ATM I Music Education Synthesis and Philosophy Paper

Dane A. Madrigal

Westminster Choir College of Rider University

Author Note

Dane A. Madrigal, Department of Music Education, Westminster Choir College of Rider University

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dane Madrigal Westminster Choir College of Rider University, Princeton, NJ 08540. Contact: madrigald@rider.edu

Abstract

This paper will explore the music education philosophy of a future educator from multiple standpoints. The main questions that will be addressed follow as such: What has been learned about students and a student-centered classroom? Topics that will fall under this umbrella of study include: What can student learn and experience in music beyond musical knowledge and skill? How can student diversity impact music classes? What does it mean to know about your students facts wise, versus knowing students such that your students feel you "know" them? How does knowing your students impact or affect what you teach and how you teach it? Other questions that will be asked include: What should be envisioned for a future classroom? What are the goals and aims that should be set for music education? Finally, What components of music education would be your major focus and why?

Keywords: student-centered classrooms, future classrooms, music education focus

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As a future music educator, there is a great deal of information that is in the world to synthesize so that one may be able to use it, the usage of this information is to enable students to execute tasks much more efficiently. When any educator looks to the answer, as to why school systems seem to be failing their students more than ever, there seems to be a large blame game that comes from this. There is much more "pointing fingers" in the American education system than there has ever been. Yet, teachers will syldem take the time, to simply reflect on their own teaching abilities, while taking into account their students and classrooms as a whole. There is also a large atmosphere of fear in many institutions that becomes implicit with enrollment as a student or teacher. This is due to many factors that are constantly debated in places other than the classroom, where they would most likely be resolved with clarity and ease, while still being thought provoking. This atmosphere spoken of is the culmination of influences from political, economical and social backgrounds which all individuals are influenced by. Hence, these must all be taken into consideration; but, they must not be tolerated, they must be embraced by all people as they are not just ways of thinking, but ways of life.

Case Review and Synthesis

Students and Student-Centered Classrooms

Classrooms are complex organisms that run independently within the greater unit of the school ecosystem. This great ability for classes to be so unique and yet standardized at the same time has become the cornerstone of the western idea of education. For this to occur, the classroom must be made up of individuals who are ready and willing to learn and to try new ways in which they may be able to synthesize information. From students and teachers ability to

come together, they form something that is much greater than what they might be able to achieve individually. It is not until recently that individuals in the scientific community have begun to label this phenomenon as emergence (Johnson, 2002). The technical definition of emergence is the ability for small things to form different things, which have different properties than the sum of its parts; in short, complexity arising from simplicity. This phenomenon in our universe is something that is vague and mysterious, though we are surrounded by it in our everyday lives. A natural example of this property of emergence would be an ant colony. Individual ants do not have a will, conscience, ability to think freely, or aptitude to engage in the world with purpose as an individual. However, when many ants come together, they form a colony of their species. These colonies can become so complex that they can become architects of complicated structures, farmers of fungus or insect livestock, and even wage war. Yet, the colony emerges from the ants, and the colony is nothing that is tangible, an individual cannot simply reach out and touch the colony. Yet, the colony interacts with its environment in many complex ways.

The same is true with students in the classroom, though there are some fundamental differences. As humans, and unlike ants, we have an innate will to live and a drive from our conscious to partake in actions that propel us to take a path in life. This path which we embark on is constantly influenced by our society and the social circles that we choose or do not choose to be in. One of these circles that we do not choose to be in and yet are put into is that of the classroom.

These classrooms are places in which students and teachers have always had distinct roles, most of which have been established by our society. Students in the classroom have traditionally been instructed to sit and synthesize information so that they can learn while in the

class and then practice outside of the class. It is important to note that before this idea of general

and primary education, children would enter into apprenticeships where they would learn skills

for a trade, in which, they would partake for the rest of their lives (Hirschman, 2009). This is

important to note as the current system in place today is similar to the one that was created

directly out of the industrial revolution which is now almost one-hundred and fifty years in the

past. From this time, many things have changed in many aspects, most specifically, those that

include cultural influences on the school system (Kleine, 1994).

There is an adage heard by many students in American school systems from their

teachers who say, "Every year I learn something new from my students." As a future educator, I

propose that these teachers are the greatest among the educators in America and the rest of the

world as they accept that they as individuals will never stop learning. These teachers then take on

the great role of having student-centered classrooms as they make themselves the students.

Therefore these teachers embark on a journey of discovering who they are as students.

Thus, it is from their own efforts to do so that they might better be able to understand that their

own students are on that same journey to find who they are as individuals in and out of the

classroom. As this pertains to music, students may be trying to figure out questions as seemingly

simply as, "What type of music do I like?", versus, "Will I study vocal or trumpet performance

in college?" Some may even be asking themselves if they will choose to listen to Spanish music

so that they can identify with people who share some of their ethnic identity. Others may be

deciding if they are going to familiarize themselves with rap so they do not feel excluded in

social conversations (Morrison, 2017).

In the modern world, there is a great diversity of students who share identities with many groups. Some of which they would like to associate themselves with, and others they would wish to not. Respecting and embracing their views is crucial as a music educator and as an individual. Yet, an instructor must not be hesitant in situations where they may see a pupil going down a narrow road, where there may not be a return, to intervene. This may seem highly unlikely, but with current climates in the world and in this tumultuous period of adolescents, it is permissible and acceptable to just have a thought provoking conversation about these subjects. Many of the adolescents a teacher will encounter, if not all, will not have a fully formed identity when they are encountered. Thus it is important to note that all interactions with them can and most likely will have a lasting impact on their identity as a person (Iszatt-White, 2017).

Musical Knowledge and Skill

Students that would be fortunate enough to study in these classrooms where the teachers take an active role as a student will find that from music, there is much more to learn than pitch and rhythm. This is not to say students that do not fall under these circumstances would not be able to do the same; however, it is much less probable that they would be able to do so.

Some of these important skills that they can gain would be ones such as teamwork, cooperation, leadership, focus, precision, diligence, the list goes on. Not to mention there is a clear integration between music as an art and the fields of science, math, and technology. On Top of the fact that the skills aforementioned would be useful to any individual in the fields of S.T.E.A.M., the abilities such as critical thinking, improvisation, and creativity draw direct correlations from music to S.T.E.A.M. Not to mention for many emerging adolescents, the fields of art, specifically music, are the places in which they find the ability to most connect to their

chosen identity. Making music, one of the most influential places in the psychological

development of emerging adolescents (Morrison, 2017).

Student Diversity

Diversity is a term that is commonly thrown around in today's culture, especially in the

west where there are many initiatives to increase diversity in places such as school. Diversity's

definition is a wide variety of things. However, in the west, there is a perception that diversity is

exclusive to the ideas of race, and consequently, privilege.

Ethnic Diversity. In America, there is a very clear and evident move to engage schools

in programs such as affirmative action. Meaning, that persons from one specific ethnicity will be

favored in processes for selection into university and in general classrooms (Selden, 2006). This

is something that has come under much scrutiny lately, but is met with opposition under the

premise that this action implements equality under the law for "objectively underprivileged

groups."(Selden, 2006). Though there is nothing wrong with offering opportunity to those who

may not have the same privileges that others do, which is infact a wonderful thing. There is no

reason as to why it should be done at the expense of those who have worked equally as hard or

harder, but may be in a group labeled as "objectively more privileged."(Selden, 2006). This

means that educators should always accept diversity in their classrooms. In the best case, a music

educator should embrace the ethnic diversity that would be present in their class and use it to

their advantage to perform varying repertoire and different cultural styles of music. Even,

learning different ways from their students to teach music.

Gender Diversity. Gender is another subject that is extremely controversial in modern

times, as there is little to no room for discussion of the subject in any system of education

(Dubois-Shaik, 2017). Though this seems extreme, institutions of higher education, especially,

push for an agenda where there is fluidity on the topic. Meaning that groups who oppose the

modern gender agenda are more likely to be asked to not speak as they are likely to offend some

of their peers. Though a music educator does not have to agree with their students opinion on

subjects such as gender, it is also important to facilitate a conversation on the topic if it becomes

problematic. Issues that could easily arise from this is a student wishing to dress in the opposite

genders clothing for a concert (Koskoff, 2014). Though gender, and the concept of it, are likely

to continue to change with the human perception of self, it is important to note that persons will

always have differences of opinions over the topic. Thus it will always be important for

individuals to facilitate conversations regarding the topic for understanding and embracing one

another.

Intellectual Diversity. With the understanding that diversity is simply a variety of

different things it is more than crucial to mention the topic of intellectual diversity (Brow, 2017).

In institutions of higher education, it is more than prominent that professors encourage students

to do independent research into topics. However, these professors most predominantly gear

students to look into areas that are already specialized by individuals who happen to lean in the

same direction when it comes to subject matter, making their opinions consequently similar or

the same (Zhang, 2017). Therefore, it is then up to the individual to look at facts and data to

make their own analysis of information to be a true scholastic (Kadioglu, 2014). Otherwise, the

student is again taking part in regurgitating information without making their own opinion on the

subject which is crucial to intellectual growth (Kadioglu, 2014). This means that teachers are

responsible for discussions on intellectual matters such as difference of opinions on subjects, that

to others, may seem like blatant facts. To this effect, a music educator must be able to facilitate a conversation where both sides are embraced while being open to dialogue from a purely intellectual standpoint.

Knowing Students

When it comes to the understanding of one's students, it is important to note that there are key differences between having a student that an educator knows, and an educator knows. This would be the same difference as hearing and listening in the classroom. A student can here all the things that a teacher says, but they do not necessarily have to listen and synthesize the information at the same time. To truly know a student, one must understand the student.

Understanding Students. Teachers often face dilemmas with students where a certain student or group of students would like to be their friend. Many leaders in the music education field, find that nurturing this relationship is best for the students psychological health, as the teacher is a safe place (Huiyoung Shin, 2017). However, it is understandable that some teachers and school administration officials would not be comfortable with such a relationship. One, that may even stem outside of the classroom. Thus, many institutions have taken the approach where teachers on staff are not permitted to be friends on social media with their students. Other measures that can be taken would include simply being an acquaintance to a student rather than a friend. Yet, none of this means that a teacher has to be closed off to their students. Many teachers have healthy and thriving relationships with many of their students because they set very important boundaries between them. Once a student is out of there institution, it would be to the instructor's discretion as to whether or not they would want to maintain a relationship with that student. To understand a student, an instructor must still be open to whatever a student believes.

This means being a safe place for any student to go, and knowing when the student may need more help than they are capable, comfortable, or willing to provide.

The Future Classroom

While the world is constantly changing, there are many places that are not meeting the pace of the world at large. One of the greatest places affected by this lack of change is the music education classroom. The reason that this is so, comes from many factors. Some of which include cultural value of school, lack of funding, lack of creativity, and lack of adaptation to modern times.

Ideal Future Classroom. The ideal classroom of the future would be one where racial and class lines do not divide how students perceive themselves or how they should treat education. Students would also not have preconceived notions of what music is to be in their lives and simply let the music affect them, taking joy in the fact that they are able to partake in that unique moment in time. This would mean that the music educator of the class would have to stress certain topics more than others that would not normally be associated with a music classroom. One of these would be the idea that music has to be a subject that there is only one way to do it (Monroe, 2018). All individuals have different ways of learning, some groups of people learn better with one certain style, but all styles must be embraced and appreciated (Claxton, 1987). Thus, educators of the future need to be adaptable and individuals who are willing to embrace many styles to get the best results from all their students.

Musical Goal. From the onset in this future classroom, it must be made clear that there should be only one goal by the end of the year with the students. This goal, is to be that all students should have grown as musicians and become more musical people over the course of

their time of study (Perret, 2005). Though this sounds vague, the topics discussed earlier would

be the modems of which musicality is to be grown in the pupils. These, again, include:

teamwork, cooperation, leadership, focus, precision and diligence. Which all tie to musical

concepts such as: choral singing, sight reading, gestural analysis, chair testing, ensemble playing

and sectional coordination.

<div align="center">**Major Focus**</div>

With the idea that goal of the future music classroom should be focused on the product of

musicality, there is a very clear line to be drawn that musicality should be the major focus of all

music classes. This, to some, will sound like a generalization of the possibilities that can come

from music.

Benefits of Musicality

The most obvious benefit of the growth of individual musicality is that a student will

become a better musician. From this, they become better persons as they learn the skills that are

necessary for excellence in musicianship and in all other field. This means that they are not only

well versed and well trained, but they are prime for execution in many other fields of study as the

lessons learned are interdisciplinary in both approach and effect (Hooker, 2013). This creates so

much of an environment for students to accel that the only thing that could hold them back

would be lack of personal motivation or harmful external conflicts (Howard, 2002). Though,

these are not odds that are insurmountable in any sense.

Limits of Musicality

Though there are little to no limits on musicality, there are limits as to how it can be

found for the students. Though the level of musicality a student is achieving can be extremely

high, they may not be able to see it themselves due to their psychological state as an emerging

adolescent, or many other factors (Perrone, 1970). This limitation can be broken if the student

has proper help from family, friends and educators alike.

Discussion

When there are discussions among educators regarding schooling and education in

America, there is always a great deal of controversy that can ensue. This has mainly been caused

by the sociopolitical climate that currently exists in the nation (Michael, 2014). However, it is

not one to be fretted over as this environment calls the people of the country to action. To form a

brighter tomorrow that will ensure only more peace and prosperity for the individuals that make

up our society. Especially in the case of education, it calls the adults of society that partake in the

educational system to make better their own work, so as to ensure youth the best possible future.

This can only be made possible if the individuals in these positions are willing to step forward

and be leaders that listen to others, acting in compassion at all times.

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