Values and Activities in Undergraduate Music Education:

An Exploratory International Perspective

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Abstract

The study examined the value of related educational activities as perceived by those individuals who were enrolled in music education preparation programs, utilizing a purposive sample of university preservice music education students ($N = 335$) across five distinct geographical, international locations: Australia, Korea, Taiwan, China, and the United States. Participants responded to a questionnaire utilizing a 5-point likert-type scale designed to elicit their perception of the importance of various professional activities (e.g., PK-12 field experiences, doing well in major methods courses, etc). A secondary research question analyzed relationships among these data, and as compared to value statements participants responded to in similar scaled format. Responses demonstrated two principal underlying structures, one identified (by researchers) as educational components and another identified as performance-based components. Correlations among value statements and activities demonstrate moderately strong relationships to "professional" musicians and select activities. Implications for music education programs are discussed.

Keywords: Music, Education, Undergraduate, Activities, Values

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Two aspects of "professional" engagement in the training of music education personnel in traditional tertiary institutions are performance-related activities and educational activities. In noting the relative importance and complementary nature of both these areas (indeed, to each other), there is nevertheless a distinction between them that emerges among university students, such that we might argue that educational curricula and activities are often somewhat consequentially related to culture and location, and have considerable influence on this discretionary process.

While the maturation process from entry into university training through graduation provides the opportunity for shaping overall career identity, discriminating among the importance of the many facets of professional activities also occurs during this evolutionary process. This study builds upon a line of research (Misenhelter and Russell, 2010; Austin, Isbell, & Russell, 2010; Isbell, 2008) predicated upon the notion that our assumptions about music education training, and students' behaviors and value systems, are typically rooted in one's personal experience. A secondary assumption would be that these experiences are contingent upon ones place of residence and the extant curricular policies of institutions specific to location.

The researchers considered the question: Does country of residence influence how individuals perceive the importance of educational and professional activities? Additionally, are there relationships among these activities? In addressing the research question(s), the study utilized a sample of university music education students ($N = 335$) across five international locations.

Related Literature

Experiences that continue to accrue before and throughout the university program clearly continue to shape early professional processes. Rickels, Councill, Fredrickson, Hairston, Porter, & Schmidt (2010) found that the majority of students auditioning to enter a music teacher training program decided to become a music teacher during high school. Robinson (2010) suggested music education students are socialized to follow recognized paths into schools as certain types of teacher-directors (e.g., middle school band directors, high school band directors), yet professional trends are toward more generic licensure in music (certification as PK-12). Individuals indicating consideration of changes in professional path(s) cited satisfaction with the musical (performing) aspects of their career preparation, but also cited interest in other factors, including creativity and composition, with vocational interests, personality, and perceived career goals also being implicated.

University students, having been exposed to many music teaching models (primary and secondary socialization), begin their professional training with inculcated beliefs about what they wish to teach, and how they expect to teach it. Their experience base has, in many cases, suggested to them that being a "musician" is a goal of a higher order than being a teacher. Research studies (Cox, 1997; Roberts, 1991) in the US and Canada suggest these early "musician first" socialization experiences may be difficult to balance and resolve during preservice coursework.

Austin, Isbell, & Russell (2010) surveyed undergraduates, examining beliefs about influential people and experiences, occupational roles, and career interest. Social influences, teacher and musician

identity, and institutional differences all were seen as contributing and music career influencing factors. Isbell suggested that "teacher and musician represent two distinct aspects of identity," (Isbell, 2008, p.175) and as well they may be different types of identities that may not even function in the same manner. Research by Bergee (1992) also suggests a variety of sociological variables influence decisions to pursue university training in music education.

Misenhelter and Russell (2010) noted that substantive change from entry in university training as compared to undergraduates current and developing interest was not demonstrated in rating most career roles, with the exception being change (increasing regard) toward elementary music teachers. Austin and Reinhardt (1999) also found that large change regarding evolving belief systems was not in evidence among undergraduates. However, a related outcome also noted by Misenhelter and Russell (2010) as demonstrated by factor analyses suggested undergraduates in two U.S. institutions did recognize music education as a unique structural subject area, distinct from performance activities.

Method

This study examined the value of related educational activities as perceived by those individuals who were enrolled in music education preparation programs, utilizing a purposive sample of university preservice music education students ($N = 335$) across five distinct geographical, international locations; Australia ($n = 24$), China ($n = 85$), Korea ($n = 37$), Taiwan ($n = 71$), and the United States ($n = 118$). Participants responded to a researcher-created questionnaire, answering a series of questions on a 5-point likert-type scale (1 = not interested, 5 = extremely interested) designed primarily to examine their perception of the importance of various professional activities (e.g.,

playing in top ensembles, PK-12 field experiences, etc). A secondary research question was the analysis for relationships among these data, and as compared to value statements participants responded to in similar scaled format. The researchers based the questionnaire on the previous research of Isbell (2008), who created a larger study designed to examine the socialization and occupational identity of preservice music teachers in the United States. We utilized questions from this study (slightly reworded when translated for the international samples) in order to build upon Isbells' research and explore the perspectives among music education students in different countries. Supporting researchers, each with doctoral degrees in Music Education from American tertiary institutions and working in the countries being studied, translated the questionnaire into the required language for their student participants (see Figure 1). The researchers used Cronbachs' Alpha to examine the internal reliability of the two subscales (career evolution and activity importance), and found reliability alphas of .86 and .79 respectively.

FIGURE 1

Excerpted Section from Questionnaire for Use in Taiwan

Results

In order to explore any differences in perceived importance of professional activities between participants in different countries, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using the performance activity and education activity components as dependent variables and country as an independent variable. The multivariate analysis revealed a significant interaction effect for country ($\Lambda = 0.76$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$). Follow-up univariate tests determined which mean differences in perceived activity importance contributed to the significant multivariate outcome. Participants' country impacted perceived importance of both education activities ($F = 12.27$, $p < .001$) and performance activities ($F = 2.70$, $p = .03$). Due to a violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption as evidenced by a Levenes' Test ($F = 3.67$, $p = .01$), the researchers utilized a Games-Howell post hoc test. American participants valued education activities ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .51$) more than Korean ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .75$), Taiwanese ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .62$), or Chinese students ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .56$). Australian students ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .54$) believed education activities to be more important than Taiwanese ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .62$) and Chinese students ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .56$). Finally, Chinese participants ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .56$) rated performance activities higher than Taiwanese students ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .59$).

Upon component analysis, activities-based responses demonstrated two principal underlying structures, one identified (by researchers) as educational components and another identified as performance-based components. The reliability of each of these components was established using Cronbachs' Alpha. The performance component had a reliability of .82 while the education component had a reliability of .81, and these reliability coefficients were considered adequate for further analyses. Using a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 the two components accounted for roughly 50% of the variance in responses. All but one loading exceeded .50 and no cross-loadings exceeded .30 (see Table 3). The researchers established sampling adequacy using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (.88) and the assumption of sphericity using Bartletts Test ($\chi 2 = 1559.01.38$, $p = < .001$).

The performance activities (Component 1) centered around students participating in staged performances (e.g., playing in top ensembles, performing majors recitals), performance related activities such as teaching private lessons or winning major auditions (often associated with performance faculty), and interacting with performance majors. The education activities (Component 2) included classroom-based activities (e.g., method classes, conducting classes), group classes in field experiences (often associated with music education faculty), and interactions with other music education majors.

Data were also explored for relationships (correlations) among select "value" statements and the activities-based responses. Moderately strong positive relationships emerged among Korean students responses to valuing "professional musicians, classical" and "winning major auditions" ($r = .608$), "teaching private students ($r = .614$), and "practicing major instruments" ($r = .765$).

Chinese students responses to valuing "professional musicians, classical" and "interacting with performance majors demonstrated a slightly weaker positive relationship (r = .536). Students from Taiwan strongest positive relationship response was to valuing "professional musicians, classical" and "practicing major instruments" (r = . 614). US students demonstrated the strongest relationships among "professional musicians, classical" and "performing in top ensembles" ((r = . 430), as well as "interacting with performance majors" ((r = .418) and "performing on major recitals" (r = .414). Finally, Australian student responses indicated no relationships of similar strength with the classical musician value statement responses, but did demonstrate one moderate relationship among responses to "professional musicians, popular" and "interacting with music ed students" (r = .544). All these relationships were statistically significant, although none were of more than moderate (positive) strength. One strong, positive relationship emerged in the study – that of students from Taiwan among the activities responses: "doing well in major methods" and "doing well in conducting" (r = .810).

Summary

Respondents were asked to rate (once, assuming current perceived value) the importance of professional activities. Participants rated all activities relatively positively (M > 3.86), raising the question of possible demand characteristics (i.e., responding as they believed would be expected for music majors). Participants indicated practicing their major instruments, doing well in method courses, and succeeding in PK-12 field experiences as most important. Respondents indicated that attending conferences, winning major auditions, and interacting with performance majors were least important. Standard deviations among these ratings were fairly consistent (M=.86), with the

exception of "winning major auditions" at 1.19. These findings are somewhat contradictory to previous research in which participants rated field experiences and music courses as having a negligible positive influence on their decision to continue to study music (Austin, Isbell, & Russell, 2010). Similar to the current study, Austin et. al. (2010) found that participants believed that attending conferences and taking auditions were, although generally positive, less important than other activities. Isbell (2008) found similar results in which preservice music teachers in the United States believed that these professional activities had generally positive influences on their decision to continue to study music.

In data reduction (component analysis), we found that the activities the preservice music teacher respondents in these five countries addressed do have underlying structures or dimensions, as a) performance activities and b) education activities. Participants viewed these pursuits as distinct, and data analysis demonstrated no crossloadings above .30. The multidimensional nature of these related but distinct professional activities, demonstrates a possible split found in music school culture and activities. Nettl (1995), for instance, labeled music education majors as on the periphery of the music school. Roberts (1991) claimed that music education majors were often stigmatized by being designated a teacher, and struggled to maintain social status with music peers and faculty alike. Study participants may be responding to perceived distinctions (de facto or de jury) in clearly identifying specifically performance-related activities as distinct from education activities.

Some differences were found in the evolving career goals among participants from different countries. These differing aspirations may be due to several factors (e.g., social status of teachers

and music teachers, relative pecuniary realities between countries, training required, status of music in school curricula, etc). For example, while no significant differences were evidenced in regard to change of participants desire to be a music education professor, Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese students all expressed a greater (increasing) desire to become a university music education professor than American students. Similarly, there were no significant differences among participants desiring to be a university applied studio teacher. American students were the least likely to indicate a career aspiration to be a collegiate studio teacher.

Relationships as evidenced by correlations among "professional musician, classical" and various activities may suggest that longstanding institutionalized values acculturating young teachers as aspiring musicians (first) is in evidence in many places in the world. Among the US students, these relationships are particularly aligned with performance concomitants. Assessing the values and cultural expectations in various locations is important from an institutional perspective if reshaping these policies is a desirable possibility.

Among many of the items examined in the study, differences between students from the five countries are often quite minimal when present at all, and some generalization of findings is supported by the lack of practical differences (i.e., statistically significant, but explaining little variance or observed power). Indeed, international comparisons such as the current one suggest that many similarities do in fact exist. While some institutional, policy, and cultural differences also seem to be evident, a continuation of research and dialogue seems warranted, and offers the opportunity for continued learning from each other.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Professional Activity Importance

Table 2

Principle Components Pattern Matrix

Figure 1

Excerpted Section from Questionnaire for Use in Taiwan.

(also in text; p. 6)

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Professional Activity Importance

Activity	M	SD

Practicing Major Instrument	4.35	.80
Method Courses	4.12	.85
PK-12 Field Experiences	4.10	.97
Education Courses	4.07	.85
Attending Concerts	3.98	.88
Interacting with Music Ed Majors	3.97	.84
Performing on Major Recitals	3.90	.96
Conducting Courses	3.89	.95
Teaching Private Lessons	3.76	.95
Playing in a Top Ensemble	3.73	.99
Instrument Techniques Courses	3.67	.84
Interacting with Performance Majors	3.63	.96
Attending Music Conferences	3.46	1.19
Winning Major Auditions	3.43	1.00

Table 2

Principle Components Pattern Matrix

Activity	Component 1	Component 2

Performing Major Recitals	.847	
Winning Major Auditions	.845	
Interacting with Performance Majors	.738	
Playing in Top Ensembles	.667	
Teaching Private Lessons	.582	
Practicing Major Instrument	.549	
Attending Concerts	.530	
PK-12 Field Experiences		.825
Education Courses		.798
Attending Music Conferences		.646
Method Courses		.626
Interacting with Music Ed Majors		.624
Conducting Courses		.605
Instrument Technique Courses		.471

N.B. All loadings under .30 have been removed to increase table readability.

FIGURE 1

Excerpted Section from Questionnaire for Use in Taiwan.