



Choosing to Teach Music: Reflections of Elementary Music Teachers in Vancouver and Hong Kong

Marina W. Wong

Department of Education Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University

Baptist University Road, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong SAR

Tel: 852-3411-5786 E-mail: marina@hkbu.edu.hk

Abstract

This qualitative multiple-case study explores elementary schools music teachers' career choice in Vancouver and Hong Kong. Face-to-face open-ended interviews were used for collecting data. The results of this study demonstrated the long-term processes of social learning of music teachers that contributed to their development of personal musical interests to become a teacher. Teachers of the Vancouver cases and Hong Kong cases made their choices according to job opportunities and training opportunities respectively. The factors that had contributed to these teachers' musical interests were very similar; but the crucial factors that had determined their choice of occupation differed remarkably. The socio-cultural differences of the two societies had noticeable influences on these elementary music teachers' choice of occupation.

Keywords: Career choice, Music education, Comparative education, Qualitative research, Multiple case studies, Sociology

1. Introduction

People's choice of career has been of interests in the field of social sciences. Besides Lortie's (2002) study that explored the reasons why people chose teaching as their career, there have been studies written on the career choice of pre-service teachers of various subjects other than music (Hayes, 1995; Serow, 1994; Zimpher, 1989). These studies revealed some of the possible reasons that pre-service teachers made their choice of career. In the United States, quantitative studies were done to investigate the career choice of orchestra musicians (Bernstein, 1986) and undergraduate strings music students (Gillespie & Hamann, 1999). These studies revealed that role models had inspired students to consider pursuing a career in music. However, there is no literature found to investigate the career choice of music teachers.

2. Contextual information

2.1 Demographics and school systems

Greater Vancouver area of the province of British Columbia, Canada has over 2.1 million people, with about 0.58 million people residing in the City of Vancouver. The Vancouver School District is an urban and multicultural school district under the Vancouver School Board [VSB] which administers all public schools in Vancouver. Schools in Vancouver follow the curriculum set by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. There are 91 elementary schools and annexes in the Vancouver School District (VSB, 2006). In recent years, although there is a steady increase in population in Greater Vancouver area (O'neil, 2007), there is a continue decline in school enrolment due to the low birth rate (VSB, 2006). Due to the decline of enrolments, more than 20 elementary schools experienced loss of teaching staff (VSB, 2006).

Hong Kong has become a Special Administration Region [HKSAR] of China since 1997. It is a densely populated urban city with over 6.8 million people. The Education Bureau is in charge of educational policy, curriculum and school development in the HKSAR. Government schools are managed by the Education Bureau while government-aided schools are managed by the school management committee of each school. There are 669 primary schools in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2007). Although the low fertility rate has led to the decline of students' enrollment and foreseeable closure of schools (Audit Commission, 2002); the rapidly growing number of mainland women giving birth in Hong Kong may lead to high demand of school places when these children reach the age of six and study in Hong Kong primary schools (Clem, 2006).

School systems of Vancouver and Hong Kong differ. In Vancouver, schools are divided into Preschool for students aged

3-4, Elementary (Grades K-7 for students aged 5-12) and secondary (Grades 8-12 for students aged 13-17). In Hong Kong, schools are divided into Kindergarten (Kindergarten 1-3 for students aged 3-5), Primary (Primary 1-6 for students aged 6-11) and Secondary (Secondary 1-7 for students aged 12-18).

2.2 Teacher education for elementary music teachers

Based on my experience in music teacher education in both cities, elementary music education for music teachers in Vancouver and Hong Kong are different. In Vancouver, elementary school teachers are usually generalists who teach multiple subjects. Teacher education programs for elementary teachers are offered by universities in the Greater Vancouver Area. Pre-service elementary teachers, regardless of their experience of music training, may take music education courses so as to facilitate them to integrate the subject into their curriculum. In addition, there are some organizations such as the British Columbia Orff Chapter and the Vancouver Community College that provide short courses on Orff methodology or Kodaly methodology for elementary teachers. In Hong Kong, primary school teachers are mainly subject specialists. Teacher education programs for primary teachers are offered by tertiary education institutions and universities in the territory. Pre-service teachers who choose to study music education are required to have basic knowledge in music theory and practical skills of playing a musical instrument. In addition, there are some short music courses offered by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union for teachers.

2.3 Music teachers in elementary schools

The allocation of human resources for elementary classroom music varies in both cities. In Vancouver, elementary students usually follow a generalist homeroom teacher who is expected to integrate various subject areas into the class-based curriculum to cater for the needs of students. In schools where instrumental (band or string) programs are offered for students in Grade 4 or above, a specialist music teacher may be hired to teach these instrumental programs. However, specialist music teachers usually have to teach instrumental programs in several schools rather than stationing in one school. The arrangement of music lessons and implementation of the fine arts curriculum in elementary schools depends on the resources of the VSB, the professional strength of teachers and the administrative concerns of school principals.

Primary students in Hong Kong are taught by several teachers who teach different subjects. Except language teachers, primary teachers usually have to teach at least two subjects. There are usually several music teachers in a primary school. Some music teachers are trained music teachers who studied music in their teacher education course, while some may be trained in other subjects but with some knowledge and skills in music, such as the ability to play piano. Trained music teachers may be allocated to take up more music teaching. Besides general music classes, schools may offer choir training or instrumental classes as extra-curricular activities taught by schoolteachers or part-time instructors. The assignment of teaching duties depends on the administrative concerns of school principals and the professional strengths of teachers.

The contextual differences of Vancouver and Hong Kong led my interests to investigate the career choice of classroom music teachers in these two cities. Since there is no literature found written about the career choice of classroom music teachers, nor any existing literature about teachers' career decision was designed as cross-cultural study, this present study is designed as a qualitative exploratory study to collect reflections of in-service classroom music teachers in elementary schools of Vancouver and Hong Kong on their career choice. I hope that the findings of this study can fill the gap in literature, contribute to the field of music teacher education and inform school administrators as well as parents.

3. Analytical framework

Since the classical study of Ginzberg and his associates (1951) on occupational choice, scholars have developed various models and approaches to occupational choice and career development. Such as the theory of Roe (1956) that relates early childhood environments to people's occupational choice; the trait-and-factor model of Holland (1997); the developmental theory of occupational aspirations by Gottfredson (1981), social cognitive career theory of Lent and his associates (1994), the social learning theory of career decision making of Krumboltz (1994). However, these theories on career choice and development are mainly based on the experience of American scholars and there may not be applicable to all types of people because of the differences in education systems across nations (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002).

As a cross-cultural comparative study, it is necessary to relate the findings to the contextual factors, sociological perspective and educational ideologies of the two cities instead of reading from the face value of the data (Masemann, 1999). Therefore the theoretical perspective of career choice and educational thoughts that prevail in Vancouver and Hong Kong will also be taken as part of the analytical framework for discussion of the findings.

3.1 Sociological perspective of career choice

According to Krumboltz (1994), there are four categories of factors that influence a person's career choice. The first

category is *genetic endowment and special abilities*, such as race, sex, physical appearance, and intelligence of a person, which affects his/her ability to benefit from the environmental experiences. The second category is *environmental conditions and events*, which include social, cultural, political and economic resources available to a person, such as job opportunities, training opportunities, monetary return, policies and procedures for selecting trainees, family experiences and community influences. The third category is *learning experiences*. A person's past learning experiences may have influence his/her education preferences and career choice. The fourth category is *task approach skills*, which result from the interactions among *genetic endowment and special abilities*, *environmental conditions and events*, and *learning experiences*. A person would employ his/her task approach skills such as work habits, performance ability, mind sets and emotional responses, to tackle and solve daily problems. Since this study focuses on career choice and Krumboltz's social learning theory of career choice discusses various categories of factors that might influence people's career choice, it forms a part of analytical framework for explaining the findings.

3.2 Educational ideologies

Children-centered approach that based on Progressivism, which emphasizes the individual development of the child's creativity, experience, and growth through discovery and play, has been the mainstream in the education system of Vancouver (Wilson, 1983). Progressivism in education emphasizes students learn through collaborative group activities and individual experience. Parents and teachers value children's musical growth as well as their enjoyment and preferences in learning (Bauer, 2001). Students' rights and interests are being recognized, and they are given the opportunities to acquire the skills for participating in the free and democratic society of Canada (VSB, 2006). Therefore teachers are expected to be a facilitator of learning rather than a transmitter of knowledge and skills on subject matter.

Hong Kong had been a British colony for 150 years before 1997. As a city where Chinese and Western values meet, people in Hong Kong enjoy freedom of living and the government's efforts in promoting economic development, in compensate of the deprivation of political power. Lau and Kuan (1997) describe such phenomenon as a "utilitarian" culture that is unique to Hong Kong. The general public values education highly and regards education as a social ideology of openness and opportunity that facilitate social mobility for improving future living (Wong & Ng, 1997). Being an essential ingredient in Chinese culture, Confucian ideology has been most influential in Chinese societies (Szalay et al., 1994). Teachers usually hold very high esteem and authority in Chinese societies. Children are expected to respect and learn from teachers. Parents expect teachers to transmit as much knowledge and skills to their children and be idealized models of intellectual and moral development. Parents and teachers prefer students to work hard on academic subjects rather than arts subjects due to their high expectations on students' academic achievement (Morris, 1996). Children brought up with these values tend to focus on gaining satisfaction and self-esteem through achievement (Wong & Watkins, 2001).

4. Methodology

4.1 Samples, data collection and analysis

This cross-cultural study is consisted of 10 cases: five documented in Hong Kong and five in Vancouver. The subjects were chosen according to "non-probability sampling" (Merriam, 1998). The sampling criteria were: (1) the participants were in-service music teachers in primary/elementary schools in Hong Kong or Vancouver when the data were collected; and (2) they were available for an open-ended face-to-face interview. Open-ended face-to-face interview allowed the participants to express their ideas more thoroughly and would not limit their response, while probing questions could reveal the underling reasons of the responses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). An identical set of interview questions was used (with translation) to enhance the comparability of the data across cases. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and tape-recorded with the subjects' consent. The data were transcribed and coded according to the categories generated to address the objective of the study. Transcribed interviews were sent to the participants for members' check to ensure validity. Pseudonyms have been substituted for the actual names of the subjects. A three-tire method was employed in analyzing the data: "within-case analysis" that explored the significant factors that influenced individual teacher, followed by a "cross-case analysis" (Merriam, 1998) that compared the overall findings. Finally, "cross-cultural analysis" (Bray & Thomas, 1995) was used to explore the possible influence of the contextual factors of different cultural settings.

4.2 Limitations of the study

The findings of this study are limited to the interviews of the 10 cases. This study represents a preliminary attempt to understand the cultural and social influences on teachers' choice of career in Vancouver and Hong Kong. As a qualitative multiple-case study, it does not intend to offer overarching generalization.

My interpretation of the research materials is shaped by my experience as someone (1) of Chinese heritage, who was born and grew up in Hong Kong; (2) educated in Hong Kong and Vancouver; and (3) worked as music teacher in both Hong Kong and Vancouver. I regard myself to be in a privileged position as a cross-cultural researcher, having been exposed to the music culture and educational systems in both cities. The limitation of language difference is believed to

be minimal because I am fluent in English and Cantonese and also have made efforts to ensure that the English translations reflected the meaning of the original Cantonese language.

5. Findings

The research findings of this cross-cultural multiple-case study are organized in two parts: Part One describes the findings from the five cases in Vancouver and Part Two describes the five cases in Hong Kong. The quotations presented are extracted from the interview data. Table 1 shows the summary of findings in the form of a comparison table.

5.1 Vancouver cases

5.1.1 Case 1: Amy

Amy was a Caucasian teacher in her early-40s. She reflected that her family and piano teacher had contributed a lot to her musical interest.

"There was always a lot of music in my home. Though my parents, neither of them played a musical instrument, they really valued that. When I was seven years old, at my mother's suggestion, I started studying piano and enjoyed it very much. ... When I was sixteen, my piano teacher asked me to do some teaching of beginners. So, that got me started and then I decided to go into music, got a music degree."

Amy reflected that she did not plan to become a music teacher and did not have specific training in music education. However, it was easier for her to find a job if she could teach music.

"I wasn't planning to be a music teacher. ... I found that the best way to get a job was to do music. In Vancouver, it's impossible to get a job as a classroom teacher. You have to focus on your specialties and my specialty was music. ... I really enjoyed it, so that's why I continued. ... I didn't specifically train as a music teacher though I had very few music education courses."

5.1.2 Case 2: Ben

Ben was a Canadian-Japanese teacher in his late-30s. He did not have any formal training in music, but he could play several musical instruments. He reflected that he started to play musical instruments with support from his parents.

"I was in school band and I played guitar. ... Well, with the trumpet, it was my parents wanted. My parents didn't discourage me listening to music or playing guitar. I always enjoy having music as something for background music. ... Guitar was something on my own. I just really liked other people that played guitar and so then I tried it myself."

Ben did not intend to become a music teacher. However, he believed that music might help students in learning other subject areas and has been integrating music in his classes for 10 years already.

"I'm a classroom teacher and I just do some music. ... I'm a generalist for the classroom, I teach art, I teach gymnasium, I teach music. ... I didn't really specialize in music. ... We don't have a music teacher where the kids go to, so the classroom teacher does all the areas. It's just something that I take on."

5.1.3 Case 3: Cathy

Cathy was a Caucasian teacher in her 50s. Although her formal degree was neither in music nor music education, she could play several musical instruments.

"I played piano since I was seven years old. ... I would play for enjoyment. ... I played recorder for 10 years, teaching it. I'm usually a few steps ahead of the children on recorder. ... The ukulele, I've been playing for 45 years. Just an instrument, a toy, I picked up as a child and enjoyed, and used it for sing-along through the years. ... My skill is minimal but children think that I'm wonderful."

Cathy reflected that she did not intend to become a music teacher though she had been teaching music in elementary school for 10 years.

"I had been a primary teacher up until that time. ... The school principal phoned me because she knew I was substitute teaching at that time and she knew that I was doing some music with the ukulele and I was interested in music. When I was asked to be a music teacher, I was excited. My training was in elementary education and my music training was piano in the past as a child. ... So that's how I ended up teaching music even though my formal degree was not in music."

After Cathy became a classroom music teacher, she realized that she needed to improve and learn more. Therefore she started to take up some short music education courses.

"I found myself in a classroom that had a whole set of Orff instruments ... so that each child in my class could be on the barred instrument. ... I realized that I needed to improve, to know how to teach, to know how to use these instruments with the children. ... I took "Introduction to Orff" and then "Level I Orff" over a period of two years. ... I went to

workshops that give me materials to use with instruments.”

5.1.4 Case 4: Daisy

Daisy was a Caucasian teacher in her mid-40s. She reflected that her family provided her with a lot of chances in encountering music since her early childhood. She felt that it was very natural for her to have great interests in music.

“I was always involved in music because my family was involved in music so that it seemed natural to go into. I enjoyed it though. ... When I was six, I began piano lessons and vocal lessons at about 10. I was in choirs, singing under my parents’ leadership. I grew up in an atmosphere with lots of music.”

Daisy reflected that she wanted to teach music and other academic subjects. Therefore she had been a generalist teacher that had to teach various subjects for 20 years.

“I wanted to be a teacher ever since I was little. ... I went into Bachelor degree in Education right after Grade 12. I specialized in mathematics and music. I did not want to be only a general music teacher because I enjoy teaching academic subjects.”

5.1.5 Case 5: Edwin

Edwin was a Caucasian teacher in his mid-30s. He reflected that his parents supported him to have music training since early childhood and his music teachers had led him to develop his keen interests in music.

“I started with piano when I was five, but I stopped piano lessons when I was 12 and just concentrated on cello. ... My parents gave me the opportunity to start cello. ... My father loves playing the piano. And there was always music in my home. ... I would consider my music teacher in high school to be my mentor. He was very knowledgeable and supportive. He showed me what is available through choral and orchestral music in classroom setting ... he influenced me. ... Another person would probably have been my cello teacher. He gave me the skills and the techniques to let music come alive. I enjoy performing so much.”

Edwin reflected that he made up his mind to become a music teacher only after he graduated from university.

“I had been doing a lot of performing as a teenager and I studied a music program in university. After studying, I decided that music was what I wanted to do. ... I wanted to become a music educator. ... So, I entered the teacher education program.”

5.2 Hong Kong cases

5.2.1 Case 6: Fong-fong

Fong-fong was a Chinese teacher in her mid-30s. She liked playing piano and singing. She acknowledged that it was her music teacher at primary school who influenced her interests in music and inspired her to become a music teacher.

“I have loved piano when I was a child. ... But I had too much schoolwork. My mom let me learn piano at around 14 years old. ... I played the piano intermittently because of no time, and my schoolwork was very busy. My music teacher at primary school was very nice to me. I thought that it would be nice to be like her when I grow up. ... She taught well. She taught me how to sing better. She encouraged me to join the choir. She said that I sang well and made me think I had the talent in this aspect. Then I gradually fell in love with music.”

Fong-fong reflected that she made up her mind to become a music teacher when she was admitted to the music teacher education program.

“I love music and I like other people to share with me, therefore I chose to teach kids. I was never sure if I could get into the music teacher education program, I just wanted to try. I decided to become a music teacher when I was confirmed to have a place in the music teacher education program.”

5.2.2 Case 7: Gigi

Gigi was a Chinese teacher in her late-20s. She revealed that she had loved music since she was very young, but she had to persuade her mother for many years before she was allowed to learn piano.

“When I was very small, I loved listening to music and especially the sound of piano, I kept on persuading until my mom to let me learn piano at around 13 years old. My mother said that learning piano was expensive, and I had to do better in my schoolwork. ... when I was in high school, I was envious to see people studying music at universities, I thought it was really wonderful to be able to get in touch with music everyday.”

Gigi decided to become a music teacher when she was admitted to the music teacher program.

“I made up my mind to become a music teacher when I applied for music teacher program of tertiary education, because teaching music would have more varieties than teaching other subjects and because of my interests.”

5.2.3 Case 8: Hing-hing

Hing-hing was a Chinese teacher in her mid-30s. She recalled that her interests in music were developed through

playing piano and reading the biographies of musicians.

"I started to learn piano when I was 13 years old. I thought playing piano was fun. My family is not rich and we lived in public housing estate. The nearby community center offered piano lessons were not too expensive, and I could afford. ... At that time, when I had nothing else to do, I would read the biographies of musicians. I found that their biographies are very different from those of other famous people. ... I thought I could achieve the same."

Hing-hing reflected that she always wanted to be a teacher. When she applied for tertiary education, she enrolled in the music teacher education program and she was admitted.

"I had wanted to be a teacher since I was little; when I had to apply for tertiary education. ..., I thought music was fun. I applied for the music teacher education program and I was admitted."

5.2.4 Case 9: Ivy

Ivy was a Chinese teacher in her late-20s. It was her mother who stimulated her interests in music, and it was her piano teacher who inspired her to become a music teacher.

"I always wanted to be a teacher, since I love music ...my mom sent me to learn playing piano and dancing when I was in Primary 3. But my schoolwork was very demanding, and I quitted dancing. ... When I was about 15 years old, my piano teacher told me that I only knew very little about music. So I really wanted to study music in a structured way in College. After graduating from high school, I have always wanted to become a teacher too, and since I liked music, so when I enrolled in the music teacher education program."

5.2.5 Case 10: Jackie

Jackie was a teacher in her late-20s. She liked playing pipa (a Chinese pluck-string musical instrument). Her love for music was developed through her experience of learning musical instruments.

"When I was in Primary 5, I happened to know that there were affordable courses on musical instruments offered by the Music Office (funded and operated by the government). I saw people playing this musical instrument on TV and thought that was nice...I spent 7 years to finish the whole course. ... My pipa teacher sent me to competitions, and let me join the ensemble and orchestra. ... My scope of musical exposure was widened; I'm no longer playing alone. ...I got feelings of success and I fell in love with music."

Jackie reflected that she decided to become a music teacher after graduating from secondary school.

"When I finished secondary school, I decided to be teacher; I thought of teaching music, becoming a music teacher would be nice because I started to learn musical instruments when I was little."

6. Discussion and conclusion

The career choice of the music teachers of this study demonstrated a resultant of a long-term process of social learning that could be described by the categories of factors as suggested by Krumboltz (1994). Teachers of this study had long-term music training which equipped them with the necessary task approach skills to become music teachers; their positive experience of music learning, family experiences, opportunities of receiving music teacher education and opportunities of getting a teaching job, created favorable environmental conditions and learning experience which shaped their personal interests to become music teachers.

6.1 Environmental conditions

6.1.1 Family experience

Teachers of all ten cases received music training with family support. However, their family experience demonstrated vast cultural differences among the Vancouver cases and Hong Kong cases. Parents of the Vancouver cases seem to value music education more than their counterparts of the Hong Kong cases.

Teachers of the Vancouver cases reflected that they got support and encouragement from their families in pursuing music training since childhood. According to their reflections, none of them recalled any obvious constraints that might have hindered their music learning. Their parents sent them to have piano lessons or join instrumental class at school on their parents' initiation. It demonstrated their parents' support in developing children's musical interests in a child-centered education environment of Western societies (Bauer, 2001).

Among the Hong Kong cases, except Ivy who recalled that it was her mother's idea to send her to piano lessons, teachers of other Hong Kong cases mentioned that it was their own initiatives to learn music. However, they reflected that their parents' support for music learning was limited by the conditions of their financial constraints and heavy schoolwork. Hing-hing and Jackie recalled that they could learn to play musical instrument until they found affordable instrumental class. Fong-fong and Gigi had to persuade their parents for many years before they were allowed to have piano lessons. Fong-fong, Gigi and Ivy mentioned their heavy workload of school had hindered their music learning. The Hong Kong cases revealed some social issues behind the scene of learning musical instruments. Firstly, families

with tight budget might need to wait until their family financial situations improve before they could support their children to learn playing musical instruments. Secondly, parents in Hong Kong usually have high expectations on academic achievement and rank their priority of schoolwork over learning music instruments (Morris, 1996).

6.1.2 Job opportunities vs. training opportunities

Job opportunity was a major concern when teachers of the Vancouver cases chose to teach music. Although all teachers of the Vancouver cases mentioned their keen interests in music, most of them did not plan to be a music teacher until they graduated from university or until they had entered the teaching profession. Amy, Ben and Cathy made their choices because of the demand of the job market. Amy admitted that it might be easier for her to get a job if she could teach music. Ben and Cathy entered the teaching profession as a generalist teacher and became music teachers when there was a shortage of music teacher in the schools they taught. These teachers' ability to teach music became an asset for them to secure a job, when there were not too many job openings in the market. Teachers of the Vancouver cases made their choices with pragmatic considerations of job opportunities in addition to their personal interests. Since elementary schools in Vancouver are taught by generalists who do not need to have specific training in music education, only Cathy mentioned that she took music methodology courses to improve her music teaching. According to the teachers of the Vancouver cases, job opportunity was more important than training opportunity when they considered becoming a music teacher.

On the contrary, none of Hong Kong teachers of this study mentioned about job opportunity. Teachers of the Hong Kong cases confirmed their career choice when they got admitted to the tertiary music teacher education program for secondary school graduates. They reflected that their choice of becoming a music teacher was mainly due to their personal interests in music, and none of them mentioned about job opportunities. Except Ivy who always wanted to be a music teacher since high school, other teachers of the Hong Kong cases decided to become a music teacher only when they were admitted to the music teacher education program and got the opportunity of job training. The opportunity of receiving music teacher education was a prominent factor that contributed to the favorable environmental conditions that determined teachers' choices of career of the Hong Kong cases.

The differences of effect of the opportunity of receiving music teacher education and job opportunity reflect the differences in labor market and education systems in Vancouver and Hong Kong, which demonstrated the notion of Johnson and Mortimer (2002) that people made their choices of career according to contextual factors that differ across nations.

6.2 Learning experience

Among the Vancouver cases, Amy acknowledged that her piano teacher strengthened her confidence and inspired her to study a music degree. Edwin admired his high school music teacher who exhibited a knowledgeable and supportive image that led him to choose studying music in university. Although other teachers of the Vancouver cases did not specially mentioned their music teacher, they mentioned their love for music that developed through playing musical instruments. Ben mentioned his love for guitar, Cathy mentioned that she played several musical instruments since her childhood and enjoyed a sense of achievement when children thought that she was wonderful.

All teachers of the Hong Kong cases mentioned that they had positive influences from some role models, such as music teachers, music students and great musicians. Fong-fong recalled that her music teacher at primary school encouraged her to participate in choral singing and convinced her that she had talent in singing. Ivy reflected that her piano teacher encouraged her to continue studying music; Jackie acknowledged her Pipa teacher who contributed to her keen musical interests by sending her to competitions and playing in orchestra. Gigi and Hing-hing reflected that their musical interests were developed through listening to music, playing piano, and following role models in the process of music learning. Gigi admitted that she admired those music students of universities and colleges, while Hing-hing wished to make music like great musicians as she read their biographies.

Although all ten cases had positive experience in music learning, cultural differences were noted in the ways these teachers expressed their music learning experiences. Teachers of the Vancouver cases recalled that they had lots of enjoyment in the process of learning music, while teachers of the Hong Kong cases recalled the constraints of financial limitations and heavy school work that they encountered instead of their enjoyment of music making. Instead of mentioning their personal enjoyment of music learning, they expressed their feelings of satisfaction through getting the valuable chance to learn music and getting encouragement from their music teachers. These differences could be explained by the different educational ideologies that exist in the societies of Vancouver and Hong Kong. The way that teachers of the Vancouver cases value their personal enjoyment in learning reflects the children-centered approach of progressivism ideology which emphasizes the enjoyment of learning through discovery, experience and play (Wilson, 1983; Bauer, 2001). Influences of the achievement-oriented expectations could be found in teachers' feelings of satisfaction of the Hong Kong cases (Morris, 1996; Wong & Watkins, 2001).

6.3 Conclusion

From a general perspective, the reflections of these ten teachers of Vancouver and Hong Kong demonstrated that

long-term process of cognitive and social learning before a music teacher acquired the music skills, build up the keen interests and confidence to teach, and demonstrated Krumboltz's (1994) notion on decision of career choice. From a cross-cultural perspective, even though these ten teachers shared keen interests in music, the crucial factor that influences their choices differs according to the contextual and cultural differences of the two cities, instead of the mere differences in education systems as suggested by Johnson and Mortimer (2002).

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Table 1. Summary of Findings

	Teachers	Gender/Age/ Ethnic group	Music training	Factors shaping teachers' music interests	Major concern(s) when deciding career choice
V A N C O U V E R	Case 1 Amy	F/40s/ Caucasian	Piano Harp	Family Piano teacher	Personal interests Demand of job market
	Case 2 Ben	M/30s/ Japanese	Guitar Trumpet	Family School Band	Personal interests Demand of job market
	Case 3 Cathy	F/50s/ Caucasian	Piano Orff Ukelele	Family Music training	Personal interests Demand of job market
	Case 4 Daisy	F/40s/ Caucasian	Piano Singing	Family Music training	Personal interests
	Case 5 Edwin	M/30s/ Caucasian	Piano Cello	Family Music teacher	Personal interests
	Case 6 Fong-fong	F/30s/ Chinese	Piano	School teacher	Personal interests
H O N G K O N G	Case 7 Gigi	F/20s/ Chinese	Piano	Music listening Music training Music students	Personal interests
	Case 8 Hing-hing	F/30s/ Chinese	Piano	Music training Great musicians	Personal interests
	Case 9 Ivy	F/20s/ Chinese	Piano Recorder	Family, Piano teacher	Personal interests
	Case 10 Jackie	F/20s/ Chinese	Piano	Pipa teacher, Music training	Personal interests