THE IDENTITIES OF MUSIC TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes some preliminary findings from the Teacher Identities in Music Education (TIME) project, which is investigating how the attitudes and identities of intending secondary school music teachers develop during the transition from music student or musician through postgraduate teacher education and into their first teaching post. It is also exploring how students on undergraduate teacher education courses might differ from those in university music departments and specialist music colleges in their attitudes toward, and preparedness for, teaching secondary school music as a career. Some preliminary findings are that students from all of these different kinds of institution rate their teaching self-efficacy as higher than their musical self-efficacy: and that although secondary postgraduate certificate in secondary education students in music have traditional 'classical' qualifications, they regard 'teaching skills' such as communication and time management as being just as important as specific musical skills. They also value music education for its social and extra-musical/personal benefits more than as a foundation for a professional musical career.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Musical identities and musical contexts

The concept of 'musical identities' has recently been introduced and elaborated by MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell (2002), and forms the theoretical background to this research. Hargreaves et al. (2002) make the distinction between 'music in identities', which refers to the ways in which people use music to express aspects of personal identity such as gender identity, national identity and youth identity: and 'identities in music', which refers to the ways in which individuals also construct identities *within* music, for instance, as a performer, teacher, listener or critic.

The importance of 'identities in music' vary considerably between different individuals: music is salient to a greater or a lesser extent in different people's lives, so that the 'musical self-concept' is far more a part of a professional musician's general self-concept, for example, than in that of a non-musician. Our interest here lies in the role of music educational institutions in the development of musical identities. The extent to which schoolchildren see themselves as 'musicians' has been found to depend strongly on situational and institutional factors such as whether or not they take instrumental lessons (Lamont, 2002), and these kind of self-perceptions can be just as important in their subsequent motivation to develop musical studies as their actual abilities (see O'Neill, 2002).

In England at least, there is a widespread view, and some evidence, of problems with school music, particularly at secondary level. A good deal of lower secondary school music is seen as unsuccessful, unimaginatively taught, and out of touch with pupils' interests, and this may contrast with music in the primary school. The view that there exists a 'problem of secondary school music' was given considerable impetus by a large-scale project carried out for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the Arts Council of England (Harland *et al*., 2000). This project drew on four different sources of qualitative and quantitative evidence about art, drama and music in secondary schools, including five school case studies, some of NFER's existing self-evaluation data from 152 schools, a survey of 2269 Year 11 pupils, and interviews with employers on the perceived values of the arts, although the data on music which is presented in the main report draws largely on quotations from the case studies. The report concludes that music is 'the most problematic and vulnerable art form' at GCSE *(General Certificate of Secondary Education)* level, and that the vast majority of GCSE pupils display an absence of 'enjoyment, relevance, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions' in music (Harland *et al*., 2000: 568).

This research brings together these two issues of identity and teaching quality by attempting to explain the putative problem of secondary school music in terms of the congruence between the musical identities of pupils and teachers, and focusses in particular on the latter. For pupils, two critical determinants of musical identity are likely to be contexts and genres. Many are likely to make a strong distinction between 'school music' and 'out of school music', and these are likely to be bound up with the distinction between 'serious' and 'popular' styles, even though the latter can now form an integral part of 'school music'. For music teachers, these issues of context and genre are also likely to be important in the construction of their own identities as their careers develop. Many will have been educated within the Western classical tradition, in which music-making is seen as the domain of the professional performing musician. Might this give rise to conflicting identities, namely between 'performing musician' and 'classroom music teacher'?

The Teacher Identities in Music Education (TIME) project is approaching this question by investigating how the attitudes and identities of intending secondary school music teachers develop during the transition from music student or musician through postgraduate teacher education and into their first teaching post. It is also exploring how students on undergraduate teacher education courses might differ from those in university music departments and specialist music colleges in their attitudes toward, and preparedness for, teaching secondary school music as a career. Data collection on the TIME project is currently under way, and this paper reports an interim view of the progress so far.

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1.2. Measuring self-efficacy in teaching and music

One of the central ways in which we hope to operationalise music teaching students' developing identities as teachers and as musicians is by assessing their self-efficacy in these two domains: we are concerned with participants' self-perceptions of their abilities as musicians and teachers, and aim to assess participants' levels of perceived self-efficacy in both these vocational domains.

After evaluating a range of pre-existing self-efficacy scales for musical and teaching activities, an instrument designed to measure so-called 'general' self-efficacy was adapted to form two distinct but comparable scales. The *Self-Efficacy Scale* (SES) (Sherer *et al*, 1982) has been used extensively by researchers working in many areas[1]. Of particular relevance to the present study was the work of Sinden (1999) who, after evaluating and rejecting several other self-efficacy measures, made extensive use of the SES in its original form in her investigation of musical performance anxiety.

Sherer and his colleagues were interested in the concept of *general self-efficacy,* in which an 'individuals' past experiences of success and failure in a variety of situations should result in a general set of expectations that the individual carries with them into new situations' (1982: 664). Focusing on the measurement of general self-efficacy in the areas of social skills and vocational competence, the SES is intended to assess (1) willingness to initiate behaviour, (2) willingness to expend effort in completing the behaviour, and (3) persistence in the face of adversity. The 23 statements that form the scale are divided into two subscales: the *General Self-Efficacy subscale* containing 17 items and the *Social Self-Efficacy subscale* containing six items. In common with other work that has used the SES to measure perceived competence in particular vocational domains (Woodruff and Cashman, 1993), only the General Self-Efficacy subscale is used in present study.

The role and significance of general self-efficacy has been the subject of debate amongst psychologists (Bandura, 1997). However, the SES was attractive to us for more practical reasons. Reflecting the theoretical motivations of its designers, the items that constitute the instrument are generic descriptions of situations and problems encountered in vocational activities. With only minor rewording where necessary, the statements were adapted so that they relate more specifically to the two vocations under study - music and teaching – without changing the underlying motivation. Support for the slight rewording of general statements comes from Barnes (2000), who adapted Gusky and Passaro's (1994) scale of teaching self-efficacy to increase its relevance to music teaching. In order to make the musical version of the scale relevant to a wide range of musicians, including those from non-traditional backgrounds, the statements were phrased so that they were equally applicable to those who play from musical notation as those who play 'by ear'. This enabled us to develop specially-constructed 'musical self-efficacy' and 'teaching self-efficacy' scales to be used alongside measures of self-esteem as primary instruments in the TIME project's investigation of the developing identities of music teaching students.

[1] The ISI Web of Science bibliographic database lists well over two hundred studies that have used this scale.

2. THE TIME PROJECT: METHODS AND DESIGN

As stated earlier, this paper is an interim progress report on work in progress, the full details of which will be reported in subsequent publications. The description that follows therefore represents a broad overview of the methods and design rather than a detailed account. The study has two main strands, namely the Longitudinal Questionnaire Study (LQS) and the Case Studies, and the LQS involves a short-term longitudinal follow-up of participants in Phases 1 and 2 of the project (see below).

2.1. Participants

An important aim of the project is to compare the developing identities of music teaching students from four different kinds of courses: namely Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students from University education departments (N = 74): Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students from a University education department (N = 8): undergraduate students in music conservatories (N = 49); and undergraduate students in University Music Departments (N = 16). The total initial sample size for Phase 1 of the LQS is N = 147. Institutions participating in the TIME project as a whole include University of Surrey Roehampton, University of London Institute of Education, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, City University, Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester Metropolitan University, Birmingham Conservatoire and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

2.2. Longitudinal Questionnaire Study (LQS)

In the LQS, students from undergraduate and postgraduate music teacher education courses, along with final-year undergraduate students from university music departments and music colleges are completing the *Musical Careers Questionnaire* (MCQ). This specially designed instrument gathers information on participants' musical background, attitudes towards careers in music and music teaching and views on their own developing skills in these two professions, as well as the special self-efficacy scales described earlier. Before use, the MCQ was piloted and reviewed by fourteen experienced musicians, music teachers and education researchers.

Participants on one-year postgraduate teacher education (PGCE) courses completed the MCQ just before graduation in June 2002. A second version of the questionnaire, being administered in spring 2003, will assess how the early months of professional experience of secondary school teaching might have affected their attitudes and development. Participants on a four-year undergraduate teacher education (BEd) course also completed the MCQ in June 2002, at the end of their third year. They will be asked to complete a second MCQ as they near graduation

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and contemplate their career options. MCQ participants from university departments and music colleges who progress into postgraduate teacher education will also be asked to complete a second MCQ with a view to establishing how adequately they believe their previous studies prepared them for secondary teaching.

Phase two of the longitudinal questionnaire study is currently under way, with the same four groups of participants completing an updated MCQ. Many questions are the same, enabling us to make comparisons with the data already collected. Others are new and have been included in response to trends emerging from the MCQ1 data and case studies (see below).

2.3. Case studies

Six NQTs (newly qualified teachers) who had taken part in Phase one of the LQS agreed to participate in detailed case studies and these formed the project's second strand of data collection. Three males and three females were chosen, representing a variety of musical and educational backgrounds. The types, locations and catchment areas of the schools in which they now teach were also deliberately diverse, including Essex, Greater Manchester, Hertfordshire, South East London, Staffordshire, and Surrey. The case studies were designed to explore the issues raised in the LQS in more depth. They also investigated the demands placed upon newly qualified music teachers and the extent to which the participants' own music education and postgraduate teacher education prepared them for the role.

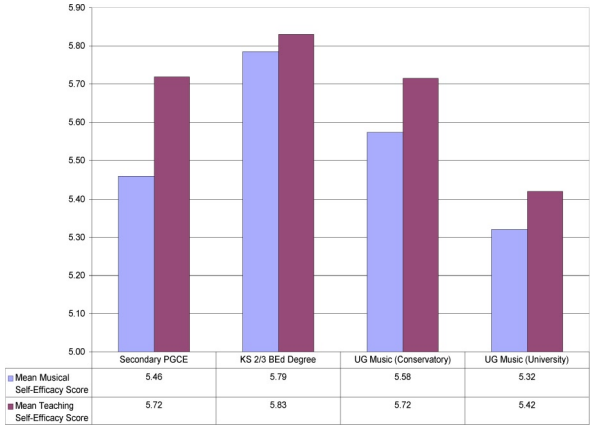
Each NQT was 'shadowed' for a school day and a detailed record kept of all their teaching, administrative and extra-curricular activities. Following the shadowing day, the participants were given ninety-minute semi-structured interviews in which they discussed the impact of their own musical and educational backgrounds on their teaching career. The interviews also covered initial experiences of the job, plans for career development and views on the purpose, status and philosophy of secondary school music education.

The case study results are currently being written up and analysed, and will provide a rich source of contextual data in which to situate the results of the longitudinal questionnaire study. The case studies will also provide an opportunity to work closely with the participants in developing classroom-based materials for music listening: these will subsequently be used to explore aspects of pupils' musical identities.

3. SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Only the Phase 1 data from the LQS is fully collected and analysed at the time of writing, and two preliminary results are reported here. The conference presentation of this preliminary report, however, will also be able to draw on the Phase 1- Phase 2 comparisons for all 4 student groups, as well as on the full case study data. We will look first at the comparative self-efficacy data of the 4 groups, given the direct relevance of this to teacher vs. musical identities, and also at the overall profile of the PGCE group (the largest single group) in LQS Phase 1.

Figure 1 shows the means of the musical and teaching self efficacy scale scores of the 4 student groups. The most noticeable feature of this is that teaching self-efficacy means are higher than the musical means for all four groups, which may be somewhat surprising. A reasonable prior hypothesis might have been that the conservatory and university music student groups should have higher musical than teaching means in relation to the education student groups, given the emphasis of their training: but this appears not to be the case. This may be because individuals tend to rate their self-efficacy in relation to their peers as a reference group: conservatory students, for example, are used to judging themselves against the highest levels of performance excellence, so that their musical self-efficacy scores may be low in relation to those of education students.



	Secondary PGCE	KS 2/3 BEd Degree	UG Music (Conservatory)	UG Music (University)
Mean Musical Self-Efficacy Score	5.46	5.79	5.58	5.32
Mean Teaching Self-Efficacy Score	5.72	5.83	5.72	5.42

Figure 1: Musical and teaching self efficacy means of the four student groups

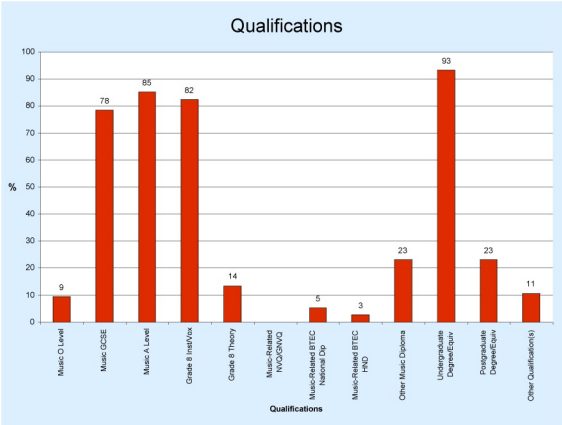


Figure 2: Qualifications of the PGCE sample

The analysis of the Phase 1 data also allows us to construct a fairly accurate profile of the secondary PGCE student, given the sample size of N = 74, which represents approximately one fifth of all such students in the UK. A full report will be forthcoming, and here we will select just three key features. The first relates to their qualifications: Figure 2 shows that in addition to an undergraduate degree (a prior qualification for the course), all students were very likely to possess GCSE Music (*a public*

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examination usually taken at age 16), Advanced Level Music (*a public examination usually taken at age 18),* and Associated Boards Grade 8 instrumental or vocal qualifications. They were very unlikely to have vocational qualifications. This confirms the view that the training of secondary music teachers is still that in the 'conservatory' tradition: there is little evidence of much influx from those from non-standard backgrounds such as from pop or jazz.

Given this first finding, the second is perhaps somewhat surprising: that when asked what they consider to be the most important skills for a music teacher to possess, these students' responses showed that they regarded 'teaching skills' such as 'ability to inspire and enthuse others'; 'good communication skills' and 'good planning/ time management skills' as being just as important as specific musical skills such as 'able to conduct/musically direct', 'knowledge of all musical styles', and 'adequate pianist'.

The third finding probably relates in some way to the second, and concerns the students' views of the possible aims of music education. When asked to rate a series of 12 statements about the possible aims of music education', these students were likely to value music education for its social and extra-musical/personal benefits rather than as a foundation for a professional musical career. For example, they rated 'music education should relate music to its social and cultural context' and 'music education should enhance the status of music in society' as being more important than 'music education should produce the performers/ musicians of the future'.

These are just preliminary and limited findings, but they clearly show that the musical identities of student music teachers are by no means predictable or obvious. The Phase 2 LQS results will enable us to say far more about the developing identities of music teachers, and the case studies will enable us to explore these in much greater depth.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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