Chapter 13
Curriculum as Professional Action

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The culminating issue in any professional framework for music teaching and learning involves complex questions concerning curriculum and instruction. Analyzing the concept of "curriculum" provides a foundation for building answers to some of these questions.

Curriculum is conceptualized in many ways. For example, traditionalists define curriculum as nothing more than a written plan. In contrast, contemporary theorists conceive curriculum in more complex terms, because the "what" of education cannot be realistically decided apart from the "why" and "who," and because issues of "when" and "how" inevitably circle backward and forward to decisions about why, who, and what. Accordingly, at the other end of the spectrum, some theorists take the broad view that curriculum is "what is taught in school or what is intended to be learned" (Posner and Rudnitsky 1986, 7–8). In more detail, curriculum can be conceived as "the planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal and social competence" (Tanner and Tanner 1975, 45).

Curriculum becomes even more complex when we realize that a fully informed, professional approach to curriculum development requires curriculum makers to decide key issues in relation to their knowledge and beliefs about alternative concepts of child and adolescent development, education, schooling, teaching, learning, assessment, and educational psychology (for example, behaviorism, cognitive theory), all of which include fundamental societal issues of diversity, democracy, equity, and social justice.

In music education, we must also consider curriculum making in relation to our beliefs about the nature and value of music making, listening, musical experience, creativity, and a long list of related artistic issues. This picture gets even more complicated when we realize that curriculum theorists have proposed many different approaches to curriculum development since Franklin Bobbitt established the field

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of curriculum studies in his book, *The Curriculum* (1918). Let us take a brief look now at some of the most common concepts of curriculum development.

Concepts of Curriculum Development

The technological approach, often called the Tyler rationale (after its author, Ralph Tyler), maintains that curriculum development should follow a four-step linear process: (a) state the objectives (or ends) of learning in specific terms; (b) select learning activities (or means) in relation to one's objectives; (c) organize learning activities in relation to objectives; and (d) develop means of evaluation in relation to one's objectives. In this view, it is essential that objectives describe the subject content that students should know and be able to do so that teachers can recognize such behavior when they see it. In this approach, curriculum designers select a type of organizing element (for example, behaviors, or verbal concepts) in order to sequence teaching and learning. Tyler's aim was to offer a highly rationalized or "scientific" way of designing curricula to bring about changes in students' behavior.

Because Tyler's simple, linear procedure was straightforward, and because it fit the mechanistic notions of behavioral psychology (popular in the 1950s), his approach was widely adopted across subject disciplines, including music, in the middle of the twentieth century. Some curriculum theorists and music educators still advocate variations on the Tylerian approach.

One such variation on Tyler's scheme emerged in the 1960s. Instead of beginning with behavioral objectives, some curriculum theorists began stating objectives in terms of verbal concepts about the "structure" of their subject domains or "disciplines." The "structure-of-disciplines" approach to curriculum making (advocated by Jerome Bruner and Philip Phenix, and Bennett Reimer in music) was based on the assumption that every subject has a foundational pattern of elements that could be organized by means of verbal concepts. This idea had two other implications: (a) curricula ought to be sequenced according to verbal concepts about a subject's "inherent structure" (for example, melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.) and (b) subject matter experts (not teachers) should take responsibility for deciding the structure of each subject and stating instructional objectives for teachers and students to follow. Many music curricula combine variations on Tyler's formula with the "structure-of-disciplines" approach. Examples of the latter include general music texts for "aesthetic music education" that organize lessons and units in terms of verbal concepts about the so-called elements, processes, and styles of musical works.

In summary, many music education theorists in the past have been persuaded that the conservative, technical-rational procedures traditionally used in scholastic curriculum making are entirely appropriate for music curriculum development.

Although there are several curriculum approaches toward the liberal end of the continuum, variations on "self-actualization" and "social constructivism" are gaining ground among curriculum developers, including music educators. Developing curricula for self-actualization evolves from mutual decision making among

students and teachers. Understandings are developed in relation to projects of interest: learning popular musics; composing; learning chamber music in small, informal, peer groups, with the help of teachers who take an informal approach, which might range across a continuum of possibilities, from a coaching stance to a completely open, hands-off teacher-student relationship. Broad goals (not atomistic behaviors) act as guides for teachers and students. The overall aim is to empower students to achieve self-growth, self-esteem, well-being, and enjoyment, now and throughout students' lifelong musical engagements. Portfolio assessment may fit this mode of curriculum, which is designed locally, and with students.

Postmodern curriculum developers (sometimes called "social constructivists") look to societal problems for what students need to investigate critically. The intent is to empower students as democratic citizens dedicated to solving problems of social equity and social justice. This approach emphasizes critical reflection, dialogue, student-community involvement, and the interrogation of all manner of "texts," as this term is understood in the postmodern context. In this approach, no defined body of musical "knowledge" or musical engagements can be decided beforehand. No form of "testing" is legitimate because (for one thing) there is no one true answer to any problem, no one "right" source of universally valid knowledge. Today, a small but growing number of music educators are seeking ways to involve students in issues of democracy, equity, and social justice.

In theory, then, there are several different concepts of curriculum from which to choose, and many different ways to conceive, develop, and design curricula for every subject. Nowadays, however, this is not what happens in practice. Why?

Curriculum the "Right" Way

Many scholars suggest that America is currently in the grip of a business model of education and curriculum that draws upon the pseudoscientific, behavioral values of Tylerian curriculum development, and the input-output models of instructing-and-testing that follow from this orientation. America's current preoccupation with educational reform, national standards, standardized tests, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are the contemporary equivalents of these top-down, managerial-behavioral approaches of bygone years, especially the 1950s.

Who could possibly disagree with (let alone oppose) something called "educational reform"? This is a noble agenda on the face of it. But its consequences have been devastating. For example, one study in 2004 reported that 26,000 of 93,000 public schools in the United States failed to make adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB. In other words, NCLB assumes that measuring schools is equivalent to fixing them. Moreover, "reform" is mostly concerned with "training" students. NCLB-driven "reformers" are not concerned with "educating" in the sense of providing a balanced curriculum for the whole child. If they were, then they would employ holistic evaluations and provide appropriate funding for carrying out the edicts of NCLB.

As Richard Colwell (2004) emphasizes, "educational reform" is directed and powered by politicians and business leaders who put marketplace capitalism above all else. In other words, says Colwell, marketplace educators will fund schools and teachers if and only if teachers are preparing students "to compete successfully, not only for jobs in their own country, so better products are made and grown, but with competitors throughout the world" (2004, 18). This agrees with Michael Apple: "For all too many of the pundits, politicians, corporate leaders, and others, education is a business and should be treated no differently than any other business" (2001, 1–2).

Apple puts these themes in a broader context when he argues that America's turn toward standardized curricula and testing is rooted in the fear of losing in international competition and a deep dread that "Western traditions" (for example, the English language, Western religions, and so forth) will be overwhelmed and lost if people from Latin American, Asia, and other non-Western cultures succeed in the global marketplace. Accordingly, he points out, conservative forces have been fairly successful in taking control of American education by boiling it down to simplistic issues of economic productivity, a "return" to more "rigorous standards," and non-critical thinking. Indeed, when teachers and students are forced to spend more and more time on behavioristic "achievement standards," teaching and learning will be much less creative and critically reflective.

In the minds of marketplace educators and conservative politicians, testing subject matter content is the key to winning control of the American curriculum and securing the long-term and short-term values and interests of American business (Colwell 2004, 18). In short, reformers are acting on a simple fact: what gets tested "rigorously" and what is good for business profit is what gets taught and valued in schools.

In summary, conservative business and political leaders want top-down control of American schools so they can control the future of the marketplace and protect "traditional" American values. In contrast, educational educators want control of the curriculum for the purpose of providing all children with a balanced curriculum for their complete development, which includes students' academic, social, culture, physical, artistic, and emotional selves.

Standards

The call in the United States to develop National Content and Achievement Standards for each subject began in 1983 with the reform rhetoric of the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk," a development that sparked controversy in most subject areas, except music. On the broadest level, "there was no public debate in the U.S. about the value of the selected basic subjects and whether these competencies fostered in these subjects resulted in the best mix for American-style democracy" (Colwell 2004, 19). On another level, many subject specialists challenge the "standards" notion, which claims that each subject has a core set of competencies that can be measured "objectively" (recall

the similar but flawed premises of the structure-of-disciplines approach). An even more basic problem with content and achievement standards is that they do not address basic issues of democracy, equity, and social justice in society and education. In sum, realistic standards will only be developed intelligently, applied fairly, and assessed rationally if/when the American government decides to assist schools and support teachers in tangible ways.

National Music Standards

Arts educators were among the first to submit Content Standards to the U.S. Secretary of Education in 1994. "The School Music Program: A New Vision" was intended to be the American music education profession's statement of Standards. This document was authored by a small group of like-minded colleagues at the top of the National Association for Music Education (called MENC then), who no doubt had the best hopes and intentions for their work and the profession's future. However, for one thing, the MENC membership was not polled about the final product of the task force that wrote the Music Standards. Instead, the authors deferred to the dominant ideology of reform by reducing the rich nature of music and music education to a list of simply stated skills that could be evaluated via quasi-behavioral methods.

To investigate the process by which this document was created, Cathy Benedict interviewed seven original members of the task force for the National Music Standards about the writing process (2003, 8). The music task force had four major concerns about the Music Standards. They needed to be: (a) as simple as possible, (b) about content in the simplest sense of "what students should know and be able to do," (c) measurable, and (d) politically uncontroversial. One member of the music task force explained that the leaders of MENC insisted on a united front due to the prevailing belief that the survival of American music education depends on speaking with one voice (Benedict 2003, 115). Note the heavy emphasis on keeping the Standards simple, measurable, and uncontroversial. This seriously minimalist approach to the complexity of music education raises a host of troubling issues. Accordingly, and compared to other fields, music education remains an immature and uneasy domain, largely because too many organizational leaders will not tolerate serious critical discourse that could lead to the kinds of deep curricular improvements that have occurred in other fields (for example, Math, English, and History).

In summary, the Music Standards suffer from several crucial weaknesses. First, because the Standards do not take a position on the rich and long-term values of music, there are no primary aims for teachers to pursue while teaching, only secondary targets (for example, singing in tune). Second, because the determination of content was driven by the unexamined mindset and motivation to measure musical achievement in terms of observable behaviors, the Music Standards are fundamentally positivistic. Accordingly, although it is possible to "measure" whether a child is (say) singing in tune, doing so tells us very little about assessing a child's growth in musical understanding and nothing about the deeper benefits that musical

achievements may or may not contribute to the child's life. In other words, without a critically reasoned foundation for music education, teachers are likely to (a) "teach" simplistic and incorrect notions of "what students should be able to do" (for example, "teaching singing" as technically accurate sound producing, with no concern for musical expression, let alone democratic engagement) and (b) "achieve" the contents of the Standards according to some type of measures (which are still not agreed upon even now, 15 years later), while children nonetheless remain lacking in musicianship and musical fulfillment.

The Standards movement represents conformity and compliance with the most conservative forces in American culture (past and present). In my view, music and music education should be free of such strictures so that music teaching can operate as a powerful force for individual creativity and empowerment. Indeed, there is a serious danger that judging children in relation to music achievement standards (as currently conceived) will drive a stake into the heart of what many music teachers want most: to foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn music now and in the future. Moreover, and although the National Music Standards were never intended to be a philosophy or a curriculum for music education, this is what they have become for many states and counties across the United States. But again, as I emphasized above, what music educators need is not a point-form list of simple Standards; what teachers need, first and foremost, is a critically reasoned concept of the nature and value of music and music education, including a concept of what musical understanding is.

Curriculum Making for Music Education

During the last 20 years, leading scholars and teachers have proposed alternatives to the conventional and problematic notions of curriculum development. One of these is called "practical curriculum inquiry." This approach has its roots in the writings of pragmatic philosophers (for example, Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey). How does practical curriculum making differ from today's conservative, minimalist, top-down procedures?

Traditional curriculum theory directs teachers to either follow or develop curricula by looking outside themselves and their situations. Teachers in all subjects have been told to test students in relation to a standard set of behaviors and state examinations. In contrast, advocates of practical curriculum development urge teachers to look to themselves and their own teaching circumstances. Practical curriculum making holds that the most important solutions to curriculum problems will not be found in lists of Standards or written lesson plans (although the latter are usually required by administrators, or valuable for novice teachers, experienced teachers seldom construct them or need them). Instead, solutions to serious curriculum issues lie in teachers' critically reflective philosophical thinking about music and education and their specific teaching-learning situations. Practical curriculum (a) replaces the top-down, marketplace notion of teachers as curriculum "retailers and testers" with

an emphasis on teachers as reflective practitioners; (b) it emphasizes situated knowledge instead of the specification of acontextual objectives; and (c) it employs multidimensional forms of authentic assessment instead of behavioral measurements and standardized testing. So, in opposition to today's Standards movement and NCLB doctrine, practical curriculum making places the teacher-as-reflective practitioner at the center of curriculum development. How?

Curriculum Commonplaces

Virtually all teaching-learning situations involve several related "curriculum commonplaces": aims, knowledge, learners, teachers, teaching-learning processes, learning contexts, and evaluation.

These are commonplaces in the sense that they appear and reappear in all teaching-learning situations and in all discussions of curriculum making. A comprehensive curriculum must resolve the problems presented by each and by the interactions among them.

Commonplaces are open categories: they remain empty until "filled in" by each teacher's critically reasoned beliefs, understandings, intentions, and actions. What a teacher believes and does in relation to the commonplaces before, during, and after each teaching-learning episode shape the educational experiences of learners in that specific teaching-learning situation. One word for "specific teaching-learning situation" is curriculum. *A curriculum is something that teachers and learners experience in specific situations as a result of interactions between and among curriculum commonplaces*.

Praxial Curriculum Making

In *Music Matters* (Elliott 1995), I offer a praxial philosophy of music education that addresses each of the curricular commonplaces presented above. By filling in each of the commonplaces with the central tenets of praxial philosophy, I also offer a praxial orientation to music curriculum development. (I say "central tenets" because, of course, I cannot detail the entire philosophy here.) The upshot of this orientation is an overall concept of the music curriculum-in-action.

1. *Aims*: The aims of music education come from one's concept of the nature and human significance of music. In my view, music and music education have many values. Developing students' musicianship and listenership by integrating listening, performing, improvising, composing, arranging, conducting, and moving enables students to participate in creating musical expressions of emotions; musical representations of people, places, and things; and musical expressions of personal and cultural values. This range of opportunities for musical expression and creativity offers students numerous ways of giving artistic and cultural form to their feeling, thinking, valuing, evaluating, and believing related to an extraordinarily wide range

of matters, for example, political, narrative, and ideological values. All such musical expressions, in turn, engage other listeners' emotions, interests, and understandings.

Additionally, teaching and learning a variety of musical styles and works comprehensively (as music cultures) is an important form of intercultural education. Why? By teaching unfamiliar musics through active music making and listening, students engage in critical self-reflections and personal reconstructions of their relationships, assumptions, and preferences about other people, other cultures, and other ways of thinking and valuing. Inducting learners into unfamiliar musical practices through critical reflection links the central values of music education to the broader goals of education for democracy.

In and through doing all of the above, students can achieve enjoyment (or flow experiences), self-growth, self-knowledge (or constructive knowledge), and, through continuous involvements with music over time, self-esteem.

In *Music Matters* I propose that the most essential, long-term task facing our profession involves enrolling parents, colleagues, administrators, politicians, and others in the quest to make schools more educational and democratic. By "educational" I mean that schools should aim to develop students as people, not just job fillers. As many pragmatic philosophers have argued, education ought to be conceived for life as a whole, in the student's present life and for the future, not just for one aspect of life, such as work, or schooling. Indeed, much more is involved in the full and beneficial development of children than the acquisition of work skills, National Standards, and academic knowledge. Human cultures past and present pursue a fairly common set of "life goals" or "life values" that include happiness, freedom, wellness, fellowship, enjoyment, peaceful coexistence, self-growth, and self-esteem for oneself and empathy for others.

If this is so, then music education should be in the core curriculum from kindergarten through secondary school because music education can enable students to achieve these life goals, which can arise from being involved with others in musical ways of life. In other words, music education is a unique and major source of many fundamental life goals. By actively supporting the aims of music education, school systems increase the likelihood that students will learn to make a life as well as a living, both inside and outside school.

Another main theme of my praxial philosophy concerns social diversity. Due to the multicultural nature of music as a diverse human practice, and because of the many kinds of social actions and transactions that take place in the music curriculum-as-practicum, school music programs can be a primary way for students to achieve self-identity and self-respect.

2. *Musical Understanding*: Musical understanding is a form of working understanding; it is an extraordinarily rich form of multilayered knowing that is situated culturally, historically, and contextually. Musical understanding is made up of musicianship and listenership (a concept I coined in *Music Matters*) that include many subsets of musical knowing and doing, including "cognitive emotions" and "mindful feelings" that inform and guide the practical-cultural actions of music making and listening. In short, all forms of making music (performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting) depend upon and express themselves as

a multidimensional form of artistic understanding that depends on the interdependency of musicianship and listenership.

Musicianship and listenership are two sides of the same coin: That is, the types of knowledge required to make the music of a particular style-practice (to perform, improvise, compose, arrange, or conduct a certain kind of music) are the same types required for listening to that music. In *Music Matters* I explain the five kinds of such knowledge: procedural (informed action), formal (or verbal), informal (or experiential), impressionistic (or intuitive), and supervisory (or metacognitive) musical knowing.

Teaching for musical understanding means helping students develop rich, multidimensional forms of cognitive-affective-social-cultural knowing. Indeed, my praxial concept of musical understanding is not "cognitive" in the simplistic sense of isolated technical skills and verbal data processing. Far from it. For example, the social and situational nature of musical understanding, as I conceive it, is exemplified in the Dogomba musical community of Ghana, where, through their dancing, the community contributes to the several layers of rhythmic activity performed and improvised by Dogomba drummers. These musical performances, then, are concurrently personal and community events in the ethical and moral sense. One's musicing and listening reveals one's sense of musical and social ethics.

3. *Learners*: Musicianship is not something given "naturally" to some children and not to others. Musicianship is a form of thinking and knowing that is educable and applicable to all. Accordingly, all music students, whether they are in so-called general music programs, or a large ensemble setting, or something else (for example, a pop group, a taiko drum ensemble, a "new music" composition class, and a community music group of some kind) ought to be taught in the same way: as reflective musical practitioners. A music curriculum should be based on active, critically reflective music making of all kinds; on learning to listen in the contexts of music making of all kinds; on listening to recordings; on listening to live performances by students themselves; and on listening to guest artists and at concerts.

Because all music education programs share the same aims, all music education programs ought to provide the same basic conditions for achieving these aims: (a) authentic musical challenges (that is, musical pieces and projects of high quality) and (b) the musicianship-listenership needed to meet these challenges. What will differ between and among music education programs across grade levels, school regions (and so on) is not the essential content of the music curriculum (that is, musical understanding) but, rather, the kinds and levels of musical challenges inherent in the curriculum materials chosen for and with students. In addition, music programs will differ in the kinds of music-making media (for example, computers, wind instruments, choirs, and recreational instruments) again chosen for and with students.

4. *Learning Processes*: Music education is not only concerned with developing musicianship and musical creativity in the present. Equally essential is teaching students how to continue developing their musicianship in the future. This involves a kind of learning process that students can both engage in and learn how to employ themselves. I contend that the growth of musical understanding depends on

constructivist and social constructivist pedagogical principles (such as progressive musical problem solving, problem finding, and musical problem reduction) carried out in democratic and socially just learning contexts. Achieving competent musical understanding, and becoming musically creative, also involves learning to reflect critically on the creative musical potential of the musical ideas (interpretations, improvisations, etc.) one generates and selects.

Implicit in all these processes is the broader requirement that all music students be engaged in rich and challenging music-making projects in classroom situations that are deliberately organized as close approximations of real musical practices (which, of course, constantly evolve over time).

5. *The Teacher*: Music educators must possess both musical understanding and "educatorship." To teach music effectively, a teacher must possess, embody, and exemplify musical understanding. Children develop musicianship, but through the ethical and caring actions, words, advice, feedback, interactions, and transactions of musically proficient teachers.

Educatorship is a distinct form of procedural knowledge that, in turn, draws upon several other kinds of educational knowledge, including formal, informal, impressionistic, and supervisory educational knowledge.

6. *Learning Context*: The praxial curriculum-in-action centers on achieving self-growth and musical enjoyment from the thoughtful actions of music making and music listening of all kinds. Teachers and students work together to meet the musical challenges involved in authentic musical projects through reflective musical making of all kinds. Music listening is directed, first, to the music being made by students themselves. All music that students are learning to interpret and perform, improvise, compose, arrange, and conduct is approached as a "full course meal," that is, as a multidimensional challenge (Elliott 1995, 199–201) to be made artistically and listened for in all its relevant dimensions (interpretive, structural, expressive, representational, cultural, and ideological). In support of listening-in-context, carefully selected recordings must be introduced in direct relation to the musical practices students are being inducted into.

The praxial music curriculum is deliberately organized to engage learners in musical actions, interactions, and transactions with close approximations of real musical style-cultures. The praxial curriculum immerses students in music-making projects that require them to draw upon the standards, traditions, lore, landmark achievements, "languages," and creative strategies of the musical practices of which their projects are a part, and to work creatively inside and outside the boundaries of those practices. From this perspective, the music teaching-learning environment is itself a key element in the music education enterprise. The musical actions of learners are enabled and promoted by the interactive, goal-directed swirl of questions, issues, and knowledge that develop around students' efforts as reflective musical practitioners.

By treating all music students (including general music students) as reflective musical practitioners, and by teaching all students how to find and solve musical problems in "conversation" with selected musical practices, music educators situate students' musical thinking and knowing.

7. *Evaluation*: Educators today make an important distinction between two forms of assessment: formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment requires using a variety of cues and languages to give students constructive feedback about the quality of their efforts-in-the-moment. This casts music educators in the role of coaches who guide students by targeting their attention to key details of their musicing, by adjusting their acts of musicing and listening, and by cueing them to reflect critically about their musical actions.

In contrast, summative assessments or "achievement standards" usually require us to step back from our students efforts in order to examine, test, judge, and otherwise reduce their musicing and listening to brief, fragmented tests of isolated skills and facts that we can "describe" as numerical grades and/or brief verbal reports.

Achieving the aims of music education depends on formative assessment. Learners need constructive feedback about why, when, and how they are meeting musical challenges (or not). Formative feedback promotes self-growth, musical independence, mutuality, and enjoyment. Students also learn to assess their own musical thinking-in-action by learning what counts as novice, competent, proficient, and expert musical involvement, as they pursue these stages according to their own desires. To become knowledgeable and independent judges of musical quality and creativity, students need regular opportunities to reflect on the results of their musicianship and of their peers. Thus, assessment is the joint responsibility of teachers and students.

Conclusion

Much more needs to be said and done toward challenging efforts to perpetuate technological curriculum making in music education. In my view, our best prospects lie in developing curriculum approaches that integrate musical understanding, self-actualization, and social justice in and for music education. I have attempted to outline an example of this in the above discussion of praxial music education. However, I welcome the fact that several of my colleagues are working along similar lines, and that debates about our efforts are alive and vibrant in this volume.

Let me end with a positive word. When times get difficult in society and education, sustaining our efforts for transformations in music education depends on maintaining hope for more energetic democracies and better societies—a society that we can develop in principle and hold in our imaginations. My hope is that this small chapter will contribute to the larger movement called "Action for Change" that is struggling to sustain and transform music education in and for a better society.

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