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“I Want to Know More About the World”: A Case Study of International-Mindedness as a Means of Music Teachers’ Professional Development in China

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Abstract

The concept of “international-mindedness” is central to many international curricula, and often sits at the heart of international education policies and programs. Research indicates many strengths and advantages to international-mindedness in education. However, in China, a majority of teachers who do not teach in international schools will have few opportunities to access or learn about this style of education.

The purpose of this study was understanding participants’ experiences with professional development with a focus on international-mindedness through an online course. This course was the “station” or mode by which to introduce the concept of international-mindedness in adopting international music teaching methods to xiaowai (out-of-school) music teachers. In particular, this research addressed the following questions: 1. Did the professional development in “international-mindedness” change teachers’ understanding of, and reflection on, music education? If so, how? 2. How have the teachers experienced implementation of international-mindedness during their teaching?

This study was designed as an intrinsic case study. Results from these teachers’ journals, teaching reflections, and interviews reveal teachers’ experiences in regard to international-mindedness throughout the online course; and some benefits, limitations, and barriers they encountered when they tried to switch their traditional way of teaching into an international mode. The conclusions from this research include: (1) international-mindedness may be essential for xiaowai music teachers from China to change their traditional way of teaching; (2) there are some visible and invisible gaps among Chinese music teachers in their application of international-mindedness to their teaching environment; and (3) in regard to Chinese music teachers’ professional development, there is a need to explore a more “Chinese” way to implement international-mindedness.

Key words: international-mindedness, music teachers’ professional development, Chinese xiaowai music teachers, teachers’ experience, international curriculum and assessment