

Music Teacher Education as Identity Construction

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Introduction

The research from which this report is extracted attempts to build a theory in the grounded tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to account for the interaction of music education students in Canadian universities as they come to construct an identity as a 'musician'. The paper is based on a qualitative research initiative with data coming from participant observation and interviews with 108 students into the social world of music education students over a period of 36 months at five Canadian universities (Roberts, 1991a). The assumption taken here is that the meaning of 'musician' is a social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) for these students and that music education students interact on the basis of the meanings that they come to associate with this social construct. It can be shown that this construct is a pivotal component of the music education students' identity, in fact, an all-engulfing construct (Hargreaves, 1976, p.204) in the formation of their identity. Music education students appear to acquire an identity as a 'musician' which they seem to construct as having a core meaning 'performer', and this process of construction appears largely dependent upon social interaction in the fullest symbolic interactionist's and Meadean sense of both with 'other' and with 'self'. This occurs most particularly through societal reaction (Roberts, 1991b).

Within the process of music teacher education in Canadian universities, however, what counts as 'musician' is not as unproblematic as might be assumed, and there is generally widespread disagreement in the literature as to the nature of the 'musician' who eventually ends up as a teacher in front of our children in the schools. Witkin (1974) suggests that 'one of the problems is that the music teacher is usually himself trained from the point of view of the instrumentalist' (p.120). There is, he asserts, 'among music teachers, a fear and distrust of experiment, of musical invention, of anything that threatens the disciplined service to the musical masters that their training has developed in them'. He goes further when he writes 'Of all the arts that we have looked at in schools music is apparently in the greatest difficulty' (p.118). His suggestion is that many of these apparent difficulties in music education stem from the kind of training that music teachers undergo. His conclusions hint strongly that there is conflict between who the teacher is and who he or she wants the pupils to be and what might be perceived as a more legitimate instructional goal for school music education. As an aside, of course, the question may not be a simple matter of 'goal' and may much more significantly be tied to what counts as music altogether. There are clear signs in the music school of a stratified knowledge where types of music and involvement in these various types of music have an almost precise hierarchy (Roberts, 1991c).

One university in this study, for example, claims that its goal for its music teacher preparation programme is to 'make musicians first, teachers second'. This motto is widely known and widely promulgated in the Faculty of Music. One needs to ask, in light of the apparent gulf developing between music education as practised in the universities and music education as practised in the lower schools, just what meanings are taken into music education students' understanding of 'musician',

and what part this plays in their interaction with each other, with faculty and outsiders as they come to develop an 'identity' as a 'musician'. This is the sociological problem.

Music Teacher Education

Because of the jurisdictional variations among Canadian universities, the preparation of a music specialist in Canada cannot be easily described with a 'typical' model. While there is the semblance of a uniform programme of studies with the inclusion of courses in musicology, theory, performance and a variety of elective things within the house of music (Schmidt, 1989), there is a large variety of teacher preparation delivery systems for the music specialist. These variations are largely jurisdictional within the university political make-up. They do, however, consist of an otherwise unprecedented involvement of the academic unit (music) with the more usual mandate of education faculties (Roberts, 1986). Some universities house the music teacher education programme in the Faculty of Education with academic input from the Music School or Faculty in much the same way as any other discipline such as Science or English. At the other extreme, the Music Faculty has taken over virtually the entire process of teacher education. In some institutions the situation is further confused because a few members of faculty may hold joint appointments in both the music division and the education division, thus wearing one hat at one time and yet another hat at another time. It is this variety of preparation models that might lead an observer to the conclusion that, although the teacher-education curriculum is a relatively stable entity, the mode of delivery is sufficiently varied to create possible differences in 'product'. It is the intent here to argue that the social outcomes of the preparation of the music specialist can best be illuminated from a stance that recognizes the 'product' of teacher education as a social product as well as a knowledge or skill-based product. One might legitimately ask who these graduates are as well as just what they know.

If the curriculum content is substantively similar within institutions, the educational 'product' must surely be differentiated not by what the student knows, but by who he is or thinks himself to be. That is to say, that the social product may be just as, if not more, important than the knowledge product that results from the music teacher education curriculum. This is a question of identity, of meaning associated with a master status as 'musician' and how that influences the processes of social interaction.

The involvement of Faculties of Music in teacher preparation remains an anomaly in Canada because no other university faculties in school curricular areas (e.g. English, Mathematics, Science) have shown such substantial interest with the education discipline as distinct from their otherwise assumed academic expertise. There has been little investigation as to the importance of setting or context for the development of an identity as teacher, but Faculties of Music have been successful in convincing many university administrations that music and the study and teaching of music is somehow 'special' and is dependent upon special knowledge and skills that are only available in a Faculty of Music setting. As this process in the apparent drift of responsibilities from the typical mandate of education faculties continues, it takes no great amount of imagination to conclude that some groups of people representing one side come into conflict with groups from the other. This view seems to correspond with the view of students and has been expressed by one American faculty member when she writes that

The freshmen I know are not primarily motivated by the desire to become a teacher five years later, even if they have settled on teaching as a career plan. They are concerned about getting first chair in the band, about gaining the respect of their peers and studio teachers by spending more time in the practice room than any other

freshmen... (Meske, 1982, p.263)

The results of such programme decisions in the USA have been described by one of its most noteworthy university music educators when he writes:

Existing programs are, without exception, hybrids, the result of a kind of random cross-fertilization of three related programs from different types of institutions - the conservatory, the liberal arts college, and the teachers college or normal school. The result has not been a beautiful flower which sometimes results from hybridization but an overgrown thicket which pleases nobody, not the musician, nor the humanist, not the educator. (Leonhard, 1982 p.245)

Thus it is clear that the first obvious anomaly is that music teachers may be typically much more concerned about 'being a musician' than perhaps a science or history teacher may be concerned about 'being a scientist or historian'. Thus it is apparent that science or history teaching may perhaps be viewed more appropriately as informed by science or history studies but that music teaching may often be viewed as a function of a musician. This may, in fact, account for the large number of special degree programmes for music specialists in Canada where these do not exist for other school subject disciplines. Thus the teacher's identity may become one of 'master status' as 'musician'. One cannot just borrow the knowledge about music as one might in science or history, one must, rather, be a 'musician'.

There appears to be sufficient evidence about the music school to demonstrate that status is gained in large measure, if not virtually exclusively, from 'musician' role acts (Roberts, 1991a). In fact, Kingsbury (1984) writes, 'the important point for me, however, was the intensity of some students' concern for a sense of identity which was engendered by such matters' (p.11). Who these students become, or think themselves to be, evolves as their 'musician' identity, an identity which previously has been suggested to be a 'master status' (Hughes, 1945) identity in the music school. We learn from Woods (1979, p.174-6) that turning certain typifications into stereotypes is typical of institutions. The music school is such an institution and while it has developed formal official bandings such as 'performance' majors and 'music education' majors, among others apparently less socially potent, it also provides critical situational opportunities for socially constructed typifications to develop. One of these, the 'definitionally superior performance major' is generally contested by music education majors. Woods later writes 'Pupils are engaged in a continual battle for who they are and who they are to become, while the forces of institutionalization work to deprive them of their individuality and into a mould that accords with the teachers' ideal models' (pp.247-8). In the music school, however, it appears not only to be the teachers who wish to see the music education students relegated to their place in the social order. By contesting the social order of the 'performance major' superiority, music education students show that their identity is not bound to roles which are prescribed for them. They have an apparent steadfast hold on the position that they are equals in terms of talent (Roberts, 1990) and thus potential as a performer which defies the more bureaucratic structure in which the 'performance' majors seem able to operate because of its supportive sponsorship.

In the literature, the notion of 'identity' has been described by McCall and Simmons (1978) as

the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position. More intuitively, such a role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position (p.65)

All music students appear to have idealized notions as to the role-content of the social role of 'musician'. It is for them, a social career because it apparently requires

a continuous negotiation to maintain. Woods (1979, p.125) refers to a career as a 'progression of events' and uses this construct to explain 'showing-ups'. He writes, 'the exposed person (to the showing-up) experiences an assault on his "identity" and feels confusion, since his previous identity was the basis of others' expectations of him'. Music education students appear to experience this same kind of 'assault' since they, too, base so much of their identity on the expectations of others (Roberts, 1991b).

As the career develops there seems to be certain points of crisis and other times of social acceptance by others of the claim music students wish to make about their musician- role. There appears to be no contract between society and musicians similar to the one claimed in medicine or law, for example. However, students do carry a notion of their idealized self with them. Whether there is any chance in a more worldly reality to aspire to such heights as claimed, and announced (Stone, 1970) by some students remains a mystery. Consider this music education student's response when asked when she decided to study music at university, 'Always, I've always wanted to do music. I've always wanted to sing. I've always wanted to be famous.'

Thus when McCall and Simmons (1978) write of a student that 'role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position' (p.65), it is clear that any requirements for the student mentioned above to make this claim remain solely in her own perception of that reality. If this student can conduct herself in a manner which is somehow consistent (and fulfilling of) the specific contents of her imaginative view of herself, that view becomes a legitimate one. McCall and Simmons (1978, pp.69-70) suggest that many of our best role- performances take place purely in fantasy and imagination. But in interactional terms, the legitimation rests not only with convincing oneself but also others of the claim on this identity.

Thus the student above who wishes to be seen as a 'star' and having made such a social claim on this status, now apparently must go in search of the Other who will react to her as a 'star'. She must seek legitimation by persuading not only herself but others that she is entitled to her claim as a 'star'. Furthermore, the support for this role must continue over time because the support for her 'star' status is a fleeting phenomenon and her claim to be a 'star' certainly will be challenged again and again. She will frequently need to repeat the process of legitimation both for the needs of the others and also for herself, simply because it is important to fulfil one's imaginings and to live according to one's role-identities. Individuals in a society want to be and to do as they imagine themselves being and doing in that society. If, as a 'star-singer', this student can be accommodated within the music school, whatever other role- identities she might be considering such as 'teacher' (albeit in lower personal priorities) might possibly remain oppressed and undeveloped, and that could very well be against her own self-interest. In fact, there is a constant challenge to determine whether a student is able to construct an identity as a 'teacher' at all concurrently with this apparently strong need to construct a 'musician' self.

Often the person who stakes his aspirations on one identity seeks support for this role-performance at whatever cost to other more suggestively 'realistic' goals. Because the standards, or role definition, against which the students must measure themselves can be set largely by the individual music school, this same 'symbolic' community (Cohen, 1985) may provide sufficient status reward for the continuation of the possibly less appropriate role-performance and subsequent denial of the importance of other role-performances that the student might also have need to construct.

There appears to be incredible pressure brought to bear upon students who, once having attained some measure of identity with the 'musician' role, and having received even a modicum of social reward for the claim on this identity,

nevertheless wish to change this priority for one more directed towards an educator's role. The reciprocal is also true. In this case, the music education student tries to manage 'undisclosed discrediting information about self' (Goffman, 1963, p.42) such as having to participate in the acknowledgement that he does in fact have sympathies toward the stigmatised role (Roberts, 1991a) as a potential educator.

In situations where students are, by comparison, seldom asked to construct other identities, e.g. as a teacher, there also seems to develop little need for social support for this role-identity. McCall and Simmons (1978, p.81) claim that we act most forthright to legitimate those identities most in need of support.

At the sites investigated, students appeared to lack any on-going construction of their identity as a teacher except in the form of 'musician' as 'teacher'. More importantly however, students who have their musician identity threatened by lack of positive societal reaction from a perceived important audience, such as peers or professors, experience what McCall and Simmons (1978, p.98) rather graphically describe as 'misery and anguish'. This can be overcome, or at least diminished by the overvaluation of what few rewards are left. Thus, personal bonds, and simple norms of propriety and polite discourse usually ensure that sufficient representatives of significant others will offer rewards in quantities large enough to ensure the continuation of the fantasy. The identity claim can be personally judged as successful and the idealized self is once again freed from threat. However, this problem can be made more difficult for students, as will be shown, who define referent others more narrowly, and subsequently it is much more difficult for those persons to find satisfactory role partners from which these limited rewards might be obtained.

It is to the individuals and their views of themselves that we now turn.

The Construction of Self

Music education students who apply to the music school from the general school population are typically highly skilled musical executants. Typically, they have all spent many years learning to play trumpets and clarinets and pianos and horns. In comparison to others in their secondary school classes or in private studios, they excelled. They were 'musicians' in the school or studio setting and could be easily identified as such. As applicants to the university music school, although their identity as musicians is threatened by the entrance protocol, the students usually come with a high opinion about themselves as performers and claim their right to study music on the basis of this standing. Kingsbury (1984, p.11) writes, 'admission to the music school is generally awarded in terms of a high level of skill in a very narrowly conceived area'. This student's reflection is not atypical when asked to comment on her self-acknowledged 'star' status in high school. She says

I was a big fish in a little place. I did three musicals and had the lead all three years and was president of the choir for three years and band executive all five years, so I was in both the bands and choirs. I was on the student council, just as a music department rep.

Once accepted into the music school, the view of self apparently must be re-examined because all of the important self-acknowledged 'big fishes' come together into a rather substantially enlarged 'pond'. This apparently requires, since it is immediately operationalized in the music school, that the students sort themselves out again and establish who is on which step of the performance ladder. This rather linear model is not exactly the best metaphor since the nature of the 'musician' as a social construct allows for vast, almost infinite variations. But, despite this, there is still a sense that, once having accepted a social definition, the students resort to a more 'simplistic' normative scale. They certainly talk quite openly about the 'best' and 'playing better'. They also appear to accept a 'community' view of how

students are ranked as 'musicians'. Since status is attributed to a greater degree to the higher steps on this performance ladder, it becomes very important to know exactly where you stand. Many students must change their view of themselves as they discover so many others who they acknowledge as playing equally well or even better. Some cling steadfastly to the top rung.

Students' own views, either in fact or fantasy, can survive only with reference to the community and the development of 'reputation'. The idea of 'reputation' is an important career concept because it allows students to hold particular views of themselves for an extended period of time.

To build a 'reputation' as a good performer appears to be a highly desirable thing for music students to attempt. If they can establish a 'reputation', then it becomes a 'symbol' which can be viewed from outside to establish perceptions by the persons themselves as to 'who they are'. Those without reputations must rely on sporadic clues as to their standing in the music school.

Nevertheless, many music students still appear to have an 'idealised' identity. They seem to wish to be seen as performers, even those who admit to themselves they are not. This is hardly news of consequence in a music school that rewards people almost exclusively as performers. But if this image in the mirror travels with the student beyond the borders of the music school, for instance into the classroom, perhaps there is cause for concern. This graduating student has yet to release the fantasy. In response to a question regarding her perception of herself at the present time as a graduate, she explains

Well, I mean in one sense I could say half-jokingly I'd want you to be able say I'm a great performer, I'm a great this, I'm a great something else and in some ways I'd like to be better at certain things than I feel I am... Well, performance for one.

This next student is a graduate with an honours degree in music education. At the time of the interview she was attending the Faculty of Education for her fifth year to qualify for certification as a teacher. Her view still focuses on the 'musician' aspects of her identity. 'Professionally' she is a singer. She replies, 'I'm a prospective teacher, I'm going to teachers college, I'm female, I'm almost 23. What type of description do you want?' To my reply, 'Professional' she replied, 'Okay, well a singer - I'm a soprano'.

To be a competent school music teacher, the universities appear to operate on the assumption, and it seems to be taken for granted in society in general, that one needs to be a reasonably competent 'musician'. While the definition of this 'musician' is frequently a point of serious disagreement (Roberts, 1991c), students often prefer to view themselves first and primarily as a 'musician' even in the face of apparently more logical perceptions of themselves. This student comments as follows:

It's a hard thing to be totally honest about but I think I would like to be seen perhaps first as a musician and then as a teacher... It's probably a terrible thing to say since I am going to be a music teacher in September.

This situation is not dissimilar from the position that some forms of music are perceived by students in the music school as being 'evil' (Roberts, 1991c). Because the teaching profession often attempts to alter the definition of 'musician' to fit the teacher's needs, some students seem to cling to the music school definition and feel uncomfortable stating their true feelings about wishing to see themselves as 'musicians' (Rose, 1990). This is perhaps the most potent form of 'side-bet' (Becker, 1960, p.32-40) made on behalf of the students committed to the music school.

Other possible identity comparisons within the music school would be with academics, as 'students' or even as 'developing teachers' in the education stream. But in almost every instance, even with students who did not feel strong as

'performers', they preferred to be seen as musicians and would report perceiving social pressure to compare themselves 'musically' rather than with these other possible criteria. To the question as to how this student would like to be compared to others, we get this answer: 'I think musically. I don't always think that academically it matters if you're talking about marks and what you see on paper is that what you're referring to?'

This view of self was examined with many of the students. No student responded that a 'musical' comparison was other than the most important.

Here is a music education senior who is confident that she wishes to be seen as a 'musician'. Indeed, she describes her schooling as the process of becoming a 'musician', in fact, quite simply as 'how I perform'. To a question as to why she might wish to be compared musically rather than academically she replied, 'Because that's what I'm doing here. I'm trying, musically, I'm trying to be a musician. I want to be a musician and that's what I'm interested in.'

While it is perhaps odd that students do not see themselves preparing in any significant way to become a 'teacher' despite registration in an education programme, that appears to be the case. With the exception of 'performing', students return to 'marks' for an indication of how they see themselves. But in the music school, where performing is evaluated and 'marks' are awarded, these 'marks' do not appear to have much social significance compared to other social strategies to construct an identity as a musician.

Thus it appears clear that students typically see themselves as 'musicians' and wish to be seen by others as 'musicians'.

In addition to the formal greeting, it can also be shown that students simply perceive their identity with their applied major as the reason for being in the music school in the first place. Consider the response to this question. 'When I asked you who you were, the only thing you could tell me was that you were a trombone player. Why is that important?' 'Well that's what I'm here for and that's what I've been doing all through high school.'

In fact, when you ask music education students what they study, the response is usually an instrument. Although students may be officially studying in an academic major such as music education or musicology, with courses in a variety of specialties within the house of music, the music education students, at least, respond that they are at university studying 'piano'.

In fact, music education majors even after graduation still view themselves as the product of a university programme where they studied 'piano'. Despite the wide range of musical subjects offered in the undergraduate music education degree programme, the self-identification with the applied major appears to remain secure and unfailing even after advancement into the Faculty of Education. One graduate reports: 'I did my degree in piano and enjoyed it quite a bit'. Often students simply tell you that they see themselves as a 'piano player'.

In addition to seeing themselves as an instrumental appendage, they also see others in the same way. Certain students are even recognized as 'a piano player'. At the beginning of the academic year at one of the faculties of education in this study, the members of the class began by introducing themselves to each other. This was necessary because there were students from several university music schools who had joined the group from this particular university's graduating class. In each and every instance, without exception, the introduction was, 'I'm and I'm a piano major' or some equivalent of that such as 'I'm a pianist', or 'I play piano (oboe, trumpet, violin).'

Of course, the vocal major has a special problem with identity because the 'instrument' is, in fact, part of one's body and thus part of one's being. Singers, more than all others, identify themselves with their 'instrument'. Thus singers become 'tenors', 'dramatic sopranos' or other more specific labels than just vocalists. In addition, the inability to separate oneself from one's instrument as a singer is often

felt as a 'curse' or 'weight'. This has been discussed elsewhere in some detail (Roberts, 1990).

Of course, not all students see themselves as 'pianists'. Students who view themselves as not very good performers most frequently refer to themselves as 'musicians'. Thus it is clear that in the music school, 'performer' is preferred over 'musician', even though reference is frequently made to the performer who is not a 'musician'. Asked whether the executant's model for self-identification was important as a 'teacher', this senior replies, 'A little bit, yea, yea I always felt that they were better than me in piano...but.. Well because I'm a musician too.'

There are those for whom the role and identification with the role as a 'star' or just a 'performer' appears less vital. Again, these students are generally more inclined to call themselves 'musicians' or use other more general terms such as 'all-round musician' or 'well-rounded musician'. For some, this 'star' category is almost repulsive. A graduate explains, 'I liked singing in choirs, performing in choirs, I like doing solos in choirs but I don't like singing as a solo performer because of the belief or the facade of this person being a star and kind of like that; I like performing, I like singing...'

For others, it is simply a matter of not clinging to a strong personal identification with the applied major. For these students again, the label of 'musician' was sufficient. This student reports, 'The instrument itself wasn't the most important thing in my life but the whole music business thing was; being a music student was probably the most important thing in my life.'

Thus it can be summarized that music education students typically view themselves as either a 'performer' on some specific instrument to which there appears to be a strong affiliation as a player, or as a general 'musician'. It further appears that this latter category is the perception of self for students who see themselves less able to compete for the 'performer' status. Despite the fact that all of these students are participating in a teacher education programme, their identity is squarely as a 'musician'.

Discussion

Both Faculties of Education and Schools of Music in Canada typically claim to be 'professional' schools. Since both are trying to produce 'professionals', it is an important question to explore how students who are obliged to participate in both of these faculties construct their 'professional' identity. It is extremely difficult to say exactly what is particularly different about a teacher of music and a musician. Many attempts have been made to identify 'teacher' characteristics in general, mostly with an aim of using these criteria for entrance selection to teaching education programmes. These attempts have been largely unsuccessful. In music, this is further exacerbated by the immense problem of the nature of the musician coming from the schools of music into education. We seem to know and agree that within certain limitations, musicians typically have musical skills in some form of performance medium. Furthermore, we generally agree that much of one's musicality and even knowledge of music itself can be gained through contextualized contact with musical performance. We learn about Bach by playing or singing Bach's music. But when does one get to be a musician? How do we know when we are? Teachers often tell musically successful primary school children that they are 'great little musicians'. Do we really understand what it means to be a musician?

Pioneering research by Bartel (1991) has recently shown that school children of different ethnic groups in the greater Toronto school area have significantly different self-concepts of their own 'musicality'. Simply stated, some groups consider themselves 'musical' while other groups do not do so to the same extent.

Yet these students face the same school demands in music education classes. Do we know which students consider themselves musical and what does it mean to be musical for them or us? Do we agree with their self-assessments as teachers?

Teachers of music and musicians graduating from schools of music may be the same thing. Do we really know what the difference is between Bernstein teaching the New York orchestra to play a symphony his way and then teaching it to an audience? Can we say with certainty what the difference is between Bernstein and the ordinary grade two music teacher, aside from the obvious level of performance expectation and the difficulty of the music?

It is becoming evident that to understand what the teacher of music really is, in other words to understand the person who has constructed an identity as a music teacher, we need to unpack the social world in which the opportunities and obligations to construct these identities occur. This research takes a first step.

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La Formation Des Professeurs De Musique Determinante De L'Identité Sociale De Ses Etudiants

Ce compte-rendu, résultat d'enquêtes qualitatives, examine la nature de la formation sociale de l'identité de 'musicien' pour des étudiants de cinq universités canadiennes préparant un professorat de musique.

Dans cet article, la formation en général des professeurs de musique sert de toile de fond pour remettre en question la prépondérance croissante de l'identité de 'musicien' au détriment de celle de 'professeur' dans les programmes en cours de préparation de professorat de musique. Brian Roberts considère cependant que la formation des professeurs se doit de conférer à chaque étudiant son identité de 'professeur', malgré que l'exemple de l'éducation musicale n'en apporte l'évidence contraire.

Musiklehrerausbildung als Identitätsgestaltung

Dieser Bericht einer qualitativen Forschungsinitiative untersucht die Art des sozialen Aufbaus einer Identität als 'Musiker' für Studenten auf fünf kanadischen Universitäten, die studieren, um Musiklehrer an Schulen zu werden. Der Artikel untersucht die Musiklehrerausbildung im allgemeinen, als Hintergrund, um die überwältigende Identität des 'Musikers' im Gegensatz zum 'Lehrer' innerhalb der untersuchten Lehrervorbereitungsprogramme in Frage zu stellen. Der Standpunkt wird vertreten, daß die Lehrerausbildung als die soziale Gestaltung des Selbst als 'Lehrer' angesehen werden kann, trotz gegensätzlicher Beweise in der Fallstudie der Musikausbildung.

La Educacion Musical Como Construccion De La Identidad

En este trabajo, se informa sobre una investigación cualitativa que examina la construcción social de una identidad de 'músico' entre los estudiantes de cinco universidades canadienses, que se preparan para ser educadores musicales. Se discute la preparación del Educador Musical en general como una situación destinada a absorber la identidad de 'músico' más que la de 'maestro' en el marco de los programas analizados, y se considera que la preparación docente puede construir una identidad de 'maestro' pese a las evidencias en contrario en el caso del estudio de la educación musical.