A Hybrid and Non-Formal Music Education Connecting China's Local Family Communities and Cultures with Nepal

Ying Liu[1], Yuanyuan Li[2], Siyu Yang[2], Tianyang Ren[2], Hanfei Li[2], Andy Hogg[3], Pramod Shah[4], Jun Li[5], Yingdi Zhang[6], Amrit Chhetri[7]

[1]*China Country Director, IHETL[1]*
[2]*Music and Art College, Capital Normal University, China*
[3]*Director and Principal, The Support School NCFE Center, Liverpool, UK*
[4]*Chairman, Dibyabhumi Multiple College, Nepal*
[5]*Director and Conductor, Henan Sanmenxia Social Community Orchestra, China*
[6]*Project Leader & Teacher, Tulip Community Academy Dalian NCC Centre. China*
[7]*Chairman of Surshala Music Academy, Surshala Foundation, Nepal*

Abstract

In this paper we focus on our Research and Development project on progress in the field of Music Education. COVID-19 has caused a deep crisis to education in many ways and also given rise to the need for family education in China. To meet such needs urgently, Tulip Community Academy Dalian NCC Centre (China) was established - it is the first, and currently the only, local NGO family social network in China that has been accredited by British Ofqual regulated NCC Education to deliver Digital Literacy Programmes for children. To this extend, there have also been local rapidly growing interest in international multi-cultures as well as in music. We intend to explore such interest as a vehicle to connect music education with China's local families across international cultures. Raising research questions, the report highlights the adaptation of Participatory Action Method; scopes research issues on how student led academic study of music and engagement with family intergeneration and social development assists, where a range of core values of music across international cultures is elicited; that how pedagogical engagements with families can be applied to social communities, schools, and off-school activities.

Keywords: Inclusive Music Education, Cross Cultures, Family Intergeneration Learning, Non-formal Learning, Hybrid Home Learning, Family Community Education

1. Introduction

In this paper we focus on our Research and Development (R&D) project on progress in the field of Music Education. COVID-19 has placed education in deep crisis in many ways [1] and also has given rise to the needs for family education in China [2]:

1) The critical need to establish non-formal online home learning across families intergeneration;
2) The incentive to have international collaborations imposing change for innovative solutions in education; and
3) The incentive to establish a model to converge educational and training standards with hybrid activities that can be undertaken immediately and inclusively for all.

In addition to the practical needs, one of the research gaps in literature is between the use of technology in education and the delivery of online home learning programmes in line of "formal, non-formal and informal" standard. Formal learning is under planned instruction and assessment by a teacher in a formal institution; formal learning is set to be intentional, regulated, standarised and implemented. Informal learning is taking the account of learning on experiences and contexts in doing situations or immersive engagement in activities. Non-formal learning is "beyond understanding formal and informal pedagogies as two poles of a continuum, …., in terms of their merits relative to what the teacher and students are trying to achieve [3].

We firstly have established Tulip Dalian NCC Centre accredited by British Ofqual regulated NCC Education and successfully delivered blended digital literacy programmes for families across China. This non-formal blended home learning model has been piloted across China. As Figure 1 illustrates, five Nepalese students from Dibyabhumi Multiple College have been undertaking the internship of teaching assistants working online together with China's local families to facilitate bilingual teaching for children. Inspired by such crossing cultural exchange (also in theory [14-17]) that motivated home learning, we extended our collaborative research in the field of music education. This is also part of the on-going development of our Non-formal Hybrid Family Learning Model, advancing research on [4]:

1) Non-formal online home learning digital literacy for children;
2) International multi-cultures as vehicles to motivate change;
3) Parents and children are both effective learners;
4) Parents' motivation influencing the value of education; and
5) Online cross family intergeneration, online family engagement and online home learning inequality.
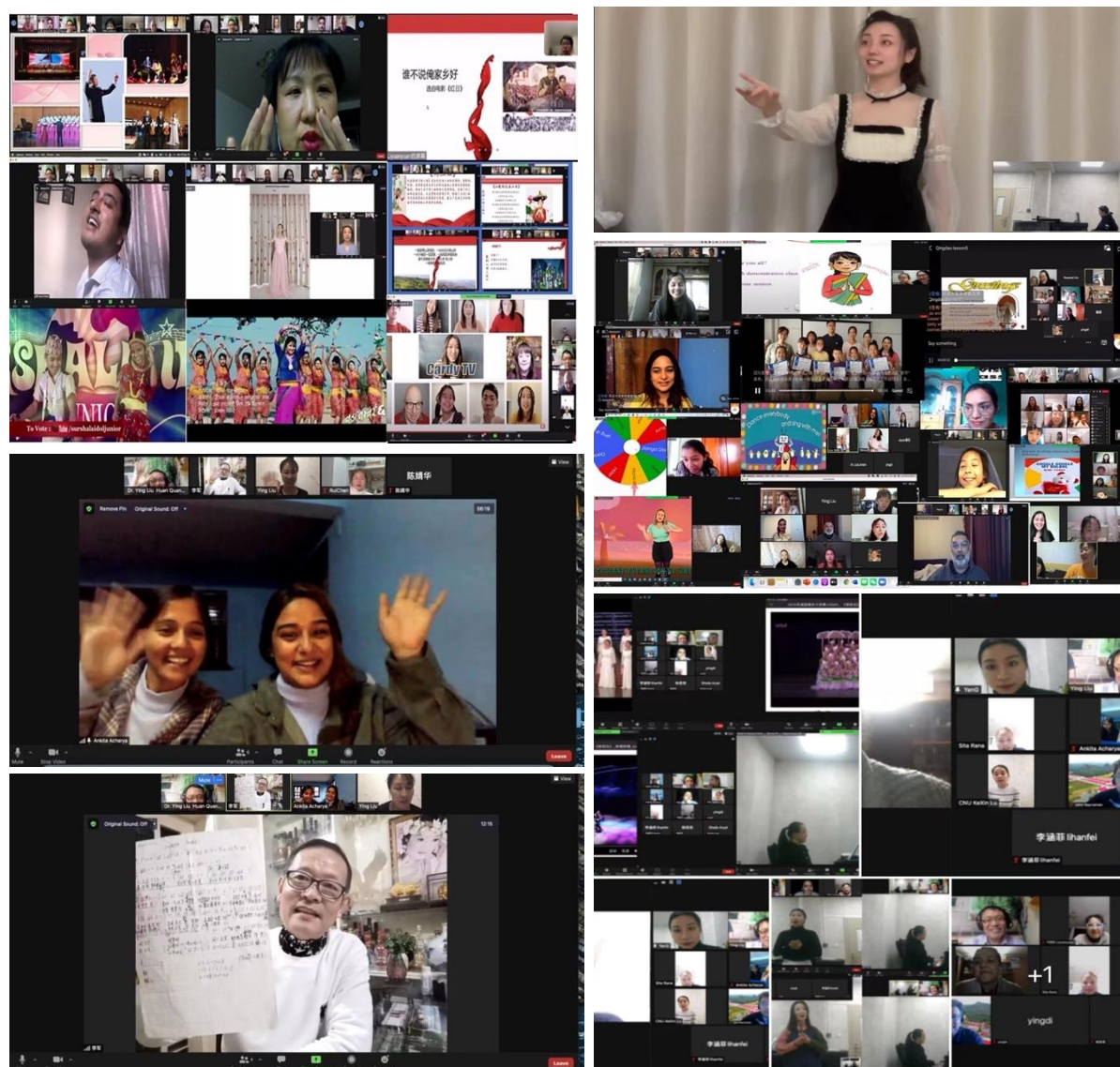
Figure 1. Collaborated with five Nepalese DMC students with local parent teachers, hybrid home learning digital literacy programme has been delivered in bilingual instructions across Qingdao, Taiyuan, Xiamen and Dalian

Extensive literature concludes that music is a powerful effective vehicle connecting people, families and social communities [5]. However:

how can we explore music as such a vehicle online for educational purposes as well as sustain such a music education and training development?

In terms of musical educational sustainability of international exchange projects [6], many are short lived, or do not have capacities continuing music educational engagements with broad and diversified groups of "learners"; significant educational gaps exist among music festival led projects, music education exchange projects, and academic education research projects [7].

2. Conceptual Framework

Due to the pandemic, there had been an estimated 1.5 billion students worldwide that were affected by school closures, accounting for more than 91% of the total number of students [18]. Efforts to ensure educational continuity during this crisis include distance, online education, and hybrid approaches, with modalities varying according to available resources and capacities. In the context of online education, the home has become a more important learning space than ever. In this space, parents, and careers act as the main facilitators in supporting their children's learning at home. However, if parents, especially mothers, have a low level of education and cannot understand the language used in school

teaching, the challenge is even greater in supporting their children to study at home.

Family education is about the process that "parents and their adults in the family have the responsibility to educate their younger children" [8]. Over several thousand years, China's families have laid the good foundation in education, since the family is the cell of society [9]. However, we need to further enhance and sustain all the advantages of China's family education [10]. In considering the application of online education technology that has been applied for rapidly growing aging communities with life-long learning sustainable goals, we need to explore how hybrid home learning model can support family intergeneration learning. Therefore, the educational response to the crisis can also be seen as an opportunity to integrate home-based and intergenerational learning into online learning models. Accumulated collective wisdom, diverse experiences, and emerging home education resources are all assets for future educational programs, programs, and for systematically preparing for future crises.

In respect of music education [11], learners can be in "three classes of people in any large segment of our society: music participants, music audiences, and people who perceive neither music activity to hold personal benefits" (p. 14). In addition to many lists of skills that can be acquired through music education, the core value of music education also includes:

1) Promoting social inclusion: many capacities continue to develop independent of age and that "some strengths *emerge* in association with aging";

2) Strengthening life: (a) vocabulary, (b) specialized skills, and (c) psychodynamic growth, which was related to "personal insight, a component of wisdom";

3) Many benefits of music activities by certain strengths, values, attitudes, abilities, which may emerge as age increases.

Covid-19 accelerates online, blended or hybrid education. In fact, in the 21st century, besides music teaching and learning is possible online, geographical boundaries of musical communities have already been "broken with the advent of written music by recording technologies and the following dissemination of music via communications technologies. Geographical boundaries no longer exist for musical cultures. Persons from anywhere in the world can connect with musical communities anywhere and interact in real time. Previously localised music sub-cultures now have instant global exposure. On the mobility of music education, many projects are short lived, or do not have capacities continuing music educational engagements with broad and diversified groups of "learners"; significant educational gaps exist among music festival led projects, music education exchange projects, and academic education research projects.

3. Method

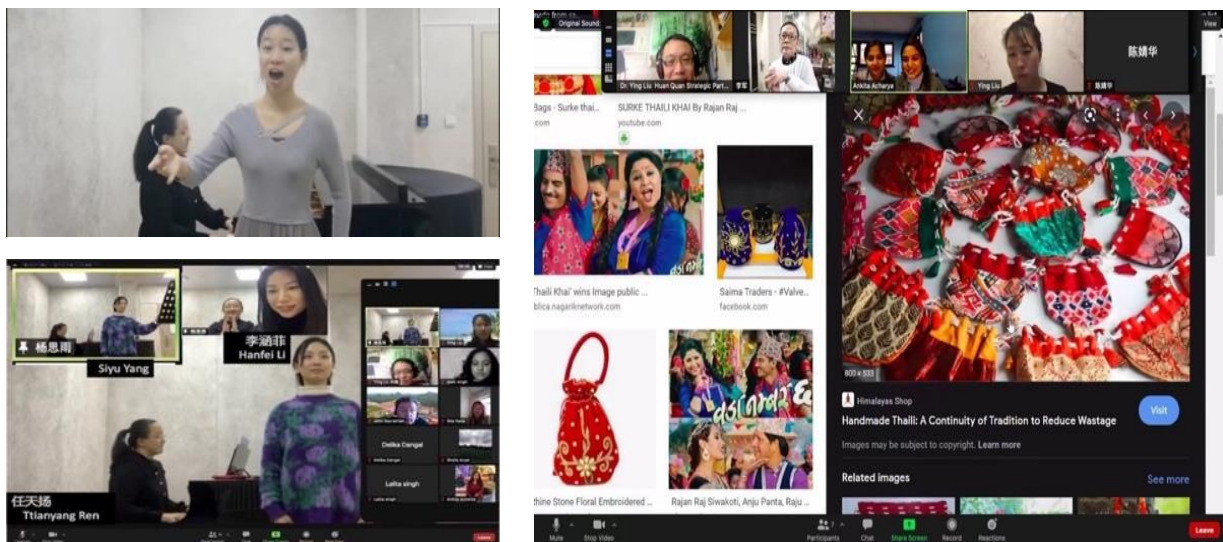We describe our research setting, then present the research developmental approach.

Figure 2. Participatory Action Research has been developed together with Nepalese Dibyabhumi Multiple College partnership

Figure 3. Joint Music Education Seminar with Professor Ms. Yuanyuan Li, Beijing Normal University, China; Mr. Amrit Chhetri, singer/composer/founder, Surshala Music School, Nepal, Mr. Yun Liu, director and conductor, Henan Sanmenxia Social Community Orchestra and Choir, China, Dr Andy Hogg, director and principal of The Support School based in Liverpool, UK

3.1. Research Setting

Our project management has been based in [12] Current participants include China's Beijing Normal University's professor, teachers and students engaging music with educational studies; China's Henan Sanmenxia Social Community Orchestra and Choirs (with social communities including elderlies); Nepalese Dibyabuhumi Multiple College (with cross cultural social development); Nepalese Surshala Music School (with children, youth and vocational learners); British The Support School with inclusion; Irish National Ballyraine National School (with educational practices); Youtube Cardy TV Malaysia (with online music education in Chinese-English bilingual).

3.2. Participatory Action Research

To enable this project led R and D, participatory action research in the field of music education is adapted [12, 13]. In terms of participatory actions, we have firstly "established relationship of trust, respect, and belief in the research team, as well as have had prior involvement, commitment, and dedication to the community before members of the team could influence change among the community" [13] (also as Figure 2 shows). Our ultimate goal is to innovate a model engaging and sustaining stakeholders to develop sub-research projects. We have the following settings (to explore music as a vehicle online for educational purposes as well as sustain such a music education and training development):

1) Students led academic study of music and engagement with family intergeneration and social development, where a range of core values

of music across international cultures is elicited. Sub-research question is*:*

To what extend the non-formal music education online can be facilitating formal music education, and what is the effective engaging pedagogy?

2) Pedagogical engagements with families are applied to social communities, schools, and off-school activities. Sub-research question is:

How can cross cultural activities motivate interests in music and music education reach out?

4. Research outcomes in progress

In respect of the effective engaging pedagogy needed, five cases have been undertaken in line of student teaching education and training at Music and Art College, Capital Normal University. Led by Professor Yuanyuan Li and her students, an innovative model of Project Based Learning (PBL) has been constructed, namely, LivelPBL (Linking Vocal Education through PBL).

These five cases are based on Chinese folk operas that reflect an extensive range of local cultural heritages, historic true local stories, and legendary masterpieces of Chinese folk opera music. The cases are enabling LivePBL to train students to develop their own understandings on the wellbeing literacy (through music). The wellbeing literacy is about an individual's knowledge about wellbeing [19]. "In the same way that a person can be literate (i.e., have knowledge, be educated) in the arts, history or politics, a person can also be literate in wellbeing" [20].

However, the research found that, while cultural heritage is a fundamental source of societal wellbeing [21], [22], how to engage family communities with cultural heritage has been focusing on conventional practices associating museums, exhibitions, festivals, etc. with teaching in-school classroom or out-school study tours. Although digital tools and models for teaching and learning have been rapidly emerging to enable and facilitate the engagement, they are still very much limited to the social scalability and sustainability. There has been a worldwide concern on the critical decline of aesthetic education [23], let alone its social influence. The role of "aesthetic education can be a purposeful, organised process of developing in children a developed aesthetic consciousness, artistic and aesthetic taste, the ability to perceive and appreciate the beautiful, sublime, tragic, comic in public life, nature, art, to live and create" [24]. Since music has its significant role in promoting the social influence of aesthetics, how to participate in music led social activities to promote aesthetics is still worth investigating. Therefore, LivePBL has been focusing on exploring PBL pedagogy using cases on vocal music teacher education and training to link PBL with families and social community engagement. Participatory aesthetic studies have been carried out by teaching and training China's folk opera singing. Moreover, the five cases had delivered China's online national vocal teacher training courses from 15th to 20th of August across the country.

These research outcomes seem to demonstrate that LivePBL can effectively bridge the gaps between the fields in vocal teacher education training, and in aesthetics research practices. Conventionally, these courses are delivered online with no interactive study learning support or delivered by interactive activities offline such as off school music clubs, private music tuitions, but with no academic training support [19].

LivelPBL also seems to engage students as roles of learners as persons with moral and global citizen values, integrating daily life with global togetherness; learning ethics of social actions to making positive contributions to local communities, and constructing LivePBL model to enable the roles to participate to social practices in aesthetics research.

5. Conclusion

Actions have been elicited in the following areas:
1) Motivating engagement with social communities on traditional singing in terms of cultural heritage - comparative cases ;
2) Common Interests and Common Curriculum Elements in Traditional Music Singing and Cultural Education in Schools.

Hybrid Approach to Inclusive Music Education Model will be applied in the following areas to answer the research sub-questions:

1) After School Art and Music Classes – Appreciation of Community and Individual Wellbeing from Different Cultures;
2) Non-formal Family Home Learning Engagement;
3) Social Community Elderly Care Engagement;
4) Social Community Vocational Engagement – Digital Media, Creative Arts and Start-ups.

As this R and D is still an ongoing progressing, collaborative activities have been organised. Projects have been kicked off, leading international student teams to participate in inclusive music education engaging academic studies with social communities. "Seminars + Performance" has been planned as cultural exchange between the countries' communities. The 2022 Chinese New Year will be celebrated by these performances. Irish, Chinese and Nepalese families are living around the world. Such studies and performances will be connecting the Irish, Chinese, and Nepalese rich cultural identity, connecting the cultural heritage and social communities, and adding new digital skill development on innovating "non-formal blended home learning" to motivate music education.

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