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### The Components Of Effective Applied Instruction

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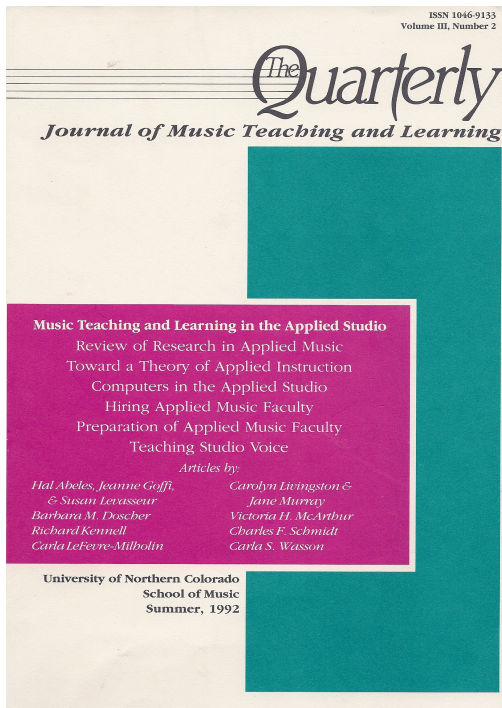
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*It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of 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.*

# The Components Of Effective Applied Instruction

By Hal Abeles, Jeanne Goffi,  
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**A**lthough considerable effort is expended to determine what are the critical components that comprise effective teaching, the vast majority of research seems geared towards public school classroom instruction (Rosenshine, 1979). Unfortunately the results of these studies may not provide much guidance on the important factors in other types of teaching circumstances. Some of the factors that influence precollege classroom instruction, such as “controlling discipline,” may not be as relevant to a population of older, more focused students, such as those attending colleges and university. Consequently, other studies which have examined the effectiveness of university teaching (e.g. Wilson, Dienst, & Watson, 1973) also have been undertaken. But colleges and universities are also comprised of a variety of teaching circumstances. In some institutions, undergraduates are often taught in larger lecture halls in groups that exceed 200 students. Other upper undergraduate or graduate classes are likely to be more specialized and contain fewer than ten students. Hopefully, these different circumstances would generate different teaching strategies and it is likely that certain faculty might be particular effective

in one teaching circumstance but not as effective in another.

Applied music teaching in institutions of higher education often has few parallels across campus. The individual nature of applied teaching, as it is traditionally taught in most

departments of music, is often the only situation on campus where such a faculty-student ratio exists. Even in other art areas such as painting, sculpture or ballet, all of which have strong studio components, instruction is more likely to be given in a group setting. Thus, efforts to determine the effectiveness of university-level teaching in general often will not have much relevance to applied music teaching. Having students evaluate an applied teacher on characteristics such as, “The instructor is a very

“The scales developed in these projects appear to be reliable measures of important characteristics of applied music faculty as perceived by their students.”

thorough lecturer,” or “The lectures are easy to become interested in,” are unlikely to yield much insight into effective applied instruction.

Efforts to determine what comprises effective applied instruction are not frequently found in the literature. In some ways this seems surprising because applied instruction comprises such a large portion of the instruction in schools and departments of music. On the other hand because of the frequent opportunities to evaluate the products of the instruction, namely the performances of the students enrolled, music faculties may not feel that it is urgent to systematically evaluate the process by which these products are produced. After all, for the most part, applied

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instruction seems successful, students usually do get better, and many believe that if a student does not seem to improve it is probably because “they don’t have sufficient talent,” or “maybe they just aren’t motivated” (they don’t practice enough).

When asked, however, college music faculty are likely to agree on the areas that are important for applied music teaching to be successful. In an earlier study (Abeles, 1975) it was reported that members of an applied music faculty identified five categories that they thought students would consider important when evaluating applied music faculty.

These categories were rapport, communication technique, musical knowledge, musical understanding, and performing ability. More recently, Albergo (1991) reported that there was considerable agreement among piano teachers on the qualities that are “most desirable in a good piano teacher.” Teachers agreed most often on qualities that included patience, knowledge of music, humor, knowledge of teaching techniques, and enthusiasm.

The two research projects reported in this article describe systematic strategies for developing an understanding of the components that comprise effective applied instruction. Both were undertaken primarily to produce practical measures of the effectiveness of applied instruction for the purpose of providing feedback to the instructors so that they might improve their teaching and to provide evidence of teaching competence for promotion and tenure committees. The projects employed a facet-factorial approach to scale development (Abeles, 1973).

### Project I

The first development project (Abeles, 1975) focused on assessing applied music instruction for music majors. The instructors involved in the project were primarily full-time faculty members of a school of music in a southern university. The school of music enrolled approximately 250 students of whom about 170 were undergraduates.

Seventy-five undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in applied music during the fall semester were asked to write a one or two-page essay describing “an applied teacher who stands out most in your mind.” Students were asked to cite both positive and negative qualities of the instructor. These essays were then content analyzed. The analysis produced 123 unique statements which were randomly ordered in a five-option Likert-type rating scale format. The five options ranged from “highly agree that the statement is descriptive of the applied instructor” to “highly disagree that the statement is descriptive.” Approximately 35 percent of these 123 statements were negatively phrased.

Ninety-three undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in applied music instruction during the spring semester employed these 123 statements to describe the teaching of ten volunteer applied music faculty who represented several applied teaching areas (e.g., voice, piano, trumpet). The students were asked to describe as accurately as possible their present applied instructor, employing the response scale and statements contained on the form.

Because the objective of this study was both to develop a better understanding of the components of effective applied music instruction and produce a practical scale that students could use to evaluate applied instructors, a statistical procedure, factor analysis, which systematically reduces large amounts of data into smaller groups or factors, was employed to analyze the results of the students’ ratings. A four-factor solution of the data yielded the most meaningful interpretation and was the solution used for the development of a shorter, more practical scale. The four factors were labeled rapport, musical knowledge, instructional systemization, and instructional skills.

Items were selected for a 30-item evaluation form from the original 123-item pool based on their factor loadings. Twenty-three

“[W]hile faculty and students agree on criteria for good classroom instruction, they do not agree on criteria for good applied instruction.”

items had relatively high factor loadings on the factor they were selected to represent and had relatively low loadings on the other three factors. Seven other items were included that had relatively high loadings on several factors. These items were labeled general instructional competence. The 30-item scale included both positively and negatively phrased statements. The 30 items selected for the Applied Faculty Student Evaluation Scale for Music Majors (AFSESMM) appear in Table 1 grouped under the factors that they were selected to measure. (Note: When AFSESMM is employed for evaluation purposes, the items are in random order.)

Once the 30-item AFSESMM was developed, it was used by 64 students to rate eight applied faculty members from the voice, piano, string, and wind areas. These ratings produce an interjudge reliability coefficient for the total 30-item scale of .88. The five factor subscales each had reliability coefficients above .71.

To examine the relationship of the AFSESMM scores with other measures of applied faculty competence, four brass applied music faculty were asked to use a performance rating scale during applied brass jury playing examinations to evaluate 17 brass students. Each of the students used the AFSESMM to evaluate their applied teacher and each brass faculty member also completed a Colleague Teacher-Description Scale (CTDS) for the other three brass faculty. The correlations among these three measures were then obtained. The results showed that there was a moderately strong relationship (.60) between the AFSESMM scores and the ratings of the student performances, and a moderately weak, negative (-.31) relationship between the AFSESMM scores and the scores from the Colleague Teacher Description Scale. There was also a moderately weak, negative (-.34) relationship between the performance scores and the CTDS scores.

## Project II

This study was undertaken to determine if students enrolled in applied music instruction

at the college level who were not majoring in music had different criteria for determining the effectiveness of their instructors than those who were music majors. The instructors involved with this project were predominantly graduate teaching assistants teaching in a large private university in the northeast. There are approximately 100 non-music majors enrolled in applied music instruction each semester, the majority of whom are enrolled in voice, keyboard, and guitar instruction. Some of these students were enrolled in applied music instruction for the first time while others had studied for several years prior to entering the university.

Non-music major students enrolled in applied music instruction initially completed a short survey which asked them to write statements describing “the particular qualities of a music instructor...that make him or her effective or ineffective in helping you develop musically,” and describing “the characteristics of music lessons...that make them effective or ineffective in helping you develop musically.” In addition they were asked “what would you change about the music lessons you have had or are currently taking and/or any music instructors that you have had?” Forty-seven students responded to the survey. The statements on the survey were analyzed and yielded 104 unique statements. To better conceptualize the statements, two applied music instructors and the researcher organized the statements into four categories, as follows: flexibility, rapport, knowledge of materials, and instructional style.

The 104 statements were then randomly ordered in a five-option likert-type rating scale format employing the same options that were used in the development of the AFSESMM. Again, about one-third of the statements were negatively phrased.

Twenty-nine undergraduate and graduate non-music major applied music students employed the 104 statements to describe the teaching of their applied instructors. The data from these descriptions were then factor

**Table 1:** Varimax Four Factor Matrix of the AFSESMM

Items	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
I. Rapport				
He/she does not instill a feeling of confidence in his/her students	<b>.68</b>	.21	.27	.26
His/her enthusiasm is infectious and inspiring	<b>.66</b>	.22	.48	.15
He/she encourages the student to express himself	<b>.73</b>	.18	.23	.14
He/she brings out the best in his/her students	<b>.74</b>	.13	.44	.22
He/she is too overhearing	<b>.74</b>	.18	.22	.14
He/she shows a genuine interest in the student outside the lesson	<b>.73</b>	.42	.09	.14
He/she is patient and understanding	<b>.71</b>	.26	.16	.23
II. Instructional Systemization				
He/she gives explicit directions regarding what to practice	.09	<b>.60</b>	.15	.06
Music is chosen to strengthen the student's weakness	.34	<b>.56</b>	.00	.16
Analysis is part of his/her approach to a new piece of music	.07	<b>.58</b>	.15	.18
He/she is absent-minded and forgetful, and never seems to remember what music the student is working on each lesson	.11	<b>.65</b>	.01	.09
He/she outlines a system of teaching for the student so the student knows where he/she is heading	.40	<b>.56</b>	.11	.11
III. Instructional Skill				
His/her explanations are clear and concise	.31	.18	<b>.60</b>	.17
His/her method of teaching gives the student insight into teaching as well as performing	.37	.13	<b>.72</b>	.08
He/she is flexible, and the instruction begins at the student's own level of proficiency	.54	.08	<b>.57</b>	.17
He/she is unable to diagnose technical problems	.30	.26	<b>.49</b>	.06
He/she is able to correct technical difficulties	.02	.18	<b>.68</b>	.15
IV. Musical Knowledge				
He/she has a knowledge of different musical styles and performance practices	.16	.08	.26	<b>.66</b>
He/she has to refer to references to answer basic questions	.13	.01	.03	<b>.64</b>
He/she knows little music outside his/her own interests	.29	.09	.01	<b>.63</b>
He/she has a knowledge of the repertoire	.16	.23	.02	<b>.67</b>
He/she has a knowledge of good performing editions of music in his/her field	.07	.00	.02	<b>.53</b>
He/she has a knowledge of reference materials to which the student can refer	.29	.16	.11	<b>.51</b>
V. General Instructional Competence				
He/she "talks down" to his/her students	.55	.13	.43	.16
He/she is reluctant to admit a mistake	.41	.12	.41	.48
His/her teaching includes criticism and correction mixed with compliments and praise	.56	.45	.30	.18
He/she has difficulty communicating ideas	.42	.37	.48	.00
He/she is aware of current professional musical activity	.19	.02	.43	.51
He/she instills a sense of responsibility which is needed to get the work done				
He/she has an accurate perception regarding the student's ability	.60	.12	.44	.06



analyzed in an effort to determine what groups or factors were used by these students when judging the effectiveness of applied music instruction. A five-factor solution of the results produced the most easily interpreted factor structure and best agreed with the intuitive groupings of the 104 statements developed prior to the data collection. This five-factor solution was used for the development of a shorter evaluation scale. The five factors were labeled rapport, communication, pedagogical skill, instructional organization, and flexibility. This five-factor solution accounted for 65 percent of the total item, with the factor "rapport" alone accounting for 35 percent of the variance.

Thirty items were selected for a shorter, more practical, evaluation form from the 104-item pool based on their factor loadings. The number of items representing each factor is related to the amount of variance for which each factor accounted. Twenty-six items had relatively high factor loadings on the factor that they were selected to represent and had relatively low loadings on the other four factors. Four additional items were included that had relatively high loadings on several factors. The 30-item scale included both positively and negatively phrased statements. The 30 items selected for the Applied Faculty Student Evaluation for Non-Music Majors (AFSESNM) appear in Table 2, grouped under the factors that they were intended to measure.

To estimate the reliability of the 30 items in the AFSESNM, an interjudge reliability coefficient was obtained using the data that were generated during the trial evaluation by 29 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in applied music instruction in voice, piano, guitar, and various wind and string instruments. The analysis produced an alpha reliability coefficient for the total 30-item scale of .89.

## Discussion

These projects are attempts to identify the broad categories by which students of applied music judge their teachers. In the development of the AFSES for music majors, it was noted that the four-factor structure produced by the factor analysis did not include

a performance ability dimension. This seems due to the consistently high rating all the applied faculty received on items describing their performing. From these results it might be concluded that students may suffer from a "halo effect" and are unable to discriminate among the performing abilities of applied faculty. This perspective seems to be further reinforced by the data collected in the development of the AFSES for non-music majors (AFSESNM). Of the 104 items generated by the non-major students, very few mentioned performance and none of these were strongly related to the five-factor structure.

A comparison of the four-factor structure applied teaching produced by the music majors and the five-factor structure produced by the non-music majors demonstrates considerable overlap. "Rapport" appears in both structures and accounts for the largest amount of item variance. While there are no items that are identical, descriptors such as "patience" and "confidence" appear on both subscales. The non-major Rapport factor includes three statements that refer to "pressure," "a non-threatening environment," and "puts me at ease," which may serve to distinguish students who are enrolling in instruction as an elective rather than as an important component of their major area of study.

The remaining three factors on the AFSESMM and the four remaining factors on the AFSESNM overlap considerably, but are not parallel. For instance, a statement describing the explicitness of directions regarding what to practice appears on the AFSESMM in the Instructional Systemization Factor, and a statement describing the clarity of the teacher's explanations appears on the AFSESMM's Instructional skill factor. These two areas are both included on the Communication factor of the AFSESNM. Items involving both knowledge and skill in improving technique are found on the Pedagogical Skill factor of the AFSESNM while these areas appear as separate factors on the AFSESMM.

There is no separate Flexibility factor on the scale for music majors, although an item on the Instructional Skill factor mentions this area. This difference may again distinguish the two populations, as non-majors with a wider range of performing ability may expect more adjustments from their instructors than music majors.

**Table 2.** Varimax Five Factor Matrix of the AFSESNM

Items	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
I. Rapport					
My teacher is helpful	<b>.88</b>	.15	.17	.19	.26
He/she teaches without pressure	<b>.83</b>	.15	.01	.12	.29
My teacher creates a nonthreatening environment	<b>.86</b>	.30	.08	.08	.21
He/she needs more patience and flexibility	<b>.88</b>	.11	.08	.25	.04
My teacher is impatient	<b>.96</b>	.10	.07	.12	.12
He/she gives me confidence	<b>.88</b>	.11	.10	.02	.16
Puts me at ease so that I can concentrate on the music	<b>.88</b>	.05	.19	.13	.22
II. Communication					
Is clear and to the point	.16	<b>.70</b>	.02	.25	.35
He/she provides easy to follow instructions	.40	<b>.71</b>	.33	.24	.01
Takes things step by step	.09	<b>.90</b>	.11	.10	.12
His/her instructions are clear	.40	<b>.73</b>	.34	.16	.21
Provides specific lessons and techniques to practice each week	.48	<b>.59</b>	.26	.16	.18
III. Pedagogical Skill					
He/she selects repertory to reinforce my developing technique	.23	.46	<b>.57</b>	.39	.02
My teacher is knowledgeable about music	.18	.06	<b>.73</b>	.08	.11
He/she focuses on the development of proper technique	.04	.12	<b>.85</b>	.30	.04
Has a good knowledge of drills that develop skills	.22	.21	<b>.60</b>	.46	.27
His/her method directly points out my weaknesses	.09	.05	<b>.58</b>	.16	.00
IV. Instructional Organization					
Is versatile with styles	.14	.16	.32	<b>.77</b>	.21
Is rigid in his/her teaching agenda	.17	.01	.05	<b>.63</b>	.30
Does not spend enough time on technique	.19	.20	.29	<b>.58</b>	.05
My teacher focuses on technique more than on quality of sound	.11	.02	.14	<b>.56</b>	.23
We do too many exercises and not enough repertory	.23	.36	.05	<b>.69</b>	.02
V. Flexibility					
He/she is willing to work with me to make my playing more enjoyable	.09	.09	.08	.14	<b>.53</b>
The lessons are rigorous	.20	.16	.27	.05	<b>.68</b>
He/she is informal	.01	.44	.09	.09	<b>.58</b>
He/she is able to remain flexible and modifies the game plan continuously	.28	.11	.22	.07	<b>.59</b>
VI. General Instructional Competence					
He/she has a long-range plan for my musical development	.61	.15	.55	.01	.28
He/she is encouraging	.55	.53	.08	.29	.31
He/she develops a solid foundation for future lessons	.62	.18	.35	.34	.30
My teacher creates a challenging atmosphere	.45	.22	.54	.36	.22



In a recent study, Schmidt, Lewis and Kurpius-Brock (1991) identify adjective descriptors that distinguish characteristics between applied instructors rated to be effective and less effective. Several of the descriptors which significantly distinguished between the two groups parallel statements on the AFSESMM and AFSESNM (e.g., rigid, tense, unfriendly, indifferent, versus methodical, sensitive, organized, and thorough). These results provide further support for the characteristics which are rated by the two scales.

The results of the interjudge reliability estimates for the total score of the AFSESMM and AFSESNM are sufficiently high to use the scales in assessing applied faculty. The examination of the relationship between AFSESMM scores and colleague evaluations contradict results reported in prior investigations that have examined the relationship between student and colleague evaluations of classroom instruction. While the AFSESMM scores were negatively related to colleague evaluations, previous research (Wilson, Dienst, and Watson, 1973) and the concurrent evaluation of classroom instructors in the same school of music has yielded strong positive (.79) relationships between student and colleague measures. It seems that while faculty and students agree on criteria for good classroom instruction, they do not agree on criteria for good applied instruction.


Some faculty feel that the best way to evaluate applied teachers is by the success of their students. The moderately strong relationship between the AFSESMM scores and the performance scores seem to support this position and also provides support for the criterion related validity of the AFSESMM scale.

The scales developed in these projects appear to be reliable measures of important characteristics of applied music faculty as perceived by their students. One use of these scales is to provide evidence of teaching competence for college and university promotion and tenure committees. An important related application is applied faculty development. Applied music faculty, while often being skilled and experienced performers, do not necessarily arrive at their first academic position with much experience or competence as teachers. Scales such as the ones reported in this article can be used by faculty and adminis-

trators to assist applied faculty in improving the effectiveness of their instruction. In particular, the factor structure of the scales makes them effective for this application. A profile of the subscale scores that are provided can suggest dimensions of teaching in which applied faculty have either already achieved competence or in which they can improve.

Another important application is in the preparation of graduate music students for college teaching positions. While graduate schools often provide their students the opportunity to teach undergraduate applied music so that they may gain experience, there is often little guidance provided to nurture the development of applied teaching competencies. The use of scales provided in these projects during such "preservice internships" can serve to systematically focus attention on dimensions of applied teaching that students need to develop further.

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"There is nothing to it. You only have to hit the right note at the right time, and the instrument plays itself."

--Johann Sebastian Bach