The Importance of Context, Reflection, Interaction, and Consequence in Rural Music Education Practice

Anita Prest
University of British Columbia

Citation: Prest, A. (2013). The importance of context, reflection, interaction, and consequence in rural music education practice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *28*(14), 1-13. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-14.pdf

In this paper, I argue that aesthetic music education philosophy, which undergirds many current music teacher education programs, textbooks, practices, and networks, fosters assumptions that are not applicable to rural settings. I outline and critique the main principles of this philosophy and demonstrate the ways in which music teachers' habits and assumptions, informed by aesthetic music education philosophy, might change due to doubts and reflection incurred by experiencing the structural and dynamic realities unique to rural music education practice. My viewpoint is derived from my personal experiences, conversations, and observations as a music educator in rural British Columbia over a sixteen-year period. I explore the themes common to Aristotle's conception of praxis, pragmatist philosophy, and praxial music education philosophy that might better inform British Columbian rural music teachers' practice and inquiry, and teacher education programs. I specify the ways in which rural music educators, by adopting a praxialist orientation, might consciously interact, deliberate, and make imposed structural and attitudinal boundaries more porous and less potent (Doll, 2006), thereby setting the stage for the ongoing transformation of their educational practice to better suit their rural context. Finally, I suggest that music teacher education curricula adopt a praxial music education orientation that will assist music teacher candidates to comprehend the notion of "enabling constraints," the importance of developing relationships and networks, and the vital role of community in rural education.

British Columbian one-year teacher education programs attempt to transform university music students who, for the most part, conceive themselves primarily as accomplished musicians, into capable secondary music educators, able to inspire and share their musical knowledge with secondary students. Some universities also offer music education courses as part of an undergraduate music degree, assisting students to determine early in their program if teaching music at the secondary level is truly their vocation.

All British Columbian universities with teacher education programs are located in communities of over 70,000 people; most are in the Greater Vancouver Area (population 2.5 million). Teacher education programs usually place secondary music education teacher candidates in urban[1] settings—in this paper, I use the terms urban and

Anita Prest is a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum & Pedagogy (Music Education) at the University of British Columbia, Canada. Correspondence regarding the article can be e-mailed to: anita_prest@yahoo.com. Special thanks to: Dr. William Doll, Dr. Donna Trueit and Dr. J. Scott Goble.
The Journal of Research in Rural Education is published by the Center on Rural Education and Communities, College of Education, Penn State University, 300 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802. ISSN 1551-0670.

[1] In the U.S., education researchers often distinguish between urban and suburban schools, also noting the socio-economic similarities between rural and urban schools. These observations, although valid in the U.S. context, are not suitable for this discussion for two reasons. In British Columbia (BC), as in the rest of Canada, the provincial Ministry of Education centrally disperses education funding through school districts to all public schools in the province based on a set per-student funding formula plus additional formulas targeted for specific needs and/or extra expenses (e.g., higher heating, bussing, and teacher salary costs in northern rural schools). Schools in metropolitan areas serve different socio-economic populations depending on their locations but receive the same funding amount per student regardless of the school districts in which they are situated. Thus, generally speaking, any disparity in resources in BC metropolitan area schools is not due to different local tax bases, but primarily to the amount of money individual school parent groups are able to fundraise for their respective school's priorities. Also, although some rural school students may share some similar economic realities as inner-city school students, their dissimilar geographic and social situations far outweigh their commonalities.

rural strictly in a geographical sense—for their practica so that supervisors connected to the university can assist and oversee student progress. Thus, music education teacher candidates are exposed to both an urban undergraduate and an urban teacher education experience. However, the job reality is such that, if a teacher education candidate specializing in secondary music wishes to obtain a full-time continuing contract upon graduation, that candidate might need to move outside the urban environment to secure a position. Over half of British Columbia's 4.5 million people live in the Vancouver area; another million live in smaller cities, dotted throughout the province, with populations between 70,000-250,000 people. The final million reside in communities that are often geographically distant from other centres and generally have fewer than 35,000 people[2]. Some of the posted continuing contract positions are located in these distant, smaller communities. Teacher candidates must decide whether to move to a small community with fewer resources, activities, and people to gain full employment and financial security, or pursue teacher-on-call possibilities in the urban environment, hoping that their diverse, but financially uncertain, experiences in several schools will eventually lead to more permanent employment.

Regardless of where they choose to pursue their career, it is possible for new teachers to gain insights into teaching and learning through their teaching experiences and ongoing self-reflective[3] practices, thereby becoming perceptive, caring, and effective teachers over time. Music teacher education programs in British Columbia encourage teacher candidates to engage in self-reflectivity to improve their teaching practice, wherever it may be. My purpose in this paper, however, is to illuminate the particular conditions of the rural[4] music educator teaching in a small school[5] in a small community and how these conditions might not reflect taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching music that are often discussed in teacher education programs and found in textbooks and other related literature. I suggest that when these assumptions do not fit their particular circumstance, music educators may pause to reconsider them and then adopt, either unconsciously or consciously, a praxial and pragmatist approach to music teaching and learning in order to create a vibrant music program in their rural communities. These particular conditions of rural music education practice are not based on findings of a formal study; rather, they are based solely on my personal experiences as a music educator in rural British Columbia over a period of 16 years, my informal observations of other rural music education practices and situations, and my casual conversations with fellow rural music educators over that time.

Elsewhere (Prest, in press) I have narrated the evolution of my teaching philosophy as I became aware of the ways in which existing music education frameworks (and the predominant music education philosophy that supported them) were ill suited for the rural setting. Concomitantly, I also awakened to the unique strengths of rural communities. This process took me some time because I had no prior knowledge of rural living. Over this 16-year period, my experiences teaching intermediate and secondary music in two rural communities, working as school district music coordinator, and volunteering as artistic director of a music education festival facilitated my apprehension that each rural community is distinctive socially, culturally, geographically, and historically. This realization awakened me to the idea that teachers require a more flexible way of thinking about music education in order for it to flourish in each setting and therefore must ask, "What is music education good for in my set of circumstances?" Although this question is useful in both metropolitan and rural settings, it is vital in rural communities because the infrastructure to support music education is inherently more fragile.

In this paper, I begin by critically examining aesthetic music education philosophy and then outline five assumptions stemming from this philosophy concerning teaching music that are often discussed in teacher education classes and music education textbooks. I will demonstrate the ways in which these assumptions often conflict with the structural and dynamic constraints of the small rural school reality, undervalue that reality, or completely ignore and make invisible that reality. Then, I will describe pragmatist philosophy as conceived by Dewey (1916, 1920, 1934) and demonstrate the ways in which rural music educators might envision their own practices differently. Next, I examine praxial music education philosophy and propose that it offers greater flexibility and, thus, is more suited to thinking about rural music education practice. I will demonstrate the themes common to pragmatism, Aristotle's conception of phronesis and praxis, and praxial music education philosophy. Through a pragmatist and praxial lens, I will suggest the ways in which rural music educators, fortified by the insights they gain while reflecting on the consequences of their actions, might consciously interact with others, deliberate, and enable some of the structural and attitudinal constraints existing in their circumstances

[2] BCStats: BC Development Region, Regional District, and Municipal Population Estimates 2006-2011. See: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Demography/PopulationEstimates.aspx.

[3] Gillespie (2007) defines self-reflection as "a temporary phenomenological experience in which self becomes an object to oneself" (p. 1). In his view, "Humans can be led to self-reflection by ruptures (problems with the subject-object relation), social feedback (where the other acts as a mirror), social conflict (in the struggle for recognition) and internal dialogues (through internalizing the perspective of the other on self)" (p. 23).

[4] For the purpose of this paper, I define rural as communities of fewer than 30,000 people, and my focus is on the many small, rural communities in BC, consisting of 1,000-5,000 people.

[5] Here I refer to secondary schools from grades eight through twelve with fewer than 300 students.

(Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Through working with others, they might initiate an ongoing transformation of their rural education practice to one that is more relevant to their circumstance. Finally, I suggest ways in which teacher education programs might better prepare music teacher candidates to teach in a rural setting.

A Critique of Aesthetic Music Education Philosophy

Music Education as Aesthetic Education (MEAE), a philosophy forwarded by Reimer (1970, 1989, 2003), has guided teacher music education and music education practice for over 40 years. Reimer (1970), in his earliest edition of *A Philosophy of Music Education*, used the Oxford English Dictionary definition of aesthetics to describe his understanding of the term: 1) a set of principles concerned with the nature of beauty especially in art, and 2) the branch of philosophy which deals with questions of beauty and artistic taste. This is in keeping with Kant's aesthetic theory, which emphasizes only mental engagement in its detachment and judgment of beauty (Kant, 1790/2007), unlike Aristotle's *aesthesis*, which is based on physical, emotional, and mental engagement in artistic practice (Aristotle, Politics, trans. 1878). Reimer (1970) agreed with Kantian Formalism "that the meaning and value of art are to be found in the aesthetic qualities of art works" (p. 24), but he also acknowledged music is sometimes used for non-artistic purposes. However, he considered non-artistic purposes minor, stating, "To translate the 'meaning of art' into non-artistic terms, whether cognitive or emotional, is to violate the meaningfulness of aesthetic experience" (p. 23). In his conception, also influenced by Susanne Langer (1968) and Leonard Meyer (1956), "the major function of art is to make objective, and therefore conceivable, the subjective realm of human responsiveness … music education is the education of human feeling" and its deepest value is to enrich "the quality of people's lives through enriching their insights into the nature of human feeling" (Reimer, 1970, p. 39). In Reimer's (1970) conception at that time, music education had two purposes: to train a minority of students who are gifted musically via performance courses and experiences, and to enrich and elevate "the masses" through exposure to the superior construction of classical music and to Western European concepts of "good" music by providing listening experiences.

In the second edition of his work published 19 years later, Reimer (1989) articulated that he had not changed his ideas, and again prioritized music's objective and intrinsic values, while minimizing the importance of its extrinsic, external values. He reiterated, "The essential nature and value of music education are determined by the nature and value of the art of music" (p. 1). Again, he stated that art has a value in and of itself and is not dependent on the society in which it is created to give it value (p. 7). It is important to note that in this edition, Reimer (1989) acknowledged the multiethnic nature of many communities and stated teachers should incorporate music of non-European origin into their curricula. But, he declared, "each piece, no matter its cultural origin, should be studied and experienced for its artistic power including but transcending any specific cultural references" (p. 145), emphasizing traditional music listening appreciation classes for the majority of students.

Critical sociologists have critiqued aesthetic theory, demonstrating how cultural tastes that focus on the disinterested pleasure of formal artistic structures are acquired only through lengthy, specialized education, and thus, are markers of class distinction rather than determinants of social mobility (Bourdieu, 1984). Although Reimer (1970, 1989) was not an Aesthetic Formalist because he acknowledged the partial role of context, he agreed with much of Formalism's premise. Because of this, one can argue that aesthetic music education philosophy is undemocratic, and, by and through its emphasis on the art work itself, stresses music as a consumable product, separate from its environment and distanced from people, except in their role as consumers of "emotional expression."

By 2003, Reimer, influenced by postmodernism, work in the cognitive sciences, and discussion in the field of aesthetic theory, had revised his aesthetic music education philosophy. He broadened his definition of aesthetic, equating it with philosophy of art, a much more comprehensive term (p. 6). Reimer (2003) also welcomed "a substantial exploration of the connections of music and the arts to the larger world in which they reside" (p. 62), but then contradictorily, suggested this could be accomplished through national standards he had helped create. While on one hand he now acknowledged the significance of music's different cultural roots, he still resisted the independent meanings various cultures (or communities) ascribe to music. In fact, in his description of the Kaluli—a people of New Guinea whose relationship with the natural sounds of the forest in which they live is more fully explored in Steven Feld's (1982) *Sound and Sentiment*—Reimer (2003) did not acknowledge that the Kaluli's very conception of music is incommensurable to our Western understanding. The Kaluli have no word for music and the "music" they "perform" is not music as we apprehend it, but an imitation and invocation of the birds in their environment, birds that, they believe, are their ancestors. As we shall see, a philosophical framework of music education that ignores the values and meanings ascribed to music by the people who create it may run the risk of constraining music education practice

Table 1

Summary of Aesthetic Music Education Philosophy as Conceived by Reimer (1970, 1989, 2003)

Philosophical Concept	MEAE Conception
1. Nature of knowledge	Received wisdom from experts; antecedent
2. Nature of music	Art as object; music as works
3. Value of music	Intrinsic to the music; universal to all music
4. Purpose of music education	Development of connoisseurship; insights into nature of feeling

to the point that it is shallow and possibly irrelevant. The basic conceptions of MEAE are listed in Table 1.

Aesthetic conceptions of music education have informed several assumptions inherent in many music teacher education programs and the practices of music educator associations. In the next section, I demonstrate the ways in which these assumptions break down in rural contexts.

Structural and Dynamic Assumptions and Rural School Realities

Assumption #1: Exclusivity Fosters a Music Program's Success

Most secondary schools have a sizable population; in schools with populations between 1000-2000 students, music teachers need only 15% of students to register for music performance courses to have a vibrant and varied performance program (Hoffer, 2001). The majority of these students will be academically oriented, have good practice habits, and receive moral and financial support from their parent(s) (Holmes, 1997; Kearns, 2011).

Small rural school reality: Inclusivity fosters a music program's success. Secondary schools with fewer than 500 students have far more scheduling conflicts than larger high schools (Miles & Blocher, 1996). In small secondary schools with school populations of between 200-300 students (40 to 60 students per grade), 50% of all grade eight students must join the Music 8 class (Concert Band, Guitar, etc.) for that course to run, because only one other grade eight elective course occurs in the same block and both classes must be roughly the same size for academic purposes (presently, classes are capped at 30 students). It may be possible to schedule a cross-graded music class, but scheduling conflicts increase exponentially with multi-level classes in small schools, owing to the fact that schools offer some academic courses only once a year and these may conflict with the music class. Additionally, if not enough students sign up for the Music 8 class one year, the chances that they will sign up for more advanced music classes in following years diminish. Another level of complexity occurs when linear courses like instrumental music and physical education classes (requiring consistent, long term development and retention of kinesthetic skills) are juxtaposed against semestered courses, increasing the potential for course conflict. Finally, although it is possible to schedule linear music courses out of the timetable, many rural students cannot participate in these courses because they rely on school buses operating on a set schedule for transportation to and from school (often up to an hour each way).

In a small rural school setting, if enough students do sign up for a music course for it to run, not all the students will be academically driven; they may be motivated to play music only for social reasons, they may be passionate about music making but initially struggle with cognitive concepts or, if they are alternate program students or home schoolers for their other subjects, they may feel uncomfortable with some of their fellow classmates. Also, some students pick music class by default; they are indifferent to music, but are even less interested in the alternate elective. These students will not be driven to practice, either by passion or peer pressure, and their parents' support may be ambiguous or non-existent. The teacher may have encouraged enough students to register for music class for it to exist, but then she must kindle enough passion, teamwork, cognitive understanding, and responsibility to create a music ensemble that performs at the level deemed acceptable by both curriculum and professional standards, a greater challenge than with a more homogenous group.

Assumption #2: Music Festival Standards are Objective Determinants of Success

The adjudicated music festival (usually organized by school districts, universities, Kiwanis, or private companies) is a cornerstone of secondary music education programs (Kearns, 2011; Walker, 1998). Teachers organize repertoire, learning outcomes, concerts, fundraising, and trips around

festival participation. Festivals work well for school ensembles of all sizes because groups do not compete with each other, only with a standard. The average instrumental ensemble consists of 62 players; an ensemble is considered small if it has 38 students (Hoffer, 2001). If students "get the right notes, on time, and with the correct dynamics and phrasing"—in other words, if they fulfill the criteria of the standards indicated on the festival performance rubric—they will get a high mark. Music festival standards are objective and fair (Gold, Silver, Bronze or the equivalent), and results over time determine both the teacher's and the ensemble's reputation (Maltas, 2004). All students and ensembles should be able to achieve the same results if they are instructed properly.

Small rural school reality: Music festival standards disregard foundational differences. Standardized testing and standards in general ignore context. At least two researchers argue that socio-economic factors are one of the variables that can affect standardized test results (Olmeda, 1981; Sammons, 1995). Schools in locations with low socio-economic factors must address these factors first to the best of their ability (e.g., school breakfast programs) before comprehensive learning can occur. These socio-economic factors exist in inner city as well as some, but not all, rural schools in British Columbia. However, small rural schools in general differ from these metropolitan counterparts in that they are not surrounded by music resources like: music stores, opera company and symphony orchestra educational programs, open air festivals, free concerts, live music role models who play a variety of genres, and musician/educators who can be hired as clinicians. Thus, even though those small rural schools in low socio-economic settings may offer the same meal programs offered in inner-city schools to compensate for some of the socio-economic barriers that exist for their students, they cannot compensate for the geographic barriers of the rural setting (Soja, 2010).

Also, although recent technological and internet tools have reduced geographic barriers and enabled students to access more information, music, and music education programs (Kearns, 2011; Mark, 1996), they are not a panacea for rural music education challenges for two reasons. First, many parts of rural British Columbia do not even have broadband internet and, for those that do, the psychological geographical distance to urban cultural opportunities is reduced but not eliminated. Second, students often believe that the images, role models, and practices they experience via technology occur only "out there" in the urban setting. In their eyes, unless local role models engage in these practices, those practices cannot exist in the students' own rural environment. In other words, although there are many websites that can teach students the rudiments of singing or playing an instrument, there may be a gap between the knowledge students acquire via technology and their belief that this knowledge is useful, relevant, acceptable, or even possible in their community (that has not, in the students' eyes, acknowledged, in some way, that that knowledge even exists). This gap may result in a student quickly abandoning practicing the musical knowledge acquired in isolation through technology.

Maltas (2004) found that rural music teachers expressed concern that music festival adjudicators using traditional "objective" standards do not compensate for factors like geographic isolation or low socio-economic background, thereby discouraging and marginalizing rural music students. In fact, Allsup (2010) states, "It can be debated … that the contest and competition tradition that makes up a large and established aspect of North American music education is an apt example of hegemonic practice" (p. 219).

However, a few festivals (e.g., Lionel Hampton Hampton Jazz Festival in Moscow, Idaho) do compensate for size, by organizing schools according to population - similar to the AAAA, AAA, AA, A, and B school sport competition designations - so that "small school" bands do not compete against bands from larger schools. This is a more equitable structure, but even the smallest "B" category is for secondary schools with school populations of roughly eighty students per grade.

Assumption #3: Rural Postings are Less Desirable Than Urban Postings

Rural music education jobs help new teachers gain the experience necessary to qualify for an urban job in two or three years. Many teachers and adjudicators from universities consider these rural positions temporary and simply stepping-stones to more desirable employment in a more desirable urban setting (Maltas, 2004).

Small rural school reality: Rural postings may be very attractive. Those new teachers who previously have not lived in a rural setting often experience a profound shift in their habits as they acclimate to a setting that might foster neighborliness rather than anonymity, be situated far from loved ones, and/or have fewer readily accessible goods and services. Some teachers are "constantly on the lookout for their chance to work in urban and suburban schools after paying their dues in rural schools" (Theobald & Wood, 2010, pp. 31- 32) and do not retain rural teaching positions for lifestyle reasons, while others, experiencing job satisfaction, find local ways to fulfill their personal needs. They might choose to live in slightly larger communities (if they exist) within driving distance of the rural school where they are employed so that they have more access to goods and services, or they may find a home in the rural community where they are employed because of the unique amenities that that specific community offers (outdoor activities, affordable lifestyle, etc.).

Thus, it is very possible for teachers to have a rewarding career as a rural music educator if their employment and personal circumstances are favorable.

Assumption #4: Multicultural Education is Achieved Through Curriculum Content

British Columbia music curricula, repertoire, and instructional strategies impart western European musical and social values, but also exemplify cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism because they encourage the performance of music from around the world. For example, choirs that sing Ghanian lullabies, First Nations welcome songs, and Jewish holiday songs reflect inclusive musical practice. Music is conceived as "art" and as a distinct "product" throughout the world, not only in Western Europe, so it is important to play and sing these pieces "including but transcending any specific cultural reference" (Reimer, 1989, p. 145).

Small rural school reality: Multicultural education is achieved through curriculum content, ethno-pedagogy, and awareness of First Nations and other cultural ways of knowing. Many, but not all, small rural British Columbian communities are located near or in First Nations[6] reserves and local schools may have a high percentage of First Nations students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2010). First Nations cultural practices (including music and dance) vary from region to region[7] and are woven into the fabric of community living, rather than musical works that can be compartmentalized and taught out of context (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). Songs are passed down orally and are usually owned by families or houses. Different songs are for different purposes and must be sung with the correct intention (Boyea, 1999). Cultural practice, epistemology, and pedagogy are intertwined concepts, so teachers wishing to integrate First Nations musical practices into their classrooms must first build relationships with First Nations Elders from their community who may be willing to share cultural knowledge with students in the school, thereby helping to decolonize[8] and indigenize[9] the school system (Faircloth, 2009; Greenwood, 2009). These relationships are central to knowledge and take time to develop (Agbo, 2007; Haig-Brown, 2010; Nakata, 2002). Thus it is inappropriate to transcribe a First Nations song and to play it out of context without cultural understanding of its purpose, meaning, or intention, or without express permission from the specific First Nation community or family to whom it belongs. It is possible that songs in music texts from other cultural traditions (e.g., Métis, Mennonite) have also been distorted because the music "product" (song) has been divorced from its environment and intention. Thus, true inclusiveness in music education implies not just performing the music of various cultures, but also considering the cultural reference points that inform the music making.

Assumption #5: Professional Development is Readily Accessible

Many secondary schools have two or three music teachers, allowing teachers to collaborate with and support each other. Music teachers can also access professional development opportunities through their school district, local conferences, knowledgeable colleagues in different schools, and university programs. They can emulate the strategies of successful music programs in nearby schools with similar student populations and demographics.

Small rural school reality: Professional development is not readily accessible. The rural secondary music teacher is often the only school music teacher and might also be the only person with formal music education in the community. The closest school music teacher may be 150 km/100 miles away in the nearest small community, making collaboration difficult. This "nearby" teacher may or may not have either answers to music-related questions or knowledge of resources, depending on his/her musical expertise (classical, jazz, etc.), and instrument of choice (piano, saxophone, violin, etc.). Until rural school music teachers build a network of trusted and supportive colleagues, they may only be able to access music teachers from the nearest city for consultation on professional development days (Maltas, 2004). These teachers, however, may not understand the rural context. The rural music

[6] Canada's Aboriginal population includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Eleven percent of all BC students selfidentify as Aboriginal. Two out of every seven schools have First Nations populations of more than 20% (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2010).

[7] There are over 200 First Nations in British Columbia, belonging to 30 language groups (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006).

[8] Greenwood (2009) defines colonization as "a) the historical practice from the colonial era through the present of dominating other people's territory and other people's bodies and minds for the production of privilege maintained by military, political, and economic power, and; b) other assimilative cultural patterns (e.g., schooling or consumerism) that over-determine or restrict possibilities for people and places." (p.1). Decolonization is the act of actively resisting these practices and patterns through first identifying them and then questioning their legitimacy. With regards to music education, Decolonization requires a critical examination of music education curricula and pedagogy to determine the ways in which they may erase or enclose" the musical practices of non-Western cultures.

[9] Wildcat (2001), a Native American, defines indigenizing as "… the act of making our educational philosophy, pedagogy, and system our own, making the effort to explicitly explore ways of knowing and systems of knowledge that have been actively repressed for five centuries" (p. vii). In music education, this means making room for Aboriginal understandings, expressions, transference, and creation of musical practices.

Table 2

Assumptions Informed by MEAE vs. Small Rural School Reality

Issue	Inaccurate Assumptions	Small Rural School Reality
1. Percentage of student population involved in music performance	A small % of students are required to maintain a music performance program. They are academic, dedicated, and supported by parents.	A large % of students are required to maintain a music performance program. Not all students are academic, dedicated, and supported. Structural issues.
2. Adjudicated Music Festivals	Standards are objective and fair	Standards do not take into account contextual (including geographic) factors
3. Employment	Rural positions are stepping stones to metropolitan employment	Rural positions hold the potential for fulfilling employment
4. Conception of Music	Music as Object	Aboriginal (and other) conceptions of music
5. Professional Development	Available to all teachers	Often must come from nontraditional sources

teacher may need to look elsewhere for support. The aforementioned five inaccurate assumptions, which break down when applied to rural settings, are outlined in Table 2.

Aesthetic Music Education Philosophy in Rural Music Teacher Practice

Despite Reimer's (1970, 1989, 2003) revisioning of his aesthetic music education philosophy over many years, his main tenet, that music's value is intrinsic and universal and that all extrinsic values are strictly utilitarian, remains central. Thus, from an aesthetic perspective, rural music educators, faced with structural and dynamic constraints, might feel conflicted asking the question, "What is music education good for in my set of circumstances?" because music's only value lies within its nature and is not based on the value given it by the community. From this perspective, teachers might not know how to consider the ways they might address First Nation's and other peoples' concerns about colonization of cultural practices, whether to attend festivals where adjudicators use standards that do not take context into account, or how best to create music courses that resonate with students, reflecting musical values important to them and the community in which they live.

New Directions

Rural music teachers who encounter challenges, including the need to have a high percentage of students sign up for music classes for those classes to exist, possible low socio-economic factors, standardized festivals that do not take context into account, multicultural music curriculum that appropriates First Nations musical practice, plus geographic and psychological isolation, quickly realize that the rural reality does not fit the urban secondary music experience they encountered either as a teacher candidate or as a teenager. Through intense self-reflection, rural music teachers either find new ways to think about their teaching practice or they move back to a larger community where the teaching challenges are at least more familiar. Those who choose to stay eventually discover that what works in their setting depends on the unique individuals and circumstances of that setting. Through building relationships that radiate out into the community, teachers may, over time, transform the curricular, pedagogic, and epistemological aspects of their music education practice.

However, in order to effect this transformation, rural music teachers may also need to reassess conceptually what they apprehend to be the core values of music and music education. I propose that pragmatism, a philosophy that acknowledges and validates the concepts of doubt, self-reflection, and change, might best support and inform rural music teachers through this potentially difficult inquiry.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that interprets ideas or concepts in terms of their effects (Goble, 2005). It recognizes that all knowledge is partial (fallibilism) and contextual. Accordingly, each society has its own truths that are arrived at by consensus; these truths,

or successful beliefs, are habits acquired by experience. Knowledge and habit interact. In fact, in keeping with the pragmatic maxim that emphasizes unity, knowledge is experience itself in one of its manifestations. Moreover, "the function of knowledge is to make one experience freely available in other experiences" (Dewey, 1916, p. 340). A society's knowledge (cultural habits, creation stories, intellectual histories, myths, and religions) reflects the meanings shared by that community; those meanings interact with the community's habits, depending on old habits while, at the same time, creating new ones.

Dewey's Conception of Pragmatism and Its Relation to Education

Dewey (1916) held that our environment and activities are inextricably linked through our actions and thoughts. Knowledge is constructed and located in the individual's transactions and networks of communication. Individuals acquire knowledge that results in predispositions to act in a certain way, in other words, habits. A "habit means that an individual undergoes a modification through an experience, which modification forms a predisposition to easier and more effective action in a like direction in the future" (Dewey, 1916, p. 339). Habits are not repetitions because circumstances often change and repetitions can only occur if conditions remain constant (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Also, each of us will react differently in the same circumstances because we have unique past histories and temperaments, and thus, different habits.

Dewey thought that, "education is a thoroughly human practice in which questions about 'how' are inseparable from questions about 'why' and 'what for'" (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 22). Knowledge is not simply about information but about consequences, effects, and purpose.

Unlike education theorists who envisioned education as a preparation for work, Dewey and the pragmatists had a "larger social and educational purpose and vision, which was that education ought to prepare students to participate in democratic society and thereby contribute to the common good" (Woodford, 2005, p. x). Although Mark (1996) suggests that the progressive education movement's (and Dewey's) support of music education was strictly Utilitarian (in this case, to develop socialization skills), Dewey (1920 emphatically critiqued Utilitarian ethics because they were based "upon [individual] acquisition and possession of enjoyments" (p. 144) and afforded "a remarkable example of the need of philosophic reconstruction" (p. 145). Rather, Dewey avowed that "it is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them" (Dewey, 1916, pp. 119-120), demonstrating his position that education should be a means for achieving social justice, a common good.

The Industrial model of education conceived school as the means and jobs as the ends. Schools existed to prepare students to fill available jobs. Dewey, rather, believed in meaningful employment, not just "a job," and education as a lifelong pursuit, not just as a prelude to work.

> The best thing that can be said about any special process of education, like that of the formal school period, is that it renders its subject capable of further education: more sensitive to conditions of growth and more able to take advantage of them. Acquisition of skill, possession of knowledge, attainment of culture are not ends: they are marks of growth and means to its continuing. (Dewey 1920, p. 184)

Dewey's educational vision dissolved boundaries between schooling and life. He sought to develop students' reflective thinking beyond social inquiry, so they could engage "with the world as a moral agent of change" (Woodford, 2005, p. x). Dewey "encouraged interaction between the school and the wider community as a means of helping children to understand things in relation to their social environment" (Woodford, 2005, p. 7). This democratic conception of education envisions students and citizens learning from their environment, changing habits, and contributing to society according to their abilities. In other words, each member of society, regardless of age, has agency.

Dewey was concerned that curricula with fixed ends were shortsighted, because ends were not "things lying beyond activity, at which the latter is directed. Ends are simply terminals of deliberation, and so turning points in activity" (Doll, 1972, p. 317). Like those moments of doubt and uncertainty that give rise to reflective thinking and habit change, moments of learning can spark a space for wonder and deliberation, a place where the student can see possibilities for future directions in learning. In these instances, the teacher's role is one of enabler, helping those students who see possibilities to transform. A comparison of MEAE and Pragmatist conceptions is illustrated in Table 3.

Pragmatist Music Education Philosophy in Rural Music Teacher Practice

From a pragmatist perspective, it is essential that rural music educators, faced with structural and dynamic constraints, ask the question, "What is music education good for in my set of circumstances?" Rural music educators must seek to understand how music contributes positively, not only to their students' lives, but also to the lives of various people in the community, because students are not islands unto themselves. Local ideas that are historic and unique,

Table 3

Comparison of MEAE and Pragmatist Conceptions

Philosophical Concepts	MEAE Conceptions	Pragmatist Conceptions
1. Nature of Knowledge	Received wisdom from experts; antecedent	Developed through action, consequence, & reflection
2. Nature of Music	Art as object; Music as works	Music as action
3. Value of Music	Intrinsic to the music; universal to all music	Contextually and socially bound; related to consequence
4. Purpose of Music Education	Development of connoisseurship; insights into nature of feeling	Develop knowledge and skills for use in life

perhaps reflecting non-mainstream ways of thinking and knowing, may influence what students value in music.

Agency is an idea central to rural, agrarian communities as well as to pragmatist philosophy. If a tractor breaks down, the closest repair shop may be far away, so the farmer must learn to fix it. If an orchardist is very ill during the fall, neighbors assist the family to harvest the crop. When communities are too small to have the structures taken for granted in urban environments, members of those communities volunteer their services to create a walkway along a river, fundraise for playground equipment, or build and maintain a baseball diamond. Rural music educators who develop this sense of agency, central to pragmatist notions of habit changing and experience as the location of knowledge, are better able to effect change in their approach to music education, one that reflects an appreciation of and response to the culture(s) and values of their communities and demonstrates the ways in which music education might be a bridge to cultural recognition and understanding amongst diverse peoples (Jones, 2010).

Pragmatist philosophy, as conceived by Dewey, provides rural music educators with a foundation for thinking about and a means for changing their practices. In recent years, several thinkers have developed a rich tradition of theorizing distinctive praxial approaches to music (Small, 1998) and music education (Alperson, 1991; Elliot, 1995; Goble, 2010; Regelski, 1996) that are informed by pragmatism. A praxial orientation may provide precisely the kind of intellectual grounding and practical guidance needed for music teachers in rural settings.

Praxial Music Education Philosophy

In contrast to aesthetic music education philosophy, praxial music education philosophy states that "the truths and values of art are seen rather to be rooted in the context of human practices," not in the objects themselves (Alperson, 1991, p. 233). According to Aristotle, praxis (practice or doing) is the means to acquire practical wisdom or phronesis, one of five ways to arrive at truth (Nichomachean Ethics, Trans. 1953, Book 6). Praxis is not simply doing; it also concerns value-laden questions central to a practice and the knowledge acquired by that practice. In other words, praxis questions "the validity or value of the ends served by that knowledge" (Regelski, 1998, p. 28).

In Philip Alperson's view (1991), music education philosophy must accommodate the many different kinds of musical practice in society, including communication, therapy, ritual, and propaganda, not just the expression of feeling. Shifting the location of music's value from the object to the praxis of music itself enables praxial music education philosophy to focus on music as behaviour and on the context that creates it; thus, it can accommodate cultural difference. This flexibility is especially important in those pluralistic societies whose people believe education should make room for and explain differences rather than use assimilative practices that impose only the knowledge and understandings of the dominant culture.

In recent years, two influential music education philosophers further developed Alperson's ideas. David Elliott (1995), a jazz player, also emphasized the experience of music making over the musical object. This conception echoes Aristotle's belief that "anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments" (Nichomachean Ethics, 2: 1103a 32-35). For Elliott (1995), aesthetic experience is simply the loss of self-consciousness during performance, similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, a state of mind that brings order to the self by total absorption in a process. Music education's value lies in its ability to foster self-growth, self-esteem, and self-knowledge through musical practice. Performance-based music education classes like

Table 4

Comparison of MEAE, Pragmatist, and Praxialist Conceptions

Philosophical Concepts	MEAE Conceptions	Pragmatist Conception	Praxial Conception
1. Nature of Knowledge	Received wisdom from experts	Acquired through action, consequence, and reflection	Acquired through *praxis*
2. Nature of Music	Art as object; Music as works	Music as action	Music as *praxis*
3. Value of Music	Internal relationships of tonal material–no context	Contextually and socially bound; related to consequence	Contextually and socially bound; related to consequence
4. Purpose of Music Education	Development of connoisseurship; insights into nature of feeling	Develop knowledge and skills for use in life	Self-growth, self-esteem, self-knowledge; right results

concert/jazz band, concert/jazz choir, and orchestra are representative of music as praxis, but only if they reach beyond correct technique to include contextual information that emphasizes the function of that music in that setting.

Thomas Regelski (1996, 2004) furthered the idea of context and promoted "the notion that music is 'a doing' guided by phronesis [practical wisdom, prudence] for 'right results' in human terms far more basic and ultimately far more significant than the psychologism, romanticism and elitism of aesthetic philosophers of music and music education" (1996, p. 24). He argued that the value of anything is dependent upon its results or consequences and that these results, in turn, are dependent on socio-cultural contexts. This emphasis on the connection between phronesis and context is evident in Aristotle who affirmed, "Prudence [phronesis] is not concerned with universals only; it must also take cognisance of particulars, because it is concerned with conduct, and conduct has its sphere in particular circumstances" (Nichomachean Ethics, 6: 1141b 15). Two necessary components of acting for "right ethical results" for particular situations are reflection and deliberation, which may lead to habit changing.

Praxial music education philosophy, like pragmatist philosophy, emphasizes experience or practice as the location of meaning. Regelski's interpretation of this emerging music education philosophy openly acknowledges its pragmatist roots in its stress on consequences, reflection, and habit changing. He said, "music is best understood in terms of its pragmatic consequences for people engaged in the acts of living" (1996, p. 26). Regelski (1996) rejected the dualities of intrinsic and extrinsic musical meanings, means and ends, and process and product; rather, he suggested they are inseparable and two sides of the same coin, a pragmatist notion.

> The traditional aesthetic account of musical value and especially its dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic, inherent and external values, and the like, is neither accurate nor educationally relevant. The issue of value in music is always and inescapably a question of relationships, not of absolutes. (p. 50)

Intentions lead to process which results in product, and they fluidly inform each other through reflection (Regelski, 1996). A comparison of MEAE, Pragmatist, and Praxialist conceptions is illustrated in Table 4.

Praxial Music Education Philosophy in Rural MusicTeacher Practice

A praxial music education philosophy is relevant to all music teachers because it enables teachers to think about the consequences of their teaching, not just in the short term (how well students place in a festival), but in the long-term (how many students believe playing and listening is so important in their lives that they will continue to engage in music making throughout their lives). It acknowledges that teachers encounter doubt, and validates this doubt by contending it can be a powerful tool leading to reflection, new knowledge, and continually transforming practice. Praxialism frees rural music educators from the constraints of trying to shape their programs into a mold that does not fit their context.

Changing Rural Music Education Practice

Adopting a praxial music education philosophy based on pragmatist philosophy as conceived by Dewey enables rural music educators to work around the unique realities

and constraints they may encounter. These constraints, plus the rural ethos of resourcefulness, might actually enable the rural music educator to become more agentic. This personal agency is strengthened when it is coupled with the capacity for music, itself, to foster agency. The value of music is understood in terms of its use in human agency. The mindfulness and intentionality that distinguishes "action" from reactive, habitual, or mindless behavior and activity, then, is a key to understanding music, and points to its values. Music is a choice by which individuals and groups change or enhance human actions in predictable and satisfying ways. (Regelski, 1996, p. 26)

Once teachers develop the conviction to change and to pursue a new course, they must convey that desire to others and discover what is meaningful about music to community members. As Gates (2005) points out, "individuality in Dewey becomes agency, personal and social, but only when coupled with communication … Communication in Dewey is that feature of social life that integrates individuals in the myriad relationships we call society" (p. 10). In fact, communication and relationship building will not only battle teacher isolation and build bonds between teacher and students so high percentages of students will take music courses (two of the five obstacles rural music teachers face), they are a potent dynamic resource that may compensate for a lack of structural resources (a third constraint). Teachers may enlarge the range of relationships they have in the community, going beyond simply organizing their music groups to play for the community at local events. Community members, be they musical, musically knowledgeable, or not, become valuable resources to energize, support, and contribute to musical endeavors. Teachers and community members may form partnerships, envisioning and creating local musical events that are meaningful to the local values of the community and benefit the community at large. Dewey (1934) reminds us of the potential effects of artistic practice on the community.

> Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvelous aids in the creation of such a life. The remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression is not an isolated event confined to the artist and to a person here and there who happens to enjoy the work. In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity. (p. 84)

Praxial music educators are responsive to context and question the superficiality of a multicultural curriculum that does not acknowledge the effects of diverse epistemologies on musical practice. They recognize the ways in which it is possible to enrich and broaden learning opportunities through embracing diversity. For example, by reaching out into the First Nations community and building long term relationships with First Nations Elders, rural music teachers may tap previously unknown and unrecognized (to the music establishment) community music resources and may find ways, with Elders' help, to authentically integrate First Nations musical practice and ways of being into their schools. This paves the way for dialogue about the various functions of different musical practices and worldviews. These diverse music practices and worldviews, standing side by side in the educational system, enhance and complement each other through their distinctiveness. Music, then, becomes the vehicle for the discussion and understanding of different ways of being in the world, and the understanding of the background ideas and historical events that preface these differences. Music is both a catalyst for change and a non-verbal means of expressing why change is necessary. Music education practice and music engagement in a rural community becomes very exciting indeed.

Finally, rural music teachers adopting a praxialist approach will seek out music festivals that celebrate diversity in music education and musical experience, and that provide the opportunity for all music learners to showcase their love of music and their unique cultural identity. Thus, student motivation to pursue musical excellence will be based on the desire to express their personal and collective identities and to share with others the ways music making contributes to their own lives. As Greenwood (2009) notes, the "arts are one of the few places where the experience of being alive, or the experience of dying, can be embraced and performed with heart and soul as well as the mind, where we can remember that we are an embodied and emplaced people connected to other embodied and emplaced people" (p. 2).

Recommendations

It is logical for teacher education programs already promoting social justice, democracy, and multiculturalism in educational practice to also acknowledge the rural condition. Teacher education programs might better prepare music teachers to teach in a rural setting through using university music education curricula that emphasize a praxialist orientation. This orientation will provide music teacher candidates with the understandings they require to provide music instruction in varied geographic settings so that all K-12 students, be they rural or urban, have access to music education that is meaningful and inclusive. The situation is urgent; in a world of ever-shrinking resources for the arts in education in general, rural students are the most at risk of experiencing an education bereft of music making, one of the most fundamental ways cultures express their uniqueness and place in the world.

References

Agbo, S. (2007). Addressing school-community relations in a cross-cultural context: A collaborative action to bridge the gap between First Nations and the school. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 22*(8), 1-14. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/22-8.pdf

Allsup, R. E. (2010). Choosing music literature. In H. Abeles, & L. Custodero (Eds.), *Critical issues in music education: Contemporary theory and practice* (pp.215-235). New York: Oxford University Press.

Alperson, P. (1991). What should one expect from a philosophy of music education? *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 25*(3), 215-242.

Aristotle. (1984). Politics (B. Jewett, Trans.). In J. Barnes (Ed.), *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford translation Vol.2* (pp.1986-2129). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Aristotle. (2003). *Nichomachean ethics*. (J. A. K. Thompson, Trans.). London: The Folio Society.

Biesta, G., & Burbules, N. (Eds.). (2003). *Pragmatism and educational research.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Boyea, A. (1999). Native American music and curriculum: Controversies and cultural issues. *Philosophy of Music Education Review, 7*(2), 105-117.

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch. (2006). *Shared learnings: Integrating BC aboriginal content K-10.* Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/shared.pdf

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch. (2010). *Aboriginal report 2005/06-2009/10: How are we doing?* Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/shared.pdf

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* New York: Harper.

Davis, B., Sumara, D., & Luce-Kapler, R. (2008). *Engaging minds: Changing teaching in complex times* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan.

Dewey, J. (1920). *Reconstruction in philosophy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience.* New York: Penguin.

Doll, W. (1972). A methodology of experience: An alternative to behavorial objectives. *Educational Theory, 22*(3), 215-242.

Doll, W. (2006). Keeping knowledge alive. *Journal of Educational Research and Development 6,* 27-42.

Elliot, D. (1995). *Music matters.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Faircloth, S. (2009). Re-visioning the future of education for native youth in rural schools and communities *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 24*(9), 1-4. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/24-9.pdf

Feld, S. (1982). *Sound and sentiment: Birds, weeping poetics, and song in Kaluli expression.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gates, J. T. (2005). *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education, 4*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Gates4_1.pdf

Gillespie, A. (2007). The social basis of self-reflection. In J. Valsiner and A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology* (pp. 678-691). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/38683/

Goble, J. S. (2005). On musical and educational habit-taking: Pragmatism, sociology, and music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education, 4*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Goble4_1.pdf

Goble, J. S. (2010). *What's so important about music education?* New York: Routledge.

Greenwood, D. (2009). Place, survivance & white remembrance: A decolonizing challenge to rural education in mobile modernity. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 24*(10), 1-6. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/24-10.pdf

Haig-Brown, C. (2010). Indigenous thought, appropriation, and non-Aboriginal people. *Canadian Journal of Education, 33* (4), 925-950.

Hoffer, C. R. (2001). *Teaching music in secondary schools* (5th edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson learning.

Holmes, D. M. (1997). *An examination of fifth grade instrumental music programs and their relationships with music and academic achievement (band)*. (Doctoral Dissertation) Dissertation Abstracts International. Order No. 9736294.

Jones, P. M. (2010). Developing social capital: A role for music education and community music in fostering civic engagement and cultural understanding. *International Journal of Community Music, 3*(2), 291-302.

Kant, I. (2007) *Critique of judgement* (J. Meredith, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1790).

Kearns, R. E. (2011). *Quick reference for band directors*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Langer, S. K. (1968). The cultural importance of the arts. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 1*(1), 5-12.

Maltas, C. (2004). *The rural music teacher: An investigation of the relationship between socialization*

factors and career satisfaction using symbolic interaction theory. (Doctoral Dissertation). ProQuest Disertations and Theses. Order No. 3128843.

Mark, M. L. (1996). *Contemporary music education, 3rd edition.* New York: Schirmer Books.

Meyer, L. (1956). *Emotion and meaning in music.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miles, R., & Blocher, L. (1996). *Block scheduling: Implications for music education.* Chicago: GIA Publications.

Nakata, M. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and the cultural interface: Underlying issues at the intersection of knowledge and information systems. *International Federation of Library Associations Journal, 28*, 281-291.

Olmeda, E. (1981). Testing linguistic minorities. *American Psychologist, 36*(10), 1078-1085.

Prest, A. (in press). Towards an enriched *rural* conception of music curriculum and pedagogy. *Michigan Music Educator.*

Regelski, T. (1996). Prolegomenon to a praxial philosophy of music and music education. *Finnish Journal of Music Education, 1*(1) 23-45.

Regelski, T. (1998). The Aristotelian bases for music and music education as praxis. *Philosophy of Education Review, 6*(1), 22-59.

Regelski, T. (2004). Social theory and music and music education as praxis. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education, 3*(3), 2-52. Retrieved from http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski3_3.pdf.

Reimer, B. (1970). *A philosophy of music education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Reimer, B. (1989). *A philosophy of music education* (2nd edition). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Reimer, B. (2003). *A philosophy of music education: Advancing the vision* (3rd edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Sammons, P. (1995). Gender, ethnic and socioeconomic differences in attainment and progress: A longitudinal analysis of student achievement over 9 years. *British Educational Research Journal, 21*(4) 465-485.

Small, C. (1998). *Musicking*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Soja, E. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Theobold, P., & Wood, K. (2010). Learning to be rural: Identity lessons from history schooling and the US corporate media. In K. Schafft and A. Youngblood Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century* (pp.17-33). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Walker, D. E. (1998). *Teaching music: Managing the successful music program* (2nd edition). New York: Schirmer Books.

Wildcat, D. R. (2001). Prelude to a dialogue. In V. Deloria and D. R. Wildcat (Eds.), *Power and place: Indian education in America* (p.vii). Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.

Woodford, P. (2005). *Democracy and music education.* Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press.