An Online Community of Interns: Examining the Music Student Teaching Seminar
in a Virtual Setting

Christopher M. Baumgartner, University of Oklahoma
Kimberly H. Councill, Bucknell University
Phillip Payne, Kansas State University
Ruth Gurgel, Kansas State University

Abstract

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) are integral as a network for engaging in regular interactions, sharing resources, and offering support. As online collegiate communities continue to expand, exploration of virtual courses and seminars becomes more critical. Fitzpatrick (2014) examined the use of blogs as a form of developing these communities of practice, finding that students were highly engaged in profound and lengthy responses to topics. Furthermore, she supported the findings of McLoughlin and Lee (2010) who suggested that videos and reflections (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) should be included in seminar-type settings. Specific to student teaching, it seems a virtual meeting space coupled with an online community of practice could be a meaningful approach to designing a professional learning community (PLC). Given the prominence of distance learning in higher education (Seaman et al., 2018) and music education (Bowman, 2014), as well as recent developments in distance/virtual mentoring (Harasim, 2000), an in-depth examination of a virtual approach to instructing the music student teaching seminar may lead to newly cultivated perspectives and practices in this crucial preservice educator course.

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to describe students' and instructors' experiences in a virtual music student teaching seminar. We sought to determine interns' perceptions of the virtual environment, instructors perceptions of teaching such a course, overall challenges and benefits, and comparisons to traditional "brick and mortar" settings. Music

student teachers ($N = 20$) completing their internship through a large Midwestern university served as the main participants in this study. Because we felt that immersion in the seminar community was imperative in establishing and maintaining rapport with the interns (Patton, 2015), the two instructors of the seminar course served as researcher-participants. The two lead researchers attended/observed all weekly, virtual seminar meetings ($N = 15$) across the 16-week internship. Students regularly shared videos, participated in class discussions, and reflected on the week's topic (e.g., management, musicality, assessment)—while receiving immediate feedback from peers and instructors verbally and through an interactive chat function on the virtual platform. Data collection included: three focus group interviews with students; two focus group interviews with the seminar instructors; observation notes from an on-campus professional development day; text chat from seminars; and select student assignments/reflective writings. Additional data were collected from participants' Facebook ® group (Fitzpatrick, 2014) managed by the course instructors. We will analyze transcripts, text chats, notes, and other written data using traditional qualitative methods of coding and combining codes into themes (Creswell, 2007).

Aligning with the Symposium theme of Cultivating Perspectives and Practices, our findings highlight the "common challenges" and "unique experiences" music teacher educators face in developing, instructing, and facilitating coursework and PLCs in a virtual space including the (a) convenience and challenges of virtual instruction, (b) positive impact of online chat platforms, (c) benefits of weekly seminars, and (d) curricular possibilities. Implications support all three goals of the Critical Examination of the Curriculum ASPA.

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

Select Quotations

Seminar Structure
Technology
- "I hate SWIVL with a burning passion." (Danny, FG 2 Chat)

- "Technology issues are what get me. As soon as there is an issue with a video, I become disengaged and do other things. BUT this is also true of in class, in person." (Sarah, FG 2 Chat)

- "As someone who doesn't speak a lot in physical classrooms, I think this platform gave me the confidence..to speak whenever I wanted." (PJ, FG 3)

Configuration
- "[I] would like to see smaller group meetings, possibly in the future, so that we can communicate out loud more...I struggle to stay engaged. (Jenny, FG 2 Chat)

- "I would have loved, I think if we could have met once a month, even though that's a drive." (Allie, FG 3)

- "Coming back to campus was amazing...we all got lunch together and just got to chat about our student teaching experience and we did some really fun stuff in-person...having a couple more, that would have been beneficial." (Bobby, FG 3)

- "...kind of mixed on whether or not I think that I would prefer it to be at the end of the week versus the beginning because then we could kind of reflect on that entire week. Whereas now I am trying to reflect on the past week. Although having it at the beginning means that I can maybe apply those things in this week of teaching now that I am thinking of it right away rather than sitting on it over the weekend and possibly forgetting. But then I could also, you know, sit on it over the weekend and apply it into some lesson plans. So it's a list of pros and cons…" (Betty, FG 1)

Content-Specific Seminar
- "I feel pretty lucky that we have this because other ed majors, they have like all of the ed majors in one seminar...that is pretty lucky for us that we get to have this one-on-one instructional time with not only our peers but our professors that are in charge of our student teaching." (Amber, FG 3)

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

Seminar Content

Lesson Planning
- "I just developed my own way of doing my own lesson plans." (Sarah, FG1)

- "...we're in a state of experimenting and trying to figure out what we want to do rather than following specific formats. I mean, those, those formats and templates do definitely help. Over the last week with my two CTs, I've experimented a lot with different formats of lesson plans, looked at what they do vs. what I used to do, or what I've had other teachers do, trying to figure out what really works...I know that's where I am, just trying to figure out what I want to do, how I wanna do it, how I want to lay things out." (John, FG 1)

Technology
- "I think if we were taught more just how to use technology in the classroom and then shown, 'Here's how you can apply it.'" (John, FG 2)

- "My CT, he just set up a Google Doc so that way we could share lesson plans and stuff. So I'm using that in my placement. And we've also had conversations with other teachers about how people in the professional world use Google all the time...I think that it might just be easier to use Google for stuff." (Amber, FG 2)

- "What some of the protocol is for when we share a screen, what do we need to click to make sure everything works right...just a little bit more instruction." (Bobby, FG 3)

Feedback to Peers (Quotes from Zoom Chat)
- "You just have to remind your students that you are different so some of your procedures or ways of teaching things will be a little different because you are not the same person as the other teachers." (Sam, Seminar 2)

- "What do you do about routines/procedures if your CT doesn't have many in place for beginning class/ warming up/ etc.?" (Amanda, Seminar 6)

- "Maybe break them up into groups? Then there isn't one kid that takes over the entire ensemble—each group would have to create something." Betty "Aww yes!!! a groove! a back beat!" (Wesley, Seminar 8)

- "Gerald, they are feeding off of your energy and facial expressions, and it is awesome to see! Great job!!" (Amanda, Seminar 9)

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

Purpose of the Seminar
MST Quotes
- "...to help us share our experiences with each other and our professors, and to bounce ideas off each other, because we are each going to experience some things now that our peers will later, so it's going to be really helpful to ask/hear about these things and think about them." (John, FG 1 Chat)

- "Get strategies and reflections to improve and make our student teaching more valuable/relatable to real life, and just generally get help and see our "mentors" which is a huge emotional and personal boost." (Danny, FG 2 Chat)

- "...to allow us to reflect on ourselves, our peers, and receive feedback on our teaching. It is meant to bolster us and helps us to improve and succeed, give us tools and strategies, and help us to be successful in navigating this semester and life after college, as well as continue to facilitate a supportive environment." (Megan, FG 3 Chat)

Instructor Quotes
Primary Purpose
- "Create a community of reflective practitioners" (Phil, FG2 Follow-up)

- "to provide students with a platform to collaborate on ideas, develop discussions that will shape their viewpoints on teaching and students, and continue learning theories, ideas, and strategies that will improve their teaching." (Ruth, FG 2 Follow-up)

- "Assist [MSTs] in analyzing their teaching and responding with effective adjustments for their students." (Ruth, FG 2 Follow-up)

Community
- Educational
  - "discussions they held about their shared experiences deepened their community as they began to respect each other's work and appreciate even their differences" (Ruth, FG 2 Follow-up)

  - "many students who did not hang around together during their time here were actively engaged in great educational conversations" (Phil, FG 2 Follow-up)

- Emotional
  - "I know that when they had a challenging day or week, it helped them to share their experiences with their friends, get encouragement, and feel that they were not alone." (Ruth, FR 2 Follow-up)

  - "The Facebook group was also very impactful in keeping the group sustained during the week and continual growth throughout the process." (Phil, FG 2 Follow-up)

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

References

Baumgartner, C. M., & Councill, K. H. (2019). Music student teachers' experiences in the

    student teaching seminar: An exploratory study. *Journal of Music Teacher*

    *Education.*Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1057083719867340

Bowman, J. (2014). *Online learning in music: Foundations, frameworks and practices.* New

    York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*

    (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2014). Blogging through the music student teaching experience: Developing

    virtual communities of practice. *Research Studies in Music Education, 36*(1), 91–105.

    doi:10.1177/1321103X13509350

Harasim, L. (2000). Shift happens: Online education as a new paradigm in learning. *Internet and*

    Higher Education, 3(1–2), 41–61.

McLoughlin, C., & Lee, M. J. W. (2010). Developing an online community to promote

    engagement and professional learning for pre-service teachers using social software tools.

    Journal of Cases on Information Technology, 12(1), 17–30.

Okraski, C. V., & Kissau, S. P. (2018). Impact of content-specific seminars on candidate edTPA

    preparation and performance. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*, 685–705.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research & evaluation methods (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

    SAGE.

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

Seaman, J. E., Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2018). Grade increase: Tracking distance education in the United States. *Babson Survey Research Group.* Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/publications/survey/grade-increase-2017

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (2nd ed.) (pp. 53–80). London, UK: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Baumgartner, C. M., Councill, K. H., Payne, P., & Gurgel, R. (2019, September). *An online community of interns: Examining the music student teaching seminar in a virtual setting.* Presentation at the biennial Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.