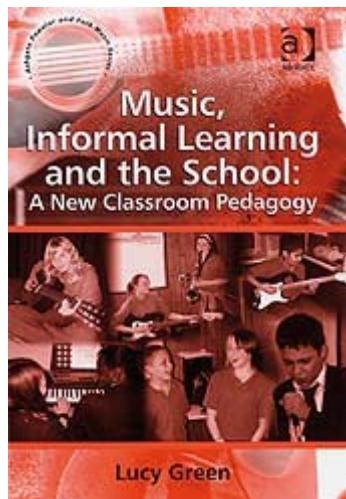


Book review



Music, Informal Learning and the School: a New Classroom Pedagogy

Lucy Green

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Review by Tiija Rinta

Lucy Green is an internationally known academic researcher in the field of music education. Her work in the field (in particular on how popular musicians learn) has been published in a number of internationally peer-reviewed journals, books and presented in conferences. Her new book "Music, Informal Learning and the School: a New Classroom Pedagogy" builds on to her previous work. The book discusses how informal teaching and learning strategies can be implemented in secondary school classroom, with examples being provided from schools in the UK.

The book covers the British music curriculum well by illustrating how informal learning and the learning strategies of popular musicians can be adjusted to the objectives and requirements formally stated in the curriculum. The book provides practical examples and guidance on how to implement informal pedagogy in the music classroom in an approachable and easy-to-read way. Different aspects of the music curriculum are discussed and solutions for potential problems faced when implementing informal learning to different aspects of the music curriculum (such as listening and composition) are provided.

Chapter One gives the reader a comprehensive introduction to the book. It summarises Lucy Green's previous work on informal learning, as well as the meaning of music, by providing an outline on how popular musicians learn. This introduction to the book builds a firm ground for what is to follow in later chapters. This Chapter also presents the methodological approach adopted to the current project on informal learning, through which the book illustrates the effectiveness of such learning process. Based on the comprehensive introduction, the reader can formulated an overview of the contents of the book and to understand where the theory underlying the proposed new pedagogy originates from. This chapter also discusses the development of the music curriculum in the UK and illustrates how the new pedagogy builds on to it.

Chapter Two demonstrates the project's pedagogy and curriculum content. The Chapter discusses concepts and challenges faced when attempting to implement the informal teaching and learning strategies in a mainstream music classroom. Different aspects of the music curriculum (such as aural listening and composition) are discussed. Each type of musical engagement is considered from both the teachers' and pupils' perspectives. Traditional concepts of structured lesson plans and formal teacher-pupil relationship are challenged and the reader will no doubt start thinking about alternative ways of interacting in the classroom. The theoretical discussion is supplemented with quotes from interview conducted with teachers and pupils. In the end of the Chapter, questions that arise regarding

implementing informal pedagogy in the classroom are outlined. The questions guide the reader nicely to subsequent chapters.

Chapter Three discusses music making and informal pedagogy. The Chapter focuses on the potential conflict between natural learning (ie, being engaged in music through informal playing, similar to popular musicians) and the formal content of the curriculum that needs to be covered during music classes (such as theory and technique). Emphasis is placed on similarities and differences recorded in the responses received from the 21 schools that participated in the project. The use of different types of instruments and singing in the classroom is discussed and illustrations of typical music lessons are provided through quotes abstracted from observation during music lessons and from interviews with teachers and students.

Chapter Four focuses on aural listening and musical appreciation and how they can be targeted through informal music pedagogy. This Chapter illustrates how listening and appreciation can be taught through the use of recordings of pupils' own playing. Through such illustration, the fact that informal strategies can be an extremely beneficial addition to more formal strategies is stressed.

Chapter Five explores pupils' perspective on the new informal pedagogy. Pupils' enjoyment (or lack of enjoyment) of engagement in informal musical activities is illustrated through quotes from interviews with the students. This Chapter discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the new pedagogy comprehensively and provides the reader with ideas as to how informal pedagogy (ie, just letting learning happen through musical engagement) can potentially be adopted to cater for individual pupils. For example, ideas for increasing pupils' motivation and for facilitating their participation in music class are provided. Pupils' perceptions are supplemented by quotes on teachers' views of the informal curriculum. The Chapter summarises itself by stating that autonomy was perceived as the most enjoyable aspect of the informal pedagogy.

Chapter Six discusses the challenges faced in informal pedagogy in terms of co-operation, ability and inclusion. The Chapter stresses benefits associated with peer-directed learning and the importance of friendship in an informal learning setting. The issues of different ability levels and of special educational needs are addressed. The Chapter concludes by stating that informal pedagogy can be adjusted to individual needs more easily than what anticipated by teachers.

Chapter Seven explores the use of informal pedagogy in teaching classical music. The Chapter gives examples of how informal teaching and learning strategies can be implemented to the classroom in order to increase pupils' knowledge on classical music. Ideas are provided for how stereotypical concepts of classical music can be challenged in informal pedagogy and how pupils can as a consequence informally learn about this particular music style.

Chapter Eight concludes the whole book in a comprehensive way. It summarises the findings and also highlights the fact that there are a number of limitation with this types of a pedagogical strategy. This Chapter rightly points out that financial and time-limitations may prevent a teacher from adopting an informal pedagogical approach to their classroom. The Chapter leaves the reader thinking about the informal pedagogy critically, yet seeing its diverse positive aspects and strengths. No doubt the reader is convinced that such a pedagogical strategy can be extremely beneficial, provided that the limitations of the approach are also kept in mind and that more formal pedagogical approaches are used for supplementing this more informal approach.

The book discusses informal pedagogy in the music classroom in an approachable and convincing way, yet does not neglect to address potential disadvantages of such a

pedagogical approach. The book should be of interest to music educators, but also to teachers in any discipline as the ideas of the book can potentially be implemented in other educational settings than those concerned with music. Educators outside of the UK can also adopt such pedagogical strategies to their classroom, provided that they adapt the pedagogy so that it covers their curriculum content. The book should also be of interest to curriculum-designers and policy makers.

References

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