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Development of New Textbooks for Transmission of Local Folk Music and Culture in School Education: A Case Study in Shunde, China

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Abstract

Shunde is a region in the city of Foshan, Guangdong Province in China. Folk music of Shunde in China is characteristic in terms of their relevance of the working lives of farmers and fishermen. However, the musical genre has not been well transmitted to the new generations. While compulsory school education is an effective channel to promote and transmit the local culture at an early age, the local government of Shunde, Guangdong Province of China has been collecting local folk music of Shunde and develop new textbooks for school teaching.

This presentation reports the development of a textbook series entitled “Local folk music of Shunde” for school music education. We record the rationale and characteristics of the textbooks, and report the situation of how the textbooks were used in schools. A number of songs and folk music were collected, including salt-water songs, pastoral songs, dragon boat singing, gongs and drum cabinet, lion dance, dragon boat racing, Cantonese opera, and Shunde nursery rhymes. We invited various artists and senior people in the region to demonstrate their music making for our recording and transcription. The contexts of these songs were investigated and connected with the musical elements for thorough understanding of the pieces. We also involved various artists to teach school music teachers to learn to sing and play with the music for their teaching. While schools have different teaching focuses, we incorporated those schools which are eager to transmit local culture to the students in this project. Exemplary music classes were recorded for promotion and demonstration for popularization. Application of the textbook series has effectively promoted students’ understanding and encounter of the local folk music in the cultural context. The book series has been adopted for primary 1 to 6 as a kind of regional music in the country.

The project has been impactful in various aspects. Local schools in Shunde have developed their own teaching and curriculum characteristics; they were invited to present their experiences in various national events. Cantonese, the local dialect, has been fading away since many teachers come from other provinces who do not speak the dialect. Through this project, Cantonese was also promoted to the other parts of China, in which the local culture of south China is well known. The project was also commended by the academics since it helps in promoting and transmitting the local culture to the younger generations, while music could be subsumed in people’s daily life. This project is a case study for sharing on how local folk music could be promoted and taught in school music education.

Keywords

education policy, folk music, music education, music textbooks, transmission,