

Michael Griffin looks at the role that music education plays in developing emotional intelligence

Wouldn't it be wonderful if a subject could deliver the following?

- Students learning how to work independently
- Students learning how to work in pairs and small groups
- Students taking on teaching roles with other students
- Students learning to make judgements in assessing themselves and others
- Students exploring their emotional responses to sensory stimulation
- Students writing reflective statements about their learning process and progress.

This is not achieved through specific subject content, but rather as a result of pedagogical application of that content. These are the essential outcomes which education must seek, and music education can deliver this as well, if not better, than any other subject area. Why? Because playing, creating, listening to and analysing music demands whole-brain and whole-person responses. If we can create a curriculum with this in mind, we move beyond the realm of content delivery to a more powerful and valuable educational experience.

Enjoyment

An OECD report in 2002 stated that one in six students hated school (not to be confused with hating learning). An important ingredient of a healthy childhood is enjoyment, a lack of which can result in stress. This stress interferes with brain circuitry and builds up hormone levels, making learning more difficult. The fact that the majority of musicians make music on an amateur basis is evidence that making music and listening are enjoyable for their own sake.

If we can make learning easier, more successful and more enjoyable for the students, then we should. Our goal should be that every student who takes a music course derives pleasure and satisfaction from its challenges. Continuing enjoyment depends on increasing complexity, an essential factor in any course of design. If students discover a love of learning from an early age, it will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Self-growth

The need to learn is a natural disposition we are born with. We instinctively want to understand how the world works, in order to gain an improved capacity to cope with our environment. Self-growth comes from a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Whenever we develop new knowledge required to meet significant challenges, we grow, and in a musical context, this happens when a person's level of musicianship matches a given musical challenge (David Elliott). Self-growth progresses in relation to increasingly complex tasks and contributes in turn to self-knowledge, self-esteem and happiness.

The writings and research of scholars such as Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind: the theory of multiple intelligences* (Heinemann 1983) and Daniel Goleman in *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ* (Bantam Books 1995) are a boon for music education. They appropriately recognise its importance in the context of fully human development. Gardner, in his theory of multiple intelligences, asserts that musical intelligence, being one of eight distinct ways of knowing, deserves at least equal standing with any other intelligence area. Goleman stresses the value of emotional intelligence, saying that we need self-knowledge skills (intrapersonal) as well as skills in relating to and understanding others (interpersonal).

It is increasingly being acknowledged that emotional intelligence (EQ) may be the most significant and important domain of intelligence in the overall success of our lives. Consequently, many schools around the world are including EQ as a core subject in their curricula. For this reason, the National Curriculum of England and Wales has firmly embedded PHSE in its programme. Even the technical powerhouse Microsoft acknowledges the importance of emotionally intelligent workers: 'The 21st-century worker requires new competencies based around emotional intelligence. Technical skills are not enough, life skills are required.'

The relationship between music and EQ has been explored by David Elliott in his best selling *Music Matters: a new philosophy of music education* (OUP 1995). Elliott connects musical intelligence with the emotional and lists the central values of music education as enjoyment, self-growth, self-knowledge and self-esteem. These are also the values of an emotionally intelligent person. Of all the emotional stimuli, music is held in special esteem – we celebrate life's joys and tragedies with it and the identity of youth culture is often defined by it. In *The Music of Man* (Simon and Schuster Inc. 1979), Yehudi Menuhin refers to music as a form of expression, which is clearer and more in touch with our emotional selves than the abstract nature of words.

The aim of music education is not to educate all students for careers as professional musicians, but to awaken each student to their musical self and help them achieve their musical potential. Education seeks to develop students as people, not just mere job fillers, and to enable them to make a life as well as a living. Let's get back to, and expand upon the central values of music education as expounded by David Elliott. These overarching aims should be clear in our mind and considered when planning learning activities. If emotional intelligence is consciously attended to in the design and implementation of music curricula, courses will have a new and rich significance for students.

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