

# **Culture crisis - continued marginalization, enabled by federal US education policy and New York State School Music Association**

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## **Abstract**

This article exams the United States education policy ‘Every Student Succeeds Act’ (ESSA) while critiquing its alignment and questioning its compliance with the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It further examines the dissipation of these policies as implemented in the local New York State NYSSMA requirements, while investigating the rhetoric of pre-service music teacher programs and local music education institution practices. It examines the practices of in-service music teachers in comparison to the rhetoric of pre-service music teacher programs and provides suggestions for concrete university music education curriculum reform to improve the segue from university curriculum to institutional implementation. Through this inquiry, causes for marginalization through curriculum implementation are identified and addressed as linked to the federal ESSA policy and requirements of New York State NYSSMA policies. It further provides suggested amendable aspects of the ESSA and New York State alignment, with approaches to multicultural curriculum development for secondary schools as well as implications for further research studies to influence curriculum development.

## **Keywords**

Citizenship, curriculum, inter-culturalism, multiculturalism, policy

## **Introduction**

Through this inquiry I will investigate the implementation of multicultural curriculum in United States federal education policy and subsequent New York State policy on music education and conclude that a solid structure for multicultural music education curriculum can only be achieved with the understanding of human identity as an amalgamation of teacher, professional, and student identity. This inquiry is in congruence with an investigation and critique of current pre-service teacher training university program rhetoric and in-service teacher practice and concludes that current New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) practices in New York City and New York State are not compliant with the objectives of the US federal Every Student Succeeds Act. However, I further argue that the current policies regarding education at large and music specifically in the federal ESSA does not take enough measure to include and specifically mandate holistic education that is inclusive of multicultural and intercultural education and thus is not in compliance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) mandate. Measures of implementation are suggested for policy revision and inclusion in the state level of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) and the New York City Blueprint for Music.

## **Questions**

What is multicultural curriculum and what quantifies the ‘multi’ in multicultural? How many cultures should be represented in the curriculum before it is considered multicultural? Is this question addressed when academics and educators engage in curriculum development? Do pre-service music teacher programs provide enough courses in world musics and can future teachers

adequately develop meaningful multicultural curriculum without a background and education in multiple world styles of music? Do in-service music teachers implement a purposefully and meaningfully developed multicultural curriculum and do in-service music teachers receive adequate professional development in multiple world musics to be able to inform their practice and to update their curriculum?

### **Diagnosing the symptoms as the problem?**

While these initial questions appear as the surface problem, it will be revealed that the problem of lack of multicultural curriculum development and implementation is a symptom of a larger, deeply rooted, systematic problem in education policy. This article will further exam the policies on education and music education in the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) in the United States of America and its correlations (or not) to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its further dissipation to state levels, particularly in New York State NYSSMA policies and practices, and further to the local level in New York City as presented in the Blueprint for Music.

Although it appears as many, these are only a few of the questions stemming from the observation of current music education practices in the United States and the literature on multicultural curriculum. They are questions that raise the concern of a culture crisis between pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher practices, and the desired evolution and implementation of multicultural curricula to achieve inter-culturality. Without a thorough investigation of these questions and correlations, multicultural music curriculum design as currently practiced, is in danger of remaining inadequate, impersonal and stagnant. Furthermore, the weakness of its implementation proliferates the ramifications of student population marginalization based on the assumptions of cultural identity, and is reinforced by the federal and state policies.

### **Policy and Human Rights**

Does the United States’ ESSA address areas of multiculturalism and inter-culturalism? Does the ESSA compel alignment of music and education initiatives with fundamental human rights as declared by the United Nations? Are the basic articles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights adhered to in federal education policy and at state and local levels? According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), “everyone has the right to education” and,

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Article 26)

A major addition to the ESSA is its expansion of inclusivity of music. New language in the ESSA includes the term “well-rounded” education, which is defined in the act to mean,

Courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign

languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience. (p. 298)

### **Non-Compliance**

Section 4107 (NCLB, p.176) “ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES” states, “programs and activities that use music and the arts as tools to support student success through the pro- motion of constructive student engagement, problem solving, and conflict resolution.” While it is evident that both the UDHR and the ESSA intend to educate students in areas of promoting and understanding, the federal measure fails to address specifically areas of multiculturalism and inter-culturalism. These terms along with ‘holistic’ education are missing entirely from the document and are therefore rendered not mandated. While the UDHR specifically promotes “tolerance and friendship” among racial groups and cultures, the ESSA fails to provide a mandated provision.

Issues specific to curriculum development are delegated to state and local legislatures, though the lack of a federal provision complying with the basic human right outlined in Article 26 of the UDHR fails to provide the necessary compulsion for multicultural curriculum development and implementation, and rather leaves the cause to chance of local officials, of which themselves may lack insight and education in this specific area. The absence is further evident when examining the NYSSMA manual for culmination of performance pieces, which is entirely centered on Western Classical Music and Jazz. The repertoire for culmination as perpetuated by NYSSMA standards and diploma requirements does not represent the diversity of New York State and its schools and at large does not represent the diversity of the United States of which the ESSA is intended for, nor does it represent the vision of the UDHR. It does, however, represent the curriculum in practice through all levels of American education. Specifically, in the area of New York State music regent requirements we see the lack of implementation of diverse musics that support the intent of UDHR Article 26, and therefore the expectation of the culmination of a students’ music education through heavily based Western European classical and American Jazz traditions marginalizes the multiple cultures that are represented in New York State schools.

### **Rhetoric VS implementation**

The literature in music education increasingly grows to support multiculturalism and plurality. However the implementation of multicultural music education continues to be weak. A disconnect between the publications of academics and the implementation of university pre-service music teacher preparation programs allows for the continued perpetuation of traditionalist Eurocentric music practices in elementary and secondary schooling. Although the focus of university pre-service teacher programs is to prepare future teachers in the ‘best way’ (Cevik, 2011) and to prepare them to be enthusiastic and participatory (Demirhan & Açıkkada, 1997), many continue to focus on Western European traditionalist practices, despite the narrative of academics in the literature, while in-service teachers in the elementary and secondary setting are seldom offered the necessary

professional development to implement a multicultural curriculum. The idealism of pre-service education programs is diminished by the pragmatism of implementing federal and state policies that mandate otherwise.

It is unreasonable to expect future music educators to implement cultural curricula if the university curriculum itself does not represent the desired practice and it is illogical to expect current in-service teachers to implement change to the current existing curricula if professional development is not provided and the case for change isn't given in order to solicit the necessary 'buy-in' from current practitioners. But the necessary 'buy-in' cannot be anticipated nor adequately solicited without policy revisions in the ESSA and NYSSMA that specifically align language of the vision of multicultural and intercultural education with the ideals of the UDHR. A period of time should not lapse to afford current pre-service teachers to take over and change the classroom culture of current in-service teachers. This is a faulty design that continues the perpetuation of the status-quo. Rather, pre-service music teacher programs need to be modified to include multicultural curriculum development and in-service teachers need to receive professional development so that the work of university teacher preparation programs is not undone when 'student-teachers' arrive to their internship sites. Although the finding of proper materials and resources to educate learners in multicultural curriculum is considered lacking and problematic (Southcott & Joseph, 2009), it is the responsibility of the university music education program to locate and/or develop these resources and provide this education. The implementation of multicultural curriculum desired and the valuing of previous teacher identities (Carrillo, Baguley, & Vilar, 2015) along with the infusion of the multicultural nature of human identity can expand and influence the successful practice of multicultural curriculum (Carrillo & Baguley, 2011). With proper multicultural curriculum development and implementation, a step towards reaching the ideals of intercultural harmony and education comes closer.

## **Culture crisis**

### *Pre-service music teacher programs and in-service music teacher practices*

A chasm between the theoretical knowledge disseminated through university pre-service music teacher programs and in-service music teacher practices can be described through the lacking of philosophical 'grounding' and perhaps understanding of the importance of multicultural curriculum (Cain, 2015; Schippers, 2010; Campbell, 2002). Both pre-service music teachers and in-service music teachers recognize the importance and the complexities of implementation, although a universal acceptance of change has yet to be executed. The status-quo and de facto implementation of Eurocentric music curricula is evident in the professional identity of many music teachers (Olson & Einwohner, 2001; Watson, 2006) and is also linked to the lack of training in world musics and readily available resources (Cain, 2015). Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, and Crawford (2013) state that, "unfortunately, multiculturalism is not always viewed as a central component of music teacher training curricula. Therefore, many music teachers across the world still feel unprepared to include music from different cultures in their daily work" (p. 210) while Ballantyne & Grootenboer (2012) state "if we want to improve pedagogy, we need to first address pre-service and in-service music teachers' professional identities" (p. 378). Pre-service music teacher training programs that focus primarily on the didactic approach to teaching (Hargreaves, Purves, Welch, & Marshall, 2007)

deprives future teachers of necessary content knowledge to be implemented through their pedagogical training. Ballantyne, Kerchner and Aróstegui (2012) point out that “PSMTs [pre-service music teachers] recognized that teaching classes of learners required them to develop different pedagogical strategies” (p. 217). The inclusion of more access to multicultural music experiences and course work can further develop the pedagogical strategies for multicultural curriculum implementation and can begin to shift the societal practices otherwise mandated.

### **Quantifying plurality?**

What does ‘multi’ in ‘multicultural’ music education mean? How many cultures need be represented in a given curriculum before being deemed ‘multicultural’? Belz (2006) suggests “music education students should learn to express musical ideas from at least two different musical cultures, be required to perform on a non-Western instrument and study non-Western music with a member of that culture” (p.42). What is ‘different’? “Multi-dimensional complexities exist within a culture. A culture can exist *within* a culture” (Douskalis, 2012, p. 95). Nethsinghe (2012) argues that the implementation of multicultural curriculum “is not always possible for a number of reasons but, as learning multicultural music is considered essential and valuable, we should try to include, encourage, and promote this type of education for the benefit of our students” (p. 385). “Not always possible” is a stratagem to avoid implementing a curriculum which is arguably very possible to do (Douskalis, 2012) but difficult for teachers who lack the training. Teachers who argue that there isn’t enough time, or refuse professional development, are doing an injustice to the spirit of education and subsequently to their students; generations of humanity are further affected by these interactions or lack thereof. The inclusion of multicultural curriculum development in teacher training programs (Nethsinghe, 2012) as well as the participation of pre-service music teachers in world music ensembles (Cain, 2015; McIntosh, 2013), including in-service teachers through professional development is a tangible means to bridge the current practice of classroom culture with the rhetoric and justly argued implementation of multicultural curriculum ubiquitously across all domains of music education.

Mantie and Tucker (2012) point out that “publicly funded schools are supposed to serve everyone equally in egalitarian, liberal democracies” (p. 269) and

If one endorses the view that freedom (as autonomy) is not just freedom from but freedom to, then student’s music be given some knowledge of musical alternatives from which they might choose. The cultural playing field can hardly be said to be level if certain musical practices are included in the common curricula of state-funded schools while other practices are not. (p. 268)

### **Neutrality in music education?**

The authors continue to point out the unjustness of large music ensembles in public school programs that perform only Western European musics, and therefore deprive students of choice and of a diverse curriculum. Barbosa (2012) highlights “many limitations to comprehend a music tradition through a band practice” (p. 54) and questions if a true cultural understanding without a distorted perception could be achieved through instrumental repertoire in traditional school music

settings with the lack of print resources for a multicultural curriculum. Nevertheless, “music education is not a neutral enterprise. Music curricula can and do function socially and culturally in powerful ways...by implementing a praxial philosophy of music education, teachers have a reasonable way of achieving the goals of humanistic education” (Elliott, 1995, p. 293) and “To glorify democracy and to silence people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and to negate people is a lie” (Freire 1970, p. 91). “Songs are not neutral, but carry with them multiple meanings associated with histories, belief systems, habits, emotions, and ways of thinking of different peoples” (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, & Crawford, 2013, p. 212). Joseph (2014) tells us that music “can be seen as an arena to have intercultural dialogue, exploring and experiencing different cultures, including traditional or contemporary music” (p. 293). Further suggesting that community music schools can cover the material that public schools cannot with the time allotted (Nethsinghe, 2009; Heath, 2001) is merely a treating of the symptoms and not the problem. It is an acceptance of the status quo.

If educators wish to break the paradigm of colonialist practices (Bradley, 2007) and conjure a curriculum around human constructs centered on students (Elliott, 2012) then educators need to take into account the students of which they are teaching and their cultures (Douskalis, 2012) without making the assumption that all students are educated in their cultures and musical traditions (Douskalis, 2012; Mantie & Tucker 2012).

Developing a classroom culture and community by utilizing the knowledge of fellow teachers, school building colleagues, community members, and prior knowledge of students, teachers can develop multicultural activities that are inclusive and diverse without needing to rely on internet searches and common method books (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, & Crawford, 2013; Barbosa, 2012).

### **Implications for further research**

As educators we desire to provide insight to students into the vast multicultural world of which they will become global citizens. But as humans we acknowledge that we do not possess all of the necessary information and knowledge that we desire to disseminate. Students should not be underestimated of their prior knowledge and experiences or perceived to be ‘tabula rasa’. With the acquisition of experiences from students and professional development in multicultural ensemble experiences, teachers can develop skills to provide to future classes. Teachers should engage in the act of experiential learning through disobedient activities in regard to traditional schooling and curriculum (Dewey, 1963) in order to advance the process of curriculum development. “Regardless of methods or materials, the teacher is the factor that makes a difference in the classroom. Multicultural music education cannot happen unless the individual music educators in classrooms all around the country make it happen” (Volk, 1998, p. 190).

Studies must be administered to determine the ratio of cultures being represented in current curricula nationwide. An assessment of the concert repertoire as performed by school bands, orchestras, choirs, and guitar ensembles can be conducted to determine percentage of repertoire per culture that is exhibited as a representation of the overall yearly curriculum. A four-year analysis should be further conducted to determine what cultures are being represented and how often throughout a student’s high school tenure, or a 6-8 year study of curriculum implementation can be

done for elementary and secondary schools. The findings of these studies can then be compared to the school population data, community population data, and global data. Areas of diverse population can be studied in relation to rural non-diverse areas as to compare and share best practices for future development and implementation of multicultural curriculum.

Federal policy in the ESSA should adopt specific language to foster the development and caring of a resilient culture of multicultural practices in curriculum development and intercultural objectives in curriculum implementation. Local governing bodies in arts administration should take steps to specifically advocate for these changes in practice in their school music programs. Further studies can be conducted in individual school music programs, examining examples of multicultural practices and the community it fosters in relation to the traditional Eurocentric school music program.

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