Enculturation and learning in music: The attitudes, values and beliefs of four Hong Kong socio-musical groups

Annie On Nei Mok

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of London Institute of Education

2010
Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on four socio-musical groups in Hong Kong, in order to investigate the groups’ enculturation experience, learning-practices, and their attitudes, values and beliefs concerning music and music-making. The informants consisted of two diasporic groups: a) middle-aged Filipino maids and b) elderly male Chinese xianshi musicians; and two indigenous Hong Kong groups: c) young male popular musicians and d) mainly middle-aged female secondary school music teachers.

Situated within the sociology of music education using interviews and non-participant observations, the data were analysed by an adaptation of the idea of grounded theory, in order to examine how musical enculturation, informal, non-formal and formal learning experiences or education may influence the attitudes, values and beliefs of the informants concerning music and music-making.

The overall findings revealed that the informal learners (the Filipinos, the xianshi musicians and the popular musicians) had a productive attitude towards participation in music-making and regarded music as an important, or even essential, part of their lives. Some music teachers, who were formal learners, preferred to engage in a receptive way of participation in music-making by listening to music. It was found that, under the influence of formal approaches to instrumental learning, both the popular musicians and the music teachers were driven by achievement motivation, whereas the Filipino and xianshi musicians explored highly personal meanings and expressed their deep interest in music through their learning and making of music.

The study concludes with reflections and suggestions that a more participatory
attitude towards music-making should be adopted, and suggests that informal ways of
learning should be acknowledged as an alternative approach to learning. It is also
suggested that changes should be made to the present unsatisfactory situation that
exists in instrumental learning and the work environment of music teachers in Hong
Kong.