

Article Review

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Article Title: The Generative Theory of Musical Learning Part II

Author: Eunice Boardman Journal: University of Illinois Press

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What is the author's purpose?

Boardman's purpose is to inform the reader of the different components of a holistic learning environment: content, context, behavior, mode of knowledge representation, cognitive skill, and attitudinal climate. After explaining each component she informs the reader of how it relates to the generative theory of musical learning and also how to incorporate it into lesson plans by breaking down each concept even further.

What are the salient issues in this article? (i.e. the main issues that provoked/stimulated your thinking)

I was provoked by how Boardman broke down each component of a holistic learning environment. In the section about content she discusses three different concepts. I found it interesting because she defined music as "a symbolic representation of cognitive and emotional processes with the subsequent recognition that music exists as a totality moving through time." Whenever I think about music, I take it as just that: music -- a whole rather than breaking it into cognition and emotion. This gave me a different perspective on how to view the concept of what music is.

When Boardman discussed context, I liked that she gave different criteria for selecting the musical examples within a music lesson. For the most part, I think I could have guessed to consider these things before choosing to use a piece of music, but I probably would have missed one or two of the criteria, which could lead to failure of a lesson.

In the "Behavior" section she explains the different categories of behavior: performing, describing, and organizing/creating. This provoked my thinking because I remember discussing these behaviors in class the other day and found it interesting to see them explained by another author. She also described the process of how children learn to sing musically, and I found that to be helpful for future use.

In the breakdown of different modes of knowledge representation I made the connection to our last lesson again. We had already discussed the enactive, iconic, and symbolic modes, but by reading this article I feel I have a deeper understanding of each one. The fact that she gave examples of how to incorporate each mode through the generative theory was especially useful when trying to further my knowledge on this concept. She also discussed how Bruner's theory about concept learning connects to the modes of knowledge representation, again helping to solidify what we've already learned.

"Cognitive Skill" gave me the most trouble while analyzing this article. I had to go back to reread this section a few times before it made sense to me. The idea of characterizing the

different skills as low, middle, and high levels is what confused me, as it seemed to leave a lot of grey area between each one. I suppose this could be how you get from the know, through the unknown, to the new known, though, because there must be at least some overlap between each of these characterizations to make generative progress.

The final component, attitudinal climate, seemed the most straight forward and was not broken down much at all. I think this is because once teachers take into consideration all of the other components of the learning environment the attitudinal climate will naturally take place. It isn't something we as teachers have to force because if we've followed the entire process leading up to this point we should receive positive reactions from our students as we have set them up for success.

How do you believe this article will impact your personal/professional development as a teacher? (i.e. what insights, connections, comparisons, or considerations resulted from reading this article?)

I think all of the components within this article will be incredibly helpful in my professional development as a teacher. Now that this process has been broken down to specific, individual steps/criteria, I think it will be a lot easier to make lesson plans that set students up for success rather than failure. Since it is all laid out and clearly explained I can just follow each step while considering what to include in my plans.

Relating to content, I know to begin with simple concepts to solidify before moving onto more complex ones. Boardman's breakdown tells me how to decide which content to include in my lessons in order to provide the correct environment for the generative approach. I need to think of music as a totality rather than in parts, I need to consider the time and place of the music, and I need to think about the form before including a piece of music into my instruction.

When it comes to context, I now have a clear description of what criteria to consider while selecting my musical examples. I'm sure I would have missed out on something without having it laid out like this, and as Boardman said later in this section, "If any one of these criteria... are ignored, the lesson may well be doomed to failure before it starts." In order to set my students up for success, I first need to set my lesson up for success. I now know to consider the aesthetic value, diverse representation, variety in genre, and the level of the learner before selecting an example.

The most important information (to me, at least) in the section about behavior was near the end when she discussed the process of how children learn to sing musically. I think I will use the list that Boardman provides because she said it was based on her own personal observations from her dissertation -- it seems like a reliable source -- and I think it will come in handy while working with elementary school children.

The mode of knowledge representation is also very important because I now know not to skip the iconic mode, like many teachers unfortunately do. It seems rather easy to miss, but it also seems to be the most crucial step in enforcing a student's knowledge of a concept. Since she gave examples of how to incorporate the iconic mode, I will know how to include it in my own instruction, whether it be in a classroom setting or even private studio lessons.

The information about the component of cognitive skills will be helpful when planning out the sequence of each lesson I give. It gave great advice on how to go from the known, through

the unknown, to the new known in order to incorporate the generative theory. It suggests repetition, which I have always been taught is incredibly important while teaching -- especially young children.

If I follow all of the steps given by Boardman this far, my classroom environment should be prepared for a positive attitudinal climate in order to create a successful learning experience. If I have any hiccups along the way, I'll be able to trace back to where I made a mistake in this process of creating a holistic learning environment and I can alter it before the next lesson.