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## **Educating Music Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Review Essay**

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### **Introduction**

A changing world requires a changing style of education...The nature of social change, and its causes, vary in their specifics from country to country. What is true in all countries however, is that there is a pressing need for re-assessment of the function of the school. ... [One] essential element in the operation of the school and in the accomplishment of necessary reform is the competence of the teacher... What are the essential functions of the teacher in a changing world? What kind of preparation can be devised to ensure that teachers acquire and maintain the competencies necessary for the discharge of those functions?

(Goble & Porter, 1977, pp.11, 12)

These were the questions that the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the International Conference on Education, which was organized under the auspices of UNESCO, addressed in Geneva on 27 August

1975. Decades later these same questions are still timely. It is true that “the ideals of education, like all other ideals, are no doubt incapable of final realization” (p. 13). Yet, we cannot but keep trying to formulate the desired goal, to establish a direction of desired change and strive to advance towards it, “stage by feasible stage” (p.13).

Music teacher education has been dealing with similar questions for many years. What is the role of the music teacher in a society and world that is always changing? What kind of preparation can ensure that music teachers are able to attend to today’s challenges? In order to be able to answer the above questions, systematic research is necessary in music teacher education (Asmus, 2000), and the edited book by Jose Luis Aróstegui is an important step in this direction. Aróstegui’s book is a compilation of seven case studies of music teacher education programs in Sweden, Mexico, Spain, Argentina, Portugal and Brazil. It is the product of the cooperation and work completed by the ALFA EVEDMUS network of a number of higher-education institutions that were created and sponsored as part of a European Commission project.

In this carefully structured book, and through the presentation of case studies in Europe and Latin America, important questions and issues in music education are highlighted. Music teachers initial preparations; their needs and competencies, as well as the effect that changing times (i.e, socio-economic circumstances) have on the decisions that are made and the quality *of teaching and learning* that is expected, are some of the threads covered in this book. The book focuses on countries in which research is not usually reported in English-language publications. The language barrier often hinders access to research and literature in non-English speaking countries. In that sense, and particularly in Music Education, this book is a rare ‘treat’. We have the opportunity to delve into contemporary challenges and global issues in music teacher education from the point of view of six countries that are less visible in international literature.

### **Book Summary**

In the first chapter, the editor (José Luis Aróstegui) sets the stage for the book by attending to the frameworks of the seven case studies that are discussed in the subsequent chapters. He establishes the contents within the realm of Comparative Education and identifies a number of issues in relation to Music Teacher Education that are later developed through further discussion. In the first chapter, all necessary information is provided for the research questions and methodology that led to the completion of the seven case studies.

A major issue and one that is later developed and discussed, is *the specialist vs. the generalist* debate. Three out of six research questions are related to this. Assessment and accountability through assessment are important and also common themes that are targeted through the

research methodologies in the different case studies, and that also infiltrates (in some cases more than the others) the analysis and discussion in each country.

In the last two pages of the first chapter, Aróstegui clearly presents a number of problems that are common to many countries around the world. The lack of clarity on the role of music in compulsory education, the different meanings and uses of the term, music education, the diversity and lack of focus in music teacher education programs, and the “demise of music as part of compulsory education” (p.12) through recent curriculum reforms, are the main issues that are presented in this part of the book. These issues are common in many countries around the world and, as such, resonate in particular with the many challenges that my own country of Greece is currently facing.

The research categories that are used in each case study are described in detail, and all of the subsequent chapters (chapters 2-8) revolve around the presentation and interpretation of these research categories, followed by reflection and discussion of the issues that were covered. In the second chapter Gunnar Heiling analyses the teacher education program in music at the Malmö Academy of Music in Sweden. He structures his chapter in three parts. In the first part he presents all of the necessary information on the course through a self-assessment study that was completed by the department (teachers, staff and students). In the second part he focuses on one aspect of the course, using it as a case study within the case study to exemplify the program, and in the third part he brings all the information together through reflection and discussion.

Edith J. Cisneros-Cohernour situates the analysis of the case study of the Bachelor in Arts Education within the context of music education in Mexico. By explaining the lack of music teacher education programs she concentrates her research on this specific program, though it is considered to be outdated. It is a program that is devoted to prepare teachers of the Arts in both secondary and primary levels of education. This appears to be a strength and weakness at the same time. On the one hand, it is a Bachelor’s Degree that is dedicated to the preparation of teachers for the Arts, thus improving the quality of education in schools. On the other hand, the time that students spend in each art form and the number of areas that they have to cover during this course, limits the expected results.

In the fourth chapter of this book, Ana Laucirica describes the program leading to a degree in Education with a music specialization at the Public University of Navarre, in northern Spain. This is also a course that aims to prepare both primary and secondary education teachers. A large amount of course subjects are devoted to general education, creating a variety of issues regarding the skills and competencies in music and music education that students acquire during their degree. The discussion of the balance between general educational subjects,

specific music education subjects and skills and competencies in music is a recurring thread in the book. It dominates the discussion in many chapters, as well as the final recommendations in the coda of this book.

The fifth chapter, by Silvia Malbrán centers on the development process of a new syllabus in La Plata University in Argentina. This course was created by the Faculty of Fine Arts and aimed to prepare music teachers as music pedagogues (p.108). The distinction here underscores the differences between the classroom teacher in primary education who has some music training, and the musician who is a trained educator and who can teach at both levels of education. The music pedagogue is the main goal of the new curriculum. This chapter covers the process, the stages, and the curricular transitions that took place between the earlier and final versions. By interpreting the data collected with the use of questionnaires and interviews, the writer voices a number of concerns and also provides a number of suggestions for further development and change.

Focusing on primary teacher education, the sixth chapter written by Isabel Carneiro and Teresa Leite, analyses the degree in Primary Education with a music specialization that is offered at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon in Portugal. In contrast to the programs described in previous chapters, this program aims towards general teachers intending to teach music in primary education. One important difference in this program is the pre-requisite musical knowledge that students are expected to have in order to enter the course. It is Portugal's answer to the question that is repeated in subsequent chapters and course descriptions: how much musical knowledge should a generalist intending to teach music in primary education have?

In the seventh chapter Teresa Mateiro describes in 'rough' lines, the higher education system in Brazil and in particular, the recent changes in teacher education. At the same time she centers our attention on the Music Teacher Education Program at the State University of Santa Catarina, attempting to map the program's transient state. She analyzes the data collected according to the research questions set in the beginning of the book and offers criticism from a participant's point of view. This case study focuses on the views of students and, especially, on how and why these views are formed, with the intent wishing to use them as indications for future developments and educational reforms.

In the last case study, Jose Luis Aróstegui turns the spotlight on the University of Granada in Spain and its Music Teacher Education Program. This is also a degree aimed at primary teachers with a specialization in music, but in contrast to the case study from Portugal, students in this degree are not expected to have any musical knowledge prior to their entrance to the course. This creates the necessary background for exploring one of the major issues in

this book – the tension between music and education in a music education course. Discussing the dichotomy from the primary education view, Aróstegui questions the importance and proportional balance between music knowledge and educational training within such a course. An issue that is highlighted in the discussion part of this case-study is the need for change; for re-considering priorities and goals in the light of higher education convergence in Europe. In the closing chapter of the book, Gunnar Heiling and Jose Luis Aróstegui discuss the critical issues revealed through the previous chapters and the analysis of the case studies. The writers sum up the results by organizing the separate studies according to their similarities and differences in relation to the issues that emerged. These issues then are grouped under the basic research categories identified in the first chapter: the course program, the students, the academic faculty and staff and the teaching and learning process. This chapter concludes with an advocacy coda for the role of music in compulsory education that also serves as an agenda for the future.

### Discussion

By far the most important theme that emerges, and one that colors all related issues as well, is the music vs. education dilemma. In the discussions on course content, structure and philosophy in teacher education, this dichotomy is manifested as a *generalist vs. specialist dilemma*. The case studies described here demonstrate that different countries around the world are located on various points of this continuum, depending upon the balance between educational and musical courses offered, music prerequisites or entrance examinations demanded by prospective students, course philosophy and so on. Even within the same country, educational reforms alter its position on the continuum, depending on the aims of the change and its impact on teacher education courses.

How many musical and how many educational subjects are enough? Is a generalist teacher with musical knowledge better suited for primary education? How can students acquire the necessary musical knowledge? Do they need to have a basic musical background? Will these teachers integrate music in their classrooms in a meaningful and effective way? How can this be assessed?

In the countries and educational systems where the generalist teacher has the responsibility to teach music, often times these teachers are required to assume a music specialization (formal or informal) as a part of their teaching practice. As such, these teachers take on the responsibility for the majority of music teaching and additional music related activities in their school. The question that concerns me is obvious: How is the role of the generalist teacher different from that of the music specialist, especially if the generalist teacher ends up having to develop a specialized focus anyway? If the argument is being made for one generalist teacher to be available for the majority of the school day, and the majority of the generalist

subject areas that would be taught are negated in practice by a specialist (even if they are a generalist), what is there left to argue about?

How can we find the balance in a teacher preparation course that attracts musicians? How long should their educational training be? What type and how many subjects should this educational training include? How can such a course connect the two sides and also create interrelations between subjects, students and tutors? How integrated are current programs, syllabi, courses? What about identities? How do students identify themselves in the different courses? How do they structure their identities? What are the factors that impact these identity formations throughout the course?

So many questions answered in so many different ways, constantly being modified, creates a clear picture of a “messy” situation in music teacher education courses. However, in order to ‘untangle’ a ‘messy’ situation we should be able to describe current needs, problems and issues according to contemporary aims and objectives. This could help each society decide on the best path that would lead to the next stage, the next step, the next evaluation and re-assessment and the next goal. Comparative education is a great asset in such efforts. It lifts the weight of isolation, facilitates decisions and provides paradigms for imitation and rejection. In my own study of music teacher education within the Greek and the English educational systems, which identified similarities and differences, the analysis pointed to similar results.

Through the comparison between two different teacher education courses (before and after the educational reform) within the English educational system, it was clear that changes in teacher training courses targeted the balance between educational and musical subjects, teaching practice and theory, time spent in the university and time spent in schools (Chrysostomou, 1997). It was too early for Greece to be a part of this debate, since specialist teachers’ education was almost non-existent at the time of the research, but it is very much part of the agenda of educational reform in more recent years (Chrysostomou, 2005 and 2009).

The way that each country moves forward with such a decision depends very much on its educational system. In Greece the educational system is heavily centralized with all decisions being made by the Ministry of Education. However, a number of stakeholders and their actions and discussions can affect those decisions. These stakeholders include teachers, teacher educators, students, parents and even political parties with very different agendas and answers to the question of the role of the music teacher in today’s changing society. It is important, then, to keep re-visiting our main questions. What is the role of music? What is the role of the music teacher?

Unique among the seven studies is the case study of Yucatan, Mexico, where the arts are treated collectively and the teacher preparation course aims at creating a generalist that would be able to teach all the arts. This discussion and practice is found in other countries around the world, as part of the generalist versus specialist debate and/or the integration dilemma (Russell-Bowie, 2006; Bloomfield, 2000). The problems reported here relate to the structure of the course, as well as the balance between educational subjects and the art competences and skills acquired by the students. The results and the interpretation of the data analysis in this particular case study questions its aims and viability.

The need for change is a recurring theme in the majority of these case studies. In his conclusions of the Swedish case study, Heiling discusses the necessity of change and enumerates the prerequisites that make it possible. Silvia Malbrán perceives educational change as a way to accomplish social and community reform. She tracks the differences accomplished in the course that served as her case study in Argentina, with the use of a longitudinal methodology.

Lastly, the necessity for change in order to comply with the European Union higher education convergence is a thread identified in all European case studies. Spain, Portugal and Sweden are undergoing changes in various aspects of their higher education systems that include course structure, identification of aims and objectives, the application of assessment processes and the use of ECTS (European Credit Track System). This convergence of objectives provides a cluster of reasons to move towards change in all countries and all higher education institutions on the continent. The discussion on similarities and differences between educational systems, as well as the need for convergence has lasted for years within the European Commission. Education Ministers from 29 European countries set the foundation with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna\\_Process](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna_Process)). Since this time, in every educational reform the agenda includes steps towards that goal. However, not all countries move easily or willingly towards that ideal. Depending on the distance that each country has to cover towards the target paradigm, the pace and the resistance differs.

“A changing world requires a changing style of education” (Goble & Porter, 1977, p.11). Education has always been a powerful tool used by society for long-term and sustainable change. In contemporary times and fast-paced societies, though, how long-term can the goals and aims actually be? If the target keeps changing positions how can we ever reach a feasible pathway to it? And if the goals change, shouldn't the means and the strategy we use to reach them change as well?

Examining case-studies from around the world, like those illustrated in this book, attempting to map the changes that have taken place and at the same time suggest further developments

for the future, we realize that change is happening faster than the global community of education can absorb or anticipate. We are running breathlessly behind a speeding vehicle and attempting to grasp the bigger picture. It is possible that running is not the way to lead the developments. Maybe we should stand still and reflect and search for the right answers.

I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think... But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!

(Carroll, 2009, p. 25)

### Coda

In this book of collective case studies we learn about different courses offered in music teacher education programs in different countries in Europe and Latin America. The authors attempt to give us the whole picture by describing as much as possible, the institutional culture, the educational system, the societal needs and changes and the political and educational agenda. Inevitably, some pictures are clearer than others. Not all case studies focus on the same research questions. Each author chooses to answer the questions that seem to be closer to his/her interests and that are more appropriate for the case study in process. In terms of comparative education, a solid methodology was designed for the specific purpose of creating the necessary conditions to compare programs and courses from very different contexts and countries in Europe and Latin America, and to be able to reach conclusions that are meaningful for other countries around the world. In the last chapter, Heiling and Arostegui with insight and reflection, bring together all of the major issues that seem to have 'haunted' music teacher education for years. They assist the readers' thinking and reflection, setting the stage through the comparison of the different case studies. One cannot help but contemplate and compare his/her own country and situation in music teacher education. Whether we agree or not with their final conclusions, the goal is accomplished. Comparative education has paved the way to reflection and discussion.

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Smaragda Chrysostomou is Assistant Professor of Music Pedagogy and Didactics in the Faculty for Musical Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has presented papers in numerous national and international conferences. Her book “Music in Education: the dilemma of interdisciplinarity” was published in Greek in 2004. Her scholarly writings can be found in Greek and International books and journals such as *Arts Education Policy Review* and *Journal of Learning through the Arts*. She has recently coordinated the creation of the National Music Curriculum in Cyprus and Greece (appointed by the respective Ministries of Education). Her research interests include teacher education and training, teaching methods, integration, cooperative learning, music curriculum and assessment.

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