

Factors Affecting Individuals' Decisions to Enter Music Teacher Education Doctoral Programs

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Abstract:

There is an emerging shortage of those responsible for training music teachers in the United States. Asmus (2001) characterized such a shortage as the “new challenge...befalling music education” (p. 3). When prognosticating the resultant effect on K-12 education, he warned that this shortage is “the single biggest threat to the health of music in our nation’s schools” (p. 4). Since 1998, there has been a notable decline in the number of doctoral degrees granted in music education. From a high of 101 in 1998, the number of music education doctoral degrees granted at NASM-accredited institutions has dropped to 88 in 1999, and 76 in 2001 (HEADS, 1999, 2000, 2002). The situation has been exacerbated further by an increasing demand for college positions in music education over the past twenty years. In 1980, music education vacancies were 6.50% of the total number of vacancies in all areas of music in higher education. By 2000, music education vacancies rose to be 10.66% of the total. Over the same twenty-year time period, vacancies in the broad areas of studio instruction, ensemble instruction, and academic instruction fell, while those in music education rose substantially (Hickey, 2002).

Keywords: music education | music doctoral programs | music teacher educator shortage

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Factors Affecting Individuals' Decisions to Enter Music Teacher Education Doctoral Programs

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There is an emerging shortage of those responsible for training music teachers in the United States. Asmus (2001) characterized such a shortage as the “new challenge...befalling music education” (p. 3). When prognosticating the resultant effect on K-12 education, he warned that this shortage is “the single biggest threat to the health of music in our nation’s schools” (p. 4). Since 1998, there has been a notable decline in the number of doctoral degrees granted in music education. From a high of 101 in 1998, the number of music education doctoral degrees granted at NASM-accredited institutions has dropped to 88 in 1999, and 76 in 2001 (HEADS, 1999, 2000, 2002). The situation has been exacerbated further by an increasing demand for college positions in music education over the past twenty years. In 1980, music education vacancies were 6.50% of the total number of vacancies in all areas of music in higher education. By 2000, music education vacancies rose to be 10.66% of the total. Over the same twenty-year time period, vacancies in the broad areas of studio instruction, ensemble instruction, and academic instruction fell, while those in music education rose substantially (Hickey, 2002).

A related phenomenon is the growing shortage of K-12 music teachers in the United States, which Lindemann (2002) describes as “one of the most critical challenges we face in the entire field of music” (p. 1). It has been estimated that 11,000 music teachers leave the workforce each year due to retirement or burnout (Lindemann, 2002). Although the number of those graduating from NASM accredited schools of music has risen steadily over the last five years, it has not achieved a rate that would meet the apparent demand. Applying the average increase of 3.24% that occurred between 1997 and 2001 (HEADS, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002), the projected number of music education graduates from NASM accredited institutions in

2003 will have reached just over 4000. Even if the 1000-2000 graduates from non-NASM schools that Lindemann (2002) estimates are added, there will continue to be a deficit of 5000 to 6000 music teachers nationwide. This deficit figure may be overly optimistic because it is derived under the assumption that every graduate will immediately enter the job market. Additionally, there has been a steady increase in the national demand for instrumental and choral music teachers between 1997 and 2000 (AAEE, 1998, 2000). While both areas were designated as experiencing “some shortage” nationally, instrumental music education was considered to be experiencing “some shortage” in seven of ten geographic regions. In response to the shortage of music teachers, researchers have investigated issues related to recruitment and retention.

Some music education researchers have examined factors related to the recruitment of new teachers into the field. Bergee, Coffman, Demorest, Humphreys, and Thornton (2001) sent questionnaires to Collegiate MENC members in the effort to identify “persons, experiences, events, organizations, and other factors that have influenced collegiate music educators’ decisions to teach music” (Introduction section, ¶ 4). From the 431 usable completed surveys (representing a response rate of 30%) high school music teachers were identified as being the persons most influential in the decision to teach music. Other persons, identified as being influential by a “substantial” number of respondents, included private instructors, parents, and higher education music professors. Of the influential experiences and events, those at school were found to be most influential and honors ensembles were considered to be “a close second.” Madsen and Kelly (2002) employed an unusual mix of qualitative and quantitative research to investigate factors that lead students to become music educators. Subjects ($n = 90$), undergraduate music education majors, were asked to indicate on a timeline their earliest remembrances of first considering becoming a music teacher. They were also asked to indicate age, place, who was present, feelings, thoughts, and any other aspect considered to be important. It was found that the decision to be a music teacher was made early (during the high school years) and, similar to the findings of Bergee et al. (2002), was primarily influenced by a school

music teacher.

Other researchers have examined factors affecting the retention and attrition of practicing music teachers. Hamann, Daugherty, and Mills (1987) investigated burnout symptoms among public school music educators by asking subjects ($N = 101$) to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory and a Demographic and Data Sheet questionnaire. The researchers found that burnout increased to the same degree as did concern in the following areas: unclear administrative direction, lack of cooperation from other faculty members, lack of recognition by students, and too much work and not enough time to do it. Kruger (2000) examined satisfaction and attrition factors among young music teachers (those with 10 or fewer years of experience) and drew implications similar to those of Hamann et al (1987). New teachers view positive administration, sufficient resources to do one's job, and a support network that includes experienced teachers as "factors essential to their well-being and success" (Kruger, 2000, p. 25). Madsen and Hancock (2002) examined retention and attrition trends among newer music teachers and found that, similar to all teachers, a substantial number of music teachers is leaving the profession early in their careers. In an attempt to uncover why music educators chose to leave, written comments about the issues raised in the survey were examined. Following "personal issues," "administrative support" was the second most frequently addressed factor expressed by the subjects. This result seems to parallel those found by other researchers (Hamann, et al, 1987; Kruger, 2000).

Clear patterns are beginning to emerge in the research that addresses factors contributing to the K-12 music teacher shortage. In contrast, however, there is a paucity of research examining aspects of the music teacher educator shortage. Asmus (2001) posits a list of reasons for the decreasing pool of music teacher educators, including (a) the negative stigma associated with societal portrayals and perceptions of the education profession in general, (b) the higher compensation for K-12 teachers, compared to compensation for those in higher education, (c) the requirement of those in higher education to complete a doctorate and go through the tenure process, and (d) the demanding workload that we, as music education professors, have created for

ourselves. However, there is no existing research to substantiate these claims. Because there is a need to initiate a line of research into the music teacher educator shortage, the present study was designed to identify factors that affect music teachers' decisions about entering music education doctoral programs. Furthermore, it was thought that data gathered from prospective music teacher educators as well as from those who had recently completed a doctorate degree would provide an enhanced perspective from which to draw conclusions. Two research questions were formulated for this study:

1. What do practicing music educators, identified as being outstanding candidates for doctoral studies, cite as positive influences and as barriers related to entering a music education doctoral program?
2. What do recent doctoral graduates identify as positive influences and as barriers related to entering and completing a music education doctoral program?

Methodology

Practicing music educators, identified as being outstanding candidates for doctoral studies (PME) ($n = 22$), and recent doctoral graduates in music education (RDG) ($n = 23$) served as subjects in this study. The RDG subjects were identified by searching Dissertations Abstracts International (DAI) with the keywords "music education" during the years of 1997-2001. The resulting 233 names were cross-referenced with the 2001-2002 Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, US and Canada to identify potential subjects and gather contact information. Of the 104 RDG subjects identified and contacted, 40 agreed to participate in the study and were sent questionnaires. Twenty-three RDG subjects completed and returned the surveys, resulting in a response rate of 57.50%. To identify PME subjects, the above-mentioned DAI source was used to list 16 institutions that had granted three or more doctorates between 1996 and 2001. Music education faculty members at these institutions were asked to relay an email message to five practicing music teachers who currently hold or were working on a Masters degree and who the

faculty would categorize as e outstanding candidates for doctoral studies.” In the message, potential PME subjects were invited to contact the researcher via email if they were interested in participating in the study. Thirty-three PME subjects contacted the researcher and were sent questionnaires; twenty-two returned completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 66.67%.

Two data collection instruments, of similar design, were devised for this study. PME subjects were sent an open-ended questionnaire asking them to (a) “Please list aspects that would (or have) positively influenced your decision to enter a doctoral program” and (b) “Please list those barriers that may have hindered you from entering a doctoral program thus far.” RDG subjects were sent an open-ended questionnaire asking them to (a) “Please list aspects that positively influenced your decision to enter a doctoral program” and (b) “Please list the barriers that you were able to overcome to earn the degree.” On both forms, subjects were encouraged to write as much information as they wanted to share and to use the back of the forms and additional sheets if necessary. All subjects’ responses were transcribed and coded into broad categories using HyperResearch 2.0. After two months the researcher re-examined the responses and made several adjustments to the categories and the assignment of responses among those categories. When the researcher was satisfied with the clarity of the final set of categories, two additional music education researchers were asked to read all of the responses and classify them using the final set of categories. Reliability between the two researchers’ classifications was found to be $r = .96$ using the formula $\frac{\text{agreements}}{\text{agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$ (Madsen & Madsen, 1998).

Results

To answer the first research question, all PME subjects’ responses were analyzed to determine (a) the total number of discrete positive influences and barriers that were listed and (b) naturally-occurring categories that could be used to code each positive influence or barrier. PME subjects listed a total of 100 positive influences distributed among 12 broad categories and 87 barriers distributed among 11 broad categories. The top four positive influence categories, accounting for more than 50% of the total PME positive influence responses were “Love of Learning,” “University

Environment,” “Relationship with University Faculty,” and “Financial Incentives” respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Practicing Music Educators’ Positive Influences

Category	# of Responses	% of the Total	Cumulative %
Love of Learning	23	23%	23%
University Environment	11	11%	34%
Relationship with University Faculty	10	10%	44%
Financial Incentives	10	10%	54%
Desire to Affect Future Teachers	8	8%	62%
Characteristics of the Program	8	8%	70%
Research Opportunities	7	7%	77%
Degree Completion is a Job Requirement	5	5%	82%
Desire to Affect the Profession	5	5%	87%
Personal Prestige	4	4%	91%
Desire to leave K-12 Teaching	3	3%	94%
Other	6	6%	100%

The top three barrier categories, accounting for more than 50% of the total PME barrier responses were “Financial Concerns,” “Characteristics of the Program,” and “Anxiety over Leaving Current Job” respectively (see Table 2).

To answer the second research question, all RDG subjects’ responses were analyzed to determine (a) the total number of discrete positive influences and barriers that were listed and (b) naturally-occurring categories that could be used to code each positive influence or barrier. RDG subjects listed a total of 106 positive influences distributed among 13 broad categories and 70 barriers distributed among 10 broad categories. The top five positive influence categories, accounting for more than 50% of the total RDG positive influence responses were “Relationship with University Faculty,” “Characteristics of the Program,” “Desire to Affect the Profession,” “Financial Incentives,” and “Reputation of the Program” respectively (see Table 3).

Table 2 Frequency Distribution of Practicing Music Educators’ Barriers

Category	# of Responses	% of Total	Cumulative %
Financial Concerns	23	26.44%	26.44%
Characteristics of the Program	11	12.64%	39.08%
Anxiety over Leaving Current Job	11	12.64%	51.72%
Personal/Family Issues	8	9.19%	60.91%
Proximity	8	9.19%	70.01%
Time	8	9.19%	79.29%
Degree not Valued in K-12 Culture	4	4.60%	83.89%
Master’s Degree not Yet Completed	3	3.45%	87.34%
Pressure to Publish	3	3.45%	90.79%
Lack of K-12 Teaching Experience	3	3.45%	94.24%
Other	5	5.75%	99.99%

Table 3 Frequency Distribution of Recent Doctoral Graduates' Positive Influences

Category	# of responses	% of total	Cumulative
Relationship with university faculty	21	19.81%	19.81%
Characteristics of the program	9	8.49%	28.30%
Desire to affect the profession	9	8.49%	36.79%
Financial incentives	9	8.49%	36.79%
Reputation of the program	8	7.55%	52.83%
Love of learning	7	6.60%	59.43%
Degree completion is a job requirement	7	6.60%	66.03%
Support from family and friends	7	6.60%	72.63%
Personal prestige	7	6.60%	79.23%
University environment	5	4.72%	83.95%
Interest in research	4	3.77%	87.72%
Proximity	4	3.77%	91.49%
Other	9	8.49%	99.98%

The top three barrier categories, accounting for more than 50% of the total RDG barrier responses were “Financial Concerns,” “Time,” and the Relationship with University Faculty” respectively (see Table 4).

Table 4 Frequency Distribution of Recent Doctoral Graduates' Barriers

Category	# of Responses	% of Total	Cumulative %
Financial Concerns	17	24.29%	24.29%
Time	10	14.29%	38.58%
Relationship with University Faculty	10	14.29%	52.87%
Coursework/Entrance Requirements	7	10.00%	62.87%
Proximity	6	8.57%	71.44%
Personal/Family Issues	5	7.14%	78.58%
Characteristics of the Program	4	5.71%	84.29%
2		2.85%	87.14%
Personal Physical Limitations	2	2.85%	89.99%
Other	7	10.00%	99.99%

Discussion

PME Positive Influences

The most cited positive influence category for PME subjects was “Love of Learning.” This category received 23% of the total number of PME positive influence responses and over twice as many responses as did the next frequently cited positive response category. Some subjects expressed an enthusiasm for learning in general, offering responses such as “intellectual fulfillment,” “the need for continual personal and professional development,” and “the opportunity to better myself intellectually.” Others, however, cited reasons specifically related to enhancing their music teaching knowledge and skills, including “the opportunity to improve my day-to-day teaching with new methods,” “improving my teaching/performance skills,” and “feeling that a gap exists in my knowledge about music education.” Whether for general reasons or for those specific to music education, PME subjects seem to be positively influenced foremost by a genuine excitement for learning.

The second most cited positive influence category was “University Environment,” receiving 11% of the total number of PME positive influence responses. Subjects provided general responses related to being on a university campus, such as “the desire to be in an environment with others committed to music education” and “opportunity to be in a high level academic and musical environment, as well as responses specifically expressing an anticipation of teaching in higher education, such as “the opportunity to teach at the college level” and “the strong desire to work with college-aged students.” These PME subjects seemed to be positively influenced by what they envision to be an improvement over their current professional environment and clearly see themselves teaching in higher education.

The next two most cited positive influence categories, “Relationship with University Faculty” and “Financial Incentives,” each received 10% of the of the total number of PME positive influence responses. Responses associated with the “Relationship with University Faculty” category most often described actual contacts initiated by university faculty as positive influences, including “I have a good connection /respect with the professors at my home institution,” “encouragement from

faculty in my Masters degree,” and “encouragement from graduate school faculty.” Less often mentioned, yet noteworthy, were those responses that cited the general reputation of the faculty as a positive influence, including “the possibility of studying with leaders in the field” and “the reputation of the music education faculty.” In addition to a genuine love of learning and the positive influence of the university environment, these PME subjects seem to be drawn to higher education by having experienced a genuine positive connection with a university faculty member. The “Financial Incentives” category most often included mentions of being awarded assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships as positive influences. Several of the responses in this category, however, included longer-term financial benefits that would expectedly occur once the degree was completed, such as “advancement on the pay scale,” “desire to increase my earning potential,” and “public school compensation increases with a doctorate.” Nearly all of the PME subjects who responded in this category were positively influenced by the financial assistance they might receive.

PME Barriers

The most cited barrier category for PME subjects was “Financial Concerns.” This category received over 26% of the total number of PME barrier responses and over twice as many responses as did the next frequently cited barrier category. As expected, a substantial number of responses addressed the immediate financial concerns associated with attending graduate school on a full time basis. These responses included “My family needs two incomes; TA positions do not provide the income,” “Taking time off of a full-time teaching position is very expensive, even with tuition waivers and a TA-ship,” and “It is expensive, even if completely or partially reimbursed by the school district.” In addition, a substantial number of other responses expressed concern over an expected pay decrease when making a career move as a faculty member in higher education. These responses included “The pay raise does not match the experience of education,” “The financial rewards do not seem worth the effort/time doctoral studies would entail,” and “Moving from PS to Univ. level = initial and substantial pay cut.” These PME subjects are foremost concerned about the short- and long-term financial issues surrounding a move into higher education.

The next two most cited barrier categories, “Characteristics of the Program” and “Anxiety over Leaving Current Job, each received over 12% of the total number of PME barrier responses. Responses associated with the “Characteristics of the Program” category described challenges with program procedures and logistics and included responses such as “lengthy application process,” “The program did not work well with my schedule” and “The residency requirements of a Ph.D. program make scheduling classes and keeping a job impossible.” Other responses expressed concern over program content. These responses included “lack of a direct connection between course offerings and actual teaching skills,” and “lack of emphasis on anything other than public school music; (There is a) lack of legitimization of other forms of music education (such as) jazz (and) studio.” Still, other responses indicated difficulty in accessing information about programs, particularly information about the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities associated with each program. Most of the responses associated with the “Characteristics of the Program” category seem to describe challenges that occur as one might initially encounter a program. The “Anxiety over Leaving Current Job” category included mostly concerns about leaving one’s professional comfort zone. In many of the responses, subjects indicated that they enjoy and are effective in their current K-12 music teaching positions and that a career change might not offer the same level of professional fulfillment. Some even expressed a sense of guilt when contemplating such a career change.

RDG Positive Influences

The most cited positive influence category for RDG subjects was “Relationship with University Faculty.” This category received over 19% of the total number of RDG positive influence responses and over twice as many responses as did the next frequently cited positive response category. Nearly all responses associated with the “Relationship with University Faculty” category described specific connections initiated by university faculty as being positive influences. These responses included “encouragement from music education faculty members,” “positive experiences during the Master’s work,” and “mentors who encouraged me.” Such faculty encouragement to consider higher education occurred as early as undergraduate school for some

subjects. It seems that specific contacts initiated by university faculty were mentioned as positive influences substantially more often than was the reputation of the faculty, and to a much greater degree than was mentioned among the PME responses.

The next three most cited positive influence categories, “Characteristics of the Program” “Desire to Affect the Profession,” and “Financial Incentives” each received over 8% of the total number of RDG positive influence responses. Nearly all of the responses associated with “Characteristics of the Program” mentioned program procedures and logistics as positive influences and included such items as “reasonable entrance exam expectations,” “(having) some input and control over the design of the degree (in) support areas,” “availability of summer coursework,” and “no residency requirement.” For these RDG subjects, it seems that flexibility associated with the degree program structure was an important positive influence. Unlike the PME subjects who listed “Characteristics of the Program” as a barrier, none of the RDG subjects mentioned program content in their responses. Responses associated with the “Desire to Affect the Profession” category included “desire to improve the music education profession,” “desire to serve people in the field of education,” and “desire to make a significant contribution by my doctoral dissertation to music education.” Responses associated with the “Financial Incentives” category universally cited being awarded assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships as positive influences. Only one mention was made of the potential for greater income due to holding a terminal degree.

The fifth most cited positive influence category was “Reputation of the Program,” receiving over 7% of the total number of RGD positive influence responses. These responses mentioned the reputation of the school and university as well as that of the program as being positive influences. In addition, some subjects mentioned the job placement history of the department as being an important positive influence. In comparison, “Reputation of the Program” did not appear as a category among PME subjects. It seems that program’s reputation is a stronger positive influence for these RDG subjects than for the PME subjects.

RDG Barriers

Similar to that of the PME subjects, the most cited barrier category for RDG subjects was “Financial Concerns.” This category received over 24% of the total number of RDG barrier responses and substantially more responses as did the next frequently cited barrier category. The RDG subjects responding in this category tended to acknowledge receiving scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships; however, they quickly affirmed that the financial assistance was not enough to ward off being negatively affected (acquiring substantial debt and/or having to lower their standard of living) by a temporary, but substantial, drop in income. Although a few RDG subjects mentioned that it was hard to leave a good public school teaching salary, none expressed concern over an expected long-term pay decrease when making a career move as a faculty member in higher education.

The next two most cited barrier categories, “Time” and “Relationship with University Faculty,” each received over 14% of the total number of RDG barrier responses. The RDG subjects responding in the “Time” category often mentioned the challenge of teaching full time while completing the post-coursework portion of their degree programs. Others mentioned having to negotiate a shift in their thinking about how they would use their time. One respondent wrote “I was used to giving my time to others as a teacher. I needed to learn to be selfish with my time and other resources.” Nearly all of the responses associated with the “Relationship with University Faculty” category mentioned a lack of assistance from the major professor as a barrier. This lack of assistance seemed to be the result of either (a) unexpected committee member changes or (b) faculty members being “immersed in their own research and other activities to secure tenure.” Several respondents mentioned feeling animosity from their major professors; others witnessed enmity among committee members. One respondent referred to being treated like “work-study help” rather than as “junior faculty in training.” Given that this category was often cited as a positive influence as well as a barrier, it seems to provide an especially rich opportunity to easily produce a positive change for graduate students.

Conclusions

A General Comparison

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When making general comparisons among all of the positive influences and barriers, several patterns emerge. For both groups, there were substantially more positive influences cited than barriers. This could be encouraging news to those interested in recruiting music teacher educators; yet, it would be most revealing to eventually determine the relative strength of each positive influence and barrier. The most frequently cited positive influence and barrier categories for both groups contained markedly greater numbers of responses than were found in both groups' second most frequently cited positive influence and barrier categories. Although the sample sizes were small and the applied statistical procedure was somewhat simple, the top positive influence and barrier categories for both groups were clearly delineated as having substantially more responses than any of the other categories.

Two of the categories were critical in that they appeared as both positive influence and barrier categories for the groups. "Characteristics of the Program" was tied as the second most frequently cited barrier category among PME subjects and tied as the second most frequently cited positive influence category among RDG subjects. It was also a substantially cited positive influence category for PME subjects and less-cited, but still present, as a barrier category for RDG subjects. When citing it as a positive influence, subjects in both groups discussed characteristics of logistical flexibility (reasonable entrance requirements, course availability, etc.). As a barrier, however, both groups discussed logistical rigidity (complex application procedures, difficulty with scheduling classes, etc.). "Relationship with University Faculty" also seemed to be a critical category as it appeared as both a positive influence and a barrier for RDG subjects and as an often-cited positive influence for PME subjects. It was not listed as a barrier for PME subjects. Both "Characteristics of the Program" and "Relationship with University Faculty," are categories that pose an immediate opportunity to affect a positive change because they both contained responses expressing concerns that can be easily be addressed by examining current practices and adjusting future actions accordingly.

As expected, responses related to financial issues occurred more often for both groups than those related to any other single issue. "Financial Concerns" was the most

often-cited barrier category for both groups. On the other hand, “Financial Incentives” was a frequently cited positive influence for both groups. Like “Characteristics of the Program” and “Relationship with University Faculty,” financial issues seem to pose a critical opportunity to affect a positive change.

Comparing Positive Influences Between PME and RDG Subjects

Several positive influence categories were cited more often by PME subjects than by RDG subjects. The most cited positive influence category for PME subjects, “Love of Learning” received 23% of the total number of PME positive influence responses. This same category, however, received only 6.6% of the total number of RDG positive influence responses. Similarly, the category, “University Environment,” received 11% of the total number of PME positive influence responses, but only 4.72% of the total number of RDG positive influence responses. One is tempted to question what happens to the love of learning and the positive influence of the university environment as a result of surviving a doctoral program. The “Desire to Leave K-12 Teaching” category seemed to be specific to PME subjects rather than to RDG subjects; expectedly, this did not appear as a category for RDG subjects.

Some positive influence categories were cited more often by RDG subjects than by PME subjects. The “Desire to Affect the Profession,” category was tied as the second most frequently cited positive influence category among RDG subjects. For PME subjects, on the other hand, it was tied as the eighth most frequently cited positive influence category. Furthermore, the “Desire to Affect Future Teachers” category was cited relatively often among PME subjects, but did not appear as a category among RDG subjects. Perhaps as one proceeds through a doctoral program, he or she becomes somewhat less intent on specifically affecting future music educators and increasingly more aware of the global issues in the profession that need attention. “Reputation of the Program” was not a positive influence category for PME subjects; yet, it did appear as a substantially cited category among RDG subjects. PME subjects seem to be influenced more by logistical characteristics of the program and by having had contact with university faculty than by the reputation of a program. Recent RDG subjects, on the other hand, are in a position to rely on the reputation of their

institutions and programs for professional credibility. “Support from Family and Friends” was also a category not mentioned by PME subjects, but was a substantially cited category among RDG subjects. Perhaps the experience of actually working on and completing a doctoral program provided RDG subjects with a realistic perspective of the strong degree to which support from family and friends was needed.

Comparing Barriers Between PME and RDG Subjects

Several barrier categories were cited more often by PME subjects than by RDG subjects. The “Anxiety over Leaving Current Job,” “Degree not Valued in the K-12 Culture,” “Master’s Degree not Yet Completed,” and “Lack of K-12 Teaching Experience” categories all seemed to represent concerns that would be specific to PME subjects rather than to RDG subjects. It was no surprise that none of these categories appeared for RDG subjects. The “Pressure to Publish” category was cited by PME subjects, but not by RDG subjects. Perhaps this is an encouraging indication that the fears about writing that some prospective doctoral students bring to a degree program are effectively quelled as a result of opportunities provided in the program. Another equally encouraging possibility is that those who have completed a degree program view publishing as an occasion to share ideas rather than as a “pressure.”

Some barrier categories were cited more often by RDG subjects than by PME subjects. “Coursework/Entrance Requirements” was an RDG barrier category not mentioned by PME subjects. One of the more common RDG comments provided in this category was “statistics courses.” Perhaps the actual experience of negotiating a degree program provides challenges that are not (or cannot be) anticipated by those who have not yet experienced them. For one who has not yet taken the coursework, it may be difficult to accurately imagine such challenges. The “Time” category was also cited as a barrier more often by RDG subjects than by PME subjects. For both groups, however, subjects were attempting to maintain working in a position that they held prior to starting the degree work.

Summary

Comparing the Results with Asmus (2001)

The present study is one of the first investigations into the music teacher educator shortage. The purpose was to identify factors that affect music teachers' decisions about entering music education doctoral programs. Asmus (2001) offered several suppositions about the shortage, some of which were substantiated in the present research while others were not. The "negative stigma associated with societal portrayals and perceptions of the education profession" did not appear in any of the PME or RDG responses. Perhaps, by the time one is in a position to contemplate entering a doctoral program in music education, he or she has established such a strong professional commitment as not to be swayed by such portrayals.

Both groups expressed concern about the short-term financial challenges associated with being a doctoral student; though, only the PME subjects raised concerns about the long-term pay differential between the K-12 and higher education level. Perhaps as one successfully moves into a position in higher education, the benefits (flexible schedule, intellectual challenge and fulfillment, university environment, etc.) begin to outweigh the difference in financial compensation. If potential candidates are initially repelled from the profession by the pay differential, however, they will never experience the other, less tangible but rewarding benefits associated with teaching in higher education. It seems that Asmus' concerns about compensation are substantiated by this research.

The requirement of those in higher education to complete a doctorate was actually viewed as a positive influence by PME subjects as well as by RDG subjects; yet, issues surrounding the tenure process were considered to be barriers by several PME subjects. None of the RDG subjects mentioned the tenure process as being a barrier. Although Asmus' concern about the tenure process is supported by the PME subjects' responses, the process of earning the doctorate degree was considered a positive influence, possibly connected to the PME subjects' love of learning and their desire to be around a university environment.

The demanding workload that Asmus referred to cannot be denied; nevertheless, such a workload was not mentioned as a barrier by either group. This could be because subjects were asked to list barriers related to entering or completing a

music education doctoral program. The workload that Asmus described occurs well after the degree is completed.

Recommendations for Recruitment of Music Teacher Educators Based on the Results

1) Those at the university level should invest time and energy in making personal contacts with prospective doctoral students. Through these contacts, prospective students should be encouraged to visit the campus so that they may experience the university environment firsthand. Support should be made available for such visits if possible. While on campus, opportunities should be provided for prospective students to be stretched intellectually or musically (by attending a concert or a class, etc.), thereby tapping into their genuine excitement for learning.

2) The amounts of financial awards such as assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships are not enough to insure against the substantial hardships that can threaten one's efforts to complete a degree program. Those at the university need to look creatively for ways to increase assistantship stipends. This could include collapsing several smaller positions in to one larger position. With subsequent additional scholarship money, a sizable financial assistance award can begin to help fill the void left by leaving a K-12 teaching position. Once larger awards are created, a mechanism should be devised to identify and recruit top K-12 music teachers who also have an interest in higher education. Several of the PME subjects did not seem to be prepared for the specific ways they would be affected by the financial hardship of pursuing a doctoral degree. It may be helpful to provide financial counseling to those who are considering entering a doctoral degree program. Such counseling could include (a) helpful and accurate information about the cost of attending graduate school, (b) the effect of various work/study combinations on one's ability to successfully complete the degree, and (c) suggestions on how to financially prepare in advance of starting a degree program.

3) Administrators at the university level need to make information about the program user friendly and readily available through web sites, printed mailings, and advertisements in professional journals. Also, perhaps a recruitment night could be organized during which faculty would be available to contact prospective students and

answer questions they may have. Next, program procedures, beginning with the application process, should be examined periodically to insure that all logistics are efficiently streamlined. It is important to prospective students that flexibility is provided in the degree program, ideally without compromising quality. Perhaps there are courses that would be better attended if offered on Saturdays or in the evenings. There may be some courses that could be offered on-line. Also, it is important that all courses (especially summer courses) are offered on a predictable and consistent rotation. Concerns about course accessibility may decrease if students can be confident about the regularity with which courses are offered.

4. The career shift from teaching at the K-12 level to being in higher education is substantial in many ways. When discussing the prospect of entering a doctoral degree program with potential students, those at the university level need to acknowledge the challenge of moving out of one's professional comfort zone. It is equally important to demonstrate to these prospective students that they could eventually impact the profession substantially through their work with future music educators and sharing their ideas through research and writing. It has been the experience of this author that knowing one is "having an impact" is a strong motivational force.

5. Two frequently cited barrier categories were "Personal/Family Issues" and "Time." Similar to a recommendation about financial issues, perhaps information and counseling could be offered to help prospective doctoral students manage these challenges. Such counseling might be the responsibility of a recruitment officer or it could simply occur as informal discussions with a university faculty member ("Relationship with University Faculty" was a frequently cited positive influence category for PME subjects).

Recommendations for Retaining Doctoral Students Based on the Results

1. The relationship that we, as university professors, initially establish with potential and current doctoral students can be a strong positive influence, however we also have the responsibility to consistently provide assistance as doctoral students work through their degree programs. In addition to academic guidance, university

professors should be keeping current with the needs and challenges that doctoral students may be facing at any given point in time. Such a proactive approach might help to insure a student's successful completion of the degree, increasing the likelihood that he or she would impart a positive perspective about the program to future doctoral students.

2. Similar to PME subjects, RDG subjects were positively influenced by receiving assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships. They also cited "Financial Concerns" most often as a barrier. Unfortunately, once a student has started a degree program, there is little that can be done to substantially change his or her financial situation. Those at the university level can best help doctoral students with financial concerns before they enter the program.

3. "Time" was tied as the second most frequently cited barrier category. Perhaps counseling incoming doctoral students about how to use their time efficiently might be helpful; then again, the majority of the time-related barrier responses seem to indicate that the respondents were attempting to maintain at least a portion of their previous employment while working on their degree programs. It appears that such time-related challenges are thinly veiled financial concerns. As such, it would be most helpful to assist potential students with finding ways to afford working on a degree program without having to seek outside employment. Some of the respondents mentioned that their time-related challenges occurred after they reached ABD status. It is strongly recommended that those at the university level establish a culture in which students are expected to complete a substantial portion of their dissertation before leaving the university environment. Once a doctoral student has assumed responsibilities in a new position, time becomes an increasingly scarce resource.

4. Similar to the responses of PME subjects, flexibility associated with the degree program structure was a positive influence for RDG subjects. It is important that those at the university level provide opportunities for students to steer the design of their programs, allowing them to explore their interests to the greatest degree possible. Giving a measure of control over to the students, without compromising the basic requirements of the program, provides a sense of empowerment and ownership

that would in all likelihood insure the successful completion of the degree. This drive to shape one's direction seems to be evidenced as "Desire to Affect the Profession" was tied as the second most cited positive influence category. Furthermore, the sense of relevance for students who are provided such flexibility to incorporate their genuine interests often brings their work to a new, higher level of creativity. For similar purposes, experiences associated with coursework and assistantship responsibilities should be relevant to the anticipated responsibilities associated with the type of college teaching position that the student would hope to find after graduation. Like "having an impact," a genuine sense of ownership and relevance is a highly motivational force.

Suggestions for Future Research

This initial study into the music teacher educator shortage was intended to identify factors that affect music teachers' decisions about entering music education doctoral programs using a methodology in which individual responses were grouped under larger categories. Future research, examining the specific positive influences and barriers, could explore the following questions: What is the strength of each specific positive influence and barrier response for both groups? Are there differences in the strength of each positive influence and barrier by group, gender, or by teaching area (band, choral, classroom music, orchestra)? Do relationships exist among the positive influences, barriers, and subjects' ages? When examining individual responses under particular categories, several other questions emerge. To what degree are "Time" challenges related to "Financial Concerns?" For RDG subjects, is there a difference in the strength in any of the barriers for those who did not seek outside employment when completing their degree programs compared to those who did work in addition to completing their programs? Do the positive influence responses associated with the "Desire to Affect Future Teachers" and "Research Opportunities" categories outweigh the importance associated with the "Anxiety over Leaving Current Job" barrier category for PME subjects? Finally, the present study was limited to examining the influences on doctoral students as they enter and work their way through a degree program. Asmus (2001) expressed a concern over "a working environment that expects too much of (those already teaching in higher education)" (p. 3). An

examination of the positive influences and barriers affecting university professors at different stages in their careers may help to discover ways to create a more healthy environment within the profession, ultimately making it more attractive to prospective music teacher educators. In light of the emerging shortage of music teacher educators, it is important for researchers to continue examining all relevant variables in the effort to uncover ways to stem the current trend.

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