

Singapore International Schools: Best practice in culturally diverse music education

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This paper explores the preliminary outcomes of research into the place and role of cultural diversity in primary music classes at five International Schools in Singapore. It highlights the ways in which school philosophy, policy, curriculum and in-service training influence teacher practice. The research provides insights into the challenges teachers face when diversifying their music programmes in addition to the areas of support that allow a programme based on cultural diversity to flourish and remain successful. The results of interviews with music specialists at these schools suggest that music programmes at International Schools in Singapore provide examples of best practice in culturally diverse music education. The success of these programmes is due to several identifiable factors such as strong philosophical and curricula foundations, quality in-service training and the regular involvement of culture bearers and visiting artists.

Introduction

Over the past 25 years, music policy makers, theorists and practitioners have begun responding to changes in contemporary populations and musical taste. These cultural and demographic shifts have led to certain music programmes being adapted to better reflect the increased diversity of student bodies. These changes have been triggered in part by the rise in popularity of world musics, increased travel to other continents, developments in the media and more ethnically varied school populations (Walker, 2000; Schippers & Cain, 2010).

While the inclusion of music from a variety of cultures in the North American school curriculum was initially addressed by the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967, it was not until the mid 1980s that interest in multicultural music programmes (particularly in Western countries) began to gain strength (Sweeney, 1991; Campbell, 1992). In Canada, Britain and Australia, multiculturalism became official social policy, heavily influencing political, cultural, economic and educational arenas. Music teacher conferences began to increasingly feature world music ensembles (Campbell, 1992) and music textbook series followed suit with the inclusion of songs from a wider range of musical cultures (Campbell, 1992). In turn, some educators began to broaden their philosophical positions by providing a pluralistic range of approaches through which culturally diverse views of music could be acknowledged (Dunbar-Hall, 2000).

Examples of the perceived positive outcomes of a global focus in music education include increased cultural awareness and understanding (Loza, 1996; Volk, 1998a) as well

as advancement in students' musical enjoyment, self-growth and creativity (Campbell, 1994b; Elliot, 1998). Such assumptions have been examined by several studies which have identified the positive effects of culturally diverse music education on race relations and on strengthening the general aims of classroom music education (Edwards, 1996; Skyllstad, 1998; Marsh, 2000; Westerlund, 2002). The importance of developing culturally sensitive music programmes for younger students in order to broaden their cultural awareness can be deemed essential (Kwami, 2002) as 'the primary school years have been shown to be significant in the development of lifelong attitudes to music' (Temmerman, 1997).

Definitions

The terminology and philosophical paradigms employed in relation to the cultural and demographic shifts mentioned have evolved significantly. There are two frameworks which are particularly useful in understanding these developments.

In Fig. 1, Schippers (2010, p. 31) has constructed a continuum outlining some of the possible approaches to culturally diverse music education.

At one end of his continuum lies a *monocultural* standpoint in which music is viewed from a 'single frame of reference' (Schippers, 2010, p. 31) such as from the perspective of the European classical paradigm. In many Western countries, as well as countries with a colonial history, music programmes have tended to focus (in some case exclusively) on Western music concepts and skills. Yet today, as societies deal with rapid cultural change, educators and policy makers are realising the restrictions of such an approach, and that music education based solely on Western classical music 'is increasingly less defensible, relevant and effective' (Schippers, 2010, p. 60).

Further along the continuum lies *multiculturalism*, a somewhat more inclusive approach which has gained increasing recognition in music education over the past 20 years. Dunbar-Hall defines the multicultural ethos as a philosophical stance which 'avows the equality of all cultures' (2005, p. 34). Schippers describes such an approach as involving the exploration of a variety of musical cultures as separate entities or when 'different musics lead completely separate lives' (2010, p. 42). While multiculturalism is still a philosophy of choice for many music educators, its lack of recognition of how musics communicate, as well as its emphasis on musical and cultural difference (amongst other reasons) has revealed its limitations and the need for an approach which reflects the reality of cultural integration in today's classrooms (Boyer-White, 1998).

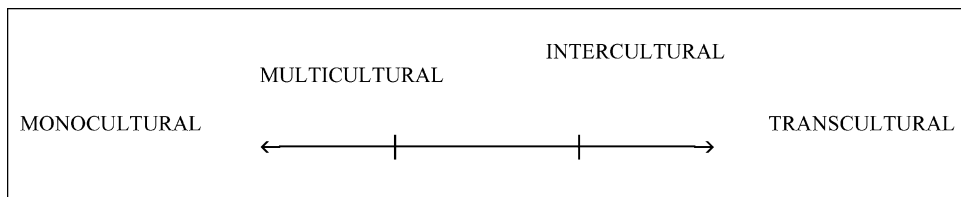


Fig. 1 Approaches to cultural diversity

Further along Schipper's continuum lies an *intercultural* perspective which is described as being concerned with the 'loose contact and exchange between cultures' (Schippers & Cain, 2010, p. 42). While proponents of multiculturalism tend to view musical cultures as separate and somewhat static entities, those employing an intercultural approach prefer to emphasise the communication and dynamism of these constantly evolving musics (Määttänen & Westerlund, 2001). This approach places emphasis on the musical processes involved in music making and not just on musical products (Boyce-Tillman, 1997). Interculturalism is therefore considered a more relevant approach to modern global music education by most modern theorists and practitioners (Kwami, 1996; Määttänen & Westerlund, 2001), as it encourages teachers to be open to synthesising elements of diverse musics with one's own. Through an intercultural perspective, educators are also encouraged to 'develop an understanding of the particular performance and transmission processes associated with each discrete style or musical tradition' (O'Flynn, 2005, p. 199), which are often overlooked when comparing diverse musics to a dominant framework such as Western music.

At the other end of Schipper's continuum lies a *transcultural* approach, which may indeed represent the ideal to which music educators should aspire. Schippers & Cain define this as 'an in-depth exchange of approaches and ideas' (2010, p. 42) or a process of hybridism. This outlook is particularly relevant in contemporary societies where particular musics have taken on characteristics of more than one culture to become specific genres in their own right (Schippers & Cain, 2010, p. 130). Comparisons can be made between the hybridisation of musics with the development of new composite languages, including Pidgins and Creoles.

Another valuable framework to consider (particularly when dealing with issues of depth and breadth) is Mantle Hood's concept of *Bi-musicality* (1960). Hood uses this term to describe those who have 'an understanding of, and are also proficient in, the technical requirements and stylistic nuances of two distinct musical systems' (O'Flynn, 2005, p. 198). In his important article, 'The Challenge of Bi-musicality', Hood describes the musicians of the Japanese Imperial Household as a true example of being bi-musical, as they have been trained since childhood in both Japanese Gagaku and Western classical music.

Swanwick proposes that music education's unique aim is to 'critically explore a number of musical procedures experienced directly through the reality of various intercultural encounters' (Swanwick, 1994, p. 223). Jorgensen (2003) concedes that at best, music teachers may become musically bilingual or possibly trilingual for it takes a substantial amount of time for a musician to develop proficiency in one musical culture, let alone develop skills and knowledge as a musician in multiple traditions. To aim for bi-musicality, however, is to enable music students to gain a deeper knowledge of two distinct musical systems in addition to encouraging music educators to deal with intercultural issues, such as honouring culturally accurate performance and transmission processes as well as allowing communication between these musics.

Philosophy, policy, teacher training and practice

The difficulties that teachers encounter in order to present culturally diverse music programmes in an 'accurate, culturally sensitive and non-tokenistic manner' (Marsh, 2000,

p. 58) have been well documented in the past 20 years. These include common themes such as resources, funding, administrative support, issues of breadth versus depth, questions of authenticity and tradition in addition to the difficulty in choosing to employ one of a number of diverse pedagogical approaches (Campbell, 1994a; Cain, 2005; Schippers & Cain, 2010).

Whichever approach a music educator chooses, be it monocultural, multicultural, intercultural or bi-musical, one's direction is firmly rooted in one's personal philosophy of music education. Even if educators have not consciously devised a personal set of beliefs about music education, their thoughts and actions in relation to how and what they teach have been strongly influenced by the tradition, values and perspectives of their own culture and their perceived place in society (Jorgensen, 2006).

Cultural values are also transmitted in tertiary music education programmes both overtly and through the hidden curriculum (Norman, 1999). While rhetoric for the inclusion of culturally diverse programmes at the university level is strong, and many music teachers and teacher educators claim to be in agreement with developing and implementing such programmes, Volk observes that most trainee teachers do not display a sound philosophical foundation for ethnically diverse music education (Volk, 1998b). Drummond (2005) agrees that it is still quite common to find schools and tertiary institutions 'providing education only in Western classical music or allowing multicultural elements but privileging the European tradition' (p. 1). Lundquist too has stated her concern that a 'lack of adequate teacher education for cultural diversity or uneven incorporation of multicultural concerns in in-service teacher education exists globally' (Lundquist, 2002, p. 636). This results in pre-service teachers being deprived of obtaining a comprehensive training which includes the skills and knowledge to devise their own culturally diverse school music programmes (Teicher, 1997; Lundquist, 2002; Drummond, 2005).

Rose (1995) observes that music teachers often 'mirror in their practice traditions and methods which they learned or acquired in their own formal music education' (p. 46). If music educators have received little exposure to diverse musics in their school experience and their tertiary training, it is highly likely that they will continue to transmit these cultural preferences to the students they teach. Dunbar Hall believes this factor to be of high importance: 'the teachers we train can influence not only the way music is taught but even more importantly the ways in which it is perceived' (1992, p. 192).

Even if beliefs about music education are well-established when a new teacher begins teaching, several factors can strongly influence the ways in which music education programmes are developed. These factors can serve either to support or widen a teacher's personal beliefs. One important influence is a school's core beliefs about the value and place of cultural diversity in general and in the musical education of its students. These beliefs may be affirmed in writing as part of its mission statement and music curriculum documents, or reflected in matters such as staffing and funding. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) is an example of a programme which focuses on the ethnic diversity in today's classrooms. It was developed by an independent movement of school teachers and administrators in International Schools whose purpose was to 'produce a common international curriculum through which to develop international-mindedness' (IB website). Students at IB PYP schools are expected to display attitudes of tolerance, respect and empathy and to achieve a wide outlook.

Another important factor in the types of programmes offered is the amount, quality and variety of in-service training a teacher receives. Schools may place priority on the training of staff in culturally diverse musics and may provide instruments and resources to enable teachers to translate this training into practical activities. In addition, schools may invite culture bearers from the local community or further afield to perform for students and share their cultural and practical knowledge.

Methodology

This paper presents findings from the first part of a PhD thesis which addresses the relevance of cultural diversity in music programmes at primary schools in Singapore and Brisbane, Australia. In this project, teachers from a selection of International Schools and government schools in Singapore were interviewed in addition to teachers from private and state schools in Brisbane. Educators from the universities that train music teachers in these cities also provided valuable input.

For the Singapore component of the research presented in this article, a semi-structured interviewing process was used. Interviews were conducted at the workplaces of the participants either following observations of class activities or at a more convenient time and were approximately 1.5–2 hours in length. Transcripts of recorded interviews were analysed and summarised manually with trends and common themes colour coded.

The interview consisted of four sections: practice, teacher training, policy and philosophy. The interview questions were based around the following themes:

1. What is the general format for music lessons; who teaches music to whom, and under what conditions?
2. What is the role of culturally diverse musics and what resources and school support exist to develop and maintain a diverse programme?
3. What influence do curriculum documents and school policy have on the types of musics taught?
4. What impact do teachers' individual philosophies have on the types of musics taught?
5. What role does pre-service training have on teachers' willingness and ability to address culturally diverse music forms?
6. What impact does periodic in-service training (or the lack of) have on the development and maintenance of a diverse programme?

Description of sample

Ten music specialists from five International Schools were interviewed. These schools base their curricula on North American, Australian and British education models, with three of the schools offering the IB PYP programme. The sample schools are large with student populations of between 2,400 and 3,900 students and all are in high-density urban areas of Singapore.

All teachers interviewed are expatriates from the USA, Australia, Britain and Canada, and all are Caucasian. All but one have experience teaching in other International schools in the Middle East, Asia, North Africa and South America, with many bringing music

resources from these countries to their respective posts. The teachers range in age from 23 to 60 years of age and have lived in Singapore for between two to 20 years. All teachers have completed an undergraduate degree in Music or Music Education and six have completed a Masters Degree or higher in Music Education.

International Schools by nature cater to a culturally diverse clientele and four of the schools in this project teach students from over 50 different nationalities. Four schools in this study are not-for-profit schools at which the fees are used to hire experienced professionals as well as provide high-quality facilities and resources and teacher training opportunities. Music teachers participate in conferences and workshops with other International Schools in the South East Asian region and professional development funding is provided by the schools for this training.

This study is not an exhaustive evaluation of primary music programmes at International Schools in Singapore as the selection of schools is limited and does not include the smaller and newer for-profit schools which do not enjoy the same level of funding, resources and facilities as the more established schools in this project.

There were few difficulties obtaining interviews with teachers. All were very helpful and understanding of the nature of the project. The research aims were made clear to respondents before they were interviewed and informed consent was obtained from each participant. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of participants and to ensure that the identification of respondents is not possible in the presentation of data.

Singapore: a home to diverse cultures

Singapore, a densely populated, island city-state, lies at the end of the Malay Peninsula in South East Asia. It is home to approximately 5 million people with about 1.3 million being non-citizens who reside in Singapore for employment purposes (Statistics Singapore website). The three main cultural groups in Singapore are the Chinese (75%), the Malays (14%) and the Indians (8%). A small percentage of people from other ethnicities and nationalities also live in Singapore. This category of residents, known locally as the 'others' is growing every year to include significant numbers of Caucasians, Thais, Filipinos, Koreans and those from mainland China. As a general rule, children who are Singapore citizens attend government schools and study the Singapore curriculum while children of other nationalities attend non-government schools (often referred to as International Schools) which teach the curricula of their home countries.

Music education in Singapore government schools has traditionally centred on the learning of Western musical concepts and performance on Western instruments. Since the introduction of formal tertiary music education programmes in 1993, trained music teachers have been employed in government schools; however it was not until the late 1990s that a more diverse range of musics was included in teacher training courses. Currently, tertiary students who complete music education qualifications participate in a variety of Asian music ensembles and are required to complete at least one Ethnomusicology or World Music course.

At present, a strong foundation supports the inclusion of diverse musics in primary music lessons in Singapore government schools. Exposure to world musics is stipulated by the Ministry of Education in the primary music curriculum and a new primary music text book written by Singaporean music educators has been introduced. The authors have

shifted the emphasis from Western musical concepts to local and Asian music cultures. Practical experience in these musics usually occurs as part of the Co-Curricular Activities programme conducted after school hours.

Despite support for culturally diverse music education in government policy, school curricula and in teacher training programmes, successful practice usually only occurs if music specialists are in charge of developing the programme and if they receive funding and support from their principals. As most specialists are employed by secondary schools or Junior Colleges there currently exists a significant shortage of expertise in primary schools. Thus, there is much less chance of students receiving a comprehensive music education.

International Schools

As mentioned, culturally diverse student and teacher populations are common in the larger and more established International Schools in Singapore which form the basis of this research. One might suggest then, that culturally diverse musics ought to play a role in the music curricula of such schools. In addition, it might be argued that musics of the host country be included, especially as students are able to experience them first hand in the community and in their cultural context. Another expectation might be that it is the role of such schools to teach the curriculum of the school's home country, in order to preserve the cultural identity of the school as an extension of that country.

In agreement with research identifying the benefits of culturally diverse music education, and with consideration for modern demographic shifts, I argue that all primary school students be given the opportunity to be exposed practically to the musical processes of a number of musical cultures. Students should be encouraged to develop an understanding of how such musics evolve when in different contexts and how interchange between musics might take place. Noting that life-long attitudes to music are formed in the younger years and that preferences for musics are heavily influenced by societal values and cultural influences, I argue that music educators should provide primary school students with ways of appreciating and being involved in musics of their own cultures, as well as cultures in their local community and those from further afield.

Given the unique set of circumstances at the larger International Schools in Singapore, this research seeks to realise what possibilities exist for students at these schools to experience a variety of musics interculturally, and what factors impact the delivery of culturally inclusive programmes. In addition, this research aims to identify examples of best practice; or practice which can be considered exemplary across a number of key indicators.

Results of data collection

The interview data revealed that the teaching experiences of the participants in this study contain many similarities. Several important themes were identified.

Cultural diversity as a challenge

One of the most significant themes noted was in response to the question '*How feasible is it to implement cultural diversity considering the constraints of everyday life in the*

classroom? Nearly all participants indicated that cultural diversity was a prominent feature of their work, and that teaching a variety of musics was not difficult, but was indeed achievable to the point of being inevitable.

'It's just part of what we do. Whether you want to do it or not, it just happens' (Linda). 'The ethos of our school is that students will be taught to think globally in all of their subjects' (Margaret). 'It's not difficult. Our clientele is truly international. It would be a mistake not to respect their heritage' (Leisel). 'It is part of our mission statement/philosophy. We decide the details but the environment is very much supportive of cultural diversity' (Heidi). 'I think it would be next to impossible not to. It's part of the school's ethos, the school's fabric and the expectations of the clients' (Marcella).

It is interesting to note that these strikingly positive comments are supported by the guiding philosophies of the schools involved.

'Students are required to: demonstrate an understanding, respect, and appreciation for cultural differences and to act and respond in a responsible and supportive manner to local, regional, and global needs and issues' (school A). 'We achieve world-class academic results while developing well-rounded, internationally minded and culturally sensitive young people' (school B). '[name of school] provides a rich international experience for its families. A multinational student mix means no majority culture or nationality dominates the school' (school E).

These data strongly suggest that the guiding philosophies and the prevailing ethos of these International Schools impacts what takes place in the music classroom. It is evident that being part of an institution where diversity is acknowledged and valued influences teacher practice similarly.

Resources and support

In response to the questions '*What resources do you have to support teaching a variety of musics?*' and '*What support do you receive from your principal, other teachers and parents to teach a variety of musics?*' all participants indicated that they received plentiful resources and strong support.

'Oh I think lots of support! We have a variety of different instruments from around the world, as well as recordings and books, films, DVDs, CDs, and many other resources' (Linda). 'They give us money to do it, they give us the physical resources; we have parents who are excited to be a part of it' (Jennifer). 'Gamelan, steel pans, angklung, djembes, tabla, ukuleles, Sumatran drums' (Carolina). 'Money . . . time off classes for training' (Heidi).

One of the most frequently cited reasons for teachers not implementing culturally diverse music programmes is the lack of funding and associated support. Teachers at these International Schools indicate that they have more than adequate resources from a number of musical cultures as well as support from administration and parents.

Types of music taught

Responses to the questions '*Does any one type of music or region of the world receive more attention in your classroom?*' and '*Does the ethnic composition of your classes influence the musics you teach?*' revealed many similarities in the types of musics taught at these schools.

'I would say probably Western music in general, the second one would probably be Asian music just because of the region we're in, and African music takes a pretty big hit as well' (Linda). 'Probably Western music, but also South East Asian due to our locality' (Carolina). 'World music as a whole is important but mainstream European is still very much the focus' (Heidi). 'I would say Western music followed by South East Asian musics and African musics. We try to explore several different musics each year and that means lots of research and training' (Marcella).

It is evident from conversations with the participants that Western musical genres were the most frequently taught, followed by Asian musics and African musics. Students are therefore exposed to musics of their home countries, those of their local community and some from further afield.

Means of gaining knowledge and skills

Results of the interviews showed that music teachers in International Schools use a variety of means of gaining knowledge about different musics in order to teach them to their students. In response to the question '*How do you go about (or might you go about) obtaining the necessary information, training and resources in order to teach a variety of musics?*' it was observed that the teachers seek information and skills in many different ways.

'We hire people to come to us and we look on the internet for resources' (Jennifer). 'I spend a lot of time watching traditional musicians that are often performing around our city. I also utilise the expertise of school members as I discover their musical abilities' (Margaret). 'I look to conferences' (Carolina). 'I ask or observe colleagues, turn to other teachers or parents who may have the knowledge. We are lucky that Singapore is a kind of stopping off point for a lot of musicians on tour and we make use of this' (Marcella).

Teachers in these schools make a point of searching for available resources on the music they teach. This includes sourcing local musicians and culture bearers so that they can experience the music making first hand. While this certainly takes effort and time on the part of the music teacher, sourcing musicians at school and in the community appears to be a beneficial means of acquiring new information and skills.

Authenticity

In response to the question '*How important are issues of authenticity to you? Do you feel comfortable about making an attempt to approximate musics even though you may not have the original instruments to use or lack specific practical knowledge?*' participants indicated that while a degree of accuracy was expected when exploring diverse musics, matters of authenticity were not a major concern. Only one teacher regularly thought deeply on this issue and wrestled with issues of authenticity.

'I would rather have the child experience the musical style than to not deliver that information because I didn't have the 'right' instruments to make it happen' (Margaret). 'Exposure to world music is our aim. We don't present ourselves as experts' (Heidi). 'If I have what I feel is a decent grasp on a music I will attempt it with my students. This would mean that if a musician from that culture was watching me teach they would feel I was making a good attempt and wasn't doing the music an injustice' (Marcella). 'I'm actually

really torn about that. I've done both (loose and close approximations), but if part of what you're sharing will be offensive or if you're ignoring the resources of the area that you are in, then I think that that's a mistake' (Linda).

This data indicates that while teachers are aware of certain cultural expectations in transmission and performance they are also aware that musics change and evolve when practiced in different contexts. Being realistic about time constraints, the age of the students they teach and their own skills and knowledge, most teachers felt comfortable to approximate musics while maintaining a degree of accuracy.

Teacher training

While some teachers did experience education in cultural diversity as part of their teacher training, in response to the question '*Do you think your pre-service education adequately prepared you for life in the music classroom?*' all agreed that their training was inadequate for their current positions.

'No. It's been the people I've met, the resources I've had, the people I've worked with that has made the difference' (Linda). 'I learned absolutely nothing that helped me as I began to teach. I learned from my mistakes. Cultural diversity was not addressed at all' (Margaret). 'Absolutely not. I did some study (of diverse musics) as I went to [a university in England] but it was the strength of the lecturer at that time' (Carolina). 'My teacher training was not adequate. . . I did study gamelan and African music with regard to teaching. Now there's much more emphasis on world music.' (Heidi). 'Not at all. My teacher training was a thin base from which to work. I only discovered that there was more to 'music' when I came to this school' (Marcella).

While all teachers agreed that their pre-service training did very little to assist them with developing and maintaining a programme based on diversity, they have all made use of the resources and support provided by the school in order to acquire enough knowledge and skills to present a variety of musical cultures in their lessons.

Personal thoughts on cultural diversity in music lessons

From the results of formal interview sessions and informal conversation, it became evident that the participants had definite views on why they teach the way they do. None had ever formally articulated their personal philosophy of music education until their interview. In response to the questions '*Do you have a personal philosophy or set of principles on which you base your teaching?*' and '*What is your opinion of the role of cultural diversity in the music education of primary students?*' the participants indicated their personal thoughts on cultural diversity in music lessons:

'Teaching cultural harmony and diversity through music. I think in our international situation we actually have a responsibility because we have kids from all different places' (Linda). 'Our students need to understand that musics are always changing and that they can participate in that change. Cultural diversity is very important; it's a necessary part of all music classes' (Jennifer). 'Cultural diversity is an amazing tool for the fulfilment of many music curricula goals but more importantly, it includes a million life lessons on how to become a respectful person in a world of global differences' (Margaret). 'It's very important for racial harmony and a general understanding of others' cultures' (Carolina).

It was evident that the teachers at these schools believed there to be a variety of social and musical benefits from a programme which includes different musics. Several mentioned that the diverse natures of the school in which they teach was reason enough to diversify their teaching.

'Going International'

The formal interview did not include a question on how working overseas had impacted the participants' teaching styles, but in recorded informal conversation some teachers indicated that this was an important piece of the cultural diversity puzzle:

'If I hadn't ever left the US, fundamentally I would probably teach the same. But the choices of curriculum and styles of music are definitely different because those resources have opened up (to me) and I actually notice that that impacts my teaching' (Linda). 'I didn't have a clue about Indonesian or Chinese music until I came to Singapore' (Margaret). 'As far as diversifying my teaching, I have become so much more aware of South East Asian musics since coming to Singapore and I doubt I would have taught these musics had I stayed in [country of origin]. I am a very different teacher for having worked internationally' (Marcella).

While music students in the home countries of these teachers also come from a wide variety of ethnicities and cultures, teachers indicated that it was the experience of going overseas which led to them learning about diverse musics and which directly impacted their teaching practice. In informal conversations, teachers also indicated that if and when they returned to their home countries to teach they would take with them the desire to continue exploring a variety of musical cultures and would share the knowledge and skills obtained while working overseas.

Placing programmes on the continuum

When asked to place their music programmes on Schippers' Cultural Diversity Continuum, participants indicated the following:

'I am somewhere around multicultural, although I know that sometimes I rely on my greatest knowledge base, which is Western music' (Margaret). 'Somewhere between multicultural and intercultural' (Carolina). 'Multicultural. We have a huge mix of nationalities and try to be as culturally diverse as possible' (Heidi). 'Closer to intercultural, because I think we successfully incorporate cultural diversity, but don't think we do any injustices to the cultures we study' (Marcella).

The data suggest that a multicultural outlook is most common. In informal conversation several teachers indicated that they are working toward acknowledging the dynamic exchange and even fusion between some musics but that interculturalism was a somewhat elusive goal.

Discussion

Comments in both formal interviews and informal conversation provided evidence that primary students in the participant schools are exposed to a variety of musical cultures in

their music lessons. This exposure is closely tied to the overall ethos of International Schools as being places which cater for and value the diversity of their clientele. Participants in the study indicated that when the celebration of diversity is a prominent feature of school life and part of school policy, diversity in the music classroom becomes a natural consequence.

Participants indicated that one of the main reasons for them being able to follow through on expectations of diversity was the strong support they received from their principals, parents and students. All participants were satisfied with the amount of funding they received and felt that they were well supported in terms of in-service training and being able to bring guest artists and culture bearers into their schools. Opportunities to take students on field trips was one area that participants felt they should expand upon but that tight teaching schedules may make this difficult. In casual conversation, several participants shared with me that while they received more than adequate funding to purchase instruments and received initial training in their use, there was a tendency for some types of ethnic instruments to 'sit pretty' and not be fully utilised. Regular in-service training was deemed very important to allow teachers to improve their skills and to move on from teaching these musics at a basic level.

It was evident that participants in this study actively sought out a variety of ways of gaining and improving their knowledge and skills. While teachers did give some thought to issues of authenticity, most did not dwell on the implications of this term and felt that they were already teaching in a culturally sensitive manner appropriate to a school setting which was outside the original culture of the musics concerned. While some teachers experienced culturally diverse musics in their training, all agreed that their training was inadequate for their current positions and that it had been their experiences in different settings which had contributed to them being successful and knowledgeable teachers.

While most participants had personal thoughts on the place of cultural diversity in primary music education, none had articulated this formally. Cultural harmony, respect, understanding and exposure were the main reasons for including diverse musics in their classes. Participants stated that moving internationally and teaching in an environment supportive of a global outlook had a significant impact on their ability to learn about unfamiliar musics both theoretically and practically. When presented with Schippers' continuum (see Fig. 1), participant teachers described their programmes as between multicultural or intercultural in nature. With the exception of some fusion activities taking place at one of the schools, I would argue that although the underlying ethos of the schools was transcultural, the activities in these programmes were predominately multicultural, as musics were taught as separate entities and with very little communication or exchange.

Conclusions

Current philosophical rhetoric is strong in its recommendation for policy creators, curriculum writers, teacher trainers and practitioners to acknowledge that limited (and perhaps culturally discriminative) approaches to music education be replaced by more inclusive and pluralistic methods. Research highlights how educators have the power to influence the ways in which musics are perceived by students. Limiting the number of musics primary children are exposed to and teaching them solely in reference to a dominant

musical framework, transmits cultural bias and restricts students from experiencing a more balanced representative of musics in their community.

This research indicates that there are several important factors which allow teachers to gain the knowledge, skills and support to be confident in developing culturally diverse programmes of music education. Firstly, it is preferable that trainee teachers at the tertiary level be exposed to contemporary music education philosophies and current research advocating pluralism in the music programme. In affirming this rhetoric, universities should work to inculcate an intercultural mindset and focus practically on the communication and dynamism of two or more dissimilar musical systems. Providing teachers with the resources, practical skills and advice on the teaching of such musical systems, gives new teachers the confidence to follow through with their desire to provide inclusive programmes.

Schools should acknowledge and validate a wider variety of musical cultures in curriculum documents and work to establish relationships with culture bearers in the local region so as to encourage visits by musicians for performances and in-service workshops. Providing assistance in terms of resources, funding and practical support for performances can help to increase the visibility and value of diverse musics in the eyes of the school community. Finally, teachers themselves can make a commitment to realising a culturally diverse music programme by using current research and examples of successful practice to advocate for changes in curricula, and to initiate dialogue on what musics are most relevant for their students. Teachers should make special effort to seek ways of gaining ongoing practical training and spend time sharing their knowledge, skills and passion with colleagues.

Results from interviews with primary music teachers in a selection of International Schools in Singapore reveal that cultural diversity is a fundamental and organic aspect of music classes, and that International Schools provide a unique perspective on the place and role of cultural diversity in music education. The many factors that contribute to the examples of best practice observed in this study are the consequence of a set of circumstances and underlying values particular to this setting. In removing the obstacles that most other schools experience, the music teachers in these International Schools are able to develop a significant and observable commitment to cultural diversity.

Music programmes at the International Schools offer a remarkable example of what occurs when policy, philosophy, professional development and practice are aligned to contribute to highly relevant and successful experiences for students. While the ideal circumstances experienced by the teachers in this study may not be achievable for all, examining the impact of the fundamental factors in the success of such programmes can provide other music teachers with examples of best practice on which to base their programmes.

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