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Self-Regulation And The Improvisation Learner

Common to all musicians, and not just improvising ones is the development and adaptation of sensory-motor, audiative, imaginative and self-regulatory strategies. They develop self-regulatory behaviors of learning that involve the evolution of specific goals, strategies, self-evaluation, adjustment, reflection and monitoring of progress.

Yet, whilst learning takes place in our minds, and as fascinating as neuroscience can shed light on music education, learning and teaching is negotiated within social and communicative environments. Recent cognition theories suggest that learning involves the attainment of automation, and the meshing of embodied skills and knowledge acquired through situated and experiential learning, acknowledging that from a social-cognitive perspective self-regulatory processes - learning to learn, and learning to be creative can be viewed as a set of relations that are actualized, mediated and activated through transactions among individuals, environments, and socio-cultural relations.

Research on self-regulation that enhances creative processes has extended beyond the synthesizing of convergent and divergent thinking, and of teaching *creatively* and *for creativity*. Recent discourse on creativity now aligns with that of self-regulation in arguing that these principles are layered within a more complex distributed nature of learning and expression of knowledge, that identifies self-regulation, co-regulation and socially shared regulation of learning. Creativity scholars such as Burnard, Glaveneau and Sarath similarly articulate a 'WE' paradigm of emergent processes that evoke multiple creativities that mark a conspicuous and striking aspect of thinking, learning and self-regulation that enhances creativity in music-making.

SELF REGULATION

Self-regulated learning (SRL) according to Zimmerman refers to the 'self-directive cyclic process through which learners transform their mental abilities, control and adjust metacognitive, motivational and behavioural processes of forethought, performance and self-reflection to both monitor and manage aspects of learning' (Zimmerman, 2005). Self-regulation theory posits three distinct phases of activity observed as a pre-action, in-action and after-action reflection, and this activity is prompted and adjusted through a feedback loop that monitors actual outcomes to those goal oriented.

So, more recent self-regulation theory extends conceptions of learning beyond an individual's isolated cognition, suggesting further context-specific processes of co-regulation (CoRL) and socially shared regulation (SSRL) (Zimmerman and Schunk 2011).

Co regulated Learning refers to activity between student and a peer or teacher, and Socially Shared Regulation of Learning refers to the processes by which group members interdependently influence and regulate their collective thinking processes, beliefs and knowledge activated by group collaboration and adaptation to situated contextual demands, and all three regulatory processes can occur simultaneously

THE STUDY

Previous studies have investigated jazz musicians reflections and experiences through lenses of developmental learning, rhythmic interaction, novice peer interactions, and learner interactive processes that include the work of (Kratus, Berliner, 1994, Monson,1996), Folkestad 2005 , 2006 Green 2002 , and Burnard).

This study was concerned with the development and refinement of metacognitive processes, that develop improvising skills, and the way collaborative activity shapes this in learning, enlightening music educators especially in jazz and improvisation of the educational pedagogies and perspectives that can enhance the way learners can be independent thinkers and creative problem solvers

This study investigated the learning processes of five expert improvisers, exploring independent, co-operative and collaborative regulatory processes that considered a practitioner's practice, performance, interpersonal and community collaboration. Participants responded to initial research questions: How did you learn to improvise? How do you develop ideas in improvisation that manifest in personal practice and in collaborative performance? How does playing with others inform your practice?

6. Methodology

This phenomenological study used an inductive approach to questioning of participants that uncovered unexpected and personal accounts (Smith 2011), and considered views to improvisation and learning both within the field of jazz and at practitioners of freer interpretations to improvised music. Eligibility criteria for the participants were that (1) the practitioner/educator had attained a 20-year career as a professional improvising musician, (2) that they were expert and of prominent standing in their musical communities, (3) that they were available and consenting for research.

Data treatment, trustworthiness and analysis

Semi-structured, interviews were recorded with follow-up interviews for corroboration, A technique known as ‘funneling’ (Smith and Osborn 2008) that personalises, understands meaning and contextualises the participants’ lived experience of the phenomena was mediated with epoche or bracketing, that suspends interviewer ‘insider’ assumptions. Data collected were assessed for bias and validity through comparison and control between interview meetings, as well as member checking with an independent researcher

7.3 FINDINGS

Three dominant aspects to learning emerged from the data

- personal crafting,
- teacher-oriented interpersonal direction and effects, and
- participating with and amongst a musical community.

Discussions with participants revealed the monitoring, controlling and organising of thinking such as this participant’s thoughts:

The individual needs to develop strategies to manipulate music materials in appropriate ways. We make choices in our playing, developing skill and forming good habitual processes; creativity is just choice making.

Another claimed that:

I have developed and cultivated a strong individualized way of strategizing that’s helped me develop my own way of playing.

Personal strategies are an integral part of the cyclical nature of planning, action and reflection, organising specific attentional focus and goal orientations in practice, articulated by this participant.

I’ve just been obsessive with repetitive practice on specific concepts. Finding a melodic idea, developing and playing with that idea. I’ve self-constructed a method of developing and elaborating certain rhythmic ideas, and my ideas have just evolved with the strategies and together this has developed my language.

This participant describes their way of adapting, modifying and refining behaviour that allowed them to make sense of their own technical/ aural, and creative aspects to learning:

I just listened to as much as I could, I just always wanted to work out how to do it. I told my trumpet teacher, just play me those records he had. I didn’t want to hear him talk about it. Listening to that was part of getting familiar with the language, figuring out what’s appropriate and what sounds work within a song. My learning to improvise is divided into two parts; the technical developing of aural intimacy with the language, and the creative thinking of what do I want to play.

The participant elaborated on this, discussing the mastery of specific process goals and the interconnection to automated, embodied responses in socially shared situations:

The beauty of improvisation is not so much the notes or their relationship to the chords, it’s the feeling I have when playing and creating something. I felt compelled to play this, and that’s what makes it work when it does. A good improviser, if I can put it that way, would be someone who could respond to that and create something and take it somewhere that’s even better. The notes,

chords, sounds you use are all just tools that feed the process of making me sound the way I do when I play with others.

The interpersonal-learner and more capable other

So,..Social interplay is a key role in the development of the self-regulating individual who operates not in isolation, and where interaction within the one-to-one lesson avails the student with opportunities to receive immediate feedback, prompting, promoting and mediating cues via tuition with a teacher. Co Regulated Learning is interactive and jointly negotiated. Learning incidents can be mediated, or an abrupt interaction and transaction of knowledge can urge students toward more independent, critically reflexive SRL. Such is this description:

I did have a lightbulb moment about 15 years ago. I realised that my practice didn't actually develop an approach to improvising to any great extent. It consisted of lots of scales and chord structures. I had a great lesson with Dave Liebman , who came to this realisation and said, 'Man, you're just playing everybody else's stuff. What have you got to say?' I realised I had little of my own. He prompted critical thought – He forced me to develop some concepts that I felt intrigued about, and find my own way. I don't know why I didn't get to this point earlier. All of the great musicians have got something that is completely their own, be it style or approach. This helped me rearrange my focus on what I thought was important in my practice.

Interpersonal influence and structured interaction with a more able other can facilitate a gradual shift from co to self-regulation (Palinscar and Brown 1984). A student– teacher or master– apprentice environment can make clear awareness, knowledge and perceptions of situation and fact, and allows the co-constructing of tasks, goals and strategies, such as this reflection:

I started working with a mentor who really challenged my concepts of practice and the complexity of strategies I could develop. We started practicing together, do different harmonic structures in different rhythmic configurations. We would make musical games, it was incredibly hard at first – trying to keep up with his harmonic knowledge, and then trying to create with it in a live band situation, and respond in certain ways to the musical dialogue and bringing that back to practice, developing my own vocabulary and way of responding, and developing a heavy rhythmic language that I was interested in.

Community

Group and ensemble music-making puts into action learned skills, knowledge and communicative awareness, and involves interactive social processes that bear on the individual as they co-construct goals, planning, and evaluation of playing. This participant describes the way various collaborative influences shape both content and context related problem-solving:

I respond to people's language and dialogue in different ways and engage in various strategies, and for me these diverse experiences feed how my practice and language develops, and the way I can manipulate these in interesting ways. Playing with some musicians excites a more rhythmic sphere of playing, engaging rhythmic motifs, subdivisions and micro divisions as thematic material. With others, different strategies are employed, such as investigating a textural polyphony and finding friction in the fault-lines between each other's languages.

Improvisers act and create within a sociocultural domain of friends, peers, teachers and within apprenticeships, in formal or informal groups that shape the acquiring of skill and knowledge over a lifespan. They organise within communities of musical practice that act as powerful mediators of influence. Investigating improviser's collaborative actions, processes and goals can reveal the changing nature of their learning, aims and aspirations, as well as how collaborative activity can feedback to exert influence upon personal processes, such as this participant:

I've absorbed many sounds and ways of playing through collaborating with Cajun, Bluegrass, Carnatic Indian, Hungarian and Gypsy folk musics. These experiences have shaped my personal challenge in creating a synthesis of styles: absorbing and uniting various techniques into a vocabulary I can utilize and engage in. The feeling of having a musical conversation with my own vocabulary is musically very satisfying and fulfilling.

This quote came from the eldest and most wisened of my participants. It demonstrates the energy, motivational effect and learning that flows from the collective to the individual

Playing in ensembles for as long as I have, I still find I'm learning as much from them as they are from me. Playing in the trio for 18 years, we had a telepathic understanding, but it wasn't always that way. I was always trying to sound like Miles' drummers, but they said 'look, you're mad, you've got something of your own going on, do that'. That was so empowering, vitalizing. I learnt how to believe in myself. It took a lot of the pressure off.

So, we have participants describing personal development through evolving strategies, goal setting, personal voice, creative fulfilment with others that are all powerful aspects of learning emergent from group activity.

Socially shared regulation can activate strategies that bind, unite and converge thoughts, promote dialogic connectivity and creative communal logic, and form a 'social reinforcing' between members, form a collective creative capital evolving from specific habitus and field of learning environments. These findings add complexity to the notion that motivation and strategizing solely stems from 'self-evaluative reactions to behavioural outcomes' (Zimmerman 2000, 23), and gives credence to further investigation how collective motivational input plays on individual and shared goal setting.

conclusion

All music learners devise, assemble and evolve strategies through the lived and vicarious experiences of practice and performance that increases individual and social metacognitive awareness and builds an individual's personal learning history. As the learner accumulates a cache of skills, strategies and experiences they evolve an 'episodic memory', what Tulving (2002) describes as a learners' auto-noetic consciousness that links musical successes, failures, emotion-charged moments of action and awareness to successful strategizing and regulatory activity. Co-, shared and self Regulation facilitates the direction and organisation of processual knowledge and cognitive awareness, that structures an improvisers inventive

intelligence. Successful regulation strategies thus become recalled as significant marker-points of reference in performative ambitions, aims and achievements.

The study proposed a new model for multi-regulation of learning (see Figure 1) and offers a useful schema for identifying flows of interaction and influence in learning activity. This study shows that the acquisition of improvisational skill, learning, knowledge, and strategic design are nascent and dynamically evolving processes. High level learners/improvisers are adept in both personal and group activities, at setting specific technique and process goals of forethought and planning, adaptively self-monitoring decisions contingent on contextual demand. Deeper understandings of Self reg, co-reg and socially shared regulation processes offers a case for a shift in the way music students are taught.

The implications for teaching and learning practices drawn from this study suggest that instruction that cultivates the ability to develop more holistically-based learning behaviors that focus on metacognitive skills such as planning, monitoring and interaction may be of greater benefit to understanding how students learn to be better, more productive co-learners, and become masters of their own learning processes.

Engagement between student and teacher is key to providing stimulus for co-regulation, encouraging student purpose and engagement in content and practice. The study provokes educators to reflect on teaching practices and the moment-to-moment learning within ensemble settings, where more sophisticated levels of co- and shared regulation can influence skill development and faster and more enriching progress.

In a time of reduced funds in higher education courses, the study asserts the imperative in maintaining, and expanding the role of collective music-making and of teachers cultivating effective creative thinking in ensemble work. Considering the ACARA general capabilities of creative and critical thinking relating to secondary education, the study emphasises improvisational skill as a powerful catalyst through which convergent, divergent, possibility thinking is promoted and developed, availing learners to immersive musical experiences through which multiple musical processes and creativities are nurtured. Relevant to higher and secondary education, as musical worlds increasingly diversify, integrate and transform, education in general, not just music education should consider more critically the way improvisation studies foster creative, adaptable, innovative and entrepreneurial thinkers and products.

Using a wider lens, the substantial weight of evidence that now supports learning, and the expression of that knowledge distributed across individual, paired and group activity

questions the singular nature with which assessment instruments such as NAPLAN attempt to calculate knowledge in students, and indeed the way we report on instrumental students collaborative and creative capacities. This evidence should compel us to review the nature with which we nurture the growth of knowledge in students, the significance of our (teachers) interpersonal connectedness and ability to model creative thinking in the classroom or studio with learners, and why and how we can begin to assess and report on learners in ways that better measure the demonstration of knowledge in ways that reflect the complexity of 21st century society.

How many secondary educators in the room?

I will hand out this checklist for you to take and consider with your practice, and will go over it now

Cognitive Toolkit for secondary teachers

Question:

- How your pedagogical approaches within the lesson are different to that when you take them in an ensemble- are you retelling the same principles or are you elaborating and/or expanding on concepts in more detailed/strategic ways and introducing new ones pertinent to specific learning within ensemble work?
- How you balance conventional ensemble attributes (tuning, blend and balance) with deeper listening, reacting and responding and developing creative impulses and exchange of ideas that can only happen in the moment.
- How you engage students as learners with each other? Practice rooms/skype
- How can you improve their levels of plurality, receptivity, deeper musical learning

Skills

- How you develop skills 'beyond the scale' - locate thinking and creativity with melodic and or rhythmic motifs
- This can mean constraint (3 notes- 4 notes). It directs specific creative action, encourages divergent thinking. Make the learning visible, audible and doable-Introduce layers of strategies (repeated notes/ anacrusis or not)
- Does everyone solo, or just the burners? Empower those less enthusiastic

Imagination- Use it or lose it

- Engage in wider creative thinking.
- 1) Tell them how to be imaginative-
play an idea faster/ slower/ fragmented/ upside down/ backwards
- Get them to create something with that
- 2) Think about how your advocating of transcription and playalong enhances creativity (fluency/fluidity/ novel/transformability)
- 3) Demonstrate /model creative practice, experimentation, human failings, resilience.
- 4) Dirtroad- Superhighway analogy

Listening(audiation)

- Listen- as modelling is how we acquire nuance of our stylistic vocabulary
- Instruct students to rely on hearing things within their inner ear, and play that,
- Most students play something and react to that- that's not really improvising
- Cultivate a culture of listening, hearing and respecting each other's solos and developing ideas with each other.

Environment

- Are you cultivating an environment that encourages and rewards participation?
- Are you allowing diverse perspectives, and allowing affirming participation as an exciting learning experiment within a laboratory of sounds, in which anything can work? (within reason)
- Cultivate and promote a culture of receptiveness and value to each others input.
The jazz/improvisation environment can be individual, but can be between any two people.
Playing with a drummer or a bass player can widen perspectives and creativity.
- Play with stereotypes:
Swap roles so the horn player comps
- Do a free improvisation module with your big band/ jazz group.
(use constraints of texture ((tight chords, pointillism, dissonance/ consonance, emancipation from regular time) between sections, dynamics (begin with dinosaur and evolve from there)
- Revisit Murray Schaffer and cross pollinate classroom ideas with instrumental ones. Quite often classroom music is the most creative and unpredictable, and instrumental is the most bland and unrewarding.
- Encourage composition in any genre
- Dynamically support gender balance and empowerment (where possible)

Taking a wider lens to music education and creativity

- Why do we teach improvised music?
- Are we teaching and training students to think creatively or re-creatively?
- The vast majority will be hobbyists in music, but only if they have developed motivations and dispositions to enjoy it as a meaningful part of their lives- all will make some kind of meaning from the learning experiences
- What kind of humans are we developing?
- Do teachers involve students in the creative processes enough, and nurture and promote this kind of thinking?
- Do teachers not only teach in music, but through music, connections with maths, sciences, languages, engineering, cultures and wider arts.
- We know these connections, but do we make these explicit to students (and educate and recruit parents as learning partners), do we talk about the transferability of strategic, and creative thinking across subjects and promote inter and cross disciplinary connections.
- Compliant, conservative, risk averse, cloistered, or inquisitive, exploratory, socially adept, responsible and charged with a growth mind-set to music, its interconnection with every domain and most facets of our lives.

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