

Research/Assessment and the Undergraduate Music Education Major
Or: “There is nothing complex about a correlation coefficient or an emergent theme”

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The music education profession deeply values research and assessment in the professional development of its members, but it remains a topic for graduate education. At the undergraduate level, there are very few teacher preparation programs that contain any substantive experiences devoted to preparing music teachers to understand research and assessment and how each might play vital roles in music teaching and learning. For example, beginning teachers are presented with a number of teaching strategies for instrumental instruction. A typical methods class will stress goals and objectives, curriculum design, lesson planning, ensemble teaching techniques, techniques for teaching rhythm and note reading, and any number of similar skills; yet rarely in this mix is consideration given for how to evaluate the effectiveness of such work (doing systematic study in practice) or how to read about others that study practice (reading results of research).

- How does a typical undergraduate learn how to design a suitable rating scale or teacher-made quiz?
- How does such a pre-service individual know how to compare mean performances on such quizzes across two or three classes to determine progress?
- How can measures of sight reading be used to track achievement if there is no knowledge of simple statistical procedures for doing so?
- How does a new professional learn to do a case study of a learner or groups of learners in order to qualitatively understand what is occurring in the education process?

We consider these matters to be “advanced” graduate ideas and not anything central to what it means to be a professional teacher prior to graduate training. This talk argues for a more aggressive embedding of research and assessment concepts within our music education curriculum. There is nothing so complex about a correlation coefficient or an emergent theme that should get in the way of a future music teacher’s understanding.

An early version of this presentation was created for the Poster Session at the 2009 *Society for Music Teacher Education* meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina and is connected to the work of the Area of Strategic Planning and Action (ASPA) subgroup on Critical Examination of the Curriculum.

Outline

1. Conceptual Background Within Music Education

- Criticism about research and its impact on practice (Reimer, 2008)
- Problem of teacher effectiveness as measured by student learning (Jellison, 2004)
- Rise in interest about teacher education reform (Allsup, 2007; Campbell, 2007; Kratus, 2007; Teachout, 2005)
- Acceptance within boundaries for action research (Conway & Borst, 2001)

2. Growing Acceptance of Undergraduate Research in Colleges and Universities

- Big Ten Universities support and fund undergraduate research
- Smaller schools seem to as well
- Research seems to support undergraduate research as a way to improve professional growth in fields of science and social and behavioral sciences

3. Evidence for This in Music Teacher Preparation Programs

- Interest in teacher education reform [research to practice (Bartell, 2004), inquiry-based curriculum (Burton, 2004; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Friedman, & Pine, in press), case study/reflective thinking (Hourigan, 2006), teacher-research (Conway, 2000; Robbins, Burbank, & Dunkle, 2007)]
- Strand study (Strand, 2006)

4. Results of a Very Limited Sample to a the Basic Question of Research and Evaluation in Undergraduate Education

- Nice idea but who has time
- Undergrads DO, Masters students CONSUME, PhD/EdD/DMA CREATE NEW KNOWLEDGE
- We think about it and try to include it when we can
- Nice to have a real course
- Knowing how to read and do a simple study is part of critical teaching skill

5. Examples of Embedding of Research and Evaluation in Current Curricula

6. Discussion

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