

# **Perceptions of Master's Graduates Regarding the Effects of the Master of Music in Music Education Program on P-12 Teaching Practice**



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# **Past Research and Conceptual Framework**

**Little to no research on effect of graduate education on program graduates AND/OR the students they teach**

**Dorfman and Lipscomb (2005):**

**“there is a cognitive division between research methods and classroom teaching” (p. 39).**

Strategies used to evaluate program outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2006)

**Surveys of graduates plus individual interviews (questions drawn from survey data collected)**

***“this explicit prompting—in conjunction with other data—allowed greater understanding of the relationships between program design decisions and student experiences” (p. 126)***

# Research Questions

- (a) After the completion of the MM degree how do graduates from the program at the University of Michigan discuss the connections between their teaching practices and their MM coursework?**
- b) What observable changes in P-12 musical achievement do they perceive that may be effects of graduate education?**

# Method

- **Phenomenological inquiry**
- **Patton (2002): “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?”**
- **“Phenomenon” = the master of music degree program experiences as well as the “relationship” between those experiences and P-12 teaching practice**
- **“People”= nine recent program graduates**

# Master of Music Degree Program

- **30 credit degree**
- **Core music education courses: research, psychology, curriculum, philosophy**
- **6 credits theory or musicology**
- **Academic year students: 2 semesters applied lessons, 2 semesters ensemble**
- **Summers only students: 12 credits “workshop” (e.g. conducting, Ghanaian drumming, technology, methodology certification)**
- **Thesis or final project**

# Participants

(All are pseudonyms)

Name	AY/SO	Thesis/Final Project	Level Taught
David	AY	Thesis	MS Band
Silvia	AY	Final Project	Elem General
Kara	AY	Thesis	Strings/Choral
Jordan	AY	Thesis	Elem General; MS/HS Choral
Sarah	SO	Thesis	MS Band
Allen	SO	Final Project	MS Band
Bill	SO	Thesis	MS/HS Band
Eugene	SO	Final Project	HS Band
Janice	SO	Thesis	Elem General

# **Data Collection Devices**

Initial online survey

Email journals

Individual interviews

# Analysis

- separate coding, compared coding
- member check
- attention to investigator expertise

**After the completion of the MM degree how do graduates from the program at the University of Michigan discuss the connections between their teaching practices and their MM coursework?**

“... [G]enerally, when it [classwork content]’s interesting to me, it’s going to somehow affect my students, but I can’t come across anything right off hand that’s an example” (Allen, interview).

“It was a very bi-polar existence” (Janice, email journal).

## ***Connection of specific course content to classroom practice***

### Research

“Just getting an understanding that there are people out there using research to hopefully improve what we do was a big thing for me” (Allen, interview).

### Psychology/Philosophy

“...has impacted me greatly. Today you could see the excitement in the classroom...” (Kara, email journal).

## *Undergraduate curriculum content review:*

“My objectives going into the program were actually to clean up on some of the stuff I maybe didn’t do so well or maybe didn’t catch on to as an undergrad...I really wanted it to be all the stuff I missed in undergrad: whether I didn’t understand it, or whether I just wasn’t paying attention” (Allen, interview).

“You get the feeling of being a student: ‘Oh, so this is how I feel, I wonder if my students feel like this if I talk too much on the podium’” (David, interview).

“My teaching has shifted more toward student-directed learning...which is a direct result of working with the professor as her assistant in General Music Methods” (Jordan, email journal).

## *Growth in the long term*

“As the semester has progressed, I do notice it [a change in teaching] seeping in a bit more” (Jordan, email journal).

“I had a hard time connecting the classes I had in my masters program to my day-to-day...it [masters degree] actually helped me develop a more questioning mind” (Janice, email journal).

## *Personal growth, academic growth, community, and connection*

“I think it’s very important to be away and part of another community. You grow as a person. You’re in another musical culture” (Kara, interview).

“... we felt very comfortable talking honestly about our successes and our struggles as teachers ... I think in some cases if we hadn’t been comfortable it might’ve limited disclosure” (Sarah, interview).

## *Thesis or Final Project: A Research-Oriented Mindset*

“The exam portions where I discussed both Heuristic inquiry and Nieto's study of what keeps teachers going have both encouraged me to keep considering more self-reflection and research in my own classroom” (Silvia, survey).

“As a result of doing thesis work on struggling underdeveloped fourth grade singers, I have built time into my teaching schedule for working one-on-one with students at my school who are not currently singing well. It...reinforced for me how important it is to intervene and assist these students” (Jordan, email journal).

“My thesis was action research and caused me to reflect a lot on my students’ practicing experiences...so that process has been ongoing since that first summer. And each year having done more study of it in the summer and more attempts to address it in the classroom, each year it’s changed...and I think my perspective on the research problem has changed as a result of interacting with my students on this problem of practicing” (Sarah, interview).

## *Identity as Teacher and Scholar*

“One of the questions I was trying to answer for myself in doing this program was would the academia route be something I would be interested in the future. For example, you know, would I be interested in doing a PhD?” (Silvia, interview).

“I sort of was encouraged to develop habits that just made it feel more normal to be writing often and to be developing presentations on a regular basis and so it was just the entire environment further, you know, further justified my feelings for wanting to pursue my PhD” (Janice, interview).

# What observable changes in P-12 musical achievement do participants perceive that may be effects of graduate education?

*Initial expectations that improvement in their teaching would lead to improvement in P-12 student learning:*

“It was just the thought that as I became a better teacher, that my students would improve. A student for so many years, the logical conclusion seemed to be that more school was going to make me a better teacher” (Sarah, interview).

*But it was hard to pinpoint specific examples of this:*

“It’s really hard to say in some ways, concretely: ‘well, this has affected my teaching practice.’ I didn’t find myself going back into the classroom...a new, totally changed teacher... but honestly I think that my ideas have broadened” (Silvia, interview).

*Improved musicianship in teacher =  
improved musicianship in students*

“My students sing ten times better than they did in my past school. And it’s not because they came in with more raw talent. It’s because I’m able” (Silvia, interview).

“I know that [students] seem more satisfied, and understand more...the feedback I’m able to give them is clearer” (Allen, interview).

## *Summary and Insights*

Connection is there, but hard to study.

Implications for program design:

- Undergraduate content
- Individual project
- Community

## *The Ultimate Question*

“The most difficult, and to many the most important question is how what teachers have learned ultimately influences what their pupils learn. Even if teacher education students are followed into their classrooms, there are many complexities in approaching this question, including the problem of linking what teachers have learned to what they later do in the classroom —and then linking what they do to what their students learn, accounting for the variability in what these pupils bring with them” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 131-132).