A Comparison of Selected Areas of Thinking Styles Between Music Cooperating Teachers and Higher Education Music Methods Teachers

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As an integral part of music teacher preparation programs, the final student teaching experience is generally considered to be the most valued aspect of teacher training. Practitioners and researchers in teacher education have urged an increased emphasis on student teaching and pre-service experience during the entire teacher education program (Gallegos, 1972; Lortie, 1975; Peck & Tucker, 1973); however, analysis of the student teaching process often shows contradictions in the stated goals and beliefs of both the universities and public schools. Student teaching placements are often made randomly with the major criterion being the cooperating teacher's (a private or public school teacher who supervises a student teacher on a daily basis) willingness to work with student teachers. No regard is usually given to the relationship of teaching methods and thinking styles between the cooperating teacher and the university. This in turn results in the lack of clear goals and objectives for the student teaching experience.

Cooperating teachers need a strong sense of the university curriculum, and university teachers need feedback and input from the schools. Unfortunately, universities and colleges make little effort toward student teaching placements, and few resources are directed toward promoting communication between the university and the field placement (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

This lack of communication is disturbing since most research states that the cooperating teacher has a tremendous impact on the attitudes and behaviors of student teachers (Zeichner, 1978). Funk and Long (1982) conducted research that was designed to examine who is the most "significant other" for the student teacher. They found that student teachers overwhelmingly named the cooperating teacher as their most significant other. University personnel were seldom selected as having significant status. In fact, relatives and peers were reported to have more significant status than university faculty.

Other studies examined the cooperating teacher's influence on the student teacher's actual teaching performance and behavior. McIntyre and Morris (1980) reported that student teachers make significant movement toward the teaching model displayed by their cooperating teacher. Seperson and Joyce (1973) also provided evidence that student teachers adopt the teaching style of their cooperating teacher. The teaching behavior of the student teachers had moved from no or negative associations with the behavior of the cooperating teacher prior to student teaching, to a more significant relation by early in student teaching. This relationship was maintained throughout the student teaching experience.

Salzillo and Van Fleet's (1977) assessment of the main function of student teaching is one of "socialization into the profession and into existing arrangements of the schooling bureaucracy"

(p.28). A few researchers support this assertion by suggesting that the more time students spend in the field the more conservative and rigid they become (Lacey, 1977). Hoy and Reese (1977) concluded that student teachers become significantly more conforming and impersonal in their views by the end of the experience, and that the bureaucratic socialization of student teachers is evident. Regardless of all the discussion for change and innovation which often occurs in university methods courses, it seems that public schools in general begin almost immediately to mold new teachers into roles devised to maintain stability.

To avoid this "bureaucratic socialization" of student teachers and to balance the influence of the university and public school, university and public school personnel should possess similar thinking styles. Similar thinking styles would help create a smooth transition between the university classroom and field experience; however, Cleary (1987) concluded that cooperating teachers exhibit more conventional and dependent thinking styles than university supervisors. This would indicate that cooperating teachers feel a greater need to comply with authority figures and are less likely to be creative. The use of such teachers is questionable since the student teaching experience is to include work on teaching innovations and experimentation (Cleary, 1987). This difference in thinking styles could prevent the student teaching experience form being a continuation of university training and the exploration of new curriculum and teaching philosophies in the public schools. Therefore, what students appear to learn during student teaching experiences is often in conflict with the intentions of those in the universities.

The purpose of this study was to compare the thinking styles of a selected sample group of cooperating music teachers and university music methods teachers and to note any differences between thinking styles. Twelve thinking styles were measured: Humanistic-Helpful, Affiliative, Approval, Conventional, Dependence, Avoidance, Oppositional, Power, Competitive, Perfectionistic, Achievement, and Self-Actualizing. Thinking styles are defined as a combination of values, leading to attitudes and thus, to behaviors that have consequences for the individual's perceptions of his/her relations to the environment (Lafferty, 1989). If the student teaching experience is to be successful, then the thinking patterns, and their behavioral consequences, should be somewhat similar between university methods teachers and cooperating teachers.

Method

The general population for this study included: (a) university and college music methods instructors from institutions that offer an undergraduate music education certification program in the state of Michigan, and (b) experienced music cooperating teachers in the state of Michigan. Only cooperating teachers who had supervised student teachers at least twice during a period of five years were invited to participate. The entire state of Michigan was well represented by the sample population. Cooperating teachers in both urban and rural school districts from the upper and lower peninsula participated in this study.

In all, 120 music educators from the state of Michigan responded, 76 cooperating music teachers and 44 university music methods teachers. Of the 76 cooperating teachers that responded, 27 were female and 49 were male. Of the 44 university methods teachers, 14 were female and 30 were male. The average number of years cooperating teachers taught in the public schools was 18.3. University methods teachers reported teaching on the average 8.1 years at the public school level and 14 at the university/college level.

To measure cooperating music teachers and university music methods instructors' thinking styles, the *Level 1: Life Styles Inventory* (Lafferty, 1989) was used. The *Level 1: Life Styles Inventory* measures twelve different thinking styles: Humanistic-Helpful, Affiliative, Approval, Conventional, Dependence, Avoidance, Oppositional, Power, Competitive, Perfectionistic,

Achievement, and Self-Actualizing. These twelve styles were identified partly on the basis of Maslow's (1954) research on human needs. Maslow's distinction between lower-order and higher-order needs led to the identification of two general types of life styles: "security" and "satisfaction" styles. The security styles are Conventional, Dependence, Oppositional, Avoidance, and Power; the satisfaction styles are Humanistic-Helpful, Affiliative, Perfectionistic, Achievement, and Self-Actualizing. The remaining two styles—Approval and Competitive—are motivated by both lower- and higher-order needs and are oriented toward security as well as satisfaction (Cooke, 1981).

The test instrument, *Level 1: Life Styles Inventory,* contains 240 short words and phrases related to orientation toward 12 thinking styles. Each of the thinking styles is measured by 20 items from the *Level 1: Life Styles Inventory*. A three-response format is used for each of the items. The responses are as follows: (a) a "2" is placed by each word of phrase which is like the respondent most of the time, (b) a "1" is placed by each word or phrase which is like the respondent quite often, and (c) a "0" is placed by each word or phrase which is essentially unlike the respondent. The responses assigned to the 20 items are summed to derive the respondent's score of each thinking style. The higher the score, the greater the respondent's orientation toward a particular thinking style.

The instrument was self-administered by cooperating teachers and university music methods instructors in the research sample, and produced an individual thinking style profile for each member of the research sample. Thinking style profiles of cooperating teachers and university music methods instructors were averaged separately on each thinking style dimension to obtain mean and standard deviation scores. A multivariate analysis of variance was used to investigate whether there was a difference between the two groups on the 12 scales collectively.

Results and Discussion

Mean scores revealed that the university and college methods teachers and cooperating teachers gave essentially equal responses to the following thinking styles: Humanistic-Helpful, Approval, Dependent, Oppositional, Achievement, Affiliative, Conventional, Avoidance, and Self-Actualizing. Cooperating teachers showed considerably stronger preferences for Competitive, Power, and Perfectionistic thinking styles.

Results of a multivariate analysis of variance revealed no significant difference between the mean responses of cooperating music teachers and university/college music methods teachers across all twelve thinking styles, Hotelling's $T^2 = 0.16$, $F(12,107) = 1.41$, $p > .17$, although, with regard to the variables Power and Competitive Thinking, the cooperating teachers scored somewhat higher than did the university and college methods teachers.

The results in this study may support findings that cooperating teachers have a greater tendency to isolate the university from the student teaching process (Yee, 1967; Zeichner, 1978). It seems that in the student teaching triad of cooperating teacher, university teacher, and student teacher, the cooperating teacher and student teacher form a coalition and isolate the university teacher (Emans, 1983). Even student teachers have reported that they view their cooperating teacher as having the most significant influence during their student teaching experience (Karmos & Jacko, 1977).

Cooperating teachers with a high power thinking style, and who feel threatened by the university, may dictate rather than guide the actions of the student teacher. The power thinking scale measures one's tendency to associate self-worth with the degree to which one can control and dominate others. Individuals who seek power are motivated by a need to gain prestige, status, and influence: they achieve false, temporary feelings of self-worth by striving to be "in

charge" at all times. Power-seekers typically lack confidence in others, and believe that force, intimidation, and coercion are necessary to get results (Lafferty, 1989, p. 42).

The cooperating teacher who has a high power thinking style may feel that he/she is more knowledgeable than the university methods teacher. If the student teaching experience is to include work on curricular innovations and experimentation, the use of such narrow guidance is questionable. This type of supervision could only isolate the university from the student teaching process.

The competitive thinking style scale measures the need to establish a sense of self-worth through competing against and comparing oneself to others (Lafferty, 1989). Perhaps cooperating teachers who have a higher combined power and competitive thinking style may be preoccupied with being seen as superior to others. This preoccupation could inhibit the cooperating teacher from accepting alternative teaching techniques that may be seen as a threat to the teacher's unquestioned authority. This is of special concern since studies indicate that: (a) cooperating teachers have a large impact on the attitudes and behaviors of student teachers (Dispoto, 1980), and (b) field-based experiences contribute to the development of utilitarian teaching perspectives in the student teacher (Zeichner, 1980). A high competitive and power thinking style could contribute to this utilitarian teaching instead of more thoughtful and reflective teaching.

Research consistently supports the conclusion that the student teaching process requires modification. The student teacher will be better served if positive communication exists between the university and cooperating teacher. Concerns of cooperating teachers who feel threatened by the university and control all aspects of the student teaching process need to be addressed. Perhaps a careful screening of prospective cooperating teachers would help identify such teachers.

Cooperating teachers who need to control the entire student teaching process can negatively affect student teachers' learning. Results from this study suggest that a number of experienced Michigan cooperating teachers may lack confidence in others and may need to establish a sense of self-worth through competing and comparing against others. The teachers may be more inclined to dictate the student teaching experience while ignoring methods and practices used at the university.

Music cooperating teachers must become aware of the training of students and specifically, the nature of the methods taught at the university as well as avenues by which they can improve their supervisory practices. Of the 76 cooperating teachers that responded, only 9 teachers (12%) stated that they had had a class or seminar that focused on supervisory skills. In general, cooperating teachers are poorly trained to handle the task of supervising field experience students. Supervision is a complex task different from teaching, and even the best teacher may not be a good cooperating teacher.

With the cooperating teacher becoming more aware of the university, the university music methods teacher must develop an understanding of the teaching techniques, concerns, and needs of music cooperating teachers. This new awareness between university music educators and public school music teachers would open new lines of communication and improve the student teaching experience.

To open new lines of communication, university and college music education departments must take the leadership role in organizing and implementing seminars for cooperating music teachers and university/college music methods instructors. These seminars should be mandatory for all music cooperating teachers. The focus of the seminar should be an open discussion of teaching techniques that are stressed in the music methods class and the techniques to be used by the cooperating music teacher. Strategies for supervising student teachers must also be

incorporated into public schools through in-service training programs, workshops, or seminars sponsored by the university.

It is important that both public school teachers and university and college faculty participate in these activities to address the needs and concerns of the student teaching process. Only through these seminars/workshops will the cooperating teacher feel less threatened by the university, thus creating a smooth transition between the university methods class and the field experience.

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