

Nomadic Teaching: A Look Into Itinerant Music Teaching

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the personal experiences and daily activities of itinerant music teachers at two or more school placements.

Review of Literature

Music teachers at multiple school placements not only had stressors of teaching, but also felt they lacked communication with colleagues, experienced isolation, and had confusion that stemmed from multiple supervisors (Benson, 2001).

Supervisors and school administrators who determined the teaching space and instructional time allotted might have caused music teachers to not feel like they are in control of their program (Eyre, 2009).

Study Design

Participants

Three female general music teachers. Each taught at 2 schools in a north-central county of Florida and had been teaching less than 5 years.

Methodology

After receiving IRB approval, participants journaled for 5 days about their daily schedules and answered a short prompt regarding different aspects of itinerant teaching and their music teaching identities.

Participants then completed a 15-minute semi-structured videoconference interview. Within two weeks, participants completed a 45-minute semi-structured interview in-person.

Data Analysis

After reading through journal prompts and interview transcripts, four themes emerged: physical space and job considerations, expectations and relationships, teaching identity development, and internalization.



Results

Physical Space and Job Considerations

"I don't have a classroom at Cooper. I have to travel from class to class, and it's been that way from the beginning." Molly

Expectations and Relationships

"And even, even the principals who hired me said this is not a job we expect anyone to have long-term." Samantha

Teaching Identity Development

"I had to sacrifice the way I had expected to sequence my material (reviewing, practicing, prepping every class) since one of my schools has two different rotations..." Jennifer

Internalization

"...but I don't feel like I'm the music teacher at that school. I mean, I'm a music teacher at the school, but I'm not the main music teacher at that school." Samantha

Conclusions

Lack of knowledge about itinerant music teacher expectations and responsibilities could cause difficulty in accepting these positions.

"I didn't even know what that word meant. I'd never heard the word itinerant, I didn't even know that these positions existed..." Samantha

Communication between itinerant music teachers and colleagues, administrators, and Fine Arts Coordinators can be improved through clear expectations and a better understanding of the job requirements.

"I'm the LAST person to know anything." Molly

Schedules for the whole school building might not be effective for all teachers within that building.

"It's really hard to accomplish anything when you see a class of ten-year-olds once a month." Samantha

Aspects of social isolation are of concern for itinerant music teachers.

"My classroom is a portable so somewhat isolated from most of the school. At one school, there are some classes I have only seen a few times this year, so I feel treated as a substitute because they are not familiar with me..." Jennifer

Recommendations for Future Research

- More research should be conducted looking at both generalizations and specifics of itinerant music teaching positions.
- Additional research should be conducted looking at male and female teachers, general music and instrumental music teachers, and elementary and secondary teachers.
- Further generalized research should be conducted that explores job stressors, job satisfaction, and burnout rates for itinerant music teachers.

