



Book Review

Constructing a Personal Orientation to Music Teaching

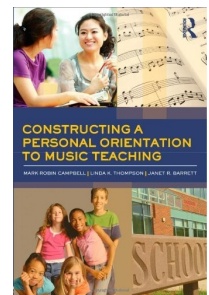
Mark R. Campbell, Linda K. Thompson
& Janet R. Barrett

Reviewed by Deborah V. Blair

Constructing A Personal Orientation to Music Teaching

Mark Robin Campbell, Linda K. Thompson, and Janet R. Barrett

New York: Routledge (2010)
195 pp, ISBN: 978-0-41587185-3



Deborah V. Blair is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. Prior to her appointment, Blair was a K-12 music teacher in public schools where she had extensive experience with learners with special needs in full inclusion settings as well as special classrooms. Her interest areas in both research and practice include the application of constructivist learning and teaching in all music learning settings, including music classrooms, classrooms for students with special needs, and in-service and pre-service teacher education.

Email: dvblair@oakland.edu

Constructing a Personal Orientation to Music Teaching is a collaboratively authored textbook by Campbell, Thompson, and Barrett, all of whom are respected leaders in the field of music education and music teacher preparation in the United States of America. Campbell is Associate Professor of Music Education at the Crane School of Music, State University of New York at Potsdam. Linda K. Thompson is Associate Professor at the Lee University School of Music in Cleveland, Tennessee. Janet R. Barrett is Associate Professor of Music Education at the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University.

Drawing upon their work as music teachers and music teacher educators, the authors guide readers

to consider their own approaches to teacher preparation¹. The authors share a “firmly held belief in the power and potential of exploring one’s individual and personal experiences in order to make sense of the present and ultimately to shape future experiences” (p. vii). As music educators move from student-learner to teacher-learner, they must re-examine their own learning experiences, consider the ways learners construct musical understanding in social contexts, and broaden their

¹ It should be noted that the descriptions of music classes and music teacher education throughout this book are drawn from a North American perspective with a model of teacher preparation unique to colleges and universities in the United States.

vision of learning in the music classroom. Professional inquiry is offered as a model for the development of a “professional identity of teacher-as-change-agent with a vision of the possible in music education” (p. vii).

This text begins with a “Starting the Journey: Developing a Personal View of Teaching and Learning.” Here, readers are encouraged to consider their own histories as they engage in a process of reflection on their own histories as music learners. The authors provide a range of activities (with sample narratives) for educators to use as they re-examine their prior and emerging ideas about what it means to be a music teacher. As future educators begin to realise the scope of curriculum and pedagogy, they may question their image of “music teacher” that may have been formed by their own “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975). In my own experience, many pre-service music teachers were unaware of the learners with special needs in their own music classrooms prior to university. Now working alongside teachers in local schools, the students with special needs included in the classroom present new challenges for novice teachers. As pre-service teachers consider the classroom experiences of all learners, these challenges confront their identity as future music teachers and of their vision of their future classrooms. Once leaders in their school music programs, they may now be more acutely aware of the wide ranges of abilities and challenges that their future students may bring to their classrooms.

Campbell, Thompson, and Barrett address the teacher-learner’s developing identity in chapters titled, “Learning to Teach: From Student to Teacher” and “Learning from Others: Understanding Teacher Career Development”. Here, they allow readers the space to draw upon their narrative histories as they move forward in their continuum of a professional identity. For example, the authors invite teacher-learners to engage in conversations with other teachers with suggestions provided for a productive interview. The authors also challenge readers to explicitly consider their concerns about teaching as well as their goals. The dynamic nature of articulating the construction of one’s own teacher identity fosters the learner’s ability to shape one’s identity in the process of becoming professionally aware of self and others in their classrooms.

In chapter four, the authors examine five orientations to teacher preparation. These include: 1) an academic orientation with teacher as scholar, 2) a technological orientation with teacher as technician and technical trainer, 3) a critical orientation with teachers as activist, 4) a practical orientation with teacher as craftsperson and

practitioner, and 5) a personal orientation with teacher as learner, collaborator, and change agent. The authors suggest that “learning to teach in a program with a personal orientation is viewed as a process of development or ‘becoming’” (p. 83). This type of program includes “reflection on past experiences and in present learning contexts, analysis of beliefs, understanding the roots of your assumptions about teaching, developing ‘teacher thinking,’ [and] fostering a sense of personal agency as a teacher” (p. 89). For music teachers and music therapists working with learners with special needs, these processes are especially important as the challenges experienced in these settings may overwhelm the novice teacher who otherwise may not have been encouraged to fully consider one’s role as teacher.

Campbell, Thompson, and Barrett nudge the teacher forward on the professional development continuum in the final two chapters. In “Searching for Horizons: Cultivating a Personal Orientation toward Change”, the teacher is invited to see one’s role as change agent, to re-envision school and learning, and to exercise one’s agency with the requisite clarity of purpose. As teachers come to know and effectively practice student-centered pedagogy in the music classroom, they may be empowered to interact with professional colleagues, parents, and students in ways that will reform school experience for their own students. In the closing chapter, “Methodologies for Exploring Teaching and Learning”, the authors describe qualitative research methodologies that teachers can use for their own onsite inquiries. In this way, teachers become change agents not only for others but for themselves as they continue to develop their professional identities. Campbell, Thompson, and Barrett draw upon Schwab’s (1983) commonplaces: learners, teachers, subject matter, and milieu (context) as fertile ground for the teacher-researcher’s (Kinchloe 2003) inquiry into their own teaching practices and into the learning experiences of their students. The suggested activities, questions, and models of inquiry and reflection serve as exemplars for the teacher-researcher and for sophisticated teacher professional development. The strategies provide avenues for teachers “to make increasingly acute discriminations, as related to increasingly wider connections, in contexts provided by culturally devised role expectations” (Reimer 2003: 204). While Reimer used this statement to define intelligence, I borrow it here to describe the ways that teacher-research can offer the teacher opportunities to be aware of and attend to acute discriminations and to make broader connections in one’s own teaching and learning environment.

The extensive connections to research (in field settings, interviews, and surveys) used by the authors strengthen the text and ground the reader regarding the integrity of theory and its application to practice. The sample narratives provide rich opportunities for transferability to one's own situation. The embedded activities enable music teacher educators and teacher-learners to think about their own identity within a continuum of professional content knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly 1995) connected to professional pedagogy that is not static but moves forward. As noted in the final chapters, this process is fostered as one gains practical expertise that is informed by others and by their own inquiry as teacher-researchers.

Finally, this text provides a window into the journey of teachers with the tool of narrative that serves to inform teacher-learners as they shape and re-shape their professional identity. The shift from focus on self to focus on learner is made explicit, thus allowing the teacher to consider the experience of the learner in the classroom (van Manen 1991). This, in particular, has important implications for the teacher who works with learners with special needs, whether it is in inclusive or special classrooms. As one considers the ways the authors' ideas may inform music teachers, one can, in almost every instance, insert the words "music teachers of children with special needs." The authors present a caring approach to the development of educators that is relevant and appropriate to all music learning settings.

Suggested citation:

Blair, D. (2011). Review of the book "Constructing a Personal Orientation to Music Teaching" by Mark R. Campbell, Linda K. Thompson & Janet R. Barrett. *Approaches: Music Therapy & Special Music Education*, 3(1), 40-42. Retrieved from <http://approaches.primarymusic.gr>

References

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Kinchloe, J. L. (2003). *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Reimer, B. (2003). *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision* (3rd Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Schwab, J. J. (1983). The practical 4: Something for curriculum professors to do. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 13(3), 239-265.
- van Manen, M. (1991). *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness*. London, Ontario (CA): The Athlouse Press.