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A Profile of Research In Music Teacher Education

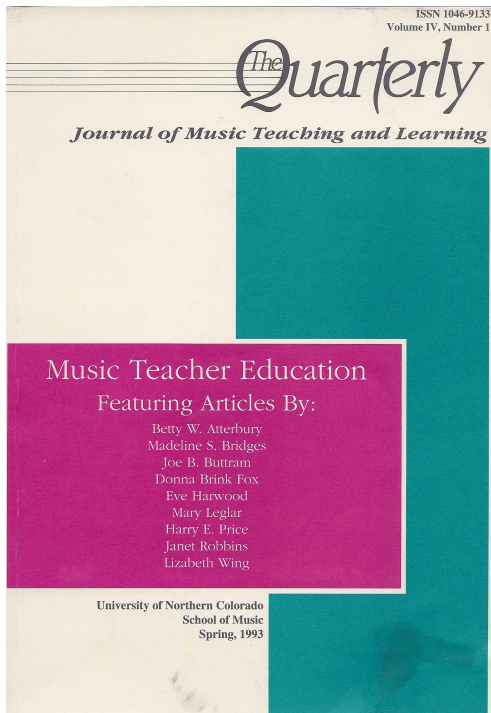
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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

A Profile of Research In Music Teacher Education

By Mary A. Leglar

University of Georgia

The purpose of this survey is to identify and analyze trends in music teacher education research over the past three decades. The analysis is confined to dissertations completed at U.S. universities between 1960 and 1991, with abstracts published in *Dissertation Abstracts International* (DAI) by June 1992. For the sake of consistency, the analysis was based only on the information contained in the published abstract. Research articles were excluded because a large number, perhaps most, are based on dissertations, and including them would amount to tallying some studies twice.

In any survey of this size, it is necessary to set limits rather narrowly, especially since most music education research may be considered to involve or be related to teacher education in some way. For the purposes of this study, “music teacher education” was defined strictly. Only dissertations dealing directly with music teacher education at the undergraduate level or citing specific implications for music teacher education were included. Thus, many studies in areas of undeniable interest to music teacher educators—for example,

“The heavy reliance on descriptive methodology has given way to a somewhat better balance of descriptive, experimental, and behavioral studies.”

teacher assessment—were omitted. The survey does include studies dealing with music fundamentals and methods for the elementary classroom teacher, but excludes those dealing with in-service training and graduate programs. A search of *Dissertation Abstracts International* produced a total of 304 dissertations that met the above criteria.

Traditionally, education research has been classified as historical, philosophical, descriptive, or experimental. Authorities on research in music education have delineated several variations of this basic schema (e.g., Abeles, 1992; Kemp, 1992; Rainbow & Froehlich,

1987). The classification system used for the present review was adapted from those of Yarbrough (1984) and Abeles (1992).

Five methodologies are distinguished: philosophical, historical, descriptive, experimental, and behavioral. Descriptive studies are further divided into status studies (usually based on questionnaires) and correlational studies, which most often rely on tests and measurements to assess the relationship between two or more variables (such as personality traits and student-teaching success). The criteria adopted for identifying experimental studies are the presence of an independent variable, and the use of discrete, quantitative measures (for instance, pretest and posttest). Behavioral studies may or may not feature a manipulable variable; they are characterized by continuous measure-

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ment or prolonged observation. This category includes ethnographic research and many case studies.

The classification for research topics is adapted from Verrastro and Leglar (1992). The broad heading "undergraduate music teacher education" is divided into three sections: selection, classroom-based curriculum, and field-based curriculum (including early field experiences and student teaching). Music education for preservice elementary classroom teachers and program evaluation are considered as separate main categories. Studies on teacher education in foreign countries are included if the research was directed by a U.S. university.

Although most dissertations fall neatly into one category, the classification of some was a matter of judgment. In some cases the abstract was so vaguely written that no reliable classification was possible; these were tallied under "other," along with studies that fell outside the adopted schema. Therefore, although the statistics given here do provide a reasonably accurate picture of music teacher education research, they cannot be regarded as exact. To avoid giving a misleading impression of precision, all percentages are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

The Degrees

Of music educators who presented dissertations in teacher education, more hold the Ph.D. than any other degree (see Figure 1). The Ed.D., the predominant degree of the

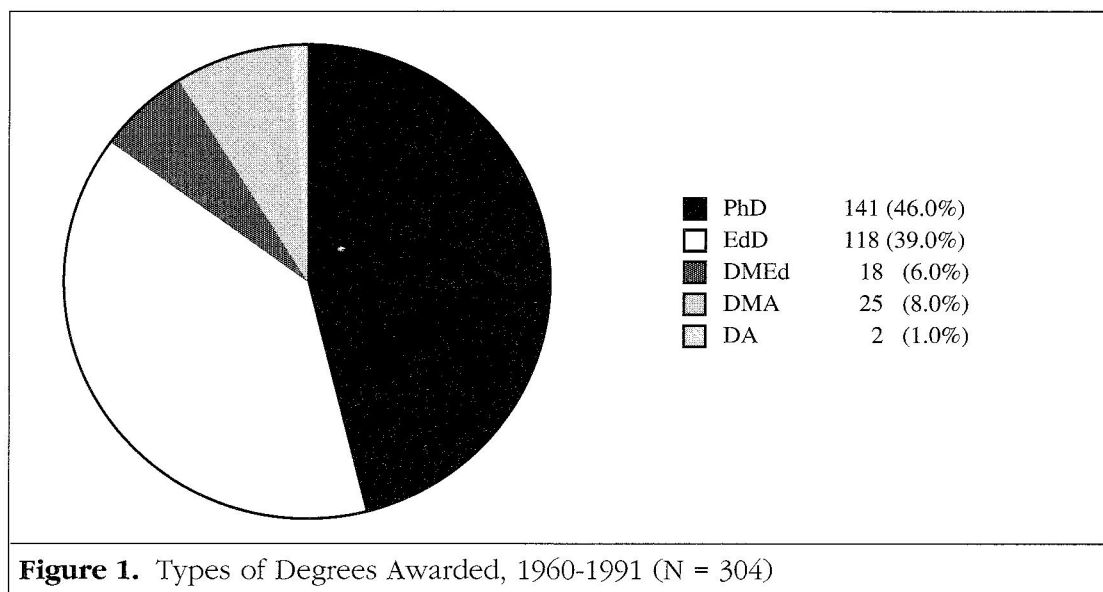
1960s, has increasingly lost favor to the Ph.D. The number of Ph.D.s increased from 33 (36 percent) in the 1960s to 56 (55 percent) in the 1980s, with the biggest increase during the 1970s. Over the same period, the Ed.D.s decreased from 52 (57 percent, to 26 (25 percent) (see Figure 2). The D.M.A., newly popular in the 1980s, may also have contributed to the decline of the Ed.D.

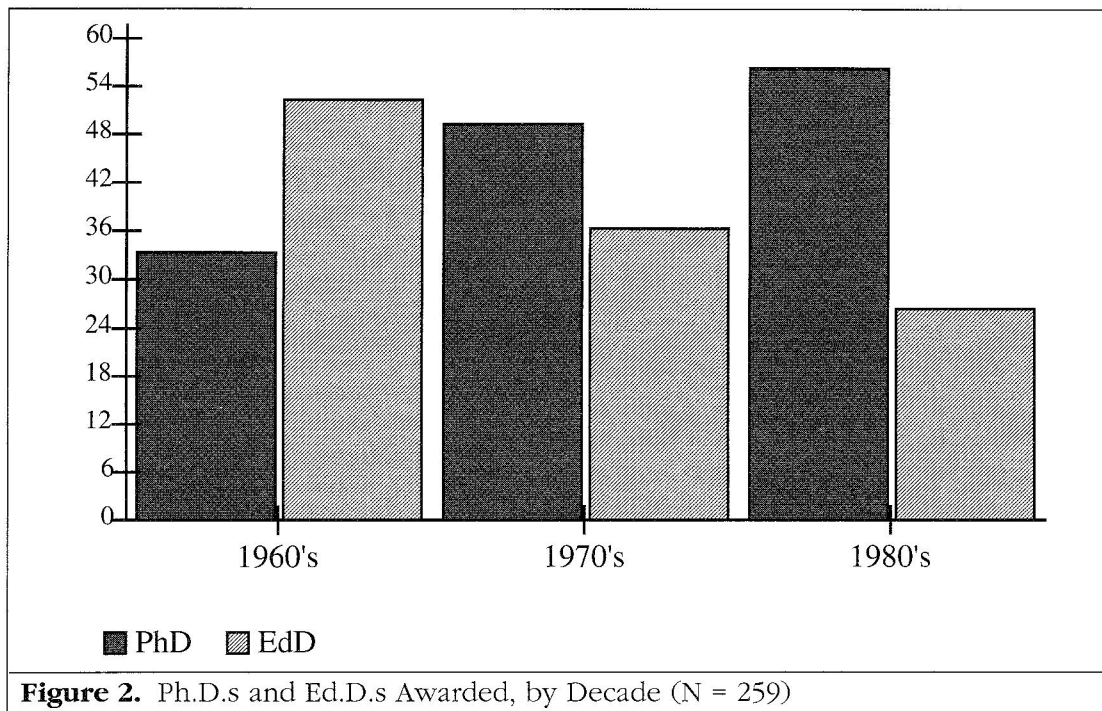
More significant is a trend identifiable in the decade-by-decade totals: 92 degrees were awarded in the 1960s, 101 in the 1970s, 102 in the 1980s, and 9 so far in the 1990s. This represents a growth of 11 percent, which seems healthy enough until compared with the substantial overall growth in music education dissertations. The number of music education-related dissertations abstracted in DAI increased by over 150 percent between 1960 and 1990. Thus the relative share of music teacher education research has actually declined over the last three decades.

The Institutions

A total of 73 U.S. universities have granted doctorates to candidates presenting dissertations in music teacher education. Grouped by the total number of music teacher education studies directed over the 32-year period, these institutions fall very roughly into thirds: Those awarding more than 10 degrees (Group I); 4-10 degrees (Group II); and 3 or fewer (Group III).

The five institutions making up Group I ac-





count for 34 percent of the 304 dissertations on teacher education. The most productive are the Ohio State University (29 studies or nearly 10 percent of the total) and the University of Illinois (25 studies, or 8 percent). Other Group I institutions are Florida State University, 18 studies (6 percent); Columbia University, 17 studies (6 percent); and Indiana University, 16 studies (5 percent). Of these five institutions, only Ohio State clearly shows a marked increase in the number of dissertations written on music teacher education from the 1960s (9 dissertations) to the 1980s (14 dissertations). Columbia University, sharing the lead with the University of Illinois in the 1960s, shows a sharp decrease in the 1970s and 1980s, from 12 per decade to 2. So far in the 1990s, 3 of the 9 music teacher education dissertations were done under the auspices of the University of Illinois, although totals for the 1990s are too small to show accurate trends.

Nineteen institutions, each contributing 4 to 10 music teacher education dissertations over the period, account for 117 studies or 38 percent of the total output. There is an identifiable gap between Group I and Group II: Indiana University, ranked fifth in Group I, sponsored 16 dissertations, while the University of Northern Colorado, the most pro-

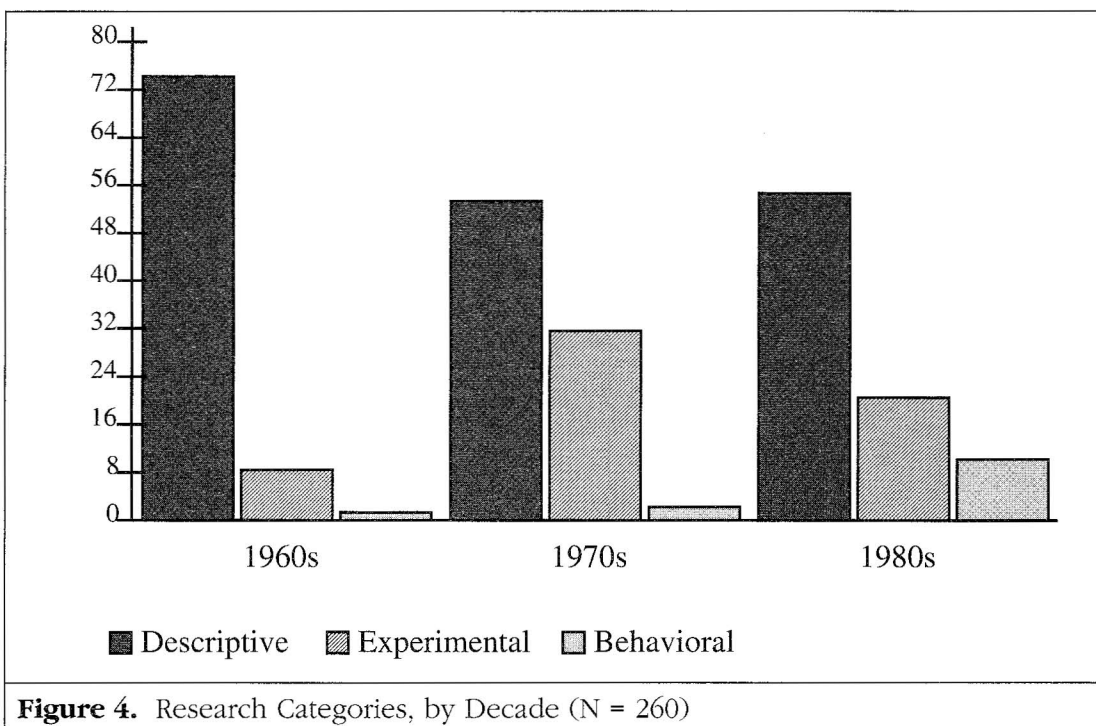
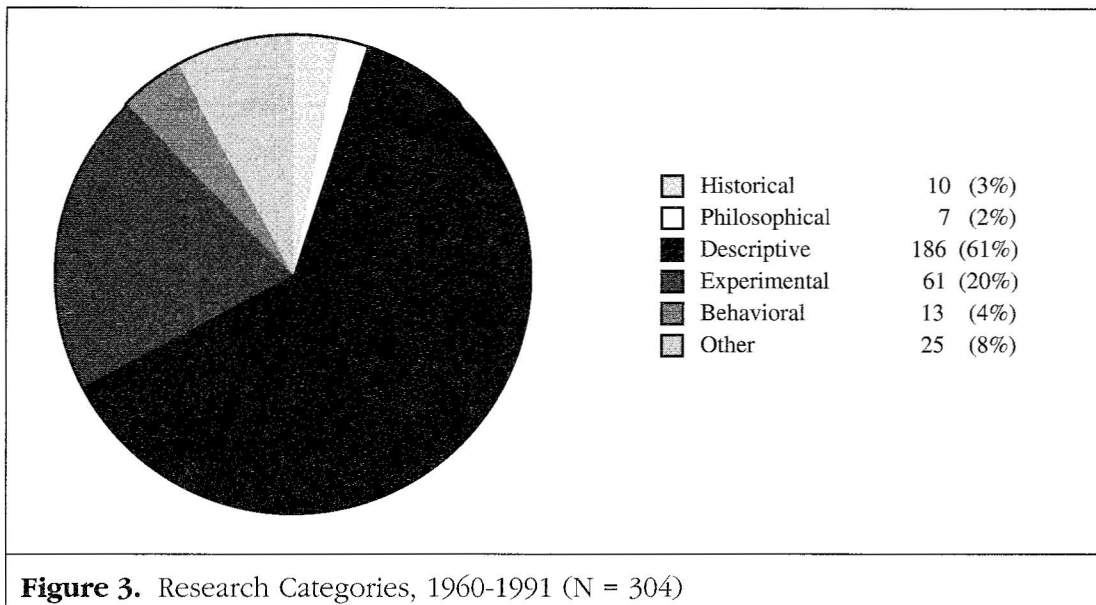
ductive in Group II, accounts for 10. In Group II, only Arizona State University has shown an increased interest in music teacher education research in the 1980s.

Institutions contributing 3 or fewer dissertations over the period number 49 and have supported 82 studies (27 percent). Of this group, only 7 have shown slight increases in the number of studies on teacher education.

Eight of the 73 institutions have not contributed to teacher education research since the 1960s, and 12 did not contribute until the 1980s. Twelve institutions have supported dissertations in all three decades. For Ohio State, Illinois, and the University of Oregon, DAI records one or more dissertations in the 1990s as well as in each previous decade.

Research Categories

The great majority (61 percent) of the dissertations written on music teacher education can be classified as descriptive research, followed by experimental (20 percent), behavioral (4 percent), historical (3 percent), and philosophical (2 percent). The remaining 8 percent, classified as "other," usually deal with curriculum or course development and take the form of curriculum guides, textbooks, units of programmed instruction, development of



instructional films, and so on (see Figure 3).

Descriptive studies are in the majority for each of the three decades (see Figure 4 for a comparison of behavioral, experimental, and descriptive totals). There was, however, a marked decline in descriptive research during the 1970s, from 80 percent of the total in the 1960s to 53 percent in the 1970s, where it has held steady at 54 percent in the 1980s and 56

percent for the first two years of the 1990s.

Of the 186 descriptive studies written during the 32-year period, 136 (73 percent) were classified as status studies that utilized some type of survey instrument, usually a questionnaire. These constitute almost 45 percent of all dissertations, making the status study easily the single most popular type of research. An examination of these 146 abstracts pro-

duced only 55 that supplied the percentage of return for the survey instrument, or enough information from which to calculate the return rate. For these studies, the return rate ranged from 29 percent to 100 percent (mean 76 percent). The average percentage of return has risen steadily over the period, from 69 percent in the 1960s to 78 percent in the 1970s and just over 80 percent in the 1980s.

The abstracts of 119 status studies supplied information about the distribution of the survey population (or enough clues to allow the distribution to be deduced). The pattern for the 32-year period is as follows: local, 30 dissertations; state, 35; regional, 17; and national, 37. Many, if not most of the local surveys were conducted as part of a program evaluation for a single institution. Program evaluation studies were particularly common in the 1960s, but a number have appeared in each decade. All such studies of single institutions were counted as local. Several of the studies with nationwide distribution were restricted in other respects—to graduates of black colleges only, for example, or to the strings area.

Interest in experimental research grew strongly during the 1970s, showing almost a fourfold increase (from 8 to 31) over the 1960s. In the 1980s, however, the number of experimental studies decreased by over one-third, to 20. This may reflect the relative difficulty of designing and carrying out true ex-

perimental research in teacher education.

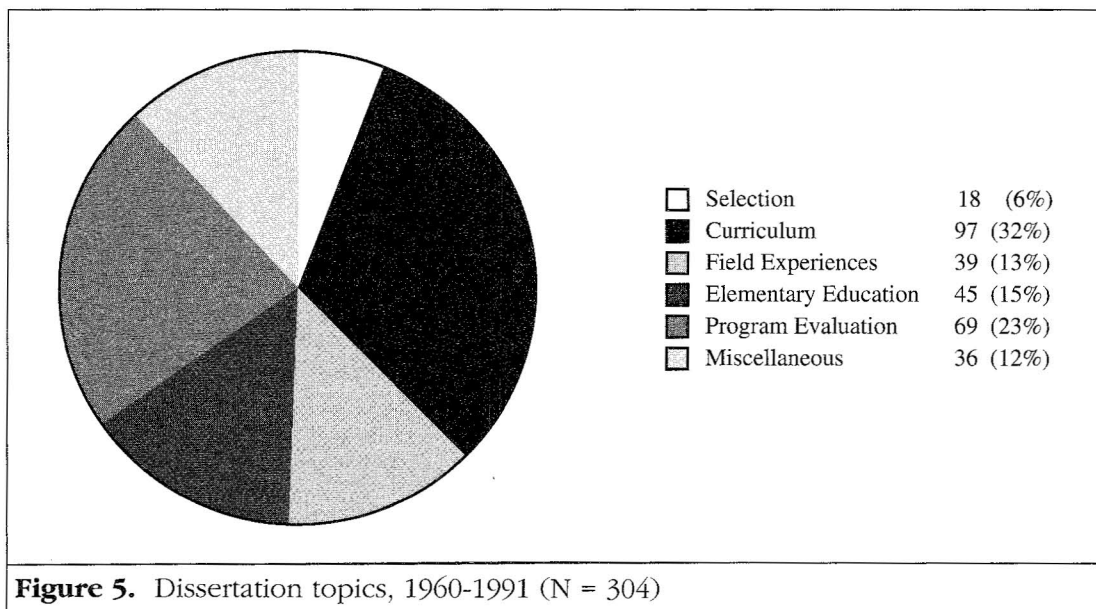
Behavioral research, in contrast, showed quite a significant gain in the 1980s, to 12 from only 1 in the 1960s and 2 in the 1970s. Several of these studies use ethnographic methodologies, borrowed from the social sciences. Slightly more interest was also shown in historical research in the 1980s, with 3 studies on various aspects of teacher education. The number of philosophical studies remains very low and static throughout the 32-year time span.

Research Topics

Dissertations were divided into five groups on the basis of topic. Problematic abstracts were classified on the basis of the predominant subject, and some studies defied classification. These dissertations, together with studies that fell outside the scheme of classification, are shown in Figure 5 as “Miscellaneous.”

Classroom-based Curriculum/Instruction

This rather broad heading covers all aspects of the music teacher education program except field experiences. General education courses and teacher education courses not specific to music (e.g., foundations and educational psychology), and music courses not specific to music education are not considered part of the music teacher education program for the purposes of this survey. Since 1960, 97 dissertations (32 percent of the total) have targeted various aspects of curriculum. These



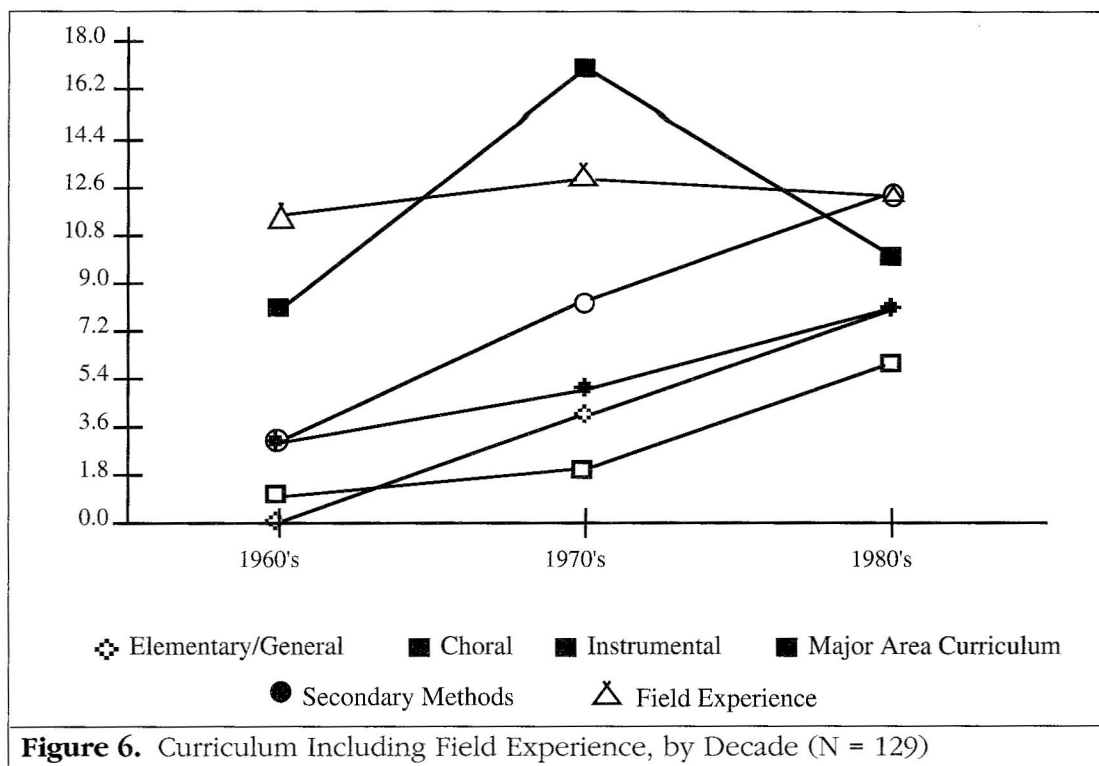


Figure 6. Curriculum Including Field Experience, by Decade (N = 129)

were classified into five areas (Figure 6).

Major Area Curriculum. Thirty-five dissertations (32 percent of curriculum studies) concentrated on the major area curriculum as a whole—theory, history, and applied music as well as methods courses. Many of these dissertations are program evaluations or studies that produced lists of competencies to serve as a basis for curriculum design.

Secondary Applied Methods. Secondary methods classes (instrumental, piano, vocal, and conducting) accounted for 25 (26 percent) of the curriculum studies. Of this group, instrumental methods classes received most attention with 15 studies (60 percent); secondary piano ranked second with 6 studies (24 percent); conducting (specifically related to teacher education majors) ranked third with 3 studies (12 percent); and only 1 study focused on vocal methods.

The number of dissertations written on topics related to secondary methods quadrupled from the 1960s to the 1980s (3 in the 1960s, 8 in the 1970s, and 12 in the 1980s). While interest in secondary instrumental and secondary piano instruction has increased throughout all three decades, no studies in either secondary voice or conducting have

been undertaken since the 1970s.

Elementary/General Music Methods. If dissertations are any indication, research activity in elementary and general music methods has increased vigorously, from zero in the 1960s to 4 in the 1970s and 8 in the 1980s, though they still account for only 12 percent of all curriculum studies. Topics receiving more than passing attention are multicultural music for prospective general music teachers and the effectiveness of methodologies such as Orff and Kodály.

Instrumental and Choral Methods/Materials. The education of instrumental music teachers was the subject of 16 dissertations, with no identifiable clusters of interest. A few explored the use of video or, in the 1980s, computer aids in acquiring specific skills. Nine dissertations were related to choral methods. Topics include repertoire and competencies, with some interest shown in multicultural repertoire in the 1980s.

Field-Based Instruction

For the purposes of this survey, field-based instruction has been divided into two categories, pre-student teaching practicums and student teaching. A total of 39 studies (13 percent) deal with field-based instruction. Of

this number, 32 studies (82 percent) are concerned with student teaching; 7 (18 percent) deal with pre-student-teaching experiences. Although research on student teaching was most popular in the 1970s, interest in this topic is demonstrated in all three decades; research activity in early field experiences increased slightly in the 1980s. Worthy of note is that 5 studies (4 on student teaching and 1 on early experiences) have been conducted so far in the 1990s.

Topics in this category include the psychological adjustment and attitudes of the student, the relationship of the triad (student, cooperating teacher, college supervisor), the learning content of the experience, and the ability of the supervisor to evaluate the student.

Selection

Studies dealing with the selection and retention of music education majors total 18 (6 percent of the total N). They tend to fall into two groups: attempts to predict undergraduate success (often defined as graduation from an accredited program or attainment of a given grade-point average), or teaching success (in the present sample, usually student-teaching success). Selection studies were most popular in the 1960s and the 1970s, numbering 7 in the 1960s and 8 in the 1970s;

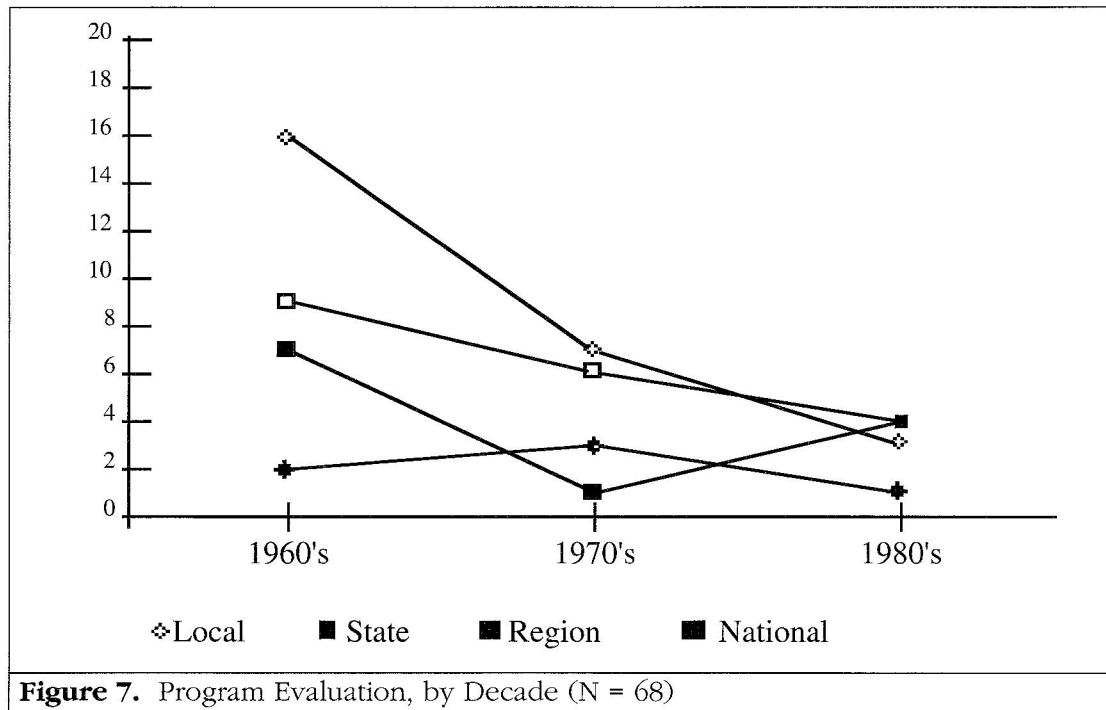
interest fell sharply in the 1980s (3 studies).

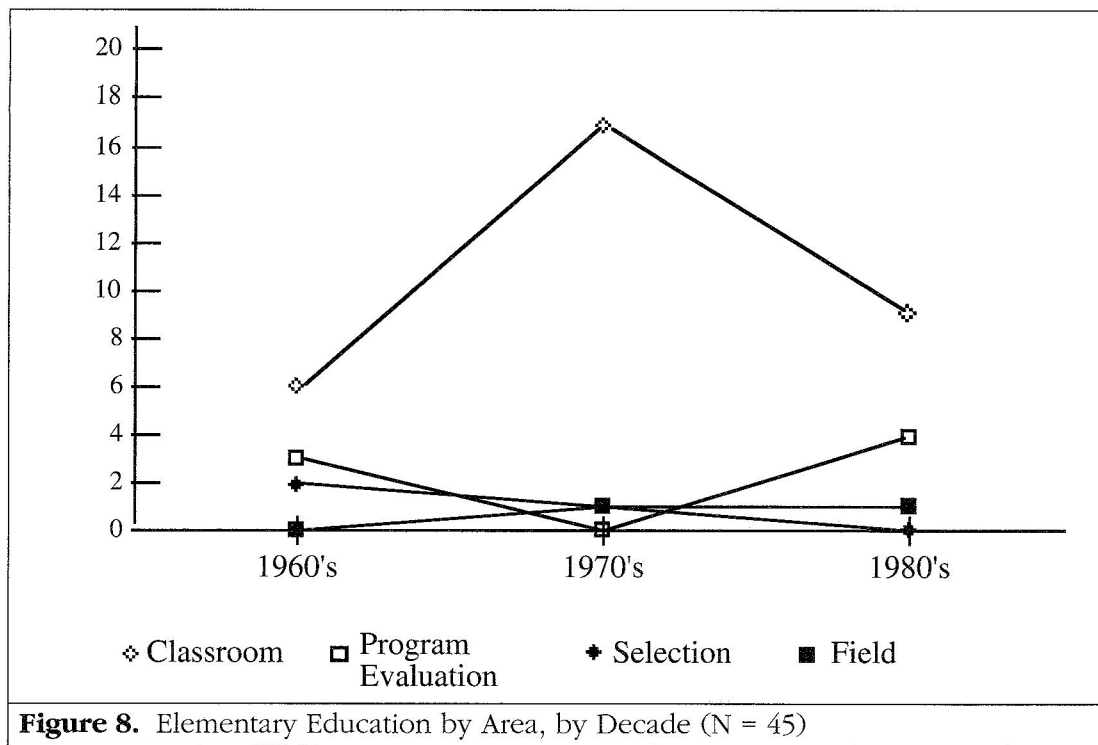
Selection studies are almost always descriptive, employing tests and measurements and correlational statistics. Subjects are generally music education students enrolled in one institution. The recent decline in interest may be due to the fact that so far no factor has been found to correlate more strongly with success than the traditional ones—grade-point average and the judgment of music education faculty.

Program Evaluation

Studies on program evaluation rank second to curriculum in number with a total of 69 studies (23 percent of total N). Program evaluations were most common in the 1960s, when 35 were recorded. The number dropped by over 50 percent in the 1970s, to 17, where it remained steady in the 1980s. Program evaluation studies are almost always based on questionnaires mailed to graduates of the institution(s) being studied. A few researchers also conducted in-depth interviews and on-site observations.

Of this group of studies, 38 percent are local in scope—involving the alumni and students of one particular institution (Figure 7). Twenty-eight percent evaluated teacher education programs in a given state. Although 17 percent of the studies sought to evaluate





programs nationwide, many of these were very limited in scope (e.g., colleges of a given religious denomination, private black colleges, and so on). Very few program evaluation studies of large scope (e.g., NASM schools) have been conducted nationwide.

Music Education for Classroom Teachers

Instruction for elementary classroom teachers was the topic of 45 dissertations (15 percent of the total N). Of this group, 32 (71 percent) were concerned with classroom based methodology, and 7 (16 percent) dealt with program evaluation. This subject was most popular in the 1970s, when it accounted for 20 percent of all dissertations (Figure 8).

Predictably, a substantial portion of these studies are concerned with attitudes toward teaching music and with factors that may influence or predict the subjects' willingness to teach music. In the 1970s, several studies investigated programmed instruction in the musical training of the classroom teacher; their 1980s counterparts were dissertations focusing on computer-assisted instruction.

Discussion

Although a compilation of this nature can provide only a superficial view, it does estab-

lish a basis for identifying some general strengths and weaknesses in a body of research. In music teacher education, the most serious weakness seems to be a lack of coherency—a failure to concentrate sufficient effort on any one problem and produce solid, useful results.

In many areas the research is so scattered that the profession may not be much the wiser for it. Of necessity, studies are often conducted on small populations of limited distribution; the results of such studies are not generalizable. A cluster of related studies, even with these individual limitations, would produce useful information—but few such clusters exist. Dissertation topics often seem to be selected on the basis of the candidate's interests or the exigencies of the moment, rather than the needs of the profession as a whole.

That doctoral candidates seem to avoid certain crucial areas of research (i.e., field experiences) may be due less to lack of interest than to methodological difficulties. The choice of a research methodology/design for studies in teacher education is complicated by:

- (1) the limited size of the population available to the researcher;
- (2) the difficulty of identifying and controlling

for extraneous variables in “real world” environments such as student teaching; and (3) the complexity of the skills, knowledge, and phenomena being measured.

This is an especially acute problem in experimental studies, and it has not yet been satisfactorily solved. The temptation is to select a research problem that presents the fewest methodological difficulties. In fact, one suspects that researchers sometimes decide on a methodology first and then chose a problem to fit.

Some of these difficulties are being addressed by researchers in other areas of teacher education. Program assessment, for example, is a rapidly developing field; current practice requires the use of a valid model and a variety of measures, including portfolios of lesson plans, papers, analysis of field observations, and videos of lesson segments. Yet evaluation studies of music teacher education programs still rely heavily on surveys of the opinions of graduates—a legitimate aspect of evaluation but basically questionable as the chief measure of program effectiveness. In general, researchers in music education could profit from a closer study of advances in other fields.

Perhaps the most noteworthy impression gained from this survey is that very few institutions seem to be philosophically committed to research in music teacher education. This is particularly disturbing in that the primary occupation of most holders of the doctorate in music education is the training of teachers. Ironically, music education researchers regularly lament the reluctance of classroom teachers to base practice on research, yet very few of them are actively engaged in the rigorous examination of their own practices.


There are, however, important signs of progress. Most encouraging is the increasing heterogeneity in methodology and research topics. The heavy reliance on descriptive methodology has given way to a somewhat better balance of descriptive, experimental, and behavioral studies. Unfortunately, there has been no appreciable increase in historical and philosophical research. New approaches, such as ethnography, have been used during the past decade and seem to be well-suited to some areas of teacher education research. More interest is being shown


in areas that were neglected during the 1960s, most notably elementary/general music and secondary applied methods.

The volume of dissertations in music teacher education has not grown substantially during the 30-year period, but the overall quality and sophistication of the research has undoubtedly improved. True experimental studies are no longer quite so rare, though randomization is still a problem. Researchers are achieving higher return rates for survey-based descriptive studies, though one still sees unacceptably low rates and, conversely, several early studies reported very high rates. Program evaluations based on one-shot mailed surveys of graduates are in decline, though these have not yet been replaced by model-based evaluation.

Research in music teacher education is still a young field. Further progress depends on two developments: (1) a medium (such as an electronic clearinghouse) to facilitate the informal exchange of information and research results; and (2) publication outlets specifically devoted to research in teacher education. Most of all, however, research in music teacher education needs a constituency—a strong support group of music teacher educators closely involved as producers and consumers of research in their own field.

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