Problematizing accountability in fine arts education: Identifying issues in accountability through four organizational frames from a Texas secondary instrumental instructor's perspective

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Introduction

Accountability in education has been a long standing topic of conversation and debate, particularly in disciplines that do not fall under the traditional definitions of the "core curriculum." In considering the accountability of educational institutions and their educators, several questions must be posed i.e. to whom are we or they accountable? What is the measure of accountability? How do we establish, model, and celebrate success? How do we deal with remediation? How do we make improvements? et cetera. Each of these questions plays a vital role in the innumerable initiatives, programs, agencies, supervisors and peers that are in a continuous search for what is desired, what is advertised, and what is produced as accountability.

Unfortunately, such a search has led to accountability framed by what is lacking, resulting in deficit thinking on the topic of accountability in public schools. Whether it is funding, resources, requisite knowledge, or potential performance outcomes, accountability and its measures of assessment seem to be focused on what is not present, rather than appreciating different definitions of success based on the use of resources that are available. Although many argue that socio-political and economic characteristics of student and teacher populations satisfy such deficits and the action being taken because of them, I would argue that the state of accountability and lack of satisfying assessment thereof, stems from a confusion of the terms and their function in achieving and identifying goals for education as a whole.

This article is an attempt to unpack terms like accountability in public education specifically for the fine arts, through multiple organizational frames, and from personal experiences as a secondary instrumental music teacher in the state of Texas.

First, I discuss the topic of accountability from a historical perspective, grounded in the accountability movement of the 1970's, which offers context to the current issues and concerns

for accountability in public education. The discussion is then paralleled with accountability for the fine arts specifically, again represented from a historical perspective to appreciate the fine arts advocates who were trying to be heard through the cacophonous dialog on accountability generated in the 1970's, and which is arguably still present today.

In an effort to objectify my own experiences as a fine arts educator, I choose to view accountability through the four organizational frames of Bohlman and Deal. I briefly introduce the four frames to clarify their function in viewing my personal experiences and professional perspectives of accountability for fine arts. By problematizing accountability through these four frames I hope to debunk the notion that accountability for fine arts is currently in existence in the state of Texas and abroad, and to generate critical questions that may yield new conversations on accountability for fine arts and ultimately demand action from the bottom up.

Accountability in Education

Accountability, at present, has been turned into a "blame game." The perception is that Tax-payers are paying for a product, and while I wish to avoid the plethora of business analogies that are too frequently used to illustrate the issues in public education and plague our perception of the purpose and function of public education systems, paying customers want to know what they are getting for the associated cost. With a financial commitment, the general public expects "accountability." In a neo-liberal, market-driven economy and a society driven by consumerism, accountability is expressed as failed expectations and desires rather than sincere and clearly defined needs. As a part of some of the first conversations published on the nation's concerns with accountability in education, Turner (1977) discusses the difficulty of defining accountability through the frequently cited, "who is responsible for what, and to whom?" She suggests "The slipperiness of the concept encourages relegation of definitional problems to the status of

semantic dispute, while implementation of the design moves forward." This issue had been unpacked further by Rosenshine and McGaw (1972).

> It might be realistic to assume that students, teachers, administrators, parents, publishers, educators, and the general public are each accountable for some aspect of educational program. But if each group is responsible, how can we determine which part of a child's mathematics achievement, for example, is attributed to each of the parties? Any attempt to use accountability should make us painfully aware of the inadequacy of our educational knowledge. The tragedy is that we seem to move from innovation to innovation, failing to conduct, synthesize, and disseminate the research about each change.

In spite of the national dialogue established on accountability in the 1970's, the need for clearly defined parameters of success in public education are still expressed today in ongoing attempts to facilitate meaningful assessment which can ultimately establish sincere and functional form of accountability. Nelson and Jones (2007) describe this as a "big business" mentality to public education. Referencing the No Child Left Behind Act, they expose a failed attempt to organize and address educational needs by narrowly defining good teaching "as a set of technical skills aimed at getting students to achieve with some proficiency on standardized tests, which, of course, are designed, constructed, and published by a select few corporations which have reaped the enormous profit from these products." With such a bleak outlook on what seems to be a corrupt and repudiated system of accountability, where does one start to manifest a meaningful and applicable definition of accountability in education?

Lessinger (1971) states "the heart of accountability is control and its face is productivity." These are truly poignant words which come from a pivotal time in the

development and establishment of accountability in the field of education, but herein lies the paradox. If, as Lessinger suggests, accountability starts with control and is represented by productivity, who has control, and more importantly, who gives it? As discussed by Rosenshine and McGaw (2005) there are many people to associate with educational accountability, but who has the ultimate responsibility and what are they doing with it? It would seem we have come full circle and begun another round of the blame game. Searching to designate responsibility for failure, students can blame teachers, teachers can blame administrators, administrators can blame government offices, government offices will blame the tax-payers, who are the parents of the students and who feed back into the cycle through the students themselves. Ultimately, true accountability is lost in a perpetual circle of blame.

Accountability in the fine arts

The question is raised then: where are we now? Needless to say, countless actions have been taken to model and support multiple theories and demands of accountability. Again, the limitations of these actions are felt by subjects outside the realm of the traditional "core curriculum," such as fine arts, the most. Fine arts have consistently suffered from a lack of attention and misguided supervision. At the same time that national educational organizations and scholars were expressing serious concern for accountability in public education, fine arts scholars and professionals were struggling to be heard through the cacophonous drone of what was later to be identified as the standardization of educational expectations and assessment for the sake of generating so called accountability measures.

Dorman responded to the latest trends in educational accountability in 1973 with a call-to-arms specifically for music educators who sought "grass roots accountability." She offers an auto-ethnographic perspective, in which she recalled an observation of one of her sixth grade

classes where she was posed with the question “Why does everyone have to do the same thing all the time?” Dorman realized that she was “more concerned with consistency than with creativity.” More than 42 years old, her words and experiences are still pertinent to today’s conversations on accountability in education, particularly in the fine arts:

> We could become much more effective as teachers if we viewed ourselves as facilitators with students- facilitators who respond to the individual learner in terms of what he needs in order to know what he is and what he can become. Accountability would then become more than assignments and evaluation; it would become an integration of knowledge of content, a knowledge of how to teach, and a knowledge of human behavior.

It is not shocking, in accordance to the notion of historic recurrence, that the national dialogue has turned back to such conversations with debates over initiatives such as STEM to STEAM. Where has creativity gone in our curriculum? What have we sacrificed to established standards? How has the continued standardization of our curriculum benefited our teaching and learning? And how do such concerns affect measures of accountability?

As a part of the conversation, Labuta contributed a critical perspective of assessment and accountability measures for music educators in 1972. I would hesitate to claim that much has changed. Again, it is disturbing to read literature of the 1970’s and recognize that the battle to establish viable means of assessment and accountability for the arts is not that different to where it currently stands. Labuta claimed quite assertively that “most teachers aern’t that accountable.” This is not so much an accusation as it is an observation, which is rooted in the inherent lack of accountability systems or structures formally in place for fine arts educators. I believe the distinction of fine arts is import at this point, as there are many (some would argue too many)

accountability systems currently in place for the "core curriculum," while few are formally recognized in the later. Why then has a system not been put into place? This question was posed by Labuta 43 years ago, and his response, again is both haunting and pertinent. Education as a whole is focused on outcome and measurable results. Without a formalized assessment of fine arts programs in public schools, a system of accountability is lacking. In other words, without a standardized measurement of "results" within fine arts classrooms, problems cannot be identified, and "since there are not identified problem areas, the schools are not being held accountable" for the arts.

Labuta suggests the establishment of defined outcomes in music classrooms to generate standards that would ultimately be used to generate a system of accountability. I must say upfront that I am not in support of standardized tests to evaluate student progress in fine arts, in spite of any perceived benefits that come from initiating accountability measures such as standardized tests. With such propositions, however, I do recognize multiple systems that have been established to address a lack of accountability for fine arts, particularly for music programs. As a secondary instrumental teacher in the state of Texas, I am speaking specifically from my own experiences in the classroom and assuming, through sporadic conversations with colleagues around the United States, that these systems are omnipresent, under many names and structures, and all seek to satisfy issues of accountability that are systemically absent in public school fine arts instruction.

Four Organizational Frames

Bohlman and Deal (2013) define *framing* as the construction of mental models to help one understand and negotiate particular territories. Their concept of framing is developed through four specific perspectives (or frames) that encourage a deeper understanding of an

organization through the critical analysis of that organization's function and operations. In problematizing accountability in fine arts education, I believe these four frames help organize my thoughts and experiences in such a way as to promote the need to address the issues that arise from such perspectives. In other words, in considering how the current accountability measures, or lack thereof, are affecting fine arts teaching and learning we will have constructed an idea of what is both wanted and needed from accountability in the fine arts.

The four frames discussed by Bohlman and Deal are based on principles and practices of organizational politics, structure, symbolism and human resources. Within the political frame "the question is not whether organizations are political, but what kind of politics they will encompass." The political frame addresses issues of power and how that power is used. The structural frame pertains to the regulations and subsequent governing of organizations. It addresses the rules, roles, policies, environment, and attitudes perpetuated by the organization and how all of these characteristics contribute to a unified and functional structure, whether it is advertised as such, or effectively managed. The symbolic frame searches for meaning in actions. It identifies the ceremonies, stories, heroes, and ritual of organizations to promote or encourage specific cultures of operation. Lastly, the human resources frame is designed to assess and meet needs. It discusses the skills associated with the membership of the organization and how such skills may be aligned to meet needs and empower relationships within the organization.

I am obviously broadening the perception of "organization" not to reference a body of people that serve in a specific capacity, but rather, to represent the ideal of accountability in fine arts education, which employs a growing number of managers and administrators to achieve an expressed goal. "Because organizations are complex, deceptive, and ambiguous, they are formidably difficult to comprehend and manage" (Bohlman & Deal). Although accountability

may be understood as an aspect of larger organizations, I am attacking accountability as an institution in and of itself, attempting to satisfy its stakeholders with dense internal structures that strive to achieve a common purpose. “Our preconceived theories, models, and images determine what we see, what we do, and how we judge what we accomplish.” Through the frames to follow, I hope to illuminate such preconceived notions through my own experiences as a secondary instrumental music teacher in Texas, and evaluate the perceived structures of accountability and their inadequacies of offering a sincere assessment and evaluation of success, and their ultimate failure to generate legitimate accountability to published educational standards.

The Political Frame

The use and appointment of political power within secondary music curriculum is vague and convoluted. In terms of perceived accountability a secondary music teacher will likely tell you the first person of authority who exercises and affects their work directly is their principal. The political dynamic of educational administration is one that by no means is restricted to the fine arts. The interaction of the secondary music teacher and principal is quite different, however, to that of a classroom teacher or even a department chair in one of the core academic subjects.

Secondary music teachers are, with rare exception, under a standard teacher contract with all of the appropriate responsibilities and expectations that accompany it. As a teacher they perform a specific role and are subject to the political powers associated with the position of being a classroom teacher, as it relates to grades, attendance, duty, et cetera. The reality, however, is more complicated than that. The secondary music teacher is not simply a classroom teacher, they are a program director. They are expected to plan trips; organize extracurricular

rehearsals, performances, and competitions; take inventory, repair, and order instruments, literature, classroom supplies, and instructional materials; just to name a few of the additional responsibilities and expectations that fall under the nebulous "and other duties as assigned" phrase which is included in most teacher contracts.

These duties suggest a sense of authority and political power for the teacher to run and operate their program, yet equitable valid measures of accountability are absent to ensure that such power and authority are exercised appropriately. The administrators that oversee the secondary instrumental teachers are rarely qualified to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching, nor do they inquire of the details associated with the programs i.e. uniforms, instruments, travel, et cetera. Some districts may employ a fine arts director or lead fine arts teacher, but in general, the measure of accountability is based on the appropriate paperwork being turned in at the required time. Senechal (2013) points out that "accountability, in its worst form, is the mandated practice of answering to people who don't understand what we are doing." She continues, "The danger of the accountability movement lies in its insistence on the generic, literal, and flat, its dismissal of the subtlety and particularity of subject matter." Public school administrators in the state of Texas are data hungry. They hold teachers accountable as they too are held accountable: by evaluating the assessment of standardized tests, which generates data, which demands reaction. This "outcomes" based model, referenced earlier by Labuta, focused on data-driven assessment and accountability, has been around since the 1980's, but as more and more of the curriculum is developed with results in mind the data moves into the driver's seat and measurable outcomes become the only destination in sight. Senchal (2103) states that "any 'evidence' we provide, any 'data' we collect any 'effectiveness' we demonstrate, has meaning

only in relation to our existing educational goals, which depend on our conception of education and of the subject matter itself."

Beyond the scope of the campus and district expectations, however, each secondary music instructor is expected to coordinate various instructional activities with regional and state music organizations. A list of some of the organizations and individuals and their affiliate activities, services or curricular expectations can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Organization/Individual	Activities/Services/Curricular Expectations
Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA)	Region and All-State auditions and ensembles and PD
University Interscholastic League (UIL)	Solo & Ensemble and Concert and Sight Reading activities
Music Educators National Conference (MENC)	National curricular standards and advocacy
Texas Music Educators Conference (TMEC)	State affiliate to MENC
Texas Educators Agency (TEA)	State curricular standards "TEKS"
Center for Educator Development in the Fine Arts (CEDFA)	Promotes the use of TEKS in instruction through PD
Clinicians	Pre-UIL adjudication
Technicians, assistants and instructors	Supplementary staff and instructional coaches

Of course Table 1 only represents a small sampling of organizations and individuals that a secondary music teacher can expect to interact with during their tenure in a Texas public school. Although the exact combination and interaction of the entities listed in table 1 and the teacher may vary widely across the state, and even within some districts, the list does provide a glimpse of the affiliate organizations that public school secondary music instructors would be expected to navigate and work with to establish and operate a "successful program," understanding that "success" may be defined in radically different ways, since there is not a standard measure of assessment and no formal system of accountability for these programs at the state level.

Although many music educators and administrators would argue that UIL Concert and Sight Reading and Solo and Ensemble activities are standards-based and that they can represent an assessment or evaluation of various music programs and their individual students, the reality stands that UIL is an independent organization, outside of the pervue of the Texas Education

Agency, and therefore has no formal authority, nor is it guaranteed to adhere to a state-approved or sanctioned set of standards. I want to clarify: I am not bringing the performance and judging criteria of UIL music activities into question. Rather, I am recognizing that the perceived power and authority of UIL to assess public school music programs is falsely assumed.

Furthermore, the notion, which many music educators operate under, that UIL acts as a formal assessment of their programs, breeds a focus on performance and neglects vital strands of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) designed for secondary music instruction. This harkens the data-driven assessment and accountability mentioned previously reducing our students' learning to a standardized score, which does not represent the progress and development of the students, nor does it evaluate all of their knowledge or skills required within the subject.

Viewing accountability through the political lens it can be seen that a severe imbalance and misappropriation has been established for music educators' perceptions of power and authority as well as the measures by which such power is exercised to generate a system of accountability. Several points are mentioned to dispel the myths and false practices surrounding political power and authority in fine arts education, however the conversation is by no means exhaustive. It is my hope that the points addressed act as the beginning of a growing conversation on political power and its effects on accountability in the fine arts.

The Structural Frame

We would be remiss to solely consider accountability in the arts through the political frame. The power and authority exercised within an organization is heavily dependent on its established structures, especially when such structures are rigid and not easily redefined. When considering the structure of public school arts education, particularly associated with secondary

instrumental instruction, one should recognize the limitations it imposes on the function and operation of such programs. Again, I will offer my personal perspective as a practicing secondary music instructor in public schools with a focus on instrumental instruction.

First, as mentioned in the political frame, the structure of individual arts programs is subject to the standardized structures and requirements of Texas public schools, as dictated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Exactly how far up one most travel to appreciate the pinnacle of authority is somewhat irrelevant, as the further one travels from the classroom, the less likely they are to see any effective measures of accountability for fine arts. From the Commissioner of Education, as the head of TEA, one can follow the hierarchical structure of the agency into various offices delegated and formulated from the top down, one of which oversees standards and programs, in which a department of curriculum is located, and which houses a program coordinator over all enrichment education in the state of Texas which includes Career and Technical Education, Fine Arts, Health Education, Languages other than English (LOTE), Physical Education (PE), and Technology Applications. Each of these disciplines has an individual page on the TEA website. Under the fine arts page the following description is given for the function of the fine arts division of enrichment education:

> The Curriculum Division provides direction and leadership for the state's public school art, dance, music, and theatre programs for Kindergarten through grade 12. The Enrichment Education staff facilitate various fine arts statewide initiatives, including implementation of the fine arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and assistance to the TEA Division of Instructional Materials and Educational Technology for the adoption process for fine arts instructional materials.

As a practicing fine arts educator, I have never personally interacted with TEA, nor have I received direction, leadership, or support in facilitating or implementing any of the TEKS or program directives. The reality is, no one is currently tasked with monitoring and supporting the fine arts curriculum at TEA, because there is not a formal state wide assessment of the fine arts in the state of Texas, and is therefore no way to measure and/or hold fine arts programs accountable for what and how they are teaching. Again, I feel it is important and appropriate to state that this is not meant to be accusatory. Many districts have developed and implemented their own systems of accountability to ensure that the TEKS are being addressed adequately, and TEA has staff that are prescribed to work with fine arts educators. In spite of this, however, the fact remains that there is not a formal statewide accountability system for fine arts education.

In 1998, when the new standards of public education "Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills" (TEKS) were approved by the Texas legislature, TEA developed Centers for Educator Development (CED) to support and facilitate the implementation of the new standards within districts across the state. The idea of educational standards promoted accountability and TEA was prepared to support the districts as these new standards were implemented, as they would ultimately become the new measure by which the districts were assessed. A CED was created for all of the subjects that had TEKS, including the fine arts. After funding had been exhausted the Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts (CEDFA) became a non-profit organization to continue supporting fine arts educators in the implementation of state standards. Originally an extension of TEA, CEDFA still exists as a supporting organization of fine arts instruction, however, involvement and engagement in CEDFA is completely voluntary, and there are no accountability measures or authority given to CEDFA in supporting TEKS implementation for fine arts in public schools. This is not to imply that CEDFA exists without a purpose or function,

but it is an example of structural elements within the fine arts who exercise perceived authority that do not actually have the ability to hold teachers accountable for their work.

Still viewing structures at the state level, another organization widely credited and utilized by fine arts educators as a tool for assessment and an accountability measure for their programs is the University Interscholastic League (UIL). UIL was established in 1910 by the University of Texas to provide educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests to eligible public school students within the state of Texas. Although UIL has established standards of performance for its music activities, that are arguably supportive of the TEKS, there is no legal authority of UIL to assess and evaluate the value or success of public school music programs. Many music educators operate under the assumption that their success in UIL activities correlates to their success as a fine arts educator and that it has a place in their own evaluation as a teacher, but again this is a perpetuated belief based solely on misconceptions. It is unfortunate that so many music teachers in particular ascribe to this, as it echoes the frustration of many educators who suffer standardized tests that dictate the success of their students and their teaching with a score. I will discuss this further when considering accountability in fine arts through the symbolic and human resources frames.

At the district and instructional level many districts employ a fine arts coordinator, director, or lead teacher. This is one of the most effective ways to encourage and reinforce accountability for the fine arts. Unfortunately, without accountability measures above these local positions, there is no standard, and the quality and effectiveness of these positions varies dramatically. The challenge becomes ensuring equity for all of the fine arts teachers and their administrators. Since there is not a “fine arts” administrators certification, nor is it realistic to assume an individual has K-12 teaching experience in all of the fine arts disciplines, more often

than not fine arts administrators are hired with a limited perspective on the arts. This is not to insinuate that a retired music teacher or former theater teacher cannot reasonably manage and support a visual art or dance program. For that matter we would expect high school principals to be certified in every academic discipline on their campus. It does however pose a serious problem for the standards of accountability exercised by a fine arts administrator. If they only have experience in one fine arts content area, and without a state standard of what a fine arts administrator should be responsible for, the inconsistencies are not only apparent, but are perpetuated as a sub-culture of educational administration.

Again, from the state to the local level, there is a lack of formalized standards for fine arts in public schools. Although some districts have developed their own system of accountability, the structures currently in place restrict effective conversations from the top down and the bottom up. In other words, in spite of successful fine arts management and accountability at the district level, there is no one at TEA to support and recognize such achievement. Likewise, although TEA has designated staff to support the implementation of the fine arts TEKS and the acquisition of fine arts instructional materials; this information is not consistently being communicated at the local level. The structures that are in place are operating under assumed precedence perpetuated by traditions.

The Symbolic Frame

Symbolically, the notion of accountability in music has been poisoned by competition. Success has turned into a trophy, a score, or a medal. Systemically, the curriculum of public school music programs has been designed around competitive festivals, activities, and events that compare our students and their programs to others, rather than evaluating progress against the established standards and rubrics which abhor competition.

As an example, a typical secondary school music calendar may begin the academic year with preparation for region auditions (a competitive ranking of auditioned students within specific regions, aligned by the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA)) which can, and do in many cases (particularly in the choral world), dictate the repertoire of the fall concert, and thus dictate the instructional materials of the first 9 weeks of school. Most of the students have had this music since the summer and have been working on it for months. Needless to say, the value of this music is limited in the scope of what students should be accomplishing in the classroom according to the TEKS. To clarify, programs can and do benefit from region music and the subsequent music preparation of the students, but the true benefit of such work and repertoire has yet to be established.

Upon completing the region auditions, which take place anywhere from late September to early October, students that have advanced will begin preparing the repertoire for state or area auditions. This is usually restricted to a smaller population of students and therefore has less of an impact on classroom instruction. October, however, begins UIL marching band competitions and fall festivals, which usually include adjudication. November is filled with the concerts which celebrate the “winners” of region auditions and more auditions to advance to the state level. Christmas and winter concerts, which for the most part avoid a competitive component, bring the fall semester to a close, but not without preparation for the next contest.

The spring semester will begin with Solo and Ensemble competitions. Students traditionally select their Solo and Ensemble repertoire in the fall, right after region concerts and before Christmas. Between January and February, UIL contests take place which evaluate individual students and again offer opportunities to advance from the region to the state level. In February, the results of the TMEA state auditions find fruition in the All-State music ensembles

at the annual TMEA convention in San Antonio. In both cases, students are not the only ones subject to comparison and assessment. The conversations of directors, administrators, and parents include inquiry into the number of students that participated in Region and All-State, how many superior ratings you received at Solo and Ensemble, and how many students will be advancing to state. March and April, resentfully referred to as "Contest Season," are the months designated for UIL's Concert and Sight Reading (C&SR) contests. These contests have symbolically become the measure of success for public school music programs. The goal is to receive a superior rating from both the concert and sight reading panel of judges. The rubric for the evaluations is inconsistent among the three music disciplines (band, choir, and orchestra) as well as the hiring of judges. Each C&SR competition is dramatically different in terms of its quality and standards. This is not to suggest that UIL condones such inconsistencies, but the fact remains that a formal standard of adjudication and the hiring of judges does not exist equitably among all three music disciplines. Several colloquial terms have been generated to express the results of a program's C&SR experience which profoundly affect the identity of the programs, their directors, and their students. If an ensemble receives "straight 1's" (meaning all six judges gave them superior ratings) they are said to have "sweepstakes." If you received a mean score of a 1, which would happen if two of the three judges gave you a 1 and the third gave you a 2, you are said to have received a "dirty sweepstakes." If the panel of judges gave you a 1, 2, and 3 in the concert or sight reading portion of the contest you are said to have received a "rainbow." It is important to note that a superior rating on either the concert or sight reading portion of the contest does not result in sweepstakes. In the case that this happens, one may report that they "received a 1 on stage (which again reflects a mean score) and a 2 in sight reading."

The true atrocity of this event is that some educators begin the preparation of this music in the fall semester. The goal of the music course then becomes a score rather than the musical development of the students. This is, without question, the equivalent criticism of foundational courses who are "teaching to the test." For the music disciplines I would offer the modified phrase "teaching to the score."

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After UIL C&SR contests most programs experience their one respite of the year in preparation of their spring concert. However, State Solo and Ensemble takes place in May, the same month that region music is released for region auditions in the upcoming year. The cycle begins again without rest. The entire year has thus been dominated by competition. Similarly, instruction has been designed to prepare for competition and receive reward through competitive rankings and results.

It would be irresponsible of me to suggest that every secondary music program in the state of Texas adheres to the calendar outlined above. As many music educators are currently employed in the state, so you will find an equal number of opinions and beliefs of how music programs should be structured and facilitated and how success in those programs is defined and celebrated. Every music teacher in the state, however, is affected by these competitions. Whether they choose to participate in them or not, the symbolism of their results and the so-called "success" associated with them cannot be avoided. In conversation with one of my colleagues in band over our participation in UIL contests, I suggested, quite vehemently, that the perceived rewards did not justify the work, and that my program and my students would benefit more from alternative instruction and performances. The "alternative" was anything other than UIL, in spite of the assumption that UIL represents the anticipated and professionally expected standard of public school enrichment programs. His response was haunting. He explained, "I used to think

that way, too. But the year I told one of my clinicians that I was thinking of not going to UIL he exclaimed, 'You can't do that.' When I asked him, 'Why not?' his response was simply, 'Because it's UIL.'" The question then becomes, who is responsible for the educational standards of our public school music students? Is it controlled by state curricular standards approved and solicited by TEA, or is it relegated to events filled with assigned "experts" that criticize your attempts at success once a year during one performance of a finite and restricted number of materials? I find it disheartening that the later bears a striking resemblance to the description of standardized tests.

Symbolically, accountability in the arts, particularly music, has been translated to competitive results. There are strong, perceivably unchangeable traditions that have been bred into our public school music programs to not only promote, but *require* competition to evaluate our student's success. It would seem the arts are suffering Goodhart's law, for when the measure becomes the target, it ceases to be a good measure.

The Human Resources Frame

The greatest question of this investigation lies in the exploration of accountability in fine arts through the human resources frame. I believe there is a negative relationship between the accountability issues of fine arts education and teacher and student agency. The human resource frame challenges us to view organizations by the needs of its members and how such needs are met. This can speak to the pragmatic needs expressed by most fine arts educators that focus on recruitment, retention, facilities, and resources. I would hope, however, that the identification of such needs and the subsequent fulfillment of those needs would be addressed in the structural and political framework of educational institutions. Again, this is a hopeful proposition, but one that I believe is important to distinguish from the personal needs that can only be satisfied with

the teachers and students themselves. External factors (such as a lack of resources) may contribute to a deficit in teacher and student agency, but a fundamental lack of formal accountability systematically affects one's capacity to succeed.

Without accountability, we lack assessment and the evaluation that accompanies it. We hesitate to identify success, as it is usually undefined, and we struggle with improvement, as there is no one to engage us in the process of development. Horsley (2009) addresses various definitions of accountability and how it is manifested in public school education for music teachers. Specifically, he discusses the dilemma of understanding accountability as answerability, and issues of top-down versus bottom-up policy making. Within the conversation the point is made that accountability is a key component to teacher agency. We must avoid neo-liberal models that strip teachers of their intrinsic capacities to teach, but we must also ensure a system that will require educators to know what they are doing, and more importantly how they are doing it within the expressed desire to educate students.

The questions remain: if a fine arts teacher is doing a great job, how do we know and how is it celebrated? Conversely, if a fine arts teacher is doing a very poor job, how do we know and how do we address improvement? It is unfair to assume the worst or best of any educator, as the assumptions ultimately affect the students more than anyone else. Accountability does not have to be unattainable. Quite the contrary, it should be an expectation that is met with sincerity and diligence in ensuring that all students have equitable access to their education in the arts. Furthermore, accountability is not, as it is viewed by most administrators and members of the public, a way of keeping teachers in line. Rather, it is a vital aspect to developing teacher agency and identity.

Conclusions

Having discussed accountability from a broad perspective on public education, to the focused content of fine arts, one begins to appreciate the systemic issues that misguided and misappropriated accountability measures continue to generate for administrators, teachers, and students alike. These issues stem from poorly constructed definitions of assessment and accountability that lack the appropriate support and authority within the public school system.

By offering my own experiences as a fine arts educator in the state of Texas through the four organizational frames of Bohlman and Deal, an objective view is developed that further dispels the myths and assumptions perpetuated by assumed and misunderstood practices within the fine arts.

The political frame shows the confusion of perceived power and authority in accountability for the fine arts. The expectations are confronted by practice, as fine arts teachers and administrators are hired into positions that lack fundamental support. The absence of such support denigrates fine arts educators for what is misunderstood as a lack of accountability, when no true accountability measures can be named.

The structural frame further supports the misconceptions of structured authority and power of institutions and organizations that both advertise and exercise so called accountability measures without critical reflection or equity amongst the fine arts disciplines. President proves to be the strongest validation for the perpetuated assumptions of educators who are ignorant to the misconceptualized accountability they are subjected to.

The symbolic frame presents the “outcome” based models that currently dominate accountability in fine arts and is manifested through competition. It is a terrifying realization to view the parallel of teaching content for standardized tests and teaching the arts for standardized

performances, which both yield an abstract score in the scope of instructional practice and influence and the state standards of essential knowledge and skills required of the subjects.

The human resource frame questions the concept of teacher and student agency. A lack of accountability invites a lack of standards. The quality of teaching and student experiences is therefore ultimately affected. Although I would not suggest that every fine arts teacher exploits this lack in accountability, I do argue that the absence of accountability questions the equity of educational experiences and places a disturbing expectation on fine arts educators to create, define, implement, evaluate and communicate their own standards.

I do not believe there is a sincere and equitable form of accountability for the fine arts in the state of Texas and abroad from the local to national level. In spite of outstanding incidents of localized success; measurable, communicable standards of teaching fine arts are systemically absent in public education. This speaks to a severe inequity that challenges the notion of educational standards for public school students. At present, I do not have answers to what proves to be a dense and complicated issue. I do, however, have many questions, and I invite others to problematize accountability in the fine arts to encourage purposeful and meaningful dialog that promotes change and encourages action.

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