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**PRACTISE AS PRAXIS: A FREIRIAN APPROACH  
TO INSTRUMENTAL PRACTICE WITHIN THE  
CONSERVATOIRE**

## HOW DID I GET HERE?



**Institutionalisation as illusory freedom**

**'Education is always remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become'**

**Always in motion – always incomplete**

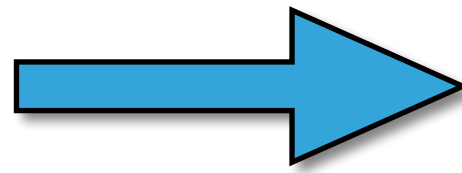
## THE QUESTION

**With respect to one or more aspects of the curriculum in your own institution, identify and justify how curricula can become socially critical, empowering and emancipatory?**



## RBC – THE CURRICULUM

**At least 1/2 of all assessment credits focussed on 1st study instrumental skills.**



**600 study hours – 565 of these individually guided.**

**The clear weighting of the curriculum on practical performance skills and associated practise requirements highlights the potential for this individual study, guided by active professional mentors, to be a powerful tool in shaping musicians skills, knowledge, beliefs, values and assumptions.**



**Embodied knowledge**

**Aesthetic**

**Habits of the mind**

**Episteme**

**Ideology**

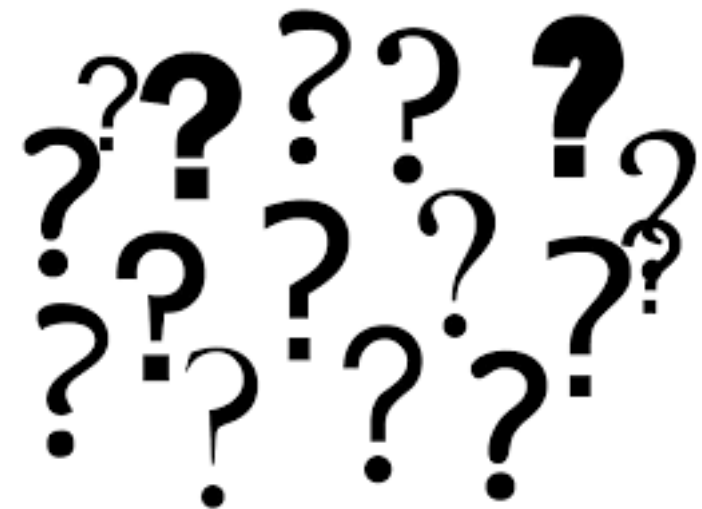
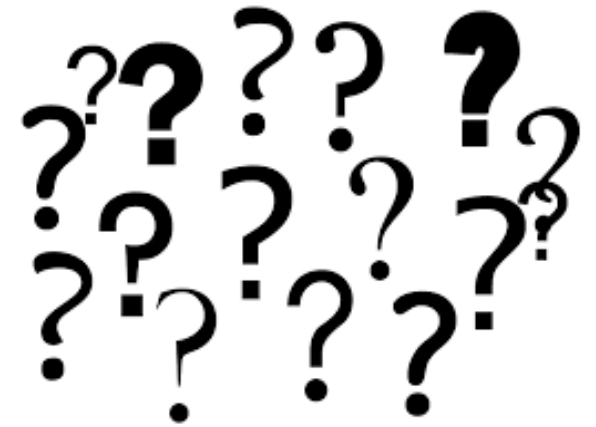
## MORE QUESTIONS

**What is practise for?**

**What do musicians hope to achieve and what can this tell us of any ideological or cultural forces?**

**Can practise be an emancipatory act and, if so, what are the power structures requiring freedom from?**

**How would 'emancipatory practise' work?**



## CONSERVATOIRE CULTURE?

**‘There is a striking lack of research that explores conservatoire culture’ (Perkins 2013), ‘traditional approaches and expectations of learning in the conservatoire environment are shaped by ‘learning cultures’, which remain largely unexplored and unchallenged’ (Carey et al 2017).**

**‘Conservatoires have something ‘seeping through the walls’ that made people act in a certain way and adhere to certain values.’ (Ford 2010)**



**Conservatoires as “secret gardens” (Mills 2007).**

## What do Conservatoires say they are?

# THE CONSERVATOIRE IN THE NEOLIBERAL AGE

Conservatoire's UK outline their 'model of education':

'This is designed to equip artists with the means to develop a **distinctive profile** that will give them a **competitive edge** in the fast evolving **creative industries**. The high international reputation of UK conservatoires also rests on their ability to equip students with the necessary skills to mould and **curate their own careers**, leading to outstanding **employment trajectories** ... Conservatoire are places where vital **professional relationships** are forged.' (CUK 2019)

Conservatoires have always been a place of 'training' but this model disproportionately expresses the contemporary hegemonic discourse of the **neoliberal**, failing to identify any of the aesthetic, artistic, creative and collaborative aspects an artistic education can provide, nor the specific benefits Arts graduates bring to society.

The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire is explicit when saying

'its main aim is to prepare students for a career in the music profession' (BCU 2018)

## GOALS INFLUENCING INTENTIONS

**‘Such a pedagogical model, which focusses exclusively on preparing students for the work force, abstracts education from the challenges of developing a critically conscious, socially responsible and politically active body and citizenry’ (Leistyna et. al. 1996).**





Carey, G., Harrison, S. & Dwyer, R. (2017) Encouraging reflective practice in conservatoire students: a pathway to autonomous learning?, *Music Education Research*, 19:1, pp.99–110



"I am working on technique, studies and pieces every day."

"technically speaking I am happy to continue concentrating on my left 4th finger for this semester and perhaps for the rest of the year"

"my current learning goals include securing a breathing mechanism... focussing on correct vowel placement"

Responses show a limited reflexivity, emphasising a 'fixed', un-creative, limited and teacher led approach. Study tended towards the technical, prioritising an 'instrumental' and mechanical method rather than a creative and critical process.



## TECHNIQUE?????

‘the average person unwittingly forsakes his or her freedom by uncritically having faith in false claims that scientism and **technicism promote rational economic planning**’

Regelski, T (2005) Critical Theory and Praxis: Professionalizing Music Education [online] <http://maydaygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Regelski-Critical-Theory.pdf>  
Accessed: 16th January 2019

Why?

# NEOLIBERAL 'BANKING'

...producing 'a cultural environment in which practice is a predictable routine where cultural elitism is an accepted standard and where institutional climate puts emphasis on guarding your advantage and thinking strategically' (Davies 2004)

'Music education has privileged expert knowledge over understanding' (Schmidt 2005)



# FREIRIAN BANKING OPPOSITION

The 'banking or transmission theory of school knowledge' is 'identified as the culprit standing in the way of critical consciousness' (Freire 1998). Within this method the teacher is the 'narrator' of dominant ideology, leading students to 'memorize mechanically' this narrated content. 'Worse yet, it turns them into "containers", into "receptacles" to be "filled" by the teacher' (Freire 1972, p.45). 'The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted in them, the less they develop the critical consciousness' (Freire 1972, p.46). **'Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety.'** (Freire 1972, p.52)

## FREIRIAN DICHOTOMIES – OPPOSITE OF BANKING?

HUMANISING VS.  
DEHUMANISING

OPPRESSED VS.  
OPPRESSORS

BANKING METHOD VS.  
PROBLEM POSING

INCOMPLETED VS.  
COMPLETED

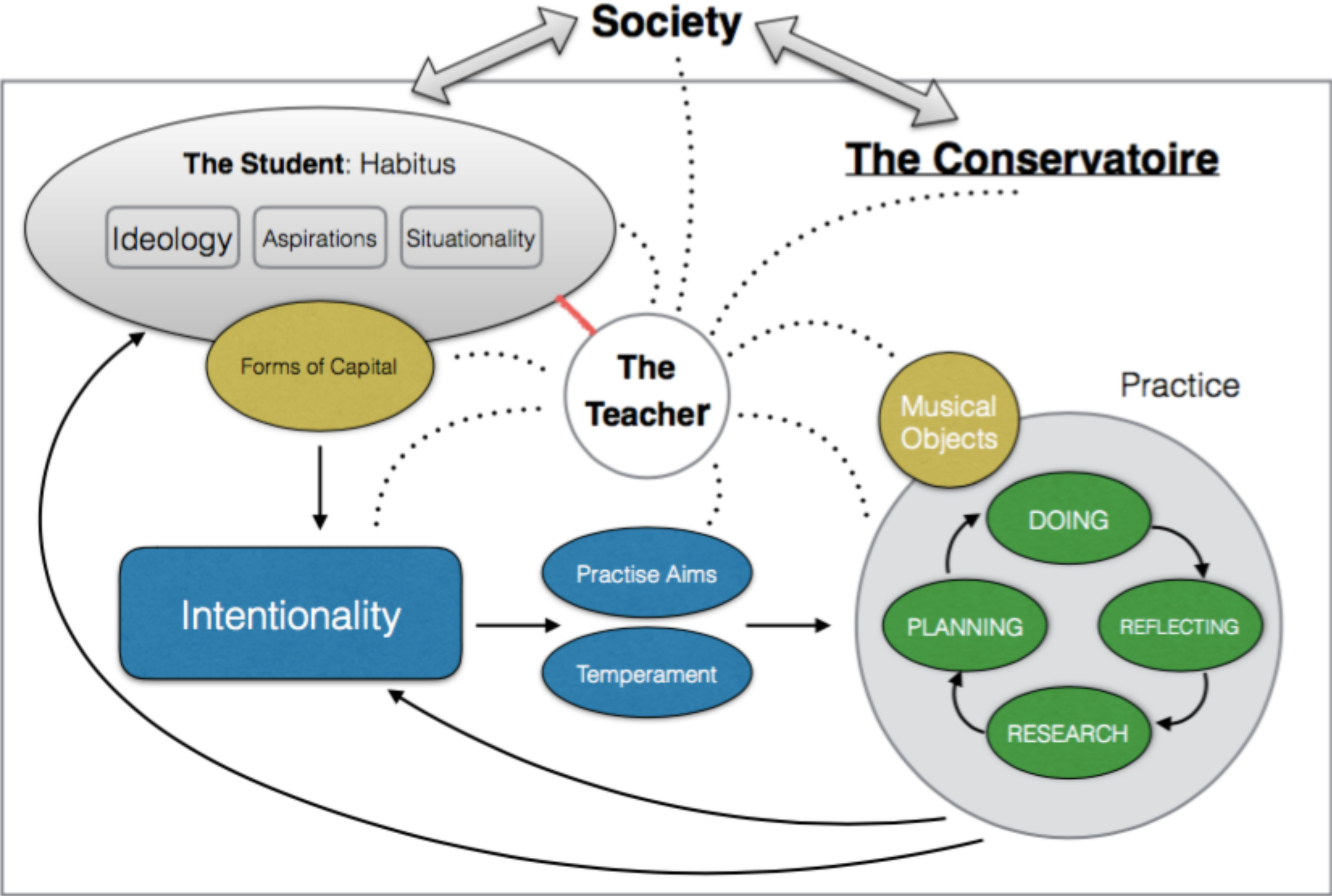
**‘Whereas the banking method directly or indirectly reinforces men’s fatalistic perception of their situation, the problem-posing method ... enables people to overcome their false perception of reality.’ (Freire 1972, p.57)**

# THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE/PRAXIS

**'Practice is the result of the relationship between an individual's habitus, different forms of capital, and the field of action' (Bourdieu 1990). 'Conceptualised thus, practice is not simply what people 'do', but is rather a complex interaction of a field and its positions with the dispositions (habitus) and resources (capitals) of those acting in the space.' (Perkins 2013). 'Music is, therefore, understood as a social praxis'!!! (Cabedo-Mas et. al. 2013).**

**These theoretical terms can lead us to an understanding of the range of constitutive elements teacher/students can problem-pose within a praxis based model of practise.**

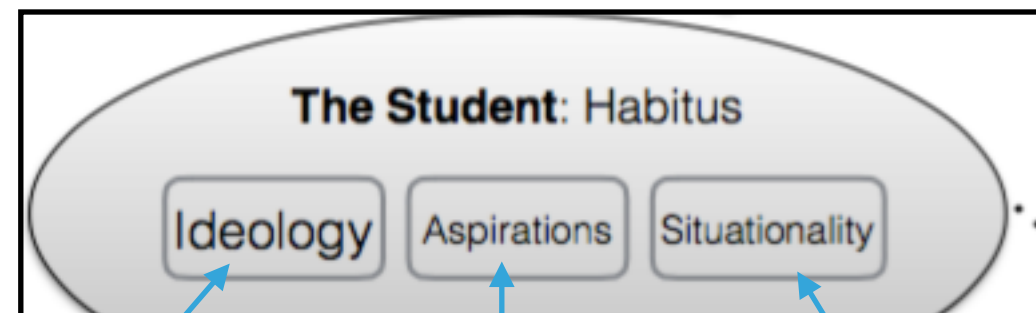
# PRACTISE AS PRAXIS



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The student's 'disposition' represents their habitus. This could be thought as constituting ideologies, aspirations and situationality. This disposition is fundamental in establishing the student's intentionality, feeding into the goals and temperamental profile established before entering the practice room.

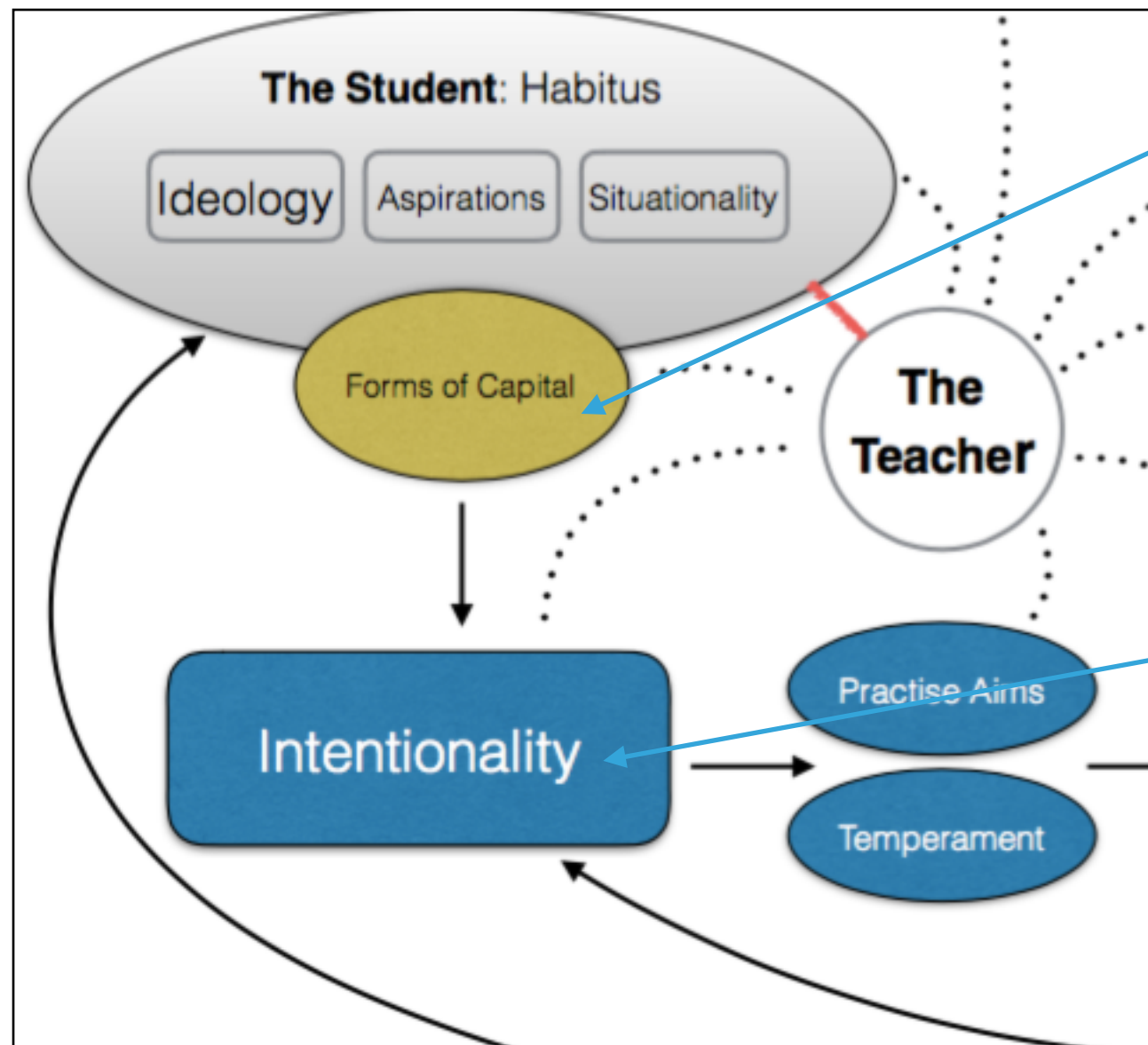


**IDEAS, PRACTISES,  
PARADIGMS**



**TIME & SPACE**





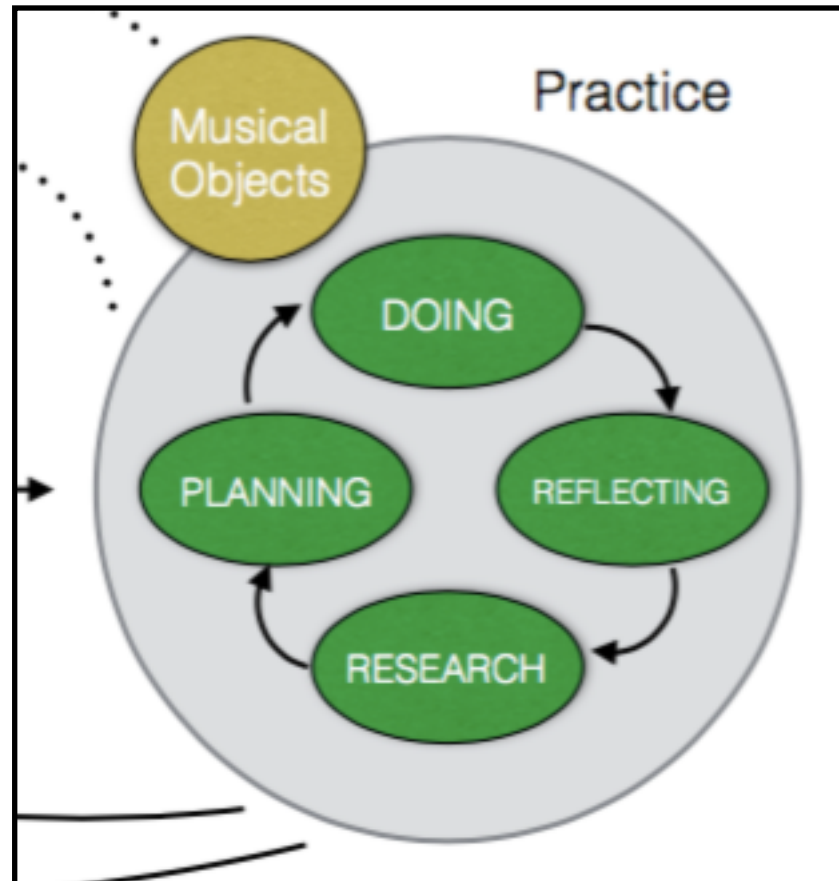
**'CAPITAL IS ACCUMULATED LABOUR' (BOURDIEU 1986)**

**'Humans are 'subjectivities' with goals, needs and intentions, not simply 'objects' controlled by natural laws. They have reason and therefore can formulate and evaluate personal and collective purposes, goals and values (i.e they have intentionality)'. (Freire 1972)**

**'Intentionality is a key aspect of learning' (Cabedo-Mas, Díaz-Gómez 2013)**

# PRACTISE AS PRAXIS

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**Action/Reflection**

**Learning Cycles**

**Experiential Learning**

**Action Research**

**Enquiry Based Learning**

## ABUSES OF POWER

News > UK > Crime

### Chetham music school sex inquiry: More than 30 report 'widespread abuse'

39 teachers from several schools under investigation in relation to sexual abuse allegations

#### THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair

Arts + Culture Business + Economy Cities Education Environment + Energy Health + Medicine Politics + Society S

### Classical music training and abuse cultures – we need to act now

March 17, 2015 7.31pm GMT

🕒 This article is more than 4 years old

### Guildhall school dismissed girl's claims 30 years before Philip Pickett jailed for rapes

School says it would now handle complaints differently, after  
teacher is sentenced to 11 years for assaults on students in dark,  
soundproofed practice rooms

Examples of exploitation within Conservatoires has exploded in recent years. Recent research by the Incorporated Society of Musicians found that over 50% of arts students respondents had experienced 'bullying and discrimination including sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour' (ISM 2018). Specific cases of sexual abuse being covered up by institutions are particularly shocking. (Quinn et. al. 2015)

# NEOLIBERAL METRIC-OCRACY



## Fear over Augar impact on arts, humanities and social sciences

Critics warn against equating a course's value with its graduate earnings, of threats to universities' autonomy on funding decisions and damage to research

### Education

## Damian Hinds aiming at 'low value low quality' degrees in university tuition fee review

Music education is now only for the white and the wealthy

*Charlotte C Gill*

Music lessons have become increasingly hard to access in schools. To enable more children to learn, we must stop teaching in such an academic way

## Proportion of students taking arts subjects falls to lowest level in decade

## CONCLUSION : QUESTIONS

