

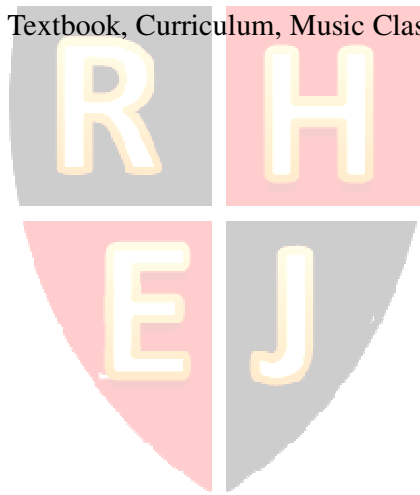
An analytical study of music textbooks used at the elementary school in Chinese society

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to analyze the music education materials used at elementary schools between Macau and Taiwan and further give recommendations for the future improvement and promotion of music education in Macau. The findings of this study are as follows: 1) The shortage of its own music materials and publishers in all subjects which is a missed opportunity for local Macau students to learn the most suitable and provincial contents of all subjects; 2) Insufficient use of globally successful music methods results in a self-enclosed regional mentality towards education with less emphasis on international inputs and influences; 3) Missing systematic and efficient curriculum guidelines at all school levels results in the repetition of students' learning and unsystematic acquisition of knowledge.

Keywords: Music Education, Textbook, Curriculum, Music Classroom, Orff Method, Kodaly Method



Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current status of music class and music materials used at the elementary school in both Macau and Taiwan in order to promote music education efficiently in the both mentioned Chinese societies. Macau was politically colonized by Portugal for the past 400 years and returned back to China in 1999 while Taiwan was colonized by Japan between 1895-1945. (Bei 2005) (Table 1)

Due to its historical background, Macau has thirty-one unique sites of its region which have been recognized by the UNESCO's World Heritage Center in the 2005. (Bei, 2005) The Macau government has been promoting cultural and fine art education over the past four years. Not only have the visitation of international tourists been increasing dramatically, but the amount of international well-known performances has also obviously been increasing in Macau after the region returned back to China. However, despite the government of Macau promotional efforts to promote art education in over the past years, music education at all school levels still remains at the same level as it has been in the past years without much progress being made in Macau. The absence of basic music knowledge and musicianship are common challenges for all school levels students in Macau. Chang (2002) believes that the purposes of music education at the elementary school are: 1) to cultivate students' moral; 2) to inspire students' aesthetic ; 3) to introduce students' understanding of fundamental musicianship, and 4) to stimulate students' recognition of their own nation. The initial problems of music education in Macau are the unsystematic contents of music class and the absence of music textbooks at all school levels. Instead of publishing its own music textbooks, local schools either borrow music textbooks from neighboring regions, such as Hong Kong, and mainland China or create their own materials for each class period and change them every year. All of the above mentioned facts result in the fact that not only can't the local Macau students enjoy efficient music learning experienced in neighboring regions, but the students also lack the opportunities to learn their own cultural and musical heritage from their own music textbooks.

In contrast, not only does the Taiwan government have several governmental and non-governmental textbook publishers; but surprisingly the textbook publications all include the latest and most up-to-date trends and current music methods so that the author believes that the local students can learn first hand information and increase their worldwide competitiveness. Moreover, the contents of music textbooks are organized systematically without much confusion and repetitive materials so that students can have a chance to learn a series of organized music knowledge from the beginning of elementary school right up to the graduation of high school. Furthermore, the music concepts are introduced step by step at each grade in the textbooks so that the students' learning potential can be motivated and developed under the best circumstance. In conclusion, the systematic music contents and approaches have shown that an increasing number of talented students from Taiwan have won lots of international awards and recognitions in the past years (Cheng, 2003). Baker (2000) believes that music classes should be taught thoroughly and systematically from kindergarten up to high school despite any differences in individual students' ability between each grade. The essence of the music education in elementary education is to provide students a solid fundamental knowledge of music musicianship; and combine music with other art genres in order to cultivate students' sensitivity towards the appreciation of the arts.

Table 1: General Characteristics of Macau and Taiwan

	MACAU	TAIWAN
Colony	Portugal (1553-1999)	Japan (1895-1945)
Official Language	Cantonese, Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese	Mandarin Chinese
Area (Square Miles)	10.42	13,896
Population	544,200	23,082,125
Currency	Macao Pataca (MOP)	New Taiwan Dollars (NT)
Currency Rate	US\$1 = MOP\$ 8.0	US\$ 1 = NT\$ 32

(Source: The Statistics and Census Service Center, 2009)

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current status of a music class and the music materials used at elementary schools in both Macau and Taiwan in order to promote music education efficiently in both mentioned Chinese societies. By applying the successful teaching experiences from Taiwan; Macau students can benefit and be better motivated in music class. By analyzing the music materials which are currently used in the both cities, the researcher suggested using systematic music contents and music methods which the researcher believes can motivate students' interest in music and make music classes become an enjoyable experience in both Chinese cities.

The Analysis of Music Textbooks:

The textbooks reflect values, cultures and educational levels. Fan (1990) believes that a successful music textbook should: 1) help students to understand and appreciate music; 2) cultivate students ability to use basic instruments, such as the recorder and small percussion instruments, e.g. the triangle and the tambourine, etc.; 3) train students to foster their ability to use creativity and improvisation; 4) help students to understand their own nation's artistic heritage and further explore the cultures of foreign countries internationally; and 5) cultivate students' sensitivity of the arts and eventually become a more well rounded person. However, the absence of the region's own textbooks would cause students to neglect their own culture and heritage. (Chang, 1994) Moreover, not only do these facts cause the students to miss the chance to communicate with the outside world; but the students also miss the chance to adapt to the most update knowledge currently available.

The textbooks at elementary schools used in Macau are either from neighboring regions, such as: Hong Kong and mainland China or the local teachers' own materials. Macau does not have its own published textbooks or any curriculum related publications. According to the survey, "Long Man Music", "New Primary School Do-Re-Mi", and "Today Music" are the most used top three elementary school music textbooks in Macau. The "Long Man Music" textbooks package which are published in Hong Kong, included student music textbooks (12 volumes), teachers guide books (12 volumes), creative flash cards, computer software, recorder music textbooks (8 volumes), Children's Musical textbooks (8 volumes). (Long Man Music, n.d) However, according to the teachers' questionnaires, more than 40% of the surveyed elementary school music teachers in Macau admitted that they still used their own teaching materials most of time in their own music classes privately rather than following the school's guidelines and requirements. This fact causes the problem that not only do the Macau students not have a systematic music learning system with which to follow, but the music competency of each student from each school is varies.

The strengths of the current music textbooks used in Macau focus on international

folk songs, such as, Japanese, Korean and African children's nursery songs and folk songs. The folk songs from different provinces of mainland China are also included in the textbooks. (Table 2) The researcher believes that it is important to provide a global point of view for children and let children appreciate the different cultures and arts in the music class. Cheng (2003) also indicates that the appearance of introducing the usage of different small percussion instruments and providing enough percussion exercises for children in music textbooks can not only heighten elementary school students' interest but also motivate their music learning and stimulate children's improvisational skills.

Moreover, Hoffer (1993) indicates that the importance of adapting other nation's folk songs can not only help children to understand the cultures, but children also can learn to appreciate how composers used different elements to create different types of music. However, the whole set of textbooks used in Macau lacks any systematic arrangement on music theory, such as, key signatures, rhythmic progression, and basic musical notation. For example, the music used in the 1st grade music class is supposed to be inspirational, introducing progressive elements in order to heighten students' interest and motivation rather than introducing complicated rhythmic patterns and key signatures (Yao, 1993). The non-progressive introduction of musical rhythms and music notations may create a disorganized perception of the 1st grade students learning progression. Furthermore, repeating the same music concepts and music theory at each level of music class may cause confusion of music concepts for children and render music learning redundant. Hoffer (1993) even believes that the music education is the only chance that students accept a series formal music training in their entire studying period. This is the period that teachers should provide students a solid fundamental of all subjects.

In contrast, the textbooks used at all school levels in Taiwan have all been edited, compiled and published by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation. Since 1988, non-governmental publishers were allowed to publish and compile school textbooks as the selection textbooks by the local schools but the textbooks must be examined and verified by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation in Taiwan. (Chen, 1986). This regulation not only provides clear guidelines for both school teachers and students to follow, but the guidelines also unify all students' learning progress in each subject and ensures learning progression and efficiency.

In Taiwan, the current selection of songs from the music textbooks of each publisher at elementary school all include local Taiwanese, Chinese folk songs and international children songs, such as, American European, and Asian nursery songs. Moreover, the three major music teaching methods, such as "Orff Music Method", "Kodaly Music Method" and "Dalcroze Music Method" are all included and applied in each introduced song. Among all of the governmental and non-governmental textbook publishers, "Han Lin publisher" and "Nan-I publisher" are the two most popular and common used music textbooks used at the elementary school level in Taiwan. Not only do these textbooks include the concepts of the global most successful and popular three music teaching approaches, but recorder training is also required as one of the fundamental approaches to music training at the elementary school level in Taiwan. The systematic contents and approaches help not only to ensure that elementary school students have concrete and systematic music knowledge, but they are also able to play the music instrument recorder fluently before graduating from the elementary school after six years training. Moreover, the students are acquainted with western and eastern music knowledge and composers through the series of textbooks. The research done by Wang (2008) proved that stimulating children's brain with exotic tunes and different combination rhythmic patterns can help children's social skills in the future. Champion (2006) also concludes her dissertation and believes that the modern music methods not only were valuable educational approaches, but the methods also provide a framework that allows

Table 2:

The Comparison of Music Textbooks Used at the Elementary School between Taiwan and Macau

	TAIWAN	MACAU
The Characteristics of the Music Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Multicultural and focus on various folk songs from any provinces of mainland China and different regions of Taiwan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mainly are Chinese Folk Songs * The textbooks focus on the international folk songs, such as, Japanese and Korean and African folk songs * Lack of local Cantonese folk songs
The Contents of the Music Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The introduction of music theory, rhythms and key signatures are progressive and systematic * The contents of the textbooks from all levels are not repetitive and redundant. Students can fully learn different music concepts at each grade of textbooks systematically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of a systematic arrangement of the basic music theory throughout all levels, such as, rhythms and key signatures * The contents of textbooks are repetitive at all levels
The Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The textbooks are officially unified. They are either compiled by the government and/or private (non-government) publishers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The textbook publishers are from Hong Kong and/or Mainland China * There are neither textbooks are owned and compiled by the Macau government nor by the private (non-governmental) publishers
The Application of the International Music Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The application of the most current music approaches, such as, Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze music method * Lots music creative activities and improvisational exercises with Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze music method 	NO
The Learning of Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Focus on introducing different small percussion instruments * Starting from the 3rd grade, learning recorder is part of the required fundamental knowledge of the music textbooks 	Focus on introducing different small percussion instruments
The Overall Evaluation of Music Textbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The introduction of music theory, rhythms and key signatures are progressive and systematic * Recorder training is part of the basic requirement * Application of the most current music methods, such as, Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze music Approach into the Chinese folk songs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Multi-elements, including Western and Eastern music knowledge; Classical and Jazz music * Focus on the introduction of small percussion instruments * The colorful textbooks heighten students' learning interest

students to learn music musically and cognitively. The most important, the inclusion of the “Orff Music Method”, “Kodaly Music Method” and “Dalcroze Music Method” in the textbooks helps students’ music learning experience using a fun and interesting approach and have further connection and follow the most popular trends in music learning internationally.

The Analysis of Teachers’ Questionnaires:

Moore and Bonney (1987) proved that the teachers effectiveness of teaching significantly affect students achievement of learning. Moreover, Sims (1986) revealed that the more passionate the teachers, the better achievement students usually become; therefore, in order to investigate the efficiency of the music class and the existing problems of music education, the researcher needs to find out the effectiveness of current music teachers. The researcher designed an anonymous questionnaire for the current music teachers in both Chinese cities. There were 80 music teachers from Taiwan and another 80 music teachers from Macau that participated in the questionnaire survey. The author believes that the questionnaires can reveal the problems of the current status of music education in both regions from the teachers’ professional point of view. (Table 3)

The questionnaire includes the information of the usage of music methods and textbooks; the current music facilities at the elementary school and the expectation of current music teachers. The author believes that the anonymous responses from the surveyed music teachers will provide the most reliable and accurate information for the current status of music education. The expectations for the future development of music education from the current music teachers were also included in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the answers to the questionnaires revealed the effectiveness and encouragement from the government and school principals.

The result of the teachers’ questionnaires from the two Chinese cities revealed the differences of music education promotion and teachers’ competency may cause relatively different results of teaching approaches and students’ learning progression. Surprisingly, more than 40% of the surveyed Macau elementary music teachers admitted that they still used their own teaching materials in their class privately rather than following the schools’ requirements. As well, there were quite significant numbers of the current music teachers in Macau who expressed that they didn’t feel the support of music/art class at school. Some of the school teachers admitted that they used only one textbook to teach for the whole school year while they should, in fact, have used two textbooks for the two semesters, in a personal interview. Furthermore, almost 70% of teachers think the region should have its own music published textbook rather than borrowing other neighboring regions’ publications. Wang (2003) believes a locally published textbook could not only unify students’ learning competency in the region but can also provide students with a more complete appreciation of their own cultural heritage and recognition of their own unique national characteristics. The result of the questionnaires also showed that despite the fact that nearly 40% of teachers believed that the Orff, Kodlay and Dalcroze music method can enhance teaching, 76% of music teachers still didn’t include such methods in their music class in Macau. On the other hand more than half of the surveyed Taiwanese music teachers have used the methods in their class. According to the survey, the top two main reasons preventing Macau teachers from using such methods were lack of professional knowledge and encouragement from their respective schools. In contrast to Taiwanese teachers who already have experience and knowledge, therefore there are a relatively lower number of the music teachers who lack professional knowledge and encouragement from their schools.

Regarding the challenges of promoting art/music education in the region, more than 40% of current teachers think the absence of music textbooks and insufficient support of

music education within the school environment are their main concerns in Macau while the music teachers in Taiwan also shared similar concerns as well. The response reminded us that there is still a lot of room in which to promote music education in both Chinese regions.

Table 3:
The Result of the Music Teachers' Questionnaires for Macau and Taiwan

Questions	Responses	MACAU (Percentage)	TAIWAN (Percentage)
1. Which music textbook does your school use?	Long Man Music	36 %	X
	New Primary School Do-Re-Mi	22 %	X
	Today Music	20 %	X
	Your Own Materials	22 %	0 %
	Han-Lin Publisher	X	56 %
	Nan-I Publisher	X	44 %
2. Do you use your own materials rather than following the school guidelines and requirements?	Yes	42 %	2 %
	No	40 %	94 %
	No Comments	18 %	4 %
3. Do you include the Orff, Kodaly or Dalcroze Music Methods in your Music class?	Yes	18 %	54 %
	No	76 %	32 %
	Others	6 %	14 %
4. Do you think the music activities, Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze, can enhance music teaching?	Yes	39 %	56 %
	No	26 %	30 %
	Not Sure	35 %	14 %
5. What might prevent you from including the music activities of Orff,	Not applicable	20 %	56 %
	Less interest from students	16 %	20 %
	Lack of professional knowledge	42 %	24 %

Kodaly, Dalcroze Method in your class?	Lack of encouragement from the school	22 %	14 %
6. How do you evaluate the promotion of arts education in your school?	Good	20 %	46 %
	Average	26 %	42 %
	Poor	54 %	12 %
7. What are your main Concerns regarding music education in your region?	Absence of Music Textbooks	45 %	0 %
	Insufficient support of music education within the school environment	48 %	36 %
	Less interest from the students	26 %	24 %
	Lower Competence of music teachers	42 %	26 %
	No Problems	6 %	2 %
8. Do you think the Facilities in your music classroom are sufficient?	Yes	36 %	36 %
	No	42 %	40 %
	Not Sure	22 %	24 %
9. Do you think the region should have its own music textbook publisher?	Yes	68 %	0 %
	Not necessary	32 %	100 %
10. What is the overall level of students' competence in your music class?	Below Average	34 %	24 %
	Average	52 %	56 %
	Above Average	14 %	20 %

Conclusion and Recommendation

Teaching music should be enjoyable, inspirational and educational. The writer suggests that the music textbooks at all levels should not only be unified in the region, but the contents of learning should be systematic and progressive. Each grade of learning content should include a series progression of different musical knowledge and related music activities so that learning can be more inspired and motivated. Music classes shouldn't be a one way teaching and learning process. Music teachers can include more music creative activities and group games along with the progression of music textbooks in the classes at all levels rather than a one way approach. The introduction of music textbooks should start from the basic C major and include numerous Chinese folk songs in the early stage of elementary school so that students can start learning their own cultural heritages at the early stage of their life. Moreover, instead of teaching students different key signatures and complicated rhythms at the early stage of elementary school, young children should be taught fundamental music theory and singing correct pitches systematically. Furthermore, just like any other knowledge, the introduction of music concepts should be progressive and organized; therefore, the writer suggests that the introduction of rhythmic concepts should start from the basic half note, quarter note, eighth notes and rests rather than the complicated rhythmic patterns.

Furthermore, the concepts and approaches of Orff, Kodaly, and Dalcroze music methods should be included in the music textbooks at all school levels so that the Asian students can also benefit from the international successful approaches and make music learning processes more motivational. Undeniable, these methods have been the most popular and efficient music approaches used in music education worldwide since the 20th century; the regions should follow the most current educational trends and learn from successful experiences from others. The theory of success behind these music methods are the musical interaction between teachers and students. This is the essence of any successful music class which allows both students and teacher to actively participate as one in a progressive and constructive manner. If this outcome can be achieved, the results can be the catalyst for future growth and nurture the trend of a positive mentality and greater motivation for teachers and students alike. Such a goal achieved will ensure continued and elevated results the likes of which may not have been otherwise achieved. Based on this approach students are not only inspired by knowledge based music activities in the classes, but these approaches can also attract students' interest and attention and propel them towards greater and more accomplished successful learning processes. Furthermore, young children can learn interaction with others and promote their social skills through body movements. Students can learn both to "feel" and be "affected" by music during the early stages of their learning progression.

To conclude, the official curriculum guidelines which were published by the Direcção dos Serviços de Educação e Juventude (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, Macau), for all school levels should be updated with the most current trend of international music education. Until now, the most current music curriculum guidelines for both elementary school and high school were published in 1999 with many repetitive and redundant concepts used throughout (Wu, 2009). Macau should publish its own textbooks which include its own culture, values and history under the guidance of the local government in all subjects at all school levels. By comparing with others, the Macau government should learn from others' successful experiences and adapt these successful experiences into its own textbooks. The music textbooks have to be systematic, progressive and comprehensive with a global point of view so that the local students can most benefit from them. All children within Asian communities should have the opportunity to be exposed to the same musical concepts and level of art appreciation which can be found in the international music arena. This together with the adoption of a set of government directed guidelines or standards that could be used by all

music faculties in Macau would present a template which teachers could use to present their own music teaching materials. Textbooks and further teaching materials could be government approved and locally published adhering to these set of standards, while allowing for some degree of artistic freedom and musical interpretation to express local culture, values and customs. The researcher firmly believes that by applying a set of standards in such a way would not only provide teachers with greater teaching confidence as they would have a single template to look to rather than loosely applying their own, sometimes innocently misguided practices; but perhaps most importantly, provide the students with the most up-to-date and essential teaching materials to further enhance and promote their musical growth and talent at a regional level.

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