A Survey on Chinese Music Teachers' Attitudes towards World Music Teaching

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Abstract

This study used a questionnaire as a research instrument to investigate the attitudes of 1 368 Chinese primary and secondary school music teachers towards world music teaching. The questionnaire includes single- and multiple-choice questions. It was used to examine the music teachers' definitions of ethnomusicology and world music, their understanding of the major rationales for world music teaching, the world view of music, and the purpose of world music education, teaching approaches, and effective teaching activities as they perceived, and the challenges faced by Chinese music teachers in world music teaching. The results showed that Chinese music teachers did not have a clear and profound understanding of the aspects examined above. Instead, the teachers are more influenced by Western centralist values. They are less affected by ethnomusicology, which interprets human music from a cultural perspective, and multicultural music education. In general, the music teachers lacked confidence in teaching world music.

Keywords: Chinese music education; Chinese music teachers; attitudes; world music; ethnomusicology.

1. Introduction

Although music education has a long history in China, school music education in modern society began in the early 20th century and experienced four stages. In the beginning, Chinese music education studied the Western by following Japan. From the 1920s to the 1930s, it learned from Europe and the United States. In the 1950s, it imitated the Soviet Union (a reproduction of the tradition of Germany and Austria) and in the 1980s, it learned from Europe and the United States again (Zhao et al. 2003; Guan 2013; Ho 2010). The school music curriculum that was deeply influenced by the 'Western-centralism' value had not changed in the 20th century (Zhu 2015).

Ethnomusicology was introduced to China in 1980 (Du 2012). Influenced by Western-centralism, Chinese scholars started to rethink and criticise music creation and music education, researching the musicological theory and the development of Chinese traditional music and so on. They realised the uniqueness of Chinese native music values and the necessity and urgency of its inheritance. Thus, in 1995, a thought of 'our music education should take Chinese culture as the mother tongue' was put forward in the Sixth National Music Education

Seminar and the National Academic Seminar on the Ethnic Music Education was later held in 1999. Through these efforts, scholars have discussed how to bring rich Chinese and colourful ethnic music cultural resources into the school music curriculum (Zhu 2015).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the reform of the Chinese school music curriculum took 'developing the national music' as one of the basic concepts of the course such that 'music education should take Chinese culture as the mother tongue' (Zhu 2015). At the same time, the new curriculum standard outlined 'understanding multi-culture' into the basic concept, adding the contents of world music into the music teaching materials in primary and secondary schools. Thus, music cultures in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania are presented in music textbooks (Zhu 2015).

However, although world music had been added to textbooks, the foundation of contemporary Chinese music education remains 'Eurocentric'. (Li 2007; Wang 2016; Zhang 2012; Zhang 2015; Zhang 2007). Music educators still emphasise music skills rather than cultivating equal and democratic multicultural awareness among students. Just as Elliott (1990) observed in American society, many music educators endorsed teaching music cultures that were either partly or entirely alien to the American musical macroculture. However, they still insisted that such music cultures be taught and experienced in terms of one particular concept of 'music'.

According to Blacking (1987), teachers should not implement world music superficially similar to a mere collection and presentation of folk songs worldwide. The lack of a solid philosophical foundation for multicultural education and world music pedagogy may result in superficial experiences as teachers pay more attention to cultural artefacts and melodies than adopting appropriate attitudes towards people from various cultures. This may also lead to contradictions in teachers' attitudes towards world music education.

Hence, this study aims to explore the attitudes of Chinese music teachers towards world music teaching based on the following research questions:

a) What are the definitions of ethnomusicology and world music perceived by Chinese music teachers?

b) What are the Chinese music teachers' understanding of the major rationales for world music teaching, the world view of music, and the purpose of world music education?

c) What are the teaching approaches, effective teaching activities as they perceived, and challenges faced by Chinese music teachers in world music teaching?

2. Literature review

2.1 Definitions of ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology has various definitions due to its broad scope (Myers 1992) such that defining ethnomusicology is a 'harmless drudge' according to Nettl (2005). With the development of modern ethnomusicology for more than 100 years, its name has also changed with the subject orientation and research focus. Comparative musicology was the name given to the discipline from 1880 to the 1950s, but it was then replaced by ethnomusicology, which

has since been in use until today. Nonetheless, the 'comparative approach' has always been a significant perspective in ethnomusicology (Nettl 2005).

Ethnomusicology was initially characterised as the 'primitive, non-Western, folk, and Oriental musics', which was 'scarcely different from those of comparative musicology' (Myers 1992). This definition was considered by Nettl (2005) 'to define ethnomusicology by the material' (p.4). Although the definition of 'primitive, non-Western, folk, and Oriental' was later dismissed as 'pejorative' (Myers 1992) and had been widely criticised, Nettl (2005) believed that this definition was descriptively correct. He stated that most ethnomusicologists 'carry out research about non-Western, folk, popular, and vernacular music, taking into account both the music itself, as sound, and how it interacts with other things that people do' (p.7).

The study field of ethnomusicology also stresses the importance of oral tradition. 'Ethnomusicology is to a great extent concerned with music transmitted by unwritten tradition' (List 1962). Furthermore, Myers (1992) stated that 'In general, music in oral tradition and living musical systems are the realms that have most appealed to ethnomusicologists' (p.3).

Unlike the definitions from the perspectives of research materials and subjects, Alan Merriam defined ethnomusicology as 'the study of music in culture' in 1960 and modified it to 'the study of music as culture' in 1973 (Myers 1992). However, ethnomusicology had expanded so rapidly that it was no longer possible to draft a single sensible definition of the field because of its interdisciplinary nature and the increasing diversity of methods and theories (Myers 1992). Nonetheless, Nettl (2005) declared that 'For one thing, ethnomusicology is the study of music in culture (p.12)' and considered it a 'credo'. Although this concept had its problems if scrutinised, it was believed to hold up in the end. 'Ethnomusicologists believe that music must be understood as a part of a culture, as a product of human society' (p.12).

2.2 Definitions of world music

World music is hard to define. Although the term has been used in different ways, many authors did not explicitly explain what they meant by world music (Miralis 2006). Wade (2004) confirmed that 'the rubric 'world music' was first coined… by ethnomusicologists in the early 1960s to categorise instruction in traditions other than those of European classical music' (p. 129). Even though world music initially became a convenient term used by the music industry to label traditional musics from around the world, "in time, 'world music' came to include popular music produced around the world" (p. 129).

As an ethnomusicologist and the author of World Music: A Very Short Introduction, Bohlman (2002) stated that 'world music is for me all the musics of the world' (p.28). However, if world music is considered the total sum of musical forms that exist on earth (including Western music), it will become meaningless (Schippers 2010). As defined by Schippers (2010), 'world music is the phenomenon of musical concepts, repertoires, genres, styles, and instruments travelling, establishing themselves, or mixing in new cultural environments' (p.27). The rationale for using this definition, according to Schippers (2010), was that the very concept of world music is primarily based on music travelling and interacting with new contexts. Other than dampening Eurocentrism, this definition also highlighted the crucial phenomenon that music from all over the world exists (and is taught) outside its original context.

2.3 Major rationales for world music teaching

Fung (1995) concluded the three major rationales for teaching world music in the United States: Social Rationale, Musical Rationale, and Global Rationale. In the book entitled Music, Education, and Multiculturalism: Foundations and Principles, Volk (1998) also summarised three rationales for multicultural education, namely the social rationale, world-mindedness, and global rationale, which were believed to be equally applicable to multicultural music education. Furthermore, Volk (1998) listed another important rationale that supports a multicultural perspective in music education. Learning a particular musical culture is a way to understand those who make the music.

2.4 World view of music

Music as a universal language was widely believed in the decade after World War I and persisted (Volk 1998). This concept was so popular that the 1996 International Society for Music Education conference had 'Music, The Universal Language' as its slogan. However, this motto was criticised by many music educators as a 'flawed proposition' (Schippers 2010; Letts 1996; Campbell 1997; Letts 1997). Letts (1997) also believed that music is a universal phenomenon but not a universal language. As stated by Elliott (1989):

Music is not a universal language: people do not immediately understand, appreciate, or enjoy the musics of other cultures. More accurately, people within cultures and between cultures often speak of 'our music' and 'their music' (p.11)

Nettl (2005) asserted that "music is a cultural universal, but not a universal 'language'" (p.57). Music is viewed as a universal language because people treat all other kinds of music as true relatives of the Western canon.

According to The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, "Music is 'works of art,' especially the 'classics'" and this notion had been used by many people as 'common sense' (Elliott 1990). However, Elliott (1990) criticised that this concept was "neither sensible nor 'common' (as in 'normal', or 'agreeable') and, therefore, did not provide a reasonable basis for arts education" (p.149). In this regard, the nature of music should be considered in terms of multiculturalism. According to Elliott (1990) '…culture is not simply a collection of objects that people have but something that people do; music is a specific form of human activity' (p.153). 'It involves a doer, a doing, something done, and a context in which the doing is done' (p.153).

2.5 Purpose of world music education

According to Swanwick (1988), the ultimate aim of music education is to 'break out of restricted worlds of culturally defined reality' and the principle of multicultural music education is to 'transcend the limits of local culture and personal self' (p.111) by focusing on music in and for itself. This requires people to pay attention to the absolute meaning and the universality of music (Wu 2012). Similarly, Reimer (1997) argued that any musical piece must be studied for its own sake and aesthetic and autonomous value.

Nonetheless, Elliott (1989) argued that learning world music requires 'self-understanding through other understanding' (p. 164). This statement regards learning world music as a process

of finding 'self-identity' and this process can only be obtained by studying music with its original distinctive culture, background, ideology, and social function (Wu 2012).

2.6 World music teaching approaches

According to Chen-Hafteck (2007), the musical concept-based approach features the study of musical components in various musical styles, which emphasises the development of musical concepts. Although this approach serves the musical rationale, the sociocultural approach centres upon an understanding of how music reflects people's lifestyles and their ways of thinking across cultural boundaries so as to understand music in its context and how it can serve the social and global rationales (p.337-338). Dunbar-Hall (2005) believed that the musical concept-based approach contradicts multicultural strategies and results in cultural imperialism. He advocated music education as cultural studies and suggested that music teachers should:

- Use the music terminology of culture as its practitioners use it.
- Read descriptions of music by its creators and performers.
- Adopt teaching methods that correspond to the music being studied.
- Become aware of and teach from the aesthetic positions of each music being studied.
- Consciously identify received teaching methods as derived from Western thinking and seek out other methods, when appropriate (p.36-37).

2.7 World music teaching activities

While Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, and Crawford (2013) agreed that singing songs from diverse cultures can foster cultural understanding among students, Lum (2009) believed that films could also be used effectively as a pedagogical tool because it provides a contextual understanding of musical genres better than most music educators can demonstrate, especially in a classroom setting. Papageorgiou and Koutrouba (2014) also evidenced in their study that 'the use of a video' is an excellent way to present a music culture in the classroom. In fact, Anderson (1980) proposed that 'the use of slides, filmstrips, films, videotapes, and recordings constitutes an effective presentation of the structure and sound of world music instruments for the classroom' (p.41).

Anderson (1980) also indicated that studying world musics can include singing, playing instruments, directed listening, and physical movement. For instance, Wong and Chiu (2017) reported that singing, listening, and practical hands-on music activities are the most effective approaches for multicultural music education. Therefore, students can experience world musics not only by singing songs, listening to recordings, or attending live performances but also by studying various types of musical instruments and performing movement activities (Papageorgiou and Koutrouba 2014).

2.8 Challenges faced by music teachers in world music teaching

Although the rhetoric on multicultural music education is considerable, there are still limited activities in general music lessons. Many music teachers around the world still feel unprepared to include music from different cultures in their daily work (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, and Crawford

2013) due to the infrequent offering of world music courses in undergraduate teacher education programmes, lack of teaching materials such as textbooks, song collections, recordings, movies, or videos, and general uncertainty and lack of confidence in how to approach and incorporate less familiar music into a traditional curriculum (Shehan 1988). Besides, the challenges faced by music teachers also include the fear of being inauthentic, presenting the music out of context, or being disrespectful to the culture (Schippers and Campbell 2012).

3. Methodology

This study involves 1, 368 primary and secondary school music teachers in China who were selected through simple random sampling. A questionnaire was used as the research instrument, which consists of two components:

Your Basic Situation includes the respondents' demographic information such as age, gender, education level, and years of teaching.

The Attitude Survey comprises eight survey questions with single-choice questions for 1, 2, 5, and 6, and multiple-choice questions for 3, 4, 7, 8.

The researcher used WeChat App to distribute the questionnaires online and the data were collected from May to November 2019. Subsequently, the data were compiled and statistically analysed using SPSS 26.0 software.

4. Results and discussions

The first single-choice question examines the definitions of ethnomusicology perceived by Chinese music teachers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of ethnomusicology by music teachers.

Option	Number	Percentage
A. Ethnomusicology is comparative musicology.	78	5.7%
B. The study field of ethnomusicology is primitive, non-Western, folk and Oriental musics.	554	40.5%
C. The study field of ethnomusicology stresses the importance of oral tradition.	114	8.3%
D. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in and as culture.	622	45.5%

Option D, according to Alan Merriam, is generally accepted by scholars and Nettl (2005) considered it a 'credo'. In the present study, 45.5% of Chinese music teachers chose this definition of ethnomusicology and 40.5% of them chose Option B. Although Option B describes the study field of ethnomusicology, it had been widely criticised and abandoned by academia because of its 'pejorative' meaning (Myers 1992). However, fewer teachers chose Options A and C. Although ethnomusicology was developed from comparative musicology, this definition is rather outdated, while the statement for Option C was rather deemed one-sided and imperfect.

The second single-choice question examines the definitions of world music perceived by Chinese music teachers as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Definitions of world music by music teachers.

Option	Number	Percentage
A. World music refers to traditional music and popular music from all over the world, except for European classical music.	145	10.6%
B. World music can be considered as the total sum of musical forms that exist on earth (including Western music).	385	28.1%
C. World music is the phenomenon of musical concepts, repertoires, genres, styles, and instruments travelling, establishing themselves, or mixing in new cultural environments.	420	30.7%
D. World music mainly refers to the ethnic music that excludes European art music and popular music. In addition, the modern style of ethnic music combined with the improvement of ethnic music melody and modern pop music creation can also be considered a category of "world music."	418	30.6%

10.6% of the Chinese music teachers chose Option A. The definition was first coined by ethnomusicologists in the early 1960s; however, it was criticised for its European centralism. Similarly, Option B, which was chosen by 28.1% of the teachers was criticised by Schippers (2010) as 'non-definition' and 'meaningless' (p.27). On the contrary, Option C was chosen by 30.7% of the teachers and was defined based on the dynamics of music travelling and interacting with new contexts (Schippers 2010). Finally, Option D entails a consensus reached by Chinese experts and scholars on its meaning (Xu 2015) and this definition was chosen by 30.6% of the Chinese music teachers.

The third multi-choice question examines Chinese music teachers' understanding of the major rationales for world music teaching and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Music teachers' understanding of the major rationales for world music teaching.

Option	Number	Response Percentage
A. Social Rationale ---- to understand society and develop a more democratic and free society.	845	21.2%
B. Musical Rationale ---- for a better understanding of the nature of music and the relationship between music and human life; developing bi- even multi-musicality by studying the manner of music-making in other cultures.	1250	31.3%
C. Global Rationale ---- to respect and live in harmony with other inhabitants of the earth.	808	20.2%

D. Cultural Rationale ---- to understand culture by learning its music because music is a mode of non-verbal expression of a society.	1092	27.3%

Option B was chosen by 91.4% of the Chinese music teachers, which shows that they paid more attention to musical rationale than social, musical, global, and cultural rationales as proposed by Fung (1995) and Volk (1998).

The fourth multi-choice question examines Chinese music teachers' world view of music and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Music teachers' world view of music.

Option	Number	Response Percentage
A. Music is a universal language.	1250	34.0%
B. Music is not universal, but culturally defined.	331	9.0%
C. Music is "works of art," especially the "classics."	953	25.9%
D. Music is a specific form of human activity.	1145	31.1%

91.4% of the Chinese music teachers chose Option A. This view was a wide belief in the past (Volk 1998) that the 1996 International Society for Music Education conference in Amsterdam even used 'Music, The Universal Language' as its slogan (Schippers 2010). However, it was criticised by many music educators (Schippers 2010; Letts 1996; Campbell 1997; Letts 1997) and ethnomusicologists (Elliott 1989; Nettl 2005), unlike the view in Option B that outlines 'Music is not universal, but culturally defined'. However, in this study, Option B was only chosen by 24.2% of the Chinese music teachers.

69.7% and 83.7% of the teachers chose Option C and Option D, respectively, but this result is somewhat contradictory to Options A and B. While Options A and C depict the standpoint of western centrism, Options B and D depict the perspective of multiculturalism and ethnomusicology. Nonetheless, the researchers speculated that the Chinese music teachers chose Option D because they recognised the objectivity and neutrality of the statement rather than considering it as the opposite of Option C.

Nonetheless, based on different musical values, such contradictory choices show that the Chinese music teachers are not sensitive to these expressions as they failed to recognise the philosophies behind these statements. Instead, they are more influenced by Western centralist values and are less affected by the ethnomusicology that interprets human music from a cultural perspective or by multicultural music education.

The fifth single-choice question examines the music teachers' understanding of the purpose of world music education as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Music teachers' understanding of the purpose of world music education.

Option	Number	Percentage
A. To transcend cultural limitations and focus on the absolute meaning and universality of music.	847	61.9%
B. To study the aesthetic value of music works.	413	30.2%
C. Self-understanding by understanding others.	108	7.9%

61.9%, 30.2%, and 7.9% of the Chinese music teachers chose Options A, B, and C, respectively. These three options represent the influential viewpoints of Keith Swanwick, Bennet Reimer, and David Elliott, respectively (Wu 2012; Schippers 2010; Swanwick 1988 ; Reimer 1997; Elliott 1989).

Swanwick (1988) emphasised the 'sonorous, expressive, and structural impact' of musical pieces (p.118) and Reimer (1997) stressed the aesthetic value of musical works (p.145). However, according to Wu (2012), their views refused to 'see music as a product of a specific culture' and 'there was little place for it in classrooms' (p.306). Nonetheless, Wu (2012) agreed with Elliott (1989) that "the aim of learning world music must be 'self-understanding by understanding others'" and that "learning world music is a process of finding 'self-identity'" that can be gained by 'studying music concerning its original distinctive cultural, background, ideology, and social function' (p.307). The results showed that Chinese music teachers seldom teach world music from the perspective of cultural understanding. Thus, Elliot (1989) argued that 'if cultural understanding is not the basis of teaching or learning world music, there is no reason for the existence of world music in classrooms' (p.306).

The sixth single-choice question examines the teaching approaches of world music perceived by music teachers as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Music teachers' teaching approaches to world music.

Option	Number	Percentage
A. The music concept approach uses the formal elements of music as the framework.	278	20.3%
B. The sociocultural context approach focuses on the construction of knowledge about unfamiliar performance styles, sounds, and cultures.	101	7.4%
C. A combination of the two approaches.	983	71.9%
D. Other approaches.	6	0.4%

Since more than 70% of the Chinese music teachers chose Option C, 'a combination of the two approaches' was what the teachers perceived that they should use in world music teaching. Although the musical concept-based approach is relatively easy to understand, the teachers may not know much about the sociocultural approach and its concept. The researchers speculated that the Chinese music teachers might regard this approach as the introduction of

the cultural background of music in the classroom; thus, they might believe that they have used a combination of the two approaches in the classroom. As proposed by Dunbar-Hall in 2005, the implementation of the sociocultural approach has a series of characteristics and judgment standards. However, the extent to which the Chinese music teachers adopted a combination of the two methods in the classroom depends on further classroom observations and interview studies conducted by the researchers.

The seventh multi-choice question examines music teachers' opinions towards world music teaching activities and the results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The most effective teaching activity as perceived by music teachers

Options	Number	Response Percentage
A. Singing songs.	1117	23.3%
B. Listening to recordings.	935	19.5%
C. Watching films or videotapes.	1128	23.5%
D. Playing various types of musical instruments.	1024	21.3%
E. Movement activities.	582	12.1%
F. Other (please specify)	15	0.3%

In the present study, Option C (watching films or videotapes) was considered the most effective teaching activity by Chinese music teachers and this result supports Lum (2009), Papageorgiou and Koutrouba (2014), and Anderson (1980), who stated that the use of a video is a good way of presenting music culture in the classroom. Other options such as 'singing', 'playing various types of instruments', and 'listening to recordings' were also chosen by more than half of the teachers as effective activities in world music teaching. Likewise, these results are in line with the studies by Wong and Chiu (2017), Papageorgiou and Koutrouba (2014), and Anderson (1980).

The eighth multi-choice question examines the challenges faced by music teachers in world music teaching and the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Challenges faced by music teachers in world music teaching.

Option	Number	Response Percentage
A. Fear of being inauthentic.	717	13.1%
B. Fears of presenting the music out of context.	819	15%
C. Fear of being disrespectful to the culture.	672	12.3%

D. Limited understanding of pedagogical processes and the roles of teachers and learners in the transmission of repertoires from particular cultures.	823	15.1%
E. The infrequent offering of world music courses in undergraduate teacher education programmes.	701	12.9%
F. Lack of teaching materials such as textbooks, song collections, recordings, movies, and videos.	862	15.8%
G. General uncertainty and lack of confidence in how to approach and incorporate less familiar music into a traditional curriculum.	849	15.6%
H. Others (please specify)	12	0.2%

Of all challenges faced by Chinese music teachers in world music teaching, Option C was chosen the least with only 49.1%. This means that at least nearly half of the teachers considered the seven options listed in Table 8 as challenges in world music teaching. However, except for the most ranked option about the insufficient teaching materials (Option F), the remaining six challenges were all about teaching concerns and issues. Thus, it can be inferred that the Chinese music teachers generally lacked confidence in world music teaching and the results of the present study have verified the arguments proposed by Shehan (1988) and Schippers and Campbell (2012).

5. Conclusions

The concepts of 'ethnomusicology' and 'world music' are complicated and vague. Due to the differences in approaches and orientations, different definitions exist in different historical development stages and even among various scholars in the same period. Teachers' choice of these concepts cannot be simply distinguished by right or wrong; however, we can learn from the results that Chinese music teachers need to clarify and sort these concepts.

Of the four rationales (social, musical, global, and cultural) in this study, the Chinese music teachers paid more attention to the musical rationale and most of them viewed that 'Music is a universal language' rather than 'Music is not universal, but culturally defined'. However, as for the purpose of world music education, very few Chinese music teachers teach world music based on cultural understanding as they are more influenced by Western centralist values and are less affected by the ethnomusicology that interprets human music from a cultural perspective or by multicultural music education.

Furthermore, although most of the Chinese music teachers in the present study thought that they should use 'a combination of the two approaches' in world music teaching, the researchers have reason to doubt whether or not they understand the true meaning of the 'sociocultural context approach' and this requires further verification in future interview studies. Finally, in terms of the challenges faced by Chinese music teachers in world music teaching, it is rather evident that the teachers lacked confidence in teaching world music.

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