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Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: Preparing Future Teachers

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Summary
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Keywords
music education; critical pedagogy; teacher training; critical questioning

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Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: Preparing Future Teachers

Kelly Bylica, The University of Western Ontario

SUMMARY
This introductory workshop will focus on using critical questioning techniques to encourage education students to think through different lenses when approaching education methods and pedagogy. Undergraduate education students, particularly music education students, often enter university with a desire to replicate an educational experience, program, or teacher they had as an elementary or secondary school student. The use of critical questioning will help students think outside this narrow box of experience and create space to consider in what ways we may be complicit in perpetuating norms that may not be inclusive of all students. Research indicates that the use of critical questioning promotes student reflexivity and engages students in higher level thinking (Abramo, 2015; Pagliaro, 2011; Yang, Newby, & Bill, 2005). In addition, this practice is important as education students and pre-service teachers with experience in critical questioning will have the tools necessary to promote critical thought and questioning in their own classrooms as educators. Although this content is specific to music education students, applications to educators in all subjects will also be acknowledged and facilitated in this workshop.

KEYWORDS: music education; critical pedagogy; teacher training; critical questioning

LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Describe the technique of critical questioning.
- Differentiate between critical and non-critical questions.
- Formulate sample critical questions to be used in introductory music education courses.

REFERENCE SUMMARIES

Abramo, J. M. (2015). Negotiating gender, popular culture, and social justice in music education. In C. Benedict, P. Schmidt, G. Spruce & P. Woodford (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of social justice in music education* (pp. 582-597). New York: Oxford.

In this chapter, Abramo makes use of Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding technique for critical reading of popular music in the music classroom. Popular music can often have lyrics or connotations that are suggestive, misogynist and/or heteronormative. The Encoding/Decoding technique examines the ways in which media messages are disseminating and interpreted. Reading a text using Encoding/Decoding engages the reader/listener in three separate ways of examining a text (or song): dominant, negotiated and oppositional. A dominant read decodes the song exactly as it was encoded. A negotiated read acknowledges the dominant read, but also encourages an interpretation based on one's own context. An oppositional read intentionally interprets the text in a contrary way. Each of these reads offers a different lens through which to view the text/song. This chapter offers not only examples of how to navigate popular music through the use of critical questioning, but it also gives suggestions for using critical questioning to balance both agency and social justice in the secondary school music classroom. This chapter will be used as an example of a critical reading technique for the music classroom.

Pagliaro, M. M. (2011). *Exemplary classroom questioning: Practices to promote thinking and learning.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

This book describes how to facilitate a classroom environment that promotes critical questioning. Students will be asked to read portions of this book for the workshop and will be encouraged to continue to use the book as a resource once the workshop is complete. Pagliaro provides a step-by-step guide with suggestions for a mindful approach to questioning in the classroom, offering prompt questions for educators first working with critical questioning. She also offers suggestions on sequencing and clarity which many participants may find helpful, as well as formatting to avoid when trying to promote critical discussion. Additionally, she offers rubrics for working with questioning in the classroom, and techniques for how to respond to student questions in order to promote critical thought. Each chapter ends with a quick at-a-glance summary, and teacher self-reflection questions, both of which can be used as a reference for practicing teachers.

Seker, H. & Komur, S. (2008). The relationship between critical thinking skills and in-class questioning behaviours of English language teaching students. *European Journal of Teaching Education, 31*(4), 389-402.

This article is helpful because it focuses on engaging pre-service teachers in critical thinking techniques in order to develop their own expertise with critical thinking skills. The study in this article uses Bloom's Taxonomy as a measurement for lower and higher critical thinking groups. The research design includes an essay test, reading passage, and structured interviews. Findings indicated that those who scored high in critical thinking used their questioning techniques to grapple with new ideas and engage in curious probing of issues, instead of simply asking for points of clarification. Both the study itself as well as the extensive literature review at the beginning of the article are excellent resources for promoting critical questioning in the classroom. While the resource itself will not be explicitly used during the course of the workshop, it provides research to support the use of critical questioning. This can be used when making the case for the use of critical questioning in the classroom.

Yang, C. Y., Newby, T. J., & Bill, R. L. (2005). Using Socratic questioning to promote critical thinking skills through asynchronous discussion forums in distance learning environments. A*merican Journal of Distance Education, 19*(3), 163-181.

Given that many faculty engage in web-based teaching, this article is helpful to illustrate the benefits of critical thinking skills in distance learning courses. One of the greatest challenges in online courses is engaging students in active discussion. Facilitating discussion that engages students in dialogue and promotes higher-order thinking is even more challenging. In this study, the teaching approach of Socratic questioning is used to help students engage in critical thought. Socratic questioning is a systematic form of critical questioning that facilitates the analysis of concepts and aids in the exposure of assumptions. Researchers found that students for whom Socratic questioning techniques were modeled demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking skills and maintained those skills after the modeling was complete. While Socratic questioning itself is not used during this workshop, this article provides additional reading on the topic of Socratic questioning, as well as a resource for educators teaching distance courses.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Popular culture: A reader* (pp. 64-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

DURATION (MIN)	SUBJECT	ACTIVITY	PURPOSE
5	Opening	Facilitator introduces him/herself and outlines the goals for the day. Workshop participants also introduce themselves (if the group is large, individual introductions can/should be skipped).	Establish the schedule and allow participants to meet one another.
10	Defining "Critical"	Give participants time to individually define the term "critical" and then engage in a think/pair/share conversation about what this term might mean and why critical questioning might matter in education.	Give purpose to the workshop.
15	Large Group Case Study	Review one case study (music education method) together as a large group. This "case study" can be taken from one of the list of methods in Appendix A. The facilitator can opt to ask participants to use their laptops to explore the website or can offer a printed summary of what the method suggests as best practice. At this time Appendix B should be distributed to all workshop participants and used as a guide for both participants and facilitator.	Provide direction for small group case study.
20	Sample Critical Questioning	As part of a large group discussion, participants can suggest critical questions (CQs) based on the case study provided. As CQs are suggested, the group can engage in discussion about the relative strength of each CQ. • Where might each question lead? • Are there multiple ways to approach the question? • Is it open-ended enough to offer multiple lenses and viewpoints from students? During this time, the facilitator shares sample CQs and non-critical questions from Pagliaro (2011).	To model what critical questioning might look like in a discussion.
20	Small Group Case Study	Divide participants into small groups and assign each group another method/case study found in Appendix A. • Have groups review their assigned method/case study in a similar manner to the previous activity.	Provide a practice opportunity for developing CQs.

		• After reading about the method/case study, have them develop CQs together. Time permitting, have small groups pair up to share their results.	
15	Sharing Time	Ask each group to choose 2-3 of their CQs to share with the larger group. Discuss challenges groups faced as they went through the process of brainstorming CQs.	Build a database of CQs. All CQs will be compiled and shared with participants via email or posted in an online forum following the workshop.
5	Wrap-Up	Ask participants to complete a short reflection on how the information they gathered at the workshop might be practically applied to their own classrooms.	Synthesize and close the workshop.
Total Time: 90 minutes			

PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

This workshop is interactive throughout, as participants will be engaged in both discussion and active learning activities. While there will be portions of didactic teaching, dependent upon participants' prior knowledge and experience with critical questioning, much of the workshop should be participant driven. This workshop is intentionally planned with flexibility to allow the facilitator to make choices about pacing, dissemination of a critical question database and discussion-based techniques.

Active learning activities and engaged discussion ensure a greater number of opportunities for individuals with different learning styles to participate in the workshop. Individuals who are not comfortable speaking in large groups have opportunities to share their thoughts with a partner or in small groups. In addition, rather than passive listening to lecture-based teaching, participants are engaged in participatory discussion throughout. The collaborative approach to this workshop is intended to promote shared thought and open space for idea sharing.

Room Set-Up and Preparation

- Prior to the beginning of the workshop, participants should be directed to an online forum (hosted by the facilitator) in which portions of the Pagliaro (2011) text should be made available to participants for reading. While it is at the discretion of the facilitator to choose which portion of the book to share (within appropriate copyright limitations and/or with the permission of the publisher), it is recommended that the prompt questions be offered as a model. The book can also be a required text for the workshop.
- Workshop participants should be encouraged to bring a laptop computer to the workshop.
- This workshop requires space to collect the critical questions designed by the group, so it is highly recommended that the room be outfitted with a computer and smartboard that will allow the questions to be uploaded into an online forum. If this is not available, the facilitator should record questions using the chalk/whiteboard or chart paper.
- It is recommended that movable chairs be available to facilitate both large and small group discussion and that space be available for workshop participants to use laptop computers

(tables or chairs with desks) to access the case study websites. The room must also allow for internet access.

This workshop uses the think-pair-share active learning technique to facilitate discussion around creating examples of critical questions. This will work best in pairs, but can be modified to groups of 3-4 participants. There is no maximum number of participants, however the process of sharing out will take longer if everyone has an opportunity and there are many participants.

Large and Small Group Discussion

- Use the model questions in Appendix B as a guide for the large group portion of the workshop (and set the stage for a similar discussion in the small group activity that follows).
- When participants engage in small group discussion, the facilitator should circulate the room, offering prompting questions to quiet groups that may need assistance in starting their discussions.
- The facilitator should refer to the Pagliaro (2011) text for examples of critical and non-critical questions.

Wrap-Up

- During wrap-up section of workshop, the facilitator may have flexibility depending upon remaining time. If time permits, a wrap-up discussion should occur with questions such as:
    - How might you apply the critical questioning technique to your own classroom?
    - How might you consider your lesson planning differently now that you have participated in this workshop?
- Another option is to give the participants one of the prompts listed above (or similar) and ask them to respond in writing and turn in their reflection before leaving. Answers can then be posted on the online forum for further consideration and follow-up.

APPENDIX A
Suggested List of Music Education Methods

This workshop is structured around methods that are often present and/or encouraged among music education students. The following list offers several music education methods that may be used as models that students may critically question. If they are not familiar with these methods, resources to websites that will offer more information about the organization are presented. Additional methods may be offered at the discretion of the facilitator.

The Kodaly Method
http://www.oake.org/
A child-developmental approach to sequencing music learning that incorporates rhythm syllables, movable do solfège, and engagement with folk music.

The Gordon Institute for Music Learning
http://www.giml.org
A method that uses cognitive theory and the concepts of audiation discrimination and inference as they relate to musical aptitude.

The Orff-Schulwerk Method
http://www.aosa.org
A developmental approach to music learning that engages with a child's world of play and uses modal singing, instruments, and dance to encourage learning by doing.

Musical Futures
http://www.musicalfutures.org
An informal approach to music teaching and learning that "teaches by doing," often with a traditional rock band set-up where students are encouraged to experiment with guitar, bass, drums, vocals, etc.

Traditional Ensemble Music
http://www.americanbandmaster.org
http://www.nafme.org
http://www.cmea.ca
Traditional ensemble music consists of concert band, choral ensemble, and traditional orchestral ensembles.

The Dalcroze Method
http://www.dalcrozecanada.com
Approach to musical learning where students learn through movement before visual representation. Aims to promote a solid rhythmic understanding to promote musical expression.

The Suzuki Method
http://www.suzukiontario.org
Approach to musical learning that focuses on playing from a young age and advocates learning by ear before reading written musical notation.

APPENDIX B
Critical Questioning Worksheet

1. How do you define “critical questioning”?

2. Read through the information provided about the case study and/or consider assumptions you have about this method of music education. As a group, discuss pros and cons of each method.

3. What questions can you ask that might help you to interrogate the “cons” written on your list?

4. What questions can you ask that might help you to interrogate the “pros” you have discussed? What assumptions does your pro list make?

5. Consider the Pagliaro (2011) reading you completed prior to the workshop. How do your questions align with Pagliaro’s questioning technique? Can you use her technique to inform your own questions?

Use the space below to develop a working list of critical questions you might use in your own classes. All of the critical questions developed during the workshop will be shared by the facilitator.