Brief Note

**Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution and
Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind:
Music Education**

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The purpose of the present study was to clarify through an analysis of Campbell's music education program at the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind what factors were necessary for the development of educational programs for persons with visual disabilities in the United States, especially in relation to the development of vocational education in the 19th century. From an analysis of the educational practices of the time and the results at the Perkins Institution, it was suggested that an excellent teacher, good quality teaching materials and tools, appropriate educational content, help with finding employment for pupils, and the systematization and succession of good teaching methods were indispensable for the improvement of education, especially vocational education.

Key Words: residential institution for persons with visual disabilities, music education, educational reform, secure work, United States

Introduction

Residential institutions for persons with visual disabilities were founded at the beginning of 1830's in the United States in order to give persons with visual disabilities, who prior to that had been treated as poor people, the opportunity to become independent through education. People associated with these institutions proposed that through work, persons with visual disabilities could learn to help themselves and acquire a spirit of self-reliance. They expected music education to be one of the most important parts of vocational education for persons with visual disabilities, enabling them to become independent (Nakamura, 1987; Oka, 1996).

The reason that the teachers and directors of these institutions had expected music education to have such an effect was not only that they believed that persons with visual disabilities had outstanding musical talents, but also that social respect could be obtained through success as a musician (Oka, 2000). In this sense, music education was a symbol of the educational plans of these institutions where persons

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N. Oka

with visual disabilities were going to be improved so that they would become social constituent members equal with those without visual disabilities, because they would be liberated from the stigma of permanently being poor people.

However, music education at institutions for persons with visual disabilities did not necessarily achieve those results. When, after the end of the 1830's, some graduates from the residential institutions who had started work as musicians showed up at the institutions, their employment activities pleased the teachers and directors of the institutions, but there were extremely few of them, compared with the staff's initial big expectation. In addition, another problem that surfaced was the treatment of graduates who could not find jobs in the community as musicians and therefore continued to stay in the institutions as unpaid assistants. Thus, by the beginning of the 1850's, music education as a specialty type of vocational education in American residential institutions for people with disabilities was already facing a serious problem of finding employment for graduates.

At this time, the person who succeeded in rebuilding music education in an institution through an epoch-making educational reform was Campbell (Francis Joseph Campbell, 1834-1914). He later established the Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind in London with Armitage (Thomas Rhodes Armitage, 1824-1890), and became its founding principal (Ross, 1950; Yamaguchi, 1993). Prior to that, in 1858, Campbell had been a music teacher at the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, which was one of the oldest residential institutions for persons with visual disabilities. While there, he had constructed a systematic educational system that not only achieved remarkable employment results for its graduates as musicians, but also trained musicians by an original method, and built a foundation for continued development of the program after Campbell had left. The success of the Perkins Institution's program was extremely exceptional among all residential institutions for people with disabilities in the United States at that time.

Why was Campbell able to achieve this rebuilding of music education whereas other educators of persons with visual disabilities in the United States, even Howe (Samuel Gridley Howe, 1801-1876), who was a famous superintendent at the Perkins Institution with a reputation as an excellent educator, could not achieve this? Moreover, what was his method?

Analyzing Campbell's music education reform at the Perkins Institution might lead to the solution of two important questions concerning education at American institutions for persons with visual disabilities in the 19th century: first, the cause of the stagnation into which the institutions had fallen, and second, discovery of the factors that were indispensable for the development of education at institutions for persons with visual disabilities.

There has been almost no previous research on Campbell's own history of education. Ross (1950) examined Campbell's life as one of the great men in history who had visual disabilities but did not describe his education. Oka (1998) partially examined Campbell's music education program at the Perkins Institution, but that

Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution for the Blind

analysis is fragmentary, and the description does not clarify the whole content of his educational practice. Also it is indefinite in describing the relation of Campbell's program to Howe's educational policies.

Thus, the present report aims to clarify factors necessary for the development of education for persons with visual disabilities in the United States at residential institutions, especially in relation to the development of vocational education in the 19th century, through an analysis of Campbell's music education program at the Perkins Institution.

Disappointment of Howe at Music Education

What was the state of music education in the Perkins Institution before Campbell was employed there as a music teacher? In the institution's 1843 annual report, Howe, the first superintendent of the Perkins Institution, criticized music educators for having excessive expectations for the music education of persons with visual disabilities. He said that giving persons with visual disabilities musical training would result only in creating low-level wandering musicians and in making persons with visual disabilities degenerate to a lazy life like beggars (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1843). In addition, he pointed out that although many persons with visual disabilities tended to think that a musician's work was far more comfortable than hard manual labor, musical talent did not increase due to the loss of sight, but rather improved only as the result of daily practice, even if persons with visual disabilities had more accurate hearing than other persons (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1852)¹⁾. Howe recognized that social demand caused by pity and curiosity does not last long. Above all, he felt that it was outrageous for people who valued the promotion of persons with visual disabilities as people of independent and self-reliant spirit to train them only so that they would spend their lives relying on charity as vulgar wandering musicians. Therefore, he asserted that the prediction that "all who were capable of becoming organists, tuners of pianos, or teachers of vocal or instrumental music, would surely find employment and earn a livelihood" was too optimistic (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1853). And, after pointing out that success as a musician was impossible if a person had neither a special talent for music nor made a diligent effort, Howe requested that pupils be selected more carefully and strictly.

How many pupils in the Perkins Institution did Howe recognize as having musical talent? He wrote that residents who had no musical sense at all, like a person who is congenitally deaf, were extremely rare. Most of the residents had an ordinary level of musical ability. However, he emphasized that the important point in whether the pupils would be able to become good musicians was in not the mere presence of musical ability, but in the level of that ability. According to his words, all, with very rare exceptions, had the capacity for music. This capacity, however, was like that for arithmetical calculation. Just as all may be cipherers, but only a few may be good mathematicians, so all may become musicians, but only a few, good ones (Perkins

N. Oka

Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1858). In addition, he wrote, in order to become a good teacher of music, one had to have an excellent mental, moralistic nature and educational ability, in addition to ability as a performer. However, perhaps one person who had such abilities could be found “in a population of several thousand ordinary persons,” so he declared that it was unreasonable to expect to find a score of such persons in every institution for the blind, which had but a hundred pupils (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1858). As a consequence of such reasoning, music education disappeared temporarily from the vocational educational program in the Perkins Institution by the end of the 1850’s. That meant the failure of one of Howe’s initial educational policies.

Reform of Music Education by Campbell

Purchase and Repair of Musical Instruments

As already described, it was Campbell, with his original guidance methods, who overcame the stagnation of music education and promoted many musicians with visual disabilities. Campbell served as the music teacher in the Perkins Institution for 11 years, from 1858. He was an excellent teacher, particularly in two points: first, he appropriately recognized the problem of music education there, and second, he introduced into the Perkins Institution a guidance method that was very new in American institutions for people with visual disabilities at that time. Music education in the Perkins Institution not only became an important vocational education program again after the 1860’s, but also hardened the base of development which continued until the end of the 19th century as a result of Campbell’s achievement.

By what method did Campbell reform music education at the Perkins Institution? The first was large-scale purchase and repair of musical instruments. Table 1 shows the amount of money that the Perkins Institution used to buy musical instruments between 1859 and 1863. From the Table, it can be seen that nearly \$9,000 was used to buy musical instruments in the four-year period after Campbell became a music teacher at this institution. His influence is especially clear for pianos. Table 1 shows that in those first four years after Campbell arrived, 23 pianos were purchased; in 1863, the institution reported that it then owned 26 pianos (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1863). Moreover, a new organ was bought in 1862 for \$6000 dollars (not shown in Table 1), replacing an old organ that had been used for 20 years (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1862). The new organ was a real pipe organ and was said to have had a performance equal to ones in cathedrals. It is clear that the Perkins Institution organ was the most expensive musical instrument that any institution for people with visual disabilities owned at that time, because the most expensive pipe organ in North America, in the Music Hall in Boston, cost \$10,000 dollars in 1863 (Burkat & Fox, 2001).

The purchase of musical instruments on a large-scale shows that Campbell recognized that good musical instruments were indispensable to improving music

Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution for the Blind

TABLE 1 Amount of Expense for Purchase of Musical Instruments in Perkins Institution (1859–1863)

Year	Musical instruments purchased	Cost of musical instruments	Total expenses during year
1859	12 pianos orchestral instruments	\$1,787.50	\$22,068.02
1861	orchestral instruments	\$91.89	\$22,264.84
1862	4 pianos	Uncertain	\$24,743.32
1863	1 organ 7 pianos	\$6,762.85	\$24,028.29

Source: Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, *28th Annual Report of the Trustees* (1860), *30th* (1861), *31st* (1862).

education; on the other hand, it suggests that there had been very bad educational equipment at the Perkins Institution prior to his arrival.

Extension of Intellectual Ability

The second of Campbell's reforms was a change in the criteria by which students would be chosen for music education. When Campbell arrived, he asked Howe to select twenty students who seemed to have special musical talent. It is not clear by what method Howe made that selection. But after casual examination of the twenty who had been selected, Campbell concluded that none of them had the necessary nature for becoming a musician. He testified that they were not even able to judge the difference between the sound of the notes C[#] and D, and also did not understand that half of four was two (Royal Commission, 1889; Oka, 1998).

What did Campbell think was a necessary ability for one to become a musician? He pointed out that a necessary ability for people with visual disabilities to succeed as a musician was intellectual ability, especially the power of analysis and reasoning. He thought that if people with visual disabilities wanted to succeed as much as musicians without disabilities, it was insufficient to know only the technique of playing a musical instrument. He was convinced that people with visual disabilities should use their brains, just like solving a mathematical problem. Therefore, he selected twenty pupils who had intellectual ability, instead of the twenty pupils whom Howe had chosen.

Campbell's negative evaluation of the students whom Howe had selected clarified a fundamental mistake of music educators at the Perkins Institution prior to his arrival there. After the 1840's, Howe had consistently insisted that music education, as a type of vocational education, should target only pupils who had special musical talent. As a result, he was disappointed when he found no pupils in his institution who had excellent talent, and he gave up the idea of people with visual

N. Oka

disabilities obtaining independence through musical ability. However, Campbell's method suggested that the cause of the failure of music education was not the absence of skillful pupils but the inadequacy of the criteria for selecting them.

Instruction in Teaching Music to Those without Visual Disabilities and the Value of Physical Training

Needless to say, Campbell's third reform was of the content and method of music education. Campbell, who had valued the development of intellectual ability, rejected the idea of rote performances in which the musicians only repeated sounds they had memorized. He taught understanding and the interpretation of musical pieces to the pupils. In addition, he considered knowledge of the musical staff to be important so that people with visual disabilities might become excellent music teachers. With sticks from a tree, he made a model like a ladder so that the pupils might in the future teach people without visual disabilities. He named this construction a "musical ladder," and advised his pupils to use this model when they taught people without visual disabilities (Royal Commission, 1889).

However, an even more original part of Campbell's method was the introduction of physical training. For instance, he took his pupils outdoors at 5:00 in the morning, and skated together with them in the midwinter, because he thought that these activities would develop the excellent energy, courage, and decision-making power indispensable for success as a musician.

Howe had long worried that the people with visual disabilities living in the Perkins Institution lacked vitality and activity compared with people without visual disabilities living in the community, so he thought that the promotion of a healthy body and strong willpower was important for his pupils. In that context, he believed that music education was especially bad for the pupils' health because they had to keep sitting in front of the piano. Therefore, he agreed with Campbell's addition of physical training to his method. Because Howe thought that physical training gave people with visual disabilities not only health but also intelligence, decision-making power, and endurance, Campbell's point exactly agreed with Howe's educational policy in this respect, too²⁾.

Results of Campbell's Reform and Conflicts with Howe

What result did Campbell's music educational reform bring? According to Campbell, the twenty excellent pupils with intellectual ability whom he had selected, except for one woman, succeeded considerably as musicians (Royal Commission, 1889). Several of them sent letters to their "alma mater" that reported on their activities as musicians. Howe was pleased with the graduates' activity and praised Campbell for their success (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1864).

However, Howe had not actually approved all of Campbell's educational methods. Campbell's fourth reform, to which he had especially attached importance,

Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution for the Blind

came to encounter Howe's rejection. That fourth reform was support for the pupils starting to work.

This confrontation between Howe and Campbell came to light when a pupil named Reeves (Thomas S. Reeves) was graduated in 1863. Because Reeves was an especially excellent pupil among the original twenty pupils, Campbell regarded him as his best pupil. However, according to Campbell's conviction, it was insufficient only to give a good enough education that people with visual disabilities might become independent as musicians. He felt that if a teacher only encouraged his pupils and did nothing more, it was nine chances to one that the pupils would fail (Royal Commission, 1889). Therefore, Campbell stressed to Howe that the institution had an obligation to secure work for the pupils when they were graduated. He proposed to hold a large-scale concert for Reeves, by using his social influence and power, plus money from Howe and other persons related to the Perkins Institution, and to announce to the audience Reeves' ability at performance and teaching³⁾.

However, Howe rejected this request. Campbell, who thus had to abandon getting any help from Howe, acquired cooperation from others on his own, went to Bangor, Maine, with Reeves, and held the concert there with sponsorship from the mayor. The concert was held in the largest hall in Bangor, which had about 1,500 seats. Table 2 describes the event and summarizes Reeves' life situation after graduating. Reeves became an affluent piano teacher, earning \$1,200 in his first year as a result of the success of the concert (see Table 2).

Howe did not explain his reason for rejecting Campbell's idea. However, it is notable that after founding the Perkins Institution, Howe had made a consistent effort to exclude a charity element. He assumed that any performance by the residents would only be a pitiful show or parade of people with visual disabilities, and he rejected even opening classes and concerts to the public. He might have thought that Campbell's plan was too far from the essence of education, representing only begging with an expectation of charity from the audience (Nakamura, 1987).

However, Campbell's idea was different. He recognized that an opportunity to show an audience the students' technique and knowledge of music was necessary in order for the students to secure work as music teachers. Therefore, he revived the concerts that had been canceled since the beginning of the 1840's, seeing them as a chance to show the students' performance technique to the public (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1866).

Campbell secured appropriate work for students other than Reeves, as well. He found jobs in large cities for excellent pupils from whom he expected big success, and ones in small towns for pupils who did not have so much ability. The pupils' independence was secured by methods similar to Reeves' case. Patton (Otis Patten), who was the superintendent of the Arkansas Institution for the Blind and himself a person with visual disabilities, praised Campbell highly, saying, at the second convention of American Instructors of the Blind held in 1871, that "in any place where we put forth the same effort that Mr. Campbell did, we can secure situations for our pupils that will be remunerative" (American Instructors of the Blind, 1871).

N. Oka

TABLE 2 The Bangor Concert and Reeves' Life Afterwards

Reeves' Bangor concert	Reeves' life after graduation
Tickets were sold to all the important people in Bangor.	After he was graduate, Reeves at once became a piano teacher in Bangor. He started with about 12 pupils whom Campbell and Reeves' friends had secured.
Tickets were sold to all 16 music teachers who lived in Bangor.	His pupils were only from the upper classes. There were piano teachers among his pupils, too.
Piano and organ performance by Reeves. Campbell explained the original content of music training at the Perkins Institution. He emphasized that people with visual disabilities were fit to be teachers of people without visual disabilities.	The number of his pupils in 1863 was 16 on the average, and the total number of lessons per week was 20, increasing to 25 later. It was impossible for him to do more than that, and he had to refuse new pupils.
Campbell recruited pupils for Reeves at the concert. He proposed that Reeves teach for no-charge for the first three months as a trial. If a student was satisfied, then Reeves should be paid as much as the most well paid music teacher in Bangor.	Students paid \$16 for three months of lessons. At that time, this was the highest amount paid to any piano teacher in Bangor. His total earnings during his first year of teaching were \$1,200.

Source: Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, *33rd Annual Report of the Trustees* (1864). Royal Commission on the Condition of the Blind, Deaf and Dumb &c of the United Kingdom (1889).

Bringing Up a Successor

Campbell retired from the Perkins Institution in 1869. In the annual report of that year, Howe wrote that Campbell was well informed about the students' desires and abilities because he himself was blind (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, 1869). This suggests that the cause of the confrontation between the two men may have been the difference of the standpoint of Howe, who had no visual disabilities, and Campbell, who had experienced difficulties as a musician with visual disabilities.

Campbell achieved the restructuring of music education in the Perkins Institution. According to Patton (*American Instructors of the Blind*, 1871), twenty-four pupils from Perkins became independent musicians as a result of Campbell's educational methods. However, the most important and distinguished service that Camp-

Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution for the Blind

bell did for the Perkins Institution was to have made the teaching method that he had designed succeed for the next generation. In other words, he trained Reeves, his former pupil, as his successor. Campbell called Reeves, who was at that time a successful music teacher in Bangor, back to the institution in 1868, and had him work as his assistant. Campbell had already decided to move to Europe for reasons of his health. He wanted to have the education method that he had designed established more certainly at this institution, and so tried to achieve a smooth succession in the work by hiring Reeves the year prior to his retirement.

Reeves became a music teacher at the Perkins Institution at the same time as Campbell retired, and served for more than 20 years, until the beginning of 1890's⁴⁾. Music education at the Perkins Institution in the latter half of the 19th century established a stable system of education led by Campbell and Reeves, music teachers with visual disabilities.

Conclusions

The present paper examined the educational practice of Campbell for the improvement of music education in an American institution for people with visual disabilities in the middle of the 19th century, and clarified factors necessary for the development of education in the institution and for the independence of people with visual disabilities.

In America, the difficulty of finding employment for pupils from residential institutions for people with visual disabilities had already become aggravated from the 1840's to the 1850's. This problem consequentially clarified defects in the content and method of education in the institutions. Mere superficial teaching concerning performance, without accompanying academic understanding of the music, and use of musical instruments that had become superannuated were also additional causes of the stagnation of music education.

Therefore, a superior music teacher was necessary in order for the institutions for people with visual disabilities to solve this problem. In other words, the abilities required for a music teacher at this time were cognition and a clear analytic power for solving the problem. The existence of Campbell who achieved a rebuilding of the music education program at the Perkins Institution in about ten years suggests that the most important condition for supporting development of music education was a teacher's excellent discernment.

The educational result that Campbell achieved also gives important suggestions for education at schools for pupils with visual disabilities today. What is the specialty in teaching that schools for pupils with visual disabilities should maintain? How can we succeed in passing on the specialty to the next generation? Educational reform in the Perkins Institution in the 19th century presents us with an old, but also a new approach to those problems.

N. Oka

Notes

- 1) According to Nakamura (1987), Howe's consistent opinion was that a musical talent did not increase if a person became blind. But, actually in the early years, he had been convinced that people with visual disabilities had more excellent musical talent than people without visual disabilities. His conviction about this changed for the first time in the 1850's.
- 2) Campbell supported Howe's theory that people with visual disabilities lacked energy compared to people without visual disabilities (Royal Commission, 1889).
- 3) Campbell's initial plan was to hold the concert with sponsorship by Howe or the Perkins Institution (Royal Commission, 1889).
- 4) Though exact details are uncertain because reports from the period no longer exist, Reeves apparently retired from the Perkins Institution between 1892 and 1896 (Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, 1892; 1897).

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Educational Reform in the Perkins Institution for the Blind

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