PROFESSIONALISM AND THE INDEPENDENT PIANO TEACHER: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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The independent piano studio owner combines entrepreneurial and pedagogical skill sets when creating a business to house their chosen occupation. These skill sets help them create a reputation as pedagogues and business owners and affects their status as professionals. In this paper, the evolution of independent piano teaching in America will be traced in order to evaluate the impact of negative stereotypes on the independent piano teachers’ pursuit of professional standing. This collective case study will interview four piano studio owners. Using Structural-Functional and Process models from sociological literature, subjects will be evaluated on their degree of professionalism. Results will be separated by categories of topics related to pedagogical and business development. The discussion outlines the differences and commonalities between the four subjects in responses to interview questions. Results show that subjects in this study meet a majority of traits required of obtaining professional status. More importantly, subjects have freedoms to choose how to become professional and how to gain community recognition as being professionals. Conclusions find how these subjects created professionalism and offers suggestions for further research into the topic.
In dedication to my mother

“Let your Spirit Dance”
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INTRODUCTION

Piano students who choose to make their living as practicing musicians and teachers have a selection of career paths. For those few whose training, skill and experience provides, they may be able to become concert artists making a living from performing and recording, possibly teaching a few master classes or private students as well. A larger number of pianists are artist-teachers, and teaching on faculty at institutions of higher learning. These teachers derive a bulk of their income from teaching private lessons and college courses and may be performers as well. The most populated domain of practicing pianists is teachers of pre-college students. These are people who operate independently of university or corporate association, and are often not seen with the degree of visibility and prestige as that of the faculty artist-teacher. They typically educate beginning to early advanced students individually or in groups. Independent piano teachers operate on a customer, or student-based mentality of working jointly with the student and parent to “accomplish certain agreed upon goals at the piano” (Uzsler, 2000, p. 179). This mentality differs from that of academia in that students study and achieve “at will” and not for academic credit or degree requirement.

Independent piano teaching can be a fulfilling and lucrative career option that utilizes musical and nonmusical skills. Standards must be created and upheld in order to produce a positive situation where students will choose to invest their time and resources. Independent piano teachers must explore an entrepreneurial side of thinking as they start, grow, and maintain their teaching space and students. To be successful, independent piano teachers combine entrepreneurial and pedagogical skill sets to establish their place in the working world. These teachers bring together the aforementioned skills in many unique and varied ways when they create their own environment for teaching.
Independent piano teaching has been historically seen as more of a part-time leisure pursuit than a full career. Low wages and less recognition are traditional characterizations which prevent independent piano teachers from receiving professional regard in American society. Of course this is not true of all pre-college teachers. Various studies and associations have sought to classify independent piano teaching as either an occupation or a profession. Members of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), which was established in 1876 and currently has over 22,000 members largely comprised of independent piano teachers, consider this to be a profession (Beard, 1983 p. 46; Brown, 1986 p. 53). Those who have applied the findings of sociological literature related to being or becoming a profession would disagree (Heisler, 1995, p. 249). However, using archetypes such as the *Structural-Functional* and *Process Models* as guides, independent piano teachers may be shown to achieve professional status to various degrees.

The purpose of this collective case study was to interview four independent piano teachers who own and operate a music studio business as their primary source of income. A researcher-developed survey guided interviews through categories of topics. Categories were designed to gather information from the perspective of both small business owner and piano pedagogue. Collecting a business perspective helped determine how each subject had used their entrepreneurial skills set to develop business practices. The information gathered during the interviewing process also helped determine in what ways these subjects use business and pedagogy practices to establish themselves as professionals using the *Structural-Functional* and *Process Models*. 
CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teaching private lessons is a career option with financial and intellectual potential which has struggled to become a respected vocation with professional status. It is an all too familiar environment for those who have been studying privately for years, yet it has been shown that only 36% of piano teachers choose independent piano teaching as a first career choice (Wolfersberger, 1987, p. 48). A brief overlook of the history of the independent piano teacher may shed light on why so few pianists choose teaching as a first career. It also documents the great effort independent piano teachers have made toward becoming professionals.

Development and popularity of the piano necessitated competent individuals who were willing to teach in some capacity. At first piano teachers were giving lessons part-time on the side of their chosen profession. As recognition of music education and demand for children to learn piano grew, it became more common for independent piano teachers to teach piano only as their primary source of income. Domestic situations gave the profession an effeminate cast as more women than men assumed the roles of community piano teacher. The profession expanded with the establishment of professional associations and entrance into the university curriculum. Slowly public awareness began to recognize the importance of serious, artistic piano instruction on all levels. Although strides were made toward creating well educated and actively involved piano teachers, this is still not required of everyone in the profession.

History of the Independent Piano Teacher

In the American culture, independent piano teachers confront lingering stereotypes associated with a general feminization combined and low monetary standards (McBride Smith, 2005, p. 27). They are seen as persons who teach on the side for personal enjoyment.
Consequently the vocation of independent piano teaching has struggled to gain professional regard in our society (Baker-Jordan, 2003, p. 17). These stereotypes have their beginnings in the historical development of the instrument and its manner of teaching.

The dawn of the industrial revolution during the nineteenth century cultivated great advancements in the expansion of piano playing. It produced complex mechanical devices at a faster and more economical rate than ever before. The piano was one of the first complex devices to be refined and mass produced. The industrial revolution jointly created a larger, more affluent middle class. As European and American middle classes grew, they were able to use disposable income toward the arts and leisure. Music became a fashionable form of entertainment on stage and in the home. This was an ideal situation for the piano as it quickly became a symbol of status and prestige throughout middle class society.

Advancements in industry and commerce made it possible to produce quality instruments of all sizes and prices, making this socially valued commodity available to ever more people. By the late 1800’s, pianos were widely available and could be purchased from the manufacturer, music store, or mail order catalogue. In Europe and America between 1850 and 1910, piano sales grew exponentially. Although France experienced a population growth of 25%, French manufactured pianos had a gain of 150%. English manufactured pianos increased 200% during this time while the population rose only 66% (Loesser, 1954, p. 428). The United States was at the leading end of piano growth. Between 1880 and 1900, the United States sold pianos at a rate of 5.6 times as fast as its growth of people, and that number grew to 6.2 between 1900 and 1910 (Uszler, 2000, p. 175). Traveling salesman would even carry pianos through rural America on modified Model T cars so that families could try one out in their own front yard (Hoover, Rucker & Good, 2001, p. 45). New pianos were being made and sold at a faster rate than people were
being born and new homes established. These figures show the rising societal importance in music and piano playing in particular. Every family that considered itself above the working class owned, or aimed to own, a piano. This was a golden age for piano teachers as piano playing was an up and coming fashion and students were plentiful (Uszler, 2000, p. 175).

During the industrial revolution, the role of family and household shifted as well. The industrial world was a constant race of commerce and self-centered control. The home, in contrast, became both a shelter from the anxieties of industrial society and a place where moral and spiritual values could be nurtured. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Victorian middle-class society made the home a cornerstone of refuge and stability, but the middle class home also was becoming a display case of social status. The center of the home was now the parlor where the family assembled and guests were entertained, and the ornate massive piano became the most prominent and fundamental parlor piece. Pianos were expensive, naturally becoming symbols of a family’s ability to afford both the instrument and lessons to play it (Roell, 1989, p. 23).

Playing the piano was an expected accomplishment among many in the household, especially women. While men took on the role of provider, women cultivated domestic tasks associated with running the home. The nurturing of manners, education, and other accomplishments was accepted as a necessary part of a woman’s role. This ‘cult of domesticity’ was a Victorian middle-class ideal (Roell, 1989, p. 13). In 1929, The *Etude* claimed that for mothers not to give her daughter a musical education was “almost as serious an error as failure to teach the child to read or write.” To be musically illiterate, The Etude warned, was to be “classed with those who leave their spoons erect in their cups and spell cheese with a ‘z’-that is, those who have not made the most of their chances” (Roell, 1989, p. 16). In period images of piano playing in the home, a woman is typically seated at the instrument (Hoover, Rucker, &
Good, p. 26). This close association between Victorian women and music, especially the piano, inevitably gave music an effeminate cast.

The new Victorian emphasis on piano literacy necessitated competent individuals that could not only play the piano, but teach as well. The response for this increased demand for piano lessons created a population of people willing to teach. The 1887 Indianapolis convention for the Music Teacher’s National Association estimated over 500,000 pupils took piano lessons at that time in the United States (Loesser, 1954, p. 540). According to critic Oscar Comettant’s estimate of 1868, Paris was home to twenty thousand persons occupied to a greater or lesser extent with piano teaching (Loesser, 1954, p. 429).

The occupation of teaching was conducive to working flexible hours in the home where the piano was positioned. Since women were often relegated to the home in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was only natural for women to give lessons out of the home in order to supplement family income. These circumstances led to a general feminization of the entire music teaching profession. By 1821 the steady growth rate in women teachers had far surpassed the number of male teachers (Roske, 1987, p. 144). In America, Harold Randolph regretfully reported to the Music Teachers National Conference in 1922 that 85 percent of music students were girls and that 75 percent of concert audiences were women. Even as late as 1978, a Gallup survey revealed that 57 percent of all musical amateurs were women. Of all amateurs playing the piano at that time, 79 percent were female (Roell, 1989, p. 17). Women have continued to comprise the majority of piano teachers over the past 150 years. A 1987 survey of independent piano teachers across the U.S. revealed that 93% were female and the average age was 45 years old (Wolfersberger 1987, p. 48).
A particular problem of piano teachers, especially females however, was the lack of regulations or standards in the occupation. Because it was, and still is, completely optional for piano teachers to get certification or specialized training, there is no quality control across the country. Moore (1936) described it as a general “overcrowding” where prices and status were compromised due to the abundance of teachers, many of whom were inexperienced and not properly educated (p. 333). Teaching piano outside of an educational institution usually does not necessarily require a license, registration, or other official identification.

In the nineteenth century, those who taught piano lessons quite often held other employment in or out of the field of music. It was commonplace for directory listings to read “musician & grocer” or “prof. of music and millinery store” (Loesser 1954, pg. 456). A financial drawback to teaching piano exclusively was that teachers only got paid when they actually taught lessons. Unlike those who owned a successful business and had a salaried career, piano teachers typically had no paid vacation, unemployment compensation, included benefits or assurance of getting reimbursed if students missed lessons. Also, those teaching out of the home had minimal overhead and fixed expenses to consider when they set their rates. Therefore hourly wages tended to start low and had a large range depending on what individual teachers felt was ‘fair market’ for their services based on education and experience. In an article written for The Musical Times in 1936, Margery Moore stated:

We hear on all sides that the profession is in a bad way. It is, but not only on account of present economic conditions… There are far too many of us. We are not, on the whole, well educated…Most of us for financial reasons have to overwork every week-day. Very often we cannot afford to take proper holidays. We are up against the common parental idea that fees should be substantially reduced for beginners and that two children of one
family should come cheap… In every fifty teachers there are perhaps a half a dozen that can hold their own financially (p.520).

From the 1930’s through the 1960’s, there sparked an interest in training the pianist to teach as well as to perform. Slowly, this began to be reflected in the keyboard curricula of universities and professional institutions. A new kind of teacher training evolved from using personal insight alone to using more current learning theories and educational psychologies. Thus courses in piano pedagogy were developed to specifically address concerns in teaching (Uszler, 1984). By 1956, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) was presented with a four-year bachelor of music curriculum with a teaching major in applied music. These panels and proposals indicate that there was national concern during that time for both the standards of private music teaching and how these standards were to be raised and acknowledged (Uszler, 1984).

During the 1970’s and into the 1980’s, keyboard pedagogy saw tremendous growth. The piano teaching profession became increasingly aware that it had a responsibility to insure that teacher training came before, rather than after, the obtaining of a degree. This meant additional courses in piano pedagogy, observation of teaching, and directed student teaching. The expansion of piano pedagogy in the 1980’s also reflected the need for independent music instruction as a business, as well as an artistic or educational endeavor. Thus some programs included courses in business, marketing, and management. While these businesses and pedagogical courses did help to further the careers of those teachers choosing to pursue a music degree, they were limited to the educational sector (Uszler, 2000).

The ideals of pedagogical training were beginning to expand in the public sector as early as the 1950’s and 1960’s. Educators who had developed new teaching materials (especially for
beginning piano students) began to host exhibitions, workshops, and other sessions not associated with university training. These demonstrators fostered teacher training by exhibiting effective teaching procedures through promotion of their published materials. Those attending such sessions and workshops were typically working teachers who did not have degrees or whose professional education had not provided adequate or practical training in pedagogy (Uszler, 1984). Other associations such as Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy also began to host national and statewide conventions where piano teachers could gain exposure to current publications and gain further education. This created more opportunity for the piano teacher to connect with other teachers and to ensure lifelong learning.

Lancaster (1990) suggests requiring teachers to have licensure to teach piano in order to weed out the ‘unqualified piano teacher.’ A 1982 survey found that 30% of piano teachers had no affiliation with national associations such as MTNA, 51% did not play in public, and 46% did not hold a college degree in music (Larvick Sanders, 1982, p. 40). Wolfersberger (1987) found that of 936 teachers, 28% did not have a college degree and 33% had no affiliation with a national organization (p. 48). Lancaster also suggested generating a national marketing campaign to “educate the public on the importance of a good music education” in order to create demand for qualified, serious piano teachers (p. 30).

In 1983 this problem still warranted public scrutiny as Beard wrote, “Piano teaching is a full time job. Our weekly, or monthly income should reflect not only the hours of actual teaching, but also the hours of class and lesson preparation, study, program planning, research, practice, and bookwork” (p. 47). In 1984 the typical independent teacher charged about $8-10 per hour for lessons. They considered this fee average for the area they lived in, with many
teachers believing their credentials “warrant a higher fee than what they now charge” (Larvick Sanders, 1982, p.41). By 1987, hourly wages had increased to an average of $15 per hour, but ranged from a low of $12.50 in the Midwest to a high of $23.80 in the Southwest (Wolfersberger 1987, p. 48). In Wolfersberger’s survey only 12% of piano teachers earned over the poverty level of $12,000 annually, and only 2% of piano teachers earned over $20,000 annually (p. 48).

The 2% of teachers who did earn enough to support themselves financially had characteristics uncommon to the majority of piano teachers: they had chosen teaching piano as a first career choice, did not teach out of the home, had an average of 49 students weekly in their own studio, were active in professional associations, and held master’s degrees (Wolfersberger 1987, p. 51). Whereas teachers in the nineteenth century used the income from teaching lessons to supplement their main source of income from businesses outside music, entrepreneurial piano teachers in the twentieth century successfully combined business and piano teaching by establishing studios.

Professionalism in Piano Teaching

A person’s occupation is a source of personal identity and links them to the larger societal structure. While the status of college and university teachers as professionals is commonly accepted, the independent teacher is not always accorded the same status. This being said despite some independent teachers having comparable education and ability with the university teacher (Brown, 1986). Clearly, this has an impact on piano teachers in how they view themselves and conduct their work.

Professional status, or lack thereof, bears directly on the relationship of independent piano teachers to society. Because this strong relationship exists, the identity of independent piano teachers in terms of profession is one which can apply the findings of sociological
literature. Before attempting to assess the private piano teacher’s level of professionalism one must determine guidelines for what constitutes a profession.

Sociologists began their investigation of the professions in the 1930’s with attempts to distinguish characteristics or traits that made the professions unique from other occupations. While the precise content of these models varied from one author or group of people to the next, the research examined many occupations to determine the degree to which each exhibited these traits and whether they could be considered a ‘true’ profession (Runte 1995). The definition and status of professions in sociological literature are not unanimous truths but a range of philosophies and shifting ideals. A sociological view of a profession is that “occupations which are striving for professional status seek to organize themselves for the purpose of increased economic security and social recognition” (Heisler, 1995, p. 240). Independent teachers have been struggling to establish themselves as professionals despite a lack of standardization among piano teachers and a lack of societal appreciation of piano teachers as qualified experts in musical development. Two dominant models will be used as focus for delineating the independent piano teacher’s professional status: the Structural-Functional Model and the Process Model.

The Structural-Functional Model focuses on characteristics that distinguish a profession from other occupations. This can be seen as a collective set of traits that independent piano teachers can work to achieve that would give them specialized knowledge beyond the general public thus creating a more professional appearance to persons not familiar with the area of piano teaching. These characteristics are (a) a specialized body of knowledge and techniques; (b) long specialized training for members to master the body of knowledge; (c) testing of
applicants for licensure to practice; (d) authority over clients; (e) professional autonomy; (f) community sanction; and (g) existence of a professional culture (Ritzer, 1977).

Frederickson and Rooney (1990) examined professionalism in music teaching in terms of a “cluster of characteristics, each of which may be present in various degrees” (p. 190). Part of their examination included defining a set of measures to help determine whether a musical occupation can be defined as a profession. These include (a) possession of a specialized body of knowledge and techniques; (b) establishment of a standardized course of training for imparting the specialized knowledge; (c) testing applicants for knowledge and competence upon completion of training, followed by the granting of licenses to practice; (d) licensed practitioners which hold a legal occupational status which guarantees them a monopoly over their sector of the market; and (e) autonomy from direct supervision and the substitution of collegial control over hierarchical control (p. 190). Arguably these measures relate quite closely to the Structural Functional Model. Fredrickson and Rooney also stress the granting of licensure, which relates as well to the Process Model, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Heisler (1995) used Fredrickson and Rooney’s study in his article, “A Theoretical Comparison of Certified Piano Teachers’ Claim to Professional Status with the Sociological Definition of Profession.” According to Heisler, certified independent piano teachers only fully met two of the five requirements: they possess a specialized body of knowledge and are autonomous practitioners who are subject to collegial control. Therefore certified independent piano teachers cannot make a strong claim to true professional status. Although many teachers would argue that they meet more than two of the five characteristics, this is not required of all certified independent piano teachers. There are no national standards requiring that an individual possess a degree in music, a defined level of ability, and membership to a professional
organization to gain certification and open a piano studio. Heisler (1995) writes that independent piano teachers will not be a group of professionals “until the domain of knowledge and training for certified teachers become standardized, until entrance to the field is controlled and the practitioners licensed, and until a monopoly over the market is held” (p. 239).

The Process Model focuses on the process through which an occupation becomes a profession (Ritzer, 1977). This differs from the Structural-Functional Model in that it focuses on the progression needed to shift independent piano teaching from the traditional regard of a leisure pursuit to that of a full profession. Wilensky (1964), who studied eighteen professions in the United States, produced a sequence of five steps toward defining an occupation as a profession. These steps are (a) the occupation becomes full-time work; (b) a perceived need for the establishment of a training school leads to contact with and entry into the universities; (c) the establishing of professional associations; (d) there is political agitation for the purpose of winning legal support for protection of the job territory and its code of ethics; and (e) a code of ethics is adopted to restrain the unqualified and unscrupulous (p. 142-145).

In 1987, Wolfersberger noted that piano teaching could be termed an incipient profession, one that shows evidence of the beginnings of a profession. There is potential for a profession to exist even though the process of becoming a profession is incomplete (p. 50). Further discussion of the Process Model shows these beginnings. Piano teaching can become full time work for anyone choosing to take a substantial number of students into their studio. Teachers now have the option for daytime teaching through association with local schools, home school networks, and a largely growing field of early childhood music. Since the early 1980’s, courses and degrees in Piano Pedagogy have swiftly become an established part of college and university curriculum. Evidence of this accelerated growth can be seen in a 1989 study which found that of
the 558 piano pedagogy instructors at American colleges and universities, 66% of these instructors did not teach pedagogy as part of their original job description (Kowalchyk, 1990, p. 62).

Organizations such as the MTNA and Music for Young Children (MYC) have developed national certification programs to give official recognition to persons who have achieved a required level of knowledge or have undergone specific training to achieve a specialization in the teaching community. MTNA has instituted a voluntary certification program to develop a higher status of professionalism within the occupation. This program was established in 1956 to promote private music teaching as a profession and to differentiate between the neighborhood teacher and the true professional. By 1980, the National Certification Board of MTNA had approved certification plans from all fifty states and has been operating across the United States for the last twenty five years (Heisler 1995, p. 244). Although this certification has furthered independent teaching it has not cured the deficiency.

Thus, a review of the historical foundations of piano teaching first reveals the need to combine business and piano teaching for a suitable income. Research findings support the need for excellence in music education, especially for children (Hodges, 2000). These findings give music instruction a further social significance, consequently developing the need for quality instruction. This combination creates a transition from a view of the piano teacher as “the kind lady down the street” to the professional musician who is also a business person. Well-trained piano teachers become a more socially viable commodity, earning teachers the market to sustain a piano studio business that provides the financial stability of a true professional.

The purpose of this study was to describe how four professional musicians cultivated a successful piano teaching business, through establishment of privately owned studios that
provide them a financially supportive and fulfilling career. Categories of pedagogical and
entrepreneurial development of these four studio owners are examined. Commonalities and
differences in approaches to piano teaching and studio management are determined. How these
aspects create a more professional image of piano teaching and establish the owners as
professionals are further analyzed.
CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

In the present study, data were collected from interviews with four studio-owners. Subjects were chosen based three common criteria. First, each subject has a degree or certification in piano pedagogy. All subjects have completed coursework in piano pedagogy and have studied with a piano professor at an accredited university. Their knowledge of how to teach others to be well developed pianists is rooted in a college education. Second, each subject has created a financially successful studio business. They have combined their vocational self with an entrepreneurial self in forming a small business out of their desire to be independent piano instructors. The business they have created has a positive return on investment and supports a financially solvent career for each subject. The third common characteristic among the four subjects is that each is currently a primary teacher in his/her studio business. The subjects are all dedicated piano teachers who have created an environment where they are able to duly run a business and teach a substantial number of lessons on a weekly basis.

The four subjects owned studios with three dissimilar criteria. First, each studio is at a different point in its maturity. While two of the studios have been more recently established within the past three to six years, the third studio has a fifteen year lifespan and has been through many stages of growth and development. This gives the opportunity to evaluate the needs of the independent piano teacher when they first establish and grow their piano studio business and how those needs change when the studio has operated at capacity for a number of years. Second, each studio is a different size both in physical square-footage of the space and in its number of students. The smaller studio which supports one full time piano teacher has a different set of business needs than the large conservatory with many teachers and a variety of programs. The final difference between each studio is the location. One studio is located in a small rural
Midwestern town. Another is located in a growing suburban town by a small city, while the third studio is located in a suburb bordering a major metropolis. The demographic characteristics of the people living in each area impact how these studios operate.

**Teacher Background and Current Studio Arrangement**

Teacher A owns a small piano studio located in a mid-size Midwest town of 30,000 residents. Teacher A is well educated, having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in piano performance from a liberal arts college and a Master of Music degree in piano pedagogy from an accredited state university. After completing her masters degree, Teacher A obtained a piano teaching certificate from the MTNA, and is a semi-active member of the local chapter of the organization. Since graduating she has maintained involvement with the state university by actively performing, accompanying, and teaching class piano for undergraduates.

Teacher A’s piano studio is a rented space on the upper level of a house-turned-office building. Teacher A has been at her current location for four years. The layout of the current studio includes two rooms that are separate studios, a small kitchen area used as a waiting room, and a bathroom. Each of the two studios has an upright piano, a computer system, and shelving units for games and music books. At the time of the interview, the population at Teacher A’s studio was 80 students, 54 of which she taught herself.

Teachers B are a husband and wife team who own a school of music in an affluent suburb of population 17,000 which borders a Midwestern city of 313,000. Both teachers hold a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance and pedagogy from an accredited state university. They are members of MTNA and are active in the local chapter, attending and presenting at workshops, master classes and national conventions. As business owners they have attended national seminars on strategies for running a successful piano studio business and read
popular literature pertaining to small business operation. Teachers B are certified to teach Music for Young Children (MYC), a program founded by the Royal Conservatory of Canada which focuses on group instruction and musical exposure of children as young as three years old. As active members of the local music community, Teachers B remain performers in ensemble or liturgical settings and publish articles about their business.

Teachers B rent a building in a small office complex where they operate the school of music. The studio has been in its current location for four years. Before this time the couple was teaching privately out of the home, moving into the office space when they had acquired 100 students. The school offers private lessons on a variety of instruments and group piano instruction. Studio layout includes a front desk at the door and a large center waiting area with couches and reading materials. Seven rooms of various size and shape honeycomb off the center area, with a small workstation in the back. There are six private studios used for individual instruction in piano, flute, violin, viola, cello, voice, and guitar. Five of these rooms have upright pianos with the largest studio housing a Yamaha C6 grand piano. All six private studios have a lengthwise mirror and shelving as well. A piano lab is housed in a larger center room. The lab accommodates seven digital pianos, three Mac computers, a large white board, and shelving and drawer space. The school of music currently has 320 students enrolled, 80 of which are in the MYC program. Teachers B combined teach 12 of the 18 weekly group classes and 40 private piano students.

Teacher C owns a conservatory of music located in a large affluent suburb of population 50,000 which borders a metropolis of over one million. She started her career as an elementary music educator in the public school system, having received an undergraduate degree in music education. She retired from the public school system to raise children and decided to start giving
piano lessons. After years of teaching lessons in her home, she partnered with another piano
teacher in her area to open a small studio. At this time she went back to school and earned a
pedagogy certificate (comparable to an undergraduate pedagogy degree) and completed business
courses at an accredited university. Teacher C is also certified to teach MYC and is an active
member in MTNA. She frequently attends and presents at local workshops and national
conferences, has written articles pertaining to her music business, and is committed to further
learning by reading and taking classes at accredited institutions. As a performer, Teacher C
often accompanies soloists and plays in chamber groups within the greater metropolitan area.

Teacher C is currently the executive director of a well established music conservatory.
Teacher C and her business partner opened a piano studio in 1990, growing it to three separate
locations. In 1999 all three locations were combined into one large conservatory. Two years
later, her partner decided to move out of state, leaving her as the sole owner of the business.
Currently the conservatory is housed in a large rented office building just off a major freeway
artery. This building accommodates a piano lab with 8 digital pianos, a small recital hall with a
stage, and 15 separate rooms for private lessons. All private lesson rooms have upright pianos,
shelving, and a large bulletin board to post announcements. Teacher C has a sizeable office at
the end of the main hall with a Kawai baby grand piano, a desk with computer, and filing
cabinets full of music, articles, and other documents. The conservatory has a student population
of 650. It offers private and group instruction in piano, voice, percussion, guitar, strings, winds,
brass, and drama. Teacher C instructs five MYC classes and 25 private piano students weekly.

The education and experience of these teachers fits the measures of the Structural-
Functional Model. All teachers possess a specialized body of knowledge in that they have been
trained not only to play the piano, but to teach others how to perform as well. They have spent
years mastering these concepts in private study, through various degree and certification
programs, and through continuing education.

The Interviewing Process

The interviewing process was conducted in two stages. The first interview focused on
the pedagogical part of operating a piano studio business while the second interview focused on
the business part. A researcher-developed survey was designed to guide each interview through
predetermined categories of topics. Within these categories of topics are subjects that can be
addressed from either a pedagogical standpoint or from the perspective of running a business.
Some topics tend to lean one direction or the other. For example, the “Mission of the Business”
(I.C1) can be approached either from a pedagogical (What is the mission for the educational
success of each student who joins your studio?) or from a business (What is the mission for
running a successful business?) perspective.

I Beginning the piano studio (Pedagogical and Business)
   A) Factors in starting a studio: Self Employment vs. Working for someone else
   B) Curriculum Development
      1) Private Lesson Structure and Cost
      2) Supplemental Classes and Studio Offerings
   C) Developing a Business Plan
      1) Mission of the Business
      2) Studio Policies
      3) Facilities
      4) Equipment, Materials and Supplies
      5) Personnel
      6) Capital
      7) Financials

II Customer Generation, Retention, and Satisfaction (Pedagogical and Business)
   A) Marketing: Methods and Cost Effectiveness
   B) Turn-around: Monitoring Drop-out vs. New Student rates
   C) Student Development
      1) Maintaining Student Motivation
      2) Parental Involvement
      3) Tracking Student Development

III Future
   A) Pedagogical Goals
B) Business Goals

The categories of topics were designed as a framework for structuring interview questions and for keeping each interview on a similar path. The first interview ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. Questions asked in this interview established the history of the teacher and their business, their current studio arrangement, and their pedagogical philosophies of teaching piano lessons. The second interview was approximately the same amount of time as the first interview. It used the same categories of topics to address business elements of daily studio operations such as developing a business plan, programming, marketing, and managing human resources. Interviews were conducted within a thirty-day time period. Teacher A and C were interviewed individually while Teachers B were both present at each interview and jointly answered questions. Data from each of the six interviews was recorded electronically and main points were extracted in outline form given in Appendix A. The results section breaks down these categories into the subjects (a) factors in deciding to open a studio; (b) financial factors affecting income; (d) developing a business plan; (e) customer generation; (g) human resources; (c) curriculum development and (h) future goals. The subjects address both business and pedagogical areas.

Due to the nature of the interviewing process, each interview provoked a unique set of data, with many points overlapping between the two stages of pedagogical and business development. Because this overlap produces interesting relationships between these two developments, the categories of topics allow the results of interviews to highlight an interrelationship of the two and how they create a professional environment.
CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Results were categorically separated into subjects for easy comparison of responses to interview questions. These topics are (a) factors in deciding to open a studio; (b) financial factors affecting income; (c) developing a business plan; (d) customer generation; (e) human resources; (f) curriculum development and (g) future goals, and these subjects will serve as a guide toward finding commonalities and differences in each topic and how they connect pedagogical and business developments.

*Teacher Response to Interview Questions*

(a) *Factors in Deciding to Open a Studio*

All subjects made a conscious decision to independently found and maintain their own business. Although each has her/his own objectives for structuring their business, they share similar reasons for going into business for themselves instead of working for someone else. All four subjects create an environment where they have the power to shape their career around their own business ideals and professional needs. The decision to start a piano studio business is predicated by a time of research, creative planning and serious thought. These teachers spent time feeling out the environment to predict how they can use their business and pedagogical strengths to successfully fill a niche in the community. As point ‘e’ of the *Structural-Functional* Model states, these teachers all sought out professional autonomy not only from university teaching, but from teaching for another studio.

Two years prior to opening her current location, Teacher A was giving piano lessons through a school of music in a neighboring larger suburb and teaching a few friends in her home in a small town. Teaching at multiple locations was working well for her but she found that teaching for another studio had its limitations. She wanted to incorporate technology and other
elements into her lessons, which was not possible at the other location. She also realized she was paying as much in rent for another studio as it would cost her to run her own studio. Teacher A observed how the owners of that studio ran their business and made a mental list of what she liked and what she would change if she had her own studio. At this time she was also starting to get more and more requests through word of mouth advertising at her small home studio. Teacher A and her husband were not planning to live in this small town permanently so there was hesitation about whether or not to start a new business.

Upon seeing the growth of students over her first few years of teaching, Teacher A did choose to make a business out of teaching private lessons. Once the number of established students she had at home would cover the fixed costs moving out and into a new location she opened her business up to the public. Living in a small town was also helpful for her as she could keep overhead costs such as studio rent, performance space rent, and other advertising costs to a minimum. Of the decision to start her studio, Teacher A states “I decided I wanted to start making money right away instead of taking out loans and having a large initial investment so I started slowly. I spent a couple thousand here and there to gradually build it up.” She prefers teaching at a separate location because she felt her house was not as accommodating for having students coming in and out as her studio is. Parking and waiting areas were not ideal, and she felt a more professional environment would improve the mentality of current and prospective students.

Teachers B made the career decision to be private teachers shortly after graduating from college. A shared dream of both subjects was to open a larger business, offering lessons on a variety of instruments, with the potential to expand to other locations. The couple began their dream by giving lessons out of their home until the 100 students coming in and out on a weekly
basis accorded a larger commercial space. As they became familiar with the community, they saw a need for private instruction in piano as well as other instruments. Their ‘waiting list’ was growing and they could not find enough teachers in the area to accommodate the growing numbers of potential clients. The husband states “I saw that some families who really wanted to start taking lessons were getting caught in this horrible cycle of referrals and wait-listing.” The decision was jointly made to take out loans in order to reconstruct and fully outfit an office space for use as a school of music. Teachers B invested time into speaking with a financial advisor, attending business workshops, and planning out the logistics of running the school.

They made a conscious decision to split the duties; the husband is more involved with elements associated with daily operations of the business while the wife designs curriculum, teaches more private lessons, and programs events which will build community within the school. They have found that since opening this school of music students have a more serious attitude then they did when coming to a house, and they are exposed to more sounds and musical situations in a larger environment. Teachers B state another positive outcome of opening their business is that “we had an opportunity to build a community of teachers who could bounce ideas off one another, perform collaborative pieces, or just expose their students to other instruments.”

Teacher C did not start her music business until later in life. She taught lessons out of her home part time for twelve years while her children were young. Once her children were into junior high and high school, her familial role as caretaker did not require as much of her attention, and she was able to focus on her musical career. Teacher C had a friend who was at a similar point in life, and who wanted to open her own business. They collaborated to jointly go back to school and start taking classes to become better teachers and to learn how to open and
operate a small business. Since they were both established teachers in the area, they had many community ties that helped them get started.

New homes and families were rapidly moving in to Teacher C’s growing suburb. The growth was so prominent that the public school system was having trouble keeping up. Students on some instruments had to drive into the city to get private lessons, while local teachers had to give lessons out of schools and churches. She recognized a community need to offer quality private instruction for piano as well as multiple other instruments that raised the level of achievement for many elementary, middle and high school students, thus supplementing and raising the level of public music education.

When her first location opened, she was able to offer lessons on a few instruments that were not previously available in her area. This symbiotic relationship with the school system was successful in raising community awareness of the conservatory and in drawing in new students. As public awareness and acceptance of the school increased, Teacher C was able to increase the program offerings to include group piano instruction, drama programs, and summer camps.

It is interesting to note that all four teachers were somewhat established names in their areas before moving out of the home and opening their piano studio business. Living and working in the area where they taught helped them create a positive reputation in the community as quality instructors. When they opened a new location, that reputation followed. This act of professionalism uses community sanction by providing a high quality service.

(b) Financial Factors Affecting Income

Each subject is involved to a greater or lesser degree with private lesson teaching, with two of the three studios offering group instruction as well. For Teachers B, the husband teaches
more of the group classes with a few private students on the side while the wife has the opposite schedule. Teacher A has a full student load while Teacher C has started tapering her number of hours spent in lessons per week. Student load is not a direct determinant of income since all subjects have other finances coming in from employees, registration fees, and book sales.

Teacher A is currently operating a successful teaching business as her primary source of income, which she also supplements with accompanying university students and teaching group piano classes. At the time of the interview, tuition for a ten-week session of lessons is $145, or $14.50 per lesson. Students have the option to stay for an extra half hour after the lesson for computer time. Factors that affect Teacher A’s decision for setting her rates are her experience and training as a pianist, fixed expenses and overhead, and typical rates for piano lessons in the area. Although her teaching load is near capacity no prospective students are turned away or wait-listed, but instead taken in by her or one of the other teachers. The contracted teachers pay an hourly rent to use the second studio, which covers overhead costs. Teacher A mails out bills to students at the beginning of each semester and requires one payment in full or a half payment at the beginning and the other half in the middle of the semester. At the same time she sends out bills to students, she also bills her teachers for studio rent. Teacher A has a nominal late fee of five dollars if bills are not paid on time. Teacher A researched what other teachers in her area were charging and decided to start her rates in the middle. Over the past few years she has gradually increased those rates as she has started to offer more ‘extras’ such as group lessons and computer time.

Teachers B currently set private lessons at $18.25 a half hour, $27.38 a three-quarters hour, and $36.50 an hour. MYC classes, the group piano instruction, cost $105 per six week session (for a total of six sessions per year) or $17.50 a class plus a $67 one time materials fee
for books. All students in the MYC program pay the first and last session’s tuition at the beginning of the first session, which is $210. (Teachers B equate this to paying first and last month’s rent.) Since Teachers B employ their other music instructors, rates do not vary from one teacher to the next within an instrument. Instead of sending out bills, Teachers B have implemented an automated payment system. When new students sign up for lessons, they give credit card or checking account information so that at the start of each new term payment is automatically withdrawn. If a student wishes to withdraw from the school, they must sign a release form two weeks before the next billing cycle. Another small source of income is through the sale of music books and materials. Although now a small enterprise, Teachers B have found that offering an undersized library of popular method books and supplemental literature for sale (especially for the piano) is a great convenience to teachers and students. By locating the book sale shelf in the main room, parents and students can browse through new books while they wait for lessons. Plus, teachers have the ease of assigning new literature that students can pay for and take home that day. Teachers B both agree that the group piano curriculum generates the largest profit compared to private lessons, and is the foundation of keeping their business running at a profit. The amount of money generated from group lessons per hour far exceeds that generated by private lessons.

Teacher C charges her private students $22 for lessons. This includes a half hour lesson and a half hour of computer time. Because the other teachers at the conservatory are independent contractors, they set their own fees of $16-25 a half hour and are completely independent in how they structure their lessons. Other teachers are charged rent of $5.25 per lesson which covers all expenses associated with piano and room maintenance, recital programming, marketing, and office staff help. MYC classes cost $15 a class and require a materials fee of $66.74 at the time
of registration. MYC families pay the school directly. Private lesson students are billed by the teacher, and teachers pay rent monthly. For her own students, Teacher C bills at the beginning of each semester and students can pay in full or pay half at the beginning and the other half after five weeks. Teacher C says “I admit that our rates for lessons are on the high end compared to other piano teachers in the area, but it works in our favor because we tend to draw more serious, committed students and families.” Teacher C is very fond of teaching her private students, but observes that the group classes are financially more successful when classes are filled.

Lesson rates vary considerably between the subjects. The small town Teacher A charges $7.50 less per lesson than Teacher C who is located near the large city. The cost of living is substantially less in Teacher A’s location than Teacher C. In all cases, the subjects’ rates were in the mid to high end for piano lessons in the area. In comparing Teachers B and C, who both offer group lessons, Teachers B charge more than Teacher C because they rely more heavily on that market. The larger studios generate more money on an hourly basis by offering group curriculums than the smaller studio who only offers one-on-one private instruction.

(c) Developing a Business Plan

Planning and administrative tasks associated with running a business can become time consuming and trying. Of course each of these subjects has met their business needs uniquely, but all share underlying traits. Each subject balances organization with creativity in maintaining a small business. They all speak to being organized without letting organization consume all “free time.” When making decisions for what to offer their students, all teachers consider how these updates will benefit the program versus how much time it will take for them to implement and what kind of return on investment it will be. These teachers are also constantly putting new
ideas in place and evaluating its impact. They take the initiative to work on the business even when it is doing well and student satisfaction is high.

Teacher A enjoys solely developing and maintaining the logistical and business elements of her studio. Although she frequently interacts with outside sources like her husband and associates for generating ideas, she likes her responsibility as the owner and primary caretaker of her business. Shortly after making the decision to move her business out of the home, she spoke with the federal small business bureau for help in tax preparation and general accounting. She meets with an accountant annually to do taxes, review her finances and make sure the business is on track. Through a small business accounting software *Peachtree*, Teacher A keeps track of current money flow and plans for future developments in her studio. She keeps a “wish list” of materials and technologies that would benefit her students and tries to consistently add to her studio. Teacher A is knowledgeable of other music offerings in her area and tries to find ways to make her business stand out from the competition. Technology is a prominent component of the lesson as she has a Roland midi-player with fun accompaniments, computer games with keyboard attached, and website searches. She enjoys the current size of her clientele and tries to limit the amount of time she spends on “busy-work” by finding ways to systemize different processes associated with running the business. For example, she now buys window envelopes so that when she prints bills the sender’s address will show through. This saves time in writing out or sticking on address labels.

Teachers B have common goals and aspirations for their business. They have agreed to a system where each focuses on a different set of operational activities that combine to cover the needs of the school. The husband is involved much more with the financial and technical needs of the business whereas the wife uses her skills for human resources and customer satisfaction.
All major decisions are always discussed and reached as a team. They try to balance what they would like to offer students with what yields the greatest return on investment. For instance, since they have noticed that different instruments yield a variety of dropout rates, they try to build a larger number of students in instruments that have the lowest percentage of student withdrawal. By building a working relationship with other teachers and music-related businesses in the area, they try to fill a certain niche in the community instead of spreading the business too thin. An initial goal to find the most effective business model for their situation has helped free these teachers to be involved in daily teaching and administrative duties without becoming burnt out. Teachers B are always looking to better and grow the business, even when numbers are healthy. They are very interested in finding ways to provide high quality service and education that prove to each customer the value of their investment in this school of music.

Teacher C benefits from years of experience in her business planning and development. When preparing to open their first studio, Teacher C and her partner were very devoted to establishing themselves as a high quality music facility. For that image to clearly resonate in the community, they were careful to be prepared for challenges along the way. Each decision that affected the development of the business was carefully researched, sometimes using professional help. Their initial strategy was to build a profitable business that could sustain growth. Teacher C also left the business very flexible and unrestricted in a lot of ways so that it could incorporate trends in teaching as well as community wishes. She regularly spoke with her clients about what they enjoyed and what they wanted to see in her business. The feedback helped her to see what was working well and what needed tweaking about her current business model. It also helped her design a future for the business. Three separate studio locations were merged into a single space where Teacher C decided to offer a wide variety of music classes, theatrics, and private
lessons for all ages. As the business grew, the expectation for well-planned and executed points of interaction with clients was a must. Eventually Teacher C was able to place key people in decision-making roles within certain areas of her business. She has evolved in her style of business management from one that was very “hands-on” during the growth and development stage to one that is much more “hands-off” in the mature stages of her studio.

It is apparent that each subject operates a unique business model from day to day that, fitting the *Structural-Functional Model*, gives them complete autonomy from other studios. A general similarity between the three studios is found in how they structure business practices. Certain processes have been put into place that facilitate a systematic way of producing results. Clients are educated on what is expected of them and what they can expect from the teacher from the beginning of the relationship. Teachers control what to put in place and what to avoid based on how it affects the business. This allows teachers to create a professional studio where high standards are upheld and decisions are made that will benefit the business as a whole and not one person or category of people.

*(d) Customer Generation*

Two characteristics of the *Structural-functional Model* assert that professionals have authority over clients and community sanction. Customer generation methods used by each subject show a strong reinforcement of these characteristics. Each independent piano teacher has used positive referral as a foremost point of marketing, and finds word of mouth through community sanction to be the most efficient form of advertising. Because each studio is able to set lesson rates at a medium to high level within their community, they develop their reputation as having a high quality product.
Teacher A regularly receives inquiries from potential clients. As a marketing operator, Teacher A primarily utilizes the local newspaper, churches, and referrals to generate new students. Location has been a strategic point of the success of finding prospective students. The piano studio is located on a major county road artery into town, and the large red lettered sign outside the building is clearly visible. An elementary school and a high school are within walking distance, and large family-oriented residential neighborhoods boarder the studio on all sides. Teacher A is currently looking into billboard advertising as well to extend her geographic boundaries, believing that the more visible a studio is to the community, the more the phone rings. She often invites current students to bring a friend to a piano lesson, where they end with a game that the friend can join in on. When Teacher A first meets with new students (and parents if applicable) she hands them a copy of her studio policy, a monthly studio newsletter, a sample bill, and an information form for them to fill out. Students and parents are aware of her expectations from the beginning of their relationship and can expect each interaction to follow those standards. By adhering to high standards for quality music instruction in the lesson and creating predictable standards for her students, Teacher A has been able to create a positive reputation of herself and her piano studio business in the community. She has found this reputation to be very valuable in growing a healthy studio, as most of her new students have been referred by current or past students.

Teachers B enjoy finding creative ways of recruiting new students. Marketing is accomplished through multiple mediums including newspaper, website, door to door, referral and other public relations. A large objective of their marketing campaign is to be noticed within the community as a place where much is happening and where students have many opportunities for musical growth and achievement. They consistently send PR notices to the local newspapers
when they hold student recitals, when students do well on exams, or if one of their teachers presents or performs. Months before the start of a new semester, area schools and churches are notified of openings. Recently, they have also invested in an ad campaign including “door hangers” that are hung on houses in neighborhoods with younger families. Teachers B try to market current and future programs when studio numbers are healthy to prepare for possible declines or summer recessions. When a prospective student calls for information about the school, they are greeted by a part-time office staff member who will answer initial questions. They are asked to visit the studio website and promptly mailed a brochure and studio policy. All new students are also given a “Student Handbook” which covers the details of weekly lessons, from snow days to how to switch teachers to canceling lessons. This ensures that every new student has a copy of studio policies and knows what to expect from their patronage to the school. A main source of information about the school is held on the studio website. The website is clear, easy to navigate, and provides information about studio location, programs, teacher bios, pictures, summer programming, and other links. The website is very important to studio operations not only for advertising, but for keeping current students informed. A pass code-protected student section makes it possible for students to get assignments, switch lessons, and watch digitally recorded recital performances. The website helps keep every student and family connected to the school and is a big draw for incoming students. Teachers B are committed to success both in teaching and in business owning. They measure their success by the satisfaction of their employees and patrons. Currently they hold an average 80% student retention rate, although this varies from instrument to instrument.

Teacher C regularly draws new students through the well-established reputation of her conservatory. Word of mouth is the strongest form of recruitment for new students, but she also
uses professional brochures within the area, advertises with local churches, gives regular press releases in the local papers, and has developed a website. She recruits teachers with strong credentials and teaching skills to be on faculty, featuring the teachers when she advertises. Area schools also send their talented band and orchestra students to study with certain faculty at the conservatory. A particularly effective draw is the conservatory’s wide array of lessons, classes, workshops, and summer activities. By having such diverse offerings, students are able to get involved with more than one program at a time, and families are able to find things for each sibling to participate in. Not only does this provide a great convenience in scheduling for families, it builds a strong community within the conservatory. Families stay involved for years at a time and invite friends, family, and neighbors to be a part of the program as well. Teacher C is particularly proud of the recent additions to the conservatory of “stage work for the singer” and “performing with confidence” programs. The stage work program employs vocal and drama instructors to work with students individually and in groups as they pair acting and singing in staging musicals and one-acts. The “performing with confidence” program offers single lessons to prepare students who struggle with anxiety to play more confidently during auditions and performances. The website gives general information about teachers and class offerings available at the studio. She finds this to be sufficient in generating interest and keeping student numbers stable. When a potential student calls for information, they speak with a part-time office staff member who gives them preliminary information about the studio, the teachers, and other programs offered at the studio that might interest the student or family. Then, information about the potential student is given to the teacher who contacts the student directly to schedule lessons. Each teacher has their own policy regarding lesson scheduling, cancellations, and payment within the predetermined calendar semester.
Each studio operates as an autonomous business within the community that has authority as a reputable place of learning. The Structural-Functional Model characteristic of “authority over clients” can be seen in that these studios typically attract committed, eager students who are a joy to teach. These studios are not endorsed or funded through other nonprofit associations, giving them the freedom to choose how to present their business to potential students. This also gives them the dual responsibility of keeping student numbers up to break even on overhead costs and income needs. All teachers are conscious of keeping current students satisfied and informing them of openings, encouraging word of mouth advertising. Students are educated from the beginning of the professional relationship on all expectations concerned with level of musical involvement as well as financial expectations. By educating students and parents, these teachers are able to produce higher commitment, lower dropout rates, and future stability of the business itself.

(e) Human Resources

While teaching alone is a viable career option for many independent teachers, all subjects in this study find that contracting or employing other teachers is beneficial for their business. This creates a larger immediate contact with the professional culture of piano teachers. It allows daily interaction with other like-minded individuals and helps support and grow the business itself.

Teacher A contracts four other teachers that share the second room at the studio, many of them are either students at the university in town or recent graduates. The contracted teachers have between three and ten students and teach one or two days a week. Teacher A takes care of customer generation, billing, and recital opportunities for these teachers, who are then charged rent and given the responsibility of collecting tuition from their own students. All students at
Teacher A’s piano studio business are charged an equal amount for lessons regardless of their teacher. Teacher A maintains regular contact with the other teachers and tries to accommodate each instructor’s schedule and provide them with enough students. By overseeing all aspects of student generation and placement, Teacher A ensures that the needs of both the teachers and their students are met to high degrees.

Teachers B are also employers of twelve other teachers and one part time office staff member. Most teachers work at least ten hours a week teaching individual or group lessons. The office staff employee works fifteen hours a week in the afternoons at the front desk answering phones, preparing mailings and other paperwork, and fielding questions. Teachers B agree that having someone to work the front desk has been invaluable to the quality and level of professionalism of their business. They find that current students feel any time-sensitive questions are promptly answered, and prospective clients are able to receive recommendations from a seemingly ‘impartial’ third party rather than from the owners themselves. This creates a system of validation that attracts new students. Teachers B decided to have employees instead of the more common practice of contracting out so that they could have control over the content of all lessons given within their piano studio business. By paying teachers a biweekly salary and preparing all tax related documents, Teachers B can legally have quality control regulations for their employees and ensure the reputation of their business. Although they admit that employing is much more time consuming than contracting their teachers, they have learned a lot about running a business by having to care for their employees. Teachers B find a very low turnover with their teachers because they appreciate being employed and receiving a steady paycheck. This allows them to concentrate on teaching and not have to worry about logistical elements related to billing, scheduling, and preparing taxes.
Teacher C contracts the thirty-eight teachers at her conservatory and employs one three-quarter time office staff member. For her business, independent contracting has been a successful draw since it allows teachers the freedom to structure lessons while having the opportunities afforded by a large music conservatory. Each teacher establishes lesson rates, uses their choice of teaching materials, and sets their own standards for student achievement. Teachers appreciate belonging to a present community of musicians to form chamber groups, combine recitals or other performances, or just talk over pedagogical or repertoire issues. Given that many of them are working performers, they have the flexibility to teach when it fits their schedule and are not obligated to work ‘year round.’ Contracting her teachers also frees Teacher C from dealing with a mass of paperwork associated with employment, so that she can teach more regularly. The office staff employee helps field phone calls, prepares marketing materials, does routine cleaning, and prepares the recital space for performances. Teacher C utilizes her managerial skills by itemizing and outsourcing the many tasks associated with daily operation of the studio to her office staff member and other ‘key’ people who oversee the different departments within the studio.

The decision to contract or employ others affects the structure of the business. Contracting is the process of allowing another individual to rent space. The benefits of contracting include low paperwork and administrative duties as the teachers themselves are in charge of the billing process and structuring lesson content. Employing involves having workers fill out W2 and other tax forms and paying them regularly. The benefits of employment are that the owners have control over what goes on in the lesson and are able to regulate studio costs and fees. This decision was weighed heavily by all teachers when deciding to expand their business beyond themselves. The two larger studios, B and C, both also have a part time office staff
member to field phone calls and help with various secretarial duties. The office staff allows them to accomplish much more during the day because they are not fielding phone calls and general questions on top of teaching.

(c) Curriculum Development

An interesting result in the area of curriculum is that all three teachers use predominantly the same method series, *Piano Adventures* by Nancy and Randall Faber. Technology is also used in varying degrees within the lesson. Teachers A and C include a computer component where students play games or use software which reinforces functional skills such as theory, ear training, composing, and harmonizing. Teachers B give more at home assignments using computer software or public websites.

Teacher A is conscious of maintaining quality and professionalism in every lesson. She is aware of what each student did or did not do well from lesson to lesson to provide focused instruction that fosters musical success and growth in all students. Although she has academic training in piano pedagogy, Teacher A has found that experience has been most beneficial in improving her abilities as a teacher. For curriculum, Teacher A employs the Faber “Piano Adventures” series with her young beginning students. She also frequently uses a Roland MT40 minidisk player which plays fun accompaniments to help students with pacing, listening and note reading. This has been a proven success with many students. Since moving into her current location, Teacher A has tried to build a collection of supplemental books for students to “check out” if they need a change from ordinary lesson materials or have a recital approaching. Students also have the opportunity to stay for a half hour of computer time. A small desk, computer, and keyboard sit in the same room where lessons are held. Teacher A has a collection of software that reinforces concepts in music theory, aural skills, note reading, and vocabulary.
Computer time is loosely structured. If a student is struggling with something or needs a concept reinforced, Teacher A will assign a particular game or computer lesson for that student to complete. She finds the computer component quite beneficial because it gives her more time in the lesson to work on technique and musicality. Teacher A also plans a monthly or bimonthly Saturday group event for her students. This gives her students an opportunity to get together with their peers to play music games, learn about composers, listen to music, and play group ensembles. Teacher A’s students are also encouraged to perform at a Christmas and Spring recital where most pieces are played from memory. An academic approach keeps Teacher A striving for refinement, as she says “Even now I sit there in lessons and think to myself ‘oh we should be doing this’ or ‘why don’t I try that’ and I try to make sure I include these new ideas in my normal routine.”

Teachers B work toward the objective of producing educated and well rounded musicians in their school of music. All new elementary-age piano students with no prior instruction are required to start in the MYC program before advancing into private instruction, and those who have graduated from MYC get priority for private lessons. Teachers B have found the group environment to be crucial in the development of well rounded musicians, not only due to the strong curriculum but to the fact that parents are required to be actively involved in each class so that they can effectively work with their children at home. Students who graduate from MYC have been exposed to music theory, ear training, and music fundamentals at the piano. From their observation, those students who graduate from MYC have a stronger internalized rhythm, can sight read more fluently, have a more developed aural sense, and progress faster than those students with equivocal private instruction. Teachers B state that “I transfer many of the concepts from the group classes into my own teaching. Now I concentrate much more on harmonizing,
composing and transposing with my private students than I did before teaching MYC.” Another
measure to test the quality of music instruction at Teachers B’s school of music is through the
Royal Conservatory’s annual examination (RACE). These graded exams test students in
time, ear training, and performance of contrasting styles of music. Teachers B have observed
that by the time their private students finish this series of exams, they have the theoretical and
aural understanding equal to many college freshman music majors. For private lessons, Teachers
B prefer to use the Faber “Piano Adventures” series but supplement this with other literature.
They have found that students enjoy the pieces they play from this series. They currently do not
have a computer component to lessons due to space restrictions, but would like to have a
computer lab in the future.

Teacher C has a substantial amount of experience with a variety of methods. Although
she started her teaching using methods such as John W. Schaum and Jon Thompson’s piano
course, she now prefers to use the Faber “Piano Adventures” or the “Celebrate Piano” method
books. Of the older methods, she observes “they aren’t formatted for the way kids learn these
days, whereas these newer methods and technology are faster paced.” Technology is a large part
of Teacher C’s lesson structure. Students are required to spend a half hour at the computer in her
office after their piano lesson. During the computer time, Teacher C has designed specific
lessons to complete using either music game software or internet resources. This visual stimulus
helps students genuinely internalize theory and ear training elements much faster than they could
within the piano lesson. Teacher C is also a strong advocate of her MYC program. MYC has
allowed her to also expand clientele to include younger children. It also helps to educate parents
on the importance of their role in their child’s musical development. Teacher C has found that
many of the younger students who start in this program show a strong sense of aural awareness
to pitch and harmony, and can easily comprehend musical structure when they start studying privately. Teacher C provides musical development in her piano students by encouraging them to compete in statewide competitions and by taking the state teachers association-developed exams. These exams test students in theory, ear training, composition, and performance of contrasting musical styles. At her conservatory, Teacher C also has a small recital hall and requires her students to perform at least once a year mainly by memory. Recitals are held four times a year, and many of the recitals have a mixed group of instruments. She finds this to be a great benefit to both students and families. Students are exposed to a variety of instruments and have the opportunity to play duos or in small chamber groups with others. Parents and families also have the convenience of scheduling siblings on the same recital, even if they play different instruments.

Lesson structure is similar among the four subjects with a few differing characteristics in styles and preferences. Teachers B, due to their involvement in group piano, transfer ideas from group to individual lessons. They tend to give more assignments relating to harmonization, composition, and transposition. Teacher A uses more technology and games during the end of the lesson to reinforce concepts. Teacher C focuses on using the students learning style to address technical and musical issues. Teachers B and C also have many students participate in state regulated exams. The exams give students a tangible means for evaluating their progress. The exams also help the teachers make sure students are learning all functional skills such as scales, chord progressions, sight reading, and memorization.

(h) Future Goals

Teacher A contributes much of her current successes to a combination of seeing what others have done in similar situations and to trial and error. Over time she has been able to find
methods that work well for her and weed out those that are unsuccessful. Teacher A is currently planning to move to another state, where she plans to open another piano studio business. She is hoping to take the knowledge of what has worked well and what has not over the past years and improve upon it in the genesis of the new studio. Lesson structures may change as she hopes to incorporate more ‘group piano’ experiences for her students. One system she was thinking to try would have students coming for hour lessons. This would break into three twenty minute segments of lesson, computer time, and group lesson. The group component would have four students, two from the first hour and two from the consequent hour.

Teachers B are in the growth stages of their studio, and are hoping to open at least two more studios in neighboring towns within the next few years. They hope to take the business model they have created for the first studio and teach it to others who can help manage the new spaces. They would like to add to their current studio as well by having a computer lab available for all teachers and students to use.

Teacher C is very satisfied with the product of years of hard work and dedication to her piano studio business. Her current location has a large draw from the community and is the largest music studio within ten miles of her large suburb. Although she admits that prices are steadily rising due to increased overhead costs and rent, she is confident that this will not detract the many dedicated students in her studio, only weed out those who are just there ‘trying it out.’ The piano program is strong and supported by high quality instructors, and she is always looking for new opportunities for her students. She hopes to also produce a strong musical theatre, vocal coaching, and chamber music program within the conservatory. In this way she can insure her business offers something for students young and old.
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Given the results, Teachers A, B and C are all operating a piano studio business in distinctive and diverse environments. These environments are determined by the geographic and demographic setting where their piano studio business is located and by each teacher’s preferences for how they intend their studio to be structured within this setting. Through observation of pedagogical and business development in each, commonalities and differences will determine how these teachers became successful. Although differences make each studio function well within its environment, the commonalities between the three studios establish these four individuals as professionals and underline common traits which enable piano studio owners to be successful.

Differences

This study shows marked differences in pedagogic and business development between Teachers A, B and C, affecting the degrees of professionalism among the four subjects. Each teacher came from a unique background in their pursuit of formally studying piano performance and pedagogy. All subjects had years of private lessons throughout their childhood and into college. Study at the university level varied widely. Teacher A had the highest degree of university training, attaining a master’s degree in piano pedagogy after receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from a private liberal arts college. Her education was concentrated on her own performance skills as a pianist and developing her theoretical knowledge of teaching both individual lessons and group piano instruction at the college level. She also went through the process of certification for the MTNA. Teachers B both attained a bachelor degree in music with a concentration in piano pedagogy. They developed their performing skills while also taking piano pedagogy coursework at the undergraduate level. After college they extended their
pedagogical training by attaining certification for group piano with the MYC program. Teacher C was originally trained for elementary school education, receiving a bachelor of art degree from a private liberal arts college and certification to teach in the public school system. She went back to college later in life and completed coursework for a piano pedagogy certificate from a local university. After opening her studio, Teacher C also became certified to teach MYC. Teacher C was the only subject to take multiple business classes at the university level beyond what is taught in piano pedagogy coursework. Teacher A would have the strongest qualifications in education and certification, yet owns the smallest studio. Teacher C has the most business education, has been teaching for the longest number of years, and also happens to own the largest studio. It stands to reason that a correlation may exist between the size of the studio and the amount of business education or years of experience teaching rather than degree of formal education.

The Structural-Functional Model characteristic ‘d’ is “testing of applicants for licensure to practice.” Teacher A has attained MTNA certification while Teachers B have not but have both been licensed to teach MYC. The MTNA certification is open to all teachers but not required in order to be a member of the organization or to teach piano. MYC, on the other hand, is a program that requires certification in order to be taught. These certification processes differ in their necessity and in how they fulfill the characteristic affecting professionalism.

Another characteristic of the Structural-Functional Model is “existence of a professional culture.” The level of involvement in the professional culture varies among these subjects. Teachers B and C are much more active in the professional culture and in business ownership than Teacher A. Both B and C travel to attend national conferences, present and write articles, and network among other studio owners around the country. They are involved as well at the
local level and hold, or have held, positions on local music teacher committees. Teacher A stays within the local professional network but also teaches college level group piano at a local university. She attends local events but does not take roles within these committees. Teachers B and C have also spent more time educating themselves about owning a business by taking courses, attending workshops or reading books that involve small businesses development. Currently, Teachers B most actively pursue knowledge of business development since their piano studio business is a younger entity that is still growing. Teacher C is not as involved in these elements given that her piano studio business is more mature and is not growing.

Both subjects A and B began developing a piano studio business relatively soon after graduation by first starting to teach out of the home and then moving into a commercial space. Teacher C used private instruction as part time work until her children were raised and then started a studio. The process of opening her studio was many years in the making as she went back to school for pedagogical and business training. Each teacher decided to open a piano studio through a different process. Only Teachers A and B had an original career choice of independent piano teacher.

Price structures varied from studio to studio. Teacher A charged the least for private lessons while Teacher C charged the most. Lesson pricing tended to coincide with the population and cost of living in the area surrounding the studios. Teacher A was in a small town where the cost of living was low, Teachers B were in a suburb and had lesson rates in the middle, and Teacher C bordered a large metropolis where the cost of living is significantly higher. Group lesson pricing was different than private lesson pricing. Teachers B charged more for group lessons than Teacher C, while Teacher A did not offer group lessons at all. Teachers B had a higher percentage of their students involved in group lessons than Teacher C, thus relying
more heavily on the ‘group piano’ component for financial strength. Teacher C had many more programs for groups of children that afforded her studio extra income that Teachers A and B did not have.

Recruitment of students is somewhat different between the three studios. All three rely on word of mouth, but Teachers B have the widest advertising campaign. They are much more focused on public relations and website activity for getting community recognition. This is due to the fact that Teachers B are the most interested in expansion of their studio while Teachers A and C have leveled off the number of students. The two larger studios, B and C, also implement website design while A does not. Teacher A relies on the location of her studio to also help her advertise to those driving by, while Teachers B and C rely on location as more a convenience for students and families. For example, Teacher C’s studio is one mile off a major interstate and Teachers B’s studio is tucked away behind the local shopping center, close to the grocery store.

Hiring workers is also different among these three studios. Teachers A and C contract out while Teachers B hire employees. Contracting out has advantages in low time spent on administration activities. Teachers A and C do not worry about collecting tuition from any students other than their own, therefore eliminating the need for creating biweekly paychecks or W2 forms. They are only concerned with collecting rent. The disadvantage to contracting is less authority over what is happening within the studio. Teachers B admit to having a significant amount of work involved with management of their employees, but they like to have the control to delegate what is happening within the business.

Lesson content and offerings varied among the three subjects. Teachers A and C have similar private lesson structures of a half hour lesson coupled with a half hour of computer time, during which students focus on technical issues related to music during the lesson and use
computer time to reinforce theory, history and ear training skills. Teachers B focus more on functional skills like harmonization, transposition, and composition along with studying new music during the half hour lesson. They tend to give outside computer assignments that utilize websites or other software which the student can complete at home. Teachers B and C, who have larger studios, both offer group instruction and other vocal or instrumental lessons whereas Teacher A only offers private piano lessons in her studio. Teacher C, who owns the largest studio, has the most diverse program offerings of the three studios while Teacher A has the least.

Each teacher has a unique set of tools which makes them professional. Background and education was quite different between these subjects, as was their level of involvement in professional organizations. Teacher A, who had the highest educational level and certificate, was the least involved in professional associations. Teacher C, who had the least pedagogical education, had the highest level of business owning education and experience with Teachers B not far behind.

*Commonalities*

Although each teacher has an individual approach toward the pedagogical and entrepreneurial development of their business, they share crucial characteristics that promote their professionalism. The principal characteristic which allows each subject in this study to be successful is financial stability. For all teachers, operating a piano studio business is a full time job and subjects are at their studio teaching or working in some form five to six days a week. Each teacher in this study currently operates their business at a profit significant enough to allow them to continue to stay in business and support themselves and their workers. Lesson rates are a crucial factor in this stability. Each studio is able to charge competitive rates within the community and still draw in enough students to keep the business operational. None of the
teachers offers any price breaks, promotions or fluctuations in the cost of lessons. Tuition is set at a market competitive price and only changes if they increase their rates. Teachers A, B and C have successfully combined teaching and business owning to produce a stable clientele, a fluidly run business, and a prospect of future success.

The second common characteristic of all four teachers is the commitment to specialized education, certification, and performance training for the purpose of high quality teaching, characteristics included in both the *Structural-Functional* and the *Process Models*. Although they differ, each teacher in this study has completed degree(s) or certificates in piano pedagogy from accredited institutions and are classically trained pianists. As pianists they continue to develop their own skills by performing locally. They are also members of national associations such as MTNA and are involved in their local chapter. Because all four teachers are concerned with providing exceptional training for their students, they realize the importance of keeping abreast of current trends in piano teaching, technological advancements, and business owning techniques. Being involved in educational advancement shows that each of these studio owners takes pride in constantly bettering themselves as teachers and business owners. They do not stagnate as pianists once they have an established clientele. They set an example for their students that demonstrate a dedication to education and a love of piano playing.

An interesting characteristic each of these business owners share is the way in which their studios have developed. Each teacher started giving lessons out of the home before transitioning into a commercial venture where they have more opportunity for expansion. There is a shared process of first creating a reputation for themselves as quality educators transitioning to creating a reputation for their business as providing a high quality service. This transition allows them to employ other teachers and program classes which are all blanketed under the same reputation.
Once their studios started expanding each of these teachers sought some kind of legal or financial advice as the nature of doing business for them was changing. The larger their studios became the more systems they had to put in place to make sure daily operations could run smoothly. By expanding they also noted a loss of the personal connection to know what is going on at all times and in all places within the business. Teacher C could not possibly know what is going on daily within the myriad of programs and lessons, so she puts key people whom she trusts in decision-making roles. The tradeoff for Teachers B and C comes in a wider range of influence.

Another commonality typical of these business owners is a desire to work on their business instead of in it. Gerber (1995) describes the necessity of any business owner to have Entrepreneurial Perspective that adopts a wider view of the business as “a network of seamlessly integrated components, each contributing to some larger pattern that comes together in such a way as to produce a specifically planned result, a systematic way of doing business” (p. 72). These teachers are not just creating a job for themselves where they come to work, teach, and leave. To them the importance is not in what is done, but how it is done. These teachers enjoy creating systems of operation that produce a specific type of experience for their students each and every time they walk through the door. Every business task has been tested to find the most efficient and effective process for completing it. For example, Teacher A has a “meet and greet” packet that she gives to every potential student or family with whom she has a personal interview. Teachers B have a printed script next to the phone so that every perspective client that calls for information is given the same response and mailing no matter who answers the phone. Teacher C has someone who updates her website promptly when any new programs or teachers are employed so students are abreast of happenings within the conservatory. These subjects are
problem solvers not just musically but operationally, and they enjoy finding creative ways of making their business unique.

Conclusions

Looking back to the Structural-Functional and the Process Models, all four Teachers in this study have met many of the characteristics that would distinguish them as professionals. The Structural-Functional Model’s traits include (a) a specialized body of knowledge and techniques; (b) long specialized training for members to master the body of knowledge; (c) testing of applicants for licensure to practice; (d) authority over clients; (e) professional autonomy; (f) community sanction; and (g) existence of a professional culture (Ritzer 1977). All subjects have accomplished a specialized body of knowledge and techniques through advanced pedagogical and business training at university levels and beyond, tying into ‘a’ and ‘b’. This is achieved in differing ways and to varying degrees. All teachers have college degrees, but focus of study varied from general music to music education to piano pedagogy. All subjects have some form of certification from associations such as MTNA and MYC, although MTNA is not a required licensure. This shows that each subject has worked in some capacity to educate themselves as pedagogues beyond university training. They have also achieved a body of knowledge in owning and operating a business. Each subject has used outside resources combined with experience to create working systems within their business. They are knowledgeable business owners. Authority over clients can be seen in the types of students that are attracted to these businesses. A majority of the students who commit to each teacher’s studio are paying more for lessons due to the higher quality of the education provided combined with other benefits of belonging exclusively to that studio. Therefore the students themselves tend to be committed and serious about their music education. Authority over clients ties in with
community sanction, where these studios are allowed to operate solely by generating business. Professional autonomy is a natural characteristic of these studios as they are not funded or associated by a higher corporate or university power. Within each geographic location there is the existence of a professional community, not only through MTNA but through other established teacher organizations in the area.

Looking at the Process Model, these subjects have all worked through as many steps as possible to establish themselves as professionals. The traits again are (a) the occupation becomes full-time work; (b) a perceived need for the establishment of a training school leads to contact with and entry into the universities; (c) the establishing of professional associations; (d) there is political agitation for the purpose of winning legal support for protection of the job territory and its code of ethics; and (e) a code of ethics is adopted to restrain the unqualified and unscrupulous (Wilinsky, 1964, p. 142-145). It is interesting to note that the primary trait of becoming full time work has evolved from the historical view of piano teaching as an association of Victorian household duties to piano teaching as a distinct career path. The incorporation of business responsibilities gives independent piano teaching further significance because teachers do not just teach a few lessons in the afternoons anymore. The cost of lessons now engulfs the direct education and all responsibilities associated with housing a facility of learning. The second trait of contact into the universities is easily seen with the establishment of pedagogy courses and degrees. All subjects in this study have marked educational histories and are well trained to teach. The third step in the process model involves belonging to and actively participating in professional associations. All teachers have also sought out involvement in local and national teaching and business owning groups. The pursuit of continuing education is made possible through professional associations. The last two steps in the process model are not
possible for these subjects to complete at the time of this study. No legal action protects piano teachers in particular, and no action has been taken to restrain those who would like to teach but do not have the proper training.

A significant characteristic that all teachers in this study share is that of being more than simply a qualified professional, but also a successful business owner. This quality awards them great satisfaction from working on their piano studio business; developing systems that will help their business run well. Each subject is constantly developing within their mind a model of their ideal business. They ask themselves how a company like this would act and then proceed to recreate that vision to the best of their ability each and every day. They benefit from solving financial, marketing and other administrative challenges that are a part of daily studio operations. One of Teachers B stated that “when you own a business you see yourself in different roles. The creativity you have making music starts to express itself in different ways.”

An interesting find was the marked differences in pedagogical education and business structure. Each teacher has been trained in piano pedagogy, but all in differing types of programs. Teacher A has the highest level of education with a master’s degree in piano pedagogy, yet operates the smallest studio. Teacher C, who owns the largest studio, was originally trained as a public school music teacher before going back to school later in life for a certificate in piano pedagogy. Teachers B, operating the mid-size studio, each had a bachelor degree in music with an emphasis in piano pedagogy. Each subject had some form of pedagogy training, yet the level of achievement did not correspond with the size or success of the studios themselves. The reputation of a high quality music facility would appear to stem from the success of the teachers in producing well trained students, not in the amount of formal education
achieved by the teacher or in the size of the studio. These studios all operated successfully and achieved a high level of professionalism despite the differences in their size and structure.

A significant finding relating to educational differences was the history of Teacher C, who did not originally get a degree involving piano performance or pedagogy. Since Teacher C has the most business training and owns the largest studio, further study would be suggested to see if there is a relationship between the size of the studio and the amount of business and entrepreneurial pursuit in a group of subjects. Would a person with a music degree who has taken a significant amount of business courses along with pedagogy courses be more apt to open a large conservatory than a person who only took pedagogy coursework? Another pathway might be to evaluate a number of studios located in the same town to compare pedagogical and business differences. Would a strong entrepreneur like Teacher C run a larger conservatory if she was placed in Teacher A’s small town? A future study of how these findings may be applied to the development of a piano studio business may also yield interesting relationships. Would the business and pedagogic ideas found in this study produce a successful studio?

The piano teachers interviewed in this study have not met all of the standards that would qualify professional status on par with those in the medical or law fields. While many independent piano teachers employ several of the traits and characteristics of both the Process Model and the Structural-Functional Model, it is impossible for them to encompass all of the qualities necessary to reach professional classification in the sense that other traditional professions, such as the medical and law fields, are professions. The main disconnect between independent piano teachers and these other professions come from the impossibility of government induced licensure forcing the standardization of the profession. It is not feasible for these teachers to be board certified or practice with a license simply because it does not exist.
Even in educational environments, these teachers had differing degrees of pedagogy and business training. These teachers have not even all been through the certification process for MTNA, which would be in closest proximity of a nationally recognized certification. The findings of *Structural-Functional and Process Models* show that the teachers in this study to have achieved many of the traits that would qualify them as professionals. There is, however, this impossibility for piano teachers to complete these models due to a lack of standardization across the profession. Would these testing procedures, if put in place, benefit the professional status of the independent piano teacher?

The results show that each teacher has strong positive reputation in the community by adhering to a sound education, involvement in professional communities, holding high standards for their piano students, and overseeing a financially solvent business. The results also show that each teacher does this in a very different way. Business structures are not similar, and pedagogical ideals are met through different means. Instead of passing a state test, the four teachers in this study use their own experience as business owners and their individual musical achievement as the groundwork for imparting musicianship in all of their students. Many of these standards are self-made and upheld relating to what each teacher considers to be important and needed within their business. The product they sell to their students is collectively perceived as instilling a critical lifelong knowledge and appreciation of music. This general principle allows them to branch out and individually create a high recognition as small business owners and pedagogues within the community.

These teachers have definitely evolved from the historic beginnings of piano teaching as a venture associated with other household or work duties to piano teaching as a sound business and pedagogical endeavor. These teachers have complete freedom and flexibility in making
decisions that will affect their students’ achievement and business’ success. Certainly there are a variety of community situations where studios like Teachers A, B, and C are needed. Whether an independent piano teacher has a small studio in the home or a large conservatory, they all have the power to obtain the training and skills necessary to enhance their education and propagate their professionalism. Perhaps this freedom is what can make independent piano teaching successful. Instead of holding certificates and passing tests, education and business practices could be a viable pathway toward a community view of piano teaching as a strong profession. As an alternative of these teachers gaining respect by telling others they are certified or licensed, they could model professionalism in their everyday activities and lead others to a better understanding of piano teaching as a respected line of work. By consciously practicing high standards in both pedagogical and business practices, perhaps independent piano teachers can raise public awareness of the unique talent and dedication required of anyone who is a professional teacher. Thus the emphasis on the training of pianists in both pedagogy and business skills, rather than the standardization and certification of piano teaching, may improve the reputation of piano instructors as professionals, as well as educators.
REFERENCES


Teacher A
Interview #1
12/15/04

1. History of Studio
   - Master’s Degree in Fall 1998
   - Teaching through creative arts for a semester, adjunct at BGSU
   - Moved to a place where I could have studio at home and advertised with a picture add in the newspaper originally. Would have helped if active in a church for referrals to recruit (or have friends in that environment to give referrals). The more visible you can make your studio the more calls you get.
   - Studio wasn’t growing fast enough so I decided to work for Perrysburg School of Music for extra income, plus I could see how other people interact.
   - Moved to studio space in fall 2001, by this time she was more visible and getting more referrals from word of mouth. Location is one very big piece! Reputation is worth a lot. I’ve spent a lot of money on advertising but referrals help the most.
   - Business cards: put out 10 at a time to keep track of if people are actually taking them

2. Current Situation
   - 80 students
   - 4 other teachers (5 total) all would like more students

3. Teaching Aspects: How did you decide upon your curriculum?
   - Looked at different methods during classes
   - Mentor liked to use Faber and Faber: the pacing and the combo of intervallic reading with landmark notes.
   - Started working with other methods with transfer students
   - What can we let slide and what do you have to be a perfectionist about (I tend toward perfection)
   - Unique cases: sisters using two different method series to eliminate competition. Have to talk to the students about
   - Royal American Conservatory: has a good, well rounded curriculum with state exams and ear training stuff.
   - With a lot of pianists, they just skipped levels and are not very familiar with it
   - Junior High level: have to do what’s “cool”: some like things that others hate, so you have to compromise your own expectations to keep the student interested. Helps them appreciate.
   - Learned the most about teaching just from teaching. It was helpful to learn the theories inside the classroom, but she’s learned the most from doing. Even now, “we should do this, and we should try that”
   - Would like in the future: each kid has a 1 hour lesson broken into three 20 min sections: individual lesson, computer time, and group. At about level 3 the student has about a 40 minute lesson.
   - Use to have group class once a month and organize exactly who is coming and all that stuff.
• Playing games with students: they want to know how fast you can read the notes. Making games helps to keep interest.

4. Starting new students
• 6 year olds have the maturity level to sit through the lesson. But the whole lesson shouldn’t be a discipline thing so play games. Younger than this is up to the child, some are ready and some aren’t.
• Adults get easily frustrated, don’t want to repeat
• Likes starting kids

5. How is technology incorporated?
• Roland MT40 midi-disc player: sometimes use it to listen to while tapping out the rhythm. Or learn a little bit of one hand with the counting while she plays the other with disc going
• Computer software: wants to really roll out a step-by-step plan of what concepts go with what piece and how successful the students are
• Piano keyboard with Midi-saurus programs have samples they can play. Or they can have a printer to print out the music and practice to bring it out and play with it at the lesson

6. General observations about how your teaching has evolved
• When she first started, she didn’t understand how basic you have to start. How am I going to teach them how to do this? Became reaction teaching to what they still need to know. Now it is much more proactive teaching. Preparation work with basic stuff to help them build a strong foundation. The more I can make them successful the more they will want to continue. Each student has their own strengths and weaknesses, so you have to address each individual student. If they go through the first couple books and think its ok, then they really want to go on. Set them up for success. Make their learning fun. They don’t see playing war with flashcards its fun rather than just going through the flashcards. The more fun it can be the more excited they are to learn. It happens when kids bring their friends, I play a game with them, and pretty soon I’m getting a phone call.

7. Prep time for lessons
• Is about the same because at first I didn’t know what I was doing. Didn’t know what I should prepare so it’s a trial and error. Now it’s a much more logical sequence. I do a lot of reflecting about the students. There’s a lot I remember about the students from week to week: how they played the week before and the difference, so I rely on my memory. When I get stressed out I start to forget more often, but at my normal load its fine. I have built my studio gradually so it’s not so bad remembering stuff about kids. If I start with 10 students for a year and then get 10 more the next year, it’s not so bad.

8. Owning and Operating a Studio. Can you be very prepared with a business plan?
• When I first started I didn’t really know what I did and didn’t need. Acquiring a piano was a must, and Dan (husband) built a computer and the office basics
Decided I wanted to make money right away instead of a large initial investment, so I got things gradually. I spend a couple thousand here and there to gradually build it up.

Also met with a small business center. They have a free service to help you get started with your own business.

Once the studio kept growing, as soon as I had enough students to cover the cost of office space we found a place and moved. Now that I have done it once, talked to people in the area to get a feel of the situation, I feel confident that I can move and rebuild with much less stress.

I didn’t see this as a serious business venture until I started talking with others that really viewed this as their livelihood

I take care of all the financial stuff for my own home, so I just do the business stuff too.

9. How do you budget?

I do a lot more of that now that I have an office than when I was at home.

When parents pay 10 weeks out, you have this huge wad of money at a time and you have to plan it out more. I usually pay 3 months rent and phone bill out at once, and just plan what other expenses I will have within those three months. I budget the cost of the recitals, updates to the studio, new music, etc. Once in a while there are unexpected things but that just makes me more aware the next time around. I always forget about stamps. When you have to send out 70 invoices it really adds up!

Taxes: I should really pay quarterly, but I have them take out most of it from my BG paycheck. Plus I have to take into account that I pay my own social security taxes, all 15.2%. You have to really keep track of your expenses, your starting and ending mileage for the forms. Keep your records in case you’re audited. This is every dollar I don’t have to pay taxes on at the end of the year. I am fortunate that my dad is a farmer and self employed, so he really knows the business tricks that keep you afloat. You have to pay 30-40% of what you make toward taxes. I would find an accountant that specializes in small businesses because they will know all these little details to help you out.

Interview 2

1. What were the reasons to open your own studio and not work for someone else?

It was a little trial and error: I was teaching through creative arts but I wanted to make more money, have more control over what my students do.

Did work for a couple other studios to have more students faster. I found it was nice to see how they were operating their studio. It was more practical experience for me

As my studio grew, it was more practical to just stick with my students and not drive all over to other studios

Once I had about 30 students in my home, I decided to move to a studio location. Working out of the home, I was concerned about my students safety

2. Was there any conflict between teaching and daily studio operations?

Not really. Sometimes when I would get overly busy there would be a week when things were crazy. But it was nice to have some help.

You find little ways to make your processes work smoother. Even to have checks in window envelops saves a bunch of time

But that didn’t conflict with my teaching schedule; I just have a lot more to do.
• I treat my bills like the electric bill: I send it out with about 2 weeks for them to pay.

3. What software do you use for bills?
• I use Peachtree accounting software. You can use it as much or as little as you want. I can keep track of who paid and who hasn’t by check numbers. Then at the end of the year when I’m doing taxes, I can print out a form that tells me how much I’ve collected
• You can get really involved with tracking all your little expenses and things like that, but I don’t use it. If my operation got bigger I might use it more.
• I try to make things organized, but not over-organized

4. How much do you break down your time/money to see how you are really making $$?
• I find that because I like to do it so much, I really don’t keep track of all the little extra work. It’s fun for me so it doesn’t feel like work.
• When I was working at BG, I found that I was really plotting that out more
• That might be a good idea to really track that stuff because that is how you can justify a rate increase. I’ve never really had people complain about that though, and if they do I have enough students that they can look for another teacher.

5. How do you come up with your marketing campaign?
• It helps to sit down with someone else and brainstorm. I do with my husband, and then I keep track of all the ideas we’ve had by writing it all down in a journal.
• For example, I once thought of a pizza party, but forgot about it until I looked at it over again. I just try to judge if I’m going to get a reasonable return on the money spend to find that kind of stuff.
• Sometimes other people come up with some really good ideas that I would have never thought about
• Even if I don’t use the ideas right away, I’ll just let them hang there
• I’ve even thought about those billboards, and I’ve been meaning to ask a friend of mine how much she paid to advertise on one of those

6. Do you share your ideas with other piano teachers?
• I think some people get a little protective of their own little area, but if you’re outside of that, sure I’ll share my ideas with you.

7. Do you have a written description of your business plan?
• I don’t necessarily write things down, but I do think about it a lot.
• In my new studio when I move to Iowa, I have an idea of what I’d like to see happen.
• Now that I know what is possible, I have a better idea of what I can achieve.
• Seeing other studios and what they’ve done, I can really visualize what is possible
• I know now that I can make a substantial living at running a studio. Not just that my husband
• Sometimes Dan says that if the studio gets big enough he can just quit his job and work for me.
• It helps to have a marriage with someone who is really supportive of what you do.

8. When you were starting and you found yourself in a tough position, what kinds of sources did you use to find help? Did you seek professional help?
I haven’t really used a lawyer, accountant, or anything like that. I’ve used the SBA, they offer a free service. I talked to a lady and told her what I wanted to do, and she agreed with certain things, saying I should peruse those avenues. She gave me some names of accountants that specialize in small business. It is important she said to use someone who has a specialty in small business because they know the ins and outs.

I think it helped that I was married because Dan’s income was used to pay the bills and mine was used to open the studio, otherwise I would have had to take out a small business loan.

When we move I’m looking into taking out a small business loan just to get things started quicker.

The SBA website has info for different areas of the country. You can find where to go for different help through them. They’ll point you in the right direction.

9. What are the advantages and disadvantages in taxes of working for yourself?

Well I don’t mind doing my own stuff so that

We have to pay more social security tax. But when you’re working for a larger studio, they have to pay the tax so they end up paying you less. So it all equals out.

Some people like that they get the check on Friday and don’t have to worry about all the other stuff

I personally like to be in charge of everything that happens, my money, etc

If you don’t like doing it, get an accountant

If you do it yourself, you just have to keep track of things. As soon as I buy something for the studio, I write on the receipt “studio expense”. So if you’re willing to keep track of things as you go. Some things, like music, are obvious expenses. Other things like paper towels and cleaning supplies, who knows if you’re buying it for yourself? As long as you can justify it to an expense. But as long as you are fair.

Going to conferences is a definite business expense. Mileage is also a big one.

10. What were some roadblocks/things you weren’t prepared for when you first started off?

Probably teaching in general! I had the classes, so I knew the theories. But I just lacked the practical knowledge. For example, how do I teach the concept of a quarter note? How can I make this presentable so I don’t have to teach it by rote?

When I first started teaching, it was a lot of trial and error. At first it was a fast learning curve. But even now I sit and think about “oh I can make that into a game, or oh we need to cover this” For example, we need to have a spelling quiz so that they know how to spell some of these words!

I get stubborn to about “I will make this work!” It wasn’t that I felt I couldn’t do it. Even in pedagogy we observed people teaching, but I never really had to insight to ask them why they were doing what they did, and how it works.

There are times when I get discouraged. How can I make this better? How can I make them pay me on time?

But you just continue on and things get better usually….hopefully!

11. What do you find the most rewarding and the most frustrating about running your business?

The students are both most rewarding and frustrating
• The most rewarding is seeing my students be successful. It makes me very proud of them and that I’ve done what I’ve said I was going to do. Recitals are a big indicator!
• Lately I’ve been realizing that I give them too many of the answers. I have to be careful not to play it too much for them.
• I really like to teach little kids. I want them to have a certain level of playing and if they’re not cutting it.
• Sometimes I feel like I’m just telling them what they are doing wrong. So even if they play and it’s terrible, I try to say something positive like: You got most of the notes right, we just need to change a few” A lot of times they’ll know the area that was wrong, sometimes not.
• Sometimes I give the impression of a painting: you have to go through the process of getting a rough draft, then putting on a few layers, then add things as you go. So sometimes I just give them a layer at a time.
• As a business owner, my least favorite thing to do is returning peoples phone calls when they first call me. If they are a referral, a lot of times it goes well. But other times I have to be a salesperson and I don’t like that. Some people are just very critical about everything and need lots of details.
• It’s not something I particularly like but I do it to get new students.
• I find its better to just set up an appointment when they call. On the phone sometimes it’s hard to communicate things that I would just rather show them.
Teachers B
Interview 1

1. Current Studio Operating Status
   • 6 studios
   • Pianos: 1 baby grand Yamaha C6, 5 uprights. (3 leased, 3 owned)
   • Piano Lab: 7 keyboards, 3 iMac computers
   • Faculty: 12 teachers in piano, flute, vln, vla, cello, voice. 1 PT receptionist

2. How does your piano lab function in running your studio?
   • We are able to use a strong curriculum: Music for Young Children, which gives students experience in theory, ear training, and music fundamentals with piano
   • Requires parent involvement, which can be good and bad
   • Kids spend 2-5 years in this program before advancing into private lessons. Those who complete this curriculum get priority
   • Learning in groups gives students more stimulus: rhythmic development by listening to each other (group kids have substantially greater rhythmic skills than those just in private lessons

3. How have your attitudes changed since opening a studio?
   • There is definitely a more serious attitude among clients
   • The professionalism has allowed the studio to grow
   • Students are exposed to more sounds and sights
   • The waiting area allows families to get to know each other (and schedule lesson times that correspond so parents can chat

4. How is technology used within both lesson and business environments?
   • The piano lab is the biggest return on investment. By offering group classes it pays the fixed expenses
   • The website is a large part of marketing and student relations. It helps answer questions for those looking into the business. It also keeps students aware of policies, “lesson swap”, and gives them resources available in the “students only” section.
   • Digital Video: We videotape all the performances and put them online so friends and family can see the student perform. This is been very successful in giving us an advantage: something unique that we offer

5. MYC
   • We started out thinking that we could make our own curriculum for group instruction. We quickly found this to be too time consuming and not as beneficial for our students
   • We looked at programs that were keyboard based and well known
   • MYC has been around for about 25 years
   • The curriculum was chosen for its strong piano background and high success rate due to consistency. It is very thorough with theory, ear training. We like that it is experienced based
   • It allows individuality and freedom for us within a structured program, which is important for our teachers to have consistency even though its not us
• The individual teacher does their own lesson plans
• This makes our job better because it's more proactive—not just error detection
• We like the program because it keeps the kids in groups and they stay in the same group
  for multiple years with their friends
• There are fees involved, students have to buy their music from MYC, but what we get out
  of it is immense
• Music for Young Children is based out of the Royal Conservatory in Canada
• Royal Conservatory offers testing exams (RACE). We were fortunate enough to have
  already established the program right before the royal conservatory was adopted by
  Canada
• Most kids who graduate from the program know about as much music theory as a college
  freshman
• This program has made us better teachers: our job before was to fix things, but this
  curriculum has made us much more proactive. Know we can plan out “ok, what do we
  want to do this year?”
• We are very careful not to make it like a proficiency test, so that students get a good
  exposure.
• 80 kids in MYC right now

6. Describe how your curriculum developed for individual lessons?
• There is an adult curriculum from MYC as well that I use in my own lessons, although I
  modify it quite a bit
• We have hired so that we can give our teachers the freedom to do what they like to do.
• We have recently thought about implementing some sort of evaluative process to make
  sure teachers are getting through
• We are looking into some kind of situation where the RACE exams were standard if
  people want to study at the Perrysburg school of music
• It takes time to establish, and parents get used to the idea

7. How is technology used?
• When we taught out of the home, we each had a computer
• Now in the lessons we
• There are websites that I use for my students so they can drill their notes at home
  • www.pedaplus.com
• If we get into a larger space, we would like to have a regular space where students can
  come in and work on computers, but we just don’t have the space right now
• Luke is very technology gung-ho and would like to use it more in the future
• Coming up with a system is trying. We would have to put together a system that would
  be fair for everyone
• At home we’ve used Music Ace, Midi-sauras, Aurelia
• In the group classes, we do some kind of work on computers. Every 3-4 weeks they all
  have mini private lessons for a few minutes where other students can be on the computer
  at that time.
• We have lots of floor games

8. Do you require a certain amount of performing/exams?
• We believe that every one of our students can and should take the exams.
• Recitals: it is strongly encouraged that when the teacher feels they are ready, the student needs to perform
• It says on the handbook that students need to perform on one recital a year,
• If we don’t see a certain student on a recital for a while, we look into it.
• We are thinking of having an “honors recital” sometime next year where each teacher chooses a few students to feature
• We really want to teach students the value of sharing music with others, so if they need to use music instead of memory then that is fine.

Interview #2

9. How do you track dropout rates?
• This year is the first year that we have instituted a withdrawal form to try to better track these things, but typically we don’t get into other teachers stuff other than our own students (who we know what is happening to)
• We had one teacher last year that had particularly high dropout, and for that reason we want to track why these students are dropping
• Retention averages at least 80% from year to year
• We find that voice and guitar particularly drops much more frequently
• Over the years you tend to weed out the students who will drop right away and are eventually left with students who we know will stick with it.
• Do you weed out kids? We have found that they tend to weed themselves out. We have never gotten rid of a student. There have been situations where changes in policy have been the reason for students leaving.

10. Do you systemize your campaign for recruiting new students?
• Yes, we have a script that is used every time
• You get used to feeling like you have to sell people on why you’re doing what your doing
• We have a packet to put in the mail that same day to get them enrolled while the interest is really there.

11. As teachers, how do you peruse your own personal growth and development?
• We still push ourselves to perform. Luke has been sidetracked writing computer programs and administrative stuff for the school lately. My role has shifted in that creativity that use to come through performing all the time, it expresses itself in different ways in the running of the business. Which can be not a drudgery but a creative thing, and when your approaching it from “what kinds of new programs can we offer, what kind of recitals will reach more of the community. There is a greater satisfaction from having a large influence. We are really able to touch a lot more people and give a lasting change. Much more than if we give a concert and maybe 40 people come out to hear it.
• Andrea is in a chamber ensemble
• There is a lot of opportunity for growth by teaching within a larger studio because you can ask other teachers if you need advice or suggestions
• We always make sure that when we hire new teachers, we make sure that they are open to the dialogue of exchanging ideas
• We also go to a lot of conferences. Aug 2003 National Pedagogy Conference, National Guild of the Community Schools of the Arts, MTNA National Conference, MYC conference in Quebec
• This last summer, we went to our strictly business conference. Successful Studio Strategies: Sam Beckford. It is totally worth it….go!
• You see things much differently in that you are not only providing for yourself, but also for your employees.
• Sam thinks like a business person. He’s good at marketing and we know that. There is an old fashion mentality that you don’t have to advertise your studio, you operate strictly on recommendations
• Through this we have also bought a whole support system. We have been able to go on and see that it happens to other people.
• He’s also led us to some great literature too on the business side of things: We went into the business knowing the work really well. We were passionate about it
• The E-Myth, Michael Gerber. They go to work in their business and not on their business

12. How do you keep it all up?
• Eventually you have to find a way to effectively administrate what we are doing without getting burnt out
• We have been on a quest to find an effective business model, so that we can provide ourselves with teaching
• Your business will change if you’re not actively involved
• In any field, people as customers have gotten use to having exceptional customer service. This is why we made the leap to hire office staff to answer the phones
• We have found its nice to have a third party to answer these questions rather nicely and neutrally

13. How have your pedagogical ideals evolved now that you have a business?
• When our students are there, they have our undivided attention.
• I feel that I am a better teacher now than I have ever been.
• Especially now that we are teaching group lessons, I teach much more harmonization, improvisation, functional skills. We do ear training preparation using sol-feg. And they are becoming much stronger students because of it.
• Running things professionally helps set standards
• The business end has to do with being very orderly and coming up with an operations of how things are being done.
• If you don’t have these kinds of systems in place, how will you be in business very long?

14. What are the driving reasons for opening this studio?
• From the experiences we had in the past, I came up with a wish list. And I kept adding to this over the years, so now I’m crossing them off
• Artistic reason: being able to have a wider influence. If we are teaching out of the home, there is a definite max students we can teach. We had a long waiting list, but there were students that would just end up in a referral void between us and other teachers
• Financial reason: if we want to get to a point where we are not doing all of the teaching, book keeping, etc. We want to be free to think about new curriculums/ideas to implement in the studio. We want to have the time to create.

15. Where do you see your studio in 5 years?
• We are just about to the point now where we have maxed out this space. This year we’ll be fine, but next year we might start having problems with the group classes
• 2 options we have looked at: one would be to build a larger space where we could attract from the larger Toledo area
• Other option would be to open another facility in another town, say Sylvania
1. History of K and S Conservatory

- I started teaching in the public school system for a few years before having 6 children. Decided to stay home with the kids and teach a few piano lessons on the side. Joined St. Paul piano teachers association and went through pedagogy certification at St. Catherine’s. Got involved in knowing other teachers and doing things the right way. Interested in teaching mostly in the home.
- Decided to open a studio with a friend in an office space away from the house one summer as a test run. With the school district cutting budgets in most public music programs, the studio filled a need for quality music instruction in the area. People would call up asking for other teachers so they wouldn’t have to drive to St. Paul.
- After opening the studio, my partner and I went to a small business association to help form a partnership which eventually became an S-Corporation. Went to small business institute at St. Paul’s business college. Did most of the research on my own, got a book on partnerships at the library. Partnership for 3-4 years but because of liability issue.

2. How the studio is currently operating

- 40 teachers, 650 students
- Teachers are independent contractors. We are just facilitators because we like to keep teaching. We provide the space and the equipment, advertising, recitals
- I like it for the professionalism. You could ask other teachers for advice or if a student isn’t working out then you can refer them to other teachers.
- Teachers: wide range of people and goals. Some teachers are retired and just want to teach one day a week, others are younger and teach daily.
- Teachers are all independent contractors: they pay for rent and are provided with space to teach, advertising for new students, and yearly recitals
- Having multiple teachers creates a nice collective of teachers in one space. It is a nice way to stay connected, and to have other teachers readily available for questions and discussion.
- Had three studios going at one time, and have just grown over the years
- Have been this size and holding for about 4-5 years. Woodbury is growing so we might grow too
- With the economy bad, piano is the first thing to do
- Prices are pretty competitive with St. Paul, but are pricey. Parents can usually find independent teachers for cheaper, but with the raised rates you tend to get parents that are serious about wanting to take lessons and are willing to pay for it.
- It is a fine grey area to tell teachers what to charge. They make that decision
- Recitals are a good time. We can have guitar, flute, and piano players on one recital, and have mixtures

3. The Curriculum: How has it evolved?

- The old methods are ok: Schaum and Thompson. But those are out. They aren’t formatted for the way kids learn these days. I use Faber and Celebrate Piano the most
right now, and have used all the methods throughout the years. I like that based on using
the black keys without the thumb right away, it gives kids a better hand position.

- There are teacher and student workbooks for the Celebration Series. The student
workbooks explain the students and composers, and makes kids pick apart the music.
- The biggest advancement for me has been the technology advancement. I have kids
come for ½ hour lesson followed by a computer time. I don’t even do much theory in the
lesson anymore. I try to coordinate the software with what’s going on in the lesson. I
find it better to almost just go through the software by stage. It is a tremendous amount
of work for me to do this and hasn’t been quite as successful. I tried that for 2 summers
and both failed
- I don’t like Midi-sauras probably because it’s not very compatible with Macs. Music
Ace, Alfred Essentials, PBJ, Aurelia for ear training, Practica Musica for older students
(college theory), Beethoven Lives Upstairs, Musicus
- That’s how kids learn these days: VISUALLY
- Tremendous amount of stuff available on the web. I’d like to have stuff available
- I also use minidisk, although I haven’t been using them as much as I use to.
- Over the years I’ve tried to keep up with all the technology: The technology is only as
good as the equipment, what the kids have readily available to them, and the educational
value. I can’t send the minidisk player home with them, so it doesn’t really help them
when they practice. I often used the minidisk to help them pick out songs
- If you waste a lot of time with the equipment, its not worth it. I think over the years a lot
of us have wasted time with the equipment, some people get too caught up with it

4. MYC (Music for young children)
- We didn’t have anything for any really young kids. Because I am a piano teacher this
cought my eye right away because its piano based.
- It comes out of Canada so you have to adapt it a little bit for America
- They keep revising it every year, so it is quite up to date. The girl that does it has a
children’s psychology degree so its very well designed
- Each key has a different character and puppets to explain them. Parents buy the books
- Must pay a royalty fee of $27/student.
- It is profitable.
- The success of the program is that parents come to the lesson, but American culture is not
ready for the time commitment
- By 7-8 yrs old, students are put into private studios
- Students aren’t required to take the class, but we don’t take kids under 5 yrs old. Usually
the 5 yr olds we do take started in the class and they get way ahead of what the class is
covering
- We don’t do the RACE testing, but the Minnesota music testing is more familiar for me.
Students do very well if they are going through MYC
- This was developed about 35 years ago but used very similar concepts to MYC

5. Describe your voice drama program
- We are very excited about this new development
- Students can take voice lessons, but they also study drama with another coach
- We did a production of “Charlotte’s Web” where they all studied the drama
6. Parental involvement in the lesson
   - There tends to be a whole set of dynamics when teachers invite parents to come in.
   - Some younger teachers might have problems with parents taking over the lesson, but I don’t since I have grey hair

7. Do you track dropout rates for the studio on the whole?
   - I don’t, although I’ve thought about it
   - I tend to go to the recitals to see how the teachers are doing. Over the years I see students

8. How is your employment structured?
   - We contract. I don’t have a whole lot of reign over what my contractors do since they are independent.
   - They charge their own fees and such

9. How do you market your studio?
   - Word of mouth is best
   - Newspaper advertising is very iffy, press releases are more effective if there is a picture with it
   - We invite local musicians in for referrals
   - We get referrals from the music teachers: band, choir. My husband was a band teacher in the area. They viewed us as competition at first, bitter feelings with budget cuts and so forth

10. What kind of interviewing process do you use?
    - There is a circuit in the twin cities, so they know each other, especially instrumentalists. My best teachers are referred from my other teachers. It is circular like that.
    - I have them send me a resume, and I have my set questions that I ask and I can tell by their educational background. I don’t ask them to play.