
School inclusion through active music teaching methods in China?

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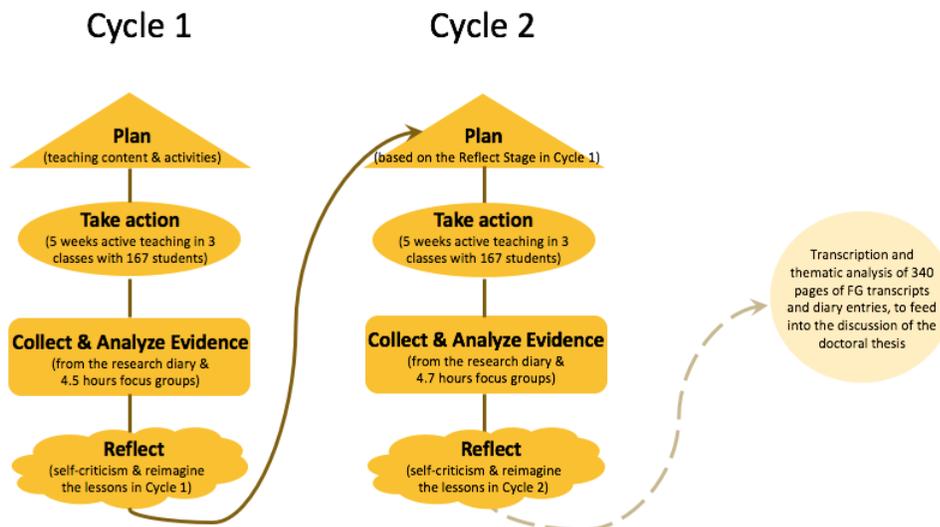
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Paper summary:

Although music education has been shown to be effective in promoting social inclusion in schools in the Global North (e.g. Odena, 2018), few Chinese studies have focussed on how group music teaching approaches – especially active music teaching methods - can effectively facilitate school inclusion in China. This study explores how music education may promote social inclusion when Chinese urban and rural students are receiving music education in the same school with gaps in music learning backgrounds. Fieldwork focused on a diverse Secondary School in southeast China. Embracing an interpretive approach (Eisner, 2017) the study aimed at: a) exploring the inclusive function of active group teaching methods; b) developing the researcher’s own inclusive teaching through action research - see Figure 1 below - while improving urban and rural students’ sense of inclusion in the music class; and c) contributing to the growing China-based music education research literature. The study answered three research questions, including the following which is the focus of this paper: how to adjust the teaching approaches in China to create a more inclusive music classroom? The empirical data to address this question was collected from three active music teaching classes, led by the first author during a 12-weeks two-cycle action research (Baumfield, Hall & Wall, 2012) with 167 students aged between 15 and 17. The data gathering tools included participant

observation, focus groups and the first author's reflective teaching diary. Focus groups were conducted twice with 20 students across three classes. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in Mandarin, totaling 340 pages, which were analyzed thematically. The results suggest that a high-level interactive music classroom can be used to lay a good foundation for students to start building interpersonal networks, while the degree of improvement of students' social inclusion level in music classroom decreases with the passage of time during the semester. It was also noticed that, due to the limitations of music learning materials, it was challenging to complete the statutory curriculum goals using active music teaching methods - especially Orff- and Kodály-inspired activities - throughout the lessons. In the conclusions we further reflect how music education may be used efficiently in diverse social activities beyond the classroom. We also outline how the Secondary music classroom in China may be considered as a multi-functional class to enhance students' sense of inclusion.

Figure 1 - Steps of the two-cycle action research



References:

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Eisner, E. W. (2017). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice* (Reissued with a new Prologue, and Foreword by Nel Noddings). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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