education (ISPME) to investigate and encourage ideas and practices in music education philosophy. As with education as a whole, the ideas and theories surrounding philosophy in music education vary greatly. The biggest task of the organization is to create an international community of music education philosophy that encompasses a global perspective. The worldview, which Greene calls “multiplicities and pluralities” includes language groups, religious perspectives, political ideologies, economic strictures, and familial obligations. To address all the similarities and differences in world music education, there are the differing views: radical relativism vs pluralism.

Radical relativism sees the differences in global music education beliefs and practices as impossible to compare (i.e. apples to oranges), and thus focuses on their differences. The example given is that Japanese and British music education reflect each country’s culture and cannot be understood in terms of the other country’s culture. On the contrary, pluralism sees the differences as measurable and focused on shared parts. No matter how different the music education may be across countries, the common thread of being created and expressed by humans means that they share a common humanity.

Commonalities and differences are addressed with two philosophical strategies: viewing music education figuratively and “theory-of-everything-in-the-world-of-music-education.” As with research techniques, there is much discussion about which is the preferred strategy, with many highlighting and using merits from both. The first strategy, seeing music education as a metaphor, describes music education as more figurative, subjective, artistic, and particularistic (“to each his own” mentality). Its aim is to explain music education with its artistic and imaginative side, focusing on the intuition, perception, reason, and feeling associated with making music.

The second strategy, the “theory-of-everything-in-the-world-of-music-education,” explains the common threads across global music education programs, with its intent being to provide a

road map for teachers developing their curriculum. The application of this strategy is not a mechanical one, but one in which the teacher must reflect on theories to include in their instruction. This strategy is described as rational, objective, systematic, and universal.

Two influential music education philosophers utilize the “theory-of-everything-in-the-world-of-music-education”: Bennett Reimer’s “music education as aesthetic education” philosophy and David Elliott’s “praxial” philosophy.

In addition to *A Philosophy of Music Education* (published 1970, revised 1989), Reimer wrote a dozen other books and authored more than 100 articles/chapters on music and arts education. Reimer subscribes to the aesthetic education approach, which encourages students to be more hands-on in their learning including inquiry, questioning, writing and art-making. His argument was that aesthetic education can transform individuals, improve student-teacher relationships, create partnerships, share insights, encourage taking risks, grow excitement in learning, increase self-esteem, and foster opportunities that provide a full sensory experience.

In 2003, David Elliott published *Music Matters*, which questions the philosophy of Reimer. He introduced the concept of praxialism, which underscores that music should be understood in relation to the meanings and values experienced in music making, music listening, and musical outcomes as related to specific cultural contexts. Elliott suggests several forms of active learning to foster this process – performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting – with the greatest emphasis being placed on listening. This multidimensional approach enriches lives by deepening a student’s understanding and appreciation for music across cultures and the role it plays in people’s lives.

Additional Resources

<https://music.northwestern.edu/news/2013/bennett-reimer-1932-2013>

<https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Aesthetic-Music-Educatin-and-the-Influence-of-P3E6TZA57KGEY>

<https://www.doane.edu/facstaff/resources/cetl-home/arts-are-basic/32485>

<http://www.davidelliottmusic.com/music-matters/>