

**MUSIC CLASSROOMS AND THE FORCES THAT SHAPE THEM:
INVESTIGATING CHINESE & U.S SECONDARY GENERAL MUSIC TEACHING**

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In recent years, the exchange of education policy reforms in China and the United States have had an impact on music teaching methodologies in both places. Where the U.S. system was traditionally decentralized so that authority was placed in the hands of local governments, today the system is becoming more nationalized and standardized causing the music education system to decrease in its relative importance within traditional school subjects. Meanwhile, China has been moving toward decentralization. As its economic needs have shifted from manufacturing to tech-related entrepreneurial positions, the role of the creative arts and music education has grown in prominence. Research shows that as a result, a new interest has grown in investigating more and new teaching methodologies so that the more oral, tradition based rote and drilling methods are being exchanged for more step by step, prescriptive, and often Western-based methods. In the United States, the opposite has occurred as a result of testing movements causing teachers to have less time to cover more material which is often not related to their subject. As a result, rote style teaching and learning as well as drilling has become more common.

This study sought to determine whether the implications of policy change on music teaching methodologies are coming to fruition. To accomplish this, responses from six secondary general music teachers - three from China who completed questionnaires and three from the U.S. who were interviewed - were collected. Four areas of discussion/description were covered including the teacher's educational background, relationships to sources of authority, instructional methodologies, and global perspectives. Qualitative data analysis was carried out using Dedoose to reach conclusions that can serve

future research studies and inform policy makers about the current state of secondary general music education. The study concluded that music teaching methods are embedded in culture and personal practice. As a result, changes in teaching pedagogy and style are gradual, frequently met with resistance, or undergone unknowingly. While to some degree mandates from the federal government have an impact on how music teachers carry out their day-to-day lesson plans in both countries, the stronger influences which determines pedagogical decisions are situational and draw from the teacher's personal educational experiences, their prior role models, and knowledge of their individual classroom. The study examines the limits and values of cross-cultural research and concludes that while sharing best practices internationally is a worthwhile endeavor, perhaps the most successful path to changing practice occurs with full cultural immersion and understanding as a result of international teaching and learning experiences.

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USE OF KEYWORDS

Several keywords are used throughout this paper and are listed in *italics* when used. These terms are defined here in order for readers to understand the context in which they are being used. These include:

1. ***Secondary general music*** will be referred to using the U.S. classification of “secondary” education – that is middle and high school. In the U.S., secondary typically refers to students in grades 6-12, ages 12-19. “General music” refers to music education courses which do not focus solely on performing in an ensemble (i.e. band, orchestra, chorus) but rather appreciation of all types of music, how music is constructed and notated, and other music courses which are offered to the general public but do not require the student to perform at a concert (i.e. guitar and piano courses).
2. ***Teacher-centered learning*** and ***Student-centered learning*** are phrases used throughout education pedagogy literature today which are used in this paper to refer to the construction of lesson plans which either involve more active participation from the student or from the teacher. In other words, a teacher-centered approach to instruction might be a lecture-driven lesson in which the student takes notes. A student-centered approach to instruction may require students to discuss an essential question in groups or solve a puzzle in order to come to the conclusion of the content the teacher wishes the student to learn without the teacher having to directly describe the concept to the students.
3. ***Rote method of teaching*** is an instruction technique in which the teacher gives students content to and asks the students to recall the knowledge accurately. Similarly, in music, rote learning refers to a teacher singing or playing a fragment of music and the student repeating it back as accurately as possible.
4. ***Differentiation*** is a recent instructional method that involves breaking students into groups according to their preferred learning styles, strengths, or knowledge level. For instance, if half of the class completely understands addition, the teacher might give them an activity that allows them to solve a word problem involving adding. If another half does not quite understand addition, they may work with blocks to visualize addition and write down their answers.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The role education plays in a given society is in constant flux. National economic success, job market growth and fluctuation, changing technology needs within the military and energy industry, and even ethnocentrism all serve as motivation for policy makers to make major changes that impact everyone connected to classrooms. In 2011 U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan explained, “Throughout the globe, education is now recognized as the new game-changer that drives economic growth and social change. And it is great teachers who help build the higher-order skills that students need to succeed in the 21st century” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, np). For quite some time the role that education has played in shaping the success of other sectors of a society has driven a race for the best education system among all the countries in the world. In recent years, globalist trends have inflated the competition, and politicians have responded by pointing out the urgency to discover best practices to implement within their society.

Over the past 10 years, Canada, Asia, and Scandinavia have been lauded in international forums for having some of the best education statistics in the world - things like highest expenditure, public education system rankings, and high scores on international standardized tests such as TIMSS or PISA that measure achievement in math, reading, and science (DeSilver, 2017). The United States has neglected to rank near the top 10 of any such international study (Ryan, 2013). This raises concerns over the state of the U.S. education system, and by extension the U.S. economy, and national security.

U.S. policy makers answered these concerns by reforming the once decentralized U.S. education system into one that mirrors some of “those high-performing and rapidly improving countries” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) listed above. A more streamlined, centralized system was developed which mandates curriculum standards (*Common Core State Standards*) that are assessed in standardized tests (*No Child Left Behind*). Effects of these changes can be felt in all areas of the curriculum. While

subjects such as math, science, and language have immediately returned quantitative results that can be analyzed to determine the degree of success from implementation, understanding the impact of this legislation on untested subjects such as the fine arts, including music education, is less clear.

In 2010, as an internationally-minded U.S. music teacher new to the field, I began in a similar position to Arne Duncan when he spoke at the Economy National Symposium. I had just left university and still felt there were gaps in my knowledge about the best way to teach my subject. In observing many teachers in the field during my time student teaching, every teacher seemed to have a different approach. It was hard to know which was best to use when in my classroom. I wondered if these approaches, methods, or pedagogies, were even documented. I wondered if there were other undocumented, perhaps better, ways to approach teaching my subject that were used around the world. I wondered how and why the methods of teaching I was observing came to be the preferred approaches. The only thing I seemed to know was that I could not examine teaching practices from all 196 countries in the world to answer these questions, so I had to choose the country I would investigate wisely.

China became the subject of my studies of music education methodologies and the forces that shape them for a number of reasons. In recent years, China has leapt into the spotlight due to its sudden emergence as an international economic superpower, now ranked as the second largest GDP in the world (Hamlin & Li, 2010). It has also experienced a sudden jump to the top of the international rankings for PISA test scores (Dillon, 2010; Zhao, 2014). In most countries today, change is a gradual, slow moving process that is only realized when observing the past. But in China, an extremely diverse, robust, and highly influential country, something happened to cause this dramatic and unexpected shift and I wanted to know what it was.

Although the international indicators measuring ‘best school systems’ said little about music education being particularly prosperous in China, there are few international measurements to compare

music education systems throughout the world. Music experts might point to Western Europe and the legacies of such masters as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven to enhance my study, but as a descendant of Europeans I felt that there was less to be gained in studying the methods of a region from which my culture descended. Additionally, public policy indicates that the Chinese education system is moving away from central government planning, strict control of school curricula, and emphasis on standardized testing - just the opposite of the United States (Zhao, 2007). Observing the impacts of this flip of public policy on music education from both sides of the spectrum could further illuminate where best practices lie for the countries involved, how they are shaped by the forces around them, and ultimately how they shape their society at large.

With all of this taken into consideration, my journey was decided. Admittedly, I did not even know how to say hello in Chinese before my arrival (不好意思!). Seven years later, after spending five years in Shanghai and two in Massachusetts teaching and studying music, I present this study to compare the Chinese and the U.S. secondary general music classroom and the forces that shape them as the thesis for my Master's Degree.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand what is occurring in secondary general music classrooms in China and the United States. It will examine how music is being taught and the forces that are shaping these conditions in an effort to determine best practices. My research question is: What are the methods by which secondary general music is being taught in the United States and the People's Republic of China today and what is their relationship to the policies and stakeholders shaping them?

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE

There are several reasons why this research is significant. First, China and the U.S. are two of the most influential countries in the world. The student populations that the Chinese and U.S. education systems serve are among the most robust. Therefore, understanding how these countries train students in creativity and basic musical skills is useful on a practical level for music educators seeking common, new, or best practices. Furthermore, because of their widespread influence, many countries have chosen to emulate the educational philosophies of China and the U.S. This research can give some insight into whether adopting these methodologies might be a worthwhile endeavor. Finally, because the topic of this paper is heavily influenced by public policy and the motivations for making such policies over the past fifty years, the implications of the changes on music education and these societies as a whole will be explored. Therefore, policy makers from China and the United States interested in better understanding how their legislation impacts music educators as well as how music education impacts greater societal goals should have an interest in this research, too.

Second, there is a lack of data to describe what *general music* teachers are doing in classrooms. Within a given music program, ensembles (band, orchestra, chorus) often become the priority for U.S. educators and administrators because regular performances give the groups public exposure and critique. On the other hand, general music courses are designed to introduce the entire student body of a school to a survey of music topics that are only assessed inside the classroom. These courses typically take place at a K-8 level and may take the form of a course introducing basic musical terminology, theory, and musical elements to students through singing, playing simple instruments (i.e. recorder, metallophones, auxiliary percussion instruments), and other music games. At the middle or high school level, music appreciation courses are more common with focuses on music history, opera/musical theatre, or composition and music theory. Alternatively, piano or guitar courses that focus more on performing a

variety of music literature for a particular instrument are also traditionally categorized as general music courses because they survey various music genres, styles, and music concepts and are available to students at all levels.

To date, the purposes outlined for the general music curriculum subject in the United States have been broad, vague, and ambiguous. The end product of the class may vary greatly because the courses offered vary greatly from school to school. Thus, when course content and purpose is unclear, measuring the relative success of the students receiving certain knowledge nationally or internationally is muddled. From a teacher perspective, then, general music courses are given less attention even though they are perhaps more influential in molding the general public's musical skills, knowledge, understanding, and perspective of the role music education plays in society. Compounding the low priority given to the course is the broad nature of the subject matter and lack of assessment. As a result, these courses quickly lose their legitimacy. Examining general music education in this research can create better exposure to the issues surrounding the subject so that public policy makers may better understand what and how music is being taught to potentially improve the quality of these courses. Because of this, two organizations that may be interested in these topics include the International Society of Music Educator's (ISME) and the National Association for Music Educators (NafME) which regularly drive arts advocacy and professional development for current music educators in the field.

Finally, though overall research in the area of comparative music education is robust, perspectives are still limited and lack exposure to policy makers. The depth of our understanding of different cultures is growing as societies become more multicultural, however it is difficult to ever entirely understand a culture that is not yours. Studies attempting to observe the Chinese music education system published to date do not seem to agree with the observations I had throughout my five years in China (Pine, 2012; Mijares, 2009; Sitsky, 1985). Instead, some Western researchers in China

made broad generalizations based on limited in-classroom observations that were likely rehearsed or skewed by the observers heightened emotional awareness brought on by being in a new place. I say this based on anecdotal evidence. In both of the schools in which I taught in Shanghai, the teachers compiled more detailed lesson plans than they would carry out on an average day for observed lessons from visitors. These lessons were sometimes rehearsed several times beforehand with students chosen to be a part of the class previous to the observation to ensure that the lesson was carried out in such a way that the outside observer would be impressed. Though I do not know if this happens in every school in Shanghai and in every observed situation, I do believe that lessons are changed when certain people are watching which makes it difficult to know what exactly is going on in the classrooms - in any school in any place - without an inside perspective. This type of understanding can only be achieved by working closely with colleagues, developing trust, and observing patterns over a long period of time.

Therefore, this research seeks to be more specific, candid, penetrating, and first hand than previous studies. In order to accomplish this degree of understanding, I will speak to my own observations as well as the views of six interviewed music teachers from some of the best schools in Shanghai, China and Boston, the United States. The outcome of this project should lead to better cross-cultural understanding between the two countries, identify areas that may need more attention in research, and perhaps to collect best practices that may lead to further collaboration in the future.

2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Several areas of academic research literature had to be explored in order to better understand general music classrooms in the United States and China. First, the history of education policy/music education policy for both sites was reviewed to determine the goals policymakers have for music education. Next,

general music teaching methodologies and educational theorists (East & West) were listed to determine what pedagogies are available, relevant, and most commonly used by current music educators. Additionally, cultural influences on student learning preferences were explored. Finally, research that examined how teachers manage change as it is dictated to them by various sources of authority was consulted to determine whether music educators are likely to be directly influenced by policy change. The intersection of these three topics creates the entire frame for the research project completed for this paper. Understanding the relationship between these three areas creates a space for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the general music education systems of China and the United States today.

Documents detailing official education policies are easily accessible on the Department of Education (U.S.) or Ministry of Education (China) government websites. Analyses describing the implications of these policies on the education systems as a whole are also extensive and easily found (China - Rai, 1983; Ngok, 2007; Brand, 2009 - United States - Spring, 2006; Zemelman, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) publishes reports that have helpful information as to the quantitative outcomes of policy changes across the educational spectrum. These studies detail the number of students that have access to music education throughout the U.S., the amount of money spent on music education, and even assess eighth grade students' creative progress in music throughout the nation. The recent 2016 report card showed little to no change since the previous in 2008 (NCES, 2016). Though this helps to bring light to the qualitative outcomes of current policy changes and subsequent method changes, it does not reveal what is happening in between - whether what is happening in the classrooms is having an impact on qualitative assessments.

Some articles and books detail the evolution of Chinese and U.S. music education practices which briefly describe policy change impacts over time (China - Law & Ho, 2009 United States - Mark & Gary, 2007). However, I did not find literature specifically analyzing the implications of policy on

secondary general music teaching *methods* throughout the past 50 years. Gerrity's 2009 article "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: Determining the Impact of Policy on Music Education in Ohio" comes closest by describing challenges in time management that result in music classrooms in the United States due to policy change.

In China, discussion about the impacts the Cultural Revolution has had on music education is not as specific as it could be in literature due to ongoing political censorship concerns. Therefore, policy for music education is not well documented here until the 1980s. Compounding the political barrier to better understanding of this topic is the language barrier - literature researched herein were read in English rather than also being translated from Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, foreign observations (Pine, 2012; Mijares, 2009; Sitsky, 1985) and comparative studies (Rao, 1996; Penner, 1995; Lee & Park, 2014; Dineen & Niu, 2008) are more commonly found than simple discussions of the inner workings of the music education system, and its relationship to public policy. Like this paper, several comparative studies acknowledge the transition occurring in the area of education policy in China and the U.S. and the exchange of teaching methods occurring as a result. Still, they do not focus specifically on music education, though Dineen & Niu (2008) at least look into creative Western teaching methods (including visual art content) and their relative success within the Chinese cultural learning style. This literature gives a fair amount of information about policy change in China and the impacts on music education as a whole.

Many textbooks exist that are designed to introduce new music educators to various teaching pedagogies and educational theorists, though the two most referenced in my undergraduate work at West Chester University of Pennsylvania were Campbell (2006) and Spring (1999). In the U.S., the National Association for Music Educators (NafME) has compiled a list of such books that might inform a music teacher's instruction: <https://nafme.org/my-classroom/books/categorized-list-of-selected-nafme-books/>.

While this list contains over 100 books, based on the synopsis of each it appears that only about five are exclusively concerned with teaching pedagogies for the *secondary general* music classroom. However, ensembles such as orchestra, band, and chorus receive their own categories on this list so that each are represented by at least ten books. This illustrates the emphasis placed on ensemble programs in the country well.

Because I did not receive my music educator certification in China, and because I cannot read fluently in Mandarin, it is unclear what type of guidance is provided for young Chinese teachers about music pedagogy in the classroom. Anecdotally speaking, Chinese music teaching colleagues expressed to me that many of the methods taught to them were Western in origin (i.e. Dalcroze, Kodaly, Orff). However, the literature suggests that the guiding principles of how to act as a teacher in China are instilled broadly throughout the education system and cultural rituals from an early age via Confucian ideals about music learning laid out in *The Analects* (500 BCE) (Li, 2012). In my research, I hope to provide more evidence to support these claims and to better understand how secondary general music is being taught in the United States and China.

To determine the external forces shaping music education policy change (and vice versa), I consulted a collage of sources. Richard Florida (2002) and Yong Zhao (2007) have led the way in forging an argument for the correlation between economic success and strong arts education programs which gives purpose to the policy changes seen in China in recent years. Jin Li (2012) does a lot to better understand how and why Chinese and U.S. students prefer certain teaching methods as a result of cultural factors which gives insight into whether the current changes in landscape could be successful. Multiple comparative studies exist in which teachers attempted to exchange teaching techniques to gauge their relative success (Penner, 1995; Dineen & Ruth, 2008; Pine, 2012; Lee & Park 2014). As a result, teacher satisfaction rates are examined as they relate to resistance or acceptance of change studies

(Chen, 2010; Su et. al, 2001; Terhart, 2013; Linares, 2016). These studies together give insight into whether policy exchange is reasonable, worthwhile, or even possible which is the central question in the comparative aspect of this study.

2.1 MUSIC EDUCATION POLICY TRENDS 1950-PRESENT

The K-12 education systems of China and the United States have undergone a great amount of change in the past fifty years. From the Post-World War II era, the Cold War, the Cultural Revolution, to the Globalist trends of the 00s, both countries reversed their previous beliefs about education so recent studies indicate that the current systems of China and the United States are perhaps more alike today than they ever have been before (Pine, 2012; Preus, 2007; Law & Ho, 2009; Ngok, 2007; Zhao, 2007; DeBoer, 2012).

One field impacted by these policy shifts is music education. Throughout history it is observed that when economic goals become the primary purpose behind excellence in education, a debate starts over which school subjects deserve the most money and energy to achieve economic success. In these circumstances of educational policy crisis the fields that typically suffer the worst budget cuts are in the arts because of the relatively high costs and perceived lack of importance compared to the “academic subjects” (Xie & Leung, 2011; Law & Ho, 2009; Gerrity, 2009; Mark & Gary, 2007; Spring, 2006).

However, a recent counter-argument has been made that the most important driver of a 21st century economy rich in human resources is creativity and innovation – skills that can be honed in arts education courses (Florida, 2002; Zhao, 2007). Thus, policy-makers are now considering the pivotal role arts education may or may not have in economic and other competitive outcomes - and in some cases shifting resources accordingly. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is not only to briefly describe

trends in recent educational policies in China and the U.S., but also to discuss how these changes may impact the field of music education.

2.1.1 Trends in Chinese Educational Policies

In the recent decades of post-Mao China, fast-paced improvements have advanced its citizens education, health, and overall standard of living. The Chinese education system, which serves the largest number of students of any country in the world, is no exception to this rule. Though the history of the Chinese education system is quite uneven in the last century due to war and the disruptive Cultural Revolution, since Mao Zedong's death in 1976 the direction of education policies has been consistent. Deng Xiaoping (following the beliefs of Liu Shaoqi) and those in leadership after him have made the purpose of Chinese education to produce students who can serve the 21st century economy, to “transition from the world's largest education system to one of the world's best... from a country with larger scale of human resource to a country rich in human resources.” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 6) And so, the Chinese education system as it exists today retains a great deal of influence from its long and fascinating history so that it now appears as an amazingly complex mosaic of hundreds of years of education policy decisions and philosophies laced with 21st century economic ideals.

In analyzing the mandates coming from the last 50 years of education policy decisions in China, five trends emerge including; 1) progress towards and focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2) renewed commitment to Confucian learning ideals and “moral education”, 3) decentralization of control of school financing and curriculum, 4) ongoing political influence on education specifically socialist and nationalist beliefs, and 5) weighing in globalization, marketization, and modernization in order to remain competitive. In the following section, each of these trends will briefly be discussed in terms of how they reflect in policy to affect music education.

1) Progress toward Millennium Development Goals

One element that policies coming from the Ministry of Education in China have in common is progress toward the MDGs. In fact, when Deng Xiaoping mandated the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* in 1986, his modernization campaign began working to create education for all before the MDGs even existed. This fundamental education document mandated a nine-year (through middle school) compulsory education for every child “regardless of gender, nationality, race, status of family property or religious belief, etc.” (1986, np). While this law focused on bringing equality in access to education to all students, the government was quickly able to identify underserved groups in the following years – particularly minorities and those in rural regions. Thus, when the *Education Law of the People's Republic of China* was passed in 1995, it focused efforts specifically on providing support for those two groups (Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1995).

Without a doubt these two laws have succeeded in achieving their goals. 2008 estimates indicate that approximately 580,000 primary and secondary schools exist in China, which serve 320 million students (Xie & Leung, 2011). In 2006, primary school Net Enrollment Rates reached 99%, more than fulfilling the Education For All and Promotion of Gender Equality Millennium Development Goals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

Although these two laws do not explicitly state which subjects the students are required to learn in school, the implication of having enrolled 99% of the student population in schools is that the students at least have access to general music education. In addition, policies created by the Arts Education Department the same year, in 1986, specified what sort of topics must be covered at what grade levels of music education. This focus on details within the programs encourages legitimacy of the topic as a whole, driving its importance and thus continued access for students (Law & Ho, 2009).

While access to education has been a goal in recent reform, so has “meritocracy” (Rai, 1983). In this system, the students who were most talented are promoted to high-echelon learning environments. This “sorting-machine” (Spring, 2006) method of schooling lead to the development of the multi-tiered school system that still exists today. In this system “key-schools” are the most coveted for entry but require top scores on high school exams. By using this system of schooling in the early stages of reform, the Chinese were able to quickly identify students who had the potential to help make major infrastructural changes in China in order to move away from the devastation of the Cultural Revolution. These top students were often sent abroad to learn from the Western advances in technology that had occurred during the previous decades of stagnation and many of them were brought back to help China pick up the ruins (Ngok, 2007). Essentially, the early 1980s saw Deng Xiaoping adjusting educational policies in an attempt to bring order to the chaos that had occurred previous to his leadership. This was the original reason for reform – to re-cultivate an education system as quickly as possible.

It was not until 2001 that music education became compulsory as stated in the *National Music Curriculum Standard for Full-Time School Compulsory Education of 2001 (Experiment)* and the *National Music Curriculum Standard for Senior High School of 2003 (Experiment)* documents. These two documents explain that students must receive 1-2 periods of music class per week in primary and secondary school. In high school, music courses become electives (courses not required toward graduation) taken for 1-2 periods a week (Xie & Leung, 2011). Thus, the implication of these documents for music education is that arts education is alive and thriving in China though the quality of this music education is likely very uneven depending on where and who is receiving it. At this point in time, this sort of qualitative analysis is unclear.

2) Confucian learning ideals and “Moral Education”

Another trend that readily presents itself in education policies coming from China is the ministry’s dedication to “Moral Education.” Article 36 in the *Compulsory Education Law* states:

“A school shall place moral education in the first place.... So as to encourage the students to have good morals and form a habit of good conduct.” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986, np).

It would seem that a large amount of emphasis is placed on moral learning. But, what does moral learning entail? According to Jin Li, moral and virtue-centered learning stems from the deep roots of Confucian learning philosophies embedded in Chinese society. She explains in her book *Cultural Foundations of Learning East and West*, “For Confucius, the most important purpose of human life is to self-perfect, or self cultivate, socially and morally... Confucius taught five virtues corresponding to relationships for one to learn and four general moral principles for all to strive for.” (2012, p. 37-38) She later lists these moral principles and virtues which each focus on the idea of hard work, learning from mistakes, persistence, perseverance, humility, and respect.

For music education there are a couple of implications to draw from the emphasis placed on the Confucian learning philosophy and its placement in education policies. First, the dedication to learning virtues and moral integrity encourages students to show extreme dedication to learning music. Students who are deeply interested in the subject typically supplement their learning by taking private lessons outside of their public/private education. In doing so, they show extreme dedication and discipline toward mastering their trade – practicing many hours a day even at young ages (Li, 2012). The reason they show such dedication has to do with their Confucian learning ideals in conjunction with their hope to achieve high scores on the Graded Music Examinations (GME), which can help them to have an edge when applying to competitive high schools or colleges (Xie & Leung, 2011).

Secondly, it is important to note that Confucius did not place emphasis on any one academic subject. In fact, to Confucius the importance of learning was to continue learning in a lifelong way with

dedication and persistence, regardless of the topic chosen to be learned (Li, 2012). Thus, education laws in China generally do not specify *which* exact topics must be studied or *how much* they must be studied. Instead, they simply list several quite general topics that should be studied. According to one of the most recent policy papers published by the Chinese government, the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development* (Ministry of Education, 2010),

“Moral education, intellectual education, physical education, and aesthetic education shall be stepped up and improved in an all-round way. It is imperative to give equal footings to cultural learning and moral edification, to theoretical study and social practice, and to all-round development and individual characteristics.” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 11)

Thus, the treatment of “aesthetic education” should be equal in importance to all the other broad subjects. However, it is suspicious that the document lists “aesthetic education” last among all of the other types of education. Does the government perceive of arts education as less important than other subjects?

One possible explanation for this less favorable placement may be related to the ever-controversial, high-pressure, “meritocratic” *zhongkao* and *gaokao* examination systems (developed in the Song Dynasty almost 1000 years ago), which must be passed in order to obtain high school and university admission (Rai, 1983). Unfortunately, while public laws and policies in China may not explicitly name the subjects that are top-priority among government officials, these tests do. And the *status quo* indicates that all subjects, including physical education, are currently being tested on these examinations except for art-related fields. Regardless of the laws and policies reviewed so far, educators explain that throughout China creative lesson plans must generally fall to the wayside in order to “teach to the test” – referring to the *zhongkao* or *gaokao* (Pine, 2012). Music and the arts being absent from this exam sends a strong message to arts educators about where their subjects lie on the education agenda of the Ministry of Education, despite their Confucian upbringing.

3) Decentralization of Education Financing and Curriculum

A trend that has been a slow adjustment throughout the Deng Xiaoping era of education reform is the overall decentralization of control of education. The 1986 reform *Compulsory Education Law* originally stipulated that the construction and overseeing of individual schools shall take place on a town level. This was a stark adjustment to the Mao years where all of school was controlled by the central government. In this way, it is good that China got such an early start on working towards Education for All because by mobilizing local governments, schools automatically suffered immense inequalities. For years these schools worked to get local support by any means possible. However, just as the government realized the error of its ways in not focusing its resources on minorities and rural populations in this initial bill, this policy has seen some change and adjustment as well. In 2001 it was adjusted so that the county – a somewhat larger division of government – should oversee individual educational institutions. Then, in 2006, the policy was adjusted one last time to say that any schools struggling shall receive support from any division of the government – including national if necessary (Ngok, 2007). In other words, in more recent years the national government has recognized the disparity created by decentralizing funding to schools and is attempting to make up for the gap via direct subsidies to struggling school districts.

The implication for music education here is that it is likely that music learning is extremely inconsistent when examining individual schools from different regions and population centers. Xie & Leung explain that in rural schools the general classroom teacher is in fact responsible for teaching *all* school subjects, while in urban centers well-trained professionals teach even at the primary school level (2011). Inconsistent levels of funding creates inconsistent access to quality teacher training which creates vastly different levels of general music education access and quality.

In addition to changes in funding, subject textbooks were also created as a result of the 1986 law as one nationally standardized series with

“Its contents... as concise as possible... choos[ing] the indispensable basic knowledge and skills... economical and practical... guarantee[ing] its quality... [while] No one may publish or use any textbook that fails to be examined and approved.” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986, p. 1)

Just as funding has become decentralized, this facet of the 1986 law has also loosened. More recent mandates allow schools to publish and use their own textbooks. Indeed, one of the schools in which I worked in Shanghai asked me to help develop lesson plans and curricula for a textbook that the high school itself would publish. As a result, there have been major changes in general music education course content. Old textbooks did not allow certain topics to be taught that related to delicate parts of Chinese history or that seemed controversial in nature. Music that encourages protest was not included since public protest is outlawed in China (as a result of the Tiananmen Square incident). Western or World musics that were not seen as acceptable during the Cultural Revolution also were not present in early music textbooks. For instance, when I shared several 20th century examples with a colleague in China such as Schoenberg and Cage, she explained that she had not learned about those in school and that she typically does not teach her students about these topics. Textbooks created in 1986 included many nationalist, Communist party songs, and folk songs. Today since the national government has loosened control on these, more Western music genres have been included with more of history covered more thoroughly.

Though world music is slowly finding a place in curriculum, it seems to be growing at the slowest rate in public schools. My Chinese students could rarely identify the source location of world musics I played for them in class. However, it is likely that Chinese students will improve in this area quickly in large cities such as Shanghai as more private schools integrate international programs such as the IGCSE (British Cambridge program) or IB (International Baccalaureate) curriculum into their

schools. These programs require students to learn about world music in order to graduate. In sum, the loosening grip from the central government on funding and textbooks is allowing general music course curricula to become more thorough and diverse.

4) Ongoing Political Influence on Education

Internationally, this is a trend that receives a lot of attention, though intrinsic understanding in these forums is often missing. Although all of the recent policy papers in China clearly state that the education system shall be dedicated to its socialist roots and that all students shall carry on their devotion to “the Party”, I would argue that the citizenry generally abides by these principles in a begrudging way. While the nationalism of the Chinese is absolute and deserved, governmental politics have remained a taboo topic among Chinese citizens since the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square events which left the recent generation of adults feeling as though “it was the Chinese culture... that brought our country to ashes” (Li, 2012, p. 4). While the Chinese education system has seen complete overhaul since the Mao era, it can be argued that the culture itself is changing but that their evolving place in the world has not yet been clearly defined. The needed conversation – like a bad argument in an otherwise mended romantic relationship – simply has been ignored until the wounds are fully healed. It is a conversation for another day.

Nonetheless, there are implications here for education and general music education. The political influences on education, from what I can tell, are primarily seen in ritualistic activities like “morning-exercises,” and opening ceremonies where students promenade to nationalist songs (Law & Ho, 2009). In fact, nationalist propaganda songs were an enormous function of music education in schools until the recent adjustments in music textbook creation. Now it would seem that this is a dying trend added to policies out of obligation rather than actualization. Chinese students sing these songs and complete these tasks out of respect for their teachers and parents, however they do not seem to truly take pride in these

activities - perhaps because they are forced upon them. In truth, the identity of the newest generation of Chinese students in Shanghai is an international one which takes pride in its economic success that has come at the heels of globalism and internationalization. When I surveyed my students about their favorite song given three examples of Maroon 5 (U.S. pop star), Big Bang (K-pop boy band), and Jay Chou (Taiwanese pop star), they almost always surprised me by expressing that they much preferred Maroon 5. It seems that in most cases for students government control is met with quiet complacency because they realize the opportunities presented to them as long as they do not make waves.

In the same way, teachers and professionals join the Communist party because they feel that if they do not participate they will not be able to succeed in their professional life. When Communist party meetings took place at my school, all but two Chinese teachers would leave our office. Several times I discussed this with the teachers that remained and they explained that they felt they could still succeed without joining the party but that societal pressures were strong to participate. It is likely that Communist party teachers and non-Communist party teachers cover course content, musical genres, and history in different ways as a result of their political views.

5) Globalization, Modernization, and Marketization: A Changing Education System

Rai Lajpat explains in his article *Education in China*, “All nations are prisoners of their history, more so the ancient ones like China with a long unbroken politico-cultural heritage and traditions” (1983, p. 7). Trends described in this section have suggested that the Chinese education system is experiencing a sort of push-and-pull of traditionalism vs. modernization, decentralization vs. centralization, nationalism vs. globalism, collectivism vs. individualism, and examination vs. dynamism.

China has chosen to focus their energy on creating a more modern education system that initiates many of the same policies seen in the United States – placing responsibility of finances and curriculum on local divisions and to some degree moving away from its Confucian and politically oriented

education roots. In this process, a decision has been made to relax curriculum standards and to allow more student choice (elective courses) in deciding which topics to study in school. Also, though it has not yet been decided, the Chinese are discussing eliminating or at least overhauling the national examination system. In fact, despite top-notch test score results in math, science, and language on international PISA and TIMSS tests, China is considering ending participation in these tests all together so that teachers feel less pressured to teach towards these tests (Zhao, 2014). Policy emphasis is being redirected to make education more well-rounded - focused on building innovators, problem solvers, and students who can think broadly as well as deeply - and they are investing more money in Chinese education so they can do it faster than ever (Ngok, 2007). The *1998 Action Plan for Vitalizing Education* states,

“Currently, and in the near future, the lack of creative talent capable of international leadership has already become the greatest restriction in our nation’s creative ability and competitiveness.... we must... stimulate independent thinking and their innovative and creative consciousness.” (Pine, 2012, p. 140)

Therefore, it is in the government’s best interest to invest in the music education system – indicating a bright future for the arts if trends in Chinese education policy continue.

2.2.2 Trends in U.S. Educational Policies

While in recent years the Chinese education system has received a great deal of praise because of their excellent placement in international tests, the U.S. K-12 education system has experienced the opposite. International scrutiny is aimed at the U.S. for being the world’s wealthiest economy that invests more money in education than most other countries in the world but that also maintains an education system that ranks 36th on PISA tests (Ryan, 2013). For the U.S. people and government, these rankings are an embarrassment and an outrage - a real shock to American Exceptionalism. Therefore, everyone has an

opinion about how the U.S. education system ought to be adjusted in order to allow the U.S. to reclaim the number one position in international rankings – the same position that its economy so proudly holds.

Like China, several trends emerge in educational policy papers coming from the United States. They include; 1) constant attention to developing strategies to provide equal access to a quality education for the ever-changing demographics of the U.S. student body, 2) adoption of a high-stakes testing model / a call for accountability from schools and teachers for their individual performances in teaching children, 3) greater control and consistency from the federal government over curriculum standards, and 4) an on-going belief that U.S. schools are in a state of emergency.

1) Striving for Equal Quality Education for All

Perhaps the biggest issue facing schools in the United States today is the “achievement gap” seen between certain minority populations, economically impoverished youth, and the European-American majority. Unlike China, policies in the U.S. have not focused on access to education but instead access to *quality* education. As Jennifer DeBoer explains in her article, *Centralization and Decentralization in American Education Policy*, the “U.S. education system is fiercely diverse” (2012, p. 513). Because of this, the most important piece of recent education legislation, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, addresses this problem of trying to cater U.S. education evenly to all of its demographics extensively. It states that it will, “...ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education...” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, np). However, education statistics show that despite policy claims to provide equal opportunities to all racial and economic groups, a persistent inequality is seen that reflects in all of the national and international academic achievement analyses (NCES, 2013; Ryan, 2013). For this reason, while this “settler nation” continues to bring in immigrants, there is a tendency in the United States to be disapproving of their status as an immigrant nation since

there is perception that immigrants have a negative effect on educational and economic outcomes (Crouch, 2012).

In order to remedy this problem, the *NCLB Act of 2001* (NCLB) sought to provide financial stipends to impoverished schools to make up for the decentralized system of school financing. As the education system stands now, the majority of funding for each individual school district comes from a combination of local property taxes and state funds, creating highly uneven school resource distribution. In fact, according to the National Center of Education Statistics, in 2002-3, only 8.5% of total school funding came from the federal government (2005). This uneven distribution of funding is often given the blame for inequalities in U.S. public education. Thus, by providing financial support to the schools receiving the least amount of financing, some alleviation of under-resourcing ought to occur - but still has not. It would seem that George Bush Sr. was right in saying that “dollar bills don’t educate students (Alonso, 2009, p. 18).” This results in stakeholders from all sides pointing fingers at each other. Parents point to inadequate teachers and inadequate funding from the government. Teachers point to economically swamped parents who are unable to properly care for their child. The solution is yet unclear. And so, the U.S. education system remains largely decentralized in terms of funding (though adjustments are being made to make up for this), and different ethnic and economic groups continue to receive different degrees of quality in their education.

For music education, the implications of having a highly diverse population in the United States are two-fold. First, music educators work hard to provide music activities that, as the Music Education National Standards created in the 1990s mandate, contain a “varied repertoire of music (NAfME, 2014-1).” Music students in the United States are privileged by their diversity because they are often automatically exposed to many different genres of music simply because they are surrounded by a class of diverse schoolmates. Secondly, music programs face a fundamental problem with the decentralized

financing of school resources. Music programs, particularly those with musical ensemble programs, require a lot of money. Therefore, schools that cannot afford music programs simply cut them. Similar to the problems faced in rural vs. urban areas in China, schools in the U.S. face extreme differences in quality of music education from school to school. However, while China's urban centers provide perhaps the best education, urban centers in the U.S. are perhaps the most problematic due to the large portion of low-income housing (and therefore minimal property taxes). By interacting with teachers from both situations in this research project, best practices might be identified as well as solutions to potential issues.

2) High-Stakes Tests and a Call for Accountability

One way that the *No Child Left Behind* legislation seeks to overcome inequalities in the U.S. education system is via high-stakes testing. The document requires that students be tested in science three times throughout their primary and secondary education as well as being tested during grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics (Spring, 2006). The idea is that, like in China, the purpose of education in the United States is to provide a stable economic future for students when they leave school. By receiving an excellent education, a student can get an excellent job, and contribute positively to society. Therefore, what high-stakes testing can eventually provide is qualifications that make a person more competitive in the job market. And so, as Joel Spring explains in *American Education*, “A society organized around high-stakes testing is advantageous to employers because they are presented with immediate evidence of a person’s abilities to perform a job... [in this system] the school becomes a crucial institution for determining economic success (2006, p. 39-40).”

The hope of the high-stakes tests implemented with *NCLB* however is that in having hard evidence of a school/teacher’s ability, succeeding and failing schools can quickly be identified by their performance on the *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP) tests. This is the idea behind the “accountability

movement,” though identifying who exactly is accountable for the success or failure of a school is not usually simple. Still, by labeling schools as succeeding or failing, each school can receive additional funding, attention, restructuring, replacement of teachers, or rewards as needed. In general, the U.S. government is trying to provide a push to make education more competitive (also via school choice and voucher program debates) in order to provide an incentive to improve academically (Zemelman et. al., 2005).

Unfortunately, the effect of this change in policies on music education is a negative one. Because the tests mandated by *NCLB* emphasize reading, science, and mathematics, other subjects fall to the wayside. In one study done by the Center on Educational Policy in 2005, it was found that 43% of schools “have to some degree reduced instructional time for art and music” (Gerrity, 2009, p. 83). Many music programs have been eliminated or greatly downsized in order to improve funding for tested subjects so that the schools will not be labeled as “failing.” In other cases, schools retain their arts courses only to instruct teachers to use a portion of their classes to teach students how to read and write within their subject.

3) The Standards Movement

The most recent reform movement led by President Obama was towards the new *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS). However, creating standards for course subjects is not a new concept in the United States. The standards movement in education began in the 1980s and 90s, when the National Standards for Music Education were created. The movement declined around 2000 when *NCLB* shifted the focus from standards to high-stakes tests (Lee, 2014). However, the recent CCSS reform is seen as a fresh start – an update to the standards movement - that may provide the scaffolding to help support schools/teachers in identifying where their students are slow in achieving satisfactory outcomes on the high-stakes tests implemented with *NCLB*. Although these standards are not the same as implementing a

school curriculum, as they do not detail exactly how and what to teach in each subject, they do provide a framework with which curriculum should be built. To date, 47 states have adopted these standards that have only been written for math and the language arts (NAfME, 2014-2).

Like the high-stakes testing movement, this is another example of the federal government demonstrating a lot of control over education in the U.S. Though both the *CCSS* and *NCLB* reforms were mandated by the federal government, the ultimate reform is still taking place on the state level – showing centralization of policies while still allowing states to remain autonomous to some degree (as long as they continue to meet federal expectations). Furthermore, like the high-stakes testing trend, the implication of this reform for music education is irrelevant - the arts are still not included in these mandated state standards.

4) A Nation at Risk

All of the trends listed above can be summarized by stating that the United States is and has been deeply concerned over the condition of their education system for at least the past 50 years. Mark & Gary attribute the establishment of this dissatisfaction with the U.S. education system as beginning in October 1957 with the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik (2007). They explain,

“[after the launch of Sputnik], a sense of urgency overtook the United States, as Americans feared that [this would] ...lead to another war. As the public became aware of the relationship between education and national security, school improvement quickly became a national priority.” (p. 384)

Following this incident, an educational policy agenda outline was released by the National Commission for Excellence in Education entitled *A Nation at Risk*, which dramatically stated “America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer” (1983, p. 1). Ever since this paper was released to the public, the U.S. has been adopting measures to try to adjust education policies to better serve economic goals and thus maintain national security. In doing so, centralization and standardization has repeatedly placed strong emphasis

on the core academic subjects of math and reading while music educators have struggled to find funding and raise awareness for the legitimacy of their subject. Despite all of the efforts to reform, educational achievements and economic conditions seem to have remained relatively unchanged.

2.1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some evidence to support the claim that the education systems of the United States and China are in some ways becoming more alike. It has outlined the major trends in educational policy reform in each country in the last 50 years and discussed the implications of these policy changes for the field of music education. It has concluded that in China, the last 50 years have seen significant changes in its long-standing educational philosophies and policies while in the United States policy changes have been somewhat slow-moving apart from the implementation of nationwide high-stakes testing. Furthermore, it has revealed that the climate for music educators in these two countries have similarities in terms of the placement of the discipline as relatively unimportant as compared to the “academic subjects,” as well as the source of funding for each and problems of consistency in quality as a result. However, it has indicated that current policies in China seem to favor creating a more dynamic curriculum that will show added enthusiasm for creative education while the U.S. system shows no indication of focusing additional energy on improving arts education fields in the near future except through private means.

2.2 INSIDE THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CLASSROOM

If a music teacher were asked in a job interview to discuss their methodologies, pedagogies, and approaches to teaching, a myriad of questions would come to mind. The first might be, “What type of music course is being taught? General, instrumental, ensemble, theory, history, drama, or appreciation?” Next the teacher might ask, “At what level are my students? Elementary, Middle, or High School? Have the students had consistent previous music instruction? What do the students already know?” But it doesn’t stop there. An international music teacher may then ask, “What are the student’s personal attributes? What are their cultural backgrounds? Do they have I.E.P.s (Individualized Education Program – for students with special needs) or 504s (for students with disabilities)?” Finally, the teacher may need to ask, “What type of resources are available to me in my instruction?”

When presented this way, it becomes apparent that discussions of teaching methods for a teacher who is certified to teach all levels of students (K-12) a wide variety of topics under one broad umbrella topic like music are slippery at best. However, the purpose of methodologies in teaching is to try to alleviate the over-complexity attached to teaching and make the process of education clearer from start to finish. The Gordon Institute for Music Learning defines *methods* as “the order in which sequential objectives are introduced in a curriculum to accomplish a comprehensive... goal. A good method tells us *what* to teach, *when* to teach it (the best sequencing of instruction), and *why* to teach it.” (2014, np) This makes methodology sound like a rigid way of presenting information to students when, if the definition is broken down, it actually remains quite flexible. For instance, exploring *why* we teach certain things in certain ways in a music class can entail cultural, historical, theoretical, and technical factors – and these factors may change in the middle of a lesson when a teacher discovers something new about their students. This makes methodologies into a catalogue of strategies to use when presented with the infinitely entwined variables of events that could occur in a single day in the classroom.

And so, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to summarize *what* is being taught in music education in the United States and China as well as listing *when/sequencing* of *how* it is being taught via the favored methods for music teaching in terms of the clearly identified, long-standing approaches that have been labeled throughout history. And finally, it is an attempt to unpack to some degree the cultural reasons *why* the favored teaching approaches exist as they do today. In discussion, personal experience as well as academic literature will be referenced.

2.2.1. Music Curricula in Secondary Schools

The music programs of China and the United States each possess their own unique qualities from which music educators can learn. In the U.S., students receive a general music education that begins in kindergarten with general music courses. Here students enjoy instruction focused on basic music literacy; singing, performing on instruments, and accompanying folk songs. This general music education continues through middle school where they may have the opportunity to learn piano, guitar, or music history appreciation. For the majority of students in the U.S., music instruction ends at grade 8 (though some schools may offer general music elective courses in high school such as upper level music theory, piano, guitar, AP/IB music, or musical theatre appreciation). However, students who decide to join an ensemble program - band, orchestra, or chorus - beginning in grades 4 or 5 may continue their music education until high school graduation.

In the U.S., with the exception of the very earliest elementary grades where students are too small to play musical instruments, there is a preference for music ensemble programs to general music programs. In fact, Gerrity (2009) found that when principals were faced with the decision of how to make budget cuts at their school, 38% of the time they chose to eliminate the general music program first. While general music is the most democratic of the music topics because it brings music education

to all students, it also garners the least recognition for the school district and thus is typically the “first to go” (despite the fact instrumental programs are more costly) (Gerrity, 2009). Additionally, since instrumental programs stretch from grade 4 through graduation – whereas general music programs end in grade 8 – the students who participate in them are more likely to go on to become lifelong musicians. Therefore, teachers and school districts invest more money and time instructing these “serious” music students.

Nonetheless, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 94% of elementary school students and 91% of secondary students in the U.S. enjoy participating in some type of music education, whether they be general music classes, dance classes, drama performances, school choir performances, or band and orchestra programs, indicating that the state of access to music education in the U.S. is quite healthy (2012).

In China, music education became mandatory for K-8 in 2001 (Xie & Leung, 2011), providing access for any student enrolled in an education institution to a general music education. In 1986, the Arts Education Department had already prescribed course content that remains intact today. In this framework, grades 1-2 focus on folk songs and music games. grades 3-6 focus on instrumental performances, education of feeling through music, and musical forms/structures. And finally, grades 7-9 focus on music appreciation with a reduction in singing activities because of the change in boys vocal cords (Law & Ho, 2009). Additionally, in 1997 Brahmstedt explained that “band programs are a recent innovation” (p. 29) that still had not fully taken hold because of extreme deficiencies in financing, access to instruments, access to sheet music, and lack of training for Chinese music educators. Xie & Leung confirmed this in 2011, claiming that “Many urban schools now have their own choirs, bands or dancing groups.” (p. 5) However, between the years of 2010 and 2015 I witnessed no bands apart from

the one that I created at one of the wealthiest international schools in Shanghai. Our band was characterized by many of the problems which Brahmstedt references. A few of these problems included:

- 1) The band director was not taught how to play a musical instrument apart from his primary instrument in college. He hired an expert for each instrument section in order to help them improve.
- 2) Sheet music was acquired by copying and pasting full conductor scores obtained from local universities. In some cases, I ordered them from abroad and had them shipped to China for a high cost so that I could avoid all of the cutting and pasting!
- 3) Students were required to provide all of their own instruments. I allowed one student to play my euphonium and she dented it badly one day.

This experience of co-conducting a band program in China with a Chinese colleague was perhaps one of the most illuminating looks into how the music education systems make ends meet there.

And so, Chinese music education topics appear quite compartmentalized. Each grade level focuses on a specific music topic, which is covered in a similar progression to the grade level descriptions above. This is not surprising considering the heavy use of textbooks to standardize practice throughout the country described in the previous chapter. However, very recent changes may not be covered here as this information is absent in current literature. In my school in Shanghai, grades 1-2 were singing-centered with games for children, grades 3-4 provided performing opportunities on recorder, harmonica, piano, or dancing, in grade 5 they studied famous composers, in grade 6 they learned music theory, in grade 7 they were exposed to world musics, in grade 8 they watched many famous operas and musicals, and in grade 9 and 10 these topics were synthesized in an upper level Western music history course designed to prepare students for IB or AP music in grades 11 and 12. Dance courses were also available at all levels. It would seem that the Chinese music education system focuses less on showcasing excellence via musical ensembles and more on:

“general music education... [which] does not aim at nurturing expert musicians but to teach a culture in the belief that whether or not students have this musical culture will nonetheless determine their standard of musical life for the rest of their lives.” (Law & Ho, 2009, p. 7)

This may alleviate the fears of downsizing that are often brought to light in the U.S. due to budget issues. The focus on general music rather than instrumental music is an important contrast. It is likely that the reasoning behind this emphasis is a result of several factors including Confucian cultural beliefs, Socialist economic roots, and the drive to compartmentalize adopted from Communist political agendas. These topics will be expanded upon later in this paper.

Traditionally, topics chosen to be covered in general music in the U.S. have remained in the hands of the educator (Mark & Gary, 2007). In my experience in college and in associating with fellow music teachers throughout the United States, much of the decisions of what should be taught in these courses is dictated by a non-governmental organization called the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). NAfME offers professional development workshops and performing opportunities for students in all 50 states. Music educators are encouraged in college to join this organization and its state affiliate organization in order to unite in advocating for music education as a whole. This organization creates a list of content and achievement standards which offer some guidance and standardization across the country in *what* ought to be taught in music classrooms at all levels. Music educators list the standards used in their lessons in written plans submitted to administrators. It is likely that this list NafME publishes heavily dictates what sort of activities occur in U.S. music classrooms. Below are the NafME standards stipulated from 1994-2014 to guide music educators in what to teach in general music:

Table 1. National Music Education Standards 1994-2014 (NAfME, 2014-2)

- | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music. 2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music. 3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments. 4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines. 5. Reading and notating music. 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music. 7. Evaluating music and music performances. 8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts. 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

It is not expected that all of these learning objectives are touched on in one day, but the goal is to provide a framework so that lessons may be geared toward fulfilling any number of them in one lesson. These content objectives were left very vague to allow for a great amount of autonomy for an individual teacher to choose what music repertoire to read, notate, analyze, perform, etc. Friends and colleagues have expressed that they rarely plan around this list because typically in planning any music lesson they automatically touch on at least one of these objectives without trying. This means that course content is more or less left to the authority of the teacher to dictate in U.S. music classrooms - a contrast to their Chinese colleagues.

However, the 2014 content standards for general music PK-8 are quite a bit more specific. Objectives are grouped into four primary areas that include subsections within each to provide guidance on how to achieve these goals. Essential questions to guide activity and discussion are also provided. Below is an outline of these areas, subsections, and essential questions.

Table 2. 2014 Music Standards General Music PK-8

Creating	<i>Imagine</i>	How do musicians generate creative ideas?
	<i>Plan & Make</i>	How do musicians make creative decisions?
	<i>Evaluate & Refine</i>	How do musicians improve the quality of their creative work?
	<i>Present</i>	When is creative work ready to share?

Performing	<i>Select</i>	How do performers select repertoire?
	<i>Analyze</i>	How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance?
	<i>Interpret</i>	How do performers interpret musical works?
	<i>Rehearse, Evaluate, & Refine</i>	How do performers improve the quality of their performance?
	<i>Present</i>	When is a performance judged as ready to present? How do context and the manner in which musical work is presented influence audience response?
Responding	<i>Select</i>	How do individuals choose music to experience?
	<i>Analyze</i>	How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?
	<i>Interpret</i>	How do we discern the musical creators' and performers' expressive intent?
Connecting	<i>Connect #10</i>	How do performers make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?
	<i>Connect #11</i>	How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

(NAfME, 2014-1)

In comparing the previous standards to the current standards, it seems clear that a change has been made in approach that aligns with recent national curricula revisions in *CCSS*. This chart is much more detailed in explaining what a general music teacher ought to focus on in terms of outcomes in their course. It is much more prescriptive of *what* (shown above) is to be achieved within the four goals of creating, performing, responding, and connecting. In addition, further guidance is given on *how to* complete these tasks below the headings listed above. Mostly, this includes verbs such as “connect.. guide... direct... demonstrate... explore” etc. which guide the type of exploratory activities but does not dictate. In other words, the new standards provide a somewhat less vague *what* to teach from the Gordon definition of a teaching method than the previous standards did. However, they preserve the spirit of the

older standards because they leave space for the teacher to choose which specific repertoire to perform, analyze, or create, as well as *when/sequencing of how* exactly to teach the material. In sum, this evidence illustrates that the U.S. system is becoming more standardized and controlled in how it mandates goals in music education while the Chinese system continues to dictate general music subject matter to teach at each level.

2.2.2. Music Teaching Methods in the United States and China

While the previous section addressed *what* was being taught in primary and secondary schools, it did not go on to describe *when/sequencing of how* these topics are being taught. Beginning with primary school, in the U.S. and abroad there are a few standard teaching methodologies that are well-known and widely accepted internationally for use in general music classes. These include the methods introduced by Zoltan Kodaly, Carl Orff, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Edwin Gordon, and Shinichi Suzuki. Below is a table that highlights the main features of some of the best-known music teaching methods:

Table 3. Western Music Teaching Methods

Name of Method	When Created	Place of Creation	Main Features
Kodaly	~1940	Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on <i>rote learning</i> through singing, moving, and playing games to folk songs • Use of <i>Solfège hand signs</i> and rhythm syllables to break down and simplify music
Orff-Schulwerk	~1950	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of simple percussive keyboard “Orff” instruments and other percussion instruments in an ensemble setting • <i>Ostinato and improvisation</i> based settings of folk songs
Dalcroze-eurhythmics	~1900	Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kinesthetic</i> learning that begins with moving to music and then drawing musical conclusions based on movement activities • Focus on being <i>expressive</i> through music
Gordon Music Learning Theory	~1980	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing <i>audiation</i> – the ability to perceive of music in an innate way before breaking down music into its technical elements • <i>Whole/part/whole</i> method of breaking down repertoire

Suzuki	~1960	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like in language, the teacher immerses the student in the <i>mother tongue approach</i> by rote methods of example – imitation – repetition • Instrumental repertoire learned by ear first, then notation • Begins at a very early age
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(Mark & Gary, 2007; Campbell, 2006; The Gordon Institute of Music Learning, 2014; Suzuki School of Newton, 2014)

These teaching methods have several things in common. First, they all implement a “rote before note” method of introducing music to students. In other words, music students are exposed to music experiences via echo songs, imitating the teacher, listening to, moving to, performing, or feeling the music before sitting down and learning how to read or write music via musical notation. They may even create or improvise music before understanding what they are creating. Second, with the exception of the Suzuki method, all of these methods stem from Western countries, and all of them were created in the 1900s. Third, each method exposes students to a variety of music learning experiences such as singing, playing musical instruments, movement activities, games, improvising, reading, writing, and creating music which emphasize exploration in a *student-centered* approach. Students begin by trying things rather than being directly instructed by the teacher. Further, by exposing students broadly and varying approach, educators can please students with a wide array of learning experiences to suit a diverse body of students such as logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, existential, naturalist, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic learners - serving all of those listed in the Gardner multiple intelligences learning theory (Schunk, 2016).

The methods above are usually taught in elementary teaching methods courses, though they have some applications in secondary settings. Teaching methodologies specifically designed to instruct secondary level, or upper level music skills, are less clear. As U.S. schools move away from general music courses and towards instrumental music ensembles, studies identifying methods used to teach middle school and high school general music disappear. Wayman (2004) points out that in the last 50

years 89 research studies were conducted in middle school music programs to analyze student attitudes in music class as compared to 212 in elementary and 104 in high school. And of those 89 studies, only 3 examined general music courses. Therefore, a hole exists for researchers here to begin studying music teaching in general music classes in middle and high school more closely.

In the U.S., the methods in Table 3 are staples in music education classrooms. Teachers may use one or several of them in combination everyday throughout the entire school year. However, to date hard data to prove how often these methods are used or which are preferred is unavailable. Though these are the primary music teaching methods that are specifically outlined in educator’s college, *learning theories* are also an essential facet of how American teachers build a structure to their daily agenda. Many of the above methods are shaped by the learning theories listed below that are also taught in U.S universities.

Table 4. Western Learning Theories

Name of Theorist	When Created	Place of Creation	Main Features
Lev Vygotsky	~1910	Belarus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Students should always be challenged with work that is just slightly above their level. • Scaffolding should be provided to work through steps of this tricky work.
Jean Piaget	~1930	Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructivism is the theory that students build on their previous learning experiences or “schema” to shape new information.
B.F. Skinner	~1930	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviorism is the theory that students need to positively or negatively reinforced to know when they are doing the right or wrong thing. • Pavlov is also a behaviorist famous for his conditioning experiments completed in Russia around 1900.
Benjamin Bloom	~1950	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloom’s Taxonomy - A pyramid chart that describes gradually more challenging learning experiences from knowledge absorption to synthesizing multiple concepts.
Howard Gardner	~1980	U.S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Intelligences (listed above) describe nine different ways people may be more adaptable to absorbing material.

(Schunk, 2016)

The influence of these theories echo throughout the halls of U.S. classrooms. Vygotsky's ZPD, Piaget's Constructivism, and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences closely tie to the concept of *differentiation* which has grown in popularity as a teaching method today (Huebner, 2010). This has to do with tailoring assignments to groups of students according to their ability level and strengths in order to challenge them where they are. This is similar to *tracking* (leveled courses that students are placed in according to diagnostic tests of their ability in a certain subject) in its end impact, though it is done on a more refined scale. In a general music classroom differentiation is crucial because of the lack of tracking in the subject. There are no higher or lower level keyboard courses. As a result, teachers are constantly put in a situation where they must create multiple plans to challenge different groups of students. This severely impacts their ability to implement a single learning method from the above list. Furthermore, the gap grows wider between experienced and inexperienced students as they get older. Therefore, on one side of the room a music teacher may be attempting to teach a student by rote memorization or drilling of the same pitch and rhythm content repeatedly as in the Suzuki method, and on the other side of the room the teacher may be using a Gordon style of breaking rhythmic content into pieces and then putting those pieces together to understand the whole section.

Further, the U.S. teacher is responsible for managing an ethnically diverse and *inclusive* classroom which integrates students with various physical, social, and learning disabilities. Teachers must take special needs into consideration when working on differentiating lessons and in many cases modifying work for students with 504s or IEPs. Additionally, the degree of ethnic diversity and number of different learning styles within a single classroom makes choosing a particular topic or method of introducing material even more complex, not to mention the need for discipline strategies for students who frequently question the authority of the teacher.

The concepts of Bloom's Taxonomy and Scaffolding interact directly with all of the music

teaching methods in Table because each has a gradual advancement of difficulty and application of concept. For instance, in the Kodaly method students begin by learning the pitch relationship of sol-mi before adding more difficult intervals involving fa, re, or ti. They begin by using the syllables in echo songs or folk songs that provide a lot of teacher support and gradually move into solo work or improvisation. In sum, the learning theories taught in educational psychology courses either heavily influence or show many similarities to music education methodologies developed in Western countries and taught in the United States. This is likely a result of historical and cultural influences and similarities throughout the region.

In China, “Contemporary music education approaches, such as Kodály, Orff, or Dalcroze have been introduced to some urban schools... though not all teachers are accepting of these overseas methodologies (Xie & Leung, 2011, p. 5).” From my experience teaching music for three years at an international school in Shanghai, I can attest that when I asked my Chinese teaching colleagues about their experience with these methods they explained that they had learned about them in university but that they do not typically use them in their classroom. Instead, a more general song-by-song, singing-centered, rote repetitive drilling experience is usual for Chinese general music classrooms. This experience has been documented by several researchers including Yang Mu in 1988, Brahmstedt in 1997, and Xie & Leung in 2011.

Finding studies about specific methods used in Chinese middle and high school music courses is challenging. Published articles usually include Western observers that take a trip around China and believe they have “cracked the code” as to why and how the system works but usually seem biased or demonstrate a limited understanding of educational and cultural norms at best. Other articles come from Hong Kong where the system is not quite the same as on the mainland or focus on the music education system very generally in China, assuming that the various Special Administrative Regions (SARs) are

no different from the rest of China. Therefore, influence of learning theories or other approaches such as *differentiation* is unclear.

Many of the complexities mentioned in the U.S. classroom setting are simplified in the Chinese classroom. For instance, Ellsworth & Zhang (2007) wrote a very informative article about the role of *inclusion* in China. This pair of Western and Eastern researchers point out that 5% of the student population in China are classified as learning disabled students while 10% are diagnosed as such in the United States. Though by law these students are mandated to be included in public classrooms, Ellsworth & Zhang point out that many of these students stay home and some move to special school districts. In both of the schools in which I taught in Shanghai, I witnessed no students with severe learning disabilities. I was given no IEPs or 504s and I was told such documents do not exist. I did notice many students that seemed to have slow processing for certain subjects and students that seemed to have ADHD but were undiagnosed. However, on the whole, I felt that I had to do less *differentiating* of my lessons as a result of inclusion. Although I planned a variety of approaches for my international classroom, my Chinese students expressed gratitude when “fun” activities were included in my lessons rather than direct lecture or, *teacher-centered* instruction. I rarely felt concerned with planning discipline strategies. Though many students seemed to be accustomed and comfortable with the *drilling* methods of lecture and repetition from their Chinese teachers, they did seem to enjoy thinking creatively and being given time for free play.

As for instrumental music teaching in the U.S., methods are presented to aspiring educators via a set of instrumental music method books series such as *Essential Elements*, *Standards of Excellence*, *Accent on Achievement*, *Belwin 21st Century Band Method*, *All for Strings*, *The Yamaha Advantage*, etc. (Brittin & Sheldon, 2004). In this way, something is shared between Chinese and schools in the U.S. because for many years instruction in China was also very textbook-oriented. Also, like in general music

courses, the specifics of how often teachers use any of the particular band or orchestra methods listed above is unclear in the literature.

From my education at West Chester University of Pennsylvania together with Brittin & Sheldon's (2004) writings about band methods, the following method is drawn for teaching instrumental music: A Western teacher will typically spend a quarter of their lesson or so *warming up* the ensemble by doing stretches, fingering exercises, breathing exercises, concentration exercises, tuning exercises, or lip exercises. They will play or sing something simple and familiar with dense harmonies to begin and then work on repertoire by breaking down the piece and *chunking*, or putting sections of the music together one by one to build a whole. At the end of the session, the ensemble will play through all that they have learned and be encouraged to warm down independently (2004). However standard this may seem, when I taught alongside my Chinese colleague he did things differently. For instance, often, he would not warm up the ensemble. He would tune them quickly at the beginning and then leave maintaining their tuning in their hands. He would ask students to play a section again and again without telling them what to change. When drilling, he did not stop to give additional instruction on *how* to fix things. Little discussion occurred to encourage students to reflect on how to portray the emotional aspect of the music. It was interesting to see how many little differences there were between our instruction – studies need to be done in this area to make more of these discoveries.

2.2.3. The Cultural Foundations of Music Teaching Methods

Now that a review of the music teaching methods documented in the literature has been completed, the question then turns to the *why* element of music teaching. *Why* do these two countries choose different approaches to teaching? Two authors, Jin Li and Nancy Pine, offer an explanation that the U.S. and Chinese teachers approach knowledge sharing differently because they have inherited separate cultural

foundations of learning. For instance, in Western countries, it is believed that the strongest learners possess the quality of being actively engaged in their learning - to the point where they are able to drive their own learning experiences via inquisitiveness. Li explains,

“In Western learning, curious and interested learners are in some ways more prized than the discrepancy-dependent questioners because their curiosity and interest are indicative of an enduring and highly valued disposition in the learners: inquisitiveness (2012, p. 112).”

This trait – inquisitiveness, intrinsic motivation - implies that the learner will continue to be curious beyond their years of schooling and maintain self-directed lifelong learning which will ensure that they continue to improve academically forever. Moreover, Li explains, it is possible that this reverence shown to inquisitiveness has been passed down as a result of the deep-rooted admiration in Western society for the logical sequencing of the scientific and Socratic methods (2012). It is the act of questioning, in the Western perspective, that allows humans to present a hypothesis, logically break it down, and then reach new conclusions - which ultimately creates new knowledge and allows us to grow academically. Nancy Pine also refers to this learning style characteristically as one coming from the U.S. (or the West), though she refers to it as “discovery” instead of “inquisitiveness”. She explains, “Americans... give... considerable latitude to [our students to] use trial and error to discover the answers, believing that will help develop their thought processes (2012, p. 8).”

Most of the music teaching methodologies listed above begin with an element of experimentation. During this stage, the music teacher introduces a musical concept or song and allows the students time to experience and experiment with it (in Orff the students will experiment with improvising on their percussion instruments, in Dalcroze the students will test how their body moves with the music, in Kodaly the students may experiment with new rhythm patterns or pitch classes, in Suzuki the students problem solve to figure out how to imitate their teacher, etc). After some period of repetition, imitation, and experimentation the teacher then dissects the experience by asking the learners

to identify what they just performed (except in the Suzuki method). The students must then explain how or why they performed the way they did. Only once the concept has been clarified will the Western teacher then move onto the more direct learning experience of reading and writing music or drilling a song for performance.

Even the method of *questioning* from the teacher to evoke the process of explaining from the student, Li argues, is an attribute inherited by Western cultural foundations. Ever since the birth of the courtroom, being an expert in oratory and the Socratic method has been a treasured skill for Western learners, and thus, in music education experiences it presents itself as well (2012).

So it can be seen that through all of these exercises, the learning does not remain focused on the teacher feeding the child knowledge, but instead the student must act as the captain of his or her own logical learning. The focus in the classroom is thus more student-centered as the teacher acts only as facilitator by introducing a situation where the child can be guided to a new learning concept. Button confirms, “pupil-centered group work and interactive activity techniques... [Western] pupils find more attractive.” (2010, p. 25) According to Joel Spring, this “pupil” or student-centered approach to teaching began in the 1960s and 70s in the U.S. when teachers began to operate under “The assumption... that the source of motivation, interest, and learning is within the nature of the child.” (2006, p. 268) Ever since, he notes, *activity programs*, *project methods*, and *open classrooms* have been developed to continue support of this approach. And so, through questioning in this paper and reading the arguments of these authors, several characteristics of a Western teaching approach have been identified: 1) an emphasis on *activity based learning* and group work, 2) relying on the *intrinsic motivation* of the student to guide teaching and push focus away from the teacher, 3) centering assessment on *verbally communicating* correct answers, and 4) conducting experiments that involve *questioning* and *logic* to build foundational knowledge.

On the other hand, the cultural foundations built into Chinese students encourage them to maintain their focus on being dedicated to hard work, diligence, persistence, perseverance, and humility in learning. Li (2012), Pine (2012), and other scholars have easily attributed these traits to the inherent Confucian upbringing of Chinese youth (Rao, 1996; Law & Ho, 2009). Confucius, in his first line of *the Analects* explains, “Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and application?” (500BCE, np) He adds, “If the scholar be not grave, he will not call forth any veneration, and his learning will not be solid.” (500BCE, np) Therefore, from the Chinese perspective, learning ought to be quite a serious endeavor in focus and discipline.

Again my teaching colleagues in Shanghai have insight on this matter. One day, when I was instructing our mandated English training course during which I taught my 14 music teaching colleagues relevant music vocabulary and teaching techniques, I was explaining some of the various music teaching methods, games, activities, etc. that I had learned at my music teacher’s college. The teachers applauded the creative, student-centered, active approach involved in these activities but asked, “Natalie, what is the learning objective of playing a game?” I patiently explained that playing games helped to introduce repertoire, learning concepts, and musical techniques in a fun and approachable way. By playing games the students experienced a heightened sense of emotional attachment to the activity and thus would be more likely to remember the experience and/or learning concepts. Again, they agreed that this seems like an exemplary method. But, they fundamentally disagreed on the use of classroom time to play a game. At the time I had not realized this was a direct result of their cultural upbringing.

Jin Li experienced a similar predicament when presenting the learning methods she studied in the U.S. to her Chinese peers. She explains their protest as, “this type of free exploration takes time Chinese teachers and students do not have” and “free-ranging learning struck them as no different from herding sheep... letting children roam around aimlessly with no measurable teaching and learning

results.” (2012, p. 340) It appears that this is one area where the Chinese and U.S. approaches to education are fundamentally different.

And so, the result in terms of teaching techniques, approaches, and methods is that the Chinese teacher typically focuses their teaching to cater to a rote learning style (Li, 2012; Pine, 2012; Rao, 1996; Zhao, 2007; Brahmstedt, 1997). In this type of learning environment, the students remain relatively quiet, awaiting instruction and showing unwavering respect for the teacher’s authority in the classroom. The teacher moves forward through a song line by line, repeating each phrase until it is mastered and then moving onward. Warm-ups are still used but are given less emphasis. *Chunking* is still used but mastery of a portion of a song means a different thing to a Chinese teacher than a teacher in the U.S.. To a Western learner this may seem unattractive. But again, Li explains that in Chinese society a slow process of absorbing information takes place. True understanding cannot be manifested immediately and the Chinese learner does not believe that after one lesson their learning is sufficient enough to discuss their findings thoroughly in class. So, in the beginning a Chinese learner would prefer to be told the answers rather than to explore and come to conclusions themselves.

This learning practice includes a four step process of first memorizing the new materials, searching to find the meaning of the material, finding situations in which to apply the materials, and finally reaching a deeper level of understanding (Li, 2012). Therefore, if a Western teacher were to ask a Chinese student what they had learned after a five-minute introduction activity, the Chinese student would be likely to feel very uncomfortable. This is not only because they do not feel prepared to answer the question, but also because Chinese learners inherently believe that “Paucity in speaking may... be a sign of intelligence in Asia.” (2012, p. 308) In fact, speaking before fully understanding a topic in Asian cultures may result in losing “face” (Doctoroff, 2011) – or credibility – among their peers. Therefore, students avoid doing so until they are entirely sure that they are confident about their answers, perhaps

several classes later.

In sum, several Chinese teaching approaches have been identified including, 1) *teacher-centered* lectures to avoid putting pressure on students to speak, 2) lessons move seamlessly from item to item in the interest of not wasting time or including frivolous activities, 3) in order to achieve deep learning a lot of time must be invested in planning so that detailed presentations are given, and 4) *rote memorization, drilling, and repetition* are used to perfect understanding of knowledge.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed music teaching methods in China and the United States in terms of *what* they teach, *when/sequencing* of *how* they teach, and *why* they teach the way they do. It is clear that a large gap remains in research literature discussing this topic today. In particular, very little research has been done describing specifically the sequencing used in secondary school general and instrumental music courses. While this may be a difficult endeavor because undoubtedly each individual teacher has their own unique combination of approaches that they take in their classroom, it is also likely that if many teachers are observed or interviewed certain trends in technique will emerge.

2.3 TEACHER: FACILITATOR OF CHANGE

In recent decades, it is indisputable that China and the United States have undergone significant educational reforms mandated by federal governments. Though it may not be clear whether the two countries are intentionally imitating one another, it is clear that if trends in reform are successful, the two countries are on track to meet in the middle and culminate in similar education systems and consequently teaching methods.

Table 5. Teaching Methods and Policy Exchange in the Last 50 Years

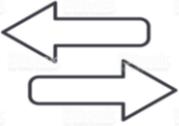
China		United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized organization of teaching curriculum via textbooks and policies dictating course content • Teacher-centered instruction involving rote learning, drilling, repetition, and memorization • Secluded, quiet, long-term learning process • Little diversity in classrooms, no IEPs or 504s • Entrance to high school and college based on a test • Confucianism the primary influence on education philosophy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionally decentralized organization of teaching curriculum - still done on a state-by-state basis • Course content mostly chosen by teacher but influenced by NAFME and national policy • Student-centered instruction involving inquisitive learners and play • Social learning process with frequent work in diverse groups • Entrance to college based on a test, success of a school district based on tests • Many theorists involved in formation of teaching strategies

Table 5 summarizes the findings of this paper so far by outlining the status quo of many of the forces shaping music education today. According to chapter 2.1, it seems that China and the United States hope that this chart might be reversed in the future as a result of recent policy adjustments. However, these changes will only occur if the societies in which they are embedded are able to absorb them, regardless of what the national government might want. To return to the 2011 speech from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, “Throughout the globe, education is now recognized as the new game-changer that drives economic growth and social change. And it is great teachers who help build the higher-order skills that students need to succeed in the 21st century” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, np). In other words, educators are the facilitators of the intended changes put forth in public policy by policy-makers. Teachers take on the unique role between the general public, the parents, the students, the administrators, professional development organizations, and policy makers. If change is to happen, it will happen because the teachers make an adjustment.

The question becomes, can these two countries successfully make the change? Can students and teachers overhaul their learning and teaching styles? Will these changes benefit the education systems in the way policymakers hope, or will there be unforeseen results? Is policy change as a result of comparative education research worthwhile? In this final chapter, the author will explore the above questions through case studies in which opposing styles of teaching and learning have already been introduced. The role of the teacher in this process will be discussed in order to explore the challenges and feasibility of carrying out education policy exchanges worldwide.

2.3.1 Comparative Case Studies

Several researchers have attempted to swap teaching methods within a given culture to verify whether international educational research claims are relevant in different cultural contexts. Lee & Park (2014) conducted a study in which they analyzed Korean and U.S. education systems and the effects of current policy changes on test scores. (Korean educational policies are similar to the Chinese policies. They, too, are seeing a shift toward more traditional U.S. education policies of decentralization, broad curriculums, and de-emphasis on tests.) They found that since the NCLB Act of 2001 mandated high-stakes tests and the Koreans de-emphasized testing, there have been no significant changes in the achievement test results in either country.

Nancy Pine (2012) interviewed a teacher in Los Angeles who attempted to teach her students strictly using rote, teacher-centered methodologies for a semester – the type of methods that are used in China, and those that are necessary to “teach to the test.” She found decreased interest in learning from the students and mixed results in terms of increases in test scores.

Two attempts of introducing Western teaching methods in China were carried out by Dineen & Ruth (2008) and Penner (1995). Dineen & Ruth worked with Chinese students to build more creative output in visual arts courses. What they found was that simply adjusting the language of instruction to

students to include phrases such as “be creative” and some initial ideas about *how to be creative* showed excellent overall improvement in the student’s creative outcomes in learning. On the other hand, Penner conducted a study with teachers. She asked Chinese teachers to teach English using the Communicative Language Teacher (CLT) approach, which requires teachers to encourage student interaction and self-facilitate their own learning in a creative way. She concluded that the teachers found it difficult to transition to this new teaching methodology.

In three of these cases (Lee & Park, 2014; Pine, 2012; Penner, 1995), foreign methods were carried out by local teachers to local students. In each of these cases, results did not improve. However, Dineen & Ruth’s study involving foreign teachers implementing foreign teaching methods to local students was successful. Though limited in scope, one might conclude from these four cases that perhaps the difficulty was either 1) that the teachers were not accepting of new teaching styles/ ready to embrace change, or 2) the students were more receptive to different teaching approaches when they were presented by a foreign expert, or 3) a combination of 1 & 2. The next section of this paper will explore the role of the teacher in facilitating change.

2.3.2 Teachers Profiles in China and the United States

There are multiple dimensions to implementing policy change via classroom teachers. Perhaps the first requirement for success in teaching - in general and in spearheading policy change implementation - is job satisfaction. If a teacher is unhappy with their job or on the way out the door, it is unlikely they will put forth full effort to see their students perform or fulfill requests from administrators (and by extension policy makers). In the United States, teachers are leaving at a rate of 8% per year - a figure higher than most other professions in the country (Linares, 2016). Chen (2010) identified the culprits for this dissatisfaction as: “poor salary (54%), lack of support from the school administration (43%), student discipline problems (23%), lack of autonomy (17%), poor student motivation (15%), large class sizes

(7.0%), no opportunity for professional advancement (6.0%), and inadequate preparation time (6.0%)” (p. 264). Still, according to NCES, 90% of teachers in the U.S. expressed that on the whole they are satisfied with their job (Chen, 2010).

Though studies about teacher job satisfaction in China are not as common or as specific, studies do exist. Su et al. (2001) found that Chinese teachers generally had a negative attitude about teaching because society does not value it and because they believe it involves too much hard work given the low salary. Further, Chen cited ongoing teacher retention difficulties despite the fact that 83% of Chinese teachers “regarded teaching as one of the best occupations” (p. 264) - a statistic seemingly at odds with Su et al.’s observations.

Still, both Su et al. and Chen found that the motivators for Chinese and U.S. teachers to enter the field could be grouped into two categories - *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* reasons. *Intrinsic* reasons had to do with personal rewards while *extrinsic* reasons had to do with monetary or physical rewards. While both exhibited interest in public service, the U.S. teachers first reason for becoming teachers was because it was personally satisfying in some way, whereas Chinese teachers went into the profession for the job security and steady income. As a result, a larger portion of Chinese teachers are male (42%) than U.S. teachers (19%) (Su et al., 2001). Based on this discussion of teacher satisfaction in China and the U.S. and its relationship to implementing public policy, already a gap is created. If not all teachers in each country are satisfied with their jobs, it is likely that not all of the teachers will fully implement policy change. This implies that governments and administrators have some work to do to ensure that teachers are satisfied with their work in order for policy change to take place in classrooms.

Still, several other factors exist that impact policy implementation at the teacher level. Certainly teacher training and educational background plays a role. If the teacher does not feel fully prepared to teach course content in their subject area when they enter the field, asking them to change the way they

teach is unlikely to be successful (Linares, 2016). Further, asking teachers to become captains of public policy change when they are not informed about public policy in the first place adds pressure on teachers to be supportive of new approaches they can not rationalize (Brown, 2015). Terhart (2013) explains,

“Although educational researchers, school reformers and educational developers assume that teachers and schools await their programmes... we should accept the fact that a considerable majority of teachers and schools in fact simply want to hear nothing of reform, innovation, new forms of teaching and so on. Quite frequently, they feel forced to take part in reform and development processes. This should come as no surprise; the culture and convictions of educational administrators and reformers and the culture and convictions of teachers in classrooms and staffrooms really are miles apart. Indeed, self-confident teachers may regard the approaches, ideas and recommendations of educational researchers, instructional psychologists, teacher developers, didactical coaches and so on concerning their very own field of work – classroom teaching – as being strange, clumsy or even clueless.” (p. 487)

For this reason, professional development, proper teacher training, and development of positive relationships between policy makers and educators is important. Teachers seek autonomy in their classrooms so it is crucial to provide the space required for them to make their own decisions. When change is necessary, a clear rationale and plan for gradual implementation is also essential. It is a lack of communication, collaboration, and understanding that leads to resistance among schools and teachers (Brown, 2015; Terhart, 2013). Recently, this dissatisfaction has been showing its face in the United States in the form of backlash against the standardized test movements and establishment of *Common Core State Standards*. In Hong Kong Brand (2009) documents a similar experience with his graduate students in music education as being “Exhausted by Education Reform.” In mainland China, my former colleagues often expressed frustration over paperwork and frequently complained about all of the things they had to complete outside of teaching and planning, though I am not able to identify the exact piece of policy causing their frustrations.

Finally, historical and cultural factors are present in making adjustments to teaching and learning methods. As pointed out by Jin Li (2012), Chinese students have certain preferences they seek in their teachers and learning style (undoubtedly the same is true of students in the U.S.). If these expectations are suddenly changed, it is likely the student will be dissatisfied with the teacher for not presenting the material in the way that all of the other teachers do. This is evidenced by teacher turnover. When a new teacher is presented to a group of students, a range of feelings arise from appreciation to abandonment and anger to indifference. In marching band programs, one researcher found that participation was decreased by 9% the year after a new teacher arrived (Kloss, 2013). And so, asking a teacher to completely adjust their teaching methods is like asking a teacher to change a large part of their identity. Asking students to accept this change in identity is like asking students to accept a new teacher in the classroom. Change on both ends of the spectrum is hard. Time is necessary to make such a dramatic adjustment.

Furthermore, a certain level of pride is associated with teaching. If an educator thinks they are doing a poor job, they are unlikely to be satisfied with their work. And so, if the figures listed above referring to teacher satisfaction are correct, then most educators think the way they are teaching is satisfactory. When more or less forced to change styles due to policy change or interaction with a new culture's teaching technique, teachers question their ability to successfully make the adjustment into a new teaching approach. This is apparent in international school settings. While living and working in Shanghai, I witnessed many foreigners (Western Europeans and U.S. citizens) interacting with their Chinese teacher counterparts in such a way that they were forcing their beliefs and philosophies about education upon them. They often complained about how the Chinese teachers did things and described the Western ideas as superior. Tavangar (2017) explains, "As a community of international educators, this might be one of our greatest challenges. *Just because we travel and live globally doesn't mean we*

possess a global mindset. Practicing humility, empathy, and deliberate reflection doesn't come automatically with a passport.” (p. 1) He goes on to describe a “Global Mindset” model developed to help international teachers, students and staff manage cultural collisions by building intellectual, psychological and social capital. And so, it is important that 1) new techniques are presented in a gradual and approachable way, 2) teachers are encouraged to be open-minded to new techniques, and 3) all parties involved in the formation of education pedagogy are reminded that education is a complex puzzle with many different solutions that are needed within a single classroom.

In sum, given the problems discussed above within the current system of policy implementation, it might be difficult for local teachers and students to make the leap. It now becomes more clear why foreign teachers are could be effective with local students. In this case, the teacher does not have to resist change - they are just continuing on the path they have always been on with different students. Moreover, because the local students will be expecting a major change when a foreign teacher arrives, they are likely prepared for such a change, avoiding feelings of abandonment or wariness over changes in approach.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the crucial role of the teacher between policy-maker, student, history, culture, and society in implementing policy-change. It has found that a number of areas need to be improved to make transition possible including 1) improving teacher satisfaction rates by enhancing *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivators, 2) providing better training and professional development for teachers so they might understand policy change better, 3) gradually and delicately introducing change to limit resistance, 4) developing better relationships between policy-makers and educators, 5) creating a culture of open-mindedness to new techniques and eliminating beliefs that one teaching technique is superior to another, and 6) considering the role of the student's developed learning techniques and ability to change.

Finally, this paper has asserted that policy exchange may be easiest when foreign teachers move to a new cultural context rather than having to make the change themselves.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

To complete this study, a total of six qualitative data sets were compiled by gathering questionnaires from three secondary general music teachers in Shanghai, China and interviewing three secondary general music teachers from Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. Initially, I aimed to complete six to ten qualitative interviews in total, with three to five teacher perspectives from each country. However, because the content of the interview involved discussing opinions about government policy, it was decided that unsecured interviews done over an internet server to reach the Chinese participants may not be wise given the political environment in China today. Instead, paper versions of the interview questions were sent to individuals in China via snail mail in English and Mandarin Chinese along with coded return envelopes and instructions to mail the questionnaires back anonymously without a return address.

Qualitative methods were chosen for a number of reasons. First, the data collected in this research is descriptive in nature. The questionnaires are aimed at understanding the classroom experiences of the teachers in these two locations as they relate to their position between policy/policy makers, parents, students, administrators, and colleagues. I believe this knowledge is best understood through the stories of the teachers themselves. Furthermore, teaching methodologies used in the classroom are not always named. Sometimes these are thought up by the teacher on their own, other times teachers follow a named pedagogy, and sometimes the methods used are a combination of things teachers have seen and things their intuition creates organically and spontaneously. The ways by which we transfer knowledge to other humans comes in many forms so that in a given day, any number of

different approaches are applied for the many different situations occurring simultaneously in one classroom for 50 minutes. Understanding such a fluid and constantly evolving phenomena can only be fully understood through ongoing observation and interaction, but due to constraints of time, place, and resources, interviews and questionnaires can at least provide some written insight into the broad picture of what happens in the classroom, while giving details which may inform future case studies.

Finally, as documented in the previous sections of this paper, research identifying music teaching methods in *secondary general music* in the U.S. is currently vague, uneven, or missing throughout the research. Therefore, it is difficult to know where to begin when creating a questionnaire to gather missing information that will strategically add to the existing body of research. For this reason, I felt that a semi-structured interview format would work best so that all parties in the process could be given the time and space to adjust and explore unexpected topics that might arise.

The qualitative approach chosen for this study aimed to fill the gaps of missing documentation of music teaching methods used in China written for journals published in English. Unfortunately, though the questionnaires presented to Chinese participants included open-ended questions that could be explored in depth, the format of a questionnaire by nature is somewhat inhibiting as compared to the semi-structured interview format. This, along with language barriers may have caused the Chinese participants to share less information than the U.S. teachers in this study. It is unfortunate these interviews were not carried out in person during my time living abroad as they likely would have allowed me to ask follow up questions to clarify unclear answers and further investigate interesting details. In any case, my experience living abroad allowed me to at least hypothesize the reasons as to why certain questions were not answered as thoroughly as I had originally expected. Though I did not carry out formal interviews while living in China, my anecdotal evidence is able to fill in gaps in cases

where evidence was missing so that this study draws several conclusions which are able to add to a growing body of research aiming at identifying best general music teaching methods and practices.

3.1 RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

Throughout the process of determining the best sampling and recruitment methods for my study, several adjustments were made in order to accomplish the task at hand. Because I planned to speak to the experiences I had working at two of the “key schools” in Shanghai which are considered among the best in the country, sampling on the U.S. side involved identifying comparable cities with the “*top*” schools in the country. The other key traits aimed at for pertinent sampling were *cultural diversity* and the relative *population size of the cities* being sampled. The schools in which I worked in Shanghai encompassed local and international divisions that catered to native and multicultural populations making the student body of these schools more ethnically diverse than the majority of schools throughout China. For this reason, I aimed at locating cities in the U.S. with education systems that serve a diverse youth population - whether they be private, charter, or public schools. Shanghai also has the largest population of any city in China and therefore its school system is perhaps the wealthiest but also the most complex. With all of these traits in mind, the most comparable sample in the United States seemed to be either Los Angeles or New York City. Because I have lived on the East coast of the United States all but five years of my life, I selected NYC for my cultural insight and proximity.

Once this planning was complete, I submitted the procedure, reasoning, recruitment/consent letters, and interview questions (see Appendix B) to the Institutional Review Board. There were several delays in the IRB process because I needed to obtain additional permissions to conduct research outside of the country, but eventually I was able to gain IRB approval (Appendix A) and move on to complete my original research project.

At this point, I began the process of recruitment. Using the ranking systems from *U.S. News and World Report* and *Schooldigger*, I identified the top ten middle and high schools in New York City. I obtained music teacher email addresses and phone numbers for the school office on the school websites. In cases where I could not find the teacher's school email address on the Internet, I called the front office, introduced myself, and asked if it could be shared. Four schools did not have music teachers on staff. Two schools told me they would have the teacher email me if they were interested in participating (I received no emails). In late May/early June of 2017, I emailed 17 teachers from the remaining 14 schools (in three cases the school had more than one music teacher) and got only one response from a band director who does not teach any general music classes. I emailed these teachers the approved scripts twice. If they did not respond the first time, I wrote to them a second time two weeks later.

During the same time period, I mailed six envelopes to the six top ranked Chinese schools in Shanghai according to *Ameson Education* with six questionnaires (three in English and three in Mandarin) and three return envelopes in each bundle. The teachers could choose whether they wanted to respond in English or Mandarin - I had a translator lined up to participate in the study for that purpose. To my surprise, I received three responses in English from two schools within the next three months.

Feeling defeated by the difficulties I was having recruiting teachers in the U.S., in early August I submitted a modification to my study to the research board. The sampling city was changed to Boston. Although the size of Boston is quite a bit smaller than what I had originally intended, Boston represents the strongest education system in the country according to several sources (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2017; Bernardo, 2017) and it is still quite multicultural. Further, since I live one hour away and have contacts in the area, I was able to ask two friends to participate and then snowball sample to find the third music educator. I decided to sample from the "greater Boston" area (within the 495 beltway) in order to increase the overall sample size to be somewhat more comparable to the spread out landscape of

inner city Shanghai. Interviews were recorded via Skype in August and September of 2017. Though these could have been done in person, I found Skype to be the most appropriate way to save time, personally interact with the respondents for free, and to record the interviews via the computer program Audacity.

The reasons for my difficulty recruiting teachers from New York City are unclear. It is possible that this was a result of the time during which I began recruitment - June, the end of the school year. The reason I began recruiting during this month is because it is the time when the school year winds down and as a full time teacher myself, I had a moment to work on my research. My assumption was that these teachers may also be free during this time which might encourage them to respond. However, it is possible that these teachers had already “checked out” and were busy preparing summer vacation plans. Alternatively, it is possible that these teachers were weighed down by paperwork until the final hour of school giving them no time to respond to such an email. In truth, I have received emails in the past requesting my participation in research studies that I have ignored as a result of my very hectic work schedule. I can understand why teachers in the U.S. would not easily be incentivized to respond. In my study, the only incentive I described in my recruitment email (Appendix B.3) was that their participation would contribute to a body of research that can inform their teaching. Monetary or other physical incentives may have been more successful than this more abstract method of recruitment. I also may have had a better response if I tried recruiting more broadly at a music educator conference in person.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Though I encountered difficulties recruiting and organizing the logistics for this study, I managed to collect the minimum number of interviews/questionnaires I had initially set out to complete. After analysis I believe the purposes of this study would have been better served if I had managed to gather five interviews from the United States and if I had been able to complete interviews rather than

questionnaires from China. Nevertheless, the data collected and presented here is relevant to current music educators, policy makers, and administrators. The evidence herein confirms some of my initial hypotheses. Some data collected will either serve to inform best practice for current music educators, may inform future policy decisions, or will bring up questions for future research studies to investigate.

The semi-structured interviews and questionnaires included 25 primary questions, though during the interviews discussion dovetailed to include several more. The entire process of interviewing took around one hour. Once the interviews from the U.S. were recorded, I transcribed the interviews from audio format to a word document. The questionnaires from China were re-written digitally from the paper and pencil versions. All digital documents and data were kept on a secure external hard drive in a private location of which I was the only person aware. Paper copies of Chinese questionnaires were disposed of once transcribed. In the transcribed versions, participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Finally, these documents were uploaded to *Dedoose* software where they were coded and analyzed for similarities.

4.0 SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

This portion of the paper will discuss the results of interviews and questionnaires carried out with U.S. and Chinese music teachers. It will break down answers into four subsections that imitate the structure of the interviews/questionnaires themselves; 1) demographic information, 2) teaching approaches, 3) influences, and 4) comparative education and relevancy questions. Music educators will be referred to with their assigned pseudonyms.

4.1 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The six participants in this study represent a diverse cross section of current high school general music teachers from China and the U.S. who speak to a range of opinions and views about their respective

education systems. Although both middle and high school teachers were invited to participate in this study, only high school teachers (those instructing grades 9-12) replied. However, two of the Chinese teachers instruct middle and elementary school classes in addition to their high school courses.

Three teachers from the U.S. were interviewed to complete this study, Mick, Regina, and Nicki. All three attended U.S. public schools for their K-12 education. Nicki is 27 years old. She is a second generation Asian American with parents who immigrated from Vietnam. Though she was raised in the U.S. and therefore reflects American cultural norms, it is important to note that philosophically she may have some perspectives that overlap with the Chinese participants due to the influence of her parents. Vietnam is a country that is heavily influenced by China. The population includes a large portion of Han Chinese people because China once occupied Vietnam. The Vietnamese language incorporates similarities to Mandarin, and many Vietnamese people believe in Confucian ideals. Because of this, I would expect that Nicki's answers should mostly reflect American cultural norms with perhaps a few lingering East Asian perspectives included. Nicki was raised in Connecticut and attended public schools there as a young person. She has completed a Master's Degree in Music Education. She has been teaching chorus and general music for three years in a public and a private high school (grades 9-12), one located in a suburban setting and the other in an urban suburb.

Mick is a 27-year-old Caucasian-American with Western European ancestry. He grew up in Boston, Massachusetts and attended urban public schools as a young person. He has completed his Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and has been teaching general and choral music for five years in urban public schools. Two of those years he spent in a middle school teaching grades 4-6. He has been teaching chorus and general music in a public high school music position for the past three years. He is passionate about the importance of urban education.

Regina is a 59-year-old Caucasian-American with Western European ancestry. She grew up in New York State and attended public schools there as a young person. She has been working in the field of music education in some capacity for 38 years. Her career began with one year of teaching in an elementary school “difficult inner city situation” after which she took two years off to get her Master’s Degree. She then taught private piano lessons for 16 years. After feeling quite isolated by this career path, she got a job teaching a wide spectrum of music subjects at a private high school for 13 years. When they downsized her position a year ago, she got a new job at a public charter high school as a general music teacher and choral director.

In sum, two out of three teachers interviewed from the U.S. are female which more or less agrees with the typical gender stratification for U.S. teachers (Su et al., 2001). Mick and Nicki are both around 30 years old, making them part of the “millennial” generation. One of these, Regina, came from the “baby boomers” and grew up just after the war in Vietnam, experiencing a very different education system than the other two participants. She was able to speak at length about how the education system has changed over the tenure of her career.

The Chinese participants completed three questionnaires. All of these were done in English. In general, the answers given by the Chinese teachers were much more brief than those produced via interviews completed in the U.S. To illustrate this point, the chart below shows the overall word counts of the various transcription documents for each participant:

Table 6. Interview & Questionnaire Word Counts

	Name	Word Count
U. S.	Nicki	4743
	Mick	7089
	Regina	5053
C H I N A	Liyou	1307
	Boyang	1034
	Shutian	736

It was surprising that all three of the Chinese participants elected to complete the questionnaires in English when copies in Mandarin were available to them. My best guess as to why they chose to complete them in such a way is that they were being ambitious and wanted to practice using their English language skills. Still, from the numbers above it is clear that either 1) they had little to say, 2) they felt uncomfortable sharing a great deal due to fears of government interference, 3) they could not understand the questions, or 4) they were inhibited by their language skills. To that point, the grammar of the English responses was coherent but frequently awkward. It is likely that for each participant there was some combination of the above problems for each response.

All of the Chinese participants come from the Han ethnic majority in China and completed their K-12 education in public schools in China. One of these participants however, Liyou, spent a significant amount of time abroad studying in Oregon to get his Master's degree at a University in the U.S. Liyou is 39 years old and teaches the International Baccalaureate curriculum rather than following Chinese national education policies. He has been teaching for 13 years, four of which he taught general music to

grades 5 through 12, the rest of the time he has taught the IB program. The other two Chinese teachers, Boyang and Shutian, do not have significant experience abroad. Although this would seem to disqualify Liyou from the study, it is interesting to find out how he has chosen to use various teaching styles from each country in his classroom after learning and living in both places. This variation in the sample allows a fuller picture of the state of education in both countries. Globalism is not something that can be ignored in an effort to identify the quintessential “American” or “Chinese” techniques. Rather, this variation is just a part of the recipe baked in the cake as to how these education systems function today. Liyou has two Bachelor Degrees, one in Music Education and one in Polymer Material Science. He has a Master’s Degree in Chemistry.

Boyang is 34 years old and teaches at a K-12 school that contains both a public and private division. In other words, this school contains two schools in one. The public branch receives federal funding and serves local Chinese students. These students are taught according to Chinese local and national educational policy requirements. The private branch requires tuition payments of its international students. These students are taught a curriculum that is created either by the school itself or that is adopted from an international program such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), or International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). Boyang has taught general music, various ensembles, and AP music there for eight years. She has a Master’s Degree which specializes in piano performance and instruction.

Shutian is 32 years old and also teaches at a K-12 school with both a public and private division (similar to above). He has taught general music, various ensembles, music technology, composition, and musical theatre there for eight years. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in music education. When he began at the school he taught part time and composed professionally for other venues.

Two of the three Chinese teachers who replied are male which, although the sample size is very

small, again more or less agrees with the overall Chinese teacher gender stratification (Su et al. 2001).

All of these teachers are of a similar age to Mick and Nicki, around 30-40 years old, and therefore come from a similar educational upbringing in China just following the Cultural Revolution. None of the teachers experienced the Cultural Revolution.

Table 7. Participant Profiles

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Number of years Teaching	Teaching Location	Teaching Levels	Source of Funding	School Setting
Mick	Male	5	Boston, U.S.	9-12	Public	urban
Regina	Female	39	Boston, U.S.	9-12	Private school 13 yrs, currently charter public	Urban suburb
Nicki	Female	3	Boston, U.S.	9-12	Charter public, private	Urban suburb
Boyang	Female	8	Shanghai, China	1-12	School that is both Private & public	urban
Shutian	Male	8	Shanghai, China	1-12	School that is both Private & public	urban
Liyu	Male	13	Shanghai, China	9-12	Private, IB program	urban

4.1.1 Limits to the data

This study initially aimed to interview educators with at least ten years of experience as an educator so that they could speak to policy changes that have occurred over time. However, after finding participants

became so difficult in NYC, the study turned toward a combination of a convenience sample and snowball sample on the United States end of the project. If there had been more responses, perhaps teachers with more experience could have been hand picked. Still, Regina offered some insights into changes seen in the U.S. over time. The change in sampling method and location from NYC to Boston did not seem to have a negative impact on the study.

On the Chinese side, all three teachers had a fair amount of experience but perhaps were not always aware of public policy changes - or they simply did not write about it. Since Liyou has only taught in private schools, he may not have been able to speak to public policy because his program is not required to adhere to the changes mandated by the government. Speaking with a head of department or arts administrator would have added perspective to this study. Finally, in order to better understand changes that have occurred over the last 50 years of history in China, it would have been great to interview a 59-year-old Chinese participant who could speak to their experience through the Cultural Revolution.

Finally, it should be noted that this study specifically aims to better understand the *how* and *sequencing* in relation to music teaching methodology. It was outside the scope of this research to focus primarily on the *what* or course content/curricula of secondary general music in each place. The assumption here is that within both countries the content will be similar; music appreciation, learning about music history, famous composers from around the world, the context of the history, and how to notate/write/perform this repertoire. As already discussed in this paper in Chapter 1 and 2, the course content for secondary general music is broad and varies somewhat from teacher to teacher. Trying to list how all of the different curricula are transferred to students could not be accomplished here and is unnecessary to achieve the primary purpose of this paper; to discover new ways to transfer knowledge from teacher to student.

4.1.2 Suggestions for future data collection

If time and resources had not been a concern, it would have been preferable to carry out this study in person with all of the participants. If I could do it again, I would work hard to get my Research Board approval before leaving for China rather than struggling to complete the project from America. This would have made the Chinese responses more robust - spoken responses require less effort than those written in a second language. If there were any fears that responses could cause Chinese participants political trouble, meeting me and trusting my integrity as a person sitting in front of them may have been easier than on a paper coded to go through security. Additionally, I would not have given the Chinese teachers the option of responding to the questions in English to assure that the responses were as genuine and thorough as possible.

Further, future studies should strive to be more selective and robust. Participants could be predetermined and stratified by age, experience, and perhaps the source of funding for the school. More interviews to hear more voices would certainly benefit our understanding of the topic. Participants in this study come from both public and private schools that created a range of responses to the impacts seen in their school from public policy change. Private school teachers had much less to say about how public policy impacts on their classroom than public school teachers. The same was true of participants who teach the AP and IB music programs. Though this study sought to hear all perspectives in order to initiate research in this area, future research may want to focus on public school music educators.

Finally, as identified by Gerrity (2009), there is a gap in research examining general music teaching at the middle school level. Though this study attempted to reach middle school teachers, none from the U.S. replied, and those from China who taught at all levels did not choose to describe their experiences specifically enough to understand the difference between their middle and high school experiences. It is important that this area is examined in future studies. Middle school general music

courses are more common and far-reaching than high school courses, serving a larger, more diverse student population. Therefore, future studies might prefer to have these discussions with middle school music educators.

4.2 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section will break down participant responses to the interviews and questionnaires carried out with the U.S. and Chinese music teachers according to trends that emerged and relate them to the literature review completed in Chapter 2.

The interview instrument (see Appendix B) was designed to better understand the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, habits, and influences on U.S. and Chinese music teachers as they relate to public policy, their own cultural and historical contexts, and the influences of other sources of authority that surround them. The goals here were to identify which forces have shaped the way teachers instruct, whether public policy has had an impact on the course content or methodology by which teachers instruct, and whether teachers have been resistant or accepting of these forces. In order to accomplish this, the instrument was split into four sections. The first section (4.2.1) examined the teacher's background including teacher training and preparation, primary and secondary experience, and general demographic information. The second section (4.2.2) focused on describing their teaching methods including learning theories, inclusion, differentiation, and sequencing. The third section (4.2.3) placed their teaching methods into context by probing the sources of authority and stakeholders which have shaped teaching procedures, including administrators, professional organizations, and policy makers. The final section (4.2.4) discussed perceptions about comparative studies, globalism, and international education opportunities.

Interview questions were designed to be open-ended in order to provoke discussion and where possible spawn further conversation down avenues that were either overlooked or absent from the existing literature. Many interview questions with U.S. teachers began as responses and gradually turned into discourse that allowed for increased understanding of various topics.

4.2.1 Educational backgrounds

Humans are inescapably attached to their history. Teachers integrate pieces of their previous educational experiences into their teaching techniques. These pieces come from many different facets of a single lifetime. I asked two questions about the educational backgrounds of the music teachers: 1) Would you describe your musical educational experience as a young person as positive? Why or why not? 2) To what degree have your former music educators influenced *how* and *what* you teach?

All three of the music teachers from the U.S. described having some kind of positive experience in their childhood primary and secondary music education. Two participants attributed their choice to become a music educator at least partially to their former music teachers. All three mentioned specific techniques that they have adopted from their former teachers:

“My teacher was very inspirational. He definitely hit home a lot of concepts that I find really important now.

Relating text to music, and the emotional side with singing that is very different from instrumental music.” *Nicki*

“In grades 4, 5, and 6... I loved going to band and going to chorus.... I loved everything about it - I was hooked - because my chorus teacher... was great... and I started considering it as a career even at that early age... Those teachers really emboldened and shaped me and made me who I am now.” *Mick*

“I had lessons for every cycle or so for band. I saw him like every day for six years. I think that a lot of the things I do I do like my middle school band teacher, you know counting and things like that. And I

remember learning key signatures in band and I remember it was hard for me, too, so I try to be more patient.” *Regina*

These discussions make apparent that while the specific pieces of teaching techniques that were inherited from their previous teachers varied, the degree which they were influenced is similar - each feels that their previous teachers played a large role in shaping the way they teach today.

However, two of the participants from the U.S. described their experience in *general* music classes as negative (below). This aligns with the implications in the literature review, which concluded that there is a gap that exists in NAFME’s book collection in regard to secondary general teaching methods. Gerrity’s 2009 study also identified a research gap specifically in middle school general music studies. It is likely that less attention is paid to creating enjoyable, engaging, informative, and well-disciplined general music courses because the outcomes are not formally assessed. Further, each of the participants in this study who were inspired by their former educators to become music teachers were inspired by their previous ensemble (band, orchestra, or choral) music directors.

“At that time it was just a lot of listening to the teacher talk. It wasn’t the way we do general music now, it wasn’t as engaging/interactive.... this was in the 70s y’know. It was a different philosophy of teaching then.” *Regina*

“I think it was probably the teacher and the fact that when you’re in a gym class, not everyone wants to be there. And when you’re in band and chorus, typically everybody wants to be there (hopefully). Had to do with behavior issues, discipline took away from what the teachers could offer to the class.” *Mick*

In these two cases, different but related reasons are given for why the teachers did not appreciate their general music classes when they were younger. In Regina’s case, she describes how the classes were more straightforward - likely lecture based - with less interaction and engagement during the time she was in primary and secondary school. Here, the teacher’s technique seems to be the factor inhibiting

more engagement over general music. In Mick's general music classroom on the other hand, the trouble seems to be the opposite - that the students are not engaged in music regardless of what the teacher presents to the class. The question becomes, how can a music teacher today engage and inspire students in general music classes? Will varied teaching methods and content help? If organizations such as NafME give more attention to publishing books about how to make these classes relevant to students, could more music teachers engage their students in general music class?

In the years beyond primary and secondary school, teachers from the U.S. reported different experiences. Nicki continued to have positive experiences with college professors, explaining that she also learned a lot about choral literature choices, how to teach emotional aspects of music, and how her gestures are important when conducting. Mick gave a very thoughtful response about the influences of all of his previous educators which articulates the stresses undergone by music educators attempting to live up to the high expectations of students:

“I think that you're always trying to do your best and you're always trying to be yourself. Something that I struggled with my first year of teaching - I tried too much to replicate or emulate my mentors and the way they did things and certainly coming into a program that my predecessor had been there for 40 years, I tried to do things the way she did it so the kids would adjust and kind of buy what I'm selling so to speak. But, eventually you realize you have to be yourself and you have to find what works for you. But I always have little voices in my head from - saying what would so and so do if they were in my shoes right now? How would they respond? I think I've stolen, or borrowed if you will, from everyone that's influenced me in different ways. It could be as simple as rehearsal techniques, conducting techniques, my piano skills, I'm fortunate that I've had a lot of different sources.”

Here Mick refers to the many layers of factors the teacher encounters when entering a classroom and choosing a teaching method. He describes the impact of teacher turnover and how students appreciate continuity, repetition, and patterned behavior in the classroom. Change from one teacher to another,

therefore, can be difficult for students no matter how well trained or personable the new teacher may be. Therefore, a new teacher must be flexible and open to adapting their teaching style and teaching methods when they begin at a new school in order to incorporate some of that school and that former teacher's philosophy.

When teaching, then, the teacher is simultaneously referencing techniques from their mentors, their educational background, the school's philosophy in which they teach, and the expectations of the students from former teachers. They take all of this through a filter - the individual teacher's "teaching style" - as Mick refers to it. Teaching style is sort of the personality or finesse of the teacher. Where the teacher may admire the way that a certain teachers take a lesson plan and makes it come alive – sometimes the same exact lesson done by a different teacher will not work simply because of the delivery – the way that teacher interacts with other people. A great lesson can fall flat when the teacher and students lack certain chemistry. Teaching style reconciles all of the pieces of the puzzle and carries the transfer of knowledge from paper to the student brain - and no two teachers are alike.

Regina also referred to teaching style and discipline when she gave an interesting recount of her college music education experience. She explained that her piano teacher in college "changed me in a way that I now know what *not* to do. I would never *ever* speak to a student in that way." She described a story during which she put forth her full effort in fulfilling the teacher's expectations but no matter what she did, her teacher never provided positive reinforcement for her achievements and expected her to attend all of her lessons without music, reciting the music only from memory.

These stories really humanize the experience of education. They touch on the social aspects of music teaching and the need for teachers to have patience, empathy, and decision-making skills in order to choose how to approach individual classes, students, and situations.

The Chinese teachers responses about their experiences with music education as a young person were mixed. Shutian described his former music educator as “very strict.” He goes on to state that, “In my childhood, people barely had music classes, especially during high school years, all students do is study for exams.” This evidences the access issues prevalent for education as a whole in the 1990s while China was recovering from the Tianamen Square protests and adjusting to globalist views. It also seems to indicate some frustration that a creative-minded student might have within an education system that emphasizes testing in non-musical subjects.

Liyou gave a mixed response stating, “[My experience was] positive. The music I learnt in the classroom made me feel sick about the mainstream music. This lead me to [be] a punk rocker in college.” In other words, although he may not have enjoyed the music he was exposed to in secondary general music classes, the course allowed him to explore other musical genres which he eventually connected with – punk rock - perhaps inspiring his rebellious nature and pushing him to go abroad.

Boyang described her youthful music experience as positive, explaining that she taught her friends how to dance and play musical instruments since she knew she wanted to be a music teacher at an early age. In response to the question asking how her former teachers impacted how she teaches, she commented “a little.”

These limited responses from the Chinese participants may indicate that music education was still quite uneven through the late 90s and early 00s when these teachers attended primary and secondary school. Further, the teachers said little about their experiences in college, though all of the participants, Chinese and American, have Bachelor or Master’s Degrees. Perhaps this is an indicator that the Chinese teachers did not develop as close of a relationship with their music teachers. Still, on the whole, the responses from the Chinese participants leave me with more questions about where these teachers grew

up and what their motivation was to become a music teacher. It is possible that access issues were also a result of the setting of the school - access is more uneven in rural schools.

However, Shutian's comment regarding "strictness" does remind me of several observations I had in China in primary and secondary general music courses. During one instance a group of teachers were choreographing a large 80 student dance. A student kept running in circles and would not sit down. To make an example of this student, the teacher took the student's shoe and cut it in half in front of the entire group, reminding the students to sit still. It seemed when I lived in Shanghai that this was an accepted norm. I watched teachers swear at children. I watched the head of my department slap her daughter across the face in our office because she was acting up at school. What interests me is the correlation between this "strictness" and the teacher described by Regina in the 1980s. It is true that the U.S. once allowed such discipline of children and young adults as well but something instigated a change in the system. Will China undergo the same adjustment? Regardless, this commentary reinforces the influential role discipline plays in the classroom - adding another element of complexity to managing teaching and learning.

4.2.2 Instructional methods

As instructional methods are the centerpiece of my research, quite a number of my questions revolved around exploring this topic. Though many different Western teaching methods have been listed in Chapter 2 of this paper, it is unclear which of these is chosen by general music teachers and how frequently, to what extent, and in what context these methods are used. Therefore, this piece of analysis is very exciting to uncover and discuss. Some of the questions in this section are very direct, while others look at smaller pieces of overall instruction.

Questions included, 1) Would you describe your daily teaching procedures as primarily *teacher-centered* or *student-centered*? What sort of activities make this true? 2) Are there any particular

methods/philosophers/educational theorists/specific pieces of knowledge about teaching that inform your teaching? 3) Do you break your students into groups during activities according to varying student needs/intelligences? 4) Do you *differentiate* your teaching? and 5) Are students diagnosed with special needs inclusively integrated into your classroom? If yes, how does this affect your teaching?

Though the research indicates that the majority of Chinese teachers use rote, *teacher-centered* learning styles (Li, 2012; Pine, 2012; Rao, 1996; Zhao, 2007; Brahmstedt, 1997), two of the Chinese teachers in this study described their teaching techniques as *student-centered*. The other teacher, Boyang, claimed that her approach was “half and half.” Each of them indicated that they typically complete a combination of instruction and application activities including creating and performing on instruments. However, again, Shutian made a comment about Chinese teachers in general stating, “The teachers teach us all the important things of the unit and tell us to memorize them for the exams.” It is possible, given his commentary, that the reason these three teachers do not engage as frequently in *teacher-centered* instruction is because in the subject area of music, exams are not implemented. However, it is also possible that the translation or understanding of these more recent terminologies in education pedagogy circles did not translate clearly into Chinese. It is possible these teachers did not understand the meaning of the phrase. Future research may want to include descriptions of key terms in an appendix before the questionnaire begins.

As far as specific methods that inform the Chinese teacher’s lessons, Liyou listed Kodaly and Orff as influences as well as the IB Approach of Teaching and Learning, though it seemed clear that the use of these methods was not a result of his Chinese upbringing but rather his Western educational experiences. Boyang stated that “Our director hasn’t inform[ed] any to us,” which might imply that perhaps Boyang does not seek new teaching methods but instead perceives of her role as subservient to the local sources of authority at her school and in her society.

Interestingly, she added later that she would like to learn more methodologies but that her university did not inform her of these. In another section of the questionnaire she stated, “there are still a lot of knowledge that I didn’t learn in the university but need to know in work.” To a Western reader, this is surprising. As Jin Li (2012) points out, Western learning promotes inquisitiveness and self-exploration. Boyang could seek these answers herself but she waits to be instructed about which methods she ought to use. The implications for implementation of policy change here are positive. If many Chinese teachers take this attitude, they are like a ball of clay waiting to be molded to teach in whatever way is mandated by the sources of authority that surround them. However, I do not believe that all Chinese teachers see it this way.

Not surprisingly, all three teachers from the U.S. indicated that they approach teaching in a *student-centered* way. However, Mick seemed to misinterpret the question perhaps because of phone interference and Nicki described student-centered approaches as they apply to chorus. Regina stated:

“[I]n general music it is more student-centered - them trying things, us talking about various things, more experimentation because they don’t feel as under the thumb to get things done. And I feel more relaxed there, too, because if I don’t get things done it doesn’t really matter. So if they really like it and they want to do a lot of extra things I would rather just stay with whatever the topic is rather than move on to something else. It doesn’t matter as much because it’s not like there’s a concert around the corner. So, I like that freedom.” *Regina*

Regina’s comments verify the concerns of many teachers about “teaching to the test.” Because general music is not assessed in some way, course content is not considered as important. The sense of urgency is removed and therefore less structured content can be covered at whatever pace the teacher dictates. This is yet another reason why general music education is so important. Though testing general music would allow the subject to have more measurable outcomes, perhaps it is the un-measurable outcomes

that are valuable here. There is space to discover new relevant topics that have not yet been determined as “essential” by textbooks.

At the same time, because of the lack of urgency, Mick describes how general music takes lower priority than ensembles in terms of effort and planning, though for a different reason:

“I wasn’t the best general music teacher because I wasn’t as well versed say in the methodologies or pedagogies of how they acquire knowledge and how they learn, you know the formative skills and basic training because I guess... I always knew in my head that I wanted to be a high school choral director.” *Mick*

After this statement, I asked him, “Do you think that’s a thing that is common across America - that people prefer or focus more on ensembles than on general music?” to which he replied “I would have to agree with that. ...and unfortunately there’s a huge need for the general music teachers because there won’t be ensembles without that.” The overall value of general music, then, can be viewed in two ways by these teachers; 1) as formative for the upper level students and the general public’s music skills, and 2) as a space for having “extra” musical conversations where music may be able to reach students at a personal, more pertinent level and discover new areas of interest within the topic. However, the teachers may not prefer teaching this topic because 1) there are fewer measurable outcomes that can evidence their worth as a teacher in their subject area, 2) because of the vagueness of suggested content and teaching strategies, and 3) because of added disciplinary considerations due to the inclusionary aspect of the course. In other words, teaching general music may involve more effort for the teacher who must create their own course curricula and see less recognition when the students succeed in the course – whatever the definition of “success” may be for that classroom teacher.

In terms of structure, all three of the U.S. participants described a three-part teaching structure that began with a “warmer” or “opener”, included an activity in the middle, and ended with a review of the content covered that day. Nicki admitted that she does not always get to the closer, though she would

like to do so more often. Mick explained that because he works in a public school that has had some trouble meeting *NCLB* expectations, that the administration has mandated that the teachers must structure their lesson into three parts as explained above. Interestingly, this structure correlates with the Gordon (2014) approach of teaching and learning, though none of the teachers identified it as such.

Whether national influences and popular educational theories influenced the creation of Gordon or vice versa is unclear, but it is clear that in several cases the U.S. teachers mentioned using teaching methodologies listed in Table 3 (Western Teaching Methods) unknowingly. In addition to this example, Nicki described Piaget's constructivism (Schunk, 2016) in her comments about *student-centered* teaching, "I am always catering towards where the students are musically and where they're coming from... I teach according to what they know and what they don't know and what they should be learning by now." She also described Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in her commentary about how she challenges her chorus. "I... get the cream of the crop 8th graders and they are doing more challenging music in order to challenge their musical abilities but then also appease to what will keep them singing."

This suggests that the teachers either recall the concepts of teaching methods and learning theories that they were taught in college but not the titles, or they innately understand how to structure a class as a result of their previous educational experiences. As far as named music teaching methodologies used in their classrooms, teachers from the U.S. explained:

"Kodaly is the biggest one. I am all about using solfege, starting with sol-mi-la, those, and then adding in do, re, the half steps, and using the very simplified kodaly notation of ta, ti ti ta, for rhythm. I'm also a big user of the Kerwin hand signs for solfege. ...I am really big on the kinesthetics, and a lot of movement. I always get confused with Dalcroze and Gordon..." *Nicki*

"I'm not that concerned with methods when I teach, I'm more concerned with just working with the kids and as I go I just pull from different areas. But I have to say that the World Music Drumming class by Will

Schnid has really impacted me and I've taken a lot of those classes. That warm up with the small ensemble things and lots of little in between stuff helps from his course.” *Regina*

“I don't necessarily subscribe to any philosopher but I will say that urban education and enriching diversity in schools is something that I'm passionate about...I guess Gordon and Kodaly I do use, but I used them more when I was teaching elementary music than in high school. I have to say I have drawn my teaching philosophy from my mentors - my previous music teachers, and my professors in college and conductors”

Mick

Based on these responses, it would seem that music educators in the U.S. are not so concerned with analyzing the *how* or *sequencing* of their lessons as much as just working with what they know and what they *remember* from previous experiences to achieve the desired result that they themselves have created. Nicki admits that she can no longer remember which method is which and interestingly Mick points out that there may be a need for secondary music teaching methods since those mentioned so far are more commonly used at an elementary or beginner level.

Among the Chinese teachers, Liyou and Boyang described a similar structure to their lessons, while Shutian skipped the question. Liyou described a largely lecture based class to introduce concepts that would then move into some sort of music reading or making assignment or project that would require student interaction. Boyang said the same in fewer words, “The typical lesson usually is divided into two sections, one is my lecture, the other one is activity.” With no mention of a “closer” from the Chinese teachers, it seems that they prefer a two-part lesson structure that may not include so much of a “warmer” but instead a focused time of absorbing the material followed by experimentation and practice with the material. This supports the notion of *rote* learning being dominant in Chinese classrooms – the teacher gives the student knowledge and the student practices the knowledge to master it.

Responses to the *differentiation* question were also muddy. All three of the U.S. teachers seemed to have an unclear understanding of what *differentiation* meant, explaining that they often placed students together into groups with students at different ability levels so that one student could help another student to improve. However, in this case the student who is advanced is not experiencing a lesson that is meeting their individual needs and therefore the lesson has not been *differentiated*.

Finally, four out of six of the teachers interviewed indicated that they are not heavily impacted by inclusion. Liyou, Boyang, and Regina – all teachers who worked at a private school - indicated that they have no experience with such matters. Shutian described how they might support a gifted student to supplement their learning, making it clear that training is not provided for Chinese teachers about the needs of other kinds of special education students. On the other hand, the two teachers from the U.S. who have had a significant amount of experience with special education in public schools indicated that while they do not intentionally modify *entire* lessons to suit one or two students, they do feel overwhelmed with the number of accommodations they keep track of daily (in addition to the many other considerations teachers must monitor already mentioned in the interview).

4.2.3 Reactions to Sources of Authority

As outlined in Chapter 2.3, implementing policy change is trickier than just getting the policy passed through Capitol Hill or *Zhongnanhai* (“the Forbidden City” in Beijing). In order for policy to be fully implemented, teachers must not only be on board to make the change but also must be trained well enough to carry out the adjustments. This portion of the analysis will focus on discussing answers to questions about public policy and stakeholders/sources of authority who might request that teachers adjust their teaching techniques. Questions included in this section include, 1) To what degree do each of the following stakeholders shape *what (curricula) and how (methodologies)* you teach: students,

parents, administrators, state/national policies, and professional organizations? 2) When observers come to watch your class, do you change the way in which you teach? How so? and, 3) In your opinion, apart from your daily content objectives, what larger purposes do these stakeholders believe music lessons serve?

The first stakeholder discussed here is the students. According to Su et. al. (2001), the majority of teachers said that the reason they come to school and teach is because they feel rewarded and positive about their students, and so it is less likely that teachers feel as resistant or intolerant of requests made by students as they might feel of other sources of authority or stakeholders. Three out of six of the teachers responded that the students want to have fun or that they want enjoyable activities. Two of these responses were from the U.S. teachers and one from the Chinese teachers. However, they listed fun as part of a list of desires from students:

“They want to pass my class... and... they want to have fun, that’s the perk of elective courses, it’s not dry. Or, they feel it shouldn’t be dry. Music class should not be dry, because it’s so hands on and you should always be doing something even the driest of things like music theory. So they do expect a level of fun and energy to pique their interest and keep them wanting to be around, to be a part of it.” *Nicki*

“Maybe it’s a stereotype, but I don’t think a lot of students enjoy their English class, or Math class, etc. Maybe they do... but a lot of kids look forward to music and they want to enjoy that class and it’s [an] output for them and a release for them. So they want to enjoy themselves number one, but they also want to be challenged.” *Mick*

“Students usually want to learn something interesting in class. A good way is to teach through lively activities.” *Boyang*

Given this cluster of responses, one might wonder if a music teacher is an educator or an entertainer. However, Liyou points out that “It changes depends on the background of the students” - certainly not

all students in China and the U.S. want an entertainer. Shutian contributes this perspective, commenting, “In [the Chinese] culture, the students rarely ask questions or think independently; they listen to whatever the teacher says.” Although teachers may be interested in what students want, there may be fewer consequences if these wishes are not carried out than in an instance where an administrator requires something from the teacher. While this may be true in other subjects, music teachers also must constantly recruit students for their various extracurricular ensembles - groups that will not exist without the students. This provides good reasoning for why a music class may focus more on the “fun” aspects of learning than other subjects. If a music teacher is not well-liked, the program may cease to exist.

The three Chinese teachers either abstained from the question or indicated that parents have little influence on their classes. Based on my experience in China, I tend to agree that parents more frequently manage issues with their child’s education at home rather than at school. This is likely a result of the enormous amount of respect given to teachers in Confucianism (Li, 2012). Regina also felt that parents had little authority over classrooms in the U.S., “except if [parents] are driving me crazy,” she admitted, meaning that on occasion a parent will express concern toward her about their child in a way that suggests they are unhappy with her decisions. However, Nicki and Mick expressed that while parents may not have had a strong impact on their own classes, that they have had various experiences with parents as they relate to school in general:

“I’d say we have more of the apathetic parents than we do the proactive “helicopter” parents in [my school district]. Many of the parents don’t even come to the classroom and many of the parents don’t instill the value of practicing in their children or support what their doing at home or don’t even know their taking the music course because maybe there is no parent when they are at home... you can get parents that are of course, helicopter parents... and I think that’s something of this generation that we’ve never had before in America. It’s that post 9/11 generation that is coddled their entire lives and the parents are on you like white on rice about this kid’s grade and it’s always your fault and never the kid’s fault. I see less of that than in the wealthier districts, I suppose.” *Mick*

In the U.S., then, there are two types of parents. The parents who take a great amount of ownership and authority over their child's education so that in some cases they may have difficulty expressing that concern in a way that is empathetic to the teacher's perspective, and the parents who provide little to no support to students in inner cities because of lack of time (Alonso, 2009). This is not to say there are no "Goldilocks" parents out there who are "just right" in the way they communicate with teachers. Rather, the parents who influence how a teacher chooses teaching methods the most are the ones who are either "helicopter" or absent. Though the teachers interviewed did not explain the impacts these parents have, based on my experience, I feel that helicopter parents often estrange the relationship between student and teacher. After the reaction from the parents, the teacher feels overly concerned about each interaction with that student being exactly as the parents would want it to be and may throw off the teacher's focus in the classroom.

Once when I was teaching in China, some very affluent parents called and complained that their student was an advanced student in general music who was bored with the level of course content. The head of my department mandated that all classes would teach upper level music composition for a week to appease this parent. As a result, the teachers were put in an uncomfortable situation where they were trying to teach lower level students content they could not comprehend. These students were very unhappy. A week later, classes resumed as usual and there were no further complaints from the parents because they realized this course of instruction was less beneficial to their student than the previous.

In the case of absent parents, the teacher may go out of their way to fill the role of parent and mentor. This is unlikely to have a large impact on teaching methods in the classroom, but the teacher may intentionally group that student with positive influences during activities or soften (or vice versa!) their teaching style during class in order to show more empathy toward that student's added needs.

In the case of administration, the Chinese teachers again claimed that this source of authority had little to no influence on the way that they teach - with the exception of Shutian. He indicated that his department head steps in to influence his lessons when a representative from the province is going to observe his class. This may indicate that the only time administration becomes concerned with general music classes in China is when other schools are judging how well they are educating students. This relates to the notion of “face” in China and keeping up an image of excellence in the school for outsiders though it may not be what happens on a day-to-day basis.

The U.S. teachers had mixed reactions about administrators, which included frustration that they did not better understand their subject, to feeling supported and encouraged, to seeing their administrators as a tool to help implement disciplinary measures. However, these interactions had little impact on the methods chosen by U.S. music teachers unless they were being observed. In these cases, the two teachers who taught at private schools (Nicki and Regina) indicated that they do not change their teaching styles, while Mick explained,

“I would say yes, I do. I would certainly try to make sure I am implementing the literacy strategy for that day because sometimes I’ll skip it, I’ll be honest with you, but and then you know just in terms of the overall classroom management, I think I’m a little less tolerant on that day than I would be on another day.. Things like that you adjust when someone is in the room, I think it’s only natural. But in terms of my content or goals for the day, I don’t change that...” *Mick*

This would indicate that private school teachers feel more unified with their administration in philosophy and educational vision, while public school teachers feel more controlled. In terms of inclusion, course content, observation reports, class structure, course content, and discipline, policy changes have a heavier impact on Mick than on the other U.S. teachers who instruct in private schools.

Throughout our conversation a host of additional issues came up that impacted his ability to teach including:

- Each day in each class, Mick is required to accommodate at least one of four literacy objectives of reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning. Though these should be done to suit his content standards, they require an additional level of planning.
- Annually the school implements “literacy week” in an effort to further support the language department in improving language standardized test scores. He explains,
“We spend a week in April where we have to write in music and it can be painful because we have a concert in May but we take a week to write an open response about something. A whole week... I do feel it takes away from rehearsal time, naturally. On the other hand I have figured out how to do it and how to do it well so that it is useful and beneficial.” *Mick*
- Because public school teachers are required to pass a certain number of observations each year in order to receive tenure or “Professional Status”, it is likely that being sure to be “perfect” (or perfectly compliant?) during observations is important.
- State laws that continue to change cause new training and paperwork trails to occur year to year. Mick vaguely explains,
“<sighing> It’s very frustrating because like I said they have this and then we had national accreditation two years ago and then you know it changed the discipline system based off of state laws, Chapter 222 or something like that, and there was a lot of change that happens and we as a teaching staff at the high school level in particular, you know the morale is very low right now because of all of that and teachers aren’t able to teach because they are caught up with all of this. So, yea, it’s a real challenge right now.” *Mick*

For Mick, then, frequent public policy changes can lead to teacher dissatisfaction (Chen, 2010) and teachers being undertrained to manage these ongoing adaptations can make implementation of policy change a real challenge (Linares, 2016; Brown, 2015). The tone of the entire conversation changed when

I spoke with Mick about this. Although he remained positive despite challenges within his country and district during most of the conversation, the turn in tone gives the impression that the effects of constant change in public policy must be an undesirable part of his job.

Though all of the teachers have experience in some kind of urban school setting, the various sources of funding made a difference as to the degree of autonomy each of them felt in their classroom as a result of the hand of public policy. Liyou, Nicki, and Regina – the private school teachers - reported that their lessons were not heavily impacted by national policies or administrators while Boyang, Shutian, and Mick – the public school teachers - expressed some concern over the added stresses. We have heard Shutian’s ongoing comments about the dry teaching techniques and emphasis on testing in China. Though Boyang expressly skipped over all of the public policy questions on this paper (which does not surprise me given her answer to the question about teaching methods), she did add this final comment at the end:

“In my school, a music teacher’s [job duties does] not only [involve] teach[ing] class. Many teachers complained they didn’t have much time for preparing the class. They have too many other stuff [they] need to do. So, many teacher quit the job.” *Boyang*

Though the purpose of this “other stuff” is unclear, the instigator of this extra work likely has to do with public policy changes. For instance, while I was working in China, it seemed that every other week there was another large event hosted by the city or province in which we were required to take part. There was a piano concert, a teacher development workshop, observations, science fairs, competitions, new teacher training sessions, and in one case the high school decided to write its own textbook. There was never a dull moment working on things beyond planning and grading, and most of this “other stuff” seemed to come from public policy requirements for national competitions or teacher training.

Music teachers in the U.S. had a lot to say about changes in education policy and the role of the National Standards for Music Education outlined in Chapter 2, Table 1 and 2:

“I just can’t really use them much in my music class because they are too general, they are too philosophical in a way. I’m not saying they’re bad, I mean I think it’s good that they have them but they need some work.... [I] just [think music class should be] a positive learning experience and an awareness. I mean, I would think that the government would be thinking about this, I don’t know what they’re thinking about!” *Regina*

“In the big push for Common Core in our district... I fear that we’re getting a little too wrapped up... and we’re not focusing on what really matters. I think education is becoming a business to a point and the people that sit behind desks at a state level [have] never been in front of a classroom before and they’re just coming up with arbitrary procedures and policies and laws that aren’t in the best interest of the kids. And as far as testing, which we’ve talked about, I don’t think it’s best. Would I rather be rehearsing than teaching writing? Of course. Do I think that there has to be some accountability and schools need to be held accountable? Of course. And I have patience but it’s a challenge and I fear that it’s a constant fight that we have to have, especially in our field because not everyone sees music as a core subject.” *Mick*

“I don’t necessarily pay attention to those. But ...remembering back to undergrad when you have to learn the national standards and all that stuff ...a lot of what I do still pertains. They are still performing and creating music, they’re still ... maybe I don’t have improv... oh no, I do have improv! Sorry, I can barely remember what the standards are...” *Nicki*

Between just these three teachers, indications of the factors of resistance to policy change outlined in Chapter 2.3 are present and attitudes have turned negative or remained fuzzy on what exactly these policies actually mean. Further, when asked what they believe the policy-maker’s intentions are given recent policy changes, the teachers answered:

“I feel that... the state is all about core subjects and English and Science, and Math. All of those have taken a lot of precedence over the arts. Just looking at the amount of testing, why can’t we do standardized testing for music? Why

can't all students be a part of music? There's definitely a stigma where music is not considered that important and they don't care about lifelong learners of music, they care about science." *Nicki*

"I have a friend in IT and she told me that nowadays they choose who they are going to hire for certain creative based jobs based on whether they have musical training... it's true. They will always take someone who has a musical background before others." *Regina*

In other words, the feeling that music is not considered as important as other subjects because it is not tested is even felt in private school settings. No matter where the music teacher goes, they feel as though their work is seen as less legitimate than the "academic subjects" as a result of various public policy decisions over the course of the last 50 years.

Two out of three of the Chinese teachers did not comment on how public policy impacts their class. Liyou likely skipped the question because he is an IBO teacher, and Boyang likely skipped the question because she felt uncomfortable commenting on government policy due to political reasons. However, Shutian continued his tone by stating, "Music is not that important [to public policy makers]." And so, overall the impression of public policy on the Chinese and U.S. general music educators is negative. However, I would argue that the Chinese educators simply are not aware of the changes that are being made around them. In just five years I saw such a change happen in that office where there were more music teachers hired each year, more professional development courses, and more development of new techniques to teach as a result of public policy workshops described earlier in this section.

Finally, when asked about professional organizations, Boyang indicated that she attends occasional piano workshops and Liyou participates in IBO conferences. Their discussion of these organizations sounded positive but were brief. The U.S. teachers on the other hand were strongly

positive about these opportunities, describing such organizations as NAFME and the American Choral Association (ACA) as “the good guys” (Mick) that “100% add [to my overall music class experience]” (Nicki), descriptions that seem to place these organizations on the opposite side of the pendulum from public policy.

4.2.4 Global Perspectives

The remaining questions in this study examined the international experiences of the teachers interviewed. This was covered for a number of reasons. First, it is important to understand how global citizens today are raised experiencing multiple cultural influences. When students are born in one place and live in another, they choose to nurture certain influences over others as they grow and develop preferences for various reasons. In the case of Liyou, for instance, it is important to understand why he chose to move abroad and to teach in an international curriculum rather than in his home culture’s system. Second, because comparative education studies have become such a fad in the news it is important to dissect to what degree teachers are influenced, value, and experiment with attempting these foreign strategies.

The interview instrument asked a series of questions pertaining to the teacher’s understanding of comparative education research trends including, 1) Do you have experience in an education system outside of your home country? 2) What are your impressions of the music education system in (the opposite country) America/China? 3) Have you adopted any of the approaches to music teaching you have learned about from America/China? If yes, which? Were they successful? If no, would you like to? and 4) Do you believe that comparative education research is helpful to inform your teaching?

Two of the Chinese teachers and two of the teachers from the U.S. responded that they have not had any educational experiences outside of their home country. Liyou explained that he gathered

additional certifications abroad but did not describe any observations he may have noticed about the change in setting. Mick described a few choral tours of Europe that he took in high school and college.

All of the teachers from China and the U.S. cautiously shared their impressions of music education in the opposite country. Chinese teachers commented:

“I have never seen music education system of USA, but in my imagination, I think they have a lot of activities and the teachers encourage the students to create their own music instead of just "tell" the students what music is and what we should do.” *Shutian*

“I don't know much about music education in America. [But,] I think [my international colleagues] teaching way inspired me a lot.” *Boyang*

“[I have] heard from some colleagues. I feel like there is too much proportion of ensemble performing in the classroom.” *Liyou*

Though brief, two out of three of these responses view the U.S. music education as positive. They reinforce several of the trends that emerged in previous chapters of this paper. Shutian refers to the vagueness of the U.S. general music curriculum that leaves space and “freedom,” as Regina describes it, to teach the course in whatever way the teacher pleases. He also refers to Jin Li’s (2012) discussion of the role of inquiry as a coveted Western learner skill.

Liyou’s comments are surprising. They lead to the question of whether his colleagues are from the U.S. or China. Based on the responses from the U.S. teachers interviewed in this study, I think few of them would change the ratio of attention given to general music versus ensemble performing. Though they might agree that general music is underserved, all three expressed that their true passion is in group performing and so sacrificing time from that area would be unlikely. This makes me think that Liyou’s colleagues are Chinese citizens who have lived and worked abroad and experienced disagreements with different cultural approaches to teaching strategies.

Teachers from the U.S. also had positive impressions of their Chinese counterparts:

“I’ve had three Chinese students and all of them have incredible music skills, taking lessons on something and they seem to be focused and could dance... They were good pianists, good at whatever they were doing, good dancers and you know it was just a high level of excellence and this would just be the private lessons, but it just seemed to be that model” *Regina*

“I am always under the assumption that music education is stronger in China given the amount of talent that comes out of that country. But... the weird thing is then, that they all leave and come to America or go to Europe. I don’t know if that also has to do with the societal work ethic of people in China versus people in America.” *Nicki*

“I have seen videos of like say a Chinese band, elementary school band, playing... and it was impeccable. So, one can assume that music is valued and that every child is receiving a music education over there, I certainly know culturally because I have friends that are Chinese that again, children focus on just one thing. If a kid is going to take piano lessons he’s gonna be really set on piano. And I guess culturally parents are much more on top of their kids to practice and take it seriously.... I will say, listening to the performance of “Slava!” it was technically precise but it lacked was the emotional aspect of it, that I think we maybe understand a bit more here.” *Mick*

The U.S. teachers point out the technical musical excellence of Chinese students, the degree of dedication, focus, and determination shown to their music studies, the heavy handed influence of parents, and the important role of private lessons. Mick also points out the perspective difference between East and West having to do with the relative importance of appreciation and emotional aspects of music vs. technical precision. This debate, along with participation vs. quality in building general music programs is one that music teachers face everyday. In the end, is the musical experience or the correctness of the performance more important? Based on the commentary herein, it seems that the U.S. music teacher would conclude that the experience comes first, though excellence is needed in the cases of state adjudications. Chinese public policy would argue that experience is most important, but in

practice it is more common to hear of strict teaching strategies and drilling for precision. It seems that there are contradictions between policy and practice in both places.

Finally, all of the teachers agreed that comparative education studies are useful and felt that more could be learned about the way other cultures and countries approach music education in order to help improve their teaching and practice.

“I think that would be very helpful to kind of know what other countries/continents are doing in terms of music education and looking at what works for them or what doesn’t and how does it affect quality of music.” *Nicki*

“...most other cultures have better luck at being involved in the arts I’d love to just like find out how they do that. ...Everybody is doing it and enjoying music. And so just trying to find ways to bring interest to the arts in a way that’s supported and how to really support the kids. Because you know [in the U.S.] they tell kids to drop chorus because you need your study hall.” *Regina*

“Certainly in choral music in particular ...Eastern Europe right now and it’s a hub for it and you can learn a lot about it by studying that and how all these upcoming composers from that area are ear training and how they got to be where they are. That can inform our practice I think.” *Mick*

The U.S. teachers indicated various interests in comparative education research endeavors. Regina emphasized her interest in trying to drum up participation in her subject while Mick and Nicki both indicated they were interested in improving the quality of their teaching by hearing about new teaching strategies from abroad, much like myself. However, in Regina’s case it may be that she is also interested in fresh and new teaching methods as this may be the means by which the other cultures have increased participation. Though they are all somewhat vague in their assessment of what exactly they want from the other cultures, this fits the tone of this section of the paper. Teaching strategy is not prescriptive. Answers often come from a broad array of knowledge and experience. Once more, these teachers are

indicating interest in comparative studies for the purpose of broadening their horizons to contribute more experiences to their educational pedagogy wardrobe – though they are not picky whether it is a sweater or a coat that is being added.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have covered a wide range of topics to better understand what is occurring in music classrooms in the United States and China today. I have attempted to synthesize several branches of educational research that analyze Chinese and U.S. classrooms, including policy analysis, learning theories and teaching methodologies, the cultural aspects of learning, the role of professional organizations in the learning process, and qualitative studies regarding the role of the teacher in the classroom. I have discussed the feasibility of international policy implementation in each of the two places in an effort to understand whether seeking best practice abroad is a worthwhile endeavor.

Perhaps most notably, this study is uniquely able to share discussions and written responses from music teachers in both China and the U.S. to record teacher attitudes about international studies, catalogue first-hand descriptions and opinions about relevant teaching approaches, document how various influences such as educational and cultural background impact the teaching techniques used in classrooms, and capture teacher opinions about the pivotal position they play between stakeholder and student in the implementation of public policy. Though this paper covers a broad range of topics, the conclusions reached provide specific insight for general music educators and the education stakeholders (policy-makers, students, parents, and administrators) regarding 1) approaches to choosing teaching methods, 2) understanding their role in the education system, 3) managing complex relationships between the teacher and various sources of authority, and 4) ways to improve current practices for implementing policy change/exchange.

5.1 IMPLICATIONS OF INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

At the start, this research project sought to identify course content and teaching methods music educators are using around the world. Along the way, China was identified as an important, influential force that has a shared vision with U.S. policy-makers: to be the best in economics, in education, in influence and, so on. As a result, studies such as those carried out by Zhao (2007, 2014) and Florida (2002) argued that the education systems of China and the U.S. are converging. In recent years, both have undergone a lot of policy change, which intentionally or not, mirror the other's historically accepted public policy norms.

5.1.1 Chinese General Music Education

China, once an extremely centralized, standardized education system fully focused on forging a highly disciplined, knowledgeable, competitive, and almost automated vision of a perfect Confucian student, recently began realizing that these students could not drive economic growth. These students must learn to be creative. As a result, public policy was forged to do just that. This research study suggests that on the ground it is unclear whether policy is having an impact on general music teaching methods, curriculum, and practice.

The Chinese educators who participated in this study did not imply in their answers that change has happened. Of the three respondents, all three seemed unaware of any policy changes that might impact their teaching. One of the participants (Boyang) seemed to wait on her boss to feed her the information she needed to know about policy change rather than seeking answers to policy questions on her own. One of the participants (Liyou) seemed content with the international program he chose to teach outside of the Chinese framework in which he was raised. He commented "I don't teach in the public school system, so I don't think I am in the right position to judge it. Yet, from what [I've seen] and heard, I feel that there should be more structured curriculum design in this country." This is

surprising considering the description of Chinese music education described in section 2.2.1. According to Xie & Leung (2011), the music education curriculum is more structured than that of the U.S. and has been that way since 1986 due to arts education policy reforms. This may suggest that as he admits, Liyou is largely uninformed about the state of current Chinese education policy. The third participant, Shutian, repeatedly voiced a great amount of dissatisfaction with the state of the Chinese education system's structure - particularly the lack of 'outside of the box' thinking and the emphasis put on drilling, memorization, and teaching to a test.

Though this sample is small and involves teachers with only around 8-10 years of teaching experience, it is surprising that none of these participants mentioned an awareness of the changes being made to bolster the relative importance of music education in their society or to adjust the preferred teaching style of Chinese educators on the whole. Is it possible that the teachers are intentionally not made aware of these policy changes and only upper administrators can be consulted to describe their experience with these changes? Given the limitations of this study, the answer to this question is still unknown, however given the clandestine nature of the Chinese government, most would find it unsurprising if the government was intentionally vague in how they carry out public policy change. Still, future research may benefit from interviewing Chinese music department leaders and administrators *as well as* educators to discover the level of transparency about policy change communicated by the central government.

What was striking, however, was that although the teachers did not necessarily attribute the ways that they teach to policy change, all of the teachers claimed to use a *student-centered* approach. It is contradictory that in the same batch of questionnaires, Shutian characterized Chinese teachers as "strict," "tell[ing] us to memorize," and "telling students what music is or what they should do," and yet all three teachers described their use of Western-style teaching techniques. Further, all three were able to

list and describe various Western teaching methods and learning theories. It is possible that the sample is unique since all of the teachers who responded come from schools that have both private (international) and public (local) divisions, and therefore they have been influenced by Western colleagues.

Furthermore, the sample is coming from Shanghai, perhaps the most international city in China.

Additionally, little commentary was given in regard to the Chinese teachers feelings about how public policy shapes their lessons, but it is also a shame that this portion of the was not collected as it could have been the most illuminating part of this entire paper. All in all, it seems clear that this study was not able to cover all of the initial aims in the Chinese area of research and that future studies are needed to better understand the Chinese music classroom. I would strongly recommend to future researchers that they conduct their study abroad with in-person interviews to help make the Chinese participants feel less reluctant to share. Chinese colleagues in Shanghai felt comfortable sharing sincere opinions about the Chinese government with me in person, but I cannot imagine they would ever write down their feelings about public policy and send it to the U.S. given the number of famous cases of Chinese citizens being jailed and worse for such conduct. Further, questionnaires in the future should only be sent in Chinese to eliminate the possibility of encountering translation issues/miscommunication. Finally, the best way to fully understand the methodologies of Chinese teachers is to observe them on a day-to-day basis. One announced observation is not enough to understand how that teacher reacts to different situations.

5.1.2 U.S. General Music Education

For almost 20 years, since the creation of *NCLB*, the United States has shown concern over low standardized test scores (DeSilver, 2007; DeBoer, 2012; Crouch, 2012) and has scrambled to make changes to education policies that focus on supporting this standardized test model of education in order to compete on a global scale. However, results have not changed and teachers grow increasingly

frustrated (Terhart, 2013) with the continued push to mandate more adjustments that do not seem to make any improvement. It would seem that either the reforms are not properly suited to the education system or the teachers are not able to absorb the change that the government envisions.

The music teachers interviewed in this study gave evidence to both of the above statements. Mick spoke at length about how the new standardized-test model has negatively impacted his music classroom and pulled away from his ability to be creative, spontaneous, or teach in the ways that he knows to be best. However, he did imply that he has come to peace with the adjustments - that he has found a way to own them and teach them in his own way. More than the other two participants, he expressed the most frustration over the looming influence of public policy on his classroom, likely because he is a public school teacher.

Interestingly, Nicki mentioned the notion of adding music to the standardized test model in order to increase the legitimacy of the topic. The logic here might be that if the relative importance of music education is suffering simply because it is not being treated the same in policy change as other topics, it may be best to simply treat music education in the same fashion as the other subjects. These seemingly contradictory statements of being for and against testing simultaneously mirrors the political discourse in the country which seems confused and without conclusive evidence about which direction to go in next. None of the strategies seem to be working to improve the U.S. education system's test scores. Perhaps the only answer is to measure the system in a different way? Perhaps the resistance to which Terhart (2013) refers is not resistance but frustration that no change seems to satisfy? Others argue that the United States education system must be doing something right to create such a successful society on so many other fronts. And so the circle perpetuates as the question is still unanswered - how can policy be changed to improve the education system in the U.S.? Answers to these questions will be discussed further in the following sections.

As far as the impact other sources of authority have had on music education in the U.S., it appears that the participants involved in this study were largely unaffected. Parents, administrators, and policy had some impact on how they taught but, by in large, the sequencing of their lessons drew heavily from experiences in either workshops or secondary and tertiary education. These influences were described more as a collage or internalized repertoire than a listing of attributed or named ideas that are cross referenced before and during each lesson. Teaching methods to the three participants were pieces of knowledge they picked up over many years that stuck with them for one reason or another having to do with a particularly influential person, a moment in their life, or a style that suited their personality and identity. This autonomy to dictate, adjust, and pull from many different sources was very personal to the participants and although all three of them lauded the attempts made to organize methods and content into structures, they seemed to prefer to do what *feels* best in their classroom – so that their teaching approach could be *owned* by the teacher. In this way, perhaps teaching is more reactionary than prescriptive and teaching techniques are better handed down orally than dictated as in improvisation in performing arts. A working knowledge of scales and structure is needed to start, but after many experiences creating, those structures fall away so that only the nameless concepts are organized in the brain to be called upon when necessary.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MUSIC EDUCATORS

Based on the research gathered within this paper, perhaps the most important thing secondary general music educators can do to improve their ability to teach is to be independent and self-facilitating in managing their own education. Teachers should seek to remain open-minded to new approaches to teaching and gain as many opportunities to teach and observe in different contexts as possible. If teaching methodology is a personal one that is gained through experience and understanding of a

classroom over time, teachers should become as well-rounded as they are able. Going to professional development workshops, sitting in on other teacher's classes, and continuing their education is essential.

Additionally, teachers may seek to learn and observe abroad by teaching in collaboration with foreign colleagues or living and teaching abroad – even if only for a few months. As observed in the Dineen & Ruth (2008) study, teachers may be more successful at accepting and understanding change when they are placed in a different cultural context, not to mention students are more accepting of different approaches when the teacher utilizes an approach with which they have a great deal of experience and comfort in teaching. Several of the Chinese teachers in this study point out that they learned a great deal from teaching and learning in international environments, borrowing from their international colleagues and adapting techniques to their international students.

As Mick pointed out in his interview, “eventually you realize you have to be yourself and you have to find what works for you.” Even the most open-minded teacher will find in some cases that particular strategies do not work for their teaching persona. However, the nature of international education scenarios pushes students and teachers to be more open-minded because of the presence of such a wide variety of teaching and learning practices. In this way, international education is a humbling situation in which all of those involved must accept that there are things they may not understand about the situation before entering the room. These new challenges help create an additional layer of empathy and understanding for the teacher to see all viewpoints present when standing in the middle of an international classroom.

Furthermore, time should not be a deterrent to garnering excellence in teaching. If experience is the most important trait for a teacher to improve, more years of teaching ought to help them improve. The teacher must be responsible, however, for keeping their teaching methods fresh and up to date with current trends. As evidenced in the *differentiation* portion of the study – most of the teachers did not

seem to understand what this word really means. This makes sense, as this is a relatively new technique being fostered in education circles today, but it suggests that these teachers have not had a clear enough description of what this means or seen it applied accurately in order to understand. More and better professional development is needed for these educators that is presented with a learning attitude rather than one that mandates particular teaching styles. The more education experiences the teacher can expose themselves to, the better. Remaining in the same post for many years and teaching the same topics may result in stagnation if the teacher is not careful. While the employer should take some responsibility in ensuring the teacher receives professional development, the surest way for the teacher to gain new knowledge is for them to do it themselves. Though financial constraints may be present, many resources are free or inexpensive today as a result of technology expansion and the internet. Being a teacher means being a lifelong learner – this means developing knowledge and skills specific to the subject area (music) but also to learning new teaching styles and techniques.

Finally, teachers must resist the urge to be frustrated by ongoing change mandated by public policy and other sources of authority. A frustrated teacher has more difficulty finding “their” comfortable teaching style. A defensive teacher has a more difficult time navigating the social relationships surrounding them at school. A burned out teacher loses sight of the reason they originally began teaching – to inspire and help young people (Su et. al., 2001). Though we saw in this study that some Chinese teachers were frustrated with the degree of control placed over Chinese teaching styles (particularly Shutian), for the most part the Chinese teachers remained relatively uninformed about current changes, and relatively less frustrated than Mick (and in some ways Regina and Nicki). The question becomes, is it better to be uninformed – in order to be less frustrated – is it better to be informed and manage frustration? Perhaps it is partially that the teachers must have more patience with

the changes placed upon them but that perhaps there are also too many changes and too much control coming from the central government, as well.

5.2.1 Understanding the Role of Secondary General Music Education

Throughout all of the chapters of this paper, evidence is presented that suggests the role of secondary general music education is considered subservient to music ensembles in music departments in the U.S. and to a lesser degree in China. Teachers should work to change this perception. Because secondary general music education reaches the most secondary students, this area of music education is perhaps the most important – even if it may not be the most important to the music educator’s professional image. The same amount of effort should be put into planning and assisting these students as is placed in music performing ensembles in a school - which in turn can help to improve the quality of performing ensembles, and vice versa. In short, a strong general music department works hand-in-hand with a strong performing program.

A strong general music education program will also work to redefine the purpose of this course to include objectives that are pertinent to the students. Though in some ways the vagueness of the state curricula may leave teachers feeling lost, disillusioned, or confused about in which direction they should plan their general music lessons, it also grants music teachers the opportunity to decide what is most relevant to this generation – something that is often difficult for us to define in the midst of history. In other words, keeping content fresh and relevant is just as essential as keeping teaching style and methods fresh. Teachers should strive to be “in touch” with the current generation to the best of their ability to help the students relate to the subject matter. This will not only engage the students to encourage lifelong learning but it will also curb many discipline problems that could otherwise arise and increase participation. Increased participation and knowledge of today’s music will lead to a better

musically educated public as a whole which in turn will create more excellent music for the teachers to study in their classes down the road!

Finally, teachers should see general music education courses as an opportunity to reach students at levels beyond excellence in music writing, performing, and written assessments. Because of the “freedom” (as Regina describes it) given to course content and delivery, there is space to foster other extra-musical skills within these students such as creativity and the social, physical, and emotional aspects of aesthetic learning. Teachers should take time to encourage students to experiment with music making, to explore new genres, to discuss how they perceive of current music, and to describe music as it relates to their daily life. In the same way that the teachers would benefit from exposing themselves to as many educational experiences as possible, the students should be exposed to as many different relevant learning experiences as possible within the time frame given to them, as well.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO STAKEHOLDERS

The course of action to improve practice for stakeholders involved in secondary general music education is less clear. The initial purported reasoning for the importance of this thesis topic is that the direction of society today indicates emphasis placed on economic success of the individual as well as the society. Two such societies that currently place such emphasis on economic success are China and the U.S. (the world’s two largest economies). Therefore, in recent years public policy makers from these places have made adjustments to improve the quality of general music education in an effort to bolster creativity, entrepreneurialism, and in turn bolster general economic success.

As a music educator, I am always happy when music education receives a boost in positive attention, however I wonder if this is the best reason to focus on improving music education. When will the ongoing need to legitimize the purpose of music education via other non-musical purposes end? Haven’t music education advocates proven the point that music is important *for music’s sake* yet? My

recommendation to policy makers is to end the discussion about whether secondary general music education belongs in schools and to just move forward with supporting it without describing a *why* for its need based in economics. It is this discussion that frustrates teachers even when public policy change does not. Nicki, a private school teacher in the U.S. explains, “There’s definitely a stigma where music is not considered that important and they don’t care about lifelong learners of music. They care about science.” The same is found in China, where Shutian explains “[State and National policies imply that] Music is not that important.” A simple change in presentation from public policy makers of their reasoning for policy change that focuses on expressing their appreciation for general music teachers would help curb resistance from teachers to larger movements like testing and standardization education models. Garnering relationships of reciprocity and respect is key to improving policy makers ability to encourage teachers, the agents of change, to actually adhere to the changes being made.

It is unclear whether testing secondary general music would improve practice. It may encourage teachers to put forth more effort in planning and assessing students regularly, but it would also take away from the “freedom” (Regina) allowed by the course insofar as course content and timing. Further, it is difficult to tell whether the current state of music education is healthy because there are no assessments. Based on the interviews within this paper, the six teachers all seemed to express some hesitation in describing their general music classes as “excellent classes.” If the teacher does not feel confident that the course is well-taught, it may be that they are simply being overly critical, or it may be that they are lacking confidence as a result of a lack of training. And so, if policy is to remain the way it is currently, teachers must take the reigns to improve the courses themselves via additional teacher training. If policy does change to include music subjects in the testing model, the teachers must be sure to keep the courses relevant and dismiss frustrations about lack of freedom in teaching content in order to succeed.

Finally, the entirety of the group of stakeholders – public policymakers, parents, administration, and students – must work hard to give more trust, authority, and ownership to the teachers in their classrooms. This can be done in several ways. First, encouraging more teachers to be involved in public office in order to be involved in making public policy decisions has been shown to improve relationships between stakeholders and teachers (Brown, 2015; Terhart, 2013). Second, when teachers are proud of their work and they take full ownership of it, they are more likely to do their best work. Positive relationships and reinforcement frequently breeds success. In China, the teachers are given utmost respect and it can be deduced that at least partially as a result, they have produced many excellent, hardworking students. Third, discipline and support of the teacher's decisions should start at home. All of the stakeholders, including students and parents, must learn to take partial responsibility for student shortcomings. Finally, change is not typically instantaneous. Once public policy is adjusted, stakeholders must wait a significant amount of time before claiming whether or not the changes have been successful. Give the teachers time and space to work and they will appreciate the break from constant policy change and the chance to do what they got into the profession to do: help children.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Pittsburgh *Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

Memorandum

To: Natalie Sheeler
From: IRB Office
Date: 12/21/2016
IRB#: PRO16060718
Subject: Teaching Methods and the Forces that Shape Them: Investigating the Chinese and U.S. Secondary General Music Classroom

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Please note the following information:

- Investigators should consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might alter the exempt status. Use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" link displayed on study workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- It is important to close your study when finished by using the "**Study Completed**" link displayed on the study workspace.
- Exempt studies will be archived after 3 years unless you choose to extend the study. If your study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has made the determination that your project met one of the required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

APPENDIX B

APPROVED IRB DOCUMENTS

B.1 INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT - UNITED STATES

The researcher will choose from this list of questions according to respondent answers as needed.

1. Demographic data:
 - a. Please share your basic demographic information.
 - i. Name? Age? Ethnicity? Race? Sex?
 - b. Please describe your educational background and experience.
 - i. In what country did you receive your education – America or China? In what province or state? At what kind of schools – public/private/etc?
 - ii. Would you describe your musical educational experience as a young person as positive? Why or why not?
 - iii. Do you have experience in an education system outside of your home country?
 - iv. How many years of education did you receive? Detail your degrees/certifications and university experience.
 - c. Please describe your music teaching experience.
 - i. How many years have you been teaching, at what schools, and in what positions?
 - ii. What subjects within the field of music would be considered your specialty?
2. Teaching approaches:
 - a. Briefly describe the teaching procedure you follow during a typical class period.
 - i. Would you describe your daily teaching procedures as primarily *teacher-centered* or *student-centered*?
 1. What sort of activities make this true?
 2. Has this balance changed over time?
 - ii. Are there any particular methods/philosophers/educational theorists/specific pieces of knowledge about teaching that inform your teaching?
 - iii. Do you break your students into groups during activities according to varying student needs/intelligences?
 - iv. Do you *differentiate* your teaching?
 - v. Are students diagnosed with special needs inclusively integrated into your classroom? If yes, how does this affect you teaching?
 - vi. Apart from your daily content objectives, what larger purposes do your music lessons serve?
 1. Is instilling; creativity, lifelong learning, the legitimacy of music, basic transferable music skills, appreciating cultural diversity, fostering a method of expressiveness, psychological needs, understanding aesthetics, nationalism, moral education, a sense of justice, etc. a secondary objective of your teaching?

- vii. What type of materials are needed for a typical music class at your school?
 - viii. When observers come to watch your class, do you change the way in which you teach? How so?
- b. Do you believe that your answers are typical of other teachers in your country? How might they be different?
3. Sources of authority:
- a. Throughout your teaching career, please describe to what degree each of the following stakeholders has shaped *what (curricula) and how (methodologies)* you teach:
 - i. Your former music educators
 - ii. Students –
 - 1. What do you believe students want from their music teachers in your culture? Has this changed over time?
 - iii. Parents
 - iv. Department head
 - v. Principal
 - vi. State policies
 - vii. National policies
 - 1. How have No Child Left Behind/Common Core/Others changed your teaching?
 - 2. How has the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development* changed your teaching?
 - viii. Professional Organizations – NafME? MAC? Others?
 - b. Do you believe that the influences shaping music teaching have allowed for overall improvement of practice throughout your teaching career?
 - c. In your opinion, apart from your daily content objectives, what larger purposes do these stakeholders believe music lessons serve (see list above)?
4. Relevancy Questions:
- a. What are your impressions of the music education system in (the opposite country) America/China?
 - b. Have you adopted any of the approaches to music teaching you have learned about from America/China? If yes, which? Were they successful? If no, would you like to?

- c. Do you believe that comparative education research is helpful to inform your teaching?
5. What else would you like to share that has not already been covered in this interview?
 6. Would you like to ask me anything?

B.2 INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT - CHINA

面试问题

研究者会根据受访者回答而选择问题从这些

1. 人口方面的资料

- a. 请介绍你的基本人口统计信息
 - i. 名字? 年龄? 种族? 性别?
- b. 请描述你的教育背景和经验.
 - i. 你在哪个国家收到了你的教育? – 美国或中国? 在哪个省或州? 在那种学校? 私立学校或公立学校?
 - ii. 你会给自己经历过的音乐教育好评论吗? 为什么?
 - iii. 你有没有经历过国外教育系统?
 - iv. 你收到了几年教育? 请列举你的学位与大学经验。
- c. 请描述你的音乐教学经验。
 - i. 你有几年教育经验? 在哪些学校? 那边有了什么位置?
 - ii. 在音乐教育中, 哪些话题算是你的专业?

2. 教学方法

- a. 请简述你的典型课程
 - i. 你会把你的典型教学手段称为“以教师为中心”或“以学生为中心”的?
 1. 有什么课中活动让你这样说?
 2. 这个平衡有没有随时变化?
 - ii. 有没有特别的事情会影响你的教学方法, 比如: 特定的教学方法, 哲学家, 教育理论家, 或具体知识?
 - iii. 你会不会按照学生不同的需要/智慧而把学生分组。
 - iv. 你会不会区分教课? **
 - v. 你的课堂是否包括有特殊需要的学生? 如有的, 这对你的教学方法有什么影响?

- vi. 除了你的日常内容目标以外，你的音乐课有什么更宽的目的？
 - 1. 你的教学有没有次要目标要灌注比如：创意，终身学习，音乐的合法性，基本可转移的音乐技能，欣赏文化的多样性，促进表现，心理需求，了解美学，民族主义，道德教育，有正义感，等等？
- vii. 在你的学校，一个典型的音乐课需要什么样的资料？
- viii. 当人来观察你的课的时候，你会不会改变你的教学方法？怎么改？

b. 你认为你的回答与你国家的别的老师的回答会相同的吗？有什么区别？

3. 权力来源

- a. 请描述下列关系到什么程度有影响过你的教学方法和课程：
 - i. 你的音乐教师
 - ii. 学生
 - 1. 你认为学生在你的文化里面对音乐老师有什么要求？这有没有随时变化？
 - iii. 学生的父母
 - iv. 部门主管
 - v. 校长
 - vi. 地方政策
 - vii. 国家政策
 - 1. “No Child Left Behind” (有教无类法案)/“Common Core”对你的教学方法有了什么影响？
 - 2. 国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要对你的教学方法有了什么影响？
 - viii. 专业组织？NafME? MAC? 共产党？别的？
- b. 对你看，在你的教学生涯中，影响音乐教学的各种条件有没有允许音乐教学做法的全面进步？
- c. 对你看，除了你的日常内容目标以外，上列关系人认为音乐课有什么更宽的目的？

4. 针对性方面的问题:

- a. 你对（相反的国家）美国/中国的音乐教学过程有什么想法？
 - b. 你有没有采用你从美国/中国学到的音乐教学手段？如果有，什么手段？成功了吗？如果没有，后来想采用吗？
 - c. 你认为比较性的教育研究有助于告知你的教学吗？
5. 有什么别的事情要说到的？
6. 有没有问题要问我？

B.3 RECRUITMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENTS TO MUSIC EDUCATORS

Email Correspondence #1 (for Subjects in America)

Researcher writes:

Hello, Ms./Mr. (),

My name is Natalie Sheeler, and I am contacting you from the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. I am conducting a research study entitled, “Teaching Methods and the Forces that Shape Them: Investigating the Chinese and U.S. Secondary General Music Classroom” Your school was selected to participate in this research study because of your current music education program. I am writing to request your participation. I would like to schedule a Skype meeting during which you will be interviewed by me. This video interview will be recorded and will take approximately one hour. It consists of several quantitative and qualitative questions about your teacher training, experience, methodologies, and curricula as they relate to various forces that have shaped your teaching over the tenure of your career.

The risks associated with this project are minimal as the information being shared is not of a highly personal or private nature. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded and saved in a secure undisclosed location making breach of confidentiality an unlikely but possible risk. Furthermore, although every reasonable effort has been taken, confidentiality during internet communication activities cannot be guaranteed and it is possible that additional information beyond that collected for research purposes may be captured and used by others not associated with this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There is no payment for participation. However, the findings will lend to a continuing body of research that will support the field of music education by helping to identify new practices and unaddressed issues. Our interactions will be confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. I will be directly quoting interview responses in my research, but neither names nor any identifying characteristics will be tied to them. No specific identifiable details about you will be shared in my written research to ensure your confidentiality. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this research study at any time.

If you would like to participate in this study, please send a response email confirming your approval. I will then forward a list of possible times you can choose from during which we can schedule the interview.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sheeler,
Principal Investigator

5500 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
230 S. Bouquet St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Phone: (857) 265-0848
Email: nms80@pitt.edu

Email Correspondence #2

Researcher writes:

Hello, Ms./Mr. (),

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my University of Pittsburgh research study, “Teaching Methods and the Forces that Shape Them: Investigating the Chinese and U.S. Secondary General Music Classroom.” Below is a list of times during which I am available to meet you on Skype (username: Natalie_sheeler) to complete the interview:

Time/Date
Time/Date
Time/Date

If you still wish to participate, please respond to this email with your preferred date/time to meet on Skype along with your Skype username at your earliest convenience.

As always, I am happy to respond to any questions or concerns. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sheeler,
Principal Investigator

5500 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
230 S. Bouquet St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Phone: (857) 265-0848
Email: nms80@pitt.edu

Telephone Correspondence

Researcher states:

Hello, Ms./Mr. (),

My name is Natalie Sheeler, and I am contacting you from the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. I am conducting a research study entitled, "Teaching Methods and the Forces that Shape Them: Investigating the Chinese and U.S. Secondary General Music Classroom." Your school was selected to participate in this research study because of your current music education program. I am calling to request your participation. I would like to schedule a Skype meeting during which you will be interviewed by me. This video interview will be recorded and will take approximately one hour. It consists of several quantitative and qualitative questions about your teacher training, experience, methodologies, and curricula as they relate to various forces that have shaped your teaching over the tenure of your career.

The risks associated with this project are minimal as the information being shared is not of a highly personal or private nature. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded and saved in a secure undisclosed location making breach of confidentiality is an unlikely but possible risk. Furthermore, although every reasonable effort has been taken, confidentiality during internet communication activities cannot be guaranteed and it is possible that additional information beyond that collected for research purposes may be captured and used by others not associated with this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There is no payment for participation. However, the findings will lend to a continuing body of research that will support the field of music education by helping to identify new practices and unaddressed issues. Our interactions will be confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. I will be directly quoting interview responses in my research, but neither names nor any identifying characteristics will be tied to them, and they will only be used with your review and permission. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this research study at any time. Would you be interested in participating in this research study?

If yes- Great. May I have your email address to forward a list of times you can choose from to complete the interview? Thank you for your help in gathering this valuable data and have a great day.

If no- Thank you for your time and have a great day.

Mail Correspondence (for Subjects in China)

Researcher writes:

Hello, Ms./Mr. (),

My name is Natalie Sheeler, and I am contacting you from the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. I am conducting a research study entitled, “Teaching Methods and the Forces that Shape Them: Investigating the Chinese and U.S. Secondary General Music Classroom” Your school was selected to participate in this research study because of your current music education program. I am writing to request your participation. The survey consists of several quantitative and qualitative questions about your teacher training, experience, methodologies, and curricula as they relate to various forces that have shaped your teaching over the tenure of your career.

The risks associated with this project are minimal as the information being shared is not of a highly personal or private nature. Surveys will be translated, coded and saved in a secure undisclosed location making breach of confidentiality an unlikely but possible risk.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There is no payment for participation. However, the findings will lend to a continuing body of research that will support the field of music education by helping to identify new practices and unaddressed issues. Your response will be confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. I will be directly quoting interview responses in my research, but neither names nor any identifying characteristics will be tied to them. No specific identifiable details about you will be shared in my written research to ensure your confidentiality. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this research study at any time.

If you would like to participate in this study, please fill out the survey included in this package and return it in the provided postmarked envelope.

If you need to contact me, I can be reached at the email/phone number listed below.
I would be happy to answer any questions you might have and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sheeler,
Principal Investigator

5500 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
230 S. Bouquet St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Phone: (857) 265-0848
Email: nms80@pitt.edu

Translation of Mail Correspondence (China)

邮件通信#1 (中国主题)

研究员写道:

你好, Ms./Mr. (),

我的名字是 Natalie Sheeler, 我和匹兹堡大学的教育学院联系。我正在进行一项名为“教学方法和形成他们的力量: 调查中国和美国中学普通音乐教室”的研究报告。由于您目前的音乐教育计划, 您的学校被选入参加这项研究。我写信要求您的参与。该调查包括关于您的教师培训, 经验, 方法和课程的几个数量和质量问题, 因为它们与在您的职业生涯中塑造您的教学的各种力量有关。

与该项目相关的风险是最小的, 因为共享的信息不是高度个人或私人性质。调查将被翻译, 编码并保存在一个安全的未公开的位置, 从而违反保密性不太可能但可能的风险。

您参与此研究没有直接的好处。没有参加付款。然而, 这些发现将有助于持续的研究, 通过帮助确定新的做法和未解决的问题来支持音乐教育领域。您的回复将是保密的, 您的身份不会被披露。我将在我的研究中直接引用访谈回应, 但是名字和任何识别特征都不会与他们相关。关于您的具体可识别的详细信息将在我的书面研究中分享, 以确保您的机密性。您的参与是自愿的, 您可以随时退出本研究。

如果您想参加本研究, 请填写此包装中包含的调查, 并在提供的邮戳信封中退还。

如果您需要与我联系, 我可以通过下面列出的电子邮件/电话号码联系我。我很乐意回答您可能遇到的任何问题, 我期待您的回复。

真诚,

Natalie Sheeler,
首席研究员

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