Abstract

The intensifying diversity and fast-paced social change characterizing contemporary societies requires music education policy and practice to contend with various and at times conflicting musical and cultural values and understandings. In Nepal this situation is intensified, with a music education curriculum adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2010 guiding music teaching and learning for 77 national districts and over 125 caste/ethnic groups within a rapidly globalizing society. In this context assessment plays a key role in framing the knowledge and pedagogical approaches deemed useful or desirable for Nepali music students, and contributes to the legitimation of music as a subject and as a career. Assessment is therefore of ethical concern and warrants critical reflection if music education is to uphold democratic ideals, such as participation and equal opportunity. In this chapter we identify four institutional visions framing music education in Nepali schools. Considering these visions through John Dewey's *Theory of Valuation* (LW13), we suggest that ethical deliberations regarding assessment focus on the relationships between means and ends in learning processes and thereby the quality of student experience. Leaning on Arjun Appadurai's theories of the *imagination* (1996) and the *capacity to aspire* (2004) we then propose that imagining *ends-not-yet-in-view* may allow for ethical engagements with values different to one's own and encourage reflection upon the inclusive and exclusive processes of assessment that frame *whose* ends-in-view count, when, how, and what for.

Keywords

assessment, capacity to aspire, ethics, institutional visions, music education, Nepal, pragmatist ideals, valuation

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Imagining Ends-Not-Yet-in-View

The Ethics of Assessment as Valuation in Nepali Music Education

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Although diversity and change are by no means conditions exclusive to the present, global economic instabilities, mass migration, political turbulence, the accessibility of and speed at which information is produced and shared, and developments in media and technology have characterized the contemporary world as one of uncertainty and intensified encounters with difference. Amid such sociocultural complexity and fast-paced change, music education policy and practice are required to contend with various and at times conflicting musical and cultural values and understandings. Thus curriculum, teaching and learning practices, and related assessment practices are of ethical concern. Indeed, as argued in this chapter, assessment can play a key role in framing the knowledge and pedagogical approaches in music education and can therefore be understood as partially constituting the process of legitimation. It is therefore important to broaden our understandings of assessment beyond processes and practices used to monitor, measure, and give feedback on student learning and related processes of evaluation such as assigning a mark or grade.

In this chapter we discuss assessment in music education in the context of Nepal. The inquiry framing this chapter became crucial during our research and collaborative work developing music teacher education there.[1] Adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2010, the Nepali music education curriculum guides music teaching and learning in 77 national districts for 126 caste/ethnic groups, with 123 languages spoken as mother tongues (including indigenous sign languages), and representing 10 religious groups (Government of Nepal, 2012), all within a rapidly globalizing society. In the absence of formal, government-recognized music teacher education, representatives of the Nepal Music Center—the music institute that lobbied the government to introduce music into the curriculum and later built that curriculum—approached the Sibelius Academy and proposed collaboration. During the resulting collaboration, we repeatedly encountered tensions between the justifications for including formal music education in schooling and assessment as a form of legitimation driving education in Nepal. For example, assessment frequently arose during early interviews with school administrators as part of Treacy's ethnographic work in 2014, even though no questions about assessment were asked. Similarly, questions of organizing student and program assessment became central during Shah and Timonen's collaborative work designing a music education program for advanced level students at the Nepal Music Center, Kathmandu.

In light of these early observations, we were compelled to engage in collaborative "critical work" (Kuntz, 2015, p. 25). This work begins with an anticolonial stance (Patel, 2014) and combines *educational* (Pole & Morrison, 2003) and *collaborative* (Lassiter, 2005) *ethnography* with *appreciative inquiry* (see, e.g., Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005). This chapter is supported by Nepali curriculum documents and assessment policy for general education and interviews conducted with school administrators and musician-teachers[2] working in the

Kathmandu Valley. Leaning on pragmatist philosopher John Dewey's *Theory of Valuation*, we analyze the institutional visions framing music education in Nepali schools. In particular, we consider these visions in relation to Dewey's notion of the *continuum of ends-means* (LW13[3]:226–36)–the "temporal continuum of activities in which each successive stage is equally end and means" (LW13:234). Thus, instead of viewing these visions as ends-in-themselves, we use Dewey to focus ethical deliberations on the relationships between means and ends in learning processes and thereby the quality of student experience. We then apply sociocultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's theories of the *imagination* (1996) and the *capacity to aspire* (2004)—"the social and cultural capacity to plan, hope, desire, and achieve socially valuable goals" (Appadurai, 2006, p. 176)—to highlight the need to envision unforeseen assessment practices and thereby a more ethical engagement with intensifying diversity and fast-paced social change.

Implementation of the Study

Although music has long been a part of the Nepali primary school curriculum (grades 1–5, students six to eleven years old) through the subject social studies under "creative and performance art," it was only introduced into the lower secondary and secondary school curricula (grades 6–8, students twelve to fourteen years old; grades 9–10, students fifteen to sixteen years old) in 2010. While these music curricula have been prepared and approved for implementation since 2011, there are currently no schools teaching them, partly because music is just one of many subjects from which the school can choose only one, and this subject is then taken by all students. Consequently, music is competing with subjects such as computer science and health and physical education. As of the writing of this chapter, an elective music curriculum for high

school (grades 11–12, students seventeen to eighteen years old) has been approved and adopted but not widely implemented. Thus, curricula development and assessment strategies for music continue to be in their formative stages.

The material for this chapter includes translations (from Nepali to English) of the following government policy documents[4]:

- The National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal 2007, published by the Government of Nepal Curriculum Development Centre.
- The Nepali Music Curriculum for grades 1–5 (2011, currently approved and adopted as the primary school music subject under the local subject curriculum, by the Nepal Ministry of Education, but not yet implemented).
- The Nepali Music Curriculum for grades 6–8 (2011, currently approved and implemented as a possible optional subject by the Nepal Ministry of Education).
- The Nepali Music as an Elective Curriculum for grades 9–10 (2011, awaiting official approval by the Nepal Ministry of Education).

Supporting these policy documents are thirteen interviews conducted by the first author in 2014 and guided by appreciative inquiry (see, e.g., Cooperrider et al., 2005). Six interviews were held with seven school administrators, such as principals or directors, from six private schools in the Kathmandu Valley, who are largely responsible for deciding which subjects are offered by the school and for curricular implementation. The primary intent of administrator interviews was to inquire into the general background of the schools, including the overarching visions and the place of music in the broader curriculum. As already mentioned, no questions were asked about assessment. In addition, seven interviews were conducted with private school musician-teachers. As government schools[5] rarely employ music teachers, and music as a curricular subject is in its

infancy throughout the country, private school musician-teachers were seen to offer important insights into music teaching and learning practices in schools. Musician-teacher interviews were guided by the appreciative inquiry generic questions (see Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 25; Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011, pp. 155–56) with the addition of questions on the themes of diversity, repertoire selection, assessment, and the school-specific song practice, assessment having been added for the purposes of this particular inquiry. All interviewees were contacted and selected through the Nepal Music Center's network of schools known to offer music as a curricular subject or extracurricular activity. Interviews with administrators were in English, while musician-teachers were encouraged to speak Nepali, with an interpreter present for all interviews. The thirty- to one hundred-minute, audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and translated into English as needed. Excerpts of the transcripts related to this chapter were then shared with all coauthors.

The material was interpreted in collaboration with all coauthors and at various levels. These levels include the contexts of Nepal and other diversifying societies more generally, our experiences from our own individual research projects, and thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Faced with the tensions between the justifications of music in schooling and assessment as legitimation, we first asked: What institutional visions frame the valuation of music education in Nepali schools? This led us to identify four visions: the desire to create socially unifying practices, moving from traditional to progressive education, including public performances in schooling, and achieving success in externally administered examinations. Extending this exploration, we then engaged in "productive critique" (Kuntz, 2015, p. 109), striving toward "ethically laden creative alternatives to normative rationalities and normalizing practices" (p. 25). This second stage of inquiry was guided by the question: How might these

visions be explored and reframed through ethical deliberations on the quality of student experience and against the fast-changing sociocultural climate of Nepal?

Assessment in the Nepali Curriculum

Public education is relatively young in Nepal, with public schooling having been prohibited by the Rana rulers as a deliberate method of control. Not until the Shah kings regained power in 1951 was education expanded to the masses, not only as a means of modernization and economic and social development, but also to promote loyalty to the nation-state and the one-party system of government (Skinner & Holland, 2009). Nepal already had a long history of social stratification (along the lines of gender, caste, ethnicity, and race) (Manandhar, 2009, p. vii), so the elevation of "the King, Hinduism, and the Nepali language as the basis of national cohesion" (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 268) only served to uphold stratification and hegemony. Later, despite the 1990 constitution declaring Nepal to be multiethnic, secular, and democratic, persisting discrimination and inequality led to a decade-long civil war (1996–2006). In light of this history, the restoration of peace in 2006 and the publication of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal in 2007 may appear to outsiders to coincide; however, in recent decades foreign actors, such as the international donor community, have had a powerful influence in shaping educational policy (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). Indeed, Pramod Bhatta (2009) asserts that changes to educational policy in Nepal are often in "response to the conditions put by the aid agencies supporting educational reforms" (p. 152). One example of the "politics of donor interests" (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 271) in Nepal's assessment policy is the reflection of both the international donor countries that value continuous assessment and

those that value standardized testing, the result being that both have been adopted to satisfy the respective donors.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2007) is "the main document of school education" and "presents the vision, policy and guidelines of school level education" (p. 55). This document defines student assessment as "the process of gathering, interpreting, recording and analyzing data, using information and obtaining feedback for re-planning educational programmes" (p. 26) and varies assessment according to grade level. Grades 1–7 outline a school-based continuous assessment system (CAS), meaning that teachers should "encourage the students to learn by giving due attention to customized teaching or an individual approach" (Music Curriculum 1–5, p. 13) in order to "assess the expected learning outcomes, behavioral change, attitudes, competency, skill and the application of feedback for teaching and learning activities" (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 47). In addition, assessment strategies suggested in the National Curriculum Framework include class, project, and community work; unit and achievement tests; observation; and formative and innovative work (p. 46).

Students in general education in Nepal are also assessed through standardized external examinations. At the time of inquiry, the "resource centers" that facilitate government-school policy communication and serve to aid teachers with content knowledge, pedagogical training, and collecting local school demographic information for relevant authorities also coordinated an external examination at the end of grade 5. In addition, there were summative district-level, standardized examinations at the end of grade 8 and national, standardized examinations at the end of grade 10 (the School Leaving Certificate [SLC]), as well as at the end of grade 12 for those students who continued to higher secondary school.[6]

These assessment strategies evaluate students by assigning a letter grade, provide certificates of achievement, and facilitate the progression from one year-level to the next. The National Curriculum Framework (Government of Nepal, 2007), however, raises ethical concerns that assessment has “not been developed as an integral part of teaching learning activities nor has it been tied up with student’s intellectual level, interest, pace, and needs” (pp. 26–27). Rather, the focus on standardized external examinations has been seen as a way to respond to various international interests and involvement and also to establish equal standards throughout the country—to “maintain the quality of [the] education” system (p. 47).

The Nepali Music Curriculum is divided into grades 1–5, 6–8, and 9–10. Each curriculum document outlines specific assessment strategies, including descriptions of recommended processes, activities, and methods for tracking student progress and assigning grades. Similar to the overall school curriculum, in grades 1–5 the focus of music classes is on learning by doing, evaluated through formative assessment “aimed at improving the level of students’ learning” (Music Curriculum 1–5, p. 18). More standardized approaches to assessment in music are introduced in the curricula for grades 6–8 and 9–10. Assessment can thus be seen to play an increasingly important role in school music education as students progress through the grade system; indeed, the “grading system can be considered as one of the most vital factors in terms of teaching” (Music Curriculum 6–8, p. 10; Music Curriculum 9–10, p. 14). This acknowledgment recalls David Boud’s (1995) assertion that while “students can, with difficulty, escape from the effects of poor teaching, they cannot (by definition if they want to graduate) escape the effects of poor assessment” (p. 35). Indeed, assessment defines not only *what* is to be learned but *how* students go about that learning (see, e.g., Boud, 1995). As such, one way of considering how assessment in Nepali music education might be developed in a way that ethically engages with

intensifying diversity and fast-paced social change is to reflect on the underlying values framing music education in Nepal, the values that assess what is taught and how; for this, we turn to John Dewey.

Valuation in and of Music Education in Nepal

In his pragmatist *Theory of Valuation* (LW13), John Dewey asserts that "valuations are constant phenomena of human behavior" (LW13:241). Indeed, "all deliberate, all planned human conduct, personal and collective, seems to be influenced, if not controlled, by estimates of value or worth of ends to be attained" (LW13:192), the only exceptions being blind, unreflective impulses and mechanical routines and habits. The difference between impulses and desires then, according to Dewey, is "the presence in desire of an end-in-view, of objects *as* foreseen consequences" (LW13:217; emphasis in original). Dewey asserts: "This is the origin and nature of 'goals' of action. They are ways of defining and deepening the meaning of activity. Having an end or aim is thus a characteristic of *present* activity. It is the means by which an activity becomes adapted when otherwise it would be blind and disorderly, or by which it gets meaning when otherwise it would be mechanical. In a strict sense an end-in-view is a *means* in present action; present action is not a means to a remote end" (MW14:156; emphasis in original). Thus, ends-in-view are not fixed but created in action, a kind of mediating end, as ends that are too distant cannot function as guides in action. Dewey further asserts that valuation is the result of ongoing critical inquiry, through which ends-in-view arise and are revised through continual reflection upon past experiences and valuation of means. He illustrates how this process takes place through "careful observation of differences found between desired and proposed ends (ends-*in-view*) and attained ends or actual consequences. Agreement between what is wanted and

anticipated and what is actually obtained confirms the selection of conditions which operate as means to the desired end; discrepancies, which are experienced as frustrations and defeats, lead to an inquiry to discover the causes of failure" (LW13:218; emphasis in original). Importantly, this process is "capable of rectification and development" (LW13:241).

Reading the school curricula documents and interview transcripts with Dewey's *Theory of Valuation*, we identified four interrelated visions framing the valuation of music education in Nepali schools:

- The desire to create socially unifying practices,
- Moving from traditional to progressive education,
- Including public performances in schooling, and
- Achieving success in externally administered examinations.

We here illustrate how these visions are in tension with each other, with assessment practices often obstructing the capability of schools, administrators, and teachers to realize other aims.

"Woven from Hundreds of Flowers, We Are One Garland"

The first of the identified visions framing the valuation of music education in Nepali schools was a desire to create socially unifying practices amid intense sociocultural diversity. With its long history of social stratification and recent civil war, Nepal is characterized as a post-conflict nation in which "social exclusion, inclusion, and inclusive democracy" (Bhattachan, 2009, p. 12) are now highlighted as key concerns for all. These concerns can be seen for example in the garden discourse that opens the new national anthem (adopted in 2007): "Woven from hundreds of flowers, we are one garland that's Nepali." This perceived need to counter hundreds of years

of divisive policies and practices also constructs unity and cohesion as an aim of general education in Nepal, with music education being evaluated as a potential means to this end. This valuation of music and music education can also be seen in our material on various levels. At the level of government policy, the Nepali Music Curricula for grades 1–5, 6–8, and 9–10, for example, reflect an explicit desire to build national unity through the inclusion of patriotic songs and a common repertoire of class (year-level) songs for government schools:

> Subject matter: Grade 1
>
> Singing:
>
> . . . Practice of children's songs, class songs,[7] the national anthem and patriotic songs
>
> (Music Curriculum 1–5, p. 7)

In enacting such curricular objectives and constructing assessment strategies, however, teachers are also required to engage in valuations, for example through repertoire selections, balancing more or less specified iterations of the local through the inclusion of music and dance from particular communities, for instance; and the global, through the inclusion of "western[8] music" and "western musical terminologies" (Music Curriculum 6–8, p. 2).

School administrators interviewed as part of this research also expressed a desire to create unifying practices and values within their schools, often evaluating music and music education as a means to this end. Some administrators described practices that had been created to engage with issues of diversity and to educate for mutual respect and solidarity. One such practice was the school-specific song (Treacy & Westerlund, 2019), which sometimes echoed the botanical metaphor in the national anthem that was said to be related to the need to cultivate a sense of belongingness in the school community (Administrator 6[9]). In justifying his school's music program, one administrator explained, "Nepal is a garden of so many ethnic groups. . . . And

each ethnic group, has their own culture, they have their own costumes, traditions, folk-songs, folk-dance and all" (Administrator 3). As such, learning songs or dances from different Nepali ethnic groups was evaluated by the school as a means to "get the taste of" and "learn to respect other cultures . . . [to] really enrich the students" because "in the music, you see the whole history of a particular ethnic group . . . it is an identity of a culture" (Administrator 3).

To "Prepare Students for Life and Not for Examinations"

The second of the identified visions framing the valuation of music education in Nepali schools was what administrators described as "progressive" (Administrator 2) or "contemporary" (Administrator 6) education. This vision involved institutional desires to "break away from the traditional means of teaching and learning" and become "more student-focused" (Administrator 6). Making this shift was valued not only at the institutional level, but also at the policy level. Indeed, the National Curriculum Framework (Government of Nepal, 2007) poses it as a contemporary challenge for schools and teachers: "Teaching and learning activities are conducted on the basis of textbooks designed in accordance with the curriculum developed at the central level. Aspects such as grade teaching, multi grade teaching, subject teaching, community work and project work have not been given due attention. The teaching and learning environment has thus been more instruction oriented rather than learning oriented" (p. 21). As such, teaching approaches that prioritized student participation and agency were seen as a remedy to the traditional, teacher-centered pedagogies of the past.

Interviewed administrators described valuing music education as a means for their schools to make this shift toward "more and more child-centric" (Administrator 3) teaching and learning. An important means to this end was perceived to be the widening of the focus of education in

their institutions from only educating students academically to “developing life-skills . . . [as schools] should prepare students for life and not for examinations” (Administrator 2). Indeed, one administrator explained the importance of helping students identify and build their “potential” and valued the music lessons in his school as “a platform to explore what they believed they couldn’t do” (Administrator 2). Music was also valued by administrators as a means of developing students’ creativity, confidence, curiosity, and collaboration as well as fostering their abilities to focus and be patient. These views can be seen to align with the national objective for general education to “help foster inherent talents and the possibility of personality development of each individual” (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 31). Music was also evaluated as important for “break[ing] the monotony” of the long school days, helping to energize and motivate students (Administrator 3), and simply as a “meaningful” use of students’ free time (Administrator 2).

The Pressure to Perform

The third vision identified as framing the valuation of music education in Nepali schools was including public performances in schooling, a common value of music education practices in many parts of the world. Performance features in every grade level of the Music Curricula. For instance, the curricular objectives for students in grades 1–5 direct teachers to ensure that students have the opportunity to “take part with interest in different musical programs” (p. 4),[10] while for grades 6–-8 it is stated: “Student work should always be practice-based, and students should have opportunities to demonstrate whatever has been learned in the classroom via various concerts, programs, classroom activities, and also at home” (p. 9). As such, performance is often constructed as an assessment of sorts, an opportunity for students to present the fruits of many

hours spent rehearsing on their own or together. However, it can also serve as a means of, and justification for, dividing students into categories of more or less capable. As one musician-teacher noted: "The skilled students are allowed to play in the orchestra and perform during the parents' day concert. The unskilled students are not" (Teacher 6). However, this same teacher noted that performances should not be the *only* goals for teaching and learning, as he explained: "Some music teachers are not very good. They use the rote routine to teach the students . . . for a long period. During competitions, the students come first or second, but if they are given different notations the students cannot play" (Teacher 6). One of the administrators expressed wholly different values in terms of performances, explaining that they were not necessarily opportunities to display the most talented students, but rather for all students to participate in community celebrations, "On parents' day we make sure that every child is on the stage" (Administrator 3). Thus, to ensure this in a school of over two thousand students, they have moved to grade-specific, rather than entire school, parents' days. This more participatory approach, however, does not necessarily do away with the evaluative role that performances might assume.

Many musician-teachers noted that more than an assessment of student skills, performances served as a public assessment of their work as teachers and of the standards or values of the school more generally. Performances were seen to "prove my teaching skills" (Teacher 7) or provide "publicity . . . and positive things about [the school]" (Administrator 6). Performances were also experienced negatively by teachers who felt that they could not "teach [students] anything else but prepare them for the event" (Teacher 7). As an administrator reflected, this also impeded student learning: "A lot of schools are not really, really imparting good music education. . . . [I]t's always centered either around the program or some show or event"

(Administrator 6). Regardless of the impact on pedagogy and learning, the pressure to perform was felt as a need to legitimize the place of music in many schools. Indeed, one teacher lamented that “if there are no [performances], the priority given to music is very minimal” (Teacher 2).

The “Iron Gate”

The fourth and arguably most important vision framing the valuation of music education in Nepali schools was achieving success in the externally administered examination, the SLC. The “Iron Gate” of the SLC is seen to determine students’ access to further education and work opportunities and thus their future socioeconomic well-being. Similar to public performances, SLC examination results also serve as an assessment of the school’s reputation (Mathema & Bista, 2006) in wider society, and it is common to see posters adorning schools’ walls featuring the photos and results of their high-achieving students. Consequently, teaching and learning in the final years of general education, grades 9 and 10, are almost exclusively focused on rote learning the content that will be examined. As an optional subject—meaning that it is elective for the *school* but then taken by *all* students—schools may choose to offer music as one of the SLC exam subjects; however, this is extremely rare. As such, music—and any other subject not examined by the SLC—does not get taught in grades 9 and 10.

Interviewed school administrators described how the SLC limited their school’s ability to provide the kind of education to which they aspired: “The curriculum, the syllabus, lesson planning, exams, all the activities that we do are all based around the SLC, which we have no control over. So even though we try to break away from the traditional means of teaching and learning, at the end of the day the students have to appear for the SLC exams, so that’s something we have to keep in mind whilst we are sort of using a more modern approach of

teaching and learning" (Administrator 6). Furthermore, school administrators expressed concern that the SLC limited students' agency with regard to what they can study: "There is no choice for them, I'm so sorry for our students, for our country's system" (Administrator 4). The SLC did not only frame curricular choices, however. As a result of the SLC pressures, students and schools often discontinue extracurricular music programs in order to encourage students to concentrate exclusively on the studies legitimized by the SLC. This was summarized by one administrator as "now it's time to stop playing the guitars, it's time to stop playing football. All you've got to do is study" (Administrator 6). Parental expectations were also seen as a major pressure for both schools and students. With parents having gone through the same SLC process, one administrator expressed difficulty in "convinc[ing] the parents that academics are not the only important thing." He said, "It is not only that if you score high marks you will be successful in life. . . . Yet it is very difficult to convince the parents that marks are not important. They are important, but they are not *the* important thing" (Administrator 3). Thus, for students attending private schools, administrators felt "compelled to satisfy the parents because they are the ones who are investing money for their children's education" (Administrator 4).

Imagining Beyond Fixed Ends

In the previous section we identified four visions that frame the valuation of music education in Nepali schools. We now extend the interpretation, considering these four visions through the work of John Dewey to imagine students' ends-in-view and Arjun Appadurai to imagine the unforeseen.

Imagining Students' Ends-in-View

Our exploration indicated that the assessment practices of public performances and the SLC were often seen by interviewees as obstructing not only the potential of music education to realize a wider range of desired ends, but its very inclusion in schools. If we explore this challenge with Dewey's theory of means and ends, it could be that rather than these assessment practices being framed as ends-in-view—that is, as "means to future ends" (LW13:229)—they are framed as ends-in-themselves. Dewey asserts that

> nothing happens which is *final* in the sense that it is not part of an ongoing stream of events. . . . [T]he distinction between ends and means is temporal and relational. Every condition that has to be brought into existence in order to serve as means is, *in that connection*, an object of desire and an end-in-view, while the end actually reached is a means to future ends as well as a test of valuations previously made. Since the end attained is a condition of further existential occurrences, it must be appraised as a potential obstacle and potential resource. (LW13:229; emphasis in original)

As such, Dewey warns of the risk that "the only problems arising concern the best means for attaining [ends-in-themselves]" (LW13:229). Alternatively, if these assessment practices have been framed as ends-in-view, they have been evaluated as *the* most important ends-in-view. Dewey's notion of the continuum of means-ends—whereby actions are interconnected and an end achieved is also a means to future ends, while the ultimate end may remain unknown—is thus useful for considering these assessment practices in terms of student experience. Leaning on Dewey, Heidi Westerlund (2002) states that "music in education is a mixture of the actual and potential" (p. 187) and that music students evaluate ends from multiple perspectives: "The

learner will evaluate the value of his or her learning experiences in relation to his or her personal life which includes past and future events, whether educational or not. In this process, every good and meaningful experience is suggesting some consequences on the life goals of the individual" (2008, p. 87). Thus, understanding assessment practices, such as public performances and SLCs, as fixed ends or ends-in-themselves, without considering the means or how the end could become a means in the means-ends continuum, is an ethical problem, as assessment practices as fixed ends may hinder, rather than become the means to, further learning.

The opportunity to participate and exercise "voice" through public performance may be seen as a matter of ethical and democratic concern. When public performances serve as the primary form of assessment for music students and music teachers and as an assessment of the schools themselves, the focus of teaching and learning may be more on achieving a predetermined standard of "excellence" rather than on the experiences of students. Westerlund (2008) has emphasized that questions of valuation in music education are questions of the means—or the "hows"—of music education and therefore argues for the importance of the quality of the learners' experiences over musical outcomes such as public performances only. She suggests that from the student's perspective, good public performances may risk remaining ends-in-themselves, rather than ends-in-view to continued engagements with music making, if the learning process, the means, fails to support the creation of sufficiently positive experiences. Indeed, "the costs of music studies can even become intolerable prohibiting the final enjoyment of what should be enjoyable by its very nature" (Westerlund, 2008, p. 85). Moreover, when "quality" public performances function as ends-in-themselves—without considering how they might serve as an end-in-view for all students—exclusionary practices may be justified through the selection of students who are "most talented" or "most proficient," leaving the participatory

requirement of democracy unfulfilled. In other words, music education becomes only for the select few, and not for all. Thus, the valuation of music performances in Nepali music education may serve not only as a “potential resource” but also as a “potential obstacle” (Dewey, LW13:229) for democratic action. In democratizing the performance aspect of music teaching and learning, we need to imagine beyond those ends that construct music as product and instead consider how performances could function as qualitatively good ends-in-view in the students’ lives. As claimed by David J. Elliott (1995) among others, if music is not a *thing*, but a social action, the focus of music education ought to be on the process of *doing* music. As such, assessment should not be an evaluation *of* the performance itself, but of the preparation *for* it—or perhaps even more important, of students’ experiences of both the preparation for and the performance itself. Similarly, with performance serving as an assessment of the teacher or the school, *what* is being assessed, rather than the teacher’s ability to select and nurture “talent” or display technical proficiency, could be the ability to enact democratic ideals of inclusion and participation. As mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework, performances could illustrate an institution’s, a teacher’s, or students’ engagement with “social equality and justice . . . to help create an inclusive society” (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 31).

The processes or products of music making in schools that *are* valued in Nepali music education are closely linked to the legitimation of the subject as a whole, with assessment determining what is deemed important for young people to study and to what ends. Success in the SLC plays a key role as “part of a selective tradition, someone’s selection, some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge” (Apple, 1996, p. 22). As what is assessed is deemed valuable, music’s absence from all but a very few school’s SLC offerings serves to maintain the stigmatized place of music as a subject worth studying and a career worth pursuing more broadly

(Treacy, 2019; Treacy, Thapa, & Neupane, in press). Although the SLC may be viewed by schools and parents, and even by students, as an end-in-view to success in life, its position as *the* most important end-in-view and the externally fixed nature of this "Iron Gate," which fails to take into account student diversity and student choice, cause students to pay "too high a price in effort and in sacrifice of other ends" (LW13:228). However, the SLC is not implemented unquestioningly and has been subject to "critical examination of the relation of means and ends" (LW13:230), as illustrated through our interviews and reports such as the extensive *Study on Student Performance in SLC* (Mathema & Bista, 2006). Still, the abandonment of elective courses and hobbies not subject to the scrutiny of standardized tests, when combined with the enormous pressures placed on students to focus and achieve academic excellence, continues to come at a high price associated with assessment as an end in and of itself. As one administrator explained: "There is this huge stress on children which I firmly believe should not be there. I personally don't believe in this examination system where everything you learn throughout the year is just dumped into one [examination] paper. It's not a judge of what you've learned" (Administrator 6). As such, it is imperative to imagine beyond success in standardized examinations if assessment is to ethically work for, and not against, such curricular ideals as producing "healthy citizens" (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 42) and inclusive education, where "inclusive education means to understand and respect others, respond to educational needs and include the experiences, interests and values of children of all strata" (p. 34).

Imagining the Unforeseen

In addition to the need to consider student experience in questions of assessment in Nepali schooling, the four previously identified visions also highlight how questions of assessment are

entangled with the need for schools to contend with the rapid pace of societal change. As such, we propose that in navigating multiple, fast-changing, and at times opposing interests and values, the most established ends and related foreseen consequences may not be sufficient for engaging in the level of critical inquiry required in the Nepali context. Indeed, we have already shown how a fixed understanding of assessment places constraints on schools and administrators striving to contend with this change. Therefore, we argue that envisioning an ethically engaged future of assessment, and school music education in Nepal more broadly, requires *imagination* and the *capacity to aspire*. Appadurai (1996) asserts that "lives today are as much acts of projection and imagination as they are enactments of known scripts or predictable outcomes" (p. 61). Moreover, he contends that the capacity to aspire is an essential social and cultural capacity that supports the exploration of "alternative futures" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69) and "guarantees an ethical and psychological anchor, a horizon of credible hopes" (pp. 81–82). This is especially important in Nepal, a post-conflict nation with many diverse communities and social groups working toward equality and democracy while engaging with ever-increasing globalization. Appadurai (2004) states: "The capacity to aspire provides an ethical horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance, and sustainability. Conversely, the exercise and nurture of these capabilities verifies and authorizes the capacity to aspire and moves it away from wishful thinking to thoughtful wishing" (p. 82). Such "thoughtful wishing" may offer one means by which assessment in Nepali schools could potentially be part of, and enact, more democratic processes. In suggesting that administrators and teachers need to imagine beyond what is foreseeable, we return to the first two visions: the desire to create socially unifying practices and moving from traditional to progressive education.

Recalling the garland metaphor in the opening of the Nepali National Anthem, different cultures are described as individual, unchanging, separate flowers to be woven together. As such, creating unity through multiculturalism, as an end-in-itself in Nepali music education, is not simply a descriptive term but is used to connote a "social ideal; a policy of support for exchange among different groups of people to enrich all while respecting and preserving the integrity of each" (Elliott, 1990, p. 151). However, this ideal raises questions about the feasibility and also the ethics of maintaining distinctions between caste/ethnic groups as part of the guiding paradigm of music education. Moreover, the preservation of difference as an end-in-itself, or taken as an end-in-view in education toward a multicultural society, is symptomatic of what Dewey (LW4) refers to as a "Quest for Certainty." This is further complicated by the "fluidities of transnational," and transcultural, "communication" that frame culture as "an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 44). As such, Nepali society cannot be adequately represented by a garland, but is rather a society in which "the appearance of a people as a coherent ethnic group reflects a group's particular historical relationship with the state more than its cultural distinctiveness" (Hangen, 2010, p. 27) and "as much variation exists within groups that share an ethnic label as exists between groups with different names" (p. 27). Indeed, Susan I. Hangen (2010) asserts that identities in Nepal are constantly "in flux" (p. 27), reflecting "the political efforts of various sociocultural groups to renegotiate their identities and their place in the state" (p. 28). Cultural identity, also as expressed in and through music, is not static, with "[discrete] but clear and lasting boundaries between 'this' culture and 'that' culture" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, p. 44), but an altogether more complex experience. Accordingly, framing music education and its assessment strategies with the vision of a Nepali garland of sociocultural unity risks archiving musics or values as cultural

artifacts, rather than constructing practices that engage with musics as dynamic and changing social activities. Thus, assessment may face challenges in relating to *musicing* as something we *do* and something we already *are* (Elliott, 1989; 1995), especially if *who we are* is understood as not fixed, but rather an ongoing process of *becoming*. Preserving cultural difference is also of ethical concern, particularly in a highly stratified society like Nepal. While the caste system is officially illegal, it is far from obsolete and has left a heavy hangover of inequity and injustice. *Whose* criteria then determine success in Nepali school music education? *Whose* music is deemed legitimate and valuable? *Whose* approaches to teaching and learning ought to inform the development of teacher education? Rather than perpetuating systems of inequity through multicultural policy, if "culture is a dialogue between aspirations and sedimented traditions" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 84), there is an ethical imperative to "bring the future back in" (p. 84). Through this, teachers might imagine a more equitable, socially just music education and society at large, consistent with curriculum directives to "help create an inclusive society by focusing upon equality between different races, castes, religions, languages, cultures, and regions . . . [and to foster students' awareness of] . . . human rights, social norms and values, and feel responsible for the nation and its people" (Music Curriculum 1–5, p. 2). Envisioning schooling as more than preparation to pass examinations aligns with pragmatist ideas and ideals of education as more than inculcating students with a priori knowledge or skills. However, conceptualizing teaching and learning as *preparation for life* risks isolating the school from life itself. Education structured in isolation from society contrasts with the Deweyan understanding of the school as reproducing "within itself, [the] typical conditions of social life" (MW4:272), whereby school classrooms are already, and always, a microcosm of society, albeit in a critical mode (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Westerlund, 2002). This discourse of preparation also permeates the values

outlined in the National Educational Objectives (Government of Nepal, 2007), which state that schools should "help prepare citizens with good conduct and morals for a healthy social and collective lifestyle . . . help prepare productive and skilled citizens . . . develop and prepare human resources to build the nation through the modernization of society. . . . Prepare citizens respectful to nation, nationality, democracy" (p. 31). Here too the implication is that schools are detached from "real life," preparing students until they are qualified to participate in society, rather than seeing schools as "workplaces, as sites of identity formation, as places that make particular knowledge and culture legitimate, as arenas of mobilization and learning of tactics, and so much more" (Apple, 2013, p. 158). Furthermore, in a rapidly changing society such as Nepal, what it is exactly that school should prepare students for is uncertain, as the foreseeable future changes on an almost daily basis. Thus, progressive music education may be better understood not as preparing students for participation in a democratic society, but as already democratic in and of itself. In this way, music education may be envisioned as an experimental site "to exercise 'voice,' to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish, not only because this is virtually a definition of inclusion and participation in any democracy" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 66).

Toward an Ethically Engaged Future of Assessment

In this chapter we have illustrated how the visions guiding music education in Nepal may not afford teachers and students the capacity to ethically navigate the conditions of intensifying diversity and fast-paced social change. In imagining beyond fixed ends, and therefore anticipating the unforeseeable, assessment—as both processes of valuation and specific assessment practices—is intricately and inextricably entwined, whether the teacher

acknowledges this or not, with the ethical dimensions of teaching and learning. The uncertainty about what "personal, social and national challenges" (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 32) the twenty-first century will bring for young people in Nepal, however, means that assessment cannot be "traditional," relegating culture to archives and determining students' future possibilities on the basis of a single exam. Rather than assessment serving as an "Iron Gate" or end-in-itself, we propose that it ought to be re-envisioned as integral to enacting the democratic ideals of participation and equality. This is not so much a way to insure young people against the challenges the future holds, but more a means of enabling confident, agential, and meaningful engagements with uncertainty. This requires, from the students themselves, the ability to form ends-in-view and in this way aspire to change their own lives and society. Through this, students are enabled "not only to adapt [themselves] to the changes that are going on, but [to] have power to shape and direct them" (MW4:271). Through this inquiry, we have argued that this requires the imagination and the capacity to aspire.

Importantly, teacher education may be one appropriate arena for this work, which we suggest requires a shift to positioning teachers as critical inquirers rather than as transmitters of knowledge, only responsible for the implementation of a prescribed curriculum. This follows Appadurai's (2013) argument for "research as a human right" (p. 269), as a way to develop "the capacity to systematically increase the horizons of one's current knowledge, in relation to some task, goal or aspiration" (Appadurai, 2006, p. 176). However, as the goals and aspirations are *not-yet-in-view*, the teacher must engage in constant reflection—looking both backward and forward in a reflexive circling and deliberation of what role assessment plays in evaluating and enabling learning. This "thoughtful wishing" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 82) can thus engage the imagination in a continual process of shaping and reshaping values, assessment practices, and

other practices in the classroom, through creative small steps: ends-in-view rather than fixed ends that function as ends-in-themselves.

In sum, developing the capacity to aspire, and by extension the capacity to inquire, is crucial for envisioning an ethical future for and through assessment and school music education more broadly. As such it is important that we understand assessment as dynamic, allowing space for the imagination and capacity to aspire. Although administrators interviewed in this study acknowledged the need for such a dynamic understanding, they described the problematic nature of fixed assessment practices that place constraints on the school and teachers from engaging their imagination in terms of ends-in-view and ends-not-yet-in-view. The capacities to aspire and inquire can support music teachers and students as they engage with the existing and increasing diversity of contemporary societies such as Nepal and rapid societal change and reflect upon the inclusive and exclusive processes of assessment that frame *whose* ends and ends-in-view count, when, how, and what for. Thus, imagining ends-not-yet-in-view in music education offers a means of ethically engaging with values different to one's own and enacting the democratic ideals of participation, equality, and the capacity to aspire for all.

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Notes

[1] The Global Visions project engages music educators and researchers in three institutions (the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, in Finland; the Nepal Music Center, in Kathmandu, Nepal; and Levinsky College of Education, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Israel) in collaboration with the

overarching goal to envision how future teachers may be equipped with the necessary skills and understandings to work within increasingly diverse environments.

[2] We use the term "musician-teachers" to refer to musicians who are employed to teach music by private schools, music institutes, and private individuals. In the absence of formal music teacher qualifications, they are usually hired on the basis of artistic merit rather than demonstrated pedagogical competence.

[3] References to John Dewey in this chapter appear as MW (middle works) or LW (later works) followed by the volume number, a colon, and the page numbers. The edited volumes are listed in the references as Dewey (1977), Dewey (1983), Dewey (1984), and Dewey (1988).

[4] It should be noted that citations to The National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal refer to the page numbers in the original Nepali document, and citations to the music curricula refer to the page numbers in the final Nepali document submitted to the Ministry of Education.

[5] The term "government school" is used in Nepal to refer to state-funded and -mandated school education.

[6] Since this inquiry, the external standardized examination system has changed. The grade 5 examination has been discontinued, the grade 8 examination is now a school-level examination, the grade 10 SLC examination has been changed to the Secondary Education Examination (SEE), and the grade 12 examination is now the National Board Examination (NBE). These changes were made as part of the amendment to the Education Act, and implementation was begun during the 2016–2017 school year.

[7] Class songs refer to songs in national textbooks published by the Ministry of Education. Each grade level has specific class songs.

[8] In countering the hegemonic centrality of the western world and the Othering of the majority world—within which this research is located—we do not capitalize the "west" as a conscious and political decision.

[9] Although not an ideal means of referring to specific individuals, as names in Nepal are closely tied to caste/ethnic identity, we have opted to use numbers to identify interviewees rather than assign pseudonyms.

[10] "Programs" in the Nepali context refers to organized performances such as those during school open days and other events.