

Jere T. Humphreys

**Influences of Cultural Policy on
Education in Music and the other Arts**

Ideally, policies are plans for action that aim toward the achievement of the greatest good for the greatest number of people, while taking into account the rights and needs of individuals and various minority groups. Today, when we think of policy-making we think first of the nation-state, the world's foremost political entity, although other types of entities generate policies as well. Regardless of the source, in practice policy-making often represents the interests of political and other special groups. Far too often, policies purported to support aspects of culture such education, music, and the other arts reflect interests that have little or nothing to do with education or the arts.

In the Balkans, policies made by governments, churches, and other institutions have tended to support the production, dissemination, teaching, and preservation of certain forms of visual art and music based on classical European models. This phenomenon can be seen in many other parts of the world--North and South America, Australia and New Zealand, Africa, and the Orient--to name only some of the other major regions. However, European/North American hegemony in the world of art can be seen as a microcosm of the domination of those regions in other realms--including philosophy, science, and economics--as well as in the cultural/artistic sphere. Similarly, domination of the mass culture market by American products such as rock music, popular films, "fast food" (e.g., Coca Cola, McDonald's), and blue jeans reflects that nation's current superpower status.

Even more than in the past, nation-states base their cultural and other policies on global concerns. This is because the process of establishing connections across numerous realms of human discourse and activity, called globalization, is increasing at a dizzying rate. To my knowledge, no one fully predicted globalization and its results, although in retrospect the historical path seems reasonably clear. From the beginning of specialized labor in the Neolithic period until relatively recent times, the production of life's necessities required the labor of most of the world's population, primarily in hunting/gathering and then in agriculture. The industrial age, which emerged due to advances in mechanical and chemical technology, enabled a smaller proportion of workers to provide goods and services for the entire population than was the case during the agricultural period. This was achieved in part because industrial-age advances in technology and delivery systems led to the production of more standardized products.

Public schools constitute an important vehicle for the implementation of governmental policies, cultural and otherwise. Schools during the agricultural era, in the United States for example, tended to be one-room affairs that mirrored the geographic, demographic, and work patterns of that particular economic system. Not surprisingly, industrial-era schools became arenas for the training of future factory workers who would produce standardized products. Toward that end, schools and school systems operated like factories, with school boards serving as boards of directors, superintendents as chief executive officers (CEO's), principals as managers, teachers as workers, and students as products—with the entire enterprise driven largely by the perceived needs of the workplace. Increasingly, curriculum was prescribed for the workers, and school scheduling practices implemented by the managers rivaled those found in the most

regimented factories. The need for more highly trained workers and the demands of a more complex, increasingly urbanized society led to more standardized and ostensibly more efficient schooling.

Currently, spectacular advances in technology, especially information-related systems, are leading to significant changes in the nature of people's work. In this post-industrial, information age, an even smaller proportion of workers can provide necessities and even luxuries to the population at large. One of the many, and I think unforeseen, results of current technological advances and the related globalization is that workers are now expected to provide not only standardized products, but also specialized, high-quality goods and services to individuals and different types of groups. Consequently, the business world is moving away from its hierarchical structures and toward think-tanks and other small groups that produce new ideas, products, and services.

As in previous eras, social and economic changes continue to manifest themselves in the form of pressure on governments to alter their policies on general education and education in the arts. To facilitate participation in the global economy, today's schools are expected to foster an entirely different set of behaviors, skills, knowledge, and attitudes from those needed during the agricultural and industrial eras. The economy-driven need to produce and sell more specialized goods and services leads to policies aimed toward educating people to think and work in very different ways from those required by the industrial economy, such as the ability and willingness to listen to, understand, and take directions from a leader (teacher or shop foreman).

Because music and to varying degrees the other arts belong to a very small group of sociologically universal human practices, every culture develops ways of transmitting

arts-related skills from one generation to the next. In the world's more complex cultures, specialist teachers teach subjects deemed too important to be left to chance so as to free most adults for other tasks, while at the same time insuring a relatively high level of teaching expertise. This places education in music and the other arts primarily under the aegis of the school system, whose policies derive from social, economic, and political concerns as well as the purely academic.

The post industrial, information-age world is now upon us, and most so-called developed nations are implementing new sets of policies intended to serve the needs and demands of globalization. However, globalization creates conflict within and among nation-states over the extent to which everyone's culture should be the same versus the extent to which various aspects of culture should differ. The dialectic resulting from this dichotomy manifests itself in two parallel sets of policies. One set seeks to develop uniform practices within and among nation-states, whereas the other set is intended to maintain certain features of cultural diversity while simultaneously fostering individual creativity. It is hoped that policies designed to facilitate pan-national similarities and understandings will in turn facilitate pan-national correspondence and trade. Given the pressures of globalization in this direction, it is not surprising to find more and more similarities in the policies of nation-states toward many things, among them policies related to culture—education, music, and the other arts among them. Indeed, even the desire to develop the capacity to produce a wider array of goods and services has led to rather similar policies among (and within) nation-states.

The reasons policies aimed toward facilitating diversity and individual creativity contribute to globalization are perhaps less transparent. Here, educational policies

increasingly aim toward training people to think independently and creatively and to work productively in small groups, both necessary attributes in an environment that requires the production, marketing, and distribution of new goods and services to individuals and increasingly numerous and diverse niche groups.

Some of this dialectic results from the time lag between social and economic changes in society and the emergence of related policies directed toward education and the arts. For example, in Europe and North America, industrialization and urbanization created a need for universal education long before full implementation of mandatory schooling occurred. Nevertheless, one result of all these forces in the development and implementation of policy is a rapidly changing environment for education and the arts.

While many countries are currently developing similar policies toward arts education, at the same time each country emphasizes different sides of the dichotomy. In other words, some nations' policies toward education and the arts emphasize similarities among cultures, while others place more emphasis on differences. Countries whose policies lean toward supporting local and national issues tend to advocate the teaching of indigenous folk music. Indonesia, for one, sees its traditional folk music as a cultural product with commercial/economic value in and of itself. At least partly for that reason, Indonesia's cultural policies are directed unabashedly toward resisting Western influences, and some of its specific policies governing music in the schools are aimed overtly at counteracting the influences of commercial rock music. An example closer to Macedonia comes from Croatia, where the curriculum for children ages six through eleven states openly the policy-makers' intention to educate students in Croatian literature, language, art, and music. It is impossible to determine to what extent policies

from Indonesia, Croatia, and other countries are driven by nationalism and related issues as opposed to economic concerns, but goals aimed at developing national pride are mentioned explicitly in the arts education policy statements of many nations.

A recent survey of governmental policies toward music education in the schools from sixteen nations, from all continents except the Americas, reveals other similarities among nations. One clear international trend is increasing support in recent years for arts education, especially music education. All sixteen nations have adopted sweeping new curricula in the arts since 1990, and all now mandate some type of education in the arts, typically music. Most stress individual student development or expression and so-called critical thinking. Arts education is now seen as an effective means for helping students develop their individual creative abilities and for learning to work together in small groups. An additional reason is that unique, diverse experiences in the arts can be linked to standards of excellence applied to the development of the specialized high-quality goods and services demanded by the global economy. The policy statements of some of these same countries also specifically include goals related to improving international understanding.

Eighteenth-century singing schools in Great Britain's North American colonies received neither regulation nor support from governmental entities. Instead, they were private affairs whose goal was to improve singing in churches. In contrast, today governments make and implement policies that govern arts education, and these policy decisions are influenced by an array of forces, many of them economic. Involvement in the arts is beginning to be seen as something that can fuse thinking, action, and creativity

into a single problem-solving endeavor—which of course can enhance performance in certain desired social, economic, political, and individual student domains.

The ability of the music industry to blanket much of the world with commercial products, which is both an economic and a social force, affects policy-making in music and arts education. Policy-making is driven by many other factors as well, including changing political realities and new paradigms in such disparate fields as psychology, sociology, education, aesthetics, and philosophy. For example, everywhere I travel in the world music educators and others want to discuss the so-called Mozart effect, whereby certain types of music exposure are said to improve children's academic abilities. Unquestionably, the Mozart effect is a driving force behind some of the increasing support for music education—something that can be attributed to both economic interests and new psychological theories. In this case, the initial “brain” research studies were funded by the Los Angeles-based National Association of Music Merchants, and the results fit in with theories of multiple intelligences, theories that are not at all new but are currently in vogue. Moreover, all too often a pending political election can lead to policy changes regarding education—with a politician seeking to become “the education governor” or “president,” or in some cases to partially privatize education due to a certain political ideology. Fortunately, some motivations for policy-making are more straightforward, such as the desire to prepare people for richer, fuller lives in ways other than financial through participation in music and the other arts.

It is more difficult to analyze actual practice resulting from policy than policy statements themselves. Currently in the United States, research, anecdotal evidence, and personal observation suggest that policies on arts education set forth by the federal

government and leading arts education organizations are not being followed widely. Education in that country is the constitutional responsibility of the fifty states, with only eight percent of education funding provided by the federal government, although the federal government's influence on state and local policy is greater than its funding share. Compliance with national policies toward the arts and arts education, including music education, appears to be higher in countries with strong federal control over education.

Related to the issue of compliance is the effectiveness of specific policies over time. At present, there are no proven mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of most cultural policies. There are at least three reasons for this. First, policies tend to be made by government officials, few of whom ever see research results or have significant contact with artists, musicians, teachers, or students. One result is that policies seldom include clearly defined goals. Second, even in rare cases where policies are highly relevant and specific, evaluation is time-consuming, expensive, and often intrusive. A third reason is that all too often policies change before their effects can be assessed. Sometimes these changes occur as a response to legitimate changing circumstances, but some changes in governmental and other policies seem to be driven by a need to maintain or enhance a given bureaucracy by attempting to make itself appear "modern" or current, or just so it will be perceived as "doing something."

Policies regarding music and the other arts extend beyond those applied to schools. There is a wide range of cultural heritage projects, like the Institute for the Archiving of Music (IRAM) that we are celebrating this week. UNESCO considers the arts one of the "Four Pillars" of knowledge and skill to be addressed by education in the twenty-first century. In recent years, UNESCO, the European Parliament, and the Nordic

Council of Ministers have published policies regarding lifelong learning, including learning in the arts. Similar policies are geared toward music programs for very young children, the elderly, and the handicapped, as well as various types of community arts programs.

In a few cases, policies regarding arts and music education now address styles of teaching and learning as well as subject content. Many private and some public organizations are even advocating certain pedagogies, a domain historically relegated to the control of individual teachers. Efforts aimed toward dictating pedagogy are motivated by an array of forces also, including new psychological beliefs about the nature of cognition, the economy-driven reasons given earlier relative to individual and small-group work, and sociological power/hegemony-driven arguments, which are essentially attempts to alter the social and economic status quo. Although some private agencies are concerning themselves with this level of micromanagement, I have found few government policies directed toward pedagogy *per se*.

Anthropologists, sociologists, historians, ethnomusicologists, and others lament the loss of specific languages, musics, and other aspects of culture throughout the world. Preservation of cultural products is not mentioned specifically in most education policies, but fortunately it is a concern among other policy-makers. Policy-makers should consider that some of the most effective and long-lasting means of preserving cultural products—such as musics, dances, films, plays, and so forth--occur as a direct result of education of the young. In other words, policies and the resulting programs that link cultural preservation and adult awareness projects like IRAM with various types of arts education programs could serve both ends of the globalization continuum. Cultural diversity, pan-

cultural crossovers, preservation, and the resulting economic benefits would accrue, while the technologies developed and applied would be exported—with considerable attention given to the transmission of cultural heritage, technology, and international understanding to future generations.