

In my teaching, I draw inspiration from eminent education scholar Lee Shulman's (2005) conception of "pedagogies of uncertainty," which he identified as a key feature of education in the traditional professions. In medicine, for example, clinical rounds do not follow a tightly-scripted lesson plan; rather, residents or attending physicians engage in a process of co-discovery alongside less experienced interns. Teachers and students collaborate, each bringing the knowledge s/he possesses to the work of diagnosing and treating patients. I believe such "pedagogies of uncertainty" belong in all classrooms. Though the development of factual knowledge and skills may require occasional direct instruction, classrooms become richer sites of learning when they provide spaces for student exploration and discovery in which the teacher participates as partner and guide, rather than master and commander.

In the field of teacher education, and in my sub-field of music teacher education, preservice teachers need to learn to see themselves as teachers and may need opportunities to reframe what a music teacher is and does, counteracting the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) they have completed over more than a decade of formal schooling. Such a process requires active, participatory learning and deep, critical thinking; it does not result from factual transmission. As a teacher educator, this compels me to organize classes around texts and activities that probe students' thinking, trouble their assumptions, and challenge them to defend their emerging philosophies as music educators. Making prescriptions about "best practice" (though "best practices" matter) is less important than developing students' sense that teachers are lifelong artisans, discoverers, and learners. Projects and assignments give students opportunities to develop their pedagogical imaginations, synthesize and apply theoretical principles to the practical tasks of teaching (e.g., developing lesson plans and assessment tools), and use field placements as opportunities for systematic inquiry and reflection.

The same principles hold for my work as a choral conductor and songwriting teacher, as I do not believe these creative practices lend themselves to linear modes of teaching and learning. As a conductor, I strive to create rehearsal environments in which singers discover the score and make

interpretative decisions alongside me—which I believe contributes more powerfully to their musical development than simply being “taught the repertoire.” In my songwriting class, students learn through consistent engagement with the creative process and frequent opportunities to receive feedback from teacher and peers. Even the occasional “mini-lessons” I present in my songwriting class, which place me in a more familiar and traditional “teacher” role, focus on discovery, not transmission. Rather than “teach” songwriting “techniques,” I more often present exemplars of a particular songwriting element (e.g., manipulation of form, lyric writing, characterization) and invite students to join me in analyzing what makes these songs effective and how we might apply what we learn from them to our own work.

This shift away from teacher “delivery” and toward student discovery does not negate the importance of the teacher. Teachers’ training and authority empowers them to convene and structure learning communities in ways that result in meaningful experiences and rich learning; further, teachers are charged with assessing student learning and adjusting instructional approaches to make them maximally effective. By yielding some level of control and embracing pedagogies of uncertainty, I endeavor to make my classroom a place where my expertise matters, but so does the expertise of my students, along with their passions, interests, needs, and goals.

References

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- Shulman, L. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52–59.

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