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Author/s:

Johnson, C;Lamothe, VC;Motoyama Narita, F;Clark, I;Mulholland, J;Meyers, N

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Chapter 12

Sharing Our Narratives on Developing Our Practice in Online Music Pedagogy

Carol Johnson

University of Melbourne, Australia

Virginia Christy Lamothe

Belmont University, USA

Flávia Motoyama Narita

Universidade de Brasília, Brazil

Imogen N. Clark

University of Melbourne, Australia

Joseph E. Mulholland

Berklee College of Music, USA

Nicholaus Meyers

Valley City State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter begins with an introduction focused on the importance of instructor's reflection on his/her teaching practices and pedagogy through the theoretical lens of Schön's work on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Five case narratives are presented that highlight instructors at different entry points into their experiences of teaching music online. The narratives outline significant learning processes that took place as instructors continued on their journey in teaching music online. The implications raised from the narratives identify the need for effective online learning systems for music, institutional support for instructors teaching music online, and a need for online music instructors to have resilience and adaptability when teaching music online. Additionally, the various contexts of teaching music online signals a need for future research in the areas of: active learning for online music courses, appropriate technology tools available with a LMS, and collaborative online music tasks for effective student learning outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Online music education provides both an engaging and fiscally-responsible model for deployment of the strategic development of formal music education. Once the need of this development is recognized (Jones, 2007), instructors can begin to address the problem of a decline in enrollment of music students at the post-secondary level (Leonhard, 2003). With traditional schools limited by course subjects and numbers, the online environment avails students to connect with like students in niche subject areas (Brown & Adler, 2008). It can be understood that music education is a niche subject area due to its required expertise, and therefore, online learning is a welcome solution for students wanting to engage in post-secondary music education performance as indicated by the increased number of course offerings (Webster, 2007). However, demand alone for online learning does not satisfy the requirement of essential music pedagogy (Himonides, 2012). One must be mindful that new programs, like online music programs, may challenge the method of traditional music education (Phillips, 2008). Therefore, today's music educators need to be prepared for an increasing youth population with technology-minded music class expectations (Webster, 2007), and equipped with an understanding of the essential teaching and learning components necessary for online learning.

Faced with online music teaching being an emerging field, instructors are not often given the opportunity to know how others in their field are teaching. The purpose of this chapter is four-fold: 1) To provide an overview of the importance of critical reflection in one's teaching practice; 2) To share critical pedagogical reflections of online practitioners in the area of music in higher education; 3) To highlight strategies and innovations implemented by music instructors to overcome noted challenges found within the online learning environments and 4) to identify areas for future research in the field.

Understanding how various instructors use their online environment for teaching music can be a helpful tool for both the instructors and those reading about their experiences. The focus of this chapter is to present five case narratives wherein instructors take time to reflect on their teaching and past experiences of approaching online music teaching. They represent current perspectives from Australia, Brazil, and the United States.

These narratives describe the spectrum of online music teaching faculty found in higher education – faculty members new to teaching music online, as well as those with over five years of online teaching experience. Each narrative provides insights into the contexts, challenges, and opportunities that are encountered when teaching music online. The final sections of the chapter (i.e., implications and future research) underscore the diverse teaching approaches implemented by instructors when shifting their traditional face-to-face teaching to an online format and how research can be assistive in evidencing effective practices and approaches for student engagement for the discipline of music.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REFLECTION

The process of self-reflection is not new to teaching, and presents the opportunity for instructors to explore and become aware of their teaching actions through identification of self-knowledge (Wieringa, 2011; Vazir, 2006). By sharing self-knowledge through narrative, willing instructors can take part in the process of inquiry and reflection on their past teaching (Beattie, 2001). Furthermore, ideas, notions and concepts surrounding one's lived experience (e.g., teaching practice), can be unearthed through the exploration of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as identified by Schön (1983, 1987).

Schön himself was an instructor, scholar, and jazz musician. In his book, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), Schön gave recognition to the professional's ability to possess a tacet knowing in regard to practice and how the professional responds to that knowledge and forms of problem-solving in a simultaneous manner. Building on these ideas, Schön coined reflection-in-action as a process that takes place while the task is happening. He further suggested that practitioners should be "studying those winning habits and trying to repeat them every time you perform" (p. 54). For example, an instructor may ask her students for a response to a specific question after a short teaching. If students are not able to respond with appropriate content knowledge and skill, the instructor may think about how to better reaffirm the content before the class is over. This demonstrates the immediacy of reflection in action.

Comparatively, reflection-on-action is the process of receiving new insights on our previous actions through reflection. Personal identities regarding one's teaching can emerge through exploration of reflection (Ayers, 1993). That is, when we take part in reflection-on-action, we can develop appropriate ideas and methods of approach based on our previous experiences and actions for our discipline. Attuned to the innovative and improvement of practice, Schön posited, "We reflect-on-action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1983, p. 26).

Both processes are integral to the practice of teaching. When we think about, and express explicitly what we did and why we did a task or practice, we may be able to ideate new and innovative ways to improve or advance our practice. The process of reflection-on-action in narrative form allows for our learning to be a shared experience. Through these narratives of reflection, instructors reading the narratives can often better understand their own contexts of teaching. When reading a particular case, we may also see our own practices talked about in the narrative as we identify opportunities for transferability to our own contexts (Polit & Beck, 2010).

REFLECTING ON TEACHING MUSIC ONLINE

It is likely no surprise that music departments are moving toward the inclusion of online music course offerings in their bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs. While there have been various distance learning courses offered in music over the past 40 years (e.g., *Open University*, UK), Internet-based baccalaureate music courses that were fully online began to emerge in the mid-2000s. For example, universities such as Valley City State in North Dakota, USA held their first fully online music course in 2004. The global context is similar with institutions like Open University's *Universidade de Brasília* offering online music education courses, and the United Kingdom's Open University initial offerings of online music and arts appreciation courses. While identifying the first global online music course offering is interesting and yet to be established in the research, the emergence of offering online music courses across the globe underscores the relevance of the need for understanding pedagogical opportunities and challenges of teaching music online.

In the following case narratives, there are similar explorations across the narratives (i.e., design strategies, challenges and online teaching surprises), and assistive descriptions of instructors' innovative solutions and strategies that have been implemented to provide engaged learning opportunities.

CASE ONE: MUSIC THERAPY ONLINE TO HONG KONG

I (Dr. Imogen Clark) work as a lecturer specializing in blended learning for Masters of Music Therapy students at the University of Melbourne, Australia. My position involves online teaching across 2 cohorts of students. One student cohort lives across various locations in the vast continent of Australia, and the other cohort lives in Hong Kong. The blended learning mode means that academic music therapy subjects (termed “courses” in the North American context) are taught wholly online, and students also receive face-to-face intensives twice a semester for practical music therapy subjects. The two subjects I teach, music therapy theory and music therapy research, are completely online.

I have been teaching music therapy theory to both blended learning and on-campus students in Australia since 2013. This has been a progressive learning experience for me, commencing first with a focus on face-to-face teaching and attempting to translate this pedagogy onto the online platform for my blended learning students. This year (2017), I also developed and taught an online version of the music therapy research subject for students living in Hong Kong. I completed a Graduate Certificate in University Teaching at the University of Melbourne in 2015, and have largely learned how to utilize technology “on the job.”

Design Strategies

Since the online platform for my music therapy theory subject is used by both blended learning and on-campus students, and is not strictly an online class, I will focus here on design strategies used to develop the fully online music therapy research subject for blended learning students in Hong Kong. Design strategies used in my teaching are largely informed by constructivist approaches to teaching whereby intended learning outcomes inform teaching and learning activities, which in turn inform assessments (Biggs & Tang, 2011). While this structured approach to teaching assisted me with subject design, I initially felt quite overwhelmed with the prospect of delivering a completely new subject online for students who were living in another culture from my own and spoke English as a second language. These large and obvious considerations were foremost in my mind when designing the online platform.

First, I recognized that the online platform would need to clearly deliver and communicate the curriculum. To do this, I tried to limit the number of pages on the online platform with the aim of making it easier to navigate. The pages were comprised of: Announcements, Subject Information, Staff Information, Weekly Learning Materials and Tasks, and Assessment (two further generic pages - My Grades and Handbook, were also listed). The Weekly Learning Materials and Tasks, set up as the main “go to” page for students, was further broken down into three module folders with four weekly topic folders in each. Each week, I released learning materials and tasks for the set topic at the same time so that students knew when to expect them. Students were also asked to respond before a certain time each week. This meant that students were able to factor the online schedule into their daily lives. The other main pages on the learning platform were simpler, with only two or three items in each.

Second, I wanted to foster engagement with the learning. To do this, curriculum content was delivered with set readings, three to four weekly videos presented by different lecturers with expertise in the topic area, and occasionally with YouTube clips or exemplar videos. Weekly lecture videos were no longer than 20 minutes in length so that students could maintain focus and glean as much information as possible. Students were then asked to respond to questions in a weekly blog. The questions aimed to guide learning and stimulate critical thinking. I replied to posts both individually when further guidance was

required, and to the full class noting key learning points and providing further probes to deepen thinking. In addition, the students were invited to attend three live webinar sessions with me during the semester at critical points following the completion of modules and in preparation for assessments.

Third, I wanted my students to feel connected with each other and with me. I was aware of the isolation that online students can experience and felt concerned that this would be heightened for students learning in another country. In an attempt to overcome any potential isolation, I included group learning tasks and encouraged students to respond to each other's blog posts. The videos, which included both the PowerPoint and the presenter's face, were "chatty" and relaxed rather than rehearsed. I also communicated regularly with students via email both as a cohort and individually, if needed, and encouraged them to email me if they had any questions. The three webinars further aimed to promote a sense of human connection across the distance.

Challenges

I found the biggest challenge was to provide a "human face" over the online forum. Each online student seems to be learning as an individual in isolation rather than in a class. No matter what strategies I use (for example, group tasks and webinars) there is a more pressing need to connect and respond with students individually to guide their learning in comparison with traditional face-to-face learning. Most of the communication is written, which is challenging because you want to provide constructive feedback and support but do not want to come across as overly critical. Written communication can lack the finesse of face-to-face conversation with all the non-verbal nuances that support effective communication. Therefore, written responses need to be carefully considered and can be quite time consuming.

While planning for teaching is always important, I have found that staying one step ahead of the students is more challenging over the online forum. Lectures, or classes, are not only prepared on traditional PowerPoint but also involve the additional steps of recording, uploading onto the server, and then embedding videos into the online platform. Added to this are the complicated actions required within the online platform itself to ensure that content is available as planned. For example, when adding a blog, there are several pages with multiple selections in each, making it easy to miss a critical option. Therefore, communication over an online system or platform is quite "clunky" and slow. For me, the online system can feel like a fog with applications that are prone to disruption, and confusing settings that are difficult to navigate. Owing to this lack of fluidity, I have found that teaching students online is far more time consuming than traditional face-to-face teaching.

Surprises

I was initially very surprised by my Hong Kong students' high level of engagement over the online platform responses in the blog forum. In the first few weeks of the semester, they were posting both personal blogs (as requested) and responses to each other's blogs, which was pleasing. However, as the semester progressed, and blog tasks became more challenging, the correspondence between students via the blogs stopped. The blog tasks are quite labor intensive and the extra demand of responding to one another may not be acceptable. I have tried to overcome this issue by providing group blog tasks, but find these can also lead to increased workload as students have to co-ordinate contact and joint contributions. I know there are some other more interactive applications that may support peer-to-peer engagement, and so I plan to look into these issues going forward.

The webinars seemed to be highly valued by the students. While this is not surprising, I was interested to observe how much the webinars improved the students' understanding of key concepts. This was evident while marking assessments. Key learning outcomes were posted over several places on the learning platform with additional emphasis in the lecture videos. However, the online tutorial was a forum where students could express their understanding of key concepts more directly with me, and I was able to tailor my response to support comprehension. While the webinars were recorded for those students who were unable to attend, I could see that they had not grasped key-learning concepts as readily as those who had attended. I imagine that it would be challenging to watch through a full hour of recorded webinar and that key points could easily be missed.

Reflective Practice

I am not sure that I have drastically changed my teaching practice. However, I have learned to accentuate the human aspects of my teaching practices more overtly over the online forum rather than focus on technology. For example, I try to present myself as an approachable teacher and hope that students will feel comfortable about coming to me with concerns and questions. This is simpler in a face-to-face situation with students than over the online platform, particularly when you are teaching students from another culture who speak English as their second language. I found that my online students in Hong Kong were initially quite reluctant to make contact despite encouragement. Simple and seemingly obvious strategies such as sending out regular announcements or emails (once or twice a week), and responding quickly to student emails (within 24-48 hours), seemed to help my students become more comfortable about initiating contact as the semester progressed. I have started to record rather than write feedback for assessments and learning tasks, and will be interested to hear whether students find this helpful. It may be that written responses are easier to understand even though they may have a less supportive tone. I also believe that regular webinars are important, and plan more of these.

Next year, I have been asked to co-ordinate the subject, minor thesis in music therapy for our students in Hong Kong. This subject aims to support students as they conceptualize, plan, implement, and write up a small research project. Given the individual attention that students will need and the levels of stress that students can experience, I feel that humanistic practices with attention to communication and engagement will continue to be an important component of my teaching practice.

CASE TWO: DEVELOPING AN ONLINE JAZZ COMPOSITION COURSE

I am a Professor and former Chair in the Harmony Department at *Berklee College of Music*, the largest popular/professional music school in the world. *Berklee* has an over 60-year history as a place to learn all aspects of Jazz, commercial, and concert performance and composition. The College was an early leader in online music education as well. In 2008, I was asked by the online division to create a course in Jazz Composition. I was already very comfortable with music and basic desktop publishing technology: confident and productive with Finale notation software (and conversant with Sibelius) and three MIDI/digital audio platforms, as well as using Microsoft Word to create documents that included a variety of formatting with music fonts and graphics. It launched in 2009, and I have taught the course four terms per year since then. In 2011, I was asked to co-create an online Music Fundamentals course as well. I

did a large part of the design and content creation for that course, and have also taught it four times a year for four years.

Design Strategies

Jazz composition is a highly personal art that draws on a 100-year repository of repertoire. This body of work is now readily available to almost anyone due to the intense scholarship of the past several decades, and the ubiquitous nature of materials on the internet. Full scores, lead sheets, analyses, and commentaries are thus easily accessible through established academic programs and to the diligent private student/researcher. The challenge for me was to create a practical, results-oriented course that does justice to the deep nature of the art in only 12-weeks. I thought hard about my own development as a writer: I was initially self-taught, and only later received more formal training. My long classroom experience at Berklee was helpful in gauging how much to assign and expect on a weekly basis.

I decided immediately to weight the course content heavily toward the blues form for the first four weeks. The blues form in all its stylistic range style is an ideal canvas against which to work out issues of form, phrasing, harmonic content, and melodic development.

I also decided to limit the scope of the course to basic tune writing in the Great American Songbook/Jazz standard tradition - what could be called mainstream Jazz songwriting. This meant leaving out big-band writing and long-form composition, as well as the rock/fusion innovations of the late 60's and beyond. Nevertheless, the bedrock harmonic, melodic, and formal aspects of Jazz writing are found in the music of roughly 1930-1965, and with just 12 weeks to work with, I have been very happy with that choice.

Finally, I decided to structure the course roughly along the lines of form and harmonic progressions first, melodic development techniques next, and then a combination of the two for the last 4 weeks. I also included a unit on odd meters and a nod to the influence of Latin-American music on Jazz, especially Bossa Nova.

Challenges

As I built the course, I had to balance my desire to address the depth and complexity of the art form with the knowledge that I would have some students who are simply curious about the music and may lack cultural and/or technical proficiency with the basics of the style. This has, in fact, been an issue occasionally, but a well-considered list of suggested prerequisite skills has helped minimize difficulties. When I do have a student who is really in over their head, I simply try to make the experience as positive as possible: I allow them to think of the course as an introduction to the style and I occasionally adjust the assignments or grading rubrics for them individually.

I had to keep reminding myself that this course is a first, and sometimes only, exposure to Jazz writing for the majority of my students. The experience on-campus at *Berklee* is quite different, so I had to constantly triage the content that I would normally give a class full of music majors or a dedicated private student.

A number of technical or design challenges I might normally have faced were reduced or eliminated by the fact that *Berklee* already had a clear, consistent model for course development. *BerkleeOnline* courses have a uniform look and feel that includes placeholders for discussion forums, lesson introductions and recaps, rubric models for grading weekly assignments, and requirements to include a certain

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number of video chats. In addition, there was a tech person to help me gather course material (audio and text) and clear it for use in the course.

The video component was very frustrating and unreliable at first, but that has improved markedly as bandwidth and technology in general have become more robust. I look forward to the weekly chat sessions very much, and I wish more of the students would take advantage of it.

Surprises

I was surprised by the personal feel of the course. I assumed it would almost be a “remote-control” experience, but I found immediately that I developed a strong interest in my students’ work and their backgrounds. They also have lots of opportunities to view and comment on each other’s’ work; this is invaluable in creating a more cohesive sense of the class than I expected. Of course, I do my part to encourage that, by modeling respectful, constructive language when critiquing assignments or moderating discussion threads.

I was also surprised by the high professional level of some of the students. Since all assignment are viewable by all, they naturally raise the bar for the others in a way that is not typically possible in a regular classroom.

Finally, I always wonder about the ones who voluntarily pay good money for the course and then disappear after two weeks, or never participate in the chat sessions. I reach out to them to make sure they are okay, but often I get no response.

Reflective Practice

I would honestly say that designing and teaching this course and the Music Foundations course have not fundamentally changed my teaching philosophy. In both my online and in-person teaching I continually strive to refresh and refine my communication with the students. I learned long ago that talking is not teaching, and that the well-crafted phrase is meaningless if the student is not listening. With that in mind, I have always tried to inculcate my enthusiasm for the material into my students. If you have their attention and commitment, then repetition and reinforcement are the most important thing for learning any technical skill. I build a lot of this into both sides of my teaching life.

I have always believed that online learning is great for certain kinds of students, and certain kinds of material; classroom teaching has its great benefits as well. I still find that to be true, and I consider myself very fortunate to be able to do both.

CASE THREE: OPEN UNIVERSITY OF BRAZIL

The *Open University of Brazil* was a government action launched in 2005 to promote distance education using existing government-funded institutions. The *Universidade de Brasília* (UnB), since 2007, has been offering a Music Teacher Education undergraduate program within this Open University system. As a university lecturer, I helped planning and implementing that program, coordinating it from 2006 to 2010 and, since then, I have regularly been offering some music education courses. One of the courses I taught was created specifically for the distance education program as an introduction to online possibilities of learning and teaching music. The other type of course I taught was an adaptation of an existing face-to-

face music course. In both cases, online and face-to-face moments were incorporated in my teaching. The official platform where the courses are hosted is *Moodle*, but I do not restrict myself to that platform. I usually use videoconferencing and other tools that allow online interactions.

Design Strategies

Back in 2009, when I was the coordinator of the Music Teacher Education undergraduate program offered by the UnB as part of the *Open University* system, I was asked to design a course that introduced students to the online mode of study. That course was aimed to help students become acquainted with the Moodle platform, to explore other online resources, and to stimulate collaboration among participants. Being the coordinator of that program helped me have a broader view of the different courses offered, such as: singing, keyboard, guitar, aural skills, and supervised teacher training. Thus, when I designed the introductory course, I had an idea of the main tools and software that were used in other courses. Most importantly, I was aware of the core purposes of that Music Teacher Education program: the training and education of music teachers as reflective practitioners, educating them to work in a diversity of contexts promoting practical musical activities to build up musicianship.

To achieve those purposes, I planned some musical practices to be carried out both online and during face-to-face meetings. Such practices were the means to explore online tools, to promote interactions and to reflect on their musical production. Having that in mind, the strategies I used when designing that course were: 1) choosing tools that, in my view, had the potential to promote interactions and learning through those interactions; 2) assigning tasks to be accomplished in groups; and 3) integrating online and face-to-face tasks related to music making. In practice, those strategies resulted in choosing a variety of tools in Moodle and in other platforms so that students could familiarize themselves with the tools while they learned about their music teacher education program.

The tools I used to promote more interaction were online discussion forums, WIKIS, and a glossary. For that specific course, a discussion forum was used as a means to share audio files in a collaborative composition of a *rondo*. It was one of the activities that students most enjoyed as was evident in their replies to a questionnaire that evaluated the course. A rondo activity was planned to be carried out both online and during one face-to-face meeting. As an online activity, students were placed in small virtual groups and asked to choose a section of an existing music to be the rondo main part. They used *Audacity* software to edit audios and *CDex* to rip audios from CDs and to convert .wav files to .mp3. Then, each student selected another musical excerpt that would be added as different sections of their rondo. Each one had to download the group audio file, edit it, add a new section and upload the revised file in the discussion forum until everyone had worked with the file and contributed to the group composition. As they constructed their rondo, they also wrote a brief explanation of their intention while editing the audio. Sometimes they also suggested in the forum how they imagined their composition should continue.

In our Music Teacher Education program offered as part of the *Open University* system, face-to-face moments are also required. As an attempt to integrate what students were doing online with their compulsory face-to-face meetings, I asked them to create a rondo in small groups. They were asked to choose a song or music that everyone could play or sing. Then, similarly to what they had done online, they chose an excerpt of that music or song to be the main part of their rondo and, one by one, each student improvised a new section of their rondo.

Challenges

In this introductory music course, one of the challenges I faced while teaching was answering students' questions about the audio editor software tools. Sometimes their questions were not specific, and gave me the impression that the students had not read the tutorials or instructions for the task. Because I was aware that having questions is part of a learning process for students, I had already set up a discussion forum for that purpose. However, I realized that a written form of reply was not solving their concerns. Therefore, I scheduled a videoconference so that all the students could see me demonstrating the use of the editor software tools, and we could also see each other. This synchronous interaction has always been welcomed by students, and I also feel we avoid many misunderstandings when we manage to see facial expressions and hear the tone of the voices of those communicating.

In other courses I taught, I sometimes struggled to promote interactions in discussion forums. Many times, students posted only once, responding to the main topic without reading or commenting on their peers' replies. On those occasions, there was not a proper conversation, but a kind of a monologue. At most, there was a dialogue only between a student and his or her tutor. In addition, students tended to post at the last minute, leaving no time to establish a conversation. Reasons for this may include the many activities students usually have to do in the different courses for which they are registered. Another possibility might be the belief that only the tutor had the correct answer and, thus, interacting with their peers would not contribute to their learning process. I was aware that I would not tackle all of those possible problems, but I knew I could at least enforce more participation. In one of the forum assignments, I established that every student should post their answers as well as comment on at least two other students' replies. I do not feel I have overcome that challenge of creating more student interactions in discussion forums because I am aware of the coercive nature of those instructions. Perhaps what I still need to ponder is the purpose of a discussion forum, and how I could peak the interests of the students on a certain topic without forcing their participation.

Another challenge I have faced since I started teaching online in the *Open University* system was to work collaboratively with tutors. In the *Open University* system, a university lecturer plans, designs, and may implement his or her course. During the course, that lecturer supervises the work of two kinds of tutors. One tutor who interacts online with students is called an "associate tutor." The other, called a "local tutor," resides in the city where a university center is open and interacts face-to-face with students. Although I have visited some centers and conducted some musical practices with students, it is usually the local tutor who is in charge of that type of activity. Regarding the online interactions, I have also made many interventions in discussion forums and conducted most of the videoconferences. However, the associate tutors were the ones who had the task of interacting online with and reply to every student question. In order for this system to function, one must recognize the importance of building a cohesive team of teachers. In an attempt to create this team, I have carried out weekly online meetings with those tutors using *Google+* hangouts. There was also a specific forum only for those tutors and myself where we posted the summary of our meetings, guidelines for the week, and questions about anything we could not discuss in our online hangout.

Surprises

When thinking about surprises in relation to students' participation in my online music classes, I recall two episodes. The first is related to the difference between online and face-to-face participations. Face-

to-face moments must be integrated into the courses I teach. Thus, every student must accomplish both types of tasks. On one occasion, I had the opportunity to visit some university centers. Here, I managed to conduct a musical activity, and witnessed how students interacted among themselves, with their local tutor, and how they organized their musical practices in those centers. To my surprise, sometimes students who emerged as musical leaders were not those who had good online participation, and vice-versa. I realized that I had already assessed some of my students according to their online participation. This made me rethink the way I was assessing them. I was undervaluing the musical practices carried out in their centers, and putting too much emphasis on students' online participation. Since both types of participation and activities are important, I decided I should give the same importance to each in terms of assessments of those practices.

The other situation that surprised me was the realization that, despite my willingness to nurture interaction and collaboration among participants, the tools used for interactions were not always used as such. The use of certain discussion forums showed me that such a tool may not always promote interactions, and may instead be used as a unidirectional means of communication. Aside from the forums, I also asked students to use *Twitter* and *SoundCloud*. Both tools were planned to enrich and to increase possibilities of interactions among participants. However, there were very few posts on *Twitter* and many students complained about having to use *SoundCloud* to upload and share their musical productions. The *SoundCloud* platform was useful for some associate tutors who gave their feedback pointing at the exact moment they were suggesting some changes in the music. However, the refusal to use those tools by some of the students made me think about discourses of technological determinism. I then realized I had planned the use of those tools subscribing to a deterministic view that certain technological tools would determine an expected result. Although this experience initially disappointed me, in the end, I was glad to notice the degree of freedom and choice everyone has in deciding if and how to use technology.

Reflective Practice

Thinking back over my experience of teaching and designing online music courses, I feel I have been choosing and using technology more aptly. Most importantly, the choices I made have been with the awareness that regardless of the potential of a technological tool, its use does not guarantee any deterministic result. Other actions I have incorporated into my teaching include planning in advance, selecting different materials, resources, and tasks that seem appropriate to be carried out online. In this sense, I have been more attentive in relation to possible adaptations from face-to-face settings to online platforms. Whether teaching online or face-to-face, I now consider different ways to promote interactions. Through those interactions, I try to be more sensitive to different types of (musical) abilities in a group so that I may promote activities in which those different abilities could be both used and useful.

The kind of interactions I have been trying to nurture is based on a dialogical and problem-posing mode of education advocated by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970/2005). Differently from what he called a banking mode of education, in which teachers would deposit their knowledge into students' minds, a dialogical and problem-posing education required teachers to be attuned to students' needs. It is worth reminding that dialogue, in Freirean terms, is not "a kind of tactic we use to make students our friends" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 98), which would function as a form of manipulation. Rather, it requires "reading the world" with critical lenses and "posing reality as a problem" (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 168) such as problematization, and challenging us to transform reality and ourselves.

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In fact, as I was trying to promote that kind of dialogue in the many activities of my courses, I was also transforming myself. I feel I have become more aware of students' needs and capabilities. Moreover, I also have an increased awareness of my own limitations and of my potentialities both as a music teacher and as a human being.

Therefore, in the continuing process of my own transformation, re-shaping my practices and re-directing my values, my next steps as an online (and face-to-face) music teacher include the search for more "humane" and dialogical interactions. These would imply valuing the diversity of activities carried out both online and in the centers. In order to do so, videoconferences will be used more often for synchronous interactions during musical practices in the centers. I will also continue to schedule weekly online hangouts among associate and local tutors and myself so that we can form a more cohesive team of teachers.

CASE FOUR: "IT'S ALWAYS CHANGING"

Based in Valley City, North Dakota, I have taught multiple online music courses. Some examples of the courses that I have taught would be the four semesters of our music theory and aural skills sequence, music appreciation, applied composition, scoring and arranging, and advanced scoring and arranging. In my current position I have taught in both the face to face and the online environment for the past six years. Additionally, the majority of our courses at Valley City State University are asynchronous. Before coming to my current position, I had three years of experience in the online environment at Troy University. The courses mentioned above are either part of the general education or music curriculum for the bachelor degree programs that are offered at Valley City State University.

Design Strategies

When having designed some of my first online music courses, I included the following ideas:

1. Looking over courses from several institutions to see what other instructors had been doing. This was very helpful, and even courses outside of my discipline helped me in preparing my courses.
2. Asking students who had taken other online courses what helped them to be successful. This helped me gain an understanding of how content was being delivered effectively.
3. Constantly asking for feedback from students while teaching some of my first online courses. With online courses, there are students from a wide range of ages. At times there has been a fifty-year difference between students in my courses.

Challenges

Some of the challenges that I initially encountered would be:

1. Making the information easy to find within the online environment. This is one of the biggest concerns for students who are beginning online courses for the first time.
2. Having dates for each assignment/project/etc. clearly visible. This item is essential to online students who are not directly on campus.

3. Having files that were compatible across multiple operating systems. With the various computer brands and file types, file and system incompatibility became an issue when dealing with music courses.

Surprises

The main item that surprised me was that it was much easier to teach music online than I anticipated. After getting over the idea of teaching through a computer using a video camera and microphone, it was just as if they were in the classroom with me.

Another item was preparing for a course. Prepping for a face-to-face course takes less time. With an online course, you must take into consideration which files or items you will need ahead of class. You will also need to make sure that they work for the student. Once students learned the initial aspects of how the course(s) worked, they were very engaged and took part just as if they were taking it in person.

Reflective Practice

The amount of material that I use for my courses has changed. The longer I teach in an online environment, the less I cram into a course. I find that using less materials within my courses has helped my students to become more successful. I have started using more links to other sources to help them in better understanding the course material. Also, I have developed my course(s) so that students can work closely together and ask one another questions, just as if they were in a face-to-face situation.

Over the years, as an instructor, I have come to believe that it is not just about what you know, but how you present it to your students. To create a positive online educational environment, I have implemented a couple practices. First, I update my teaching strategies so that they evolve with the ever-changing world of online apps, tools, and resources that are available for students. Another practice I utilize in order to create a positive experience is delivering feedback to students in a reasonable amount of time.

CASE FIVE: CREATING AUTHENTIC ONLINE MUSIC LEARNING

Based in Nashville, TN, I teach a course on American Popular Music that is an upper-level music history course specialized for songwriting majors and music therapy majors. There are 30 undergraduate students in the course. I initially created this course in the Spring of 2015. When I was approached to teach this online course, I had two years of experience teaching online music appreciation and American popular music courses for non-music majors.

Design Strategies

I had learned from previous online courses that communication is key. So, I geared assignments towards discussions rather than just quizzes or short assignments. I asked students to write narratives about themselves and post a picture so that everyone in the class could “meet” one another. I also designed final projects that would have “real world” applications to the students – what we call “Authentic” assignments and assessment. Using the history of popular music in America, students learned how to identify specific

musical features when listening to a song, and then recall past styles where those musical features came from, or past styles that may have been an influence on the creation of the song.

The final project for the songwriting majors was the creation of a podcast about a song they wrote where the student identified musical features, past influences, and included some discussion of what was innovative about their song's qualities. For the music therapy majors, the students created a final project where they described the musical features of a song, past influences, and ways in which that song could be used in a clinical setting. With the skills needed for the final projects in mind, I worked backwards in scaffolding my course. This way, they start at the very beginning of the course identifying key descriptions of melody, harmony, texture, form, tempo, and rhythm of a song. They slowly build up those skills as they also learned a chronological history of American popular music moving style by style so that they could see the connections between past styles.

Surprises

Once again, I have to say communication was also a surprise to me. No matter how many methods I used to communicate with them - I even also added weekly emails as well- I will still receive emails, some written in response to my weekly "What is Due This Week Email" asking, "What is due this week?" It can be rather frustrating, and I'm still working on finding the underlying reasons for and possible solutions to this problem.

Reflective Practice

In my overall teaching practice, I have created more opportunities for the students to interact with each other and with me. In my first online course, I found that the students were not interacting with each other, and often not with me because there were no penalties for not doing so. The students turned in their homework, but it was not the interactive course I had imagined. Many students also earned low test scores because they were not really reading the assigned pages and were skipping the online lectures I had provided.

Currently, I have re-designed the course material and have the students interact with it through our learning management system, *Blackboard*. They must read the pages online and watch the online lecture before they can do any graded assignments. In an effort to increase student engagement, I have put the homework discussion questions inside the video lectures. That way, the students must watch the lecture, think about the questions, and then answer them in an online forum with the other students.

In addition, I have created assignments that give students the ability to respond as a class or in small interactive groups. These assignments contain very different questions from those on the short assignments that focus on basic information. Previously, I had asked students to turn in the short assignments to me; however, they viewed this process as "busy work." The large class-group questions promote discussions that require students to already have a basic understanding of the material in each unit. Using this format, the students go deeper in their learning and have discussions with one another, which can build on the basic information for each unit that they have studied.

Watching the weekly video lecture and interacting with one another keeps students "tuned in". Consequently, I have received positive feedback about how students felt the course was inclusive and enjoyed interacting with one another. For example, the students commented on course evaluations that

they liked giving and receiving feedback on their song projects that they posted on *SoundCloud* before creating their final podcasts.

Something I really want to work on is how to reach students who fall behind, do not engage with me or the other students, and seem “out of touch” with the class. Although I have greatly improved student interaction outcomes, there are always two or three students who stop turning in assignments, or do not even sign into the course’s *Blackboard* system for a week or more. I want to explore what causes these types of problems to occur. Many times, the student has the best of intentions, but falls behind due to personal crises. I want to help these students keep up with their work while at the same time utilize the benefits offered by the University for counseling, financial services, health services, and even religious guidance, should they need it.

I am also interested in creating courses through programs like *Second Life* where students interact with each other using an avatar. I have read a good deal of literature on the subject. I have learned that many students are very familiar with interactions like this through entertainments like video games and mobile apps. I would like to create a “virtual classroom” that could be just as entertaining as a video game, while at the same time, exists as a space to help them learn new skills and the history of American popular music.

IMPLICATIONS

It is understood that there were no wrong responses held within these narratives. Each narrative was a personal reflection by the instructor on their current teaching practice. Through the reflections, we sought to demonstrate the multiple ways online music classes could present themselves and, more importantly, the various practical designs and teaching strategies instructors felt were successful for student learning and highlighted the challenges they encountered. From the five narratives, we see that there are similarities and differences that are threaded throughout each narrative. The ways instructors use their online learning course areas demonstrates the need for a learning management system that is both technologically robust and yet allows for instructors to design and create online course areas with ease. Secondly, the narratives highlight the need for new instructors to understand how they can effectively engagement their students in the online environment. Finally, the notion of teaching challenges within the online music class is akin to the regular classroom – challenges are often not fully negated and require instructor resilience.

Availability of Effective Online Learning Systems for Music

As in experiences from the traditional face-to-face classroom, each narrative describes a unique context to the teaching of music in an online environment. That is, there are unique ways each instructor uses their online class area. Some instructors identified using their online area with additional technology tools, while other instructors used the tools within their learning management system. Instructors also designed their online course areas to appeal to their specific student context and course topic. While online course characteristics were not necessarily novel, they do highlight the need for online learning environments to be adaptable to the instructors’ needs and course discipline. From the narratives, we can see that to teach music in the online environment, there needs to be effective technology tools for communicating both asynchronously and synchronously to students; that is, the desire for dialogical

interaction was common across all narratives. These specific communication tools include video conferencing, email correspondence, in-course announcements with options for text, graphics, and video, as well as technology tools that support student collaboration during group projects. Additionally, the narratives underscore the importance of having an online environment that supports personalization of learning for students in the activities tasked which are both influenced and supported by the instructor's course design and learning activities.

Availability for Instructor Professional Development

Understanding how to use the technology tools available for teaching music online is integral for supporting student learning engagement. The narratives suggest instructors that had both minimal and extensive online teaching had to increase their knowledge of current technologies and their abilities to implement technology into their teaching. The emphasis on needing to be able to know effective online teaching strategies and ideas for ways to support student collaboration in the online environment suggests that instructors need to have support systems for learning such technologies and strategies. Support systems for learning effective approaches to teaching online should address both the technology aspects along with a discipline-specific approach to the learning engagement. This suggests that institutions should have professional development opportunities (e.g., workshops, seminars, coaching, and mentoring) available for instructors teaching online. Additionally, those teaching in the areas of online music, should have access to a person or knowledge base that is well-versed in the discipline of music within an online context.

Need for Instructors With Resilience

Finally, an implication resulting from the narratives is the notion that teaching music online has known challenges and requires instructors with resilience. Such resilience includes the abilities to be adaptable to new technologies and approaches to teaching online, and awareness of and tenacity for addressing challenges within the online environment. Additional skills that demonstrate effective communication in an online context are also highlighted as a mechanism for instructor resilience within the narratives. Instructor resilience is not necessarily a skill that is taught in a single workshop. It is a skill set that is developed over time, and often through the assistance of modeling and examples. To this end, instructor resilience may be most effectively encouraged and achieved through the process of mentorship.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The narratives within this chapter identified critical reflections as authors identified key places that were challenging for their current online teaching area. These areas include ways to encourage active participation by all students in the online music course, appropriateness of technology tools for music within a learning management system, and student learning outcomes from learning music collaboratively in the online environment.

Questions for future research in the area of active participation for online music courses may include: How does video conference affect student learning outcomes in music?; How can mobile apps be used

to create active participation in online music courses; and, To what extent does multimedia influence the learning outcomes of music students on an online discussion area? These questions are linked to the ways in which students can learn music in an online environment through active learning mechanisms. Such exploration of studies would require the participation of both students and instructors.

The research questions surrounding appropriate integration and use of technology tools for music within a Learning Management System (LMS) would likely explore both what a LMS can support for music (i.e., audio and video feedback and audio and video posting capabilities) and what learning modalities are effective when learning music. Through the combination of these two avenues of research, questions posed could include: How relevant are audio and video tools to learning music online?; To what extent can students add audio and video feedback and assignments into an LMS?; How can student audio and video assignments be effectively graded through an integrated LMS structure?; and, To what extent do online music student use both the web and mobile versions of the audio and video tools available in an LMS? Together, these questions would surface the degree to which technology tools in an LMS are necessary for the online music course.

Finally, the exploration of research involving collaborative student learning tasks in the online environment is necessary. Questions that identify the degree to which online collaboration is assistive for student learning, as well as the level of technological skills for integrating such collaborative tasks should be taken up. Such questions may include: To what extent are students open to learning music through online collaboration?; How can online collaboration assist student learning outcomes in the online music course; What strategies assist students in developing effective online collaboration skills for learning music online?; and, What are effective tenets for developing online collaborative tasks for learning music?

CONCLUSION

We can learn about our practice as online music instructors through the exchange of self-reflections. Through the sharing of the case narratives, it was evidenced that each online music course is itself a unique environment with its unique student and instructor culture. Approaches to teaching music in the online environment are also unique to the instructor's use and integration of technology and active learning tasks. While there are many differences, the identification of instructors having resilience for teaching through the challenges raised from the online environment was similar across the narratives. Furthermore, the authors shared their significant learning processes that took place as they continued on their journey in teaching online.

The implications raised from the narratives identify the need for effective online learning systems for music, institutional support for instructors teaching music online, and a need for online music instructors to have resilience and adaptability when teaching music online. Additionally, the various contexts of teaching music online signal a need for future research in the areas of: active learning for online music courses, appropriate technology tools available with a LMS, and collaborative online music tasks for effective student learning outcomes.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Common Approaches: Teaching practices that are understood to be used in a variety of course designs. They may be specific to course disciplines, if warranted.

Higher Education: The term used to include accredited institutions that offer post-secondary programs. They may or may not offer graduate programs.

Narratives: Expository writings that identify one's experience regarding a past encounter and/or personal thoughts.

Strategies: Ideas and approaches that have been identified as effective through past experience and research.

Teaching Practices: The lived experiences of instructors in their classroom. These experiences can be individual in nature as well as be representative of a group.