

2012

Editorial

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Recommended Citation

Kruse, Nathan B. (2012) "Editorial," *Visions of Research in Music Education: Vol. 22* , Article 1.
Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol22/iss1/1>

EDITORIAL

By

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This issue of *Visions of Research in Music Education* features articles that explore diverse areas of inquiry and expand the boundaries of music education. From early childhood music, songwriting, and preservice general music teacher preparation, to online learning, percussion methods course reflections, and non-traditional backgrounds of music teachers, the authors present a collection of important and timely considerations. Taken separately, these articles depict individual portraits of pedagogical and contextual issues within the profession. As an amalgam, however, these articles form an interconnected chain of trends representing the current landscape of music education; the diversity of issues presented here parallels the diversity now in the profession. Furthermore, at the end of this issue, a historical reprint and a book review offer additional portrayals of contextual learning in music, and serve as indicators of where the profession has been and where it could be going.

First, Soojin Lee examined publication trends in *Young Children*, an early childhood education journal. She conducted a content analysis of early childhood music and music education articles spanning a 26-year period, from 1985 to 2010, and reported the number of articles written along with content summaries and author backgrounds. Lee discovered that while published scholarship devoted to music increased over time, early

childhood music often was couched as curricular support rather than as an independent, viable subject.

From a contrasting area, Dave Knowlton and David Sharp explored student opinions surrounding the use of written journals in a percussion methods course. The authors distributed a questionnaire to ascertain the students' perceptions of their journaling experience. Although the findings suggested that the journals allowed students to review and assimilate course content, the authors acknowledged the difficulty in using journals to assess the link between depth of review and depth of learning.

In another study, Rhoda Bernard confronted the current and ongoing debate of relevance in music education by considering the perspectives of seven music educators who had non-traditional, non-Western classical music backgrounds. Through qualitative inquiry, Bernard created compelling implications that highlighted the need for music education to remain flexible in accommodating individuals with non-traditional backgrounds.

Also with regard to accommodation, Ronald Kos and Andrew Goodrich approached the pertinent topic of online music education courses, which is a growing consideration for graduate students. The authors explored the perceptions of changed beliefs and practices among nine graduates of an online master's degree program. An additional matter the authors broached was whether online coursework met the professional development needs of the students. Their conclusions highlighted the impact an online degree can have on teachers' ability to make connections to student learning.

Next, Patricia Riley documented undergraduate students' personal development through songwriting activities at a liberal arts institution. Riley used student reflection

papers and song lyrics as a means of reconstructing the ways in which the students expressed themselves in a supportive environment. Through mentoring, collaborating, performing, and reflecting, the act of songwriting appeared to provide emotional stability and therapeutic rewards for students during this self-discovery process.

From yet another angle, Wendy Valerio, Daniel Johnson, Timothy Brophy, Judith Bond, Brent Gault, Herbert Marshall, and Carols Abril conducted an exploratory study to examine various perspectives of experienced university faculty members and cooperating teachers in the area of general music education. The authors looked at preservice teacher preparation, expectations, and improvements through gathering open-ended survey data from their participants, and emphasized the need for university faculty members and P-12 teachers to work collaboratively toward preparing future general music teachers and enhancing professional practices.

A historical reprint of Charles Benner's *Teaching Performing Groups* (1972) provides a traditional school ensemble perspective and makes for an interesting counter to the notions Bernard posited earlier. Benner's historic document linked research with the support of performing ensembles in the United States by examining the role of school performing groups, student and teacher concerns, rehearsal techniques, and performance conditions. Benner further outlined the importance and relevance of acknowledging teacher assumptions, the benefits and limitations of motivating students, effective teaching strategies commonly used in large-group rehearsals, and the psycho-social connections performing groups can establish with audience members. One of Benner's most universal assertions was that unless music teachers explicitly implement activities that stimulate deeper musical understanding among students, performing group

participation might garner improved performance skills only. Benner's contribution is the final piece in this journal's reprint of MENC's "From Research to the Music Classroom" series, which dates from the early 1970s. *Visions of Research in Music Education* reprinted No. 1 of the series in Vol. 17, and No. 3 of the series in Vol. 19. This issue's reprint is No. 2 and completes the *Visions of Research in Music Education* historical reprint of the series.

Finally, Patrick Schmidt provided a thought-provoking book review on *Sociology and Music Education* (2010), which was edited by Ruth Wright and published by Ashgate. Schmidt discussed the depth and breadth of the book's 16 chapters, highlighting the tensions between conservatism and progressivism, and between theoretical and practical applications of sociology in music education. It is perhaps this tension that both elucidates and challenges current trends in music education, and is one of the catalysts toward philosophical discussion among practitioners and researchers alike. Wright's text reflects the diversity of ideas presented by the authors in this issue, particularly with regard to the cultural and sociological influences that challenge the status quo in music teaching and learning. Consequently, the considerations of Wright's text complement and frame the current issue of *Visions of Research in Music Education* and are intriguing in light of contemporary discussion across the profession.

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