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Classroom Management in Music Ensembles: Exploring the Relationship between Perceived Classroom Management Skills and Performance Achievement

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN MUSIC
ENSEMBLES: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PERCEIVED CLASSROOM
MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE
ACHIEVEMENT

By

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DATA FORM
ABSTRACT

As literature repeatedly has stated that classroom management is a great area of concern for teachers, the present study was conducted in an attempt to determine whether a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles in western Michigan. Subjects (n=28), selected from Michigan School Vocal Music Association’s District Ten, responded to a mail survey providing answers to various questions pertaining to their classroom management skills and education experience. Also volunteered by the participants were the District Festival ratings received by their ensembles during the past three years. These ratings served as the measure for performance achievement for the purpose of this study. Results indicated significant, moderate correlations between three separate management variables and performance achievement. Also revealed was the fact that 93% of the music directors surveyed feel that classroom management is an important element leading to successful performance achievement with their ensembles.

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CHAPTER ONE: THESIS PROPOSAL

Problem Statement

Classroom management has long been a topic of great concern for teachers. Past research has shown that both pre-service, and in-service teachers not only have great concerns over classroom management, but they also often lack the ability, in the form of instructional skills, that is required to administer successful and consistent classroom management practices (Bergee, 2001). Research has also concluded that large class sizes can have a negative impact on classroom management and the resultant level of classroom achievement (Blatchford, Moriarty, Edmonds & Martin 2002). One educational environment where large class sizes are often found is that of the school music ensemble. Given the aforementioned ideas, is classroom management a problem for music ensemble directors? Is enough attention to pre-service training in classroom management being given at the undergraduate level? Is enough attention being given to classroom management professional development at the district level? Should more attention to classroom management training and retraining be devoted to the education of teachers who will be expected to manage large class sizes such as those found in performing music ensembles? Finally, among directors of music ensembles, is there a relationship between classroom management skills and performance achievement?

Importance and Rationale of Study

A great deal of educational research has stated that teacher behaviors have a direct impact and influence on the curricular gains of students (Yarbrough & Madsen,
Abundant literature also exists pertaining to student behaviors and those behaviors' potentially negative effect on the overall classroom environment (Brendell, 1996; Brophy, 1988 and 1983; Brigham et al., 1994; Dunn, 1997, Madsen, 2003; Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998; Yarbrough and Henley, 1999). However, scant research exists, specifically in the field of music education, attempting to correlate a music director's ability to manage student behavior to the performance achievement of said director's ensembles. The present study is an investigation into the relationship between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles. If classroom environment, and hence classroom management has been shown to have a direct effect on curricular achievement, research is needed to determine whether a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement in music ensembles. If said relationship exists, changes to the current system of teacher education may be considered to include a greater emphasis on classroom management instruction.

Background of the Study

A veteran choral director of Middle School students, the author, as a result of his own management issues, began to suspect the possibility that the classroom environment, and hence classroom management, has a significant effect on the overall progress toward achievement in the setting of the music classroom. This fact was made ever more apparent by witnessing student teachers struggle regularly with management. It has long been considered important for educational institutions to provide prospective teachers with the necessary tools to succeed in the complex
process of teaching students to learn (Austin & Reinhardt, 1999; Jensen & Winitzky, 2002), and classroom management skills have long been considered crucial skills for pre-service teachers to learn. After much corroborating discussion with other professionals and educational leaders, the author began to formulate research questions in the areas of classroom management as it potentially relates to performance achievement in music ensembles. To the principal investigator, it became more and more apparent that pre-service and novice teachers often struggle with classroom management. This thought lead to the questions: could my limited management skills be having an effect on the performance achievement of my ensembles? Do other music director’s management skills have an impact on the performance achievement of their ensembles? Are there directors who feel undereducated in the area of classroom management? Are other directors, specifically, those who find management challenging, also seeking answers to these questions? These questions eventually begot the concept of a study attempting to correlate classroom management and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles. The study takes the form of a mail survey to music ensemble directors residing in the greater west Michigan area. Directors responded to questions pertaining to classroom management ranging from the evaluation of their own self-
perceived management skills, to reflecting on their pre-service management
direction. Also included were questions pertaining to directors’ overall opinions of
their current school districts’ professional development opportunities in the area of
classroom management, and the overall importance of management as it pertains to
performance achievement for ensembles. Survey responses from subjects (n=28) were
analyzed seeking correlations between classroom management variables and
performance achievement.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this thesis is to support the research hypothesis in the
fact that music ensemble directors’ classroom management skills are directly related
to the performance achievement of their groups. Evidence, via a mail survey was
sought to support said hypothesis. Specifically, sought were answers to questions
pertaining to ensemble directors’ self-perceived classroom management skills, their
thoughts on the training they received as an undergraduate, and their thoughts on the
overall importance of classroom management for ensembles as it pertains to
performance achievement. A secondary objective of the study was to attempt to
ascertain whether music directors either felt undereducated in the area of classroom
management, or felt that, due to the size of their ensembles, extra training should be
offered or provided for ensemble directors. It has been the experience of the principal
investigator, that large ensembles of forty or more students are significantly more
difficult to manage than smaller ensembles/classes. Therefore, a third objective of the
study was to determine whether other west Michigan music ensemble directors shared
this opinion. If correlations were found on the aforementioned objectives, should changes be considered to the process of pre-service music teacher education?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, classroom management skills will be purely self-perceived as reported by the ensemble directors participating in the survey. Time constraints simply did not allow for interviews of principals and students of the survey participants, in an attempt to validate management skills as reported by the participating ensemble directors. Performance achievement, for the purpose of this study, is defined as ensemble groups receiving overall first division (I) ratings at adjudicated Michigan School Vocal Music Association (MSVMA) sanctioned District Choral Festivals. The First Division (I) rating is the highest overall rating awarded at MSVMA events and represents “an excellent performance for the event and classification judged” (Michigan School Vocal Music Association, 2004). This rating is a nominal figure, and in no way represents ordinal data such as first or second place. Therefore, several groups can be awarded First Division ratings at a single festival, similar to the fact that several students can receive an “A” in the same class. Other possible ratings at MSVMA festivals include: Second Division, or II (“a good performance [that] had minor defects. Shows much accomplishment and promise”), Third Division, or III (“A fair performance. Shows accomplishment and promise, but is lacking in some essential elements”) and Fourth Division, or IV (“A performance which is lacking in many essential qualities”) (Michigan School Vocal Music Association, 2004). As a measuring device, these ratings provide performance
achievement results for the highest percentage of the population, as a majority of MSVMA directors attend District Choral festivals. Other festivals available to directors are Solo and Ensemble Festivals, Chamber Choir Festivals, Pop Choir Festivals and State Choral Festivals. Of the preceding, the District Choral Festival comprises the highest percentage of participation among ensemble directors and their performing groups.

Limitations of the Study

As with any, the present study has its limitations. Obviously, the sample size (n=28) is slightly small to be considered scientifically significant and is limited by its location to only a portion of Michigan. A similar, future study should include not only many more subjects, but subjects from different geographical and socioeconomic regions. As mentioned earlier, validation of the reported perceived classroom management skills would also strengthen future studies. Interviews (or surveys) of principals, fellow teachers and students, along with observations of subjects teaching, could help to create more valid and significant results. It is also suggested that more specific survey groups may yield more significant findings. For example, a repeat of this study that only surveyed Junior High/Middle School ensemble directors may yield strikingly different results than the present survey of teachers representing all grade levels. Other limitations to this study include the limitations of the survey instrument itself as well as subject response error. Respondents have no way of expressing their feelings or emotions when forced into a Likert-style selection. Again, interviews and observations would help the subjects clarify their responses. Errors, or
incomplete data, found in six of the returned surveys proved to be the limitation that, ultimately, brought the sample size below the desired number of thirty.

Summary

The present study is needed to determine whether a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles. Classroom management has long been an issue of concern for pre-service and novice teachers and this issue is magnified with the music ensemble due to its inherently large class size. More research is needed to determine the relationships between management and performance achievement, management and pre-service training, management and in-service training and the overall importance of classroom management as it pertains to performance achievement among directors of music ensembles.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Classroom management is defined “as all of the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so that instruction in content and student learning can take place” (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 35). Classroom management has long been a topic of much debate and research in education and according to Bergee, is not only a primary concern for many pre-service teachers, but beginning in-service teachers as well. “Beginning teachers often lack the instructional skills that facilitate good classroom management” (Bergee, 2002, p. 1). This chapter will focus on existing literature as it pertains to classroom management in musical ensembles. Specifically, areas of focus will be teacher behaviors, student behaviors, class size and makeup, and pre-service and beginning teacher beliefs and attitudes toward classroom management.

Teacher Behaviors

Studies have shown that teacher behavior has a significant effect on many variables including classroom climate and student behavior (Brigham, Brigham & Renfro, 1994; Brophy, 1998; Duke & Henninger, 1998; 2002, Hamann, Lineburgh & Paul, 1998; Lapointe & Legault, 2004; Van Der Sijde & Tomic, 1993). Brigham et al. (1994) add, “it is argued that an effective classroom management plan must first examine the curriculum and the behavior of the teacher who provides the instruction” (p. 3). The first section of this chapter will discuss pertinent literature as it applies to specific teaching behaviors that, according to respective authors, have been found to
equate to successful instruction, focusing specifically on how these issues pertain to directors of large music ensembles.

In the 1970s, Jacob Kounin described several teaching behaviors that distinguish good from poor classroom managers (Van Der Sijde & Tomic, 1993). These behaviors, according to literature, are still considered necessary for today’s educators. In fact, Brophy (1998) concludes, “principles of good classroom management developed primarily during the 1970s and early 1980s appear to be just as applicable to contemporary classrooms” (p. 1). One of those behaviors is known as “withitness.” Withitness is demonstrated when “a teacher communicates with his students through (overt) behavior; he shows awareness of what the students are doing and what goes on in the classroom. He has the proverbial eyes in the back of his head” (Van Der Sijde & Tomic, 1993, p. 3). Withitness, as described here, should be considered an extremely desirable behavior for instructors of music ensembles simply due to the size of the teaching space and the amount of students with whom it is occupied. Another of Kounin’s prescribed behaviors, “overlapping,” is achieved when a teacher successfully supervises or attends to more than one activity at a time (Brigham et al., 1994; Van Der Sijde & Tomic, 1993). An example of overlapping in a music rehearsal would be “that of an orchestra conductor attending to one or more sections [of the ensemble] specifically, while rehearsing the entire orchestra” (Brigham et al., 1994, p. 11). Therefore, overlapping can also be considered essential for directors of large music ensembles. “Movement management,” the third of Kounin’s suggested behaviors for success to be discussed in this chapter, relates to
the ability for an instructor to make smooth educational transitions, moving easily from one activity to the next, avoiding “jerky” transitions and minimizing “slowdowns” (Brigham et al., 1994). Several studies, including the one conducted by Brigham et al., cite these qualities as paramount for teacher success in the area of classroom management. Concerning directors of music ensembles, this point appears to be magnified simply due to the number of classroom participants and the physical size of the classroom environment.

In a study published in 1998, Yarbrough and Madsen sought to measure teaching effectiveness in the choral rehearsals of eighty-nine music ensemble directors. Of the ten categories used for measurement in their study, eight were in the area of teacher behaviors while only two pertained to student behaviors, thus showing the importance of teacher behavior as it pertains to overall teaching effectiveness and, for the purpose of this study, classroom management in music ensembles. In the aforementioned study, Yarbrough and Madsen define [music ensemble] conductor behaviors as “eye contact, facial expressions, body movement, speaking-voice inflections and conducting gestures” (p. 2). They concluded that music ensemble directors who maintained greater eye contact, communicated with more positive facial expressions and body movement, and used more emotive inflections in speaking-voice and conducting gestures, received higher overall performance ratings (Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998). Brophy (1998) also adds:

Research findings have shown that the key to successful management is the teacher’s ability to maximize the time that students spend actively engaged in
worthwhile academic activities and to minimize the time that they spend
waiting for activities to get started, making transitions between activities,
sitting with nothing to do, or engaging in misconduct (p. 1).

It is hypothesized by the author, that directors of music ensembles who demonstrate
the behaviors discussed above may achieve higher educational results both in the
classroom and in musical performance.

Student Behaviors

The "misconduct" mentioned in the last quote of the previous section of this
document refers to one of the many student behaviors to be discussed in this section.
Misconduct, inattentiveness, or off-task behavior has been the topic of a vast amout
of research literature in the field of music education (Brendell, 1996; Brophy, 1988
and 1983; Brigham et al., 1994; Dunn, 1997, Madsen, 2003; Yarbrough & Madsen,
1998; Yarbrough and Henley, 1999). Research in the field of music education has
concluded that when this off-task behavior exceeds twenty percent, student learning
suffers (Madsen, 2003). According to Brendell (1996), student attentiveness appears
lowest in the portions of [music ensemble] rehearsals where singing [or, playing
instruments] is not utilized and thus, off-task behavior increases. She goes on to add,
"the literature reveals that student off-task behavior is lower when the activity [being
taught] requires more active involvement" (Brendell, 1996, p.2). To music ensemble
directors, this speaks to the need to keep student musicians actively involved for as
great a portion of the rehearsal as possible.
Attitude of the student has also been the subject of great amounts of research. According to Dunn (1997), “Previous researchers in music have indicated that student attentiveness and attitude may be related in part to teacher reinforcement” (p. 1). This brings us to the idea that attitude and attentiveness are, perhaps tied to motivation in rehearsals. In the area of student motivation, Stamer (1999) writes, “Effective variables of motivation [in ensemble rehearsals] include providing a nurturing environment, feedback, interesting [music] repertoire, and achievable challenges” (p. 4). The preceding statement gives weight to the fact that student behaviors are greatly affected by teacher behaviors and that music ensemble directors may benefit from the information presented in this chapter.

Class Size and Constitution

It has been suspected for decades that smaller class sizes allow for more individualized instruction and hence, higher instructional results (Blatchford, et al., 2002). In her recent study, Best (2005) concluded, “no more than twenty ( . . . ) students should be permitted in any class. Ideally, class size should be limited to fifteen” (p. 74). The makeup and class size of a typical music ensemble differs from a standard general education setting in two ways. The class sizes are typically quite large, ranging from forty to over one hundred, and the makeup of students often includes mainstreamed, special-needs students as Brigham et al. (1994) state:

Music educators are not only called upon to work with the same students who populate general education classes, they are often required to work with larger groups of students than general education teachers and frequently under a
hectic schedule. In addition to this, students who receive special education services because of learning or behavior problems, which limit their ability to work in large or in cooperative groups, often attend music classes with their more able classmates (p. 4).

As class size pertains to classroom management, Blatchford et al. (2002) state that in a classroom of fifteen pupils:

The teacher spent little time on control, and there was little need to keep children on task. There was a very noticeable contrast with the situation in another school visited at about the same time by the same observer, involving a teacher in a large class of more than thirty. Interactions with the children were a continuous battle to keep their attention on task (p. 102).

The Tennessee Star Project, according to many researchers, also points out pertinent findings concerning overall class size (Achilles, Krieger, Finn & Sharp, 2003; Blatchford et al., 2002; Finn, 1997; Gilman & Kiger, 2002; Nye & Hedges, 2002).

By analyzing and reporting on the Tennessee Star Project Blatchford et al. (2002), discovered:

A common benefit cited by teachers in small and regular plus aide classes was that they were better able to individualize instruction. These teachers reported increased monitoring of student behavior and learning, opportunities for more immediate and more individualized re-teaching, more enrichment, more frequent interactions with each child, a better match between each child's ability and the instructional opportunities provided, a more detailed
knowledge of each child’s needs as a learner, and more time to meet individual learners’ needs using a variety of instructional approaches (p. 105). Clearly, research has concluded that smaller class sizes correlate with higher educational outcomes. Therefore, directors of music ensembles may benefit from this study as it points to areas of concern with teaching, as well as the fact that class size has been proven to have an effect on both learning and management.

Pre-service/Beginning Teachers’ Thoughts on Classroom Management

It has long been considered important for educational institutions to provide prospective teachers with the necessary tools to succeed in the complex process of teaching students to learn (Austin & Reinhardt, 1999; Jensen & Winitzky, 2002). Recently, as reflection has become a popular educational tool (Winitzky, 1992), it has also become important to learn what pre-service teachers are thinking, as stated in a dissertation published by Jensen and Winitzky in 2002. “In viewing learning to teach as skill learning, pre-service teachers’ declarative knowledge is important for the development of their procedural knowledge” (p. 4). For decades, the greatest concern that pre-service teachers regularly declare is that of classroom management (Austin & Reinhardt, 1999; Bergee, 2002; Rozmajzl & Bourne, 1996). This is particularly true for directors of large music ensembles according to Bergee (2002). In fact, Bergee (2002) labels management of student behavior as “one of the biggest challenges facing music teachers” (p. 1). Many student teachers of large music ensembles have quickly learned that the few specific strategies learned in a methods class are nowhere near the amount of knowledge required to maintain a smoothly managed music
ensemble (Schmidt, 1994). Schmidt (1994) also found that many teachers report feeling that the principles learned in methods classes, such as the belief that a well-paced, interesting lesson will avert management problems, are somewhat true, but must be accompanied by more in-depth strategies often only learned after a teacher has secured employment. Butler, in a 2001 study, determined that many pre-service teachers envision the “effective teacher in terms of a ‘persona,’” that is, as someone who possesses information, personal characteristics, and the ability to carry out specific actions related to teaching” (p. 9). Butler (2001) suspected, if these student teachers create a mental composite of this “persona,” they might be able to move a step closer to developing their own identities as teachers. This persona, as it is described, is not only considered learnable (Butler, 2001), but may also be considered necessary for teachers of larger, more difficult to manage class sizes such as those typically found with music ensembles.

Another concern for many pre-service music ensemble directors is the limited field-placements required at many universities (Conway, 2002). Most Midwestern universities continue to only require a one-semester field placement (student teaching) for their potential music educators (Conway, 2002). This differs from other degree programs in education where college students are placed in classroom settings for two complete semesters (Conway, 2002). A student in Krueger’s 2001 article was quoted as saying, “one can’t have enough classroom experience before entering a teaching position” (p. 4). Snyder (1998) echoes this sentiment:
Regardless of student teachers' personal histories or university preparation, time and experience with the students and the teaching materials used are the most important influences on classroom management. Successful classroom management techniques should be stressed in methods classes but, as soon as possible, university students should be given the opportunity to apply and reinforce these skills with actual students either in lab or school classrooms (p. 3).

Research clearly shows here that pre-service music educators are not only greatly concerned with the aspects of classroom management, but that they also desire more education in this area, particularly as it applies to placements in the field.

Beginning music teachers, not unlike pre-service music teachers, are also quick to speak to the importance of classroom management when it comes to succeeding with their ensembles (Krueger, 2001). Krueger quoted a second-year middle school teacher admitting his struggles with classroom management:

My biggest challenge was with discipline and crowd control with large groups of middle school (...) students. When there is only one adult in the room, large groups of middle school students need more structure than I could have imagined. I had good practice at this in my student teaching, but I now know that my cooperating teacher had done enormous amounts of structuring for the students before I walked into the classroom (p. 1).

Beginning music teachers have also been shown to comment that perhaps more in-service, classroom management training should be instituted at the district level.
(McDonald, 2000) as well as allotting more professional time for reflection.

“Professional time geared toward reflecting, writing, talking, listening, discussing, and problem-solving activities with others may be more productive than attempting ‘fix-it’ formulas” (p. 3). It has been discovered that teachers often feel a need for more time to rethink curriculum and instruction (McDonald, 2000). Demonstrated above is the fact that beginning music educators share many of the same management concerns as their pre-service peers.

Summary

Decades worth of research suggest that classroom management is an essential aspect of education. Music instructors are immediately made aware of this glaring reality upon entering the classroom due to the fact that management has often been shown to become more difficult with higher student numbers, as literature suggests that large class sizes are generally more difficult to manage than are smaller groups. Therefore, due to the size of many music ensembles, music educators need to become experts in the area of classroom management. Research also suggests that more school districts should consider the incorporation of more time for reflection, as well as considering professional development opportunities to foster growth of employees dealing with management issues, particularly, as it pertains to this study, directors of large music ensembles. For decades, it has been known that teacher behaviors affect student behaviors and hence, have an overarching effect on classroom management in general.
Recently, it has been speculated that these known, positive teacher behaviors are indeed learnable by pre-service teachers and should therefore be an integral part of pre-service teacher education at the university level. Student behaviors, such as inattentiveness and misconduct have been linked to educational settings where activity is low. Therefore, it is suggested that music ensemble directors, must maximize rehearsal activity in an orderly and systematically organized manner to facilitate learning and, as a result, attempt to reduce negative student behaviors. As the body of literature grows, pre-service teachers’ thoughts and beliefs are becoming a growing part of the research process concerning pre-service teacher education. Abundant literature states that pre-service educators report classroom management as their number one concern pertaining to teaching and as a result, current literature hints of a trend toward a goal of improving classroom management instruction at the pre-service teacher level. Ultimately, the thrust of much literature concludes that management must be tied to curriculum, and that a management system that exists as a separate coercive entity rarely works as effectively as a system based on curriculum and sound teacher behaviors.

Conclusion

It is concluded that more research is needed to determine whether a relationship exists between performance achievement and classroom management skills. If this relationship indeed exists, the music education profession may consider changes to its current system. These changes could include more intense training in aspects of classroom management at the undergraduate level, particularly for pre-
service music education majors who, ultimately, will be expected to direct large
music ensembles. Additional classroom management professional development
opportunities may also be considered for beginning teachers. Perhaps extra training is
necessary for pre-service and beginning teachers of large music ensembles. This
training should be geared specifically for those music instructors who report problems
with discipline and classroom management. As Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) state
below, additional research is also needed to determine how known teaching behaviors
function in large music ensembles to produce higher performance achievement.

Two of the foremost goals of research in music rehearsals are to (1) identify
and define observable behaviors of music teaching and learning, and (2)
determine the function of those behaviors in producing excellence in music
performance. There is abundant research literature that contributes to an
identification and definition of observable behaviors; however, there is scant
literature regarding how those behaviors function to produce better
attentiveness, attitude and performance (p. 1).
CHAPTER THREE: THESIS REPORT

Introduction

Classroom management, according to abundant literature, is, and generally has been, an issue of strong concern for teachers to the point where pre-service and novice teachers regularly state classroom management as their number one concern pertaining to the teaching profession (Bergee, 2002). Literature makes suggestions to the notion that class size has been shown to raise the difficulty level of classroom management in many settings (Blatchford et al., 2002). One educational setting where large class sizes are the norm is that of the school music ensemble. The present study seeks to determine if a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles in western Michigan. Sought, will be answers to the following research questions: Do better classroom managers necessarily receive higher adjudicated performance ratings with their ensembles? Do poorer managers necessarily receive lower adjudicated performance ratings with their ensembles? Do music ensemble directors feel undereducated in aspects of classroom management? What are the opinions of current school music ensemble directors pertaining to the importance of classroom management as it relates to performance achievement for their ensembles? What follows will be the thesis report on said study including a description of the subjects and the research design, analysis of the results, a conclusion, and plans for dissemination.
Subjects

Subjects (n=69) were selected from the membership directory of the 2004-2005 Michigan School Vocal Music Association (MSVMA) in accordance with the association’s research guidelines (Michigan School Vocal Music Association, 2004). In an attempt to give the study a local perspective, directors from MSVMA’s District Ten were selected, as the principal investigator is a resident of the west Michigan area and has taught in a District Ten school for nine years. District Ten includes the western Michigan counties of Allegan and Barry, and the portions of Ottawa, Kent and Ionia South of the 43rd parallel, including the corporate limits of the city of Grand Rapids. The subject group is comprised of vocal music educators teaching elementary, junior high/middle school, and high school levels and includes educators with teaching experience from one to thirty-nine years.

Design of Study

Procedure

A cross-sectional design was selected in order to provide results from ensemble directors that spanned not only many years of teaching service, but also many levels of students taught. A survey designed in the spring of 2005 was mailed to subjects (n=69) on July 6, 2005. Follow-up phone calls/e-mails were placed/sent on July 14 to non-responders in an attempt to garner a higher percentage of participating ensemble directors. Participating subjects (n=34) responded by completing and returning both the survey instrument (see appendix) and the Informed Consent Form (see appendix). Data were collected, tabulated and analyzed between July 7 and July
20, 2005. Including two self-addressed, stamped envelopes with the original mailing, ensured anonymity. The subjects were instructed to return the survey instrument in one envelope, and the Informed Consent Form in the second envelope.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument (see appendix A), generated by the principal investigator, consisted of six questions pertaining to classroom management. Subjects responded via a five-point Likert-style scale. Also included in the instrument was a space for subjects to enter the adjudicated MSVMA District Festival final ratings of their respective performing ensembles from the past three years, as well as a space for subjects to enter their years of teaching experience in the field of choral music education. Survey question number one asked ensemble directors to evaluate their personal (self-perceived) classroom management skills and was worded in the following manner: Please rate, in general, how you perceive your own classroom management skills. Likert-style choices for question one were: 1=poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=above average and 5=excellent. Question number two, which incorporated the same Likert-style answer choices as question one, was worded as such: Please rate your pre-service education experience pertaining to classroom management instruction. Question number three read: Do you feel you were provided with enough instruction in the area of classroom management as an undergraduate? Likert choices for question three were: 1=no, 2=not really, 3=probably, 4=basically, yes and 5=definitely, yes. Question number four asked participants to share opinions pertaining to their current school district’s professional development opportunities in
the area of classroom management training/re-training and was worded as follows: Please rate your satisfaction with your current school district’s professional development opportunities in the area of classroom management skill development. Likert answer choices for question four were the same as for questions one and two ranging from poor to excellent. Question number five asked respondents to evaluate the difficulty of managing a large (40+ member) ensemble when compared to that of a smaller one and included the sentence: In my experience, managing large groups is ____ compared to managing smaller groups. Likert choices for question five were: 1=much more difficult, 2=slightly more difficult, 3=about the same, 4=slightly less difficult and 5= much less difficult. The final question of the survey asked for the subjects’ opinions on the importance of classroom management as it pertains to performance achievement in their music ensembles and was worded: Please rate, in your opinion, the overall importance of classroom management as it pertains to performance achievement. Likert response choices for this question were as follows: 1=not important, 2=somewhat important, 3=important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important. Performance achievement, for the purpose of this study, is operationally defined as ensembles receiving high adjudicator ratings at MSVMA sanctioned festivals. High adjudicator ratings, for the purpose of this study, consist of first division (I) overall scores. The first division (I) rating is considered the highest achievable rating score for a performance ensemble at MSVMA sanctioned events followed by the nominal (not ordinal) values of II (second division), III (third division) and IV (fourth division). Descriptors attached to those ratings are similar to
those attached to school report card grades: I = excellent, II = good, III = fair, IV = poor (Michigan School Vocal Music Association, 2004).

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of reviewing and compiling results from the completed and returned mail surveys. Surveys returned via postal mail between July 7 and July 20, 2005 (n=34), were collected and inspected for error by the principal investigator. It was found that six surveys contained missing data, and were therefore discarded. The remaining surveys (n=28) were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Each survey question was analyzed and correlated with the subjects' performance achievement scores (averaged) in an attempt to support the hypothesis that a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement in music ensembles.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis of data included tabulating survey results and calculating percentages and means for each question. Formal analysis involved each question being analyzed individually in an attempt to discover patterns in the responses. Pearson Correlation calculations with a two-tailed significance value were then made seeking relationships between classroom management variables and festival ratings for the directors' ensembles as reported in the survey. Upon reviewing the analyses, it was discovered that only eight of the twenty-eight participating subjects reported scores for Junior High/Middle School ensembles. Therefore, the results portion to follow, will conclude with a discussion of the findings as they pertain to Junior
High/Middle School directors only. Considered in this discussion of Junior
High/Middle School responses must be the scientifically small sample size (n=8).

Results

Preliminary analysis of data revealed interesting findings in the area of
ensemble directors' opinions toward classroom management in general (see Table 1).

Question one, "please rate how you perceive your own classroom management
skills," resulted in a mean response of 4.30 on a five point Likert scale with choice
four being "above average," and five being "excellent." One can conclude from this
data that the majority of music ensemble directors participating in this survey (23 out
of 28, or 82%) consider themselves either above average or excellent managers.

Question two, "please rate your pre-service education experience pertaining to
classroom management instruction," returned a mean score of 3.00 on the Likert scale
demonstrating that most ensemble directors feel that their pre-service management
training was "average." Question three, "do you feel you were provided with enough
instruction in the area of classroom management as an undergraduate?" returned a
mean score of 2.25. Responses to this question demonstrate that twenty-one out of
twenty-eight, or 75% of the surveyed ensemble directors feel unsatisfied with their
undergraduate experience in the area of classroom management instruction and
responded with either 1=no, or 2= not really. Question four, "please rate your
satisfaction with your current school district’s professional development opportunities
in the area of classroom management," returned a mean score of 2.75. Results to this
question can be interpreted to reveal that eight out of twenty-eight, or 29% of

25
respondents are unsatisfied with their current school district’s professional
development in the area of classroom management and answered either 1=poor, or
2=below average. Question five, “please share your opinion on management in large
ensembles (40+) compared to that of smaller ensembles/classes: In my experience,
managing large groups is ___ compared to managing smaller groups,” returned a
mean score of 3.89. This data represents that twenty out of twenty-eight, or 71% of
the participating subjects feel that managing large groups is either “much more
difficult,” or “slightly more difficult” than managing smaller groups of students.
Question six, “please rate, in your opinion, the overall importance of classroom
management as it pertains to performance achievement,” returned a mean score of
4.75. Twenty-six out of twenty-eight, or 93% responded either “very important,” or
“extremely important” to question number six overwhelmingly stating that directors
of music ensembles in western Michigan feel that classroom management plays a
crucial role in the performance achievement of their groups.
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of survey questions and festival ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of all questions</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of all festival ratings</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Correlations were then computed in an attempt to demonstrate scientifically significant relationships between each individual question as it related to the performance ratings reported by ensemble directors. The following represents detailed information on the question-by-question analysis of the survey (also, see Table 2). Analysis of question number one resulted in a moderate correlation ($r=.454$, $p=.02$), between an ensemble director's perceived management skills and the performance achievement of his/her groups. Question number two (the rating of pre-service education pertaining to management) demonstrated no correlation with performance achievement ($r=.102$, $p=.60$). Question number three (the rating of the amount of undergraduate education pertaining to classroom management) also
returned no significant correlation ($r=.030$, $p=.88$). Analysis of question four (satisfaction with the current school district's professional development opportunities in classroom management) resulted in a moderate correlation ($r=.422$, $p=.03$) when correlated with festival ratings. Question five (directors' opinions of the difficulty of managing large groups compared to small groups) demonstrated no significant correlation ($r=0.052$, $p=.80$) when correlated performance achievement. Question number six (ensemble directors' opinions on the importance of management as it relates to performance achievement) showed no significant correlation ($r=.232$, $p=.24$). Also computed for correlation was the mean of all management variables, or survey question responses (3.48) with the mean of all festival ratings (1.58). Results of this computation show a moderate correlation between these two variables ($r=.389$, $p=.04$).
Table 2

Pearson Correlations between management variables and festival ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of all questions</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = < .05, two-tailed test

Conclusions

The present study was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between classroom management skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles in western Michigan schools. Discovered was the fact that three significant, moderate correlations exist when comparing variables pertaining to classroom management and performance achievement. The strongest relationship discovered in the analysis resulted when question one, pertaining to perceived management skills, and the foundation of the hypothesis for this thesis, was correlated with performance achievement. From these findings, one can surmise that classroom management skills do play an important role in the music education process when it comes to the performance achievement of ensembles. A relationship was also
discovered when question two, pertaining to the overall satisfaction of directors with their current school district’s professional development opportunities in management, was correlated with performance achievement. From this, one can suggest that more school districts might consider additional opportunities for classroom management training, and in this case, re-training. Perhaps school districts should consider additional management training for music ensemble directors when given the fact that larger class sizes are generally an issue. The final significant correlation was discovered when performance achievement was paired with the mean score of all six questions from the survey. This further supports the hypothesis by stating that classroom management is at least moderately correlated with performance achievement.

Still unknown is to what extent specific components of classroom management affect performance achievement in music ensembles. Both teacher behaviors and student behaviors have been linked to classroom management issues (Brophy, 1998, Madsen, 2003), yet it is not known which of the two has the larger contribution to management success or failure and ultimately how they effect performance achievement in music ensembles. Also unknown is whether different educational levels would answer differently on this survey. A repeated version of this study may wish to consider sampling from only one educational level at a time, as an interesting discovery that took place during data analysis of this study. It was determined that of the twenty-eight subjects, only eight reported festival scores for Junior High/Middle School ensembles. It is further hypothesized, by the principal
investigator, that a similar survey sent to only Junior High/Middle School directors may yield different results and future research should focus on this area. It is the opinion of the author that most education professionals would, often without hesitation, consider Junior High/Middle School students as the most difficult to manage of the K-12 grades. Concerning the present study, although much too small of a sample size (n=8), by comparison, the means calculated for only Junior High/Middle School directors indicate preliminarily different results from those computed for the entire sample (n-28). For example, the mean response for the question asking directors to rate their self-perceived management skills was 4.30 for the entire survey group, but that question’s mean for Junior High/Middle School directors was 4.19. This result poses the question that perhaps Junior High/Middle School ensemble directors have lower efficacy ratings in the area of classroom management, or perhaps, consider management a greater challenge, or a more pressing issue, and therefore rated themselves lower than the rest of the survey group.

The principal investigator, a Middle School music director, hypothesizes that a combination of both may be the case. Further and more stringent, level-specific research in the area of classroom management for ensemble directors should provide answers.

**Plans for Dissemination**

The primary investigator would like to stress that the information contained in this thesis project should be used with caution. The results of the survey need not be interpreted into generalizations such as the notion that school districts need to
immediately begin incorporating more professional development in the area of classroom management, or that universities and colleges of education immediately need to begin incorporating more coursework in classroom management for their undergraduate pre-service education students. However, it is worth stating that classroom management continues to be a concern for teachers, and as it applies to this thesis, directors of music ensembles. More research involving larger sample sizes of differentiated teaching levels is needed to thoroughly understand the classroom management needs of music ensemble directors.

Initial plans are being made to include a summary of this thesis in the Michigan Music Educator’s Fall Journal and also for it to be presented at the 2006 Michigan Music Conference to be held January the nineteenth through the twenty-first, 2006 at DeVos Place and Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
REFERENCES CITED


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Dear MSVMA District Ten Music Educator,

Please take a moment and complete the following survey that will assist me in meeting the requirements for my Master’s Thesis at Grand Valley State University. Please sign and date the Informed Consent Form and place it in the SASE marked CONSENT. Please complete the survey and place it in the SASE marked SURVEY. Place both envelopes in the mail.

Your confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed, and I thank you, in advance, for your time. Please kindly place the SASEs in the mail by Friday, July 15 or shortly thereafter, if possible.

Please rate, in general, how you perceive your own classroom management skills: 1=poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=above average, 5=excellent

Please rate your pre-service education experience pertaining to classroom management instruction: 1=poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=above average, 5=excellent

Do you feel that you were provided with enough instruction in the area of classroom management, as an undergraduate? 1=no, 2=not really, 3=probably, 4=basically, yes, 5=definitely, yes

Please rate your satisfaction with your current school district’s professional development opportunities in the area of classroom management skill development: 1=poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=above average, 5=excellent
Please share your opinion on management in large ensembles (40+) compared to that of smaller ensembles/classes.

"In my experience, managing large groups is ___ compared to managing smaller groups."

1=much more difficult, 2=slightly more difficult, 3 = about the same, 4= slightly less difficult, 5= much less difficult

Please rate, in your opinion, the overall importance of classroom management as it pertains to performance achievement:

1=not important, 2=somewhat important, 3=important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important

Please list the number of years you have been teaching choral music: __________

Please provide your overall ratings from the past three years’ MSVMA District Ten festival experiences (you may choose to list ratings for as many groups as you desire).

Please identify whether scores are for JH/MS groups or HS groups:

2005: __________

2004: __________

2003: __________

My groups do not participate in MSVMA festivals: ____
Dear Potential Survey Participant,

As part of my Master’s Thesis, I am conducting a mail survey of Choral Music Educators who are members of MSVMA’s District Ten. Mailing addresses were obtained via the MSVMA 2004-2005 Membership Directory and are being used in accordance with MSVMA guidelines, as I am a member of the association. Thank you for taking the time to respond to both elements of this survey. Please place this form in the SASE marked CONSENT and the survey in the SASE marked SURVEY. Your timely response is appreciated.

Please be assured that your personal information will not be divulged in any way, as the findings of this report will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

Should you wish to receive an electronic final version of this Thesis, please indicate as such here:

Yes, please_____ No thank you_____

E-mail address:_____________________________________________________

Please feel free to contact me regarding any questions pertaining to this report. Should you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a human subject, please contact Dr. Paul Reitemeier, Human Research Review Committee Chair, Grand Valley State University at (616)331-2281.

Thank you for your time,

Jeffrey D. Costello
parisblue3@hotmail.com
(616) 392-2890
**Informed Consent:**

By signing below, I agree to allow Mr. Jeffery D. Costello to use the information I provided him, via mail survey, in his Master’s Thesis project through Grand Valley State University.

Signature: ________________________________________________

Printed name: _____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________
July 5, 2005

Jeffrey D Costello  
10948 Ryans Way  
Holland MI 49423

RE: Proposal #05-260-H

Dear Jeffrey:

Your proposed project entitled **Classroom Management in Large Music Ensembles: Exploring the Relationship between Performance Achievement and Perceived Management Skills** has been reviewed. It has been **APPROVED** as EXEMPT from the regulations by section 46.101 of the Federal Register 46(16):8336, January 26, 1981.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Amy Masko, Ph.D., Acting Chair  
Human Research Review Committee
NAME: Jeffrey D. Costello

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)
- _____ Adult/High Ed
- _____ CSAL
- _____ Early Child
- _____ Ed Tech
- _____ Ed Leadership
- _____ Elem Ed
- _____ G/T Ed
- _____ Mid & H.S.
- _____ Read/Lang Arts
- _____ School Counseling
- _____ SpEd Admin
- _____ SpEd ECDD
- _____ SpEd EI
- _____ SpEd LD
- _____ TESOL

TITLE: CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN MUSIC ENSEMBLES: EXPLORING
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE ACHIEVEMENT

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)  SEM/YR COMPLETED: Summer 2005
- _____ Project
- _____ Thesis

SUPERVISOR’S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Using key words, choose as many descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the
contents of your paper.
1. Classroom Management  6. Teacher Behaviors
2. Performance Achievement  7. Student Behaviors
4. Pre-service Education  9.
5. Professional Development  10.

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.
A study conducted to determine the relationship between classroom management
skills and performance achievement among directors of music ensembles. Results
indicate moderate correlations between management and achievement and reveal that
93% of participants feel that management is a key ingredient for success.

** Note: This page must be included as the last page in your master’s paper.