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Content and Procedure Recall: Undergraduate Music Education Methods Perceived as Meaningful

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Abstract

Music Education coursework is provided with the obvious and necessary need for preservice teacher development. A critical attribute of teacher training is for students to identify aspects (lessons, activities) that they themselves value. Student receptivity to teaching efforts on their behalf is consequential. Effective use of time during the considerable coursework of undergraduate programs would seem to require university faculty to efficiently provide and emphasize experiences young teachers will value and recall as personally meaningful.

In this study, undergraduate music education majors (N=72) at a large, comprehensive university in the US were asked to describe memorable experiences in course work during and after semester long (approximately 16 week) methods classes in music education. Written, open responses were requested without providing extensive questioning or guidelines in order to gather the broadest and most honest possible replies.

Initial analysis of response data indicates virtually all participants described “positive” experiences, although a qualitative distinction was not requested. Analysis consisted of a) simple frequency count after identifying central focus of individual responses, b) categorical coding, and c) citation of examples from written open responses. Among the highest frequency responses were those researcher categorized as “activities” and “social,” with most students citing group work of a communal nature (movement, learning folk dance, drumming circles, etc.) and music creating experiences. Paired interpretive activities were specifically cited (“profound”), as were game-oriented methods. Other citations included class discussion and debates (learning community experiences). While methods with prerecorded music were rarely cited, generating in-class musical events seemed to be valued and was cited, despite the undergraduate courses sampled having no specific public performance concomitant expectations.

Responses from the current study imply that instilling confidence through positive, memorable participatory classroom experiences is one alternative to widely emphasized ensemble performance and studio outcomes. Previous research has examined undergraduate anxieties, suggesting many worries about insufficient knowledge and teaching difficulties are normal and will abate somewhat with experience in the field.