

Thomas J. Dust  
University of Alberta

## Motivational Influences to Pursue Graduate Studies in Secondary Music Education

*Motivational influences on the decision to pursue graduate studies in secondary music education were investigated. The population of secondary music education graduate students in one large Canadian university (N=13) completed a survey that included both open-ended and closed-ended response items. The greatest motivational influences to pursue graduate studies were found to be: (a) intellectual development, (b) personal development, and (c) professional development. The motivational influence Need to Refresh showed the most diversity and elicited the most prose response. Standard deviations indicated that on most items the response group was homogeneous. All results were consistent across gender and degree program, master's or doctoral. In contrast to similar studies of educators in general, the influence of Potential Monetary Gain was not identified as important. Demographic information supplied by respondents indicated that the typical secondary music education graduate student in this university was 30 or more years of age and had five to 14 years of teaching experience. Results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the population from which the data were collected.*

*Cette recherche porte sur les motivations qui influencent la décision de poursuivre des études supérieures en enseignement de la musique au secondaire. Des étudiants aux études supérieures inscrits à une grande université canadienne (N=13) en enseignement de la musique au secondaire ont complété une enquête impliquant des questions ouvertes et fermées. Les facteurs qui influencent le plus la décision de poursuivre des études supérieures se sont avérés être les suivants : (a) développement intellectuel, (b) développement personnel, et (c) développement professionnel. Les réponses les plus longues et les plus diversifiées évoquaient l'influence de « Need to Refresh ». Les écarts-types indiquent que pour la plupart des questions, les réponses du groupe de sujets étaient homogènes. Tous les résultats étaient cohérents pour les variables du sexe et du programme (maîtrise ou doctorat). Contrairement à d'autres études semblables auprès d'enseignants, l'influence du facteur « gain monétaire potentiel » ne s'est pas avéré important. Les données démographiques fournies par les répondants démontrent que l'étudiant diplômé type en enseignement de la musique à cette université était âgé de 30 ans ou plus et avait entre 5 et 14 années d'expérience en enseignement. Les résultats de cette recherche ne peuvent être appliqués qu'au groupe expérimental à l'étude.*

Motivational influences to pursue graduate studies in secondary music education are of interest to university professors and administrators involved in the design and implementation of these degree programs. Knowledge of the reasons secondary music educators have for engaging in graduate studies is useful in the design of curricula and other program structures that enable graduate music education students to achieve their personal and professional goals. Graduate programs that are relevant to the goals of students will attract more students. The resultant increase in secondary music educators with grad-

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Tom Dust is an associate professor of secondary music education in the Department of Secondary Education where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in music curriculum and instruction. He also conducts Jazz Band II for the Department of Music.

uate education will contribute to the development of excellent school music programs, and at the doctoral level will help to address the growing concern over an anticipated shortage of candidates to fill university positions in music teacher education (Asmus, 2001; Teachout, 2004).

Topics, including motivational influences, pertinent to graduate studies in music education are not among those commonly chosen by researchers (Sample, 1992; Schmidt & Zdzinski, 1993). At the time of data collection for this study (September 2003), no studies were discovered with the primary focus being motivational influences for music educators to pursue graduate studies. Subsequent to data collection, Teachout (2004) explored "incentives and barriers for potential music teacher education doctoral students" (p. 234). Because Teachout's findings were not published until after the data collection for this study was completed, it was not possible to consider them when constructing the survey tool for this study. However, researchers have investigated the motivational influences that professional educators other than music educators name as important in the decision to enter graduate school. This body of literature was examined and provided a foundation for the development of a suitable survey tool to explore why music educators may enter graduate school.

Studies by Cardon and Rogers (2002), Fardanesh (1984), Jablonski (2001), Mertz and McNeely (1990), and Wilgers (1993) identified several motivational influences or factors for educators to pursue graduate studies. The most common influences, grouped thematically, were: obtaining the credential/prestige/status, love of learning/intellectual development, challenge/personal development, change in life/phase of life, monetary gain, job advancement/career opportunities, acquisition of knowledge, and direct application of learning to classroom practice/professional development.

Although not specific to the field of music education, the work of Fardanesh (1984) is of interest in that his sample included graduate students in the field of music including, but not restricted to, graduate students in music education. In addition to the field of music, Fardanesh explored the motivational influences on individuals to pursue graduate study in the areas of business, education, engineering, and law. Fardanesh found that all respondent groups other than music assigned over 63% of motivational influences to (a) rewarding career, (b) acquisition of knowledge, and (c) monetary gain.

Respondents in the field of music named *rewarding career*, *acquisition of knowledge*, and *other* as the three most important motivational influences on the decision to pursue graduate studies. In the category *other*, Fardanesh (1984) thematically grouped the most frequent responses as *career opportunity*, *challenge*, *miscellaneous*, and *personal interest/satisfaction*. Respondents from the field of music, although paralleling the other disciplines by ranking *rewarding career* and *acquisition of knowledge* among the top three motivational influences, ranked *monetary gain* as the fifth most important, attributing only 8.27% of their motivation for pursuing graduate work to this influence. Fardanesh's study is important in that it established that music (including music education) graduate students were not motivated by the same complement of influences as were students in other disciplines. Specifically, music students were not motivated by the prospect of monetary gain.

The main purpose of the present study was to identify major motivational influences for individuals to pursue graduate studies in secondary music education in one large Canadian university. A secondary purpose of the study was to construct a demographic profile of the population of secondary music education graduate students in the institution where the data were collected.

#### *Method*

The population for the study was all students ( $N=13$ ) who had registered in a secondary music education graduate degree program within the past six years in one large Canadian university. All 13 individuals participated. Four participants were registered in doctoral programs and nine were either registered in or had completed a master's program. Six participants were women and seven were men.

Participants were asked to complete a survey consisting of a rating scale and several closed-ended and open-ended questions. The survey and accompanying letter requesting participation in the study were examined and approved by the Ethics Review Board of my home institution. The survey was pilot tested with two graduate students who had public school music teaching background but were not enrolled in secondary music education. The wording of several items on the survey tool was adjusted following the pilot test. In September 2003, the final version of the survey was distributed to the target population by means of electronic mail. The initial response was good, with nine of 13 individuals completing and returning the survey. A follow-up electronic mail request to the remaining four individuals resulted in a 100% return rate. Eleven of the respondents chose to return the completed survey by electronic mail, and two chose to print the completed survey form and return the hard copy through Canada Post.

The survey was constructed in three parts. Part I asked respondents to rate the importance of nine motivational influences on their decision to pursue graduate studies in secondary music education. Seven of the motivational influences were based on my thematic grouping of influences identified by earlier research in the area of motivational influences for graduate studies. Two motivational influences were added based on my informal conversations with secondary music teachers encountered through professional activities. The nine motivational influences were: (a) potential for a new and satisfying career (college/university teaching, administration, etc.); (b) intellectual development (commitment to learning, intellectual satisfaction); (c) personal development (know myself better, self-actualization); (d) professional development (direct application of learning to classroom teaching, job requirements); (e) potential monetary gain (income enhancement); (f) prestige (to attain a level of education and/or an occupation that will elevate my social and/or professional status); (g) influence of another (university professor, colleague, high school teacher, etc.); (h) need to refresh (to get a break from the classroom and/or to "recharge" or to regain enthusiasm for teaching music); and (i) phase of life development (transition period in life, the time was right). Respondents rated the importance of each motivational influence on a scale from 1 (no importance) to 5 (extreme importance). Respondents were able to add and rate motivational influences that were not included on the survey.

Part II of the survey asked respondents to write a “paragraph or two” outlining their reasons for pursuing graduate studies in secondary music education. It was suggested that the prose response be an elaboration of responses to Part I or that it contribute additional information pertinent to the decision to pursue graduate studies.

Part III of the survey requested that respondents supply the following information: (a) sex, (b) age range, (c) years of teaching experience range at the time of starting graduate study, (d) current degree program, and (e) degrees currently held.

### Results and Discussion

#### Motivational Influences

Respondents’ mean ratings of the nine motivational influences are shown in Table 1.

An examination of the mean rating for each motivational influence revealed that seven motivational influences received a rating of at least *moderate importance* with regard to their influence on the respondents’ decisions to pursue graduate studies. Ranked from the highest mean to the lowest, the seven motivational influences were: (a) intellectual development, (b) personal development, (c) professional development, (d) potential for a new and satisfying career, (e) phase of life, (f) prestige, and (g) need to refresh (tied with prestige). The motivational influences *potential monetary gain* and *influence of another* each had a mean rating of *little importance* in the decision to pursue graduate studies. The three highest-rated motivational influences had mean ratings of *great importance*. No motivational influence had a mean rating of *extreme importance*, although *intellectual development* with a mean rating of 4.54 approached this threshold.

An examination of the standard deviations associated with the means indicated that the respondents’ ratings were homogenous for some motivational influences and diverse for others. Arranged in order of the least standard deviation (homogeneous) to the greatest (diverse), the nine motivational influences were: (a) intellectual development, (b) personal development, (c) potential for a new and satisfying career (tied with personal development), (d) professional development, (e) potential monetary gain, (f) prestige, (g) influence of another, (h) phase of life development, and (i) need to refresh.

The relatively large standard deviations for the motivational influences *need to refresh* ( $SD=1.47$ ), *phase of life development* ( $SD=1.22$ ), and *influence of another* ( $SD=1.21$ ) indicate that although these influences were not among those rated

Table 1  
Mean Ratings of the Nine Motivational Influences

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9
Mean	3.77	4.54	4.23	4.00	2.70	3.00	2.38	3.00	3.46
SD	0.80	0.75	0.80	0.88	0.91	0.97	1.21	1.47	1.22

Note. F1=potential for a new and satisfying career, F2=intellectual development, F3=personal development, F4=professional development, F5=potential monetary gain, F6=prestige, F7=influence of another, F8=need to refresh, F9=phase of life development.

more highly by the group, they were important for some individuals. The four motivational influences that were rated most highly by the group were also the influences with the smallest standard deviations indicating that they were important for most of the respondents.

Respondents were able to add and rate motivational influences that were not included on the survey. Three respondents named additional influences. From one respondent came: "develop a resource document that would benefit working teachers and music education students." This was rated as being of great importance in the respondent's decision to pursue graduate studies. Another respondent provided: "personal satisfaction of accomplishment—achieving a goal" (extreme importance); "need to be in contact with adult learners" (great importance); and "network with other music educators" (great importance). The third respondent added: "sabbatical from current school board" (great importance).

Responses to Part I of the survey were examined for differences based on the sex of the respondents. Male and female respondents rated the same four motivational influences as the most important in the decision to pursue graduate studies, although the rankings were not identical. The top four motivational influences for pursuing graduate studies as rated by male respondents were: (a) intellectual development, (b) professional development, (c) personal development, and (d) potential for a new and satisfying career. The top four motivational influences for female respondents were: (a) intellectual development, (b) personal development, (c) potential for a new and satisfying career, and (d) professional development.

Men rated two motivational influences *intellectual development* and *professional development* as being of *great importance* in the decision to pursue graduate studies. Women rated the motivational influences *intellectual development*, *personal development*, *potential for a new and satisfying career*, and *professional development* as being of *great importance* in the decision to pursue graduate studies.

Responses were also examined for differences based on the degree program of the respondents. No difference was found in the top three responses of the master's and doctoral groups. The highest three means for both groups were for the motivational influences *intellectual development*, *personal development*, *professional development*, and the *potential for a new and satisfying career*. The two groups differed on the fourth-ranked motivational influence. Master's students ranked the *potential for a new and satisfying career* and doctoral students ranked *phase of life development* as the fourth most important influence in the decision to pursue graduate studies.

#### *Prose Response*

Respondents were asked to write a paragraph or two outlining their reasons for pursuing graduate studies in secondary music education. The prose responses added detail and personal circumstance to the Likert-scale responses given in Part I of the survey. Statements such as "an overwhelming need for more high-level intellectual stimulation" and "I find academic discourse endlessly stimulating" supported the high ranking of the motivational influence *intellectual development*. Other prose responses confirmed the high ranking of other motivational influences. The motivational influence that was written about more than any other was *need to refresh*, the motivational influence with

the largest standard deviation ( $SD=1.47$ ). Women contributed all the prose about *need to refresh*. Statements contributed included: "a need to get away from the adolescent 'angst' mentality"; "After 10 years of teaching I felt that I was beginning to slip into routine and that I was not growing as a music educator"; "I decided to pursue graduate studies as a way of personal growth and rejuvenation. Classroom teaching can be thankless, and I felt myself 'in a rut' professionally"; and "I realized that I was highly stressed and possibly close to burn-out." These statements indicate that for these individuals the need to refresh was an important motivational influence in the decision to pursue graduate studies. Graduate studies were seen as a break from the classroom and an opportunity to engage in personal and professional development. The high standard deviation for *need to refresh*, the numerous prose responses, the gender bias of the responses, and the illustrative language of the responses (*angst, thankless, in a rut, burn-out, highly stressed*) together suggest that this is a topic in need of more research.

Prose responses contributed motivational influences that had not been explored in Part I of the questionnaire. A desire to engage other music educators professionally and socially was indicated by responses such as "I saw graduate studies as a way to explore these ideas with other graduate music students" and "I found my experience in graduate school to be intellectually and socially fulfilling. The time spent with colleagues and new friends ... made it a very rewarding experience." Several prose responses indicated that for some the motivation to engage in graduate studies evolved or changed after they began the program. For example, one respondent stated,

Initially I was only interested in continuing my education to enhance my teaching and to move up the [salary] "grid" ... Now that I am nearing the end of the process, I am entertaining the idea that I could perhaps use my master's to further my career, either within the district I currently am employed by or at a local college.

A number of respondents wrote of the satisfaction they derived from their studies, as illustrated by: "it has been a terrific experience and I am pleased ... and I would recommend the experience to any of my fellow colleagues" and "I get a great deal of pleasure from the experience."

#### *Demographic Information*

Six women and seven men completed the survey. Twelve respondents indicated that they were 30 or more years of age, with five of them indicating the 40-plus age category. The sole respondent who was not 30 or more years of age indicated that he or she was in the 20-24 year range category.

Nine respondents indicated that they had between five and 14 years of teaching experience at the time they started graduate study. Two individuals indicated that they had 15 or more years of teaching experience, and two indicated fewer than five years teaching experience at the time they started graduate study.

All but one of the respondents reported holding either a Bachelor of Education (Music) or a Bachelor of Music degree and teacher certification. Two of the respondents reported holding a music diploma from a community college. One respondent reported holding a graduate diploma in wind band conducting

earned in another university. Information pertaining to music diplomas was not solicited, and others may hold music diplomas but did not report it. The four doctoral students reported holding both undergraduate and master's degrees. Master's degrees held were the Master of Arts (1), Master of Fine Arts (1), Master of Education (1), and Master of Music (2). One respondent held both Master of Music and Master of Education degrees. The respondent without teacher certification was a doctoral student with college teaching experience. This individual held a Bachelor of Commerce degree and a Master of Music degree.

Based on the demographic information collected, the typical teacher entering graduate studies in secondary music education in the institution where the data were collected is at least 30 years of age and has between five and 14 years of teaching experience. A teacher who is 30 or more years of age with five to 14 years of teaching experience can be categorized as a mid-career teacher, given current pension and retirement structures. In a jurisdiction that does not require a master's degree for permanent teacher certification, it appears that teachers wait until they are well established in their careers before they return to university to earn a graduate degree.

#### *Conclusion*

Knowledge of motivational influences identified as important in the decision to pursue graduate music education is useful to those who design and deliver graduate programs. Graduate programs that meet the aspirations and needs of music educators are more likely to attract students. I speculate that music educators with graduate education are better prepared than those without graduate education to engage in a critical, reflective praxis that results in the ongoing renewal of the music education field. In addition, an increase in music education doctoral candidates will help address the anticipated shortage of university music educators available to deliver preservice music teacher education programs (Asmus, 2001; Teachout, 2004).

This study identified (a) intellectual development, (b) personal development, and (c) professional development as being of great importance in the respondents' decisions to pursue graduate study, whether they were master's or doctoral students. These motivational influences to pursue graduate study are found among the common motivational influences for graduate study for educators other than music educators, as determined by the work of Cardon and Rogers (2002), Fardensh (1984), Jablonski (2001), Mertz & McNeely (1990), and Wilgers (1993). After completion of this study, research by Teachout (2004) conducted with 63 potential doctoral students in music education identified four positive-influence factors for doctoral study that together contributed 53.65% of the variance: (a) prestige of and connection with faculty/university, (b) desire to affect future music teachers, (c) desire to learn, and (d) personal/professional future. Teachout's sample was drawn from practicing music educators in the areas of instrumental ( $n=33$ ), classroom/general ( $n=19$ ), and choral ( $n=11$ ) music. These teachers were all engaged in master's programs and were identified by their supervisors as being outstanding candidates for doctoral study. Two of four positive-influence factors identified by Teachout are commensurate with the motivational influences determined by this study. The remaining two, pertaining to the prestige/reputation of a particular facul-

ty or university and to the desire to affect future music educators, were not specifically included in the motivational influences rated by participants in this study. However, the opportunity to affect future music teachers may be a component of the motivational influence *potential for a new and satisfying career*, which was ranked fourth ( $M=3.77$ ) by participants in this study. In addition, one respondent in this study added the motivational influence, "develop a resource document that would benefit working teachers and music education students," and rated it of great importance in his or her decision to pursue graduate studies.

For this study, the small size of the population ( $N=13$ ) and the restriction of data collection to individuals enrolled in one institution suggest caution against generalizing the results of this to other groups of music education graduate students, including those who may yet enroll in the institution where the data were collected. However, the apparent agreement between the top-ranked motivational influences between the sample in Teachout's (2004) study and the population in this study contribute to confidence in concluding that intellectual, personal, and professional development are among the principal motivational influences for secondary music educators to engage in graduate studies.

I speculate that the ranking of motivational influences to pursue graduate study by music educators not currently in a graduate program may differ from that of the 13 participants in this study. Students in this study chose an extant graduate program that focused on curriculum theory and research methodology with an opportunity for self-chosen professional development in topics relevant to teaching music in the public schools. It may be that other music educators not yet engaged in graduate work would be attracted to a prescriptive professional development degree program focused on improving traditional classroom practice without the intent of critically examining current praxis through the lens of curriculum theory or of preparing individuals for careers in academia. It is reasonable to assume that the ranked motivational influences of this group of music educators would differ from the ranked motivational influences of the group in this study. This is an area in need of research.

This study is the only Canadian investigation of motivational influences for individuals to pursue graduate studies in secondary music education and one of only two North American studies. As a group, respondents in this study indicated that their engagement in graduate studies was the result of a desire for intellectual, personal, and professional development. Individuals further indicated that they enjoyed the social aspects of graduate school and valued the opportunity to interact with other music educators. The transformative nature of graduate studies was evident for some students as they acknowledged that their perception of self in relation to career aspirations changed over the course of their studies. Further exploration of the identified motivational influences and of the themes evident in the prose responses may yield specific information about the nature of coursework and other graduate school experiences that music educators seek. University administrators and others involved with the design and implementation of graduate programs must consider that, especially at the master's level, there may be two groups of potential students: those



who aspire to an academic career and those who seek a professional development degree program with the goal of increasing their effectiveness in the classroom. The application of this information to the development of curricula for graduate programs should result in programs that address the intellectual, personal, and professional goals of educators.

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