

INSTRUMENTAL PRACTICE AND DEVELOPING MUSICIANSHIP

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Background

Interest and amount of research in instrumental practice has increased greatly in the last decade. More than half of all research on practice in the 20th century has been published since 1990.

Aims

The aim of the paper is to present recent theory and research in instrumental practice. From the last decade, I will present two issues where empirical research has expanded our knowledge of practice, and one theoretical issue.

Main contribution

The three issues are:

- Time. How does “time” enter practice as a variable? Research has addressed three time perspectives: The initial starting age, i.e. the age when a child starts serious study and practice on their major instrument, the accumulated amount of practice at a certain time, and the amount of current practice. These time perspectives are studied in relation to performance level and achievement. In the last ten years, much of this research has been carried out within expertise theory.

- Self-regulation of practice. In the last decade, several studies have analysed practice behaviour within the theoretical concept “self-regulation”, derived from cognitive psychology. In this research, the emphasis is on the degree to which individuals are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviourally active participants in their own learning.

- Model and theory development. At a certain stage in the development of a research area, efforts to develop models and theories to structure and comprehend research results will emerge. Research on practice reached this level in the 1990s. I will present two models that address practice activity as a whole (one based on a cognitive systems model, the other based on theories of didactics (educational theory)). In addition, I will present four models for individual practice strategies.

Implications

Implications for instrumental teaching and development will be addressed in the presentation.