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Multicultural Music Education: Building an Appreciative Audience

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Abstract

Globalization and increased diversity within student populations generate a growing impetus toward a multicultural approach to music education in today's schools; however, student responses to world music are often initially negative (Shehan, 1985). This study investigates whether sixth-grade students become more appreciative of Indonesian Gamelan music as a result of participation in a multicultural music education program. Approximately 180 students, selected at random from an elementary school in Massachusetts, were divided into two groups. Both groups listened to an example of Indonesian music and were given a pre-test survey. The experimental group received multicultural instruction; while the control group did not. Both groups listened to the same example of Indonesian music and a post-test survey was administered. The data were analyzed to determine any changes of response. The results indicated that initially negative responses toward Indonesian music became more tolerant following multicultural music instruction. The concluding discussion addresses issues for further research and offers suggestions to improve multicultural music education in today's schools.

Multicultural Music Education: Building an Appreciative Audience

Globalization and increased diversity within student populations have contributed to the increasing demand for a multicultural approach to music education in today's schools (Hao, 1997). The U.S. Bureau of the Census predicts that non-white population growth will increase to 28.2 percent by the year 2050 (Fung, 1995). According to Fung, "These projections reflect the growing multicultural profile of American society" (p. 36). Building an appreciative audience for a multicultural music education program may be condensed into the following four steps: teachers must evaluate the importance of the program, determine how to implement it, identify the inherent problems of multicultural music education, and investigate possible solutions for those problems. This paper will explore these issues and focus upon a study to determine whether or not student responses become more appreciative as a result of multicultural instruction. The rationale for the study is that students may broaden their viewpoints, benefit more fully from future multicultural instruction, and become a more tolerant and appreciative audience of world music and foreign culture.

Why should multicultural music education be taught to American students? As societal demographics change, education must evolve to reflect, include, and welcome the wealth of diverse cultures present in today's classrooms (Goodkin, 1994). Scholars have proposed several rationales to justify teaching multicultural music. Perhaps the most obvious is the social rationale resulting from changing classroom demographics. This approach reflects and celebrates cultural diversity within the classroom, allowing students to honor their uniqueness through music (Gonzo, 1993). It promotes the

understanding and acceptance of cultures from other parts of the world (Blair & Kondo, 2008; Damm, 2006; Fung, 1995).

Another rationale stems from the benefits to music education that result from the infusion of musical ideas originating in other parts of the world (Fung, 1995). The study of foreign musical elements reinforces the understanding of traditional Western music, as typically taught to American students. An example may be the study of musical instruments, from the simplistic found in remote parts of the world, to the sophisticated instruments used in traditional and modern Western music (Hao, 1997). An effective and comprehensive music program incorporates all styles and genres of music, not just one.

A third rationale is global in nature and is based upon the premise that music is the universal language spanning ethnicities, nationalities, and geographical divisions. Through music, people of all backgrounds are united in appreciation, participation, and education (Fung, 1995). All three rationales illustrate the benefits derived from the teaching of multicultural music education.

How may an effective multicultural music program be implemented in today's schools? Teaching multicultural music involves some pedagogical challenges. Standards 1, 2, 6, and 9 of the National Standards in Music Education require that students understand various aspects of music, "in relation to history and culture" (Goetz, 2000, p. 23). One implementation consideration is authenticity of the cultural presentation. "Although absolute authenticity is not achievable in a classroom context, music educators can still attempt to create the most authentic musical experience for students" (Fung, 1995, p. 38). This recommendation encourages the use of authentic recordings, music, classroom materials, instruments, and performances by native artists whenever possible.

Traditional usage of the simplified Western adaptations of multicultural music typically found in music textbooks may be exchanged for more authentic ethnic representations (Abril, 2006; Goetz, 2000). However, this requires additional time and effort on the part of teachers to research and prepare authentic ethnic representations.

Multicultural music is not simply the study of foreign music; it involves the study of foreign culture as a whole, and should be taught from this perspective. If students are exposed exclusively to music, they miss the other components of a particular culture such as art, dance, drama, dress, food, history, and customs (Goodkin, 1994). “Investigation of various non-Western musics is a way to demonstrate relationships between modes of cultural expression” (Hao, 1997, p. 31). The research of Carolin (2006) states that multicultural music provides a clear means of linking interdisciplinary study with history, social studies, geography, and other subjects. When world music is taught in conjunction with other societal and historical aspects of a particular culture, students receive a more comprehensive and well-rounded education. The research of Skelton (2004) states that traditional Western music is typically studied in the context of “music *and* culture” whereas world music should be studied from the perspective of “music *as* culture” (p. 171). Therefore, the study of world music denotes the cultural study of a people.

What problems arise from the study of multicultural music? One problem may be ethnic prejudice. Historically, Western music has been regarded as superior to music from other parts of the world. Gonzo (1993) asks the question, “Why not simply teach Western music and dismiss the rest?” (p. 49). The research of Fung(1995) indicates that an intellectual and moral dilemma for teachers may result from this viewpoint. Regarding Western music as the intellectual apex of musical achievement is a tunnel-vision

approach ignoring the multitude of contributions derived from world music. For instance, American jazz is built upon the syncopated rhythm patterns developed in the African culture. Regarding Western music as the cultural pinnacle of musical achievement denigrates foreign music, creating a biased viewpoint. These dilemmas must be addressed and resolved by teachers and students in order to fully understand and appreciate world music.

Another problem with world music education is the unwillingness of many teachers to tackle this aspect of musical study. The research of Campbell and Schupman (1992) describe several reasons for this attitude. One reason may be the lack of time to include world music study within typically overloaded curricula. Multicultural study is often viewed as a lesser priority and relegated to the time remaining at the end of a semester. Another problem may be linguistic challenges in foreign songs. Many teachers may not elect to tackle the challenge of teaching songs in an unfamiliar language and therefore omit these examples of world music. A third problem may be the lack of teacher preparedness for teaching multicultural music (Gonzo, 1993). Many university pre-service teaching programs provide inadequate preparation in multicultural studies, causing music teachers to expend time and effort conducting independent research for self-education. These problems may contribute to the unwillingness of many music teachers to participate in multicultural study.

A third problem may be the lack of ethnically authentic materials and equipment available to teachers. Budgetary constraints often limit the procurement of authentic materials for classroom usage. Authenticity presents challenges to teachers, but should not deter their efforts because, “authenticity lies in the perception of the individual”

(Abril, 2006, p. 38). An approximation of ethnic authenticity outweighs the educational deficit resulting from the omission of multicultural study (Blair & Kondo, 2008).

A fourth problem impeding the effectiveness of multicultural music programs is student responses to the sound of world music. Students typically react negatively when first exposed to the sound of world music. There are several reasons for this attitude. Demorest and Schultz (2004) indicate that student age and gender may be contributing factors to this problem. Typically, the younger the student, the more receptive is the response to unfamiliar music. Exposure to multicultural music should begin in the early elementary grades. Demorest and Schultz further indicate that older boys are less receptive to foreign music than are girls of the same age. Teachers may need to consider the age and gender of students in order to effectively implement world music programs.

The research of Shehan (1981) and Britten (2000) describe student preferences for various types of music. Students typically prefer popular or classical to ethnic non-Western music, instrumental to vocal world music, and rhythmic African and Japanese music to the less rhythmic music of Indonesia. In selecting examples of world music, teachers may need to consider the preferential trends of students.

Familiarity with world music is an important factor influencing student response (Peretz, Gaudreau, & Bonnel, 1998; Shehan, 1985; Siebenaler, 1999). Shehan (1985) studied the responses of sixth-grade students to ethnic music from Africa, India, Japan, and Latin America to determine if familiarity through multicultural instruction increases positive responses. Pre-test and post-test results showed an increase in positive responses to foreign music following instruction, indicating that students may become more appreciative of world music as a result of increased familiarity.

The experimental study discussed in this paper follows a similar format. Approximately one hundred and eighty sixth-grade students are divided into two groups and surveyed (pre-test) to determine their initial responses to Indonesian Gamelan music. One group receives multicultural instruction and the other does not. Following the instruction, both groups are again surveyed (post-test) to determine changes in responses. The results of this study are similar to the findings of Shehan (1985). Students become a more receptive and appreciative audience with the increased familiarity of world music resulting from multicultural instruction. While this attitudinal change is of immediate importance to students while studying multicultural music in the classroom, it may also promote continued tolerance toward world music in the future.

Method

Hypothesis

Student appreciation of Indonesian Gamelan music increases as a result of participation in a multicultural music education program.

Participants

Approximately one hundred and eighty sixth-grade students are selected at random to participate in the study. Approximately one hundred are assigned to the experimental group and receive the test treatment, while the remainder are assigned to the control group and do not receive treatment. Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of students are not variables in this study.

Variables

The independent variable in this experiment is participation in a multicultural music education program. This nominal data denotes participation for the experimental group and non-participation for the control group.

The dependent variables are the student responses to authentic Indonesian music, indicated via a five-point Likert scale survey. Survey responses include Strongly Agree, Agree, Can't Decide (Neutral), Disagree, and Strongly Disagree reflected by values one through five, respectively. The survey questions are as follows:

Q1: Gamelan music sounds different from American music.

Q2: Gamelan music has a pleasant and enjoyable sound.

Q3: Listening to Gamelan music makes me want to learn more about it.

Q4: I would enjoy learning to play Gamelan instruments.

Q5: I already know some information about Gamelan music.

Q6: If I heard Gamelan music on the radio, I would probably turn it off. (Likert-scale data was recoded so that 5=1, 4=2, 3=3, 2=4, and 1=5 for similar scaling).

Q7: I like to listen to music from other parts of the world.

Q8: Hearing Gamelan music makes me want to learn more about Indonesian people and their culture.

Procedure

Both groups of students listen to an authentic recording of the Indonesian melody *Udan Mas*. This is an instrumental piece performed in traditional Indonesian style. Following the listening activity, an instructor administers the survey to all students.

Students answer the questions anonymously, in order to encourage honest responses.

These pre-test survey results are tabulated and analyzed.

The next step is instruction for the experimental and control groups. One teacher instructs both groups, to ensure consistency of results. The experimental group receives instruction on Indonesian Gamelan music including lecture, instrumental demonstration, video presentation, and instruction on Indonesian culture. Students perform *Udan Mas* on Orff classroom instruments, create original music within Indonesian format, and participate in an authentic Indonesian shadow play based upon the legend, *The Ramayana*. Students participate as musicians, puppeteers, actors, narrator, or scenery changers. Classroom instruction culminates with the performance of the shadow play. The control group does not receive this instruction.

Both groups of students listen to the same authentic recording of *Udan Mas*, as previously instructed. Following the listening activity, the same survey is administered to all students. These post-test survey results are tabulated and analyzed. Pre-test and post-test data are compared to determine if student responses to *Udan Mas* are more appreciative following multicultural instruction.

Limitations

Generalization of the results of this study is impeded by several limitations. The scope of the experiment itself must be considered. One hundred and eighty participants are selected from one particular school in suburban Massachusetts. These results may not be indicative of student responses in other schools or be consistent with other geographic regions. A broader range of schools and locations, with a larger number of participants, may provide more reliable results.

Age, race, ethnicity, educational background, and socioeconomic status of students are not variables in this study. These characteristics may influence student responses; therefore, inclusion of these demographic variables may provide more comprehensive results.

The resident classroom music teacher administers the survey and provides the instruction. A guest teacher, unknown to the participants, may enable students to feel more comfortable in providing honest responses to the survey. A change of instructor may increase accuracy of results.

This experiment is also limited by the scope of the multicultural instruction itself. Only Indonesian music is used as the independent variable. A more comprehensive study may include a variety of music from various parts of the world. Student responses to other types of world music are not included in this experiment.

Survey procedures may also impact the reliability of results. Students are polled only twice, once as pre-test and once as post-test. Student responses on those particular days may be influenced by many unknown factors. A more comprehensive study may include several periodic surveys to eliminate extraneous factors and increase accuracy of results.

Results

The results of the eight-question survey are tabulated and analyzed. Cronbach's alpha, measuring the reliability of the instrument, is .75. The eight survey questions constitute the dependent variables. Seven variables are z-scored in order to create a scale, wherein the lower the score on the scale, the more favorable the response to Gamelan music. (The first variable, Gamelan music sounds different from American music,

decreased the overall reliability of the scale to .70 and was deleted from further analysis).

According to Nunnally and Bernstein's criteria for affective measures, the score

reliability estimate for the scale is adequate.

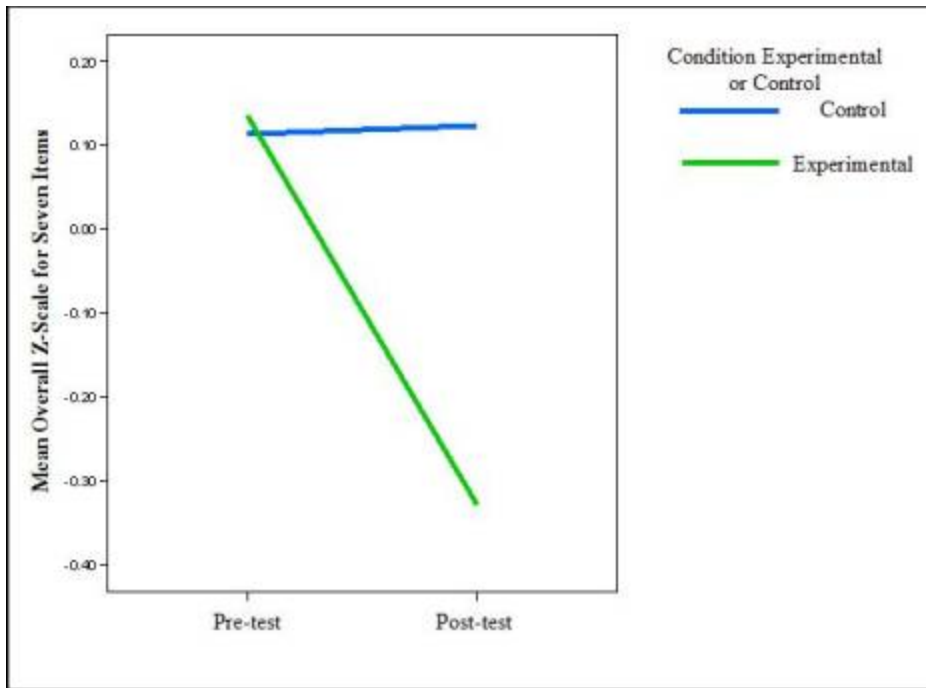


Figure 1. Attitudes of the experimental and control groups toward Gamelan music.

Figure 1 shows the basic results of testing the core hypothesis. Participants are nearly equivalent in their opinions on Gamelan music during pre-test. Before instruction, both the experimental and control groups are slightly negative towards the music. Following instruction, the control group becomes slightly more negative in post-test, whereas the experimental group responses become more favorable toward Gamelan music. This is shown by the downward trend within the scale.

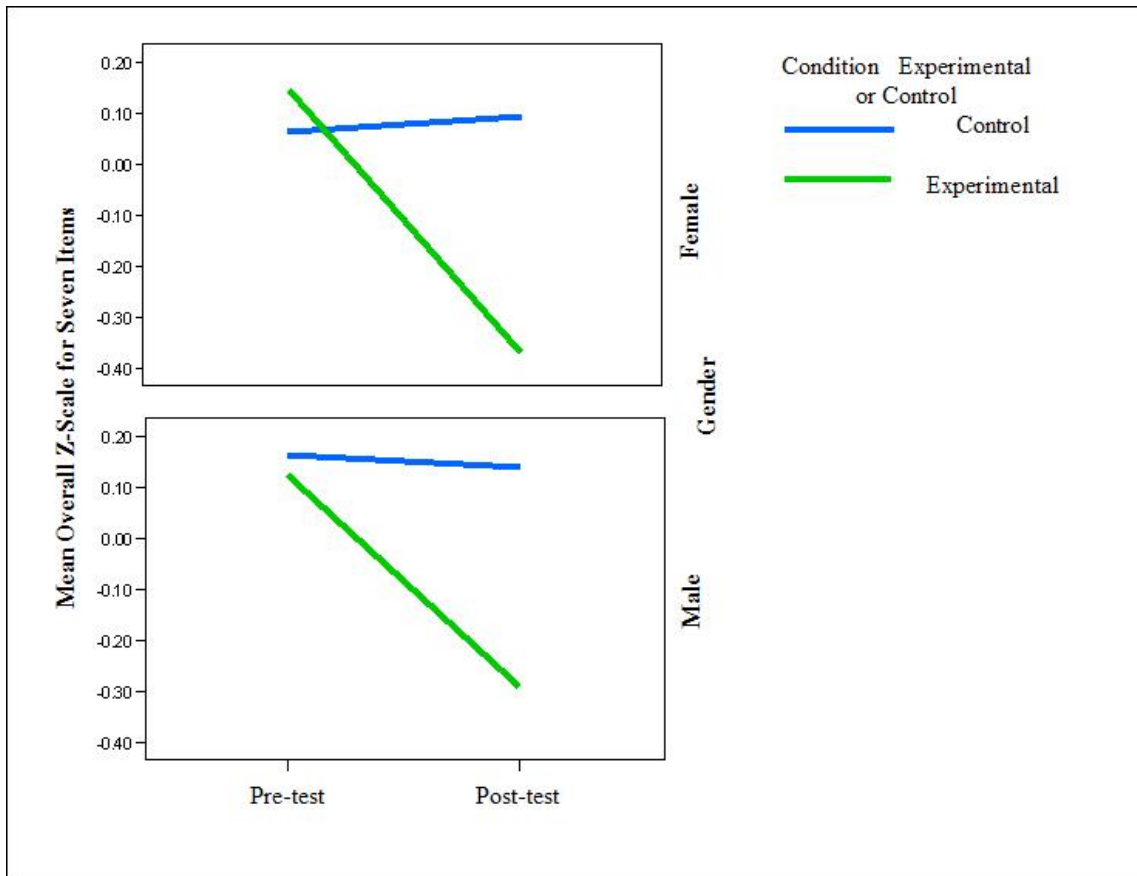


Figure 2. Attitudes of the experimental and control groups toward Gamelan music, with respect to gender.

Figure 2 indicates that male and female responses are similar. Gender has no significant influence upon student attitudes toward Gamelan music. Female responses in the control group become slightly more negative than male responses. Following instruction, the attitudes of both females and males in the experimental group become more favorable toward Gamelan music, as indicated by the downward trend within the scale. Results in both Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate support for the hypothesis.

Table 1

Summary of Results

Dependent Variable: Overall Z-Scale for Seven Items

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	15.668(b)	7	2.238	6.210	.000	.107
Intercept	.036	1	.036	.099	.753	.000
Pre or Post	4.646	1	4.646	12.892	.000	.034
Gender	.213	1	.213	.592	.442	.002
Condition (Experimental or Control)	3.953	1	3.953	10.967	.001	.029
Pre or Post * Gender	.011	1	.011	.030	.863	.000
Pre or Post * Condition	4.810	1	4.810	13.346	.000	.036
Gender * Condition	.051	1	.051	.141	.707	.000
Pre or Post * Gender * Condition	.121	1	.121	.335	.563	.001
Error	130.471	362	.360			
Total	146.139	370				
Corrected Total	146.139	369				

R Squared = .107

Table 1 presents the summary of results for the model. There are two significant main effects; time of data collection (pre-test or post-test) and condition to which the respondent was assigned (experimental or control group). Gender is not a significant factor influencing student attitudes toward Gamelan music. Additionally, there is one significant interaction effect; the condition to which the respondent was assigned (experimental or control group) interacts with pre-test and post-test, as illustrated in Figure 1. Overall, the model explains about 11% of the variance in attitudes toward Gamelan music. Effect sizes range from small (pre or post, condition, and pre or post* condition) to insignificant for the rest of the estimated coefficients.

Discussion

The research of Sheehan (1985) indicates that student responses to different types of world music become more appreciative through participation in a multicultural music education program, and the study conducted for this paper supports a similar hypothesis. Future research may expand this hypothesis in various directions to provide beneficial information for teachers and students.

Future Research

Future research may include many other types of world music within the study, thus presenting a more comprehensive examination of the topic. Additional research may also expand the demographic variables of the participants. According to Demorest and Schultz (2004), younger students are more receptive than older students to foreign music. Younger students may be polled to expand the survey results. Additionally, the ethnic and educational background of participants may influence responses to world music, and may therefore be another important factor to consider. Socioeconomic status may also impact student responses to world music. Disadvantaged students may have less opportunity to experience world music in daily activities, and therefore be more inclined toward negative responses due to the unfamiliar sound.

Benefits

By expanding the scope of this study, a more comprehensive representation of student responses may be provided, thus enabling teachers to more effectively instruct and guide students in the study of world music. Teachers may become more cognizant of the cultural needs and musical tastes of students, and thus able to develop a more effective multicultural music education program.

Students may also benefit from an expansion of this survey. As a result of improved teaching strategies within an effective multicultural music program, students may respond more positively to world music. Class participation, student interest, and extended learning may increase due to increased appreciation and enjoyment. Therefore, expanded data from this survey may benefit teachers, students, and multicultural music education programs.

Solutions

Multicultural music education is of ever-increasing importance in today's schools. In order to circumvent pedagogical issues, the following strategies may be helpful to teachers. University pre-service multicultural music education programs may be improved to include an expanded array of world music classes and more stringent requirements for pre-teachers. Professional development programs may be developed to include multicultural music in order to alleviate teacher reluctance in tackling world music due to insufficient preparation.

Additionally, curricula may be restructured to allow sufficient time for multicultural study. Multicultural music may be taught in conjunction with other musical topics to alleviate time constraints. Due to the increasing importance of multicultural education in today's schools, the study of world music should receive higher priority within curricula.

As a final solution, the amendment of musical prejudice may be utilized as an effective learning tool because it provides a wonderful example of promoting open-mindedness and freedom of thought for student emulation. "Exploring music from other cultures is essential and valuable because of the bridges of understanding it creates

among peoples and because of the expanding world of sound that enriches our musical lives” (Blair & Kondo, 2008, p. 51). It is the responsibility of teachers to provide this opportunity for exploration in order to stimulate musical growth, expand the scope of musical familiarity, and thereby build an appreciative audience of students.

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