

The practice of pedagogy

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Abstract

Despite its relatively short history in Australian musical academia, a recent survey indicates that over half of Australian music institutions now offer Keyboard/Vocal/Instrumental Pedagogy as a formalised course in their institution at either Undergraduate level or Post-graduate level. While it is clear that the imperative to raise the standard of teaching through formal tertiary training has been addressed by some music institutions in Australia, many pedagogy courses/programs are however restricted to lecture type classes, in abstract form or with artificially created practice teaching exercises. Consequently, young professional musicians are still emerging from their advanced study more often than not better prepared as performers than as teachers.

Some researchers argue that the real crux of a successful piano pedagogy program or even one pedagogy course, is and always will be the practical training of current and prospective teachers and this can only be accomplished by a large and successful measure of practice teaching.

This paper examines one pedagogy program currently being offered in an Australian tertiary institution. The aim of the paper is to ascertain the effectiveness of the intern program and whether or not the success of the program lies in the practical training of current and prospective teachers that can only be accomplished by a large and successful dose of practice teaching.

Context

Historically, the priority of Conservatoria and Australian schools of music has been to concentrate on performance studies despite only a small proportion of graduates achieving a living from a performance career alone. While graduates have had the benefit of one-on-one contact with their performance teachers, this process typically focuses on mastering the technique and interpretation leading to excellence in playing the literature. The organisation and communication of those techniques and interpretative ideas are seldom the centre of intensive study. The assumption therefore is that the student will “pick up” the ability to impart knowledge to others in the process of assimilating the material itself. Consequently, many graduates experience isolation and frustration in developing the necessary skills to become a

successful teacher. The cycle of limited teaching skills manifesting itself in indifferent quality of standards of performance becomes perpetuated due to the lack of training in the area of teaching. Furthermore, most students have not had the exposure or the experience of teaching in the primary areas in which they will work and learn and earn most of their lives – the teaching of instruments to students at pre-tertiary level.

Over the last twenty-five years, the majority of American music tertiary institutions have steadily implemented pedagogy courses into their degree programs. They recognised the inclusion of formalised pedagogy courses as an essential element if standards of teaching at all levels are to be improved and developed. Likewise, a recent survey of music institutions in Australia (Carey, 2004) reveals that a large percentage of programs include some courses in the area of studio pedagogy. However, only a small percentage of institutions offer practice teaching as a component of their courses. This paper examines one keyboard pedagogy program which has recently embedded practice teaching as a natural progression towards a professional career in studio teaching.

As a result of an internal review of the Bachelor of Music curriculum at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University in 1998, a recommendation was put forward that students be provided with courses that address the skills required of the Professional Studio Teacher. There was increasing awareness of the responsibility to insure that teacher training came prior to rather than after the completion of a degree. In order to respond to this challenge, four Pedagogy courses in the area of Keyboard, Strings and Voice were designed at Undergraduate level. The central objective of these courses is to provide an introduction to studio teaching which exposes the students to the effective pedagogical practices. Complementary pedagogies from the field of music education and popular music are currently being trialled with QCGU courses.

The intention was to implement a curriculum that is organised, sequenced, and linked to current theories of studio pedagogy and music education (Bridges, 1993; Carey, 1997; Clarke 1983; Lebler, 2007). The literature in the field is described in more detail below, but an essential objective of the program as a whole is about the encouraging and enhancing of the students' ability to think critically and contribute to discussion and debate. The program aims to provide students with a framework for independent lifelong learning. Strategies that provide an environment that encourages interaction and discussion – one that views students as participants – an environment that freely lends itself to experimentation with ideas and the finding of solutions through trial and error are also implemented in the courses. Students are eligible to enrol in these courses from the second year of their degree program.

The first of the suite of courses (Pedagogy 1) is an introduction to teaching (*Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, 2007*). It explores the basic principles and the practical application of pedagogy as related to the student's major area of study. Effective teaching practices for the instruction of the beginner to intermediate level in the studio environment are central to this course. Recent trends in studio teaching influence the perspective of the discussion and research. Although specific content varies according to the instrument, topics studied in the course include:

- Introduction to the field of keyboard teaching
- Introduction to the learning process and its application to teaching and performing
- Lesson and curriculum planning
- Instructional procedures for teaching the beginning student in both individual and group lesson settings
- Survey of current methods and literature.

Students actively participate in discussion and are expected to demonstrate their critical understanding of the course matter through the completion of regular tasks, readings and integrated learning activities. They are required to keep a reflective journal on all readings and class discussion.

Practicum 1, which runs parallel to Pedagogy 1, provides a program of activities that addresses the practical skills of studio teaching (*Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, 2007*). Its core activity is analysis and performance of repertoire. Lesson observation and reflection on pedagogical practice, incorporating both individual and group teaching, are central to the program. Peer teaching, pedagogical communication and skills are analysed and synthesised within weekly conferences.

Pedagogy 1 and Practicum 1 are pre-requisites for Pedagogy 2. The central objective of this course is to develop further a foundation for studio teaching. Students' understanding of constructivism in teaching and learning is extended with constant specific reference to the intermediate performance skills required. The course embraces current innovative methods applicable to the studio setting and to the student's own development as both a teacher and a performer. Topics covered in the course include:

- The intermediate student and technique
- Repertoire for the Intermediate student
- Performance practice requirements of the baroque, classical, romantic and contemporary periods
- Teaching and learning - student centred instruction.

Pedagogy Practicum 2 aims to incorporate skills and approaches for both individual and group teaching at intermediate level (*Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, 2007*). The course provides students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and practical skills for

teaching in their area of practice, with an emphasis on the foundation of secure technique and creative artistic presentation commencing at intermediate level. It tests students' ability to work independently, to be self critical, to reflect on current teaching practice and to encourage a constructivist approach to the problem-solving skills needed for teaching and learning in the music studio.

Internship course

In 2000, in response to a demand from graduates who had completed the Undergraduate Pedagogy courses, a Pedagogy Internship course was implemented into the degree program. The aim of the program is to afford students practical training that can only be accomplished through practice teaching. The internship was designed on an American model (Clark, 1983, p.1) which allows students the opportunity of concurrently observing teachers, having classes on how to teach and then doing it (Carey, 1997). The internship¹, open only to Masters students and those majoring in Performance and Pedagogy, is designed to give prospective teachers intensive experience working within their own studios and on location². The Intern class deals with students representing a wide variety of ages and musical levels. However, in order for the project to be successful Interns and their students must establish and honour a four-month commitment to work with each other.

Practice Teaching

The course includes three main components:

1. Lesson observation
2. Supervision, and
3. Teaching and Reflection.

¹ Presently offered to Keyboard and String and Voice students

² A pre-requisite for enrolment in the intern course is completion of a minimum of three courses

Observation involves the Intern student in the observation of an experienced teacher.

Observation lessons include lessons at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. A minimum of five observations must take place throughout the semester. Each Intern is required to write a reflective account of what they have learnt during this process.

Additionally the Intern student conducts weekly lessons to one of their own students. Lesson plans and content are initially **supervised** by the lecturer, however in the latter half of the semester Intern students are left to design their own lesson plan. Each week, segments of the lesson are presented by the Intern. The demonstration lesson is observed by all members of the class who are expected to provide peers with helpful, supportive feed-back on their teaching.

The last stage of the Internship involves the Intern student in the actual **teaching** process. Each Internship student is responsible for teaching at least one student a series of ten private lessons. This student can be at any level of advancement, subject to approval. Each of the ten lessons requires a weekly written lesson plan to be shown to the supervisor, a practice assignment for the Intern's own student to follow and an evaluation report of the Intern's own teaching.

Additionally, the following occurs:

1. The lesson the Intern conducts is regularly video-taped and observed by the supervisor. It is also viewed by peers and critiqued in class. All lessons taught must be evaluated by the Intern and recorded in a reflective journal.
2. Students are also exposed to the specific areas of research interest relating to their area of need and specialisation. Learning and Teaching literature is prepared and summarised by students for discussion and analysis in class.

As the course progresses, the supervisor becomes increasingly dispensable to the Intern.

Students are encouraged to assume a more autonomous and self-efficacious role.

Resources for student teaching experiences

While most Conservatoires are well equipped to provide the observation of best teaching practice at tertiary level, the majority of graduates will earn the better part of their income through the teaching of a more diverse clientele ranging from young children to adults. In order to provide Pedagogy students with observation and teaching experiences at all levels, several programs have been designed through the Young Conservatorium program over the course of the last six years³.

The main providers of experience for the Keyboard Intern teachers are students who are enrolled in 'The Young Beginner Keyboard Program'. This program was established in 2000. The Program offers two levels of tuition: group instruction for 5-6 year olds, which is designed to be an introduction to the keyboard; and individual weekly instruction for children aged approximately 6-8 years.

While Undergraduates must provide their own students for practice teaching, graduate Interns are allocated students enrolled in the Young Beginner Program. While this program has been only more recently established, practice teaching in Education programs has been considered significant and an essential bridge between the theoretical and practical components of teaching.

Identifying the role of Practicum, Internships and Mentoring

The application of theoretical knowledge in a practicum experience has long been acknowledged as a vital component in music education. The term practicum has its origin in Latin meaning practical. In tertiary institutions this typically involves a course in a specialised field of study

³ There has for the last 25 years been individual tuition available to pre-tertiary students. However the main criterion for selection of these students was an established high level of performance ability, which is determined through an audition process.

that is designed to give students supervised practical application of previously studied theory. It is frequently applied to classroom teacher preparation. An Internship extends the process of supervised practical training in a manner related to the student's academic and career goals, and may act as an entree to professional employment; some may provide student payment.

Internships provide very close supervision by a mentor in an apprenticeship-like relationship.

Internship suggests a stronger bond between the student and the mentor as well as a degree of increasing independence for the mentored. The concept of mentoring is therefore central to the practical applications of theoretical knowledge. Hansen found that 'mentoring' incorporates ideas of guidance and the development of a close relationship which, in turn, fosters wisdom and the understanding of a new role (Hansen, 1992). McGuire and Reger describe the mentoring relationships as:

a relationship between two people who differ in age, experience and status. The terms for the individuals in this relationship, mentor and protégé, reflect the hierarchical ordering; a mentor teaches and a protégé learns. (2003, p 56)

In music, the mentor relationship most beginning teachers experience in their own learning is typically one-to-one and is characterised by

... the experienced musician acting as a guide for the protege. The relationship facilitates the sharing of understandings, attitudes, insights, technical and interpretative expertise, life experience and professional philosophy (Power, 2000, p. 23).

This hierarchical relationship, while common, can negate the value of peer learning. Recent research, particularly in relation to popular music, indicates the role peers can play in university-based courses. Lebler (2007) challenges the master-protégé model and advocates a learning scenario based on a scaffolded self-directed learning community, a master-less studio. His findings recognise that

... greater student autonomy and self-efficacy result from the a-synchronous reflection on performance that is enabled through recording, the self-reflection that is required by self-assessing, and the reflections on the work of others that peer-based assessment(Lebler, 2007 in press).

The practicum, the Internship and the self-directed environment rely on an experience, in which students interact and rely, as Shavelson's (1973) suggests, on their pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge, as well as on their experiences and beliefs, to guide them. It follows then that success at decision-making tasks would be dependent in part on the knowledge and experience available to teachers. Furthermore, Paul's (1998) study found that extended peer teachings assisted pre-service teachers in constructing knowledge about teaching, which in turn led to their identification with various aspects of a teacher's professional role.

The experience of the practicum is reported anecdotally by students, but also has some foundation in recent literature: Hodkinson & Hodkinson (1999) state that students believe the time spent on practicum is intended for 'learning how to teach' rather than 'learning in order to teach' (p. 274). Yourn (2000) along with Ferguson (1989) indicate that a structured practicum experience is more than a 'trial and error' approach: it can assist beginning teachers in being more reflective in their approach to learning the art of teaching.

Studies of classroom and studio music teacher preparation by Harrison (2003, 2004, 2005) and Ballantyne (2005, 2006, 2007) recognise a number of elements related to the current investigation. In brief these include the need for preparation to include pedagogical knowledge and skills, musical knowledge and skills and development of personal attributes. The application of knowledge, skills and attributes in practical settings was discussed by Harrison and Ballantyne (2005), who found that 43% of their respondents mentioned practicum as the most useful aspect of the university program. They noted that

this is the area of the pre-service program where students are able to apply the knowledge and skills learnt in university directly... There is also a strong emphasis on the usefulness of knowledge and skills associated with teaching music, with repertoire and resource development, planning lessons and work plans, music teaching techniques and aural perception skills being rated as very important...Practicum is identified as being of particular importance in terms of developing 'hands-on' knowledge and skills (Harrison and Ballantyne, p. 27)

Specifically in relation to internships, participants in Conway's study noted that

I felt like by the time I was looking for a job I had a good handle on what the different [contexts] were like because I had done so many of the little internships." "I learned a lot in the once-a-week internship things. It was good to sort of start slowly into teaching. (2002, p. 31)

Although Conway's study noted that fieldwork was one of the most valuable aspects of preparation, participants also discussed observations without context as a least valuable experience:

"It seems like we did a lot of observing in the schools and I did not really know what I was supposed to be looking at." "I wish I could go back now and do all those observations we had to do in the methods classes. I think I was just going through the motions back then. Now I'd know what to look for." (2002, p. 21)

The notion of contextualised study is a feature of the work of Ballantyne (2007) who notes it as being one of the three components essential in teacher preparation. The internship can therefore only operate if the context has been prepared in the lectures and other sessions preceding the practical application. The timing, content and delivery of the pre-internship, concurrent training and post internship experience is therefore critical to its success. As Yourn's investigation found,

practicum experience should become one that is tailored to the individual needs of the student teacher in order to maximise benefits. It will be essential that the student teachers be encouraged to become independent, critical thinkers and learners in order to meet the challenge of becoming a teacher. (2000, p.190)

It is clear from the above that the content, timing and delivery of Internship are therefore well established in the literature and provide a useful platform for the study that follows.

Method

Subjects

Six students enrolled in the Intern program at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University participated in this study. Of the six participants, five were female and one was male.

Students' ages ranged from 20 to 24. All had some experience of teaching, six taught at home and two of the six also taught at a Commercial Music school.

Design

A mixed methodology using qualitative and quantitative techniques formed the basis of this inquiry. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how pedagogy students acquire conceptions about what it means to be an effective teacher, and the quantitative approach provided a different perspective from which to evaluate and compare differences among students regarding aspects of their pedagogy program. The incorporation of these two elements supports the decision to incorporate both methodologies (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Accordingly, this approach allows for confirmation of data from both techniques via triangulation and provides richer detail within the framework of data analysis. It also accommodates unexpected findings, leading to a more open-ended interpretation of results.

Procedures

As part of a larger study, a survey was designed to explore the perceptions of pedagogy students regarding the knowledge and skills they require to function effectively in the studio and the effectiveness of their pedagogy program in developing these.

In addition to the demographic data presented above, a set of five questions was asked, focusing specifically on participants' qualitative ratings:

1. What do you think teachers need to know about music?
2. What do you think teachers need to know about teaching and learning?
3. What qualities or attributes do you believe it is important for teachers to possess?
4. Has the Intern experience changed your attitude or opinions?
5. Do you think that the Pedagogy program has helped you to develop?

Participants were also asked to rate, on a five point Likert-type scale, the following aspects of the pedagogy course:

- Content of course
- Delivery of course
- Class interaction/discussion
- Opportunity to observe other teachers
- Discussion of book/journal readings
- Critiquing of peers
- Problem solving/evaluation
- Diagnosis/decision making
- Self prepared performance and presentation of repertoire
- Video presentations
- Reflective journal

The complete survey is in the appendix.

Data Analysis

The data from the study was subjected to content analysis (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001) to identify themes, concepts and meanings (Burns, 2000). It was the purpose of this study to ascertain the effectiveness of the Intern program and whether or not the success of the program lies in the practical training of current and prospective teachers that can only be accomplished by a large and successful measure of practice teaching.

In analysing the data, a number of themes emerged pertaining to aspects of the pedagogy internship program as a preparation for teaching music. In broad terms, these are described as:

1. Musical knowledge and skills
2. Pedagogical knowledge and skills
3. Personal attributes required

Acquiring musical knowledge and skills

Participants commented on the need for teachers to possess musical knowledge and skills.

Responses focussed on the need to incorporate musicianship and an understanding a variety of musical genres. Comments included that teachers need “musicianship in terms of basic theory” and “musical general knowledge”. While study of the main instrument was clearly not the focus

of the pedagogy program, participants noted the need for “knowledge about their major instrument.”

One participant gave a comprehensive response:

Teachers need to understand technique, practice, and musicianship. They should know ... how to relate other art fields into music, being able to draw on and develop in their students a sense of ‘artistry,’ not just music playing. General knowledge about composers, form, structure, other works, the stylistic periods, how things fitted together in the history of music are also important.

Another participant summarised the essence of the responses by succinctly saying that studio teachers “need to know the great extents of music literature of different periods and styles of repertoire” while another gave less detail stating “as much as possible!”

Acquiring pedagogical knowledge and skills

Participants were able to describe the aspects of the pedagogy program that emphasised the attainment of teaching and learning skills. Some responses noted the need for studio teachers to understand how students learn, to be aware of aspects of psychology. Others noted aspects of the teaching and learning process incorporated into the course with comments such as “Teaching and learning strategies were fabulous” and “Teaching and learning is an ongoing process and you will always need to have an open mind about everything in the musical world”.

Given the opportunity for further comment, one participant offered the following:

Teachers should understand HOW [participant emphasis] understanding takes place, i.e. knowing how the brain learns and remembers. They should be aware of the basic psychology involved... different methods of teaching and learning, eg rote, read, self learn etc, and should incorporate a mix of different methods. An understanding of many teaching situations helped me to gain confidence ... to solve problems.

Enhancing personal attributes

This last remark combines aspects of pedagogical knowledge and the attributes required of teachers. Confidence featured in almost all the responses, along with communication, enthusiasm, flexibility, patience, and developing independence. Comments from participants that were typical in this area included:

I feel more confident and know a lot more. Although being assessed on teaching does make me a little stressed...

Teachers should be confident in their students and themselves. They shouldn't be scared to grow more, learn more and push themselves most importantly.

In addition to the broad themes elucidated above, student comment is reflected in more general terms:

The pedagogy program has not only helped me in my teaching but also in my playing

I really like teaching now. It has become more than a job, it's a passion. I've developed skills that let me look, evaluate and always think of new things that might work in teaching. I have confidence to experiment. I've got an open mind in that I'm not restricted to doing what I do now, i.e. I'm willing to push in new directions and try new things.

The last question asked participants to rank the following aspects of their pedagogy program on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), with the results represented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Rating of aspects of pedagogy program

	1	2	3	4	5
Content of course				xxx	xxx
Delivery of course				xxx	xxx
Class interaction/discussion			xx		xxxx
Opportunity to observe other teachers			x	xxx	xx
Discussion of Book/Journal readings		x	xxx		xx
Critiquing of peers			x	xxx	xx
Problem solving/evaluation					xxxxxx
Diagnosis/decision making					xxxxxx
Prepared performance & repertoire		x	xx		xxx
Video presentations				xx	xxxx
Reflective journal			xxx	x	x

A high degree of satisfaction with the course was evident from these results. Problem solving and diagnosis were clearly well regarded by participants in the study. To a lesser extent, video presentations and class interactions were perceived as being an important aspect of the pedagogy course while the content and delivery of the course was also highly ranked. Of the remaining categories, only the reflective journal received a mean rating just above three.

Conclusions and further research

In addition to providing a platform for teaching practice, pedagogy Internship courses enhance the relationship between the community and the tertiary institution. Given that students who complete the program subsequently teach students who may ultimately prepare for a tertiary program, the training of studio music teachers in the long term has significant potential to influence the quality of future undergraduate and graduate music students.

As testimony to the value of including Practice Teaching within the Pedagogy program, graduates have gained full-time employment in their field ranging from private studio teaching to instrumental teaching in schools and other institutional settings. Additionally, intern graduates are capable of making a contribution to music education resulting in more reliable and sustainable learning.

As evidenced in the literature, these preliminary findings reflect outcomes from similar studies in the broader fields of education and music education. In particular, the correlations with recent studies in classroom music education preparation, popular music pedagogy and studio teacher preparation are notable. Although not possible within the scope of this paper, the wealth of current literature in related fields and the application of such could enhance pedagogies employed in Conservatoires. Given the typically small cohorts in these courses, further research

will also need to be undertaken through the use of longitudinal data. Finally, in order to more broadly evaluate the nature of studio practice teaching, an investigation of similar programs in other institutions would be beneficial.

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APPENDIX

Meeting Graduate Outcomes in teaching teachers: An investigation of the effectiveness of QCGU pedagogy intern courses.

Name (Optional)

Year of Birth (Optional)

Male/Female (Optional)

Previous preparation for teaching: Comment on any teaching; teaching training or other preparation you may have undertaken:

If currently teaching please state the teaching location (Tick one or more boxes)

- Home
- Commercial music school
- State School
- Private School
- Other

What do you think teachers need to know about music?

What do you think teachers need to know about teaching and learning?

What qualities or attributes do you believe it is important for teachers to possess?

Has the Intern experience changed your attitude or opinions?

If so, How?

Do you think that the Pedagogy program has helped you to develop?

If yes, please state how?

Which of the following aspects of the pedagogy program have you found to be useful? Please rate on a scale of 1-5 rate with 5 being the most useful.

1. Content of course	1	2	3	4	5
2. Delivery of course					
3. Class interaction/discussion	1	2	3	4	5
4. Opportunity to observe other teachers	1	2	3	4	5
5. Discussion of Book/Journal readings	1	2	3	4	5
6. Critiquing of peers	1	2	3	4	5
7. Problem solving/evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
8. Diagnosis/decision making	1	2	3	4	5
9. Self prepared performance and presentation of repertoire	1	2	3	4	5
10. Video presentations	1	2	3	4	5
11. Reflective journal	1	2	3	4	5

Any other comments