



THE OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MUSIC EDUCATION MAJORS IN MEXICO

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Occupational aspirations and expectations have been the focus of much recent research since these variables have been found to be predictive of subsequent occupational achievement (Devroop, 2005; Devroop & Devroop, 2006; Chung, Loeb and Gonzo, 1996; Kapral, 1980; Mote, 1982; Newkirk, 1998; Ok, 1993; Rojewski & Yang, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1994; Talbot & Kopala, 1991; Vaden-Kiernan, 1992; Wims, 1994). Occupational aspirations refer to jobs that individuals would ideally prefer or like to have while occupational expectations refer to jobs that individuals realistically expect to obtain while accounting for the realities of the job market (Devroop & Devroop, 2006). Prior investigations on aspirations and expectations have embraced an array of topics including descriptive analyses of aspirations and expectations of various populations, psychological determinants of aspirations and expectations, the impact of family and work experience, the influence of selected variables and the determining of predictors of aspirations and expectations (Ok, 1993; Rojewski & Yang, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1994; Talbot & Kopala, 1991; Vaden-Kiernan, 1992; Wims, 1994). However, much remains to be learned about aspirations and expectations and their role in helping individuals make career choices.

Theorists (Super, 1951; Farmer & Chung, 1995) have emphasized the importance of investigating aspirations and expectations within the individuals' cultural and environmental context. Several researchers addressed this issue and conducted studies on culturally diverse populations including Mexican-American (Menhaca, 1996), Puerto Rican (Dillard and Perrin, 1980), African-American (Chung, Loeb & Gonzo, 1996), American-Indian (Kuvelsky & Patella, 1971) and South African (Devroop & Devroop, 2006). No studies were found that investigated the occupational aspirations and expectations of individuals in Mexico. Menhaca (1996) did investigate the occupational aspirations of Mexican-American youth; however, her study was based on youth currently residing in the United States.

Research into the occupational aspirations and expectations of Mexican youth are sorely needed since a recent report by the National Institute of Statistic and Informatics (INEGI, 2006) indicated that approximately 20% of the Mexican population is currently underemployed. Underemployment is a reference to low income work, involuntary part-time work, and skill

mismatch (Chesky & Devroop, 2003). According to the World Bank (2006), in 2002, half the population in Mexico was living in poverty and one fifth was living in extreme poverty. As Mexican youth continue to invest considerable time and resources into their education, and seek viable avenues from school to work, an investigation into their occupational aspirations and expectations becomes increasingly important.

Within the field of music education, occupational aspirations and expectations are relevant given the current status of music programs at public and private schools and colleges in Mexico. In Mexico, the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) determines the curriculum for elementary, secondary, and teacher education for the entire Republic. According to the Education Development Program (SEP, 1994), music is not considered a subject within the national curriculum. Instead, it is viewed as an activity subject to the interests, capabilities, and resources of each individual school. Accordingly, only a few schools can afford to hire music teachers.

In contrast to the status of music education in the school system, there appears to be a growing number of students majoring in music education at the college level. Additionally, the National School of Music at the National Autonomous University of Mexico recently approved the creation of the master's and the doctoral degrees in music education. The imbalance between the growing interest in music education at the college level and unstable employment opportunities for music education majors provides a clear need for an understanding of students' occupational aspirations and expectations.

A review of literature indicates that no studies have sought to investigate the occupational aspirations and expectations of music education majors in Mexico. There currently exists no baseline data on students' motivation to major in music education and their expectations upon graduation. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the occupational aspirations and expectations of students majoring in music education in Mexico.

Methodology

This study utilized the population of students majoring in music education at the National School of Music (NSM) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The NSM is the oldest music education program in the country and is accredited by the Ministry of Public Education. It is also the largest program in the country and until recently was the only degree granting institution in music education in Mexico. In recent years a few universities started to offer degree programs in music education; however, the NSM remains the primary institution for obtaining a degree in music education in Mexico.

Measurement Instrument

A questionnaire that was developed, pilot-tested and utilized in a previous study on aspirations and expectations (Ramnunan, 2001) was modified and used to obtain data in this study. On the original questionnaire, content validity was assessed by a panel of experts and reliability was measured in a pilot study. Test-retest and internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .65 to 1.00 for individual items. Reliability on the revised questionnaire ranged from .62 to 1.00. The original questionnaire was adapted, modified for content relative to Mexico and translated into Spanish for this study.

Procedure

Prior to administration of the questionnaire, permission was solicited from the chair of the NSM to conduct the study. Subsequent to approval, university registration records and class schedules were reviewed in order to obtain student enrollment. A total of 91 music education majors were registered at the NSM during the 2002 academic year. Class schedules were

reviewed in order to identify the classes that the entire population could be accessed for administration of the questionnaire. Over a period of one week, questionnaires were administered to the population of music education majors by one of the researchers. A return rate of 92% was obtained.

Participants

Participants ($N = 83$) represented 92% of the population of music education majors enrolled at the NSM in Mexico during the 2002 academic year. At the time of this study, the program in music education at the NSM was an eight year degree with the first three years referred to as Propedeutico or preparatory study. Occasionally students could take the three years of preparatory study concurrently with the last three years of high school however most students began their studies in music after completing high school. Some students were able to “test out” of the preparatory requirements and then begin with the bachelors degree which was a five year degree. Many students generally sought employment after high school in order to finance their studies; accordingly many students entered the program in their late twenties.

Overall the population was comprised of 65% females and 35% males with an average age of 30 years ($M = 30.13$) and a range of 18 years to 62 years. Academically, fifth-year bachelors degree students were the largest subgroup (30%) followed by first-year students (23.8%), fourth-year students (18.8%), third-year students (15%) and second-year students (11.3%). Instrumentalists accounted for 87.5% of the population and singers 12.5%. Among the instrumentalists, the majority of participants (66.7%) were pianists followed by guitarists (26.9%). Piano, guitar and accordion are the only instruments that music education students can major in since there are no wind bands in the school system. All three instruments are considered accompaniment instruments that potential teachers can use to accompany choirs in the schools. Guitar, specifically classical guitar is a historically and culturally prominent instrument in Mexico. Approximately 60% of the instrumentalists surveyed indicated they had an average of 4 years of instruction ($M = 3.93$) on their respective instruments prior to enrolling at the NSM.

Results

The analysis of occupational aspirations and expectations revealed some disparities in the types of occupations subjects preferred and expected. Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents aspired to a combination of occupations (42.5%). A combination of occupations was a reference to a combination of categories such as teaching and performing or teaching and composing. The majority of respondents indicated that their preferred combination of occupations included teaching and performing. The second most aspired occupation was music performance (28.8%). Only 7.5% of the population aspired to teach exclusively. Concerning occupational expectation, the majority of respondents (32%) indicated they expected to be engaged in music performance. Approximately 23% expected a combination of occupations and 18.7% expected to teach exclusively. Less than 7% of the population either aspired or expected to be engaged in each of the remaining occupations.

	Occupational Aspiration		Occupational Expectation	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Combination of Occupations	34	42.5	17	22.7
Performer	23	28.8	24	32

Teacher	6	7.5	14	18.7
Composer/Arranger/Author	5	6.3	5	6.7
Music Technology Specialist	5	6.3	5	6.7
Music Business Specialist	3	3.8	5	6.7
Ethnomusicologist	3	3.8	5	6.7
Radio/TV Prog/Broadcaster	1	1.3	0	0
Total	80	100	84	100

An exploratory comparison of the frequencies of subjects' preferred and expected occupations was conducted using chi-square analysis. Results revealed a significant difference between respondents preferred and expected occupations ($X^2 = 16.526$, $df = 1$, $p < .000$). This finding alludes to the possibility that the occupations subjects aspire to have and the occupations they expect to obtain might be different.

The analysis of subjects' performance aspirations and expectations indicated little difference. Table 2 indicates that the majority of respondents both preferred and expected to perform in a Pop/Jazz/Latin band. This was closely followed by small ensemble performance such as a trio, quartet or quintet. At the NSM, students had the option of performing in a large ensemble such as orchestra or smaller chamber ensembles. Less than 5% of respondents either aspired or expected to perform in a recording studio environment or a combination of categories that were presented to them. Overall, respondents generally preferred and expected to perform in similar performing environments.

	Performance Aspiration		Performance Expectation	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Pop/Jazz/Latin Band	13	29.5	17	36.2
Small Ensemble	9	20.5	10	21.3
Large Ensemble	7	15.9	4	8.5
Other	7	15.9	6	12.8
Soloist	5	11.4	8	17
Recording Studio	2	4.5	2	4.3
Combination of Categories	1	2.3	0	0
Total	44	100	47	100

Due to the fact that the current population of subjects was comprised of music education majors, an analysis of teaching preferences and expectations was conducted. Subjects for this series of analyses was not restricted to just those students that aspired or expected to teach but rather to all students that indicated they aspired or expected to teach including those that chose a

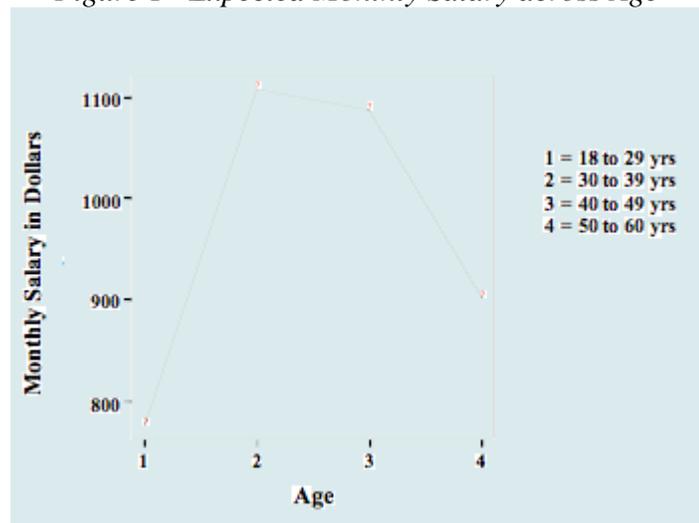
combination of occupations that included teaching. The analysis of subjects teaching aspirations ($n = 65$) and expectations ($n = 73$) indicated that most respondents aspired to teach at a music school (26.2%) and a university (18.5%). A similar percentage of respondents indicated they expected to teach at a music school (26%). In Mexico, music school is a reference to a private or government supported after-school music program where students study instrumental performance. A slightly lower number (13.7%) indicated they expected to teach at a university. A greater percentage of respondents indicated they expected to teach private lessons (16.4%) and at middle school (13.7%). Overall, a very small percentage of respondents (less than 5%) indicated that they either aspired or expected to teach at conservatory, high school, elementary, or preschool level.

The analysis of subjects' career plans immediately upon graduating revealed that the majority of subjects (48.8%) expected to be engaged in a combination of teaching, performing and composition. Only 12.5% of respondents indicated they expect to teach fulltime immediately after graduating. An interesting finding was that 35% of respondents indicated they expected to do something other than teaching, performing and/or composing. Less than 2% indicated that they will either perform fulltime or continue studying fulltime.

When questioned about their reasons for wanting to become music teachers, the majority of respondents (42.3%) indicated that education was as important as performance. Approximately 30% indicated that they loved teaching and 15.4% indicated that education contributes positively to culture. Some of the additional reasons that respondents cited for wanting to become music teachers included a love of music and a love of children.

The final series of analysis investigated subjects' income expectations. On the questionnaire, subjects were required to provide their income expectations in Mexican pesos. This figure was subsequently converted into dollars in order to manage the data more effectively. In general, subjects indicated that they expected an average monthly income of \$933 ($M = 932.87$, $SD = 595.36$) with a range of \$100 to \$3000. In order to determine the expected income across age, the initial age variable was collapsed into four categories and recoded: category one (18 to 29 years), category two (30 to 39 years), category three (40 to 49 years) and category four (50 to 60 years). Figure 1 indicates that subjects in category one expected the lowest monthly income. Subjects in category two expected the highest income. Income expectations decreased as age progressed from category two to category four.

Figure 1 Expected Monthly Salary across Age



Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the occupational aspirations and expectations of students majoring in music education in Mexico. Results revealed a disparity in

the types of occupations students aspired or preferred to have and the occupations they realistically expected to obtain. While the majority of students indicated they aspired to a combination of occupations, most students indicated they expected to be engaged in performance. Teaching was among the least aspired occupations with less than 9% of respondents indicating they would prefer to teach exclusively. This is an alarming finding when one considers that the population under investigation was comprised of music education majors.

The significant difference between students' aspirations and expectations is consistent with findings from studies outside of music. In general, researchers have found that relationships between aspirations, expectations, and selected variables are different, and predictors of aspirations and expectations tend to be different. Within the context of this study one would expect students' aspirations and expectations to be similar since it is generally accepted that a music education major would naturally aspire and expect to be engaged in teaching. Evidently this is not the case with the subjects under investigation. Subsequent studies on this population should attempt to determine why students elect to major in music education.

Of those students that indicated they aspired or expected to teach exclusively or in combination with other occupations, an analysis was done of their teaching preferences. Most students indicated they aspired and expected to teach in a music school followed by university level teaching. A very small number of respondents (less than 5%) indicated they preferred or expected to teach at high school, elementary or pre-school level. This finding alludes to the possibility that students might be aware of the volatility of the job market for public school music teachers in Mexico. With just a few public schools offering music within the curriculum, students may view music schools and universities as their primary employment institutions. Subsequent studies should ascertain students' knowledge of the job market.

The analysis of students' career plans upon graduation revealed that almost half of the population indicated they expected to be engaged in a combination of teaching, performing and composing music. This finding is consistent with findings from previous studies (Ramnunan, 2001; Devroop, 2005; Devroop & Devroop, 2006) on populations of students majoring in jazz studies in the United States and South Africa. Students might be inclined to engage in a combination of teaching, performing, and composing in order to continue developing their musicianship or in order to diversify their skills with the intention of sustaining adequate income. Subsequent investigations should attempt to provide more insight into this finding.

Supporting the idea that income increases with age (Chesky & Devroop, 2003), the present study found that income expectations were highest for subjects between the age of 30 and 39 years. The expected income of this age group was equivalent to the national average of qualified professionals in other occupations in Mexico. An interesting finding that emerged was that income expectations appeared to decrease for subjects over the age of 40 years old. This finding is contrary to the findings of previous studies on income expectations (Devroop, 2005). The decrease in expectations might be attributed to the possibility that the older subjects in this study were more aware of the high rate of underemployment in the music profession.

The results from this study should be viewed cautiously since the data provides only initial insight into the population under investigation. Additionally, the results cannot be generalized to the population at large but rather reflect the views of the population of music education majors at the National School of Music. Although this study is among the first to investigate the occupational aspirations and expectations of music education majors in Mexico, the data does provide baseline information for subsequent investigations.

The results from the current study have implications for music education in the US. The findings from this study indicate that the types of occupations that music education students prefer to have and the occupations they expect to obtain may be different, which may or may not be true for students majoring in music education in the US. Additionally, results indicate that students may have little knowledge of the job market and that their occupational choices may

not be based upon trends in the job market. Research on music education students in the US should attempt to determine students' occupational expectations, knowledge of the job market and reasons for wanting to major in music education. This might help us to better understand our students and provide possible ways toward increasing teacher retention in music.

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ISSN 1532-8090

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