

I retired recently

Professor of education and music psychology **Sue Hallam** was dean of the Faculty of Policy and Society from September 2007 to August 2013. When she stepped down from that role and retired from full-time work, she decided to devote her time to her lifelong passions: research and teaching. Prior to joining the IOE, Sue had been a full-time professional musician working as principal second violin for the then BBC Midland Light Orchestra and deputy leader of Orchestra da Camera. She also plays the piano, which was useful for accompanying her pupils when she became a teacher. She reminisces about her time at the IOE and the scope of her research in education and music over the years.



I started work at the IOE in July 1991 in what was then the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Educational Needs. It was my first job in higher education and I was terrified that the students would know more than me about the psychology of education. Fortunately this did not prove to be the case. The staff in the department were very supportive, particularly Professor Hazel Francis and my PhD supervisor Dr Fitz Taylor. To say that moving to higher education was a culture shock is an understatement: it was quite a change from being a professional musician, a school teacher and a further education lecturer in turn. On some days I could sit in my office in Woburn Square and, if I was not teaching, barely see anyone at all. There have been days in my subsequent roles at the IOE when this would have been a blessing!

My first teaching was on diploma and master's programmes in the psychology of education. The classes were very large. It was very stimulating, with many students from overseas, some of whom went on to study for doctorates with me; they are now themselves working in higher education and we keep in touch.

My PhD research focused on the development of expertise in musicians, exploring how practice and preparation for performance changed a beginner musician into a professional. Over time I have done further research in the broad field of music psychology and music education: on instrumental music services and initiatives in music teaching in primary schools, for successive governments; on the Musical Futures approach, for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation; and on evaluation of specific musical interventions, for various other charities.

My personal research has focused on instrumental music: practice, performance, examinations and motivation. After an appearance on the BBC's *Tomorrow's World* television programme, carrying out an experiment on the Mozart effect (hypothesis suggesting that listening to Mozart makes you smarter), I became involved in research for the Performing Rights Society on the power of music, and subsequently for the government into

the cognitive, physical and psychological benefits of music. This is still a major focus of my work.

Other areas of education, notably disaffection from school, exclusion, attendance, ability grouping, homework and pedagogy, are equally captivating. My research on disaffection was undertaken for the DfE evaluating programmes, to try to reduce exclusion and improve attendance. I still do research in those areas, especially homework – which seems to hold a particular fascination for parents – and ability grouping, working with Sam Parsons using the Millennium Cohort Studies (see ioe.ac.uk/cis).

I have also worked on research centred around music in the third and fourth ages and the book 'Active Ageing with Music' (details below) reports the findings from the 'Music for Life' project – part of the largest and most ambitious research project on ageing ever mounted in this country. The research found that older people involved in musical activities, whether novices or more experienced, benefited from higher measures of well-being than those who were not involved in musical activities. In many cases, becoming involved in active

music-making had been life-changing. A particularly important feature of the findings was the importance of participative and performing activities, which people preferred to home practice. Musical preferences were very diverse, the least popular being electronic music. The most common musical activity was singing, although there were instrumental groups for beginners and more experienced players.

Facilitators of musical activities with older people were experienced musicians but there were issues about working with older people for which they had received no specific training. There were few opportunities for them to develop their pedagogical skills.

The follow-on project, 'Maximizing the benefits of participation in music amongst older people: Developing a skilled workforce', allowed us to disseminate findings from the 'Music for Life' project, develop materials and provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for facilitators of music with older people. The 'Music for Life' project won the Royal Society for Public Health 'Arts and Health' Award in October 2014.

What will Sue publish next?

At the moment, she is working on an updated version of the review of the wider benefits of music for children and young people, building on the work that she completed in 2009. "It is particularly important in a time of austerity to bring to public attention the benefits that music can have beyond those of the sheer enjoyment of being engaged with it", she said. More on the 'Music for Life' project at: ioe.ac.uk/research/departments/lce/31139.html

Active Ageing with Music: Supporting wellbeing in the Third and Fourth Ages, by Andrea Creech, Susan Hallam, Maria Varvarigou and Hilary McQueen, is published by IOE Press (July 2014, ioepress.co.uk).