

## **DEVELOPING STRATEGIC THINKERS: THE KEY TO TRANSFORMING MUSIC EDUCATION**

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Most pre-service music teacher education programs employ an occupational model that ignores or de-emphasizes music education theory and focuses primarily on practice. Since music teachers don't learn music education theory, they engage in imitative practices based on assumptions they are ill-equipped to question rather than grounded in their own informed and developing theoretical understandings. Their assumptions go unquestioned and their efforts and thinking remain directed solely toward improving what they already do with no consideration of its appropriateness for, or effectiveness in, meeting society's needs. The end result is that music education has ossified and continues to reproduce an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century model while music, society, and education have all drastically changed.

Many scholars have addressed this disconnection between theory and practice in music education. In this paper I pick up where they have left off and address why music educators ignore and are disinterested in theory in the first place. To do this, I employ Organizational Theory as an analytical framework to illustrate how and why this is the case and I make suggestions for redressing it.

Organizational Theory outlines three widely accepted organizational levels: tactical, operational, and strategic.

- The *tactical* level deals with the short-term planning and the implementation of tactics (methods, strategies, etc).
- The *operational* level is focused on mid-term results and is responsible for developing the plans, procedures, and processes used at the tactical level.
- The *strategic* level deals with long-range planning and is comprehensive in scope. It considers a variety of factors that have symbiotic relationships with the plans being considered, questions existing assumptions and paradigms, attempts to comprehend the future environment, develops visions and strategies to accomplish them in order to meet future needs, and considers potential second and third order effects of plans.

My analysis indicates that music education functions primarily at the tactical level and illustrates how those operating at the tactical level of music education control the profession's agenda and direction. This reveals why music educators are disinterested in theory and why our profession fails to think and act strategically

I advocate that the only way to transform music education to be more responsive and relevant is to develop the strategic thinking abilities of K12 teachers. I define strategic thinking and apply it to music education, provide thoughts on developing strategic thinkers in general, and suggest curricular and in-service offerings that can help develop strategic thinking and leadership for the music education profession.