

Does Early Teacher Role Development Training Affect the Professional Development of Undergraduate Music Education Majors?

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Abstract

University music education professors increasingly view their role as one of facilitating undergraduate music education students' maturation such that these prospective music teachers might likely go on to transcend tradition and improve and expand current music education practice. Such a charge requires innovative approaches to music teacher pedagogy based on foundational principles that explain occupational identity formation, the aim being to empower prospective music teachers to construct their own occupational identities unencumbered by current norms of the profession. Guided by the related literature, the first course of a three-course foundational role development sequence was conceptualized to include components that encourage class members to accelerate the development of their role as music educators. In Spring 2007, an experimental version of the sequence's first course was offered as an elective option for any interested freshmen at a large Southeastern university; the second and third courses of the sequence have been scheduled to be implemented beginning Spring 2010 and Fall 2010, respectively. In Fall 2008, several students who had experienced the experimental version of the sequence's first course ($n = 9$; Group 1) were enrolled in an elementary general music education methods course with other students who had not taken the experimental course ($n = 9$; Group 2), presenting an opportunity to compare the two groups. Four research questions were formulated for the present study: (a) Are there significant differences in teaching effectiveness between the two groups? (b) Are there significant differences among levels of concern (concern for self, concern for the task, and concern for impact on student learning) between the two groups? (c) Are there significant differences in attribution of teaching behaviors (effort, background, classroom environment, ability, and affect) between the two groups (d) Is there a significant difference in confidence to pursue a music teaching career between the two groups? Participants were asked to complete the *Concerns, Attributions, and Confidence Measure* devised by the researchers to assess self-reported levels of teaching concerns, attribution of success or failure in music teaching, and confidence to continue pursuing a music teaching career. Participants' teaching effectiveness was determined using the *Survey of Teaching Effectiveness* to evaluate videotaped teaching episodes.

No significant difference in teaching effectiveness was found between the two groups. One explanation could account for such similarity is the span of 1.5 years between when members of Group 1 were enrolled in teacher role development training as second-semester freshmen and when they were enrolled in the elementary general music methods course as first-semester juniors. It is possible instructional skills developed in the teacher role development training course were sufficiently mitigated by the passage of time.

No differences were found between groups for any of the three levels of concerns. Similar to the result for teaching effectiveness, role development training provided in one course seems to be insufficient to sustain an effect on subjects' concerns over time. However, main effect differences were found among the levels of concerns. All participants identified impact-related issues as being of significantly ($p \geq .01$) more concern than self- or task-related issues and self-related issues as being of significantly ($p \geq .05$) more concern than task-related issues. The low position of task concerns is reflective of the research examining knowledge and skills perceived necessary by preservice teachers in which preservice teachers were found to hold views of teaching that are unrealistically optimistic and not related to previously learned or studied methods of teaching.

There were no differences between the two participant groups with regard to attribution of teaching behaviors; however, among the five factors attributable to success or failure in music teaching, both groups rated effort, ability, and affect significantly higher in importance than background or classroom environment. That effort and affect for music teaching, both internal-unstable factors, were among the pool of highest rated attributes for both groups is especially fortunate because internal-unstable causes have been found to encourage persistence until a task has been achieved successfully.

No significant difference was found between the two groups in confidence to continue pursuing a career in music teaching, with both groups indicating a reasonable degree of confidence in career plans as music teachers.

The present study is a response to the charge for needed development and testing of approaches to music teacher education pedagogy that hold promise for facilitating music teacher role development. That no significant differences were found between the two groups for any of the variables tested is not an indication of the success or failure of role development training to produce an effect. Rather, the results of the present study can be used to support the idea that experiences and activities provided in one course were insufficient to sustain an effect for the sample tested. Perhaps instruction provided during the additional two courses of the sequence may offer the foundation needed to sustain an effect.