

Born Or made?

Developing Personal Attributes Of Teachers

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Pre-service teachers have expectations of the capacity of universities to prepare them for the task of teaching. Education authorities, schools and communities also have expectations and requirements of graduating teachers. While the modes of presentation and course content in relation to knowledge and skills are readily identifiable, the extended role of the teacher is more difficult to quantify and transmit. This paper investigates the roles that teachers fulfil and the way in which they are equipped for those roles through pre-service education, in-service activity and lifelong-learning experiences. Using existing literature, the experiences of practitioners, expectations of community and education authorities along with reflections of pre-service teachers, an attempt is made to focus on the acquisition of attributes considered appropriate for teachers in order to function effectively and develop roles in the classroom and the community. As such, the paper is concerned with personal qualities, personality attributes and interpersonal skills and the transmission of such attributes to pre-service teachers through courses, the interface of university with school and mentoring initiatives.

Introduction

Contrary to popular mythology, professional artists are made, not born. Though artistic techniques, especially in music, are often learned early, indoctrination into the culture of artists may come quite late (Kadushin, 1969).

This paper focuses on music teacher education. It appears that music teachers have to fulfil a number of complementary roles, with the central conflict being that many music education majors struggle with the nexus between their identity as musicians or performance teachers in training. Woodford (2002, p. 690) says researchers and writers describe music teachers as having multiple roles and responsibilities, including but not limited to performer, composer, conductor, critic, musicologist, mentor, facilitator, social activist, politician, music listener, music theorist, public intellectual, diplomat, travel agent, administrator, confidante, instructor, public speaker, moral agent, visionary and democratic leader.

In order to unpack these roles and endeavour to discover which of them are born attributes and which can be taught, the research reports on three main areas:

1. The expectation of pre-service teachers
2. The transition from university to school
3. The expectation of employing authorities

The final section of the paper addresses teacher education models and asks the question – who is responsible?

Pre-service teachers expectations

There is a considerable body of existing literature in that examines pre-service teacher attributes and expectations. Pajares (1992) contends that pre-service teachers will adhere to their existing, established beliefs unless they respect their teacher educators and are strongly challenged by new ideas that better explain their experiences. The values pre-service teachers bring to university (whether they are innate or shaped by school, home or community experiences) are problematic for teacher educators to change. If, as Madsen (2003) suggests, students are most influenced by the teacher's delivery, standing and approach, this represents a considerable challenge for the university context. Courses should therefore encompass the teaching of delivery skills as well as skills that deal subject-specific content. In the field of music education, Strouse (2003) further contends that the essential areas for music educators include rapport building, curriculum planning, recruitment, administration, and public relations.

In the Australian context, Harrison (2004, p. 204) suggests that there are a number of areas that pre-service and experienced teachers expected to be included in pre-service courses. In summary, these could

be categorised as content, pedagogical, practical, management and reflective skills, along motivational and communicative attributes.

Transition from university to school

The reflections of early-career teacher are relevant in this discussion, as they have immediate past knowledge of university training, juxtaposed with the reality of the classroom. Much of the recent research in this field has been undertaken by Conway (2002, 2004) who contends that loneliness, exhaustion, classroom management, administration, planning and curriculum, working with parents and communities, working with colleagues, and expectations of the field are areas of concern for beginning teachers. In looking at the roles outlined by Woodford (2002) above, there is little doubt of the authenticity of these remarks. Furthermore, Conway (2004) suggests that all teachers, beginning or experienced, are learning as much as they are teaching. This notion of lifelong learning in music education finds support in Harrison (2004). The role of mentoring and induction through the early-career phase teacher is significant particularly in classroom management, assessment, repertoire and planning.

Conway (2004) also found that many of the issues that she observed beginning teachers to be struggling with may have been worked out before the first year if they had been in a field placement for a longer period of time. In an extensive study into teacher reflection of practicum experiences conducted by Brophy (2002), two areas of teacher weakness and strength were identified: musicianship and pedagogy. Musicianship was defined to include all personal musical skills (in particular, voice and piano skills) and the student's ability to connect these skills to their teaching of music to children. Harrison (2003) reported similar findings in relation to singing teachers' practical and pedagogical skills. Pedagogy, in this instance, included matters relating to teaching skills: lesson planning, delivery and management. Practicum is aligned with microteaching in the sense that it is a university-based application of practical skills. Butler (2001) found that

Microteachings had a direct impact on students' thinking and skill development. Certainly, these students perceived the microteachings as a highly valuable experience, connecting them to the "real world" of teaching.

Recent Australian research contends that the knowledge and skills that related specifically to learning how to teach music and how to cope with the professional aspects of a music teacher's job was of most importance to early-career teachers (Ballantyne and Packer, 2004). Furthermore, pedagogical content knowledge and skills and professional knowledge and skills are seen as important to early-career music teachers and teachers in this phase would like to see them integrated through preparation courses (Ballantyne, 2004).

The perspective of education authorities

The role of professional learning and accreditation across all curriculum areas is becoming increasingly apparent. In the United States, according to Bidner (2001), licensure of teachers is performance-based and measures the ability to deal with diversity in the classroom, develop students' creative and critical thinking skills, and infuse technology into the curriculum. The disposition (or attitude and ability to work with others) is also considered a very important characteristic of a good teacher. The extent to which this can be taught poses an interesting conundrum for the teacher educator. Teachers are certainly shaped by their formal and informal interactions, but whether those without the disposition to teach can have this attribute developed is problematic and central to this research.

NASM (National Association of Schools of Music) says that the prospective music teacher in schools in the United States should have an

ability and desire to remain current with developments in the art of music and in teaching, to make independent, in-depth evaluation of their relevance, and to use the results to improve musicianship and teaching skills.

Perhaps of greatest interest here is the desire to teach – can this be taught? In addition, among teaching competencies, NASM claims, prospective teachers should have knowledge of current methods resources and repertoire. Recent research in Australia by Temmermann (1997, 2004) and Ballantyne (2004) supports this approach. Australian music teachers are also fortunate to have recently developed ASME National Framework for Music Teaching standards (<http://www.asme.edu.au/>). In general terms, these standards are based on existing models in other disciplines and include references to the need for teachers who:

- know their students, their subject and how students learn

- plan for effective and creative learning, including a challenging and enjoyable learning environment
- assess and review student learning
- continue to learn and engage in reflective practice
- work collegially to improve the quality and effectiveness of music education
- recognize and respond to a range of different learning contexts
- demonstrate cultural respect
- adhere to a code of conduct
- embrace technology.

For teachers in Queensland, the recent review of the Board of Teacher Registration in which McMenemy (2004) recommends, in part, a mandatory commitment for teacher to be accountable for professional learning through formal processes. The Board of Teacher Registration (<http://education.qld.gov.au>) already provides a framework that assists teachers, schools and teacher educators in the formation of teachers. Central to the Board's schema is the capacity to "structure flexible and innovative learning experiences for individuals and groups."

How is the music teacher constructed and who takes responsibility?

It would therefore appear that these broad areas worthy of consideration in teacher education and professional learning about music:

- the acquisition of musical knowledge and skills
- the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge and skills
- the acquisition or development of personal attributes
- application of the above through professional practice.

The expectations of pre-service teachers, early career teacher, schools and education authorities as outlined above are gargantuan. The linking of professional training with ongoing professional learning is perhaps the most significant aspect of this, along with the enhancement of existing skills and attributes. The responsibility for the initial and ongoing training of teachers cannot and does not fall solely to the university sector but they can play a greater role. One way universities can help is to communicate regularly with high school teachers about students, student teachers and early-career teachers. We must also, according to Bergee and Domerest (2003, p. 20), begin to talk to our state (and federal) organizations about better scholarship support for music education. There are existent models to support the notion that a collaborative approach is required. As Mark (1998) puts it, the role of music teacher training is not

to satisfy the expectations of highly specialised experts, but rather those of the pupils, students, teachers and the school and education authorities as representatives of a society which wants to see music as part of the school curriculum

The most significant stakeholder in this process is the pupil. It is crucial, as Taebel (1994) contends, that teachers do not lose sight of what the ultimate questions should be: 'what is good for our students, and are we giving them the best?' The cope of this research has not canvassed the reflections of students in schools and this is vital need in future research. What the students want and what they need could be two very different things and therefore the current research can form an important foundation for this proposed future direction to inform teacher education processes.

In referring to administrative challenges faced by teachers, Conway, et al. (2004) remarked that

I do not believe that an undergraduate course that is "out of a context" can address what teachers need to know. We cannot depend on school district, county, or state policies to provide music teachers with what they need to be successful.

One model, provided by The College Music Society in the United States, is an institute on "Music Teacher Education for This Century: A Working Institute for Change and Innovation in Our Profession" in which all participants will collaborate in examining issues facing music education.

Strategies could (and already do) include workshops presented by professional organisations, university short courses as well as degree programs. Many of these can focus on skill development. Furthermore programs focussing on such areas as classroom management, planning and curriculum, working with parents and communities, working with colleagues, and expectations of the field should be addressed in both teacher education and professional learning. What is now required is a concerted approach that

ensures all those involved in teacher education take responsibility for various aspects of teacher education. This does not have to mean complete separation of roles of universities, schools, authorities and others. On the contrary, it means that clear delineations and more adequate communications are required to guarantee that we are covering the essential needs of all the stakeholders, with consistency and lack of redundancy.

Furthermore, as Conway (2004) suggests, teachers are learning as much as they are teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to acknowledge this as a way of enhancing collaborative and innovative learning practices. The notion of lifelong learning in music education finds support in Harrison (2004) who traces the process from pre-womb to tomb:

Our lifelong music education journey begins in womb. The music choices and tastes of our parents are thrust upon us soon after conception and then, from our first utterance, playtime cries and banging of toys, we are engaged in music making. Through lullabies, through the mobiles hanging over our cots, through toys given by well-meaning relatives, our process of music education in the pre-compulsory years begin.

Harrison (2004) also looks at issues of disengagement from learning. This is as much an issue for teachers as for students. The notion of "playing for the pension" is a common one in musical circles and has some resonance when one visits staffrooms. An examination of course content, transmission, attributes, and training will not only assist in pre-service processes but in engaging the disengaged and ambivalent practicing teachers.

The role of mentoring and induction through the early-career phase teacher is surely the shared responsibility of the school and the university. Bell and Robinson (2004, p. 42) offer these suggestions to beginning teachers, mentors, cooperating teachers, college supervisors, and others:

There is a great resource at hand to help you negotiate obstacles: the university supervisor. As experienced teachers who have previously travelled this path, they can pave the way for a smoother experience. Most college music education professor's view working with student teachers as the most important part of the job.

The links that are made through professional practice and internships need to continue through the first few years in order to avoid disengagement and attrition. The role of the secondary music teacher is enormously significant, according to Bergee and Domerest (2003, p. 17)

High school music teachers were highly influential in students' decisions to become music teachers, with 41% of respondents citing them as the most influential and another 29% as the second most influential in their decision to pursue music teaching. According to one respondent, "the music educator at my former high school was a remarkable person and helped me and many others to develop a true love and appreciation of music."

Conclusion

A possible model for "making" the teacher needs to continually involve the various stakeholders to ensure lifelong learning practices are enacted in teacher education. A working model could be represented as a jigsaw puzzle in which teachers, communities, professional development, universities, school and others all play a part.

Are teachers born or made? Bergee and Domerest (2003, p. 18) found that 98% of respondents of teachers chose "love of music" as the main reason for choosing their career while Butler (2001) reflected that

Descriptions of effective teaching focused primarily on ideal traits or qualities that they believed an effective teacher would possess, as well as the kinds of activities in which teachers engage. The emphasis on teacher traits and actions suggests that participants viewed good teaching through the construct of a teacher persona.

As teacher educators, we would like to hope that we take the raw materials we have and, through some of the processes above shape them into teachers who continue the vocation to which we have been called.

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