

MUSICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES IN CULTURAL LIMINALITY: JAVANESE GAMELAN TEACHERS NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN WESTERN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

Pia Korpela

16 December 2008

Finnish culture is becoming more diverse because of increasing immigration and widening international cooperation. The school system has a central role in the construction of a multicultural society by advancing the equality and mutual understanding between individuals and cultures. In the music curriculum, together with the notion of pupils' different cultural backgrounds, multiculturalism is encountered as a discourse of suggested diversity of music genres - also referred to as teaching *world musics*. Yet, the pedagogical discussion about these music cultures derives largely from ethnomusicological concepts used in former western colonial countries, forgetting that Finland's cultural-political background differs from these countries in many ways. Therefore, a deeper research is needed to open up further philosophical and practical views on the relationships of multicultural questions in international music education with the Finnish context. One crucial topic concerns the skills of teachers who conduct multicultural music education; therefore, musicians originated from a particular music culture - also called as visiting artists or culture bearers - are often seen as the most ideal persons to teach certain music genre or culture. However, the educational-cultural contribution expected from these persons may contradict with their former background as an educator, musician and individual.

My study will examine this topic through the identity work of four Javanese-born gamelan teachers who work in Western higher education. Teaching one's "own" music as an "other" music culture in the global context defined from the western point of view touches a teacher-musician's identity in many ways. The relationships between global and local views in constructing a teacher's identity reflect to his/her work as musical and pedagogical challenges. As a preunderstanding, I refer to this process with the concept of *cultural liminality*. Accordingly, the research question is as following:

How do Javanese gamelan teachers negotiate and re-construct their personal, musical and pedagogical identity in a cultural liminality within a Western higher education context?

Gamelan music has been largely studied in North America and some European countries during recent decades. Following this, it has quite successfully been used in music education projects outside of Indonesia. Javanese gamelan music has formed the way for myself, too, to consider the questions of ethnomusicology and multicultural music education. As a Finnish researcher and person, I thus place myself to a multilayered cultural liminality: on one hand I study both the Javanese and the chosen Western cultures as an outsider, on the other hand I have insider knowledge of both to some extend.

My study combines educational studies of teachers with ethnomusicology and cultural studies in an inter-disciplinary way. In a broader sphere, it is connected to recent theories of cultural hybridization, which take into account an individual's complex situation within the problematics of (music)cultural insideness and outsideness. This study can be described as a multiple case study with ethnographic approach. It differs from a traditional ethnography using loosely thematic interviews as a primary method for collecting data. Interviews will be completed with participatory observations of the teachers' lessons to deepen the themes discussed in interviews. Furthermore, the interviews will be based on short biographical narratives written by the interviewees on beforehand. When analyzing the data, I will confront the themes expressed by the teachers with the international and Finnish discussion of multicultural music education. Especially I base this analysis to the theories of identity reconstruction in a cultural liminality.

Consequently, my study aims to show that roles such as "a culture bearer" or "a culture broker" are re-negotiated by visiting music teachers working in Western countries - or even may not be relevant at all for their identity process. With the interviewed Javanese teachers, my study will discuss these roles in order to help international teachers in general in their dialogue with the educational culture and concepts of the host country. Thus, as a part of the international music education community, my research will give tools also for Finnish music teachers' identity work in changing cultural setting. Especially those teachers who go to other countries to teach Finnish or Western music - their "own" music - will benefit from my study.

KEYWORDS: multicultural music education, gamelan, teacher identity, cultural liminality