Spoken Paper

Envisioning music teacher education: Global Lessons from Nepal

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This conference paper presents global lessons from a research project with musician-teachers in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, by extending the interpretation of the project's five sub-studies beyond the local context. The research project began in 2014 and involved a number of stages. The first stage focused on visiting schools to observe music lessons, and interviewing school administrators and individuals teaching music in these schools. The second stage focused on working with over 50 musician-teachers in a series of sixteen workshops guided by Appreciative Inquiry’s 4D cycle of Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. The resulting five sub-studies explore context-specific issues influencing the envisioning of music education, the process of co-constructing visions for music education with practitioners, and the resulting co-constructed visions. Theoretically, they use Hammerness’ (2004) concept of teachers’ visions as a starting point, and extend this starting point through socio-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s notions of the imagination (1996) and the social and cultural capacity to aspire (2004).

Reflecting on the findings of these sub-studies highlights the importance of listening to teachers voices for the development of music teacher education. Indeed, the participating musician-teachers emphasized the importance of coming together, discussing their teaching, and envisioning new possibilities. The findings also underscore some of the challenges and ethical dilemmas music teachers and music teacher educators face globally while negotiating a world of intensifying diversity and rapid change. While the resulting co-
constructed visions challenged shared experiences of hierarchy and social stigma associated with being a musician, for example, they also omitted experiences not common to all participants, such as the difficulties women face in pursuing music as a hobby or career. This reminds music teachers and music teacher educators of the importance of engaging in ongoing reflection on their teaching practice and the values underlying their practice. Imagining ways to challenge and disrupt structures that continue to marginalise some groups and individuals foreground profoundly complicated and ethical questions of who speaks, who listens, who is heard, and who and what remains silent.