Developing Core Practices for an Instrumental Music Education Methods

Course

By

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Abstract

This article outlines the rationale for the development of an instrumental music education methods course devised around core practices. First, I provide a brief history and context of how teacher educators in the United States, over the last half-century, have negotiated a tension between teaching behaviors and dispositions. Second, I describe some of the guiding principles of practice-based teacher education and its proponents' critiques of current conceptions of teacher education. Third, I define the concept of core practices and derive a set of core practices of instrumental music education. Fourth, I outline the pedagogy of practice-based education, including the concept of approximations of practice, and demonstrate its application to the instrumental methods course. These approximations of practice include providing feedback, structuring and pacing rehearsals, eliciting thinking through questions, selecting appropriate repertoire and materials, teaching higher-order thinking, and creating a student-centered pedagogy. Finally, I conclude with areas for future development.

Introduction

The act of professional teaching is a complex set of actions not easily learned nor taught. Teachers deliberately choose content, ask students questions teachers already knows the answers to, take on a professional identity, and learn and perform the norms of professionalism. These abilities constitute only some of the many complex tasks teachers perform every day. Because of these difficult and unique tasks, Ball and Forzani (2009) referred to professional teaching as "unnatural work" because, compared to everyday interactions and even informal teaching among the general population, professional teaching "requires an unnatural orientation toward others and a simultaneous, unusual attention to the 'what' of that which [teachers] are helping others learn" (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 499). Similarly, Higgins (2012) described music teaching as the "impossible profession" (p. 213) because music educators must negotiate tensions between providing a broad liberal education and a focused, skill-based vocational education, reconcile their identities as a musician and a pedagogue, and maneuver institutions that do not always value music's purposes and unique outcomes. These tensions are unresolvable; music educators work through them by using professional judgment, often requiring compromise.

This quality of teaching renders the task of educating teachers equally as unnatural and impossible. Teacher educators have traditionally negotiated a tension between demonstrating the discrete tasks and skills of teaching, as described by Ball and Forzani (2009), and developing the professional judgment of maneuvering dilemmas as outlined by Higgins (2012). On one side, teacher educators might teach specific *behaviors* by providing students with explicit educational strategies and techniques known to be effective. But, as Grossman and McDonald (2008) suggested, behavior-oriented teacher education might not allow novice teachers the ability to create new and unique pedagogies catered to their individual needs. On the other side, helping

students develop *dispositions*, or habits of mind, allows novices to develop professional judgment, generate new practices, and respond to individual and context-specific dilemmas encountered in professional teaching (for an in-depth definition of dispositions, see Dottin, 2009 and Katz & Rath, 1985). But, a disposition-oriented teacher education might not be detailed enough for inexperienced teachers to know how to execute habits of mind in practice (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). This tension is felt in music teacher education when, for example, instructors try to balance teaching behaviors like effective feedback, rehearsal pacing, and repertoire selection with developing the disposition to read an ensemble, responding to students' needs and making in-the-moment adjustments that are needed in effective rehearsals. The challenge of sufficiently balancing and addressing behaviors and dispositions within the limited time allocated to teacher preparation leaves teacher education, like music teaching, a difficult task.

How, then, can music teacher educators sufficiently balance the tension of helping novice teachers develop specific behaviors *and* dispositions? In this article, I outline my negotiation of this tension through the development of an instrumental music education methods course structured on practice-based teacher education, core practices, and approximations of practice. This course occurs within the fourth year of a five-year integrated bachelor/master program in music education at a flagship public university in the Northeast. First, I provide a brief history and context of how teacher educators in the United States, over the last half-century, have negotiated a tension between teaching behaviors and dispositions. Second, I describe some of the guiding principles of practice-based teacher education and its proponents' critiques of current conceptions of teacher education. Third, I define the concept of core practices and derive a set of core practices of instrumental music education. Fourth, I outline the pedagogy of practice-based

education, including the concept of approximations of practice, and demonstrate its application to the instrumental methods course. Finally, I conclude with areas for future development.

Competing Conceptions of Teacher Education

Researchers have suggested that the tension outlined above between behaviors and dispositions is a useful heuristic to understand the history of teacher education's trajectory in the United States within the last half-century (Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011; Grossman & McDonald, 2008). As Grossman (2011) noted, in the 1960s and 1970s, teacher educators focused on behavioral frameworks to uncover and then teach novices the discrete behaviors of effective educators. These techniques were often considered universal and non-context bound skills that could be applied regardless of students' backgrounds. As a result, teacher educators articulated discrete competencies and created situations where novice teacher could practice these skills, often in controlled or modified environments, such as university classrooms and lab settings. Teacher educators commonly employed microteaching that adhered to protocols and checklists of competencies as a strategy to learn how to teach (Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011).

Starting in the 1980s, this approach to learning to teach came under criticism for its prescriptiveness (Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011; Grossman & McDonald, 2008). Critics argued that behavioral approaches did not take context into consideration. Behavioral approaches excluded the development of necessary teacher qualities such as execution of professional judgment, the ability to develop effective pedagogies tailored to the idiosyncratic strengths and limitations of the teacher, and the development of responsiveness to the needs of specific students and the context where learning takes place (Forzani, 2014). Because of these critiques, teacher educators increasingly looked to cognitivist paradigms of teaching and shifted focus from execution of discrete behaviors to the development of dispositions of teaching. These

dispositions included developing the appropriate content knowledge, the ability to reflect, the habits of collaboration with others (Diez & Raths, 2007), and, more recently, a commitment towards social justice and equitable teacher practice (Villegas, 2007). Teacher educators who are advocates of this paradigm believe that development of dispositions becomes the foundation that generates in-the-moment decision-making and responsiveness. As a result, McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh (2013) argued, "[t]his move from behavior to cognition prompted the emergence of scholarship detailing the improvisational nature of teaching" (p. 379). Teacher educators have used case studies, discussion, and development of content knowledge to develop the analytical skills and dispositions to generate practice. This practice remains the dominant paradigm within teacher education to this day (Grossman & McDonald, 2008; McDonald et al., 2013). In whole then, these scholars argue that the history of teacher education over the last half century has been a shift from development of non-contextual behaviors informed by behaviorism to the cultivation of dispositions and context-specific teaching informed by cognitivist approaches.

Rationale for Practice-Based Teacher Education

Some teacher educators have pointed to the shortcomings of this most recent focus on dispositions instead of behaviors, prompting what might be another shift in the conception of teacher education (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2011; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Hiebert & Morris, 2012; McDonald et al., 2013). As Grossman and McDonald (2008) noted,

> Much of the research on teaching in the past two decades has focused on teachers' knowledge—of specific subject matter, of learners and learning, of ways to teach specific content—and teachers' beliefs. And while we would be the first to agree that these are critically important aspects of teaching, teaching, at its core, is an interactive, clinical practice, one that requires not just knowledge but craft and skill. (p. 189)

Similarly, Ball and Forzani (2009) suggested that, "the focus in teacher education can slip easily into an exclusively cognitive domain, emphasizing beliefs and ideas over the actual skills and

judgment required in enactment" (p. 503). The recent emphasis on dispositions, critics argue, does not sufficiently provide guidance to novice teachers on how educators execute dispositions and knowledge in practice. Hiebert and Morris (2012) referred to this as an emphasis "on teachers, rather than on teaching" (p. 98) and instead suggested that a focus on practice and the artifacts of practice will lead to better outcomes in teacher education.

As a result, proponents argue that there should be a shift away from the cognitivist emphasis on dispositions and a turn back towards the *practice* of teaching.

> To make practice the core of the curriculum of teacher education requires a shift from a focus on what teachers know and believe to a greater focus on what teachers do. This does not mean that knowledge and beliefs do not matter but, rather, that the knowledge that counts for practice is that entailed by the work. . . . [A] practice-focused curriculum for learning teaching would include significant attention not just to the knowledge demands of teaching but to the actual tasks and activities involved in the work. It would not settle for developing teachers' beliefs and commitments; instead, it would emphasize repeated opportunities for novices to practice carrying out the interactive work of teaching and not just to talk about that work. (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 503)

This focus on practice, in some ways, is a return to a behavioral paradigm of teacher education—a point some readily make (Forzani, 2014; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; McDonald et al. 2013). Because of this, Zeichner (2012) argued:

> there is a danger that the growing movement to focus teacher education on core instructional practices . . . will fail to benefit from what we have learned from the difficulties experienced in past efforts to establish a practice-focused approach in teacher education. (p. 376)

For Zeichner, practice-based teacher education may edge out important work in political aspects of teaching, such as attention to social justice, equality, and enacting culturally responsive pedagogies.

But practice-based teacher education advocates argue that there are some key differences between its current iteration and previous orientations focused on practice, of which Zeichner (2012) is critical. Unlike previous behavioral conceptions of teacher education, current conceptions of practice-based teacher education acknowledge the complexity of teaching (Forzani, 2014), including attending to national and state policies, institutional contexts, and

local districts and labor market needs (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). As a result, practice-based teacher education synthesizes behavioral and cognitivist paradigms of teacher education by developing dispositions and responsiveness to contexts, but embedded in clearer practices or behaviors that can be articulated to novice teachers. As Grossman and McDonald (2008) noted, "[w]e argue not that practice with the pre-active or cognitive aspects of teaching should be eliminated but that teacher education should offer significantly more—and more deliberate— opportunities for novices to practice the interactive work of instruction" (p. 503).

The disagreements between practice-based teacher education's proponents and critics might be seen as different emphases while trying to negotiate this tension between behavior and dispositions. Depending on the frame one takes to this issue, and the theories—recognized or not—one draws upon, practice-based teacher education can be seen as an innovation, a regression, or a corrective to the excesses of too heavy an emphasis on dispositional development. Regardless, practice-based teacher education provides an answer to this tension between behaviors and dispositions, one that I will pursue in more detail.

Pedagogies of Practice-Based Teacher Education

What might practice-based teacher education look like in practice and in music teacher education? Advocates suggest that, first, teacher educators define the practices essential to the discipline of teaching, or what they call *core practices.* Second, they suggest that teacher educators create *approximations of practice*—teaching practices that are less complex than real world teaching, so that novices might observe, analyze, and practice these core practices in increasingly complex contexts. This may serve as a way to conceptualize music education methods courses.

Core Practices

Core practices are "high-leverage practices" (Grossman et al., 2009), meaning that they "occur with high frequency in teaching, are enacted across different curricula or instructional approaches, preserve the integrity and complexity of teaching, are research based, and have the potential to improve student achievement" (Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009, p. 209). Grossman et al. (2009) added that these are practices that novices can actually begin to master. Core practices must also incorporate professional judgment; they must be structured not as non-contextual tenets of practice, but as conceptual tools to help shape teacher educators' instruction (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). Of key importance in delineating core practices to incorporate contextual practice is attention to their "grain size" (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Lampert, 2010; Windschitl, Thompson, Braaten, & Stroupe, 2012; Zeichner, 2012). Too narrowly conceived, core practices revert back to behavioral competencies where the complexity and context-specific aspects of teaching are ignored. Conversely, core practices that are too broad serve as dispositional guides that do not give novice teachers clear enough practices to direct their learning and mastery.

Examples of core practices proposed by teacher educators include leading a class discussion, eliciting student thinking during interactive teaching, anticipating student responses and eliciting further thinking (Grossman et al., 2009). These practices occur often, are used in different educational approaches, are supported by research as effective practices, and preserve the complexity of teaching while still being clearly defined so that novice teachers may practice and begin to master them.

Core practices in instrumental music education. What might be a set of core practices in instrumental teaching? While there is no known literature that explicitly uses the language of

core practices in music education, there is a body of scholarship that has addressed best practices

through surveys of effective band and orchestral directors (Juchniewicz, Kelly, & Acklin, 2014;

Kelly, 2008), quantitative research that has catalogued and counted the frequency of certain

instrumental teacher behaviors (Cavitt, 2003; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Silvey, 2014), and

qualitative and philosophical research on pedagogical strategies within instrumental teaching

(Abril, 2009; Allsup 2003; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Hoffman, 2012; Hoffman & Carter, 2013;

Mixon, 2009). The findings and conclusions of these areas of research, however, often conflict as

to what counts as effective practice for instrumental educators. For example, the surveys and

behavioral studies emphasize use of effective teacher-derived warm-ups to prep instruction and

carefully select quality repertoire (Silvey, 2014). They also argue that teachers should provide

concise direction to instrumental students, decrease talk time, and increase playing time (Duke,

Prickett, & Jellison, 1998; Goolsby, 1996, 1997). Conversely, qualitative research indicates that

ensembles often leave little room for student input and decision-making (Allsup, 2003; Allsup &

Benedict, 2008). This scholarship argues that teachers should incorporate more dialogue,

inquiry-based instruction that is student-led and constructed around students' interests, culturally

relevant pedagogies, and student input in repertoire selection of a variety of styles (Abril, 2009;

Hoffman, 2012; Hoffman & Carter, 2013; Mixon, 2009; O'Toole, 2003).

How do music educators and teacher educators make sense of these conflicting

conceptions of effective practice to derive core practices? This lack of consensus may be

understood as researchers and educators borrowing from and working within different *traditions*.

Jackson (1986) articulated two approaches to teaching, which he describes as the "mimetic

tradition" and the "transformative tradition." The mimetic tradition, he argued, approaches

teaching as the transmission of knowledge through presentation, guided practice, feedback, and

evaluation. In this view, the teacher mostly holds expertise in content knowledge and imparts that knowledge to students. Conversely, the transformative tradition does not approach teaching as imparting as transmission, but instead views education as the transformation or cultivation of students' "virtue" and "moral" characters (p. 127). In this view, education is achieved through dialogue, problem posing, use of personal narratives, and connections to students' lives outside of school. The teacher mostly holds expertise as a facilitator and pedagogue who helps students make meaning of and reflect upon their world.

For Jackson (1986), the mimetic and transformative traditions were not a collection of strategies divorced from theory, but instead were structured by competing epistemologies. As the term *mimesis* (from the Greek, "to imitate") suggests, the mimetic tradition holds an objectivist, realist epistemology. Knowledge is separate from the individual. The individual then acquires this knowledge, or makes a *copy* of this information. Conversely, the transformative tradition holds a phenomenological and constructivist epistemology, where knowledge is constructed in the individual's mind and body, and is therefore intimately connected to perceptions and experiences.

Similarly, historian of education Cuban (1993) described the types of pedagogical strategies educators use in the United States. Somewhat similar to the mimetic and transformative traditions, Cuban argued that pedagogies sit on a continuum from teacher-centered approaches—sometimes called, subject-centered, teaching as transmission, direct instruction, or behaviorist—to student-centered approaches—sometimes called progressive, teaching as facilitating, or constructivist.

Cuban (2009) argued that, despite impassioned advocacies for the effectiveness of these strategies on both sides, and the critique of the other side of the continuum, "no preponderance of

evidence is yet available to demonstrate the inherent superiority of either pedagogy in teaching the young" (p. 6). As a result, he suggested that practicing teachers are more often than not "pedagogical pragmatists" (p. 50), adopting a wide range of pedagogies, combining, blending, and blurring these traditions and sides of the continuum. "They hug the middle of the pedagogical continuum" (p. 53) in a stance he called "teacher-centered progressivism." (p. 10).

Cuban and Jackson's research might suggest that teachers embrace a variety of strategies, from teacher-centered to student-centered, including direct instruction, practice, and problem-based learning (Cuban, 1993, 2009). Teachers' choices are embedded within (often tacit) epistemologies of objectivist realism and constructivism (Jackson, 1986). But, Cuban's (2009) empirical research suggested that effective teachers borrow from both these traditions and use a variety of strategies.

While Jackson and Cuban's writings do not specifically investigate or address music teaching, their research may reconcile conflicting ideas of instrumental music teaching in the literature. Like education in other disciplines, instrumental teaching might have mimetic and transformative traditions. Readers might understand the survey and behavior research as emphasizing a mimetic tradition. This research stresses direct strategies such as the need for providing effective feedback to students, selecting appropriate repertoire, and structuring efficient and effective pace and sequence of rehearsals (Cavitt, 2003; Duke et al., 1998; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Juchniewicz et al., 2014; Silvey, 2014). Conversely, readers might understand the philosophical and qualitative writings as emphasizing a transformative tradition. This research advocates the use of culturally relevant pedagogies, "democratic practices," and student-centered pedagogies (Abril, 2009; Allsup, 2003; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Dobbs, 2008; Hoffman, 2012; Hoffman & Carter, 2013; Mixon, 2009; O'Toole, 2003). But while these traditions exist,

effective practice might be conceived of as "hugging the middle" by implementing and even blending these traditions at appropriate times. As Cuban's (1993, 2009) conception of effective teaching might suggest, these approaches are not binaries, but are two poles of a continuum.

Therefore, a set of core practices for instrumental music teachers might include a wide, and sometimes contradictory, variety of teaching strategies and epistemological frameworks, ranging from strictly mimetic, teacher-centered, direct instruction to transformative, student-centered, constructivist, problem-based pedagogies. I derived the following diverse set of core practices based on this instrumental music teaching literature, as well as observations of effective music teachers and my experiences as a secondary instrumental teacher. Instrumental teachers:

- Rehearse large ensembles (Cavitt, 2003; Duke et al., 1998; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Silvey, 2014)

- Facilitate small groups (Allsup, 2003; Allsup & Benedict, 2008)

- Provide students feedback to improve practice in a variety of ways (Allsup, 2003; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Cavitt, 2003; Dobbs, 2008; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Haston, 2013; Silvey, 2014)

- Engage students in creative musical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry (Allsup, 2003; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; O'Toole, 2003)

- Incorporate students' musical and cultural identities into the classroom (Abril, 2009; Hoffman, 2012; Hoffman & Carter, 2013; Mixon, 2009)

- Select appropriate repertoire and materials (O'Toole, 2003; Juchniewicz et al., 2014)

It is important to note the parameters of these core practices. First, while these practices are neither complete nor uncontentious—no set of core practices could be, which is a point I will

address later—this list provides novice teachers core practices they can begin to master and employ in a variety of settings (Grossman et al., 2009). Second, these practices are distinct from skills (Forzani, 2014). Skills like conducting, improvisation, aural skills, instrument competencies, and score analysis are not core practices. Instead, these skills are abilities needed to execute core practices. For example, conducting technique and aural skills are needed to rehearse large ensembles and instrument competencies are required to provide effective feedback to students. These skills, which are commonly included in instrumental practices, are, in this course, combined in ways that avoid a decontextualized list of competencies of smaller grain-sized skills and are instead embedded within authentic, core *pedagogical* practices.

Approximations of Practice

How do teacher educators help novice teachers learn and master core practices? Grossman et al. (2009) suggested that teacher educators engage novices in *approximations of practice.* In these approximations, novices are given time to practice teaching in university classes. In these classes, the context is less complex than teaching in real settings, where teachers must also execute classroom management and fit the lesson in the sequence of a curriculum, among other parameters. In the university class, novices are under the support and scaffolding of a teacher educator who gives direct and continued in-the-moment feedback, with the opportunity to immediately re-execute skills and activities. Ball and Forzani (2009) suggested that these approximations of practice might be sequenced in a way where complexity is gradually increased and scaffolding is reduced. Further, Lampert and Graziani (2009) suggested that these instructional practices are placed in a cycle where students observe examples—such as teacher educator demonstrations, videos of effective practice, or live observation—practice and execute these instructional practices, and finally reflect upon their performance. Finally, approximations

of practice are not merely opportunities to develop discrete skills, but are embedded within educational theory. As McDonald et al. (2009) noted:

> What is also needed is a continual examination not just of mechanistic implementation of a set of practices but the meanings that are imbued within certain enactments and the kinds of learning environments that can be designed for students and teachers to thrive. (p. 381)

In other words, educational theory is immediately learned and applied in the context of learning to teach. In short, approximations of practice include providing students the opportunity to *observe* representation of practice (Lampert & Graziani, 2009), "decompose" those practices through *analysis* and connection to educational theory (Ball & Forzani, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009) and then *rehearse* these practices in scaffolded contexts of increasing complexity (Grossman et al., 2009).

Approximations of practice in instrumental music education. For my instrumental methods course, I translated the set core practices of instrumental teaching I derived into six approximations of practice. Each of these practices allowed students to observe, analyze, and rehearse core practices repeatedly. Figure 1 describes the approximations of practice and their aims, which of my core practices the approximations address, the scaffolding I put in place to gradually allow the practices to increase in complexity, and the theories that inform the practices. I wanted to create opportunities for students to observe, analyze, rehearse, and reflect upon each of these approximations of practices (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009). Each practice is structured so students first observe the practice in action.

Figure 1: A continuum of instruction in instrumental music teaching.

These approximations of practice move from left to right in the sequence of the curriculum. The course increases in complexity by moving along a continuum from teacher-centered and mimetic instruction to student-centered and transformative instruction (with the exception of approximation of practice four [See footnote 1 above]) and by slowly releasing scaffolding (Cuban, 1993, 2009; Jackson, 1986). The practices are also informed by educational theories.

	Sequence of the course over time					
	Pedagogical continuum					
	Teacher-directed, Mimetic →					→ Student-Centered, Transformative
Approximation of Practice	1. Provide Feedback	2. Structure and Pace a Rehearsal through Questions	3. Elicit Thinking through Questions	4. Select Repertoire and Materials[1]	5. Teach Holistic and Higher-Order Thinking through Comprehensive Musicianship	6. Create Student-Centered Pedagogies
Aim Students demonstrate that they:	Have a strong knowledge of the score and the instruments, can anticipate and quickly diagnose problems, stay on task within a lesson plan.	Can create and execute a lesson objective from a variety of instruction perspectives, and 3. is written up in a lesson plan that has clear objectives procedures, and assessments.	Can use a variety of questioning techniques to have students devise solutions together with the teacher to solve problems.	Can choose and justify developmentally appropriate, motivating, and educationally and artistically rich literature, and differentiate the instrumental parts in that repertoire for the individual needs of students.	Can create and execute lesson plans and units that require students to 1. engage with knowledge of music besides performance and technique (i.e. theoretical, historical, cultural) and 2. make decisions about interpretation.	Can create student-centered lessons that are relevant to students' sociocultural contexts, musical interests, and "lived everyday worlds."
Core Practices[2]	1, 3	1, 3	3, 4	3, 4, 6	2, 3, 4, 6	2, 3, 4
Scaffolding offered by instructor	Instructor creates lesson plan, selects repertoire, and devises warm-ups	Instructor selects repertoire	Instructor selects repertoire	None	None	None
Educational theories informing practices	Behaviorism		Cognitive constructivism and critiques of behaviorism	None	Social constructivism, sociocultural theories, and culturally relevant pedagogy	None

[1] Approximation of practice four does not fit along the pedagogical continuum because selecting repertoire and materials is required of strategies throughout the spectrum. It was placed here in the sequence because it completes the releasing of scaffolding in the first three approximations of practice.

[2] The core practices are:
1. Rehearse large ensembles
2. Facilitate small groups
3. Provide opportunities to give students feedback to improve practice in a variety of ways
4. Engage students in creative musical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry
5. Incorporate students' musical and cultural identities into the classroom
6. Select appropriate repertoire and materials

Students watch videos of exemplary teachers working with K-12 students; they participate in live demonstrations where I teach and provide commentary on my planning and in-the-moment thought processes; and they observe teachers in their clinical placements guided by protocols I provide them. Through these observations, students decompose practice and analyze effective teacher moves (Ball & Forzani, 2009). After this observation and analysis, the students study, devise, and adapt lesson plans—either alone or in groups—and practice teaching these lesson plans, so they may receive feedback from me and their peers. This gives them further opportunity to analyze. Next, they exhibit mastery of the core practice in a teaching demonstration. Finally, they write a formal reflection to improve and to prepare for future practice (Grossman et al., 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; Lampert, Franke, Kazemi, Ghousseini, Turrou, Beasley, & Crowe, 2013).

As Figure 1 demonstrates, the order of these approximations of practice is purposeful. Using Cuban's (2009) notion of teacher-centered progressivism, I placed these core practices on a continuum from teacher-centered to student-centered. Throughout the semester, students begin by studying practices that are teacher-centered and less complex and move to more complex student-centered approaches.

I structured this sequence based on students' past experiences as students, theories of teacher development, and as a way to connect theory to practice. First, this structure helps students start with their experiences and then move to places that are less familiar. Students more often experience teacher-centered, direct instruction, are more familiar with its "grammar" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), and, therefore, usually have an easier time mastering teacher-centered techniques. Gage (2009) suggested that teacher-centered instruction is the most conventional form of teaching, and ones that students experience most in their time in public schooling. My

searches did not reveal an identical study aimed at instrumental ensemble teachers' pedagogies. However, extant literature reviews and empirical studies—which focus on "better" rehearsals (Silvey, 2014; Duke et al., 1998; Cavitt, 2003), the behaviors of band directors who are successful at festivals and competitions (Juchniewicz et al., 2014), and the differences in rehearsal techniques of novice and expert teachers (Goolsby, 1996, 1997)—suggest that ensemble directors predominantly use teacher-centered approaches in ensembles. So, while no conclusive empirical evidence exists, it seems likely that the preponderance of strategies used by instrumental ensemble teachers are teacher-centered. Because of students' familiarity with these approaches in ensembles and developmental capabilities, I begin with the more teacher-centered instruction in the sequence of the course, and move along the continuum to more student-centered pedagogies.

Second, students' developmental abilities also contributed to the rationale of ordering these practices. Developmental research suggests that preservice teachers are first preoccupied with their own actions, only later developing the ability to focus on and address students' behaviors and learning. Fuller (1969) argued that novice teachers develop along a "self-task-impact" trajectory, first focusing on their *self* in the classroom and the discomfort of being in this new role, second focusing on the techniques of teaching or the *task,* and finally moving to concerns about the *impact* these techniques and strategies have on learning. Fuller's framework further supports beginning with techniques directed on controllable self and task oriented behaviors, gradually sequencing to more flexible behaviors, which focus on impact upon students' learning. In this way, the approximations of practice slowly increase in complexity.

Lastly, the need to connect theory to practice informed the order of these practices. This structure not only allows students to practice strategies, but also articulates the educational

theories that inform those strategies. I begin with behaviorism in the teacher-centered practices (numbers one and two) because this is what students are familiar with, even if they are not aware of it. This, then, becomes an opportunity to show students that all practice is informed by theory, even when that theory is unrecognized. In approximations of practices three and four, students study cognitive constructivism and begin to critique the tenets and assumptions of behaviorism. And in approximations of practice five and six, they study social constructivism and the so-called sociological turn in education. They explore how to create communities of inquiry, how sociocultural contexts influence learning, including culturally responsive and relevant pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009).

As Figure 1 also shows, further scaffolding is added to aid in the gradual increase in complexity. I gradually give students more responsibilities in the planning of instruction. Approximation of practice one is highly scaffolded; I provide them the repertoire and a lesson plan to follow. In approximations of practice two and three, scaffolding is slowly lifted—I still provide the repertoire, but students are required to write the lesson plan. Finally, in approximations of practice four, five, and six, previous scaffolded parameters are released, and students are responsible for all aspects of planning, with consultation with me and their peers.

The instrumental methods course, thus, is structured on six approximations of practice intended to help students observe, analyze, and rehearse core practices of instrumental music teaching. These approximations of practice move from less to more complexity through scaffolding, developmental concerns, and students' past experiences. The course begin with teacher-centered, mimetic instruction like large rehearsals informed by behaviorist theories, and slowly transition to student-centered approaches informed by constructivist and sociocultural theories. This practice-based music teacher education provides novices opportunities to learn the

behaviors and dispositions of teaching through approximations of practice.

Limitations and Conclusion

This application of practice-based teacher education to an instrumental methods course may be a first step in a more robust development of practice-based music teacher education. Music teacher educators may apply similar inquiries to entire programs of study and other methods courses, including choral, general music, and music education as a whole. Of particular interest would be the development of a set of core practices within music education across all subdisciplines. This, of course, is difficult, if not impossible, work. As Zeichner (2012) warned, consensus on such a set of core practices is probably not possible. Common areas of formal music education—such as general music, chorus, studio instruction—might be too varied in practice, making their combination under a single set of core practices impossible or contentious.

The issue of grain size, or how discrete or broad these core practices should be, is an important if not elusive parameter to consider. Too narrow, or smaller grain size, and the practices will devolve into a list of competencies, with no room for generativity, which are the limitations of behavioral approaches. Too broad, or bigger grain size, and the practices may lack the specificity, for which dispositional approaches have been critiqued. Finally, despite Cuban's (2009) pluralistic calls for "teacher-centered progressivism," divisions in the field of music education—including mimetic and transformative traditions and behaviorism and constructivism—and strict advocacies for different methods, pedagogies, and theories will produce differing conceptions of best practices, making consensus on core practices difficult. These limitations create formidable obstacles and suggest that the implementation of a practice-based approach does not automatically resolve the tension between dispositions and behaviors that has preoccupied teacher educators for decades. However, a practice-based teacher education

does provide music teacher educators an approach to this dilemma as they prepare preservice

teachers for the "unnatural" and "impossible" profession of music teaching.

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