

Music Teacher Professional Development in Singapore: Mapping the Landscape

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

- To be effective and transformative, professional development (PD) initiatives need to be *responsive* to teachers' own motivations, needs, beliefs and preferences.
- It is vital to continue to provide Singapore music teachers, both music specialists and non-music specialists, with high-quality PD opportunities.
- PD providers and researchers need to explore new venues to engage music teachers (especially non-music specialists) in continuous learning.

BACKGROUND

In the past years, Singapore has put in place numerous professional development (PD) initiatives to raise the level of preparation of school music teachers. The ultimate aim of these initiatives has been to enhance the quality of students' musical learning, as music is regarded as one of the key focus areas in pursuing the goal of holistic education. The present project sought to contribute to the efforts of music-specific PD providers in Singapore. We brought to the fore the notion of 'responsive teacher professional development'. Our fundamental idea is that for PD to be effective and transformative, it needs to be designed in response to teachers' own motivations, needs, beliefs, and preferences (Bautista, Toh, & Wong, 2016).

FOCUS OF STUDY

This study focused on primary music teachers with different levels of specialization, from generalist teachers to music specialists. We obtained baseline data about their motivations, needs, beliefs, and preferences, their instructional approaches in the music classroom, and their needs and suggestions concerning further music-specific PD.

KEY FINDINGS

- Teachers with different levels of specialization in music education have different PD needs, motivations, beliefs, and preferences.
- Qualitative evidence suggests that the instructional approaches of music specialists tend to be more sophisticated than those of non-music specialists.
- Teachers regard peer-observation and modeling as effective venues to foster their PD. They suggested the creation of video-based learning resources featuring good teaching practices.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Implications for Practice

This project has provided information about the content and design features of the music-specific PD most valued by teachers. Our findings have therefore the potential to further improve existing PD initiatives.

Implications for Policy and Research

This project enriches the international PD literature with data focusing on music, a content area relatively unexplored in mainstream PD research, which has tended to focus on the “core” content areas (Bautista, Yau, & Wong, 2017).

Proposed Follow-up Activities

In collaboration with the Singapore Teacher Academy for the aRts (STAR) and Arts Education Branch (AEB), we are currently completing a development project (MAF 03/15 AB) based on the results of this study. Our goal is to design video-based learning resources that are responsive to the needs, motivations, beliefs, and preferences of Singapore music teachers.

PARTICIPANTS

Nationwide survey (quantitative): 286 teachers.
Classroom observations and individual interviews (qualitative): 10 teachers.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A nationwide survey study was conducted to investigate teachers’ needs, motivations, beliefs, and preferences. We then analysed the instructional approaches of a small subset of teachers while implementing a regular unit of instruction. Finally, through in-depth interviews, we investigated teachers’ views regarding how music-specific PD could better help them in improving specific aspects of their teaching.

REFERENCES

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