

## **DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR CHANGING PRACTICE IN MUSIC EDUCATION: A POLICY ANALYSIS FOR MUSIC TEACHER EDUCATION**

Ronald P. Kos, Jr.  
Boston University  
rkos@bu.edu

As American society has changed over time, the focus of the educational system has shifted. With those shifts, music education has evolved in many respects. Many music education scholars agree that despite recent changes, school music programs do not prepare students to engage musically in today's society. There have been numerous suggestions for improving school music through changes in pedagogy or content. Unfortunately, the type of change required for widespread adoption of new approaches to music education is difficult to achieve. A previous policy analysis recommended a two-fold approach to solving this problem.

One part of the solution is a New Advocacy that will alert teachers, administrators, parents, and communities of the need to adopt new approaches to the teaching and learning of music. The other part is the development of a system that will provide the necessary professional development to help teachers rethink their approaches, develop new skills, and successfully implement these changes in classroom. This second part of the solution is the focus of this paper.

### **Framework**

This paper takes the form of a policy analysis, defined as “an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems” (Dunn, 1981, p. 35). It is a useful approach for scholars and practitioners who want to influence what is happening in schools because a variety of social, economic, and political objectives can be achieved through policy (Morse & Struyk, 2006, p. 3).

I will be using Bardach's (2000) Eightfold Path to policy analysis in this paper. The steps in this approach are: 1) identify the problem, 2) gather some evidence, 3) identify alternatives, 4) establish criteria, 5) project outcomes, 6) confront tradeoffs, 7) make a decision, and 8) tell the story. I prefer Bardach's model for education policy research for a number of reasons. First, it is a comprehensive approach resulting in a detailed method, and is therefore likely to stand up to the scrutiny of peer review. Second, this approach is unique with its inclusion of evidence gathering as part of the process. Unlike public policy, in which clients often present analysts with alternatives to evaluate, it is common for scholars in music education policy to undertake theoretical work, rather than completing an analysis of predetermined alternatives for hire. The second step of the Eightfold Path generates the information needed to develop multiple policy alternatives. Finally, this model does not include the implementation or feedback process, which is unnecessary in theoretical work.

It is important to clarify how I am using policy in this paper. In previous work, I have understood policy to be both text and discourse (Kos, 2007). It is a manifestation of a society's beliefs about a problem. It constructs ways of thinking about problems. Policy includes both formal, legislated policies and less overt, though no less powerful, informal

constructs that guide us every day (Kos, In Press). Both *hard* and *soft* policies, as they are described by Jones (2009) will be considered as evidence and policy alternatives in this analysis.

### **Problem**

Bringing about significant change in music education will require teachers to develop new ways of thinking about music education. Many will need to rethink their understandings of music and its place in the schools and culture. Spillane and Zeuli (1999) noted the need for extensive professional development when teachers need to change epistemological assumptions. Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) found that change is more likely to take hold if teachers receive focused, ongoing, local-level professional development.

A systematic approach to professional development that reaches both pre- and in-service music teachers would have the potential to provide the necessary human capacity for change. It would be a long-term endeavor that would provide general knowledge that could be used in any context. Such a system would also function on a local level to allow for specific situations. Unfortunately, such an endeavor would be expensive, time consuming, and require coordination between teachers, school systems, and professional development providers.

This brings us to the problem that this analysis addresses. There is currently insufficient structural capacity for professional development that will encourage and sustain change in music education. The remainder of the paper will address this problem by presenting evidence, presenting and analyzing various alternatives, and making a recommendation for policy that will develop the needed structural capacity.

### **Evidence**

To make a policy recommendation, I need to know several things. First, what does the literature tell us about the characteristics of effective professional development? Second, what are the common types of professional development used by music teachers? Third, what are some models currently in place that have been proven to provide effective professional development? And, finally, how does policy drive the success of professional development?

#### **Characteristics of effective professional development**

Bauer (2007) noted that research on professional development in music education is limited. There are a few notable findings regarding the characteristics of effective professional development. Conway (2008) has noted that teachers find informal interactions to be the most powerful form of professional development. This is consistent with Bush's (2007) study, in which he surveyed teachers about their professional development experiences. Teachers in his study found informal discussions to be most beneficial, followed by summer or weekend workshops, then state conference presentations. Teachers indicated that the least beneficial form of professional development was district-sponsored opportunities. Interestingly, Bush did not look at graduate education as a form of professional development. We also know that teachers' professional development needs may change as they progress through their careers.

Although research in music education professional development is limited, research in general education is plentiful, and has examined many questions. What do teachers find to be important? Teachers place high value on informal, collaborative learning (Armour & Yelling, 2007). For learning and implementation of new ideas to be successful, it is important that teachers perceive a coherent approach to professional development (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Research has examined barriers and contributors to successful professional learning, finding that there are often technical, political, and cultural barriers to the implementation of new content and new practices, and that to overcome those barriers, administrative buy-in and support are necessary (Johnson, 2006). Planning and technical support are also important to promoting implementation (Penuel et al., 2007).

Finally, what works in professional development? A number of factors have been shown to support successful implementation. Lee (2007) studies mathematics teachers adopting new techniques that required to changes in their beliefs. Their implementation was successful with a series of knowledge building workshops, classroom implementation and application, and the support of a professional learning community. In a separate study of local systemic changes to mathematics instruction, Heck et al. (2008) found that professional development needed to be focused on content with a connection to practice, be extensive, and have a sustained duration. Johnson (2006) found that whole school, sustained, collaborative professional development contributed to student achievement. In a longitudinal study, he discovered that students' achievement was significantly better in a school where teachers participated in an extensive summer institute with ongoing, follow-up professional development sessions compared to students in a school with more traditional professional development. Steinbach et al. (2008) found that instructional coaching, mentorship, and collaborative learning all contribute to effective professional development.

Other studies have examined the usefulness of local-level coaching to supplement classroom or workshop-based professional development. Cantrell and Hughes (2008) found that such a model contributes to a teachers' sense of self-efficacy when implementing new practices. Neuman and Cunningham (2009) noted that teachers' practices showed significantly greater improvements when coursework and coaching were used together than when coursework was used alone.

In a summary of other literature, Richardson (2003) suggested that professional development should: be schoolwide, occur over an extended period with follow-up opportunities, foster agreement among teachers and administrators on goals and vision, acknowledge existing beliefs and practices, make use of an outside facilitator, and develop buy-in on the part of stakeholders. She also noted the importance of a supportive administration and access to funds.

Based on this review of characteristics of effective professional development, an effective model is likely to include several, if not all, of the following characteristics: 1) Focus on music content, with a direct connection to practices, 2) intensive workshops or institutes supplemented by ongoing local opportunities and in-class coaching, 3) include informal and collaborative elements, 4) recognize the teachers' pre-existing knowledge and beliefs while fostering the development of new beliefs and practices, 5) provide the flexibility to work in any local context, and 6) be supported – financially and conceptually – by district and school administration.

## **Current practices**

Barrett (2006, Barrett) has identified four main types of professional development in which music teachers currently engage: conferences, networks, graduate study, and partnership or residencies. To these I would add district- or school-wide initiatives and summer workshops. In this section, I will briefly describe these experiences, including some ideas about how they contribute to learning, but also the ways in which they are less than ideal.

### **Individual efforts**

State Music Education Association conferences and the workshops, concerts, and clinics they feature provide several benefits for music teachers, including socialization, validation of current practice, and inspiration. Unfortunately, they lack sustainability and context, both of which are important characteristics of professional development (Barrett, 2006). A percentage of these sessions often promote particular products or methods. Sessions are selected based on whether organizers believe that the topic, product, or clinician will be a good draw. Conway (2005) suggests that professional development opportunities should reflect the needs of the teacher, not the marketability of the product, yet the opposite seems to be true at many conference sessions.

Summer workshops are similar in nature to conference workshops, except that they add the aspect of intensity over a longer period. Teachers will typically attend workshops that will contribute to their content or, more often, pedagogical knowledge. As we will see, some successful models make use of summer workshops, but they are usually focused on district or disciplinary goals rather than on individual teachers' needs.

Many individuals choose to enroll in graduate courses and degree programs. These opportunities are sustained and concentrated (Barrett, 2006), but they tend to be theoretical, rather than practical. Where they are practical, they often lack connection to teachers' own context. Offerings may reflect the professional goals of teachers (conducting, philosophy, technology, applied lessons, etc.) but rarely reflect the needs of the specific schools and classrooms in which the teachers spend most of the year.

### **Large scale efforts**

Barrett (2006) describes networks of professional educators and professional development providers. These often take the form of cross-district collaboration that may include faculty from a nearby university. Such networks feature collaboration, they are focused, thoughtful, and have a disciplinary fit that is important to music teachers. Networks could play an important role in professional development working toward the implementation of large-scale reform.

Partnerships or residencies are commonly used in the visual arts or theater, but are not commonly seen in music programs. Residencies bring artists of various sorts into the schools to work on a larger project, usually with a fixed duration. They work with teachers and with students, but do not necessarily provide them with skills or knowledge that will carry over. Partnerships, perhaps between a community or professional organization and a school, can be a valuable resource for teachers. In both cases, there danger is a danger that a partnership or residency will become a replacement for the music program rather than a complement or supplement.

District-wide professional development initiatives have tended to focus on strategies that will meet district objectives. Often they focus on assessment, strategies for improving reading or math instruction, or diversity. Rarely do they have an arts focus, and music teachers often struggle to find a connection between those initiatives and what they need to improve their own knowledge and skills.

From this review of current practices in music professional development, it would seem that none fulfill a majority, much less all, of the characteristics that were identified in the review of literature. Therefore, none can stand alone in providing the types of professional development that will support sustainable change. They will have to be used in conjunction with one another, or with other delivery methods, to create a successful model.

### **Models that may support sustainable change**

To determine how to structure a model for music education, it is helpful to examine other models that have been successful. The process of obtaining National Board Certification includes professional development aspects. Robbins and Stein (2005) identify different types of professional development partnerships, including professional development schools. These and other large-scale models are described below, including a discussion of how these models meet the six characteristics of an effective model listed above.

#### **NBPTS Standards**

Changes in practice that come about through epistemological shifts in how teachers view teaching and learning of subject matter have been referred to as transformational learning. This type of learning requires deep reflection on one's experiences, beliefs, and practices. Standerfer (2008) studied the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification process and determined that it sometimes leads to transformational learning for teachers. Teachers in her study found the process of obtaining National Board certification to be a positive form of professional development.

The process of achieving National Board Certification focus on music, but the emphasis is on practice, not on content. The effort is largely individual, rather than collaborative, with the exception of the feedback from the individuals reviewing a teacher's materials. It does recognize teachers' pre-existing knowledge and does encourage them to reflect on how they could improve their teaching. The process is teacher specific and often is supported by schools, sometimes with higher pay for teachers who achieve certification.

#### **Professional Development Schools**

Professional Development Schools (PDS) are collaborations between university teacher education faculty, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers. The intent is for all members of the partnership to learn from one another. Teachers, students, and faculty share ideas with each other, reflect on their experiences, and plan together. Cohorts of students are typically assigned to a single school, where they observe and work with a variety of teachers. PDS are more common in general education than in music education, in part because there are too few music teachers in a single school to fully implement the model. Jones (2007) described the implementation of a PDS model at the University of the

Arts, and Conkling and Warren (1999) have described an adaptation of the model, which they call Professional Development Partnerships, at Eastman. Their research has indicated that PDS partnerships can help early-career music teachers with the socialization process.

Professional Development Schools can, if they partner preservice music teachers with in-service music teachers, focus on music content and music education practices. They typically are ongoing and include in-class coaching for the preservice teacher. There are both informal and collaborative elements, and consider both current and developing beliefs of all partners. Finally, they can be implemented at little or no additional costs to either partner.

### **Scope, Sequence, and Coordination**

Kimble, Yager, & Yager (2006) described an intensive professional development experience that the National Science Teachers Association developed when they wanted to incorporate more constructivist teaching strategies in science education. The model featured:

- a one week leadership conference for lead teachers, scientists, and staff
- three one-week summer workshops
- practice teaching with students during the summer
- a three day course in fall to discuss the summer trial
- two district level meetings to monitor implementation
- weekly building meetings
- a three day course in spring to share experiences and data
- end of year reports and the selection of leaders for the following year

Kimble et al. reported that through participation in the Scope, Sequence, and Coordination Program, science teachers became accustomed to change, and they remained critical of their abilities to stimulate optimal student learning throughout the process and after the project ended.

This particular model meets at least four of the six characteristics of effective professional development; it focus on music content and practices, includes intensive workshops with ongoing local opportunities and coaching, includes collaborative elements, and recognizes existing and developing beliefs. Flexibility would require that at east some of the training help teachers to determine the needs of their own communities. It is unknown whether such an endeavor would be supported at the school or district level for music teachers.

### **Collaborative Apprenticeship**

Glazer and Hannafin (2006) describe a model in which novice and experienced teachers are partnered in a Master/Apprentice relationship. The collaborative partnership progresses through four stages: introduction, developmental, proficient, and mastery. In the introduction phase, teacher leaders promote and model new practices while peer-teachers observe and participate in learning opportunities. As they progress through the phases, peer-teachers take on more of a participatory role while teacher-leaders begin to coach more. In the mastery phase, the peer-teachers become teacher leaders themselves. Glazer and Hannafin's work demonstrated that the reciprocal interactions in the context of

a supportive community of practice stimulated professional learning opportunities and overcome barriers to professional development.

This model does not include intensive workshops, but does have most of the other characteristics identified above. Unfortunately, it may not be sustainable, at least at the school level, for financial reasons. Music teachers are usually specialists and are often the only music teacher in the school. Having regular close contact in and out of the classroom would require additional staff, which may not be supported financially.

### **Influence of policy**

Policy makers believe that professional development is important for improving the quality of instruction and increasing student learning (Barrett, 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, in particular, stresses the importance of improving teacher quality through effective or high-quality professional development (Desimone, Smith, & Kristie, 2007).

Policy Attribute Theory is based on the premise that four attributes—authority, power, stability, and consistency—determine the strength of a policy (Desimone et al., 2007). Authority, which refers to the extent to which a policy is accepted and persuasive, and power, which is the ways in which a policy achieves its outcomes through rewards and sanction, are interrelated. Generally, authority is more important than power. Likewise, there are similarities between consistency (alignment with other policies and beliefs of implementers) and stability (how long policies or people remain in place). In a study of a policy requiring teachers to participate in professional development, Desimone et al. treated the four attributes as independent variables and participation in professional development as a dependent variable. They found that authority and stability played more of a role than power and consistency in moving teachers towards choosing more high quality professional development options, especially when the focus was on content or strategies and/or interactive learning. Power actually had the opposite effect, driving teachers away from challenging activities.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations arising from this analysis are twofold. The first is a professional development model, the second a policy solution. The model begins with a partnership between school districts and music teacher education programs at nearby colleges and universities. These partnerships reflect the professional development school model. The second aspect of the model is a coordination between leaders within the partnerships (a teacher, an administrator, and a university faculty member) and leaders among the stakeholders (music educators and teacher educators). This coordination allows for networking and consistency. Leaders would participate in intensive institutes each year, with regular school-year meetings for the partners at a regional level. Coaching by leaders would occur at the school level. State music education association workshops would ideally reflect the needs of teachers as determined by the stakeholders in this professional development model. This model represents a scaling up of other successful models. It would potentially provide the structural capacity for change, but the real issue is ultimately not what the structure should be, but how to ensure its creation.

Desimone et al. (2007) remind us of the importance of teacher buy-in in the professional development process. The development of this structure must be started by recognized and accepted leaders within the profession. At some point, regional leaders—including teacher educators, school administrators, and music teachers—will need to be identified. My recommendation is the establishment of a formal leadership cooperative to include elected members of MENC: The National Association for Music Education, The Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). This cooperative shall be tasked with determining the structure and coordinating the implementation of the professional development model. They will in turn identify regional leaders to facilitate professional development partnerships between teacher education programs and school districts and to coordinate professional development offerings. By adopting these recommendations, we might develop a system to provide the capacity to enact widespread reform in music education.

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