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ABSTRACT

'Burnout' and praxis shock seem to be causing teachers to leave the profession early. Much research suggests that this is a reflection on the quality of teacher education programs. Interviews with teachers who were in their first four years in the secondary music classroom reveal how they view their pre-service preparation, and therefore provide an insight into how pre-service teacher education might be effectively reconceptualised. This paper explores the relationship between Zeichner and Liston's (1990) teacher education 'traditions' and early-career music teachers' perceptions of an 'ideal' teacher education course. Analyses of interviews with 15 early-career secondary classroom music teachers suggest the emergence of a common understanding regarding the design of effective music teacher education programs. Rather than representing any of Zeichner and Liston's four traditions in particular, early-career music teachers speak of a music teacher education approach that incorporates all of the traditions in an integrated way. This understanding of an 'ideal' teacher education course should be considered when designing or reconceptualising teacher education courses in order to provide improved opportunities for future music teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching occurring in schools can be directly attributed to the pre-service teacher preparation that teachers receive (Carter, Carre, & Bennett, 1993; Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Temmerman, 1997). If early-career teachers (those teachers in their first four years of teaching) do not have *realistic* expectations of teaching life, they may experience a 'confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a classroom teacher' which 'puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test' (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002: 105). The discrepancies between teachers' expectations of school life and the realities of teaching often contribute to what is known as 'praxis shock' (Mark, 1998). Praxis shock seems to be particularly evident in the high incidence of 'burnout' among music teachers (Kelly, 1999; Leong, 1996), which has been associated with music teachers leaving the profession early.

One way to address the praxis shock and 'burnout' among early-career music teachers is to explore ways to better prepare them for the workforce (Stokking, Leenders, De Jong & Van Tartwijk, 2003). Preparation for the teaching workforce takes place during pre-service teacher education, and as a result the effectiveness of teacher education programs in minimising praxis

shock and 'burnout' among music teachers needs to be explored. Previous research has shown that early-career music teachers in Queensland felt that their preparation left considerable room for improvement, particularly in the areas of pedagogical content knowledge and skills and professional knowledge and skills (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).

This study therefore focuses on early-career music teachers' perceptions regarding how they might best be prepared for teaching classroom music, and how they would design an 'ideal' teacher education course.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

By considering the needs of early-career music teachers, it is possible to create teacher education programs that become more learner centred (considering the capacities, interests and motivations of students), future-focused (considering the challenges and conditions students face following the completion of their formal education) and research based (considering the best knowledge and insights available about learners and the design and implementation of empowering learning experiences) (Spady, 2002).

A previous study (Ballantyne, 2004) indicated that Zeichner and Liston's (1990) teacher education traditions could provide a useful framework for exploring philosophical allegiances underlying reforms in teacher education. Zeichner and Liston's (1990) reform traditions (namely the academic, social efficiency, developmentalist and social reconstructionist) refer to the reform traditions of the twentieth century in America. Zeichner has since referred to these trends as 'traditions of practice' (1993) and, most recently, as 'approaches to reform' (2003) in an attempt to describe the different approaches to reform in teacher education over time, to clarify the theoretical and political assumptions underlying reforms (Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zeichner, 1993), and to argue for finding 'some common ground across these often warring camps' (Zeichner, 2003: 491). It has been argued (Ballantyne, 2004), that Zeichner and Liston's traditions (as they will be referred to in this article) represent four ways of viewing teacher education, and are therefore useful in examining teacher education reforms in Australia and particularly Queensland. Zeichner has recently written an article commenting on the past decade in American teacher education reform. In this, he identifies three traditions – renamed, and essentially the same as his initial traditions, although he doesn't mention the developmentalist tradition. It is necessary, when writing about teacher education in Australia, however, to include the developmentalist tradition, as it is still evident in teacher education programs in this country.

As such, this research explores how early-career music teachers perceive an 'ideal' teacher education course and uses reform traditions as a means of organising these data. Each of the four traditions proposed by Zeichner and Liston (1990) will be summarised briefly below.

The *Academic Tradition* focuses on the importance of disciplinary knowledge for pre-service teachers, gained through a classical liberal arts education combined with an apprenticeship in schools. In this tradition, teachers should be educated in their subject

matter at university, but should learn *how* to teach in the company of more experienced teachers once they get to the schools (a disciplinary and apprenticeship model).

The *Social Efficiency Tradition* focuses on the scientific study of teaching as the best basis for building a teacher education curriculum and many contemporary teacher education reforms reflect the social efficiency perspective, under the label 'research-based teacher education'. In this framework, the 'outcomes' of teacher education should be consistent with the realities of teaching. Since 1990, this approach (which is associated with the terms 'outcomes' and 'professional standards') has become increasingly evident in teacher education reforms (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001).

The *Developmentalist Tradition* asserts that the 'natural development of the learner provides the basics for determining what should be taught both to pupils in the public schools and to their teachers' (Zeichner & Liston, 1990: 9). This approach is also associated the idea that if a teacher education program is aligned with student teachers' developmental needs, it will guide them towards maturity as a teacher (Zeichner & Liston, 1990).

In the *Social Reconstructionist Tradition,* 'schooling and teacher education are crucial elements in a movement towards a more just society' (Zeichner & Liston, 1990: 12). This tradition encourages student teachers to take a critical look at the prevailing social and political orders that are associated with education, and aims to break, for example, the poverty cycle by preparing teachers to teach in low-income areas.

CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

Many teacher education courses in Australia have recently undergone reconceptualisation and restructuring (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2001; Grieshaber et al., 2000; Ramsey, 2000). As music teacher education in Australia typically occurs as part of a general teacher education course, it is automatically affected by any changes to the structure of teacher education courses.

As such, it has been argued (Ballantyne, 2001) that music teacher education be considered within the context of teacher education and that reform agendas in teacher education should be reviewed. This study therefore explores the teacher education reform traditions (Zeichner & Liston, 1990) with which early-career music teachers identify.

METHOD

A study was conducted into the effectiveness of music teacher education programs in Queensland, Australia. Results from the first stage of the study (a questionnaire administered to all early-career music teachers in Queensland) have been published (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004), and provide more detail on early-career music teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of teacher education programs in Queensland. The second stage of the study involved a series of interviews with fourteen early-career music teachers who studied in Queensland. These teachers had responded to the questionnaire seven months earlier.

The questions for the interviews arose from the analysis of the questionnaire data relating to the ideal focus for the design of a

teacher education course (not previously published). In this section of the questionnaire, early-career music teachers were asked to rank their preference for statements that represented each of Zeichner and Liston's four teacher education traditions. Frequencies suggested that early-career music teachers viewed the academic tradition as the most important (ranked first by 40.6 per cent of respondents), followed closely by the social efficiency tradition (ranked first by 37.5 per cent of respondents), the developmentalist tradition (ranked first by 20.3 per cent of respondents) and the social reconstructionist tradition (ranked first by only one respondent). This contrasted with the apparent consensus in teacher education reform literature (Cochran-Smith, 2002), which suggests a move towards the professionalisation of teachers, and therefore the dominance of the social efficiency tradition (Ballantyne, 2004). To further explore these choices, interviewees were asked to explain their reasons behind their preferences for an 'ideal' teacher education program (as indicated by their rankings of the traditions in the questionnaire), and to further elaborate on how they might best be prepared for teaching classroom music.

Interviews took place at the convenience of participants, across a wide variety of sites – most commonly at the school of the teacher (if in Metropolitan Brisbane), or by telephone interview (if interviewee lived outside Metropolitan Brisbane). All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed with participants' consent. Participants were asked to comment on:

- their ideal teacher education preparation; and
- the reasons behind their selection of teacher education tradition (from their questionnaire response).

The approach of semi-structured interviewing adopted for this study was a combination of Patton's (2002) *interview guide approach*, and his *standardised open-ended interview*. By combining these strategies, flexibility is possible where further probing becomes desirable, and certain subjects are able to be explored in greater depth at the interviewer's discretion (Patton, 2002). All interviewees were asked identical questions, but additional questions were also used to elaborate, probe and expand on particular topics. This flexibility ensured that important and salient topics were not excluded from the interview, and also provided enough structure to ensure comparability of responses.

Purposeful sampling (cases chosen because they are expected to elicit the most useful information) was used. Specifically, this study utilised *maximum variation sampling*, which 'searches for common patterns across great variation' (Glesne, 1999: 29). Interview respondents were selected for their willingness to participate in interviews (indicated in the questionnaire) and to represent varied teaching experiences, perceptions on the effectiveness of the course, and perceptions on the purpose of teacher education.

Interview data were analysed in light of the research questions and trends identified in the analysis of the questionnaire data, in that teachers were asked to describe their 'ideal' teacher education course and to explain the reasons behind their selection of teacher education tradition (from their questionnaire response).

These data were subjected to content analysis to identify themes, concepts and meaning (Burns, 2000) and the results shed light on the ways that early-career music teachers perceive an 'ideal' teacher education course, and how this relates to Zeichner and Liston's (1990) reform traditions.

As interviewees were themselves re-evaluating which tradition they felt most reflected their idea of an 'ideal' teacher education course, it is possible to conclude that the results are credible and trustworthy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Academic Tradition

An academic orientation reflects the idea that teacher education courses should focus on cultivating high levels of music skills and music knowledge in future teachers. Analysis of the interviews indicate that teachers who demonstrate an *academic* orientation towards teacher education curriculum (regardless of orientation identified as most important in the questionnaire), tend to perceive the role of music knowledge and skills in their teacher education in two different ways. One way of seeing the *academic tradition* is portrayed by Carolyn, a music teacher who had been teaching for four years:

Carolyn *I think that to become a music teacher, you have to do a music degree first ... [A competent teacher is] someone [who is on] top of music, both theoretically and practically ... I believe teaching should be ... more of an apprenticeship-type thing ... You [should] do your music degree, you do a little bit of theory, let's say six months of concentrated theoretical curriculum etc, etc. And then you go into the school environment, and maybe you have six months of [being] monitored by teachers ... you get to experience things, and have that guidance quite constantly, almost like a mentor type thing.*

Layla also found that the academic style of teacher education that she received was beneficial to her as a music teacher.

Layla *[I view myself as a] musician first, and then a music teacher, however, they are almost the same ... and that is why I did my degree at the conservatorium before I did the teaching degree. I had always planned to be a teacher and I thought that if I was a better performer I would be a better teacher, and it has worked out really well.*

This perception of an ideal teacher education course is very similar to the *academic tradition* described by Zeichner and Liston (1990), where the focus in university is predominantly on the mastery of subject matter closely followed by an apprenticeship model of teacher education, where teaching skills are developed in schools under the tutelage of an experienced teacher.

Others who identified with the *academic tradition* saw music knowledge and skills as inseparable from the knowledge and skills to teach music:

Andrew *The best music schools tend to be the ones who have teachers who are skilful and competent musicians, first and foremost, and educators … So it's music teaching skills, and knowledge. I do feel very strongly about that, that music teaching skills… go along with the knowledge of music, but the musical skill, if you haven't got that, then what happens to the twenty-five people in the class?*

Many teachers who perceived *music knowledge and skills* to be similar to music *teaching* knowledge and skills, found it difficult to choose between the *academic tradition* and the *social efficiency tradition*. This is seen when Rachel, although having chosen the social efficiency tradition in the questionnaire, found it difficult to articulate which tradition she actually preferred:

Rachel *I am torn between … music knowledge and competencies [required to teach].*

A reason for this may be that the social efficiency tradition is concerned primarily with providing future teachers with the skills and competencies that they will require for their working lives in schools. If teachers see these skills and competencies to be tied to music skills and competencies, then they may find it difficult to separate the two. The fundamental differences between these traditions lie in the generic (non-discipline specific) nature of the social efficiency tradition, and the content knowledge (discipline-specific) focus of the academic tradition.

Social efficiency tradition

As argued by Ballantyne (2004), the *social efficiency framework* is reflected in many of the current teacher education reforms in Australia, where the 'outcomes' or 'professional standards' in teacher education have been under consideration. In short, exponents of this tradition support the belief that teacher education courses should focus on providing future teachers with the skills and competencies that they will require for their working lives in schools. Analysis of the interviews suggests that music teachers see the social efficiency tradition in a discipline-specific way, and do not initially equate it with 'outcomes' or 'professional standards'. Instead, music teachers equate this curriculum orientation with the skills and knowledge to teach music (in much the same way that they see the *academic tradition*), and to deal with the professional skills required as music teachers:

Nancy *we need to be trained for what we're going to be faced in the classrooms … I guess I think that it's very important that you learn more, sort of activities and strategies that you can use in the music classroom and also what the education departments expect of you and what their documents are … So I think that you need to know all that educational stuff to be able to write an effective work program that's consistent with what you're expected to teach in the classroom.*

Amelia *[it is important for a teacher education course to concentrate on] developing the skills that we already have and the knowledge that we already have, but developing those things, to a point where we can then teach it. So it's not so much teaching us more stuff, it's teaching us the right stuff that we need to know, and know it solidly, so that we can teach it to our students.*

Therefore it seems that the differences between the preference for the *academic tradition* and the *social efficiency tradition* rest on the relative emphasis on *music knowledge and skills* and general teaching skills, although all respondents (regardless of tradition chosen as most important), listed *music knowledge and skills* to be important. In the analysis of teachers' justifications for their choices in the questionnaire, it became evident that the social efficiency tradition was seen to emphasise both *pedagogical content knowledge and skills* and *professional knowledge and skills.*

Developmentalist tradition

Respondents who chose the developmentalist tradition responded in favour of the statement in the questionnaire that *teacher education courses should focus on teaching future teachers about developmental needs of students, and how to use this knowledge to teach effectively in schools*. An example of an orientation that indicates a *developmentalist tradition* preference was articulated by Claire:

Claire *I think you need to understand the audience that you are catering to. If you don't understand that audience, then the information that you are trying to impart to them is not going to get through.*

Other respondents saw musical involvement as being linked inextricably to the emotional and intellectual development of students – a perception that was not mentioned in the tradition description provided by Zeichner and Liston (1990):

Layla *Any studies that have been done, I'm sure will support that the arts are a very strong part in developing a person.*

Louise *I think music … is very much a way of self expression and developing as a person because you can put so much into music and of yourself.*

The link made by teachers between the *developmentalist tradition* and music reflects the ongoing perception that teaching is inseparable from the discipline taught.

Social reconstructionist tradition

In the questionnaires, only one respondent chose the *social reconstructionist tradition* as the most important (this person was not available for interviewing). This tradition focuses on producing teachers with a socially just orientation towards their work, and the statement which reflected this in the questionnaire was *Teacher education courses should focus on how future teachers can use education to move towards a more socially just society*. A common

reason for this tradition receiving less preference was that it was seen by teachers to be implicit in the study of education, and perhaps not as obviously applied as the other traditions:

Shane *[the social efficiency tradition] was deliberately put last because ... I do think it is one that is already perhaps ... at the forefront of a general education of yourself ... people are already aware of that, whereas perhaps developmental needs of students, and the actual skills and competencies, how to deliver knowledge and music as a subject would all have to be addressed before you could talk about how to frame it in the society that you live.*

Carolyn *How future teachers could use teaching to move to a more socially just society. That's just a 'hoo ha' thing, and that's why I put it last... That's good, we need to be socially just and things like, but it's not going to help us everyday.*

One respondent did change her response to favour the social reconstructionist tradition, reportedly as a result of her recent experiences:

Kathleen *I'd have to say: being able to deal with the problems that society offered us [is most important to me]... in a school that doesn't deal with good children, the most important thing is to make them socially aware, and being able to function as a society, rather than content.*

This demonstrated the sometimes fluid nature of teachers' responses, but was really the only example of this in the interviews conducted.

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EDUCATION PHILOSOPHIES AND TRADITIONS – THE EMERGENCE OF A CONSISTENT UNDERSTANDING

Although teachers managed to justify their choice of tradition, they found difficulty in identifying one tradition as most important:

Rebekah *I don't really think I can say one is more important than the other ... it would be good if there was something that linked the social justice kind of stuff and the developmental needs to the music rather than seeing them as a general sort of thing.*

Layla *They're hard to number in order.*

Louise *I guess you can combine them in a way.*

This may be seen as an indicator of a wholistic perception of teacher education among music teachers. Indeed, following analysis of teachers' descriptions of their 'ideal' teacher education preparation, it appears that, regardless of the tradition chosen as most important, early-career music teachers' preferences for the teacher education traditions were framed within the

context of the *music classroom* and therefore did not fit neatly into any of the teacher education traditions. For example, although they may have identified the social efficiency tradition as most important, they may have described the importance of music knowledge and skills and the importance of sequential, developmental classes with equal passion. Consequently, despite the apparent diversity of preferences (as evidenced by the questionnaire responses), there emerged from the interviews a consistent understanding regarding the way in which effective music teacher education programs should be designed.

Further evidence of this consistent understanding of an 'ideal teacher education course' is the continued emphasis that participants placed on a 'contextualised' course:

Roy *I did think that so little of what they had taught me over those four years applied to what I was doing ... None of it was made music-specific, and I think when you're in the music classroom, there's a whole range of things that you need to consider ... If we were taught at university the things that we were taught, but they were put in a music context ... then that would solve a lot of those problems.*

Katherine *Perhaps [pre-service teacher education] does need to be brought back to [music teachers'] context, whether that is in the psych classes or in their particular pedagogy classes ...Because if [pre-service teachers] were young and inexperienced like me, they can't see the links quite so easily. They need to see those links in the context of their particular subject.*

This concept of a 'contextualised' course is particularly relevant when considering the teacher education traditions favoured by early-career music teachers. It seems that despite their stated preference for the academic, social efficiency or developmentalist model of teacher education, early-career music teachers continue to frame their responses within the context of teaching *music* in the classroom. This understanding of an 'ideal' teacher education courses is less focused on content knowledge than the academic tradition, more focused on content than the social efficiency tradition, incorporates the developmentalist tradition in a way that links music with development, and assumes the inclusion of the social reconstructionist tradition.

RECONCEPTUALISING TEACHER EDUCATION

Early-career music teachers' perceptions of an 'ideal' course are useful in designing teacher education courses to align with the needs of future music teachers (Yourn, 2000). It seems that a course which reflects early-career music teachers' desire for the integration of music and education components will incorporate all of the teacher education traditions. However, such a course would not be designed with individual subjects representing the separate traditions. Rather, the early-career music teachers

interviewed see an 'ideal' course as one that integrates all traditions simultaneously.

Although this study was conducted with music teachers in Queensland, the research findings presented here have important implications for teacher education beyond the original context of the study. By analysing early-career music teachers' comments, it becomes apparent that teachers' affinity with their subject area may have much to do with the way they conceptualise an 'ideal' teacher education course, and may also contribute to the ways that they are able to utilise the knowledge and skills developed in their teacher education preparation once in schools. The findings provide an empirical basis for the planning and development of pre-service music teacher education programs based on the needs and experiences of new graduates. Teacher education programs that address these needs will have a greater potential to minimise praxis shock and 'burnout' among early-career music teachers.

This paper highlights the need for more in-depth research into the ways that teachers' perceptions of their teacher education course may impact on their praxis shock; how teacher education courses should be developed so that they bridge the expectations of teaching with the realities faced by early-career teachers; and the link between discipline specialisation and perceptions of teacher education course effectiveness.

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