

Situational Pedagogy in Community Music

Developing a pedagogical approach which accounts for and responds to the changing needs of music learners and music learning situations

Bex Mather & David A. Camlin, Sage Gateshead

Abstract

The great diversity of Community Music (CM) practices requires a flexible and responsive approach to conceiving of pedagogy: one size does not fit all. In this paper, we set out an approach to training undergraduate students of CM at Sage Gateshead which prepares them for a professional life where they might find themselves adapting their approaches to teaching-learning situations in response to a range of situational factors including: participant (and practitioner) previous experience and skill level; situational purpose; performative factors; changes in collective - or individual - group identity and aspiration; aspects of leadership and followership; instrumental arrangements; musical genre.

Building on the business leadership model of Situational Leadership developed by Ken Hersey (Hersey, 1997) and more recent dialogical approaches to pedagogy (Alexander, 2008; Price, n.d.; Wegerif, 2012), we outline a model of Situational Pedagogy for CM which recognises the changing nature of group music learning situations, and the need for an adaptable and flexible approach to pedagogy which accounts for the complexities of individual situations of music-making.

In particular, this approach to teaching and learning supports student CM practitioners to:

- appreciate and adopt a wider range of teaching styles and approaches;

- emphasise learners' needs, capabilities and aspirations in curriculum design and session planning;
- resist the common trap of teaching the way they themselves were taught.

Introduction

Pedagogical approaches used by CM practitioners vary according to the situation, not just because the situation demands it (Harrison & Mullen, 2013) but also because within these different situations, the context of music-making may shift as a project develops. Groups of participants might expect to be led from initial engagement with simple musical forms, to more complex musical forms as part of their natural evolution as a musical group. A pedagogical approach to music learning therefore needs to be able to adapt and respond not just to these basic changes in an evolving musical context, but also to subtle differences in group make-up, individual preferences, pre-existing skills levels and a host of other factors which are particular to each situation of music learning.

One of the correlatives of this kind of situated practice, is that the pedagogical field of CM spans a number of inter-related continuums of practice, including formal-informal (Department for Education, 2004; Green, 2008), pedagogic-heutagocic (Price, 2013, n.d.) and technical-ethical (Bowman, 2005). A more straightforward conception of pedagogic practice might tend to view practical situations of music teaching and learning as occurring at one end or the other of these continuums, giving us a rather dichotomised view of music education, with more formal, pedagogical approaches to developing technical skill at one end, and more informal, heutagocic approaches to personal and social development through music at the other. However, the reality is considerably more complex. While arguments about 'aesthetic' vs. 'praxial' models of music education (Bowman, 2005; Elliott, 1995, 2009; Elliott & Silverman, 2013) may have been a consistent feature of academic debate around music

education (Hallam & Creech, 2010) critics argue that such distinctions ‘don’t do anyone any service, they don’t really have any meaning’ (Mullen, n.d.)

While some music educators may work exclusively in either formal, non-formal or informal settings, surely many more operate *across* all of these settings, and negotiate the pedagogical changes which ensue without much consternation. An ‘average’ day for a CM practitioner - if such a thing existed - may include giving private music instruction, leading group music-making and facilitating a more informal drop-in session for local bands, all in the same day. As practitioners, of course we adapt our pedagogy to suit the situation. Kathryn Deane makes the point that ‘Community music is often accused of not having a pedagogy. On the contrary: it probably has too many’ (Deane, 2013, p.51).

Rather than viewing leadership as a fixed quality of the leader (Lewin, 1944), the reality of effective leadership is that it is contingent and situational; it depends on the circumstances of its existence for meaning. Moreover, it is fluid - in the sense of being subject to change - and responsive to the needs of its ‘followers’. In that sense, it emerges from teaching-learning situations in response to them. As CM practitioners, we are probably used to moving between the more ‘instructional learning’ of formal ‘pedagogy’, the ‘self-directed learning’ of andragogy’ and the ‘self-determined learning’ of heutagogy (Price, 2013, p. 212) as the situation requires. In a similar vein, while, ‘we may engage in musicking and teaching either technically or ethically,’ (Bowman, 2009, p. 117), the reality is that we are often required to do both. We are concerned with our participants’ development as musicians, and we are also concerned with their development as people.

More sophisticated conceptions of music education pedagogy which account for this situational complexity will help CM - and music education more generally - to evolve, guiding research and practice beyond two dimensional thinking around ‘formal’ and

‘informal’ to a place where, ‘it might be possible for research to help teachers consciously to adopt a range of pedagogies, adapting them to their students and institutional requirements’ (Cain, 2013, p.89, p.90) Mullen has long advocated that the CM practitioner, ‘moves through a range of roles’ as part of what he terms the, ‘facilitraining rainbow’(Mullen, 2008), and Higgins echoes this, suggesting that, ‘facilitators are never static in one approach or another but move in and out of roles as the group dictates’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 148).

In supporting undergraduate CM students to develop a better understanding of this pedagogical complexity, as well Mullen’s and Higgins’ ideas, we have found ourselves referring to a model of leadership which has largely fallen out of use - and print - but which we think may be due a re-appraisal.

Situational Leadership Model

Situational Leadership (Hersey, 1997) was developed as a management leadership framework by Dr Paul Hersey in the 1990s. The model recognises the complex inter-relationship between what Hersey terms ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’, emphasising the ‘importance of a leader’s diagnostic ability’ (p.57) i.e. their ability to understand the ‘readiness’ of ‘followers’:

‘Situational Leadership is based on an interplay among (1) the amount of task behaviour a leader provides; (2) the amount of relationship behaviour a leader provides; and (3) the readiness level that followers demonstrate in performing a specific task or activity.’ (Hersey, 1997, pp. 57–58)

Hersey offers a diagnostic tool for leaders to assess followers ‘readiness’ suggesting that, ‘the two major components of readiness are ability and willingness’ i.e. ‘ready, willing and able’, (p.47) where ability is, ‘the knowledge, experience and skill that an individual or group brings to a particular task or activity’ and willingness, ‘has to do with confidence, commitment, and

motivation to accomplish a specific task or activity’ (p.46). ‘Followers’ may be more or less able, and more or less willing to participate in an activity. Taken in relation to each other, these two characteristics reveal a rich field of ‘followership’ which Hersey divides into four categories of follower ‘readiness’, where followers are either:

- unable to carry out the task independently, and also unwilling or insecure / lacking in confidence to attempt to do so (R1);
- unable to perform the task independently yet, but willing or more confident to do it with guidance (R2);
- able to perform the task independently, but unwilling or insecure about doing it on their own initiative (R3);
- able and willing or confident (R4)

The relationship between these levels of followership ‘readiness’ is shown in the following diagram:

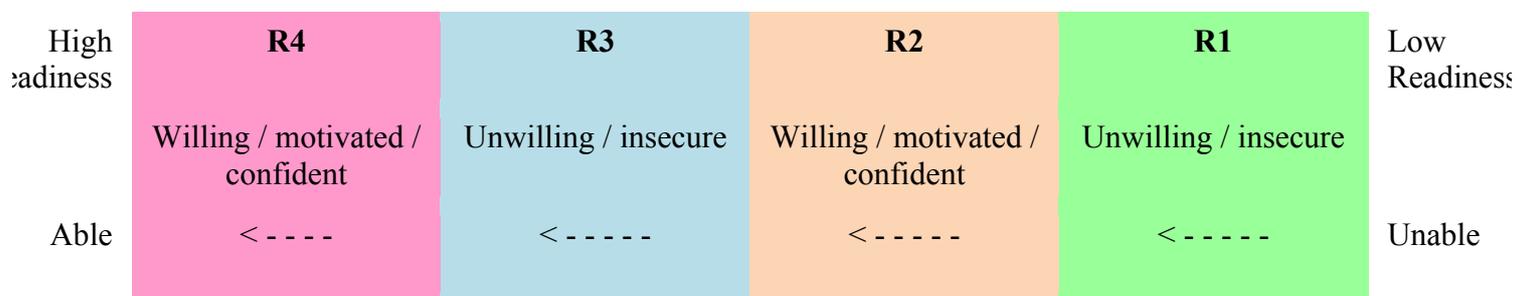


Fig. 1 – Follower Readiness

The development of competence works from right to left across the table. Interestingly, Hersey recognises a ‘dip’ in competence / confidence as followers move from R2 to R3, and ‘are given the responsibility to accomplish task on their own’ (p.68), effectively giving two cycles of development, one (R1-R2) while learners are developing initial competence, and one (R3-R4) while they are learning to accomplish the task independently.

These levels of ‘Readiness’ then guide the deployment of a corresponding leadership style, particularly in terms of the amounts of ‘task’ and ‘relationship’ behaviour, as shown in the following diagram:

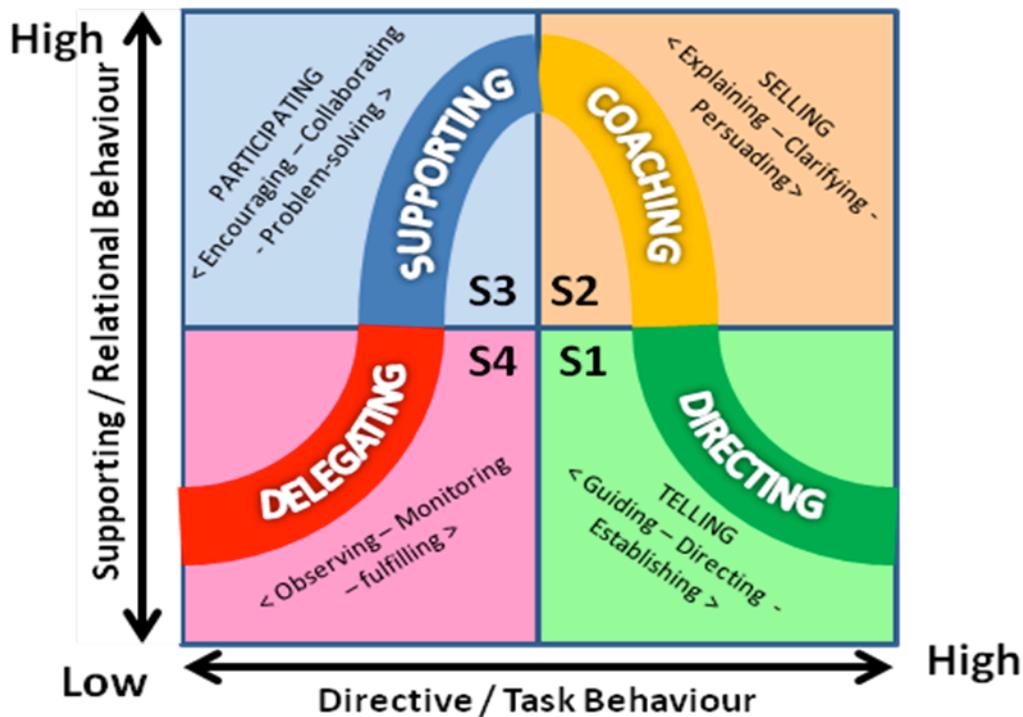


Fig. 2 Situational Leadership

Each of the four kinds of leadership behaviour relates to the corresponding level of follower ‘readiness’ as ‘followers’ / learners progress in confidence and competence i.e. R1 follower ‘readiness’ suggests an S1 Directing style of leadership, and so on. Learners who are still acquiring competence in a given task are best supported by S1 Directing and S2 Coaching styles of leadership, while learners who are able to perform a given task confidently and competently may benefit from the opportunity to explore the scope of their acquired skills with more independence, hence S3 Supporting and S4 Delegating styles of leadership become more appropriate.

Situational Pedagogy in Community Music

Although we remain cautious of any 'fixed' or taxonomic responses to leadership situations - a leader's intuition and tacit knowledge of teaching-learning situations, and the people involved, must always be allowed to inform the situation - the general principles of Hersey's model seem to bear a useful relationship to music teaching-learning situations, particularly when it comes to finding appropriate pedagogical approaches to different groups of learners, or individuals. It invites critical reflection, by bringing the needs of learners, their existing skill levels and their aspirations to the fore.

For musicians at the beginning of their training as educators in particular, critically reflecting on a musical leadership challenge within the simple structure of the Situational Leadership model supports them to both critically analyse their own leadership choices, and reflect more objectively on the nature of particular groups and group teaching-learning situations. In the particular context of the BA (Hons) Community Music course we deliver at Sage Gateshead, the model serves as a useful springboard into critical reflection, within a curriculum where reflective practice is emphasised (Brockbank & McGill, 2004; Kolb, 1983; Schön, 1984, 1990). Reflection-in-action (Schön, 1984, p. 243) might be viewed as a key component to making the necessary adaptations suggested in Hersey's model. These adaptations (adapting communication, task and relationship behaviour) may happen from situation-to-situation, week-to-week within a process, or even moment-to-moment.

Followership

In terms of music education, follower 'ability' might relate to a number of things, including: the current levels of general musicianship skills of individuals or the group e.g. ability to work with 'pulse', hold their part against contrasting parts; their technical skills - ability to produce good 'tone' on their instrument / voice; their practical knowledge of musical

concepts.. Follower ‘willingness’ might be to do with their engagement - as individuals or collectively - in the group musical process, and their general confidence in any / all of the above.

Leadership

The range of possible leadership responses to the many variables of ‘followership’ then becomes a complex pedagogical process. In terms of ‘task’ behaviour, individuals may need additional support to acquire the particular musical skills which will facilitate their participation. Or the whole group may need to work on aspects of collaboration to strengthen their collective musical expression. In terms of ‘relational’ aspects, there may be social aspects of group process and collective working which need addressing. Ways of differentiating roles and responsibilities so that everyone is able to contribute to the best of their ability, whilst being sufficiently challenged, requires negotiation and testing.

How leadership is ‘shared’ in these more ‘delegated’ or ‘dialogic’ teaching-learning situations becomes an important aspect of the group’s – and individual – development, similar to the kind of ‘self-determined learning’ (Price, 2013, p. 212) of more heutagogy situations exemplified by ensembles like the Orpheus Ensemble where ‘individual musicians constantly rotate formal leadership roles, while others spontaneously take on ad hoc leadership responsibilities in response to organizational needs and the specific demands of each piece of music’ (Hackman, Seifert, & Economy, 2001).

More experienced practitioners might take all of this as a ‘given’ - as we acquire these skills, we have to think about them less. However, the acquisition of situational pedagogical skill - matching an appropriate pedagogical approach to the learners within a group - is something that requires time and practice. At the outset of a developing practice in group musical leadership, practitioners may be thinking less about the learners, and more about a host of

other concerns, including the musical content they want to cover, remembering the different parts they have to teach, their own insecurities or anxieties about their leadership, communicating their musical ideas clearly, and the taxing challenge of being responsible for the group sound. Using the Situational Pedagogy model as a reflective tool supports practitioners toward a more diagnostic approach to pedagogy, bringing issues around facilitating the learners' development to the fore.

Assessing where participants are at in terms of their willingness, skill and confidence is not an easy task, especially as none of those things can be easily measured with much objectivity. Willingness might well be a function of someone's confidence, learned behaviour and / or expectations of the environment, culture or situation, while skills are often situation-dependent - for example, very skilled musicians used to working exclusively from notated scores can quickly experience a dip in their skill and confidence when called upon to improvise, making them much less willing to do so, and vice versa.

Therefore, the skill of musical leadership is in being able to adopt a range of pedagogical approaches to suit the particular teaching-learning situation, but always in response to the dialogical shifts within that situation: 'Because teaching occurs not in isolation but in relation to students, a teacher's knowledge-in-action is what gives meaning to the teaching-learning situation' (Elliott, 1995, p. 251). While more experienced practitioners might do this automatically, drawing on their tacit knowledge of such teaching-learning situations, the Situational Pedagogy model provides a helpful framework for less experienced practitioners to reflect on the situation and the developing needs of the learners within it - literally, to deconstruct the teaching-learning dialogue - and deploy an appropriate pedagogical response which will maintain learners' engagement and ongoing learning.

Limitations

There are, of course, some obvious flaws in the model. The risk of any kind of categorisation of learners is in many ways to go against the fluid and emergent nature of the model itself. Putting 'followers' in 'boxes' according to their readiness and willingness and then matching such 'readiness' to a specified pedagogy could be interpreted as quite restrictive, or a rather simplistic way of justifying a particular pedagogical approach. Of course, 'the map is not the territory' (Korzybski, 1933) and the reality of music teaching-learning situations is much more complex than this simple model allows. Moreover, the model seems to place the development of the group squarely as the responsibility of the leader, rather than in a 'dialogic' process with the group. Who decides when a 'follower' / learner is 'ready', and for what?

A cursory consideration of how it might be applied in practice reveals several further inconsistencies. For example, a more directive 'telling' approach with disengaged learners who might be sceptical about their own ability as well as learning in general might be a surefire way of ensuring their ongoing disengagement, whereas learning about their own motivation and interests might be a better starting place for a dialogue about what might be achieved together. Furthermore, people may be competent in one context, but not another e.g. working with score / improvisation. Therefore, the model does not replace *common sense* as a key informant for how to work with people.

However, the strength of the model is not in its being rigidly applied as a taxonomy of learning needs and corresponding pedagogical approaches. What the model *does* do is invite practitioners to consider the learners / 'followers' in a given situation - and their learning needs - as a priority in any consideration of how to progress learning. Effective leadership consists in reading the subtle changes in levels of learners' competence and confidence in

different situations, and tailoring an appropriate response in each case, rather than assuming a more 'fixed' style of leadership with a group or an individual.

Implications

Situational approaches to pedagogy help to develop a discourse that goes beyond a discussion of more 'fixed' approaches to music teaching-learning, and counter the concern that teachers are only able to teach one way i.e. 'the way they were taught' (Zeserson, 2014, p. 23). A shift in focus from the pedagogical skills of the practitioner to the needs of the learners brings with it a compelling need for practitioners to broaden their pedagogical scope and attendant skills, in order to facilitate teaching-learning situations which are flexible and responsive to the needs of learners. Because this situational approach to pedagogy is what CM practitioners have much experience in, CM can take a lead on this aspect of workforce development, helping to facilitate a future workforce of music educators with a more flexible approach to teaching-learning, and able to move between more formal instruction and more delegated facilitation as the situation warrants.

Conclusion

Situational Pedagogy is a framework that we have found to be particularly helpful in the training and ongoing development of student CM practitioners, as it explores the interplay and the subtle shifts in group process and dynamics which can occur from session-to-session and from moment-to-moment; it helps to articulate those shifts in at least some of their complexity, rather than resorting to more fixed, or binary, responses. While we do not see it as a 'flawless' model, we believe it provides a useful concept through which to 'frame' critical reflection on musical teaching-learning situations. It invites conscious reflection,

interpretation and adaptation, highlighting the opportunities we have as practitioners to respond and adapt to teaching-learning situations.

References

- Adorno, T. W. (1973). *Negative Dialectics* (Reprint ed). New York: Continuum.
- Alexander, R. (2008). *Essays on Pedagogy* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Bowman, W. (2005). The Limits and Grounds of Musical Praxialism. In D. Elliott (Ed.), *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues* (pp. 52 – 78). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bowman, W. (2009). The Community in Music. *International Journal of Community Music*, 2(2/3), 109–128.
- Brockbank, A., & McGill, I. (2004). *Action Learning as a reflective process*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Brown, T., Higham, B., & Rimmer, M. (2014). *Whatever Happened to Community Music?* AHRC.
- Cain, T. (2013). “Passing it on”: beyond formal or informal pedagogies. *Music Education Research*, 15(1), 74–91.
- Camlin, D. A. (2015a). Whose Quality Is it Anyway? Inhabiting the creative tension between presentational and participatory music. *Journal of Arts and Communities*, (ArtWorks Special Edition). Retrieved from <http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-issue,id=2917/>
- Camlin, D. A. (2015b, August). *Music In Three Dimensions* (Doctoral Thesis). University of Sunderland, Sunderland.
- Camlin, D. A. (2016). Music In Three Dimensions. Presented at the ISME, Glasgow.

- Deane, K. (2013). How many pedagogies does it take to train a community musician? In *Reaching Out: music education with hard to reach children and young people* (pp. 41–52). The UK Association for Music Education - Music Mark.
- Deane, K., & Mullen, P. (2013). Community Music in the United Kingdom. In *Community Music Today*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Department for Education. (2004). *The Music Manifesto*. Department for Education.
- Elliott, D. J. (1995). *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*. OUP USA.
- Elliott, D. J. (Ed.). (2009). *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*. OUP USA.
- Elliott, D. J., & Silverman, M. (2013). Why Music Matters: Philosophical and Cultural Foundations. In *Music, Health and Wellbeing* (pp. 942–1447). OUP Oxford.
- Finney, J. (2013). Music Education: Still No Pedagogy! In *NAME 2012 Conference proceedings*.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. Ashgate.
- Hackman, J. R., Seifert, H., & Economy, P. (2001). *Leadership Ensemble: Lessons in Collaborative Management from the Worlds Only Conductorless Orchestra*. New York: Times Books.
- Hallam, S., & Creech, A. (2010). *Music education in the 21st century in the United Kingdom: achievements, analysis and aspirations*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Harrison, C., & Mullen, P. (2013). *Reaching out: Music Education with Hard to Reach Children and Young People*. UK Association for Music Education - Music Mark, The.
- Hersey, P. (1997). *The Situational Leader*. Center for Leadership Studies.
- Higgins, L. (2012). *Community Music: In Theory and In Practice*. OUP USA.

- Kolb, D. A. (1983). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (1st ed.). Financial Times/ Prentice Hall.
- Korzybski, A. (1933). A Non-Aristotelian System and its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics. *Science and Sanity*, 747–61.
- Lewin, K. (1944). The Dynamics of Group Action. *Educational Leadership*, 4, 195–200.
- Moser, P., & McKay, G. (Eds.). (2005). *Community Music: A Handbook* (Spi). Russell House Publishing Ltd.
- Mullen, P. (2008). Issues in Leadership for Community Music Workers. ISME Community Music Activity Commission, Rome.
- Mullen, P. (n.d.). What is “quality” in music work with children in challenging circumstances? Retrieved from <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/groups/musical-inclusion/discussions/what-%E2%80%98quality%E2%80%99-music-work-children-challenging-circumstances-in>
- Price, D. (2013). *Open: How we'll work, live and learn in the future*. England: Crux Publishing Ltd.
- Price, D. (n.d.). Why Pedagogy Is No Longer Enough. Retrieved from <http://engagedlearning.co.uk/?p=2212>
- Schön, D. A. (1984). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New edition). Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Schön, D. A. (1990). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (New Ed). John Wiley & Sons.
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (First Edition). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Turino, T. (2008). *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (annotated edition). University of Chicago Press.

Wegerif, R. (2012). *Dialogic: Education for the Internet Age*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Zeserson, K. (2014). *Inspiring Music for All*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Retrieved from

<http://www.phf.org.uk/news.asp?id=2232>