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Double Closure and Critical Openness in Music Education: Rethinking Musical Creativity and Tradition

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Abstract: Music educators value creativity, yet learners may encounter inherited musical knowledge whose acceptable uses have already been decided. This conceptual article examines how different justifications for teaching tradition can restrict learners' participation in its interpretation and continuation. Through a theory synthesis of open philosophy in music education, culturally sustaining pedagogy, cultural production, authenticity scholarship, and an interpretive use of Nietzsche's historical modes, I develop two related concepts. Double closure distinguishes canonization through normative standards from preservation through authorized authenticity. These routes can converge in positioning learners as reproducers of settled knowledge, despite their different histories, political purposes, and ethical stakes. Critical openness is a pedagogical framework for addressing that convergence through substantive inheritance, inquiry into authenticity, continuity through responsible transformation, and accountable learner participation. Its contribution lies in connecting the justification for a restriction to the authority that sustains it and the opportunities learners have to negotiate it. Ghanaian scholarship provides a historically situated illustration. A worked example links an identified indicator in Ghana's 2023 Performing Arts curriculum to a proposed Kpanlogo learning sequence, distinguishing the policy text from hypothetical enactments. The analysis shows how creative activity can coexist with restricted cultural authority and specifies questions for examining that relationship. The framework remains a conceptual proposal whose educational consequences require empirical investigation.

Introduction

Musical creativity depends partly on the relationships educators establish between learners and inherited knowledge. Composition, improvisation, interpretation, and musical problem-solving can give students opportunities to develop ideas, but the presence of these activities does not establish what students may question or change. Research on creative learning has emphasized curriculum design, meaningful composition, and teachers' recognition of imaginative musical work (1, 2, 3). These concerns invite a further question: how can students participate creatively when educational authorities treat the legitimate uses of musical inheritance as already settled? Musical traditions are often internally diverse and contested. The problem examined here concerns the pedagogical settlement of that diversity: decisions through which teachers, institutions, assessment systems, or recognized cultural authorities establish which versions count and which departures learners may pursue. A classroom can invite composition while limiting acceptable work to a prescribed musical grammar. A classroom can also include a historically marginalized practice while recognizing students principally as its custodians. In each instance, creative activity may occur within a relationship that leaves the authority to define legitimate continuity largely untouched.

Existing scholarship provides substantial resources for understanding this problem. Allsup's open philosophy challenges the restriction of music learning to teacher-directed craft and promotes exploratory relationships with inherited knowledge (4). Culturally sustaining pedagogy supports the cultural and linguistic practices of communities while explicitly recognizing evolving youth identities and practices (5, 6, 7). Good-Perkins develops culturally sustaining approaches for music education (8). Gaztambide-Fernández's account of cultural production directs attention to the social relationships through which people make culture (9). None of these perspectives needs to be reduced to a theory of passive transmission to establish the present argument.

Scholarship on tradition and authenticity also precedes this intervention. Handler and Linnekin challenge

the treatment of tradition as a bounded object transmitted intact from the past (10). Schippers argues for dynamic understandings of tradition, authenticity, and context in music education (11). Mantie examines how authenticity, teacher authority, and accountability complicate the teaching of diverse musical practices, including the limitations of treating teaching as reproduction of an original model (12). The issue is therefore more specific than whether tradition changes or whether authority matters. It concerns how different reasons for restricting change become educationally consequential for learners.

I bring these conversations together through the concept of double closure. The term distinguishes two justificatory routes through which inherited knowledge may become pedagogically settled: canonization through normative standards and preservation through authorized authenticity. The analytical gain comes from examining their convergence in a restricted learner position while retaining their different histories and purposes. Critical openness is the corresponding pedagogical framework. It organizes inquiry into who authorizes musical continuity, how that authority is exercised, and how learners can participate responsibly in interpretation and transformation. The contribution is a focused synthesis and specification of existing insights, rather than a claim to have discovered cultural dynamism, musical authority, or learner agency. Three questions guide the argument. How can canonization and preservation produce comparable restrictions on learners through different justifications? What distinguishes a legitimate demand for knowledge or cultural responsibility from a restriction that makes inherited knowledge unavailable for inquiry? How might educators organize creative participation when learners, teachers, institutions, and community practitioners have different forms of authority? These questions locate the framework's contribution in the relationship among justification, authority, and learner participation.

Ghana provides an illustrative context because scholarship documents tensions between inherited institutional arrangements and the recognition of Ghanaian musical knowledge, while national curriculum policy brings creative production into direct relationship with Indigenous knowledge (13, 14). I develop a conceptual argument through this literature and a selected policy passage. I do not report an empirical study of Ghanaian classrooms. The worked example shows what the framework enables a reader to distinguish; I do not establish the prevalence of either form of closure.

Approach to Conceptual Analysis

The article uses theory synthesis as an approach to conceptual research. Jaakkola describes theory synthesis as conceptual integration across theories or literature streams and emphasizes the need to explain the selection and analytical roles of theoretical resources (15). Here, the organizing problem is the learner's relationship to inherited musical knowledge. The synthesis seeks conceptual clarification and a defensible pedagogical proposal, rather than a comprehensive literature review or empirical causal explanation. Sources were selected purposively for their relevance to inheritance, cultural continuity, authenticity, authority, and learner participation. Allsup supplies the principal music education orientation toward openness. Culturally sustaining pedagogy establishes the importance of sustaining communities' practices and the agency of young people. Cultural production clarifies why participation concerns the making of cultural meaning. Scholarship on authenticity and tradition makes it possible to examine claims of fidelity without assuming that traditions have fixed boundaries. Nietzsche supplies a philosophical vocabulary for interpreting relationships to the past (16). These resources have different functions; they are not interchangeable evidence for the same claim.

The conceptual analysis proceeds through three moves. First, I distinguish the dimensions emphasized by each perspective: the learner's relationship to knowledge, the justification for preserving or authorizing it, the agents entitled to judge it, and the possibilities for its continuation. Second, I compare how appeals to excellence and appeals to authenticity can each justify treating a selected musical form as settled. This comparison produces double closure as a distinction between routes to a potentially similar pedagogical outcome. Third, I connect that diagnosis to the commitments of open philosophy, cultural sustenance, and cultural production to formulate four conditions for critical openness. These conditions organize questions for pedagogical judgment; they are not presented as empirically validated measures.

Ghanaian sources were selected for three complementary purposes. Historical and educational studies contextualize institutional authority and curricular inclusion. Scholarship on cultural change examines relationships among continuity, adaptation, and community recognition. Kpanlogo-specific historical scholarship contextualizes the proposed musical example. This selection includes studies from different educational and community settings, whose findings remain bounded by their original scope. The 2023 Performing Arts curriculum is a policy source. Indicator 1.2.1.LI.2 was selected because its associated exemplars combine creative production, Indigenous knowledge, community collaboration, and authenticity (14). I read the indicator with the adjacent content standard, rather than treating its reference to authenticity as self-sufficient evidence of restriction.

The worked example then holds the curricular task broadly constant and varies the grounds of judgment and the learner's role. Its four readings are constructed analytical possibilities. They distinguish policy wording from pedagogical choices and show how the framework might guide analysis of lessons or assessments. Muhammad's work on joy appears later as a normative consideration concerning the purposes of participation, rather than an additional component from which the framework is derived (17). The argument's adequacy rests on the clarity of its distinctions, its consistency with the literature, and the usefulness of its questions. No claim of systematic sampling, observed implementation, or demonstrated educational improvement follows from this procedure.

Creativity and the Pedagogical Treatment of Inheritance

For this article, musical creativity means the situated

development, interpretation, or reorganization of musical ideas through activities such as composing, improvising, arranging, and performing. This working definition emphasizes what learners do with musical resources. It does not require every contribution to be unprecedented in the history of music. Tan and colleagues connect creativity to making and new interaction, while research on classroom creativity illustrates the educational significance of developing and using musical ideas (2, 3, 18). The definition used here remains an analytical choice, rather than a direct quotation or an exhaustive account of creativity. Inheritance makes such activity possible. Learners encounter rhythmic practices, repertoires, techniques, histories, instruments, and social relationships that precede their participation. Shils provides an account of tradition through transmission across generations (19). Handler and Linnekin complicate a purely object-like understanding of this inheritance by emphasizing the interpretive construction of tradition (10). Taken together, these perspectives support attention both to what is passed on and to the present relationships through which continuity is recognized.

Substantial knowledge and creative agency can develop together. A learner may imitate a phrase to understand its organization, then explore variation through that understanding. A group may rehearse a particular version carefully because the learning objective is to understand that version. These activities become relevant to the problem of closure when their authority extends beyond the stated purpose and forecloses further questions. The distinction is between a bounded task whose constraints can be explained and a pedagogical relationship in which an authorized model defines the limit of legitimate musical action. In “Toward Open Encounters,” Allsup locates open and closed orientations on a continuum: a master–apprentice relationship can become open, while a laboratory setting can become closed (4, pp. 25–26). These orientations concern how participants relate to musical practices and one another. They cannot be inferred from a genre or teaching format alone. His account of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra shows how musicians can redistribute authority while retaining demanding performance standards (4, p. 26). The present analysis focuses on whether learners can inquire into the terms governing inherited knowledge. Students may make decisions about tempo or instrumentation while remaining unable to question the criteria by which their work is judged culturally legitimate.

This vital distinction strongly discourages assigning openness to entire musical cultures. A written score can support nuanced comparison and creative experimentation, while an aural demonstration can easily become an unquestionable model. Neither formal notation nor oral transmission inherently determines the learner’s complex relationship to authority. Therefore, cultural origin, the specific medium of transmission, and underlying pedagogical purpose need to be carefully examined together. The proposed analytical framework consequently addresses particular educational relationships rather than uncritically sorting European art music and diverse Ghanaian practices into opposing, rigid categories.

Authority, Authenticity and Cultural Continuity

Authenticity scholarship already challenges the assumption that educational responsibility requires reproducing an unchanged original. Schippers shows why tradition, authenticity, and context need dynamic interpretation across musical settings (11). Mantie places the question of appropriate musical teaching within a wider relationship among expertise, authority, and responsibility (12). These arguments establish an important starting point: acknowledging change does not remove the need to justify what educators do with culturally situated knowledge. Culturally sustaining pedagogy provides another safeguard against a simple opposition between preservation and creativity. Paris’s original formulation supports cultural and linguistic pluralism, and Paris and Alim explicitly discuss evolving youth practices and the need to examine the inequalities those practices may also contain (5, 6). Young people already have an active role within this literature. Good-Perkins extends culturally sustaining concerns into music education, and Rector’s review treats implementation as a broader pedagogical issue than the selection of diverse repertoire (8, 20). The present article therefore addresses a possible restrictive enactment of cultural sustenance rather than attributing that restriction to culturally sustaining pedagogy itself.

The question becomes acute when several people make plausible but different claims about musical continuation. A practitioner may emphasize obligations associated with a performance context. A teacher may emphasize the learning objective and the responsibilities of a school. A learner may propose a musical response grounded in a different experience. Cultural participation requires an account of how these claims are heard and evaluated. Merely affirming that a practice is dynamic cannot decide a particular disagreement, but neither should that disagreement automatically exclude young people from inquiry.

Gaztambide-Fernández’s cultural production perspective helps locate such disagreements within the relationships and conditions through which people make cultural meaning (9). This perspective directs attention to whose contributions receive recognition, how resources support participation, and which institutional arrangements shape the work. Its significance for the present argument is that learners’ cultural participation includes their capacity to affect interpretation and judgment. Permission to produce an object is only one part of that participation. Ghanaian scholarship makes continuity through change particularly relevant. Oduro-Frimpong examines hiplife through processes of glocalization, showing how locally meaningful popular music can involve the transformation of global forms (21). Addaquay examines preservation and adaptation in Ghanaian music and dance and proposes contextual fidelity as an evaluative orientation attentive to intention, community recognition, and function (22). These contributions establish that responsible transformation is already an explicit scholarly concern. Critical openness builds on that concern by asking how its conditions can be negotiated within educational relationships where learners have limited institutional authority.

Double Closure Through Canonization and Preservation

Double closure names two analytically distinct routes through which educators may treat inherited musical knowledge as settled: canonization and preservation. "Double" identifies the pair of routes. It does not require both to occur simultaneously or suggest that they exhaust the possible causes of restriction. They may occur independently, successively, or together. The distinction concerns the justification for a restriction and the authority that supports it. Closed tradition names the resulting relationship in which learners principally reproduce authorized knowledge; double closure asks how that relationship becomes warranted.

Closure Through Canonization

Canonization produces closure when an institution treats a selected repertoire, grammar, interpretation, or form of expertise as the authoritative measure of musical legitimacy. The restriction need not prohibit creativity outright. Students may compose, improvise, or arrange, provided that their work confirms the authorized standard. For example, a teacher might judge an arrangement exclusively through a preferred harmonic vocabulary even when the task draws on a musical practice organized through different priorities. The problem is the unexamined authority of the criterion, rather than the existence of criteria or the study of harmony.Canonization can also occur within recently included repertoire. An institution may select one transcription or recording as the definitive account of a practice and treat differences from it as evidence of deficiency. In that situation, diversification of content leaves the relationship to knowledge largely intact. The analytical question is which selected representation has become normative and whether its authority remains open to musical and contextual explanation. A standard becomes a route to closure when it claims a reach beyond its justified purpose and excludes learners from examining that reach.

Closure Through Preservation

Preservation produces closure when the protection of cultural continuity becomes a requirement to reproduce an authorized form without opportunities to investigate its selection, interpretation, or possible continuation. Its justification can differ substantially from canonization. Communities may seek to protect practices from erasure, misrepresentation, commercial exploitation, or the loss of knowledgeable practitioners. These concerns deserve recognition. Closure arises only when a particular preservation demand makes the learner's custodial role the settled limit of participation.

Preservation itself is not evidence of closure. Documentation, careful imitation, language learning, and sustained work with practitioners may be necessary conditions for meaningful participation. Some knowledge may also carry restrictions on access or use. The framework asks how educational constraints are explained, whose obligations they protect, and what forms of inquiry remain possible within them. It does not require communities to release protected knowledge or to recognize every classroom adaptation as part of their tradition. A decision to refrain from alteration may be informed and responsible when learners understand its grounds.

The restrictive case is narrower. A classroom treats one version as the only authentic form, regards questions about that judgment as disrespectful, and evaluates student work solely through conformity. Even extensive participation may then leave learners without standing to inquire into the cultural authority governing their work. The framework identifies that arrangement as closure through preservation because fidelity, rather than institutional excellence alone, supplies its justification.

The Value and Limits of the Comparison

Placing the routes together enables a question that repertoire-based analysis can miss: do contrasting cultural projects leave learners in a comparable relationship to settled knowledge? It also helps distinguish possible responses. A universalized institutional standard may require examination of whose knowledge it marginalizes. A preservation demand may require careful discussion of cultural vulnerability, obligations, and the conditions under which change is appropriate. Recognizing a similar learner position does not establish that the restrictions deserve the same judgment or remedy. The analogy stops at pedagogical structure. Colonial canonization and the reclamation of marginalized cultural practices have unequal histories, institutional resources, and political stakes. A formally similar restriction can protect different interests and impose different costs. The concept would lose explanatory value if it made these differences disappear. Historical context therefore remains part of the diagnosis, rather than a qualification added after both routes have been condemned.

The relationship between the routes is also empirical rather than predetermined. A school might protect a musical practice through authenticity language while allowing an examination rubric to define its acceptable form. That possible combination would require investigation of both institutional standards and preservation claims. Double closure provides questions for such investigation; it does not permit the analyst to infer either mechanism from the cultural identity of the repertoire.

Historical Relations as an Interpretive Resource

Nietzsche's account of monumental, antiquarian, and critical history supplies a vocabulary for examining the educational treatment of inheritance (16). He was addressing the uses and disadvantages of historical consciousness, not developing a music education method. I adapt his distinctions through a limited analogy: educational actors express a relationship to the past through the purposes they assign to inherited material and the actions they authorize learners to take. The analogy concerns those purposes and actions. It does not treat curricula as persons or claim that Nietzsche's categories describe actual classrooms without further analysis. Monumental history draws on exemplary achievements, while antiquarian history values preservation and belonging. Nietzsche also describes the dangers of excessive attachment and the disruptive role of critical judgment. His critical mode includes the need to

judge and sometimes break with the past, together with the difficulty of escaping an inheritance that has helped form the present (16). This qualification prevents a simple translation of the three modes into bad reverence, bad preservation, and good critique.

In the pedagogical interpretation proposed here, an exemplary performance can expand a learner's sense of possibility. Careful preservation can sustain access to knowledge and relationships that might otherwise be lost. Critical inquiry can examine whether an inherited expectation still serves the educational purpose claimed for it. These orientations can coexist within the same lesson. The problem arises when admiration or attachment removes the possibility of examining the authority assigned to an example. Nietzsche's vocabulary thus contributes a question about the educational force of the past, rather than an additional classification of musical cultures. Nietzsche's vocabulary helps explain why the issue concerns relationships to inheritance rather than inheritance alone. The political evaluation of those relationships still requires historical and cultural knowledge. Nietzsche's critique cannot by itself determine the legitimacy of a Ghanaian community's preservation priorities, nor does it supply a decolonial account of their conditions.

Critical Openness as a Pedagogical Framework

Critical openness is a pedagogical framework for examining and organizing learners' relationships to inherited musical knowledge when claims of authority and authenticity shape participation. The idea combines a diagnosis of how knowledge becomes settled with principles for making its interpretation accountable. Its primary status is a framework for pedagogical judgment. Researchers may also use its questions to examine curricular decisions, but it is neither a validated assessment instrument nor a general theory of every form of music learning. The framework has four interconnected features: inheritance as necessary but non-final, authenticity as an object of accountable inquiry, continuity compatible with responsible transformation, and learner participation in cultural continuation. Each feature translates the preceding synthesis into a question about educational design. Their relationship is important. Experimentation without knowledge may disregard the practice being taught; preservation without inquiry may restrict participation; learner agency without accountability may displace the people whose knowledge makes the activity possible.

Substantive Inheritance With Continuing Possibilities

Learners need access to musical knowledge, histories, techniques, and relationships with knowledgeable people. Instruction should make these resources available in forms appropriate to the practice and the students. Teachers can demonstrate, correct, sequence, and set demanding expectations. The condition of openness is that learners also gain opportunities to understand what those expectations enable and where their applicability ends. Foundational learning and exploratory work can proceed iteratively: questions arising during experimentation can reveal what students need to learn more carefully. This feature can be recognized when students can explain the purpose of a constraint, compare more than one interpretation where appropriate, and use learned resources in a further musical decision. A unit devoted to accurate reproduction may form part of an open curriculum if its purpose and relationship to subsequent inquiry are clear. Conversely, an assignment described as creative may remain restrictive if every acceptable outcome has effectively been determined in advance.

Authenticity as Accountable Inquiry

Authenticity claims require attention to who makes them, what they refer to, and which responsibilities they protect. The classroom questions are concrete: authentic to which performance context, version, purpose, or community judgment? Who has the knowledge to explain a distinction? What would count as misrepresentation? These questions do not presume that every boundary should change. They require reasons appropriate to the particular boundary. This feature is visible when a class investigates the grounds of an authenticity judgment and recognizes the limits of its own authority. A student may learn why a proposed change is inappropriate, or why the work should be described as a classroom arrangement inspired by a practice rather than an authoritative version of it. Critical openness preserves that possibility. Inquiry becomes shallow when the teacher invites questions but allows them no bearing on the task, the explanation of criteria, or the interpretation of student work.

Continuity Through Responsible Transformation

Continuity may involve relationships of recognition, function, memory, technique, or performance practice that persist through change. Addaquay's contextual fidelity provides a Ghanaian contribution to examining adaptation without reducing integrity to unchanged form (22). The framework takes from this discussion a pedagogical obligation to explain the relationship between a proposed transformation and the knowledge on which it draws. It does not assume that any change sustains the tradition. Teachers can ask learners to identify what their work retains, what it changes, why those changes matter, and how others interpret the result. Learners seek feedback from relevant practitioners and peers, then explain how it informs their decisions. Retaining, revising, or withdrawing an adaptation can each follow from that inquiry. Novelty itself supplies no guarantee of cultural responsibility. The educational achievement lies partly in making and evaluating a reasoned musical decision.

Learner Participation With Negotiated Authority

Learners should have standing to contribute questions, interpretations, and musical proposals. Such standing differs from an entitlement to determine community recognition. Teachers remain responsible for assessment, and practitioners retain relevant expertise and cultural authority. Negotiation concerns how these responsibilities enter the educational decision and how learners can respond to the reasons offered. Student reinterpretations should therefore become legitimate objects of musical and cultural inquiry. They can be discussed, criticized, revised, or refused for stated reasons. They should not be rejected

simply because they depart from a selected model. Equally, classroom approval should not be presented as community endorsement. This distinction protects learner agency while limiting the institution's power to authorize a tradition on behalf of others.

Taken together, the features specify a procedure of judgment: identify the restriction, examine its justification and authority, clarify the interests it protects, and determine what accountable participation remains possible. The classroom practices described above offer possible evidence for such inquiry; they do not constitute a scoring scale. Their value does not depend on claiming that Allsup, culturally sustaining pedagogy, or authenticity scholarship lacks any one of these concerns. The contribution is to organize them around the convergence identified by double closure and to make that relationship usable in the analysis of an educational decision.

The strongest objection is that the framework restates commitments already available in its antecedents. That objection sets an appropriate standard for evaluating the proposal. Critical openness is useful only if it helps distinguish arrangements that an undifferentiated description of creative or culturally inclusive teaching would leave together. For example, two classes may both include community collaboration and improvisation. In one, learners may vary musical material but cannot discuss the standards governing its legitimacy. In the other, learners participate in examining those standards while remaining accountable to practitioners. The framework focuses attention on that difference without claiming that existing open or culturally sustaining pedagogies could not also address it.

Ghanaian Scholarship as an Illustrative Context

Ghana is theoretically productive because the cited scholarship brings institutional inheritance, cultural reclamation, and active musical change into the same discussion. Flolu's historical study examines cultural influences and the dilemmas confronting school music teachers (13). Otchere's analysis of undergraduate music course content at two Ghanaian public universities identifies the limited proportion devoted to African music (23). The latter finding concerns the institutions and curricula examined; it is not evidence about every Ghanaian university or the current practice of senior high school teachers. Together, these studies provide reasons to examine the authority of curricular selection within their respective settings.

Acquah and Mensah's case study of Tamale International School addresses a different problem. They identify a mismatch between classroom music and dance content and the JHS syllabus, despite what they describe as substantial African music content in that syllabus. Their recommendation favors closer instructional alignment (24). This study supports a distinction between policy inclusion and enacted content. It does not establish closure through preservation, nor does it show that teachers should move beyond the syllabus's prescriptions. Its relevance here is that curricular inclusion alone cannot stand as evidence of the relationship learners develop with included knowledge.

Dordzro provides a complementary account of musical knowledge outside university instruction. Drawing on community brass bands in Cape Coast and Elmina, he argues that Indigenous approaches to musical learning merit recognition within decolonial music education. His account explicitly values community ensembles' roles in both preserving and transforming knowledge (25). This is an important qualification to any critique of preservation. Community practice may already sustain adaptive relationships that formal educational institutions insufficiently recognize. The framework must examine the particular authority arrangement rather than assume that community transmission fixes tradition. The literature on cultural change further complicates a static account of Ghanaian inheritance. Addaquay explicitly examines adaptation and performance integrity, while Oduro-Frimpong describes the local transformation of global musical forms in hiplife (21, 22). Historical work by Salm and Ofosu also locates Kpanlogo within changing youth cultures and interactions among musical and dance practices (26, 27). These sources concern different practices and periods. They support a historically situated understanding of cultural dynamism, not the generalization that Ghanaian musical life is uniformly open.

The policy illustration is useful because it connects production and Indigenous knowledge rather than simply listing traditional repertoire. NaCCA's 2023 Performing Arts curriculum asks learners to plan artistic production using Indigenous knowledge systems and specifies collaboration with community practitioners (14). This provides a setting in which questions of creativity, expertise, and cultural responsibility arise together. The analysis that follows treats the policy as an opportunity for examining possible pedagogical decisions, while leaving their actual enactment open to empirical research.

A Worked Example Using Kpanlogo

The Curricular Anchor and the Musical Illustration

Learning Indicator 1.2.1.LI.2 asks learners to plan the creation or production of a performing arts product using Indigenous knowledge systems. Its exemplars include collaboration with Indigenous communities to understand practices and protocols and with artists and performers to "ensure cultural authenticity" (14, p. 49). The preceding content standard, 1.2.1.CS.1, includes the words "identify and interrogate" in relation to Indigenous knowledge systems (14, p. 48). These elements support inquiry and collaboration; the reference to authenticity does not itself prescribe a closed pedagogy.

I use Kpanlogo as a proposed musical application of this indicator. It is not named as the required content of that indicator, and the sequence below is not an observed lesson. Salm situates Kpanlogo in the creation and adaptation of popular cultural forms among youth in early post-independence Accra (26). Ofosu places its development within interactions between Ghanaian and external artistic practices and discusses the later reworking of dance material in popular culture (27). These histories make Kpanlogo appropriate for examining why an inherited practice's integrity cannot simply be equated with the absence of change.

The proposed task is to plan a short performance drawing on Kpanlogo in collaboration with a knowledgeable practitioner. Learners study an appropriate version, its musical and movement relationships, and the context in which they are learning it. They then prepare a performance plan and explain the relationship of their choices to that learning. The four readings below vary the basis of authority and assessment while retaining that common task. They are analytical possibilities, not stages through which every class must pass.

Canonization as the Governing Criterion

In the canonizing reading, the teacher selects a transcription as the definitive representation and bases judgment exclusively on agreement with it. Learners may choose instruments or presentation details, but deviations from the transcription are treated as deficiencies even when a practitioner explains them as appropriate to a different version or performance context. The transcription has acquired an authority that exceeds its stated use as a learning aid. The diagnostic issue is not the presence of notation. A transcription could support comparison, memory, or detailed study within an open lesson. Closure arises when the selected representation determines musical legitimacy and learners have no meaningful opportunity to examine its limits. Here, double closure identifies normative authorization as the justification to investigate. Adding a creative task would not necessarily alter that arrangement if the same criterion continued to govern every acceptable outcome.

Preservation as the Governing Criterion

In the preservation reading, a teacher presents one learned version as the sole authentic form and treats all departures as threats to heritage. Learners are permitted to reproduce it and organize its presentation, but questions about its selection or possible variation are treated as disrespectful. An appeal to protection settles the learner's role. This example should be distinguished from an assignment devoted to learning a particular version accurately. A practitioner may reasonably ask students to develop greater understanding before altering it, or explain why some material is unsuitable for the proposed setting. Those decisions need not constitute closure. The restrictive condition in the example is that preservation supplies an answer to every question in advance. The class cannot investigate which responsibilities the restriction protects or what further participation might become appropriate.

An Open Tradition Reading

An open tradition reading permits learners to use inherited material in musical inquiry. After learning with the practitioner, they might compare versions where appropriate, explore a permitted variation, or propose an arrangement. They revise their ideas through listening, performance, and feedback. The resulting work need not reproduce a predetermined solution. This reading develops Allsup's account of coauthoring, facilitation, and learners putting inheritance to use in changed circumstances (4, pp. 34–35). His open philosophy already examines power and the authority to remake musical practices. Critical openness specifies questions about cultural responsibility within that orientation, especially when creative permission does not clearly extend to the terms of cultural judgment.

Critical Openness and the Terms of Judgment

Under critical openness, the class examines how musical decisions acquire legitimacy alongside developing the performance. The teacher and practitioner first clarify the purpose of the task: learning a particular version, proposing a classroom adaptation, or preparing a performance for a specified setting. They explain which knowledge and protocols bear on that purpose. Learners can ask how these expectations were determined and identify where they need further instruction. The class then considers selected historical accounts of Kpanlogo's development. The purpose is to contextualize change without treating its history as permission for any alteration. Learners document what their proposal retains, what it changes, and what they understand to be the implications. The practitioner's feedback and the students' responses become part of the work. Where accounts differ, the teacher identifies the disagreement and its grounds rather than converting one classroom decision into a definitive judgment about the whole practice.

Assessment distinguishes musical understanding, the coherence of the proposed work, and cultural responsibility. For example, learners might submit a performance plan with an oral explanation identifying their sources, the reasons for their choices, and the revisions made after feedback. A creative departure can be evaluated as a serious proposal without receiving automatic recognition as an authentic continuation. When that recognition has not been established, the presentation can accurately describe the work as a classroom arrangement informed by Kpanlogo. Consider a proposed alteration that a practitioner questions. A permissive teacher might approve it because the task encourages creativity; a restrictive teacher might reject it solely because it differs from the learned version. Critical openness instead calls for examination of the objection. Does the change obscure a relationship central to the chosen version, disregard a contextual obligation, or merely depart from one preferred interpretation? Students may respond by learning more, revising, retaining a justified choice within the assignment, or declining to present the adaptation. The educational process makes the grounds and consequences of the decision available to participants.

This example specifies the framework's analytical payoff. The presence of improvisation or collaboration does not settle who may interpret the criteria governing a task. Double closure distinguishes why those criteria might become fixed. Critical openness asks whether participants can examine their authority and negotiate an accountable course of action. The proposal thus directs attention to assessment decisions, explanations, and opportunities for response that a list of creative activities would not reveal.

Implications for Music Education

Curriculum designers can use the framework to examine the relationship between a creative objective and the criteria through which students demonstrate it. If an objective invites interpretation but the rubric rewards only

resemblance to a selected model, the intended opportunity requires clarification. Designers can state when accuracy to a particular version is the purpose, when transformation is appropriate, and how students should explain the cultural responsibilities involved. Clear purposes make demanding criteria more defensible and make restrictions available for examination. Teacher education can develop this judgment through concrete tasks. Preservice teachers could compare two rubrics for the same musical project, identify the authority supporting each criterion, and explain which learner decisions each permits. They could revise a lesson that treats one recording as definitive or examine how a community collaboration affects assessment. The aim is to prepare teachers to give reasons for their decisions and to recognize where their own knowledge is insufficient. These exercises can also distinguish consultation that merely endorses a predetermined lesson from collaboration that materially influences it.

Community collaboration requires time, resources, and clarity about responsibilities. Within the proposed framework, practitioners should help determine appropriate material, contextual obligations, attribution, and the terms of participation. Teachers should plan for compensation where collaboration requires professional labor and avoid treating any one visitor as the uncontested representative of an entire community. These are recommendations for responsible design, not findings that particular Ghanaian schools currently follow or fail to follow them.

The framework also has human purposes. Muhammad's work places joy alongside identity, skills, intellect, and criticality in culturally and historically responsive education (17). In the present argument, joy supplies a normative reason to care about meaningful participation; it is not a fifth feature of critical openness or an outcome the framework has demonstrated. Students may find significance in being able to contribute to musical life, but their experiences cannot be inferred from a teacher's intention. Their accounts should inform any future evaluation.

For research, the concepts suggest questions that can be investigated through lessons, interviews, assessment materials, and student work. What reasons do teachers offer for restricting a musical change? Whose judgments influence the final decision? Can learners understand, question, or respond to those judgments? Does consultation affect the work or merely confirm it? Studying such decisions could establish whether the proposed routes are recognizable and whether the framework distinguishes practices that participants themselves experience differently.

Limitations and Further Inquiry

This article offers a conceptual synthesis with a bounded policy illustration. It contains no classroom observations, teacher interviews, student accounts, or empirical evaluation of the proposed framework. The constructed readings demonstrate possible distinctions rather than the prevalence of canonization or preservation in Ghanaian schools. An identified curriculum indicator makes the illustration traceable, but it does not convert the article into a systematic analysis of the entire curriculum. The source selection is purposive and cannot establish that all relevant literature lacks the same synthesis or terminology. The contribution should be assessed through the specificity and usefulness of the argument, rather than an exhaustive claim of novelty. Canonization and preservation are also only two possible routes to closure. Examinations, resource shortages, institutional timetables, and other conditions may restrict participation without relying primarily on either justification. Further research could examine how such conditions intersect with the mechanisms proposed here.

The Ghanaian discussion draws on different historical periods, educational levels, and community settings. These sources cannot be aggregated into a single account of current national practice. Nor do they establish that the framework transfers unchanged to other countries or musical communities. Researchers would need to examine local histories, institutions, and participants' understandings of authority before applying the concepts elsewhere. Finally, negotiation can reproduce unequal power. A classroom may invite dialogue while leaving the teacher's decision effectively unanswerable; confident students may receive more influence than their peers; institutions may invoke collaboration while marginalizing practitioners' concerns. Critical openness names commitments that require scrutiny in their enactment. Future studies should examine whether those commitments alter whose judgments matter and how disagreement is handled, alongside any consequences for musical learning, creativity, or cultural continuity.

Conclusion

The article advances three connected propositions. First, the learner's relationship to inherited knowledge depends partly on how educational actors authorize its interpretation, rather than on the cultural origin of the repertoire alone. Second, canonization and preservation can justify a comparable restriction through different appeals to normative standards and cultural fidelity. Double closure names these routes while retaining their unequal histories and ethical stakes. Third, critical openness proposes conditions for accountable participation through substantive inheritance, inquiry into authenticity, responsible transformation, and negotiated authority. The conceptual contribution lies in connecting a restriction's justification to the authority that sustains it and the learner's opportunity to respond. The Ghanaian illustration makes that relationship concrete through a policy expectation and a proposed Kpanlogo learning sequence. The illustration shows how the same broad task could be organized around different judgments of knowledge and participation. It does not establish which arrangement teachers use or which produces better outcomes.

Shared musical inheritance can effectively support both exacting learning and continuing critical inquiry together. Modern educators urgently need clear ways to explain precisely what should be retained, what may be thoughtfully reconsidered, and who should actively participate in those vital decisions. Critical openness offers an indispensable framework for that complex work while consistently keeping the underlying responsibilities of effective teaching, broader community recognition, and

authentic learner contribution clearly in view.

Declaration

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The manuscript is a theoretical essay and so no data was collected.

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