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Music Education Policies and their Implementation in the Higher Education System in Thailand: What Does the Future Hold?

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Abstract

The development of Music Education in Thailand's Higher Education has been impacted by external changes in the social, political, and administrative contexts. In the next period (2008-2017) Thailand's music education system will be confronting significant tendencies including a society dominated by a free capitalist economy and an alternative tendency toward spiritual well-being within the culture. Thailand's music education system must be prepared to adjust to these issues. This research shows that accommodating these changes includes: (1) increased focus on the transition from basic education to higher education prioritizing the development of students into professional musicians (2) emphasis on music education for the general public, making music education available to people of all segments of society (3) developing opportunities for music creation and learning and (4) greater empowerment of musicians, music teachers, and music scholars. These four areas should allow Thailand to respond to future trends and develop music education in Thailand's higher education institutions accordingly.

Introduction

This article is a part of the dissertation for a Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education at the College of Music, Mahidol University, Thailand, on the topic of the Development of Music Education in Higher Education in Thailand. The purpose of this study was to determine the past, present, and future of music education in higher education and to design the ideal future of music education policies and their implementation in Thailand's higher education in response to various upcoming tendencies of the society, the world, and the domestic context in the next period. This article focuses on the trends of music education in Thailand's higher education institutions in the next period (2008-2017) and makes strategic suggestions.

According to the study, music education in higher education has developed and provided instruction for more than seven decades; however, it still faces various problems. According to information from the seminar on music education in Thailand in 2006 at the College of Music, Mahidol University, the 40 states and private higher education institutions providing music programs lack efficiency in providing education. Each institution faces various problems such as a lack of staff, instructors, instruments, buildings, and funding. During the interview with the music scholar, Sugree Charoensook in 2006, he criticized music education's status in Thailand's higher education because "…the higher education institutions which are universities want to provide music programs considered to be modern and necessary…But every institution faces a lack of budget, human resources, teaching areas and facilities, and knowledge. The only thing that they have in common is shared problems. Every university providing a music program has similar problems."

From the data analysis of music education in higher education, the expansion of the music programs in Thailand's higher education institutions have faced various problems. For instance, the continually changing political systems connected with education lead to an

inconsistent policy and delayed administration. Discussion and study of music were considered as matters of minor importance. The national policy normally gives importance to major matters or social problems. Moreover, the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) did not consider music graduates to be in demand. During the interview with the Secretary-General Office of the OHEC, Sumate Yamnoon in 2008, he suggested that: "...so music programs have not been supported and facilitated like other programs such as engineering, medicine, and nursing." As a result, the institutions responsible for providing music programs still face funding restrictions, the major obstacle towards institutions achieving excellence in music education.

Music programs have rapidly grown in a number of Thai institutions. The development from the past until now shows that music education in higher education arose from the need to educate artists, the need to use music as a unifying factor during political turmoil, and the desire to change the public's perception of the music profession. Nowadays, there are new philosophies in music education (Charoensook, 2008).

The global and educational trends in the future play significant roles in influencing music education. Studying various emerging trends is an important task to prepare for the future. This article features historical information, current details on managing music education in higher education in Thailand and other countries. The study concludes by offering strategic suggestions according to the upcoming trends in the next period (2008-2017).

Research Methodology

This study employs various research methods with the aim to use the collected database as reference to find solutions to the research objectives. The procedures include**:**

(1) Documentary analysis: Printed and web-based documents, domestic and international, as well as primary sources related to the development of music education in

higher education for Thailand, research papers, relevant documents concerning music education in higher education and various trends affecting Thailand's music education in higher education in the next period (2008 – 2017) were analyzed and identified.

(2) In-depth interviews and brainstorming session: Key informants in music education, music industries, professionals in Thailand's education field, futurologists, policy and strategy makers, as well as the concerned stakeholders shared ideas regarding trends and directions of music education in higher education in the next decade. The brainstorming session was divided into 3 steps: (1) Presenting a brief background to the participants including research questions, important data on music education in higher education, and important trends affecting music education; (2) Discussing the questions with the participants and allowing the participants to interactively share opinions on the topics; and (3) Summarizing the data extracted from the brainstorming session.

Findings

Background: Music Education in Thailand's Higher Education from 1934

From the recognized beginnings of formal music education in Thailand in 1934, development has not progressed by itself, but has been impacted by external changes in the social, political, and administrative contexts of each period. In this regard, it is possible to summarize formal music education development into five periods.

Early Training of Performing Musicians: 1934-1969. The preliminary period when music education advanced from local community learning into music programs in a school system (courses for music professionals, not just basic music courses offered in general education which had already existed since the reign of King Rama V). In this initial period, there were several factors which accelerated the progress, most notably the national reformation and modernization after the 1934 transformation from an absolute to a

constitutional monarchy, which brought about an increased focus on intensive national development to reach a Western level (Nakornthap, 2006). The performing arts became one of the focal points in that government's agenda. At that time, there were massive intellectual disagreements and a negative attitude towards the performing arts. Some groups openly rejected the calls to reform music education, leading to financial budget constraints. Bunditpatanasilpa institute was originally established using local music teachers who did not hold any educational degree (Fackchamroon, 1996), but did have extensive knowledge and expertise in music. Courses offered at the new school included music teacher training courses. Thailand then was able to produce music teachers holding high school and diploma certificates (1952) under the administration of the Fine Arts Department.

Training Musicians through Teacher Education: 1970-1975. Thirty-five years after the initial period, music education program development entered the second phase. In this period, the key change was the government policy on educational opportunity enhancement aimed at increasing the number of students and teachers. Music lessons were classified as "art education" in the National Education Plan Year 1960 (Revised Edition). Music became a compulsory lesson, leading to a national shortage of music teachers. At the same time, teacher training schools throughout the country were upgraded to provide training at an academic degree level (Tanom Intarakumnerd, personal communication, 3 February, 2009). These factors led to an increase of music teachers in the music education major under the Thailand Government's Teacher Training Department. This was a major change compared to the first period, when music education courses were offered only as vocational degree courses.

Internal factors in music education led to a nationwide demand for a bachelor degree qualification, as so many people at that time already held a vocational diploma. This demand precipitated the establishment of the music education bachelor degree curriculum (Prateep Lountrattana-ari, personal communication, 15 March, 2006). This period is regarded as the

period of *Producing University-Based Music Graduates: 1976-1988*. Music education programs at the bachelor's degree level expanded into the various regions of Thailand. The higher education development policy of the time focused on enhancing the capability and role of Thailand on the global stage and producing graduates to feed the market especially in medical science, computer, engineering, and various branches of sciences.

The next period of music education was the period of *Higher Degrees in Music-Promoting Musical Scholarships: 1989-1997*. In this period the Masters Degree curriculum in Music was introduced for the first time in Thailand to enhance the qualifications of music teachers by adding more research skills. The program offered was "Ethnomusicology". Within six years two additional courses were introduced, i.e., "Music Education" and "Musicology" followed by other curricula.

Music education in Thailand has continuously expanded along with education in Thailand in the past period. (from 1998-2007) In the past period, many new curricula, branches, majors, offices, and also new universities and academic institutions have been opened. There have been many efforts to upgrade academic institutions. This phenomenon has raised concerns regarding the quality of the education in Thailand and has caused academic degree inflation, and lack of quality and efficiency (Tongroach, 2008). Since 1999, higher education in Thailand has been reformed in several ways including the establishment of educational standards, which leads to the need to reform music education policies and their implementation in the social context of globalization. Due to educational reform, universities in Thailand became autonomous universities under government control for better administration and management. The College of Music, Mahidol University, was the first music institute to become an autonomous college under university control. It served as a model for other music programs in autonomous university systems.

Social changes, the economy, technology, the expansion of the service industry, and the expansion of the music industry have also affected music education in Thailand. As a result, music has been more influential in social and cultural contexts at the global level (Charoensook, 2008). During this period, new curricula have been developed and new majors have been introduced such as jazz studies, music composition, music entertainment, music production and engineering, music business, and music technology. This final period can be called the period of *Training Professional Musicians: 1997-2007*. Even though there are more curricula at present, most of them are in universities in Bangkok. There are not many new curricula or majors in universities outside of the capital city. However, Thailand is innovative in the sense it is the first country in Southeast Asia whose universities provide music education from undergraduate to doctoral degrees.

Music in Higher Education: Developments over the Past Period (from 1998-2007)

Institutional Profiles. As a result of the 1999 restructuring of education in Thailand, all universities and academic institutes that provide tertiary education fall under the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), Ministry of Education. There are 47 higher education institutions offering music programs as of 2010. They can be categorized into several groups including:

1) Public (State-funded) universities, ten offer music as a major;

2) One university classified as an Open university (unrestricted admission to every program) offers music as a major;

3) Thirty-one Rajabhat universities (community colleges) offer music programs as major,

4) Three private universities offer music as a major;

5) Three vocational institutions in the Rajamangala Universities of Technology group offer music as a major; and

6) One institution under the jurisdiction of the Government Fine Arts Department (Banditpattanasilpa Institute, Ministry of Culture) offers music as a major. According to the statistics in 2010, four universities in the public university group that offer music as a major have transformed themselves into autonomous universities. (See figure 1)

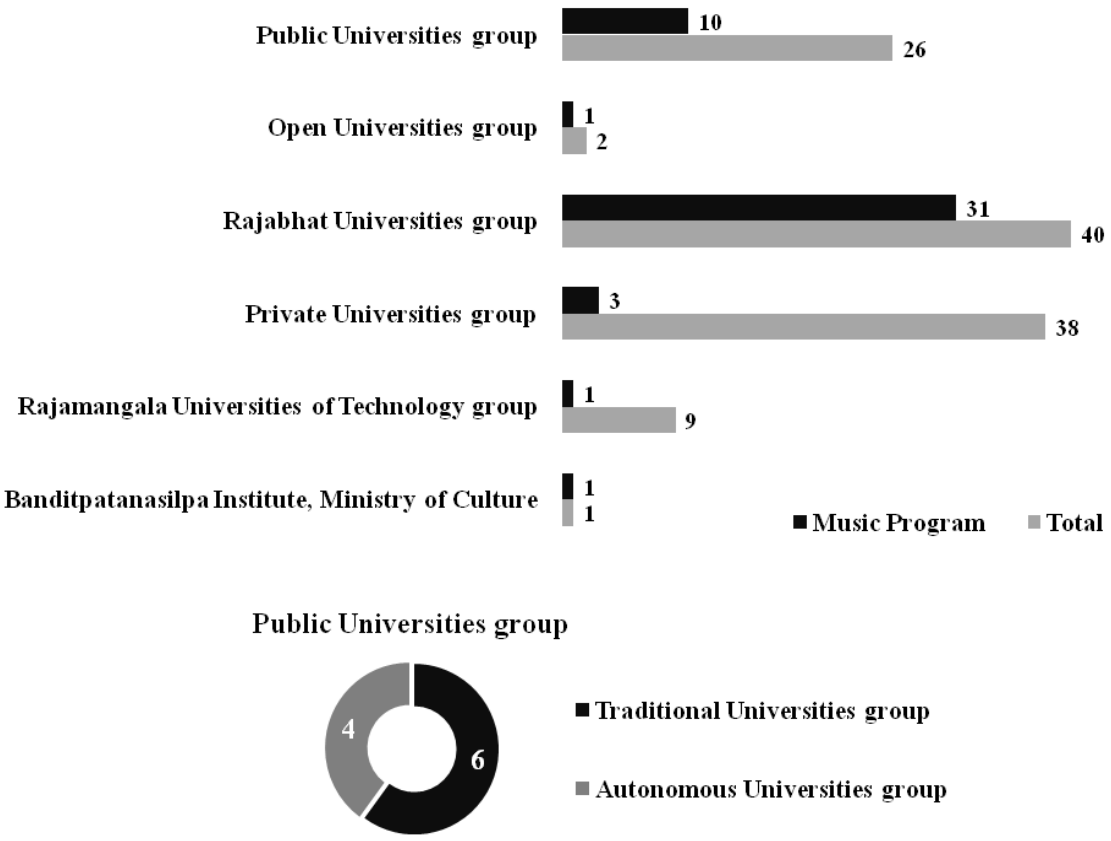

Figure 1. The quantitative expansion of higher education institutions offering music programs categorized by types of institutions

According to the details of music programs offered by the institutions mentioned above, 47 institutions offering music as major are classified into two groups as follows: (1) founded as College/School/Faculty/Conservatory of Music, six administrative groups or 11.54% of the total units involved, and (2) concerned faculties, 46 administrative groups or 88.46% of the total. Therefore, altogether there are 54 administrative groups from 47 institutions offering music programs.

Music programs in Thailand are currently presented under the auspices of several different areas of study, depending on the university. Music Programs are offered under specific university areas as listed as follows: Humanities and Social Sciences, 27 locations or 58.7%, Fine and Applied Arts or Fine Arts, nine locations or 19.57 %, Education, five locations or 10.87%, Humanities, three locations or 6.52%, Arts, one location or 2.17%, and the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, one location or 2.17%. (See figure 2) Currently, the music programs in Thailand are classified by the College/School/Faculty/ or Conservatory of Music.

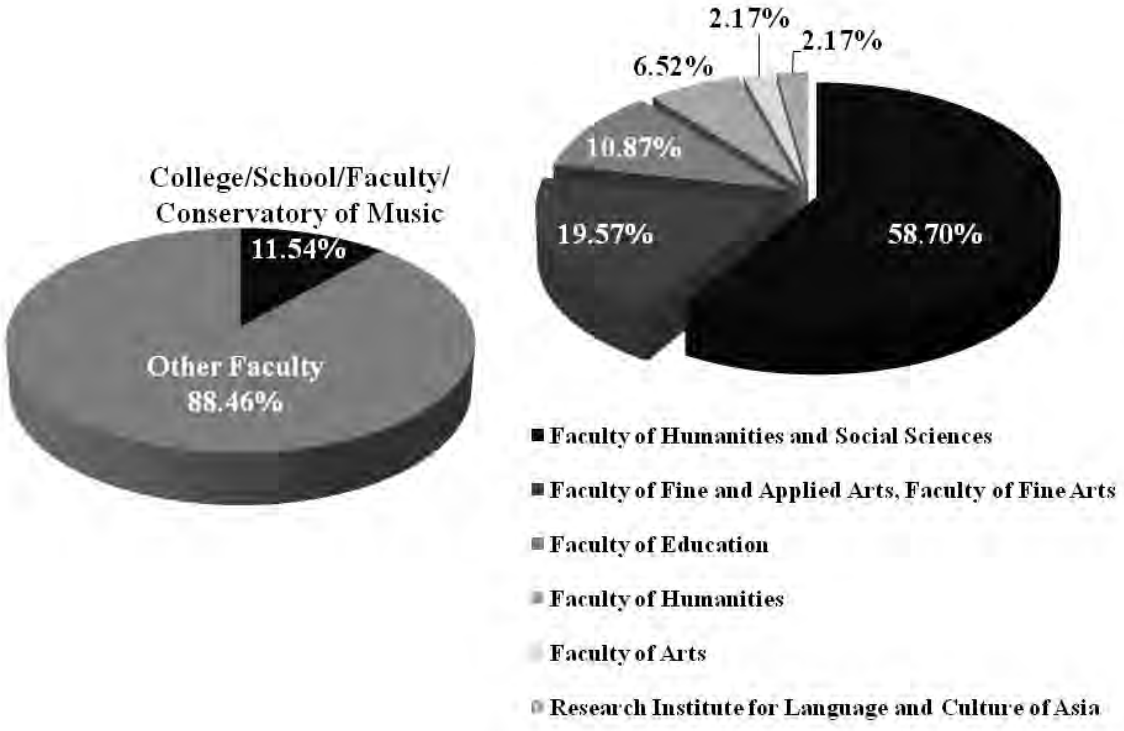

Figure 2. Higher education units offering music programs

Program Offerings and Curriculum Profiles

Throughout the past period (from 1998 – 2007) music education in Thai higher education has been able to offer curricula for bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorate degrees with a variety of specialized programs. A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), which is equivalent to 100% (available in two institutions**,** see figure 3). As for the master's degree level, there are three curricula available including Master of Arts (MA), equivalent to 58.34% (available in seven institutions), Master of Fine and Applied Arts / Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.), 33.33% (available in 4 institutions), and Master of Education (M.Ed.), 8.33% (available in one institution). At the bachelor degree level, there are four curricula available including Bachelor of Arts (BA), which is equivalent to 47.62% (available in 30 institutions), Bachelor of Education (BEd), 28.57% (available in 18 institutions), Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts or Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA), 19.05% (available in 12 institutions), and Bachelor of Music (BM), 4.76% (available in three institutions). (See figure 3) There is a tendency for more curricula development at the bachelor's, masters and doctoral levels, i.e., Bachelor of Music, Master's of Music, and Doctor of Music.

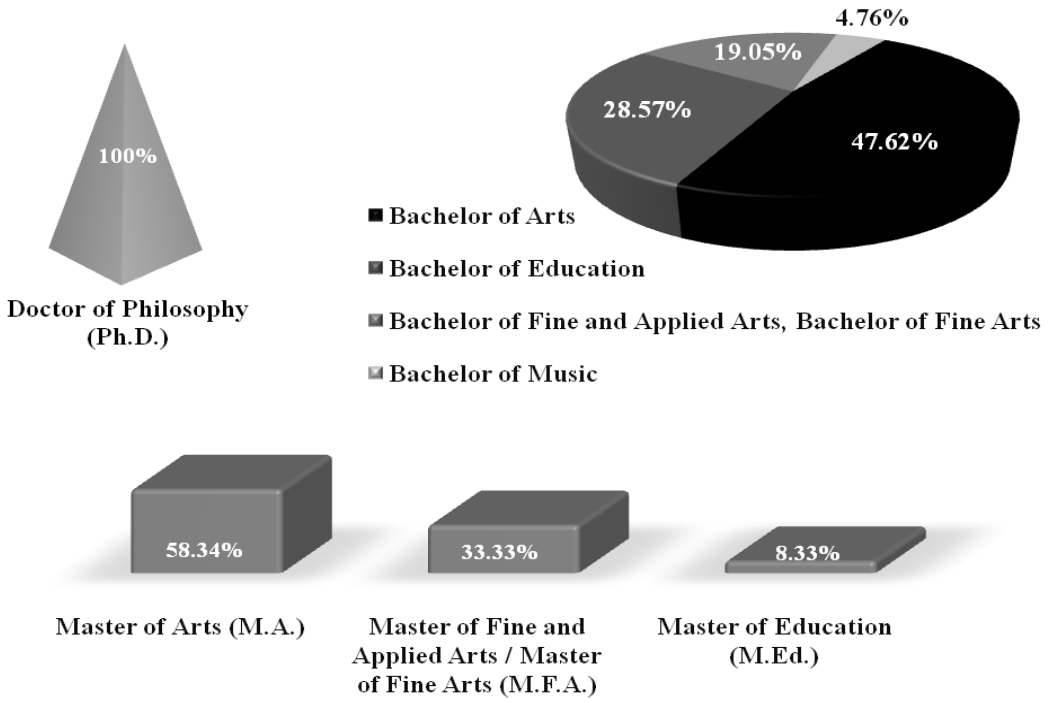

Figure 3. Music degree programs in Thailand (as of academic year 2009 - 2010)

Staffing Profiles

According to the 2009 - 2010 statistics collected in terms of the number of music instructors in higher education institutions throughout Thailand, there are 575 Thai-national instructors teaching at the university level. The number of foreign instructors teaching music in higher education institutions in Thailand totals about 60-70. Most of them are hired on a yearly contract basis. According to the records, around 50 foreign instructors are teaching at Mahidol University (as of 2010 report). Thai music instructors can be sorted by educational qualification. There are 46 instructors with doctoral degrees (including 14 instructors holding doctoral degrees in programs other than music, but giving lectures in music programs. Most of them hold the doctoral degrees in education), 367 with master's degrees, and 154 with bachelor's degrees (See Table 1). By academic designation, there are three Professors, 23 Associate Professors, one Assistant Professor, and 463 instructors working for a music program (See Table 2).

Table 1. *Number of Music Program Instructors by Level of Educational Attainment*

Degree	Doctoral	Master	Bachelor	Other	Total
No. of Staff	46	367	154	8	**575**

Table 2. *Number of Music Program Instructors by Academic Rank*

Designation	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Total
No. of Staff	3	23	86	463	**575**

Graduating Student Profiles

In the past period, the number of music program graduates has increased. All over Thailand, there are 7,349 graduates with a Bachelor of Music and 425 graduates with a Masters of Music.

Even though the number of music programs, curricula, institutes, graduates, and instructors has been increasing, there are still limitations in music education, especially the gap between music education at basic and higher levels of education. The study of music in basic education still has limitations. For example, there is lack of equipment due to insufficient budget, and lack of support from school administrators and policy makers. Some music teachers at schools do not have sufficient skills to teach or even to play music. It was found that 50% of music teachers at schools do not have degrees in music. Due to these reasons, the quality of music education at schools varies significantly. As a result, the ability level of music students also varies in different schools because music skills of children are developed to the maximum level when they have good teachers and good opportunities to learn (Amornwich Nakornthap, personal communication, 13 July, 2010). It was also found that students acquire music skills from private music schools with parental support as most regular schools cannot provide music education at a satisfactory level, especially for children with musical gifts. They either learn music at private schools or at the homes of famous music teachers.

There is also a problem in recruiting students into music colleges or universities. Currently, there are several methods of recruitment. Some music colleges have a reliable recruiting system while some colleges accept all applicants due to their own policies or the policies of the universities to which they belong, because of financial factors, or the administrative system of such institutes (Suchat Saengthong, personal communication, 17 July, 2010). While music education in Thailand is continuously expanding, there is little

direction to such expansion. Many institutes provide similar educational programs in music. Some institutes provide programs in Western music even though the objectives of the institutes are to provide education for the local community. Nowadays, most music institutes develop educational programs by prioritizing the supply rather than the demand. They open new programs with little concern for the quality of the education and the graduates or the demand of the labor market.

Review of Future Trends: Present Impact and Moving into the Next Period (2008-2017)

Various tendencies impacting humanity, the world, society, and education

*Trend of population change***.** Global society, including Thailand, is moving toward a senior society. On the other hand, the percentage of people under 18 has declined. The population at the higher education age will peak in the next 3-4 years, and from 2012 onward, the number of students going to higher education will constantly decrease (Kiratikorn, 2009). The size of the working age population will also drop. This will affect music education due to the shrinking size of the higher education student group.

*Trend of future careers and the labor market***.** The professional world for Thailand will change with globalization and the free capitalist economy, particularly in terms of a knowledge-based economy and the creative industry. The music industry is a part of the creative industry including such areas as music editing, film & TV, electronics, instrument design, instrument repair/restoration, music publishing, as well as service sector businesses like event organizing, services involving performance arts, music production, organizing musical performances, touring, etc. These industries will require a higher degree of knowledge from their workers (Masatieanwong, 2006). Therefore the future labor market will require more personnel in the field of music with both specializations and well-rounded skills, not only knowledge in music, but also the knowledge and ability to work in the modern

world.

*Trend of information technologies and advancement of various fields of knowledge***.** The world will be divided into technologically literate and illiterate countries. The technologically illiterate countries will get poorer, whereas the technologically literate countries will become more secure and stable (Enriquez, 2000-2001). Technology will be used to propel the music industry by creating new innovations in both production and services. Technology will help music production in various forms of media such as music production for radio, television, the newly emerging media in various formats. Moreover, in the future, the world will be connected through wireless-network communication. Knowledge is no longer limited to the classroom. Learners can seek knowledge from various sources autonomously. The new generations should acquire information literacy, ICT literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, critical literacy, and consumer literacy (Masatieanwong, 2006). These requirements apply to the production well-rounded music personnel literate in the information age.

Trends of a Pluralist Society and the Multi-Cultural Context. The diverse conditions of society and calls for multiculturalism have resulted in several new trends including a new way of living together in the borderless world due to globalization. These movements have resulted in changes in people's lifestyles. People worldwide now have more opportunities to observe different cultures through advances in communication technology. The cultural diversity concept has been accepted. The concept of a culturally based economy where the productions and services rely on the foundation of cultural richness of each society has emerged with the presence of cultural entrepreneurs. In the future, social orientation will change from "think globally, act locally" to "think locally, act globally" (Torrington, 1994). This is because people in society are more intellectual and capable. They can adapt global knowledge to fulfill their personal and local needs. In this regard, the music personnel in the

new generation should acquire more cultural knowledge at an international level while maintaining the awareness of the value of their own cultural identity.

*Trend of changes among youth, students, and graduates in the future***.** All societies now require citizens with the capability to take part in national development. The new generations should acquire civic literacy skill and some broad knowledge and basic skills in subjects concerning development such as economics and management, particularly knowledge in financial management.

Trend of spiritual well-being. The society now lacks a spiritual dimension as the life style dominated by the capitalist economy has shifted social values toward modern materialism and individualism so much that it directly affects the social values regarding spiritual concepts and social relations, particularly among young people. Consequently, this leads to various social problems including crime, materialistic behavior, selfishness, and a lack of public consciousness. Finally, there are some new concepts as that provide solutions to those problems such as humanism and vitalism which counter capitalism by addressing the question of how to live happily in the capitalist world (Chumpol Poolpatarachewin, personal communication, 13 July, 2010).

Tendencies of Changes in Higher Education in Thailand

In the next decade, the structure of higher education in Thailand will change in accordance with the *Second Higher Education Development Plan for 15 Years* (2008-2023) developed by the Office of Higher Education Commission and the National Education Plan, revised version (2009-2016), as well as the second phase of Educational Reform (2009-2018). In these plans, guidelines on higher education development are provided, i.e., the standards and quality control system of higher education in Thailand to produce efficient graduates to meet the needs of labor market and to compete with other countries by creating new knowledge and

innovations to meet global trends. Higher education development should also promote sustainable development of local communities based on good governance, good financial systems, quality control, and higher education networks with emphasis on academic freedom and diversity as well as systematic unity (The Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2008).

Tendencies in Thai Music Education

Economic development in Thailand has included the concept of creative economics as a main factor of economic restoration. Strategic plans for economic restoration have been made focusing on the export of creative products which include music, as current thought suggests that music is considered a purchasable commodity (Sumate Yamnoon, personal communication, 22 September, 2008). Advanced technology has made music available through all kinds of media. This is very important for the music industry (Suwannapas, 2008). It is believed that products of creative economics will be prioritized by the Thai government so the growth of the music industry in Thailand will continue. This will lead to an increased demand for human resources in the music industry, which shall lead to intellectual works that have high economic value.

There is another trend of the labor market regarding human resources in music. Music institutes in the world, especially in Europe, need well-rounded music personnel, meaning those who have not only music skills but also skills to meet the needs of the labor market. Therefore, many music institutes have revised their curricula so that they can produce graduates who can work in different areas of the music industry in any part of the world (Chandransu, 2008). The global trend of music education will focus on multiculturalism and cultural diversity so that graduates will work with people from different backgrounds and address human diversity.

Key Trends Affecting Music Education Policies and Implementation

In the next period (2008-2017), there will be few changes even though there is continuous progress due to changes in many dimensions. There are two key trends as follows:

The mainstream tendency – society dominated by the free capitalist economy. The future trend is a capitalist economy with a focus on creative economics which includes the music business, which is a creative industry (Weerasak Kowsurat, personal communication, 13 July, 2010). Music education institutes need to keep this trend in mind and prepare graduates to meet the needs of the labor market in music. Public and private universities and all sectors should cooperate with one another with the goal of promoting creative works in music which can be a main source of income for the country.

The alternative tendency – spiritual well-being and the cultural dimension. Spiritual well-being and the cultural dimension are important factors that music institutes need to be aware of when developing curricula or managing music education. These two trends need to be well balanced in music education so that institutes can promote music which enhances spiritual well being and improves quality of life. Music educational institutes should include these two trends in the institutes' philosophy, administration, and curriculum development (Chumpol Poolpatarachewin, personal communication, 13 July, 2010). Regarding Thai music, there is concern about how Thai music can survive and develop with regard to the current trends.

The results from the study have led to the design of philosophical and conceptual goals on the directions of music education policies and their implementation in higher education as follows:

The key trends	Philosophical and conceptual goal
The mainstream tendency **Capitalist/Economy/Consumerism/Materialism** ***Career Dimension/Business Dimension***	Music is an honorable profession that is economically viable
The alternative tendency **Humanism/Idealism/Spiritualism** ***Spiritual/Cultural Dimension***	Music is a cure for social ills. Music education is a social asset of mankind. It can improve our lives through various ways, e.g., music therapy, music appreciation, music for all, music preservation, music for expression

Directions of Music Education in the Future Derived from the Study

Movement towards the Goals

Transition from basic education to higher education – catalyst for quality improvement. In music education, there should be a better transition from basic education to higher education through the following elements: policies of music education, academic support system for music students, and the support system for music teachers (such as fringe benefits, bonuses, and training). In the future, there should be certifications for music teachers so that the career becomes standardized and more recognized by society. Development of music students is equally important. Music should be available for all children. Children with musical gifts or talents should be supported, and there should be scouts who look for talented children. The recruitment system of music students should be revised and standardized.

Music for the Public/Music for All. Music education should be promoted as an academic alternative. Due to global trends, education management in Thailand should equally promote all sciences so that students can have more options. Music should be regarded as a science and an asset of mankind, a part of life, etc. Music education should be available for Thai children at an early age. They should be able to know, learn, play and appreciate music. Music should be available for all groups of people. It can be provided as a program of study or as a self-directed learning method. People should have more opportunities to learn music

so that music becomes part of their lives. An important mission of music education institutes is to provide music education as a profession and to make it recognized by society under the context of the capitalist economy.

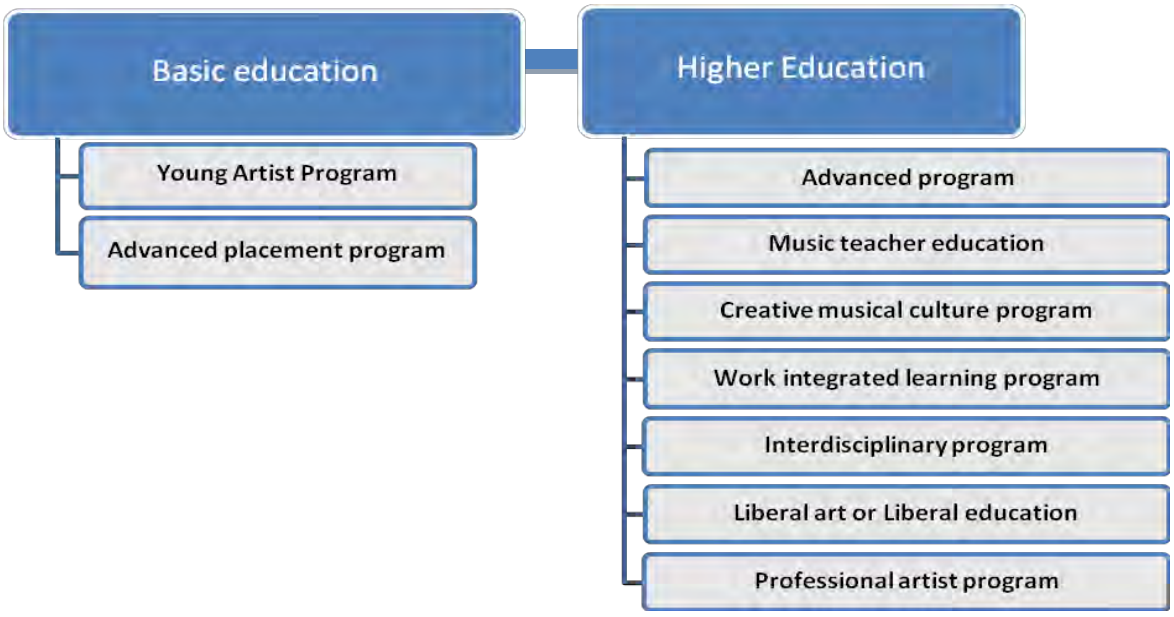

Figure 4. Curricular Alternatives in the Future

Environments for music learning and creativity. In order to promote self-directed learning (SDL), there should be designated areas or places where people can learn and create music. More space means more music. In this way, music can be part of society and, as a result, regarded as a social asset. More space for music should be allocated in the following places: cultural centers, auditoriums, cultural squares, and music museums. There should also be more music programs on television, radio, and the Internet. Thailand is expected to be an important center of music education and cultural heritage in Asia.

Career development for music teachers, musicians, music scholars, and music instructors in universities. Music instructors and music professionals that teach in universities should be able to acquire academic titles, e.g., Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and

Professor as part of their career development. Currently, there is no clear system or criteria on how to acquire academic titles for music instructors and music professionals that teach in universities. As a result, there are problems in developing or expanding the curricula, raising the standards of this profession, supporting graduate students in doing research, evaluation, and quality assurance. In order to promote career development of music instructors in universities, new criteria should be developed including indicators, types of work, and nature of work, because musical academic works are different from those in other fields. In addition, there should be support systems for music teachers who teach at schools or other institutes so that music education in Thailand can develop.

Changes in Management

In order to bring changes to music education management in higher education, stakeholders in Thailand (Ministry of Education, Office of Higher Education Commission, Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment) need to be flexible and aware of the uniqueness of music when addressing the administration, policies, standards, and quality assurance. More cooperation from private sectors should also be promoted for the changes in the following directions:

Cooperation with private sectors, independent funding agencies, social sectors at all levels, and national organizations. Working with the above mentioned organizations will be a catalyst for change. Cooperation can be in the form of financial support, implementation, public relations, or curricular development with the private sector, e.g., co-programs of music study, internship, and other forms of cooperation so that students will have more job opportunities in the private sector after they graduate. More cooperation with the organizations at the national level should also be promoted such as scholarships in different

areas of music study, career development programs, educational technology development, and visiting scholars exchange programs.

The innovative university (or innovative organization) – source of knowledge – a model of music education in Thai society. The College of Music, Mahidol University, is an example of an innovative music program. It is an autonomous college which has an independent administrative system. This type of academic institute can be a model for other institutes in the future due to the following characteristics: (1) human resource development by supporting music programs and activities, providing scholarships for musicians, music teachers and students, singers, sound engineers, music businessmen, and other music-related careers so that they can be competitive at the international level. (2) career development of music professionals (skill development and quality of life development) as well as development of the music profession.

Propositions for Development

All of the above mentioned functions of an innovative organization should be integrated for the development of music education, music knowledge, and human resources. The government should prioritize music education at the policy and strategic levels when making a national plan for music education in higher education institutes in Thailand. When drafting a national plan or strategy, the organization in charge should organize brainstorming activities with music institutes and organizations on the following strategies: (1) empowering music teachers at all levels by giving incentives including career development and fringe benefits for the development of music teachers at all levels. (2) making music available for all children. Music should be part of their lives. Children should have opportunities to learn, play, appreciate, and love music. They should have access to music education through a life-long learning process. As for children with musical talent, they should be empowered and

supported so that they can realize their potential. (3) music education for future music professionals: An objective of music education is to produce music professionals in the areas of music business and industry as part of the creative industry. These graduates shall enter the labor market and work as professionals in different areas of music. If they are empowered, they can become professionals at the international level and Thailand can be more competitive in terms of the music industry. (4) music for the general public: Music should be available for all people. Anybody interested in music should have access to learning, playing, and appreciating music as music can improve their quality of life.

All of the above mentioned strategies should include the following two components: (1) investment in different social sectors such as private sectors, independent organizations, government sectors, and national organizations (2) networking with other organizations and institutes for music education and activities. However, in terms of cooperation, the duties and responsibilities of each sector should be clearly determined for the systematic development of music education in Thailand.

Another key point to the success of the above mentioned strategies is the cooperation among academic institutes that provide music study programs at the higher education level including private music schools, informal education networks, parents' associations and networks, entrepreneurs, etc. People in all sectors should participate in music education, especially at the policy level as wider networks will result in more cooperation from all sectors in policy making and strategy implementation for the development of music professionals as part of human resource development.

About the Author

Nantida Chandransu has a scholarship from the H.M. King Rama 2 (PhraBuddhalertlaNaphalai) Foundation (under the Royal Patronage), Thailand, from year 7 as a student at the Dramatic Arts College until the completion of her Master Degree in Music Education from Mahidol University. Her academic success has garnered her further scholarships from the University Development Commission (UDC) Scholarship Commission on Higher Education, Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, Ministry of Education,

Thailand, which have allowed her to pursue her PhD in Music Education at Mahidol University.

Nantida Chandransu has over seven years' experience in music education research. She served as Head of the Research Management Office at College of Music, Mahidol University, Thailand from 2008 - 2010. She is a co-researcher of the "Research for Development of New Knowledge in Music" project which was funded by The Thailand Research Fund (TRF). She was also the Head of research project in "Research Project for Development of the Music Research System Innovation: College of Music, Mahidol University". This research project has been granted by The Thailand Research Fund (TRF), 2008. Nantida Chandransu has published more than 15 articles on music education, published in Mahidol Music Journal.

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Music Education and the Culture of Assessment: A Hong Kong Secondary School Perspective

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Abstract

A fundamental objective of Hong Kong in the 21st century is a vision of itself as an international cultural metropolis. This sits within a wider culture of change initiated by the comprehensive educational reforms launched in 2000, all aimed at preparing the future workforce for the challenges of the new millennium by encouraging students to take the learning initiative while simultaneously nurturing in them the ability to think and create. At the same time Hong Kong, at both an educational and at a wider, societal level, is a high-stakes, results-based environment generated by a culture of assessment. It is within this context that the article uses Music (through its traditional espousal of cultural values) as a "barometer" of the present climate to report the findings of a survey of Hong Kong secondary students in an attempt to gauge, and consequently articulate, the place of this particular subject within the curriculum. The subsequent confirmation that the cultural aims of the HKSAR are at odds with a mindset which is essentially commercial at heart reveals more than a simple mismatch in

terms of drivers: the wider implication that, in real terms, little has effectively changed in the past decade is a finding which clearly has important repercussions. Hinting that a "back to basics" tripartite process of rethinking, reevaluation and reorientation may well be required in order to help ensure that Hong Kong successfully realizes its ongoing policy goals, the article concludes with some suggestions of its own for the various relevant stakeholders.

Never the Twain? Hong Kong's 21st Century Cultural Evolution

If there is one city that truly represents a unique synthesis of East and West, then Hong Kong is surely that city; it is, after all, the place where a traditional Confucian work ethic (characterized perhaps most obviously by an innate pragmatism) comes ready-wrapped within a colonial sensibility. Although the great majority of the population is Chinese, the 150 years of British administration has duly played its part in helping to shape the city as one that embraces both the essence of Chinese culture and the diversities of other cultures: together, these contribute to its position as one of "diversity with identity". In addition, while recognizing that Hong Kong's cultural identity should start from acknowledging both its local character as well as its deeply-rooted cultural traditions, this is today matched by a vision which is at once both open and pluralistic.

Globally, Hong Kong is perhaps best known for its role as an international financial center rather than for its artistic and cultural offerings. Indeed, the popular stereotype of the city holds that its residents are far too focused on getting and spending to concern themselves with the ephemeral affairs of art and culture. However, it is equally undeniable that the role of art and culture has taken on increasing prominence in the city's search for an identity in the years since the handover of the territory back to China. While cultural matters fall mainly under the purview of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (http://www.lcsd.gov.hk) and the Hong Kong Arts and Development Council (http://www.hkadc.org.hk), the blueprint for the Government of

the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's (henceforth, HKSAR) cultural policy came via the adoption of the Policy Recommendation Report of the Culture and Heritage Commission (http://www.hab.gov.hk) – a high-level advisory body responsible for advising the Government on the policies as well as funding priorities on culture and the arts – in April 2003. Adopting a broader perspective towards the overall cultural development and cultural position of Hong Kong (through its six principles of "people-oriented", "pluralism", "freedom of expression and protection of intellectual property", "holistic approach", "partnership" and "community-driven") and a narrower one in matters relating to resource deployment, cultural facilities and arts education, investment in culture and the arts has moved away from a demand-led model to one that is now more typically supply-led and vision-driven. Comprising four major elements – the respect for freedom of creation and expression, the provision of opportunities for participation, the encouragement of diversified and balanced development and the support of environment and conditions through venues, funding, education and administration – there is a conscious decision on the part of the HKSAR to provide a descriptive (rather than prescriptive) cultural policy and to offer no official definition "on culture and the arts, nor influence the specific operation of artistic creation or contents of creativity. Instead, the Government is committed to upholding the freedom of cultural and artistic creation and expression as well as providing an environment that keenly supports the development of culture and the arts" (Home Affairs Bureau, 2008, p. 1).

As it moves forward into the new millennium, Hong Kong aims to position itself as the city most capable of bridging China and the world, in the process opening up new opportunities on the cultural front. Guided by its ultimate aspiration to become an international cultural metropolis, the Government of the HKSAR has consequently made it its policy to create an environment which is conducive to the freedom of artistic

expression and creation, primarily through the encouragement of wider participation in cultural activities. The initiative that has perhaps come to symbolize this vision more cogently than any other is the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), a major project seen as implementing the Government's policy on arts and culture by meeting the long-term infrastructure needs of Hong Kong's art and cultural development in such a way as to become "a cultural hub for attracting and nurturing talents, an impetus to improve quality of life, as well as a cultural gateway to the Pearl River Delta" (HAB, 2008, p. 2).

Situating the "Assessment Culture" in Hong Kong

Education in Hong Kong has traditionally represented a means of gaining upward mobility, material rewards, foreign residence, or all three (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Based on a three-step structure (primary, secondary, and tertiary) which continues to form the basic design, modern Western school education was introduced around the mid-nineteenth century. Despite a strong British influence, both overall and within the curriculum, the language of instruction within Hong Kong has shifted between being largely English pre-1997, to the mandatory use of Cantonese post-handover, to the restoration of English-medium teaching "in most secondary schools" (Lau, 2009). The present situation is that some "fine-tuning" medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements are in the process of being implemented (starting with Secondary (S) 1 level during the 2010-11 academic year) by the Education Bureau of the HKSAR (http://www.edb.gov.hk) at all government, aided / subsidised (CAPUT), Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary schools and special schools offering the ordinary secondary curriculum as part of the Government's Refined English Enhancement Scheme (Refined EES). Under this initiative – through which schools are no longer classified as those using either Chinese as the medium of instruction ("CMI schools")

or English as the medium of instruction ("EMI schools") – institutions "should take into account their own circumstances (including teachers' capability to teach in English, school support measures, etc.) and students' needs to make professional judgement on the most appropriate MOI arrangements." In order to ensure that students' learning effectiveness is not compromised, "schools have to plan holistically their overall school curriculum (including their whole-school language policy)" in such a way "that their whole-school language policy embraces the strategy underpinning the MOI arrangements, and that the directions of both are consistent" (Education Bureau, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Given the high-stakes nature of the Hong Kong education system, it is no surprise to find that assessment occupies a central role in the minds of its students, teachers, schools and parents. With a long history of coping with examinations, the traditional Chinese recipe for success has always been a combination of effort and diligence; in the case of Hong Kong, the education system is additionally strongly influenced by the highly-competitive public examination system. Perceiving educational success to be the route to a better life, both for their children and their family in general, parents are particularly anxious that their offspring should do well at school. Consequently, the region's students are not only a highly-selected academic body; they are also street-smart in examination technique by the time they enter tertiary education. Prior to 2000, the educational system was one that largely emphasized the *selective function* of assessment, typically focusing on high-stakes exams that required students to "strive for high scores by doing exercises repeatedly and memorizing the model answers" (Berry, 2008, p. 26). Such "teaching to the test" was deemed to be detrimental to students' potential creativity and Hong Kong has, instead, pushed ahead with curriculum reform in which assessment is highlighted as key for learning. The document that makes such a proposal explicit, *Learning for Life, Learning through Life* (Education Commission of

Hong Kong, 2000), "reiterates that assessment should be incorporated into classroom teaching. … In other words, assessment should not be treated merely as an end-of-learning activity with the single purpose of finding out whether the set learning outcomes have been met. Assessment should also be used to help students learn during the teaching and learning processes. Teachers are expected to provide quality feedback and specific advice to students" (2008, pp. 26-27).

However, assessment is also a process caught in transition, with government policies routinely placing conflicting demands on schools – especially with their increasing focus on accountability – which, in turn, translates at a school / classroom level as the dichotomy between the purposes of "education for all" and "education as gatekeeper". In the case of Hong Kong, the education system is additionally strongly influenced by the highly-competitive public examination system. When combined with a norm-referencing system that will see only the top 20% succeed in reaching tertiary level, "teaching becomes focused and ruthless, particularly when teaching and examining are carried out in a second language (L2), so that Hong Kong students are under considerable academic stress early on in their school careers" (Watkins & Biggs, 1996, p. 277).

Students' attitudes towards assessment can perhaps best be summarized as the effects brought about by the interplay between such external forces as parental influences, society and peers and internal personal factors such as interest, self-determination and personal goals for achievement. These various factors combine to form a kind of "expectancy for success" that operates hand in hand with the values that students place on their schooling. In modifying the subjective task value box within the expectancy-value theory of Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele (1998) to incorporate the issues of attainment value, task value, task difficulty and intrinsic motivation, McPherson *et al*. (2005) aimed to explain students' valuation (or lack thereof) with

reference to specific Visual Arts / Music subject participation. As far as this particular study is concerned, a later conception of the same theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) similarly identifies four issues; the specific aim of the additional "parents' evaluations / expectations" construct is to contextualize the study by bringing more sharply into focus the role the cultural background plays for the Confucian learner:

1. Expectancy, incentive and attainment value / Motivational orientations: Interest, the effort correspondingly expended and perceived assessment and feedback usefulness, along with academic and career development judgments and self-confidence about subject and exam performance, are all factors affected by the degree of (intrinsic) motivation attached by students to particular subjects.
2. Utility value / Importance or Perceived importance: The future importance of a particular subject for students can additionally be viewed in both utilitarian and self-rewarding value terms.
3. Cost or the price of success or failure: Doing well or badly in a particular subject carries a number of additional positive or negative implications for students.
4. Cultural traditions or Parents' evaluations / expectations: Since all learning sits within a wider, social context, students' views on their parents' perceptions of them are important motivating factors, both in terms of the effort they expend and the degree to which they are expected to do well in a particular subject. Likewise, the importance and usefulness parents place on certain subjects and the corresponding degree of satisfaction they feel when their children get high marks are also powerful incentives.

A Question of Value(s)

A complex interrelated combination of probability and expectancy for success on the one hand, combined with beliefs about the importance and desire to do the task on the

other – to which can more recently be added contextual influences – results in motivated behavior (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008). Value is thus defined here as the importance a person attaches to an object within an environment. Simply put, "we may feel capable of doing a task, but if we do not value it, then we will be less likely to engage in it. In the same way, we may value a task, but if we do not feel capable of doing it and expect to fail we will be less likely to engage in the task" (2008, p. 49).

From an educational standpoint, going hand in hand with this lies the fact that different cultures attach different meanings to achievement; inasmuch as they have different achievement goals and go about achieving these goals in different ways we can say that individuals are, effectively, *motivated to achieve for different reasons*. Given that Hong Kong has a long history of teaching to typically high-stakes examinations, it follows that within such an assessment-driven environment certain subjects will assume greater importance in the minds of both its students and (educational) stakeholders. Thus the three traditional "core" curriculum subjects of English, Chinese and Mathematics (to which should now be added Liberal Studies as the newly-instated fourth pillar in 2009) enjoy a more elevated status in Hong Kong, with Music and the Visual Arts not only being perceived as less useful than academic subjects but with students who elect to study them also being less confident that they can achieve good results (McPherson *et al*., 2005). In addition, certain paradoxes exist with regard to student perceptions of both Music and the Visual Arts: namely, that while *interest* in these subjects is greater compared to academic subjects across all school levels, *enjoyment* actually declines across the years of schooling, as does perceived *importance*. Indeed, according to McPherson *et al*., while students believe that Music and the Visual Arts are easier than academic subjects and require less effort, there is also a dramatic decline in students' perceptions of their own ability to study them across the four school levels (2005, p. 3). In addition, two deeply-embedded

viewpoints within both the school and wider, cultural Hong Kong community, cited by the same authors, are also relevant to this article:

- "nature", rather than "nurture", is responsible for the creation of musicians and visual artists (the implication being that any increase in the amount of help will have no impact on a child who is not naturally gifted in either area), and that;
- the arts are rewarding at a superficial level, but are not perceived as positive agents in their contributions to an individual's overall success in life.

Between them, these two fundamental "misconceptions" have traditionally succeeded in conspiring to seriously stifle attempts by arts educators to improve the standing and servicing of Music and the Visual Arts within the Hong Kong school curriculum.

Music as a Barometer of the Current Climate

Despite Music's admittedly somewhat lowly subject status, both inside and outside the Hong Kong classroom, nevertheless at the same time it is still seen as the embodiment of a fully-rounded arts education that is of tangible benefit to children's education through its cultivation of creativity, along with the importance of its role in promoting cultural awareness (HAB, 2003). For this reason it can be viewed as representing the crystallization of the HKSAR's cultural aspirations and initiatives – both imagined and realized – thus far. In short, Music is identified here as a suitable "barometer" of the present climate. Underpinning this as a proven perspective on motivation, expectancy-value theory highlights both the social and environmental factors, along with the values students place on an activity (Eccles, 1987, 1993, 2005;

Eccles *et al*., 1983, 1989; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, 2000, 2002; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998; Wigfield, Tonks, & Eccles, 2004).

Development of the Questionnaire

Since the purpose of the study was to explore the attitudes of those Hong Kong students studying Music at secondary level (together with their opinions of the attitudes of their peers and parents), in the process aiming to determine which subjects students consider to be the most interesting, useful and important as well as investigating how these perceptions are affected by the related processes of assessment and feedback and the students' wider cultural background, the decision was taken to develop a *Questionnaire for Secondary School Students* based on a conception of expectancy-value model of achievement motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

With the exception of a few "warm-up" questions at the beginning of the questionnaire covering students' school level, age, gender and number of family members, all remaining questions were based around either a 5-point Likert scale or a 5-point nonparametric rating covering the five subjects (Chinese, English, Mathematics, Liberal Studies and Music) under consideration:

1. Expectancy-value motivational orientations: Students were asked about how much effort they put into studying, the amount of effort they expended on each subject and the extent to which they believed that being assessed and receiving feedback was useful. They were also asked to judge each subject in terms of its perceived usefulness for their long-term academic and career development as well as focusing on the degree to which they felt confident about doing well in a particular subject.
2. Importance or Perceived importance: Here, students supplied information pertaining to the importance of particular subjects, including their perceptions of being assessed and receiving feedback, as well as the importance they attached to

being perceived as "good" students by both their parents and their peers.

3. The price of success or failure: In an attempt to understand perceptions of success or failure within a subject, students were asked to gauge how they felt about taking tests in particular subjects, the extent to which they were concerned about receiving results, and the value they attached to getting high marks in a particular subject.
4. Parents' evaluations / expectations: The aim here was to encourage students to express their views on their parents' perceptions of them, both in terms of the effort they expend and the degree to which their parents expect them to do well in a particular subject. Students were also asked to gauge the importance and usefulness their parents place on certain subjects, and the degree of satisfaction their parents feel when they get high marks in a particular subject.

Ultimately, it was hoped that the findings would answer three research questions:

1. Which subjects do Hong Kong secondary students find interesting, important and useful?
2. What is the relationship between such perceptions of subject interest, importance and usefulness and the value attached to feedback, assessment and testing?
3. What value do parents place on Music within the framework of their children's education?

These all served to feed into the overarching question guiding the whole study: How do Hong Kong secondary students feel about the subjects that they study, particularly Music?

Seven teachers associated with a tertiary institution in Hong Kong assisted with implementing the questionnaire. A covering letter provided some background information on the nature of the survey. Since only secondary levels 1-4 (aged 12 – 16)

were taught by the contributing teachers, the decision was made to specifically request *which* levels each teacher should distribute the questionnaires among (although which particular classes were selected was left to their discretion) in order to give as equal a balance as possible between teachers and levels. Both Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire were made available. Three hundred returns were analyzed, split equally (75) across level and between gender (150). Attempts were also made, wherever possible, to ensure that an almost equal number of students per teacher for each class within a level were accommodated.

Results

Data Analysis

Rather than attempt a detailed comparison between subjects, the decision was taken to analyze the quantitative data across the four levels by focusing mainly on *frequencies* (in other words, summing the number of instances within a particular category), in order to get a picture of the percentage difference of opinion concerning Music and the "core" subjects, and *descriptive statistics* (designed to give information about the distribution of the variables such as age or gender), typically to find the mean rank or to cross tabulate, and thus more succinctly categorize student opinions.

Since the questions were designed with the purpose of answering each of the four issues within the conception of expectancy-value theory proposed, each issue is thus identified with its associated groupings and specific types of questions, together with the mean scores in tabular form, as follows:

1. <u>Students' perceptions of effort, interest, usefulness and expectations</u> [Issue covered within the proposed model of expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation = *Expectancy-value motivational orientations*]

As noted previously, this construct covered students' degree of motivation in relation to certain subjects via such factors as how hard they worked, the perceived usefulness of being assessed and receiving feedback, judgments relating to subject usefulness in connection with future plans, and how confident they felt about doing well in exams. Thus, students were asked to rate how much effort they put into each of the five subjects and to rank them in the order into which they put the most to the least effort. With regard to interest, students were asked to rank the subjects in order from the most to the least interesting. Similarly, they were required to consider and give their opinions about the degree to which they felt it was useful to be assessed in and to receive feedback on each of the subjects, along with indicating the perceived usefulness of each subject to their future plans. Finally, students were asked to rate how well they expected to do in their exams this year and how happy they expected their parents to be if they did well in each subject, along with ranking the subjects in order from the one in which they expected to do the best to the worst this year.

2. <u>Students' perceptions of importance</u> [Issue covered within the proposed model of expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation = *Perceived importance*]

Here, students were asked to think and give their opinions about the importance they attached to each subject, ranking them from the most to the least important, and indicating the degree to which they felt it was important to be assessed in, to get a high mark in, and to get feedback on each one, along with giving their opinions on their parents' and friends' perceptions of them as a good student in each discipline.

3. <u>Students' feelings about tests</u> [Issue covered within the proposed model of expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation = *Price of success or failure*]

Students were asked to rate how much they worry about doing tests and getting test results and how they feel about getting high marks for each of the subjects, along with ranking the subjects in the order that they worry about doing tests and getting test results from the most to the least and also those subjects for which getting a high mark makes them the most or the least happy.

4. <u>Students' perceptions of their parents' opinions</u> [Issue covered within the proposed model of expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation = *Parents' evaluations / expectations*]

Finally, students were asked a series of questions concerning their perceptions of what their parents thought. These included rating how hard their parents believed they studied each subject, how important their parents considered each of the subjects to be / how important it was to their parents that they got a high mark in each of the subjects, and how useful their parents considered each subject to be to their (students') future plans. They were also asked to rank the subjects in the order of importance their parents placed on them, the order in which they thought their parents believed they would do the best or the worst at this year and the order for which they thought their parents would the most or the least happy if they got a high mark.

Table 1. ***Mean Rating of Students' Perceptions of Each of the Four Issues by Subject***

Subject	Issue	Mean*	SD
Chinese	Expectancy-value motivational orientations	4.16	.61834
	Perceived importance	4.31	.65959
	The price of success or failure	4.04	.91950
	Parents' evaluations / expectations	4.29	.64446
English	Expectancy-value motivational orientations	4.33	.56955
	Perceived importance	4.53	.59271
	The price of success or failure	4.20	.90313
	Parents' evaluations / expectations	4.42	.56437
Mathematics	Expectancy-value motivational orientations	4.15	.66818
	Perceived importance	4.26	.67972
	The price of success or failure	4.04	.97986
	Parents' evaluations / expectations	4.30	.64814
Liberal Studies	Expectancy-value motivational orientations	3.98	.63477
	Perceived importance	4.02	.71548
	The price of success or failure	3.97	.91679
	Parents' evaluations / expectations	4.07	.70441
Music	Expectancy-value motivational orientations	3.21	1.01963
	Perceived importance	3.01	1.05930
	The price of success or failure	3.00	1.17098
	Parents' evaluations / expectations	3.08	1.13196

**1 represents the "lowest" and 5 the "highest" rating within each issue*

As can be seen from the results shown in Table 1, Music is regarded by students as the subject for which their motivational orientations, their perceptions of importance, the price of success or failure, and their beliefs about their parents' evaluations and expectations are all, on average, the lowest. Thus, it is the one into which they put the least effort, the one for which feedback and assessment are considered the least useful, and the one about which they believe their parents will be the least happy if they get a high mark. Likewise, it is perceived as being the least important of the five, including its priority level for assessment, the receipt of high marks and of feedback, and the

degree to which being perceived as a good student by both their parents and their peers is rated. Cost-wise, Music is the subject for which students worry least about doing tests and getting results, and the one for which the receipt of getting a high mark makes them the least happy. Finally, it is the subject into which they themselves believe their parents think they put the least amount of effort, the one they think their parents believe is the least important to get a high mark for, and the one that is the least useful with regard to their future plans.

Discussion and Implications

The Key Findings

As mentioned earlier, it was hoped that by allowing students to give their opinions (in so far as is possible via the medium of a questionnaire) something of a cohesive, collective voice, the results from this research study would thus give those with an educational stake at secondary level a clearer picture of students' perceptions and expectations – in short, a clearer picture about how students *feel* about the subjects they study, particularly Music, both within the immediate context of the other subjects they study and within the wider one of the workplace of the future. This would, in turn, suggest some ways in which assessment (and feedback) might be more closely aligned to the cultural context in which it (they) operate(s).

The Subjects that Hong Kong Students Find Interesting, Important and Useful

The first of the three research questions / objectives aimed to find out which subjects Hong Kong students at secondary level find interesting, important and useful and whether or not these perceptions change significantly over the course of their school lives.

As anticipated, the traditional three "core" subjects of Chinese, English and Mathematics were the ones that students across all four levels felt were the most interesting, useful and important, both for their studies at the present time and their future plans. In addition, students clearly felt that these were the subjects most highly valued by their parents and peers and, as such, were anxious to be perceived as "good students" in the eyes of both parties where these particular disciplines were concerned. Similarly, as expected, these perceptions of interest, importance and usefulness shifted over the course of students' school lives, typically in a downward direction and frequently quite radically, particularly in the latter (upper) years. In short, English, Chinese and Mathematics were perceived by secondary students as being much more important and useful than Music. Within the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation model being proposed, the reasons *why* Music should have such a low importance or utility value were not specified explicitly, nor were specific reasons asked for or given by respondents concerning the sharp decline in Music's favor. The most likely scenario is perhaps a combination of those already propounded; namely, that of Music being perceived as an enjoyable subject but one ultimately limited in terms of career prospects, allied to a diminution of parental influence (and, therefore, greater freedom for self-expression on the part of the respondents) as students mature.

The Relationship between such Perceptions of Subject Interest, Importance and Usefulness and the Value Attached to Feedback, Assessment and Testing

The second research question / objective was concerned with understanding the relationship between students' perceptions of subject interest, importance and usefulness and the value attached to feedback, assessment and testing, allied to how this selection affected their motivation to study such subjects.

Not only did the survey reveal that again it was the "core" subjects that students considered to be the ones most important and useful, both for their present and future plans; these were also the subjects that students considered to be the most important and useful when it came to being assessed and receiving feedback, and for which they worried the most about doing tests and getting results. In expending the most effort in these subjects in an attempt to secure success – initially through much-coveted high marks and, subsequently, their yearly examinations – students thereby gained (additional) kudos in the eyes of their peers and parents, achievements that were clearly valued.

Given that students had already indicated that Music was considered the least important and useful of the five subjects when it came to their present studies and future plans, it was expected that their perceptions to being assessed, receiving feedback and being tested – along with their concerns for the outcome or their feelings of elation in the event of receiving a high mark – would be similarly low, and indeed the results bore out this prediction. Just 9.3% of students considered it to be "very important" to be assessed in Music (with 14.7% feeling the same way about receiving feedback), with similar figures (13.7% and 14.3% respectively) being recorded with regard to usefulness. Additionally, students not only worried little about both taking tests and getting test results in Music compared to Chinese, English and Mathematics, but their concerns in these areas also declined over the school years (although not as markedly as was noted for importance or usefulness). Indeed, student reaction to receiving a high mark in Music was more notable for its ambivalence – as witnessed in the rise from zero respondents in Secondary 1 to 26 by Secondary 4 – than anything else, a result that perhaps speaks volumes for the *absence* of emotions such a seemingly positive scenario perhaps ought to engender.

There thus exists, in the minds of the respondents, a very clear link between task and value: again, while not specifically targeted in this study, it is highly likely that this translates at a practical level into the utilization of certain strategies by students to allow them to consistently deal with the rigorous demands brought about by feedback, assessment and testing.

The Value Placed on Music by Parents within the Educational Framework

What is the value placed on Music by parents within the framework of their children's education, and what patterns – if any – emerged between their perceptions of this subject as opposed to those within the "core" curriculum?

From the findings of this survey there can be little doubt that – assuming the students' views to be accurate – their own feelings towards the subjects they study mirrored very closely those of their elders. Indeed, just as the students themselves consistently rated Music as the least important and least useful subject among the five, as well as the one least likely to generate a positive response through the reward of a high mark, so too were such negative feelings deemed to be shared by their guardians. In short, the results were that Music as a subject continued to fall a long way short of the status afforded to Chinese, English and Mathematics and that its value, at an educational level at least was, beyond being something of superficial interest, extremely limited.

As before, the reasons for this were not explicitly investigated as part of the remit of the questionnaire; nevertheless, they are probably very similar in many respects to those already given for the previous findings. The only caveat to this would be that since, of the three aims / objectives under consideration, this was the one focusing on the wider, social context, it was therefore the most likely to be affected by the expectancy-value of achievement motivation model's "cultural traditions" issue.

Conclusions

In addition to clarifying student opinions, the results of the survey also serve to help gauge the extent to which the HKSAR's efforts at educational reform through the espousal of a more "cultural" mindset mentioned earlier have taken root ten years into its growth. By revealing that it is still the "core" subjects which are considered to be those best placed in terms of the realization of perceived future opportunities, the presence of a deeply-ingrained "commercial" philosophy on the part of the stakeholders in the form of schools, students and parents indicates that, when it comes to education at least, the fundamental Chinese values remain essentially unchanged. In short, while the *processes* within the present system – for that, read Assessment for Learning – may have changed, the *products* of those machinations – for this, read English, Chinese and Mathematics – and the elevated pantheons which they (continue to) occupy in the minds of the stakeholders seem to have barely altered. Driven largely by assessment, those values at a student level translate into ones based largely on the degrees of interest, usefulness and relevance certain subjects occupy in the practitioners' minds. These, in turn, lead them to make certain career choices which, given the influence that Confucian society typically wields, tend to mirror those granted the most approval in the eyes of their parents. At a deeper level, such a dichotomous situation can be viewed as a reflection of the changing nature of education itself and the role that it has come to presently occupy in society. There is no doubt that despite the acknowledged necessity of ensuring that the workforce of tomorrow is equipped with the skills to allow it to thrive and survive in the uncertain future of the "knowledge economy" – along with the acceptance of the increasingly vital role that creativity seems destined to play in facilitating such a transition – it is still the practical economics of financial stability which, more often than not, shout with the loudest voice. At a time when the role of

education is often equated to that of vocational preparation, students are quite simply less likely to take a chance on subjects such as the Arts in favor of those deemed to offer the promise of safer, financial rewards. Those subjects that broaden the (creative) mind, but do not necessarily equate to perceived job opportunities, today find themselves increasingly marginalized.

Time to Re-think, Re-evaluate, and Re-orientate?

So what, exactly, is the study saying? While admittedly throwing up as many questions as answers, what does emerge more clearly as a result is the confirmation that the process of change can be both protracted as well as intractable. So what's the solution? To answer that, it is suggested that the Government of the HKSAR revisits the educational reform documents from a decade ago in an attempt to re-assess *who* needs to do *what*, and *how*. In the process, hopefully a more concrete rationale, both for education generally and Music education specifically, will emerge. In the meantime, the following recommendations are put forward as starting points for each of the identified shareholders:

Recommendations for Policy Makers

- Promote actively the importance and necessity of creativity within Hong Kong, not as a nebulous concept but rather as a clearly-defined, tangible asset that must be harnessed, promoted and developed to both include and benefit everyone at all levels of society.
- Work closely with schools, through the medium of education authorities, in taking the initiative to *actively* promote Music as one of the subjects ideally placed to meet the needs and requirements of the new millennium.
- Stress always the *in*clusiveness, rather than the *ex*clusiveness of Music, wherever

possible, so that the subject is felt to have a place in the lives and general education of *all* children, irrespective of ability.

Recommendations for Schools

- Aim to prepare students for life beyond the school classroom by thinking objectively about what kinds of skills they are likely to need, and have the courage to take the initiative by investing in those areas, rather than continuing to focus too heavily on a narrow range of "safe", purely academic skills.
- Raise the status of Music by developing a "tradition" within the school, starting with the encouragement of students to take the initiative in forming their own groups and leading to the organization of performances, competitions, festivals, etc.
- Strive to change parents' perceptions towards Music education by both clarifying its aims and effects and inviting them to see how Music is changing the life of the school from within.

Recommendations for (Music) Teachers

- Investigate ways and means to try and make Music more relevant (and thus more important, useful, etc.) to all students across all levels – whether that might be by inviting them to choose which kinds of Music they want to perform or in forging links with musicians outside the classroom – as well as in thinking about how the processes of musical assessment and feedback can be made more meaningful within the remit of Assessment for Learning.
- Think continually of ways to hold students' interest in Music for as long as possible, including looking for ways of encouraging those who wish to follow their "dream" of pursuing Music as a career, thereby counterbalancing the more

widespread, pragmatic notions of career advice.

An inward-looking "value package" driven by an ultimate reliance on summative assessment within the framework of high-stakes examinations (underpinned by an at-present unshakeable faith in the "core" curriculum) on the one hand, versus a progressively outward-looking future which has more cultural aspirations for Hong Kong at its heart on the other inevitably make for uncomfortable bedfellows. Indeed, perhaps the most intriguing dilemma – raised indirectly by the survey – is in trying to provide a definition of what, in today's economically-driven world, constitutes the notion of "culture". There is a strong argument that with the ascendancy of today's "marketization" of education, culture, for so long a byword for knowledge, excellence and morality, is no longer seen as an important legitimating reference (Readings, 1996). If it is instead a strictly utilitarian version of that concept which prevails in today's educational climate – that, in turn, sees students turning away from the Arts because of the belief that these subjects carry little value in monetary terms – the problem may boil down to one simple question: How can we convince society of the value of grooming the child that wishes, let us say, to become a musician?

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