**An Intrinsic Case Study of Six Southeastern Public School Music Educators’ Classroom Management Development**

Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, PhD

Assistant Professor of Music Education

Boyer College of Music and Dance -- Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street Philadelphia, PA  19122

elizabeth.parker@temple.edu

*Presented at the annual conference of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Hershey, PA. March 26-27, 2015.*

Abstract

Classroom management represents a compelling concern for preservice, novice, and experienced music teachers. The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore the classroom management development of six southeastern public school music teachers. Research questions included (a) how participants describe their classroom management development, (b) how participants articulated the challenges and successes of managing their classrooms, and (c) how participants’ classroom management development influenced their teaching careers. As a theoretical lens, I used the concept of “figured worlds” developed Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (2003) and expertise as defined by Dreyfus (1984). Schools are ‘figured’ in ways that individuals construct their experiences, produce and reproduce social actions and interactions, and position individuals within specific roles. Teachers’ perceived expertise within the world of the school is important to their identification within the school setting.

Participants were pre-selected using heterogeneous sampling and represented mid- and late-career professionals. Two general music educators participated including Mr. M, a teacher for 23 years, and Ms. W, a teacher for 36 years. Two instrumental music educators also participated, including a middle and high school string specialist, Ms. D, who taught for 13 years and a middle and high school band teacher, Ms. C, who taught for 9 years. Two choral music educators, Ms. B, a middle school teacher who taught for 26 years, and Ms. P, a middle school teacher for 13 years, also participated. Participants represented small and larger school contexts, lower to higher socioeconomic demographics, as well varied population densities. The data collection included three individual interviews with each participant over an 18-month period and multiple observations of each teaching context. Throughout data collection, constant comparative data analysis was used to clarify and focus codes. Member-checking and peer review were incorporated as a verification procedures.

Four themes emerged from data analysis including (a) building relationships, (b) establishing routines and fortifying expectations, (c) engaging everyone, and (d) prospering through lifelong learning. Findings reflect participants’ desires to build a teaching legacy through learning and overcoming difficulty, to develop relationships with students, administrators, families, and community members, and to use multiple methods to engage students in order to elicit their best work. Consequences of classroom management development included day-to-day challenges balanced with enjoyment and satisfaction of teaching. Implications for teacher education programs include developing contextual understandings of P-12 students through regular and consistent externship opportunities and aiding preservice teachers’ classroom management development through discussions and problem-solving within methods’ courses.

Applications of Teachers’ Classroom Management Development Case Study:

* Historically, classroom management literature has not consistently addressed the interactions between the classroom environment and the learner. A positive classroom climate and student feelings of independence as well as ownership are essential to their motivation toward learning. Positive relationships with teachers have been found to have an energizing effect on individual students, heightening their motivation toward learning (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).
* This study confirms there is no specific set of guidelines for teachers to follow. Teachers’ styles and approaches are diverse; it is their coherence, consistency, and authenticity that helps to foster a productive classroom climate (Richardson & Fallona, 2001).
* In this study, participants discussed the evolution of finding themselves as teachers over several years. They experimented with many approaches, both in learning to work with specific children and with the full class, and they attempted a variety of curricular concepts until they began to find their teacher identities. Participants asked for and incorporated feedback from important mentors such as administrators, colleagues, and music supervisors.
* The perception that one “arrives” as a teacher and then no longer experiences classroom management challenges is not supported in this study. Participants continue undergoing challenges and seek daily solutions in their classroom management development.
* An important finding in this study is the participants’ perseverance and dedication to student progress. Participants viewed students as individuals, even when they were teaching in large ensemble contexts. They proposed the growth and progress of the full group was supported entirely by individuals’ contributions. Classroom guidelines helped to direct the group’s energy and focus, however, employing consistently high expectations supported students’ feelings of self-efficacy.
* Participants used a variety of resources to grow in their classroom management including learning from mentors, reading books and attending workshops, as well as experimentation. Consequences of their growth included enjoyment and experiencing fulfillment from participating in their students’ progress.

Recommended Reading and References

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