

Who am I?

An examination of multiple identities in a Hong Kong primary music teacher

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Introduction

My personal narrative as a musician and music teacher in Hong Kong intrigues me to further explore the complexity of how an individual develops multiple identities in their teaching profession and the interactions within the teaching and learning contexts. In Hong Kong, most of the primary music teachers either graduated with a music degree or hold a postgraduate diploma in education (PGDE) in music. Therefore, primary school music teachers are often first identified as musicians because of their musical expertise.

At present, there does not seem to be literature related to the development of multiple identities in Hong Kong primary music teachers, where there is an emerging literature about identity development in musician and music teachers in other contexts (e.g., MacDonald et al., 2002, 2017). Moreover, there is lack of literature in terms of music specialists teaching in a generalist classroom.

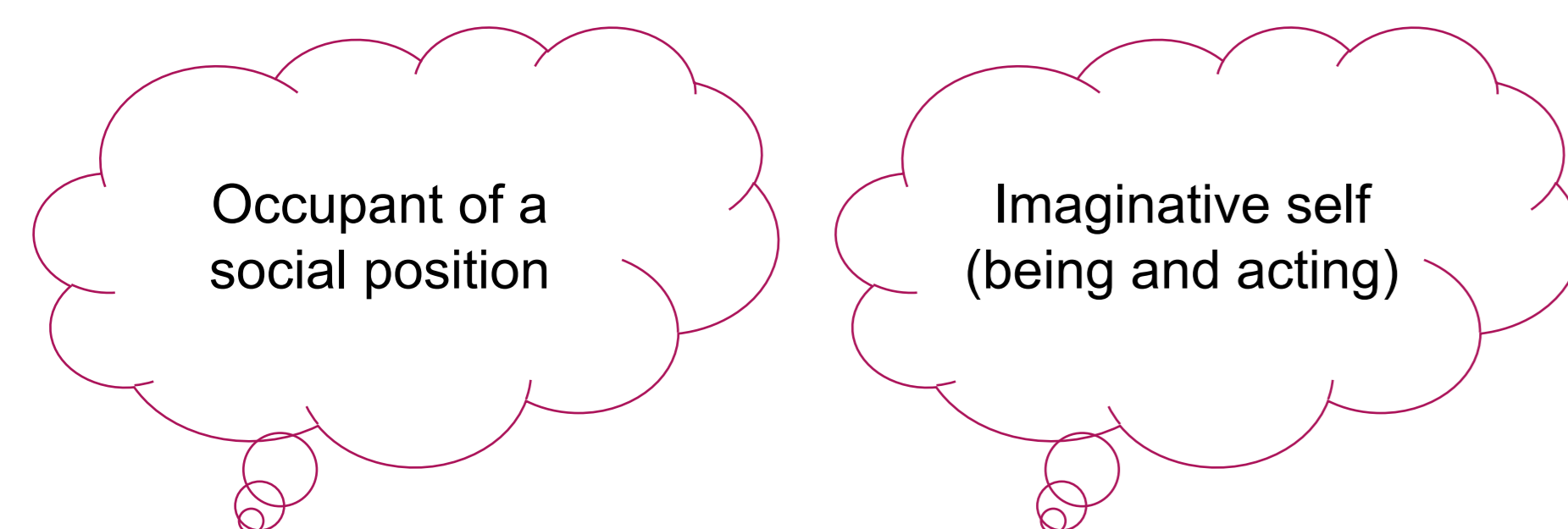
Research Aims

- Understanding the development of primary music teachers' multiple identities
- Understanding the impact of the learning and teaching context of Hong Kong's school music education on the development of primary music teachers' multiple identities

Research Questions

- What are the multiple identities of primary music teachers in Hong Kong?
- What are the key features (key influences) in the development of music teachers' multiple identities?

Theoretical Framework - Role Identity Theory (McCall & Simmons, 1979)



Findings – Valerie

Valerie started her musical journey at the age of four. She is a pianist, violinist, composer, choir member and solo vocalist. She has been working in a government primary school as a contract teaching staff for two years. She teaches music, mathematics and general studies. She is also a primary one class teacher. Valerie holds a bachelor's degree in music and a PGDE in music (primary).

Composer identity

"Every year, the music teacher would collect our works and produce a student composition CD. I was awarded a prize for my composition work too. I played on the piano, violin and also wrote the lyrics. I was happy about that and started to think about studying music in university. Then I applied for the music program in Scarlett University."

- ❖ Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- ❖ Composition influenced Valerie's decision to pursue music professionally

"Cognitively... I know I am not a composer because composers to me... they are very quick in listening and they could think about chord progressions right away. They can also recognise mistakes very quickly and fixed problems. They are also able to talk a lot about music history. So yeah, I discovered that I am not a composer when I was in university."

- the composer identity remains fluid
- dip in self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation with an increase in anxiety as a result of peer comparisons in defining their musical identities

Musician identity

"I had a good impression with music and thought that I am a 'okay' musician because of my relative pitch. I found those piano exams quite easy. Because of my piano background, I found it very easy when I played in orchestra too while the others struggled a lot."

- ❖ Satisfaction in music, Valerie sees herself as a capable musician when she was young

"I think I am bringing my musician identity to the students when I am doing things like the virtual choir because it's a performance. Even for the whole school composition activity, it feels like a musician identity as well because I am bringing my expertise to it. I am also bringing my students to try the identity of a musician... The students learning experience turns into an experience of being a musician."

- The musician identity remains strong when Valerie enters the teaching profession
- Valerie is also being recognised by her students as a musician
- Struggle between musician and music teacher identity

Music teacher identity

"[...] I discovered that I quite like classroom teaching in my practicum. However, I realised that it's quite different from teaching instruments because it's a one-to-one teaching. It becomes teaching a whole class when I am at school. I need to pay attention to different learning abilities in the class. There is new interaction with the students and there is a curriculum that I need to follow. There are guidelines that I could follow."

- ❖ Valerie further consolidates her music teacher identity in ITE

- Valerie identifies herself as a teacher who focuses more on music because she is teaching her students with her musical expertise.
- Valerie further consolidates her identity as a musician music teacher by comparing her teaching pedagogy with colleagues who did not pursue music in undergraduate.

Teacher identity

"...Because I am a class teacher. And also the administration tasks. Both of them take up a substantial amount of time in my personal development. I can only teach about music when I am delivering music lessons but as a teacher, it's not only about music lessons. There are other lessons. I am a teacher when I step my foot into the school's gate. I have the image of being a teacher. I am not only teaching music, I am teaching my students about interpersonal relationship, communication, different values etc."

- ❖ the earliest development of teacher identity is presumably in line the emergence of music teacher identity
- ❖ the teacher identity comes stronger than Valerie's expectation due to heavy administration work, teaching non-music subject and being a class teacher

"I think as a teacher, I also need to keep learning. Some people may choose to learn more about education, but I think through performance, I could open up myself to new things, I think this will facilitate my teaching as well."

- the eagerness to improve pedagogical skills
- the interaction with students

Research Methods

Qualitative case study
Semi-structured interviews
Thematic analysis

Conclusion

With reference to the theoretical framework, the interviews with Valerie have shown the multiplicity of roles and identities within and outside the school contexts. However, the development of these multiple identities emerged not only within the current social contexts but also developed from previous musical experiences.

The complexity of role conflicts and identity negotiation will be further examined in the next stage of this doctoral research.

Key References

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