

2021

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Recommended Citation

Abrahams, Frank (2021) "Book Review: Globalization, Nationalism and Music Education in the Twenty-First Century in Greater China, by Wai-Chung Ho, Amsterdam University Press, 2021, p. 342, ISBN: 978-9463729932," *Visions of Research in Music Education: Vol. 38* , Article 9.
Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol38/iss1/9>

Book Review: *Globalization, Nationalism and Music Education in the Twenty-First Century in Greater China*, by Wai-Chung Ho, Amsterdam University Press, 2021, p. 342, ISBN: 978-9463729932

A Review by

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A frequent contributor to international research journals in the fields of education, music education, and cultural studies, Wai-Chung Ho, wrote a masterful and scholarly text that unfolds the issues of music education inside the context of the political and social challenges of globalization and nationalism in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Framed in the relationship of knowledge to power, and specifically, the power of the governments to mandate curriculum, the text is a collection of stand-alone research studies that comprise each chapter. After an introductory chapter, each of the following three chapters presents the political and social histories of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, respectively, as they interact separately and collectively, particularly with Mainland China. The research is thorough, extensive, and current. In addition, it provides the reader with the most recent governmental

Abrahams, F. (2021). Book Review: Globalization, Nationalism and Music Education in the Twenty-First Century in Greater China. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 38. Retrieved from <http://www.rider.edu/~vrme>.

mandates that influence education. Finally, throughout the latter part of the book, we hear the voices of music teachers in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan gleaned from survey data and interviews.

The overarching message is that the purpose of music in schools is to foster a sense of nationalism and particularly allegiance to the country. Most of the music education discussed centered on singing. There are some exceptions. A music teacher from Hong Kong explained, "Different songs from different countries are introduced in school music lessons. We also teach students about the history of the countries' cultures" (p. 252). To this reviewer, some of the discussion was reminiscent of the political influences that prompted Zoltán Kodály to develop his method and materials in the middle of the 20th century. His concern was to preserve the Hungarian culture; thus, he developed a learning sequence for children to become musically literate and learn the catalog of Hungarian folk songs. What is different here is that there is no organized methodology for teaching.

In terms of philosophy, there is a discussion of aesthetic education. Many teachers concurred that aesthetic education would facilitate the children's communication skills, cultural expression, and learning about music. One teacher from Hong Kong said their aim was for students to look for the beauty of music. And another added that their goal was to help students express their feelings through music. A teacher in Taiwan had a utilitarian perspective and said, "School music education should encourage students to develop aesthetics and personal expression so that students have the opportunity to work together to enhance student collaboration in school" (p. 248).

A primary focus is on the differences between music education in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan due to political ideology, cultural values, and musical knowledge.

Ho states, "The main challenges facing school education and teacher education in school music education are the interplay between political ideologies and contemporary values and between traditional music and contemporary music styles" (p. 41). On globalization, teachers in Mainland China agreed that studying music was one of the most diverse disciplines and should encourage students to learn more about world music (p. 252). In Hong Kong, a teacher said, "Music can break down barriers among various ethnic-racial, and cultural groups within school education" (p. 252). Ho's findings indicate that teachers in Mainland China preferred to teach traditional Chinese music and world music. That involves singing the Chinese national anthem. While in Hong Kong and Taiwan, teaching centered on Western and world music. Teachers noted that music from Mainland China was not popular. Responses on surveys and interviews revealed that teachers from Hong Kong and Taiwan did not support the idea that national or patriotic education should be part of school music education.

Many teachers felt that their teacher training did not prepare them to teach in ways that centered on globalization or fostered nationalism. For example, in response to globalization, teachers from Hong Kong requested Western music, and teachers in Taiwan requested world music. However, all noted that "authentic teaching materials on world music are not found" in the teacher training programs (p. 253).

In Hong Kong, teachers are "only taught the more popular world music, such as American music" (p. 253). Teachers reported that their students did not want to learn the music of other cultures. Specifically, children in Taiwan and Hong Kong were not interested in the music from Mainland China. Most Taiwanese teachers reported that students no longer learn or sing the national anthem in music classes or school assemblies. One shared, "I do not find that our students have national sentiments or national consciousness through singing the [national]

anthem. [In fact] students don't need to learn the anthem. Students have no idea why the anthem lyrics were composed and how they are related to modern Taiwanese society" (p. 262).

Despite this, many music teachers did introduce Chinese music. Some had Chinese music ensembles in Hong Kong and Taiwan schools, believing that Chinese music had educational value. Still, others added that they, as teachers, had minimal knowledge of Chinese musical heritage and repertoire. One teacher shared, "Our students won't listen and won't find information about Chinese ethnic music on their own time. I believe they won't have incentives to learn Chinese music. Thus, I need to educate and to encourage my students to learn more about China's traditional ethnic music from diverse ethnic groups" (p. 255). Teachers in Mainland China requested content centered on traditional Chinese music to foster nationalism. One Chinese teacher wrote, "I consider Chinese music (including traditional and folk music) should be vital, and it should be the foundation of my students' knowledge in music" (p. 255).

To summarize, the teachers in Mainland China spoke most positively regarding traditional Chinese music, nationalistic education, and the promotion of patriotic songs in classroom music lessons. However, this was not true in Hong Kong or Taiwan. There, most wished for more of a balance of traditional ethnic music with Western music. In terms of national identity, the teachers in Hong Kong encountered the most significant resistance to promoting education and national identity within the music education curriculum.

According to Ho, "no book is available that has presented the theories and the relationships between nationalism and globalization in school education and cultural education as an analytical framework in the three Chinese territories" (p. 309). For this reason, Wai-Chung Ho's text is outstanding in every way and, over time, may emerge as a seminal text on the issues of globalization and nationalism in 21st-century music education in greater China. My one

criticism is the extensive use of abbreviations. While Ho includes a glossary of these abbreviations in the beginning pages of the book, one needs to photocopy them and keep them close by while reading. This becomes cumbersome. That aside, the book provides fodder for discussion and thought among scholars in music education and particularly those interested in the effects of globalization and nationalism in greater China.

I congratulate Wai-Chung Ho on this impressive volume, and it is well worth the reading.

Reference

Ho, W-C. (2021). *Globalization, nationalism, and music education in the twenty-first century in greater China*. Amsterdam University Press.

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