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Window with a view: Perspectives in music education

Editor: Roger Buckton

Link to MERC e-Journals and Sound Ideas
Window with a view:

music education perspectives from Africa, Australia and New Zealand

Editor: Roger Buckton;
Assistant editor: Patrick Shepherd
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The e-Journal of Studies in Music Education

In academic publishing, change is as inevitable as in every other field of communication. The e-journal of studies in music education, is the third generation of University of Canterbury publications on music education, having yielded to the pressures of the electronic medium, and in the process, taken on a change of name.

The publications date from 1986, when the School of Music began publishing the Canterbury Series of Studies in Music Education. This went through six issues under the general editorship of David Sell before a regenerated enthusiasm, led by Roger Buckton newly appointed Head of the School of Music, brought changes of format as well as of name. Sound Ideas was a journal of general music educational interest that enjoyed a life of eleven years and nineteen issues.

From 2009, a number changes were made. The first and most important was that it should become a fully refereed journal devoted to substantial research articles of particular relevance to New Zealand and Australian music educators. To distinguish this, a change of name seemed appropriate. This led to the decision to publish it as an electronic journal. At the same time, responsibility for its production was passed to the National Centre for Research in Music Education (MERC), which continues to be based in the School of Music at the University of Canterbury.

Also in 2009 the relationship with the Australian and New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education (ANZARME) was strengthened with the joint conference of ANZARME and MERC in Akaroa, and a stronger New Zealand involvement in trans-Tasman music education research interests. One consequence of this was the decision by ANZARME to recognise the e-journal of studies in music education as its recommended e-journal.

From this issue the Contents and Abstracts will be freely on line, with a small charge being made to download the full issue or articles from it. A subscription procedure has been set up to give individuals and libraries full access.

About MERC

Since 2006 the National Centre for Research in Music Education and Sound Arts (MERC) has served as the national hub for the coordination of and contribution to research in music education and sound arts in New Zealand. It aims to increase understanding and knowledge of the musical arts in education and in the wider community. MERC is devoted to developing the national and international profile of music education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Te Puna Puoru National Centre for Research in Music Education and Sound Arts

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One of twenty five research centres at the University of Canterbury, MERC works in the College of Arts under the general management of the School of Music.
Dr Roger Buckton

Roger Buckton is an associate-professor at the School of Music, University of Canterbury. His career encompasses secondary school teaching, the advisory service and preservice teacher education. From 1990/92 he was the director of the team that wrote the Ministry of Education's three Teacher Handbooks in Music Education. Other publications include *Sing a Song of Six Year Olds* (NZCER), and the MUSIKit Recorder Series.

In the past few years, his research interests have focused on the music of the New Zealand Bohemians – an ethnic group that settled in Puhoi, North Auckland in 1863. This has lead to numerous performances of the music in New Zealand and overseas. This year, his group “Folkworks” performs in the Chodsko Folk Festival, Czech Republic 8 – 10 August and a few days before, his book, *Bohemian Journey*, published in 2013 by Steele Roberts, Wellington will receive its European launch in Stodt, the place where the first pioneers caught the train for their long journey to the other side of the world. *Bohemian Journey* traces the cultural heritage of the Bohemians amidst a dominant British culture which was itself coming to terms with pioneering life.
Following twelve years as a music specialist in secondary schools in the Wellington region, David Sell was District Music Adviser in Canterbury, a position that he held for two years before being appointed lecturer in music at the University of Canterbury. In his twenty eight years on the full-time staff he rose to reader/associate professor, served two terms as Dean of Music and Fine Arts and was eight years Head of the School of Music. Since retiring, he continued for some years as a part-time lecturer, specializing in music education. He is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor at the School of Music.

David was for eighteen years on the Board of the New Zealand Society for Music Education (now MENZA), is Deputy-President of ANZARME, was inaugural president, and is a current committee member of Music Education Canterbury, was on the setting up committee and Board of Studies of the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA), President of the Specialist Music Programme for its first six years, and is currently Chairman of Arts Canterbury.

The author, co-author or editor of thirty-nine books, mostly concerning music education, he is also a concert reviewer for The Press, Christchurch, and has written at various times for the New Zealand Listener, Opera, Opera, and publications of the International Society for Music Education. He participated in five ISME conferences, in Tunis, London (Ont.), Canberra, Helsinki and Seoul, and at ISME Research Commission seminars in Gummersbach, Christchurch and Mexico City, and seminars of the Commission for Music in Schools and Teacher Training in Leningrad and Kyong-ju.
Patrick Shepherd

Patrick Shepherd is a composer, teacher, conductor, adjudicator, reviewer and examiner. His compositions have been performed in New Zealand, UK, USA, South Korea, Germany, China, Russia and Australia. Patrick is also an Honorary Antarctic Arts Fellow, having travelled to Antarctica in 2004, and his Antarctic-inspired orchestral work, Cryosphere, was a finalist in the 2006 Lilburn Prize. Patrick holds degrees from the universities of Canterbury (DMus), London (MMus) and Manchester (BMus (Hons)), a Fellowship and Licentiate in Composition from Trinity College, London, and in 2007 he was the recipient of the Composers’ Association of New Zealand (CANZ) Trust Fund Award for excellence and potential in composition.

Stuart Wise

Stuart was born in Hamilton, New Zealand. He studied music at the University of Otago and pursued a teaching career in Auckland, Nelson, the UK and Christchurch, before joining the (now the College of Education at the University of Canterbury) in 1997. Stuart was appointed as Head of Centre for the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art (NASDA) in 2000, for which he facilitated the move from Christchurch city to the Ilam campus of the Christchurch College of Education in 2001. In 2003 he decided to return to teacher education and currently teaches in music education courses and professional studies in the GradDipTchLn. At present he is programme coordinator for Grad Dip TchLn (Secondary).

Recently completing a PhD, on the impact of ICT on music education in secondary schools, he is particularly interested in the perceptions of teachers and pupils, how these may differ from each other, and what implications these differences may have for teacher education in secondary music.
The refereeing procedure

Each article was read and assessed by two referees. This was a “blind” process in which the authors’ names were removed from the articles before sending. Realistically, however, we acknowledge that in a field such as ours, it is impossible to keep authorship entirely anonymous, topics, specialities, references and collegial connections often providing compelling clues as to the author. All referees carried out their tasks with integrity, and we are most grateful for the time and consideration that they gave. The papers were sent to the referees without comment, and they were given no fixed format for replies, but were asked to consider –

- Research design
- Writing style and clarity
- Relevance of cited literature
- Impact of the research

and to consider an appropriate category from the following -

- Approve for publication in its present form
- Approve for publication, but recommend that the following changes are made
- Recommend that it be resubmitted with the following changes made to the satisfaction of the assessment panel
- Reject

Attempts are made to match, as far as practicable, referees with similar and related research interests to those articles that they are asked to assess. Members of the referee panel for the e-journal are –

Diana Blom  
Diana Blom teaches music at the University of Western Sydney. Current research areas include the arts practice as research, music therapy and classroom outcomes, collaboration and tertiary popular songwriters.

Beth Bolton  
Dr. Beth Bolton is Associate Professor of Music Education at Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University, Philadelphia. She is internationally renowned for her work on early childhood music development, and music learning theory.

Roger Buckton  
Roger Buckton's career encompasses secondary school teaching, the music advisory service, teacher training and tertiary music education. His research interests currently focus on the music of immigrant communities and the degree of change that a transplanted culture experiences in comparison with those who “stayed home”.

Pamela Burnard  
Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, UK where she manages Higher Degree course in Arts, Culture and Education and Educational Research.
Gordon Cox
Gordon Cox was senior lecturer in music education at the University of Reading until his retirement in 2007. He was co-editor of the *British Journal of Music Education*, and is the author or editor of four books about music education history.

Kay Hartwig
Dr Kay Hartwig is a senior lecturer in music/music education at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, and has taught music from pre school through to the tertiary sector. Kay's main research interests focus on sustainable vocal health for music teachers and quality music programs and their access for all students.

Samuel Leong
Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Professor and Head of the Department of Cultural and Creative Arts at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. His current research projects are in the areas of interdisciplinary arts education, i-learning, performance wellness, assessment and curriculum reform.

Errol Moore
Dr. Errol Moore is Senior Lecturer in Music Education at the College of Education, University of Otago. His research interests are in the musical education of gifted and talented children, and in aspects of music and music education in the community.

David Sell
Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Music, University of Canterbury, David Sell’s research interests focus on the history of music education in New Zealand, with particular interest in the influence of immigrant music education leaders in the nineteenth century.

Patrick Shepherd
An active composer, conductor, teacher and researcher, Dr. Patrick Shepherd lectures at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. His current research interests are on the incidence and music education implications of synaesthesia.

Jane Southcott
Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Dr. Jane Southcott engages in a keen phenomenological exploration of community music, ageing and engagement in the arts, together with historical and biographical studies of the development of music curricula in Australia, America and Europe.

Trevor Thwaites
Dr. Trevor Thwaites is Principal Lecturer in Music Education, at the University of Auckland. His research interests include the philosophy and politics of music education; embodied learning, collaborative and informal learning; the Arts and experience, and critical perspectives on music technologies.

Stuart Wise
Dr. Stuart Wise is on the staff of the College of Education, University of Canterbury, and pursues his research interests on the impact of ICT in schools, and the relationships of teachers and students in the secondary school music environment.
Editorial

Whenever I talk over a research topic with new music education post-graduate students, it is almost certain that most will want as a premise that their topic should be practical and relevant to the classroom, or whatever music education situation they may headed for in the future. And why not? Music educators as a group seem to look for relevance and the chance to make a difference to the quality of lives of their pupils, and the betterment of society through that activity which we all love – music. Occasionally, we find someone with an interest in the past, but always with a view of the past being a precursor of current practices.

This issue, entitled ‘Window with a View”, borrows a phrase from Robyn Trinick’s article on the childrens’ orchestral instrumental scheme called “Sistema Aotearoa”. Robyn in turn quotes from Emily Styles’ notion of ‘window and mirror learning’. Robyn writes: “the idea of looking in and through mirrors and windows invokes notions of images, reflections, outlooks, perspectives and views”.

Each of the papers in this issue opens a window to a new perspective in the world of music education. Robyn takes us to the world of learning instruments as practised at Sistema Aotearoa. Here, the issues are related to introducing Maori and Pacific Island children to the world of European orchestral music. On the other hand, Dawn Joseph opens a different multicultural window viewing the introduction of indigenous African music to students of European traditions. In our multicultural world, these are key issues to be addressed and shared in music education circles: careful and reflective thought as exhibited by these authors is welcome.

We also live in a technological world and whilst music is one of the most traditional areas of the curriculum, arguably, it can be at the forefront of technology in schools. It is, therefore, appropriate for David Sell to remind us of how this began with the humble radio receiver. Still, as in considering some new piece of music education software, it is the same curriculum issues which emerge, such as the role of the teacher when the teaching is taken over by a ‘machine’. Whilst Froebel’s gifts seem to be beyond technological education – there were no power sockets in those days – nevertheless the type of ‘gifts’ offered by Froebel are based on the same type of analytical thinking that should be used in computer programming design and bearing in mind Jane Southcott’s opening sentence: “The importance of a sound theoretical basis for early childhood educational practice is undeniable.”

Rowena Riek’s article brings us back to the realities of current educational practices in schools where music as one of the arts is fighting for its place in an ever-crowded curriculum.

In fact all our authors exhibit the same characteristics as my post-graduate students. Each opens a window to an aspect of our music world and draws conclusions practically relevant in today’s schools. Many thanks to the authors for their contributions. It has been a pleasure to work with them.

I would also like to thank my associate editor, Patrick Shepherd, for his work in the editing phase, as well as David Sell for his work in layout and setting this edition for the internet.

Roger Buckton
Window with a View: Reflections on Sistema Aotearoa

Robyn Trinick
University of Auckland

Abstract

Sistema Aotearoa (SA) is an orchestral programme offered to children in Otara, Auckland, by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra (APO). The programme is voluntary, group-based, inclusive, and free of charge to participants and their whānau (families) and aims to give children from a low socio-economic area of Auckland opportunities to learn to play orchestral instruments.

Now in its fourth year of operation, SA is drawing increasing attention, not just from music educators, but also from general public who are intrigued by the idea of children in Otara playing orchestral music. Alongside the affirmations is an underlying critique of the socio-cultural implications of the programme, with suggestions that ‘elitist western classical music’ is being ‘imposed’ upon the children. The paper is framed around the notion of ‘window and mirror learning’, a metaphor used by Emily Style (1996) in her work relating to the need for curriculum to reflect and reveal a child’s sense of self in a multicultural world.

Keywords: Instrumental and orchestral teaching for children, El Sistema, window and mirror learning, multicultural music education.

The author

Robyn Trinick was a generalist primary teacher prior to becoming a lecturer in Primary and Early Childhood Music Education at the University of Auckland, a position she has held for over twenty years. Apart from her research on Sistema Aotearoa, her other interests include Māori music, music’s connection with language, and accessibility of music opportunities for all children, particularly in the fields of early childhood and junior primary.

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Window with a View: Reflections on Sistema Aotearoa

Introduction

*Sistema Aotearoa* (SA) is a local adaptation of the international orchestral programme, *El Sistema*, initiated by economist and musician, Dr José Antonio Abreu, in Venezuela in 1975. The overall goals of *El Sistema* focus on the transformative aspects of the programme in under-resourced communities around the world. Dr Abreu claims, "music has to be recognized as an agent of social development, in the highest sense because it transmits the highest values – solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion. It has the ability to unite an entire community, and to express sublime feelings” (cited in Tunstall, 2012, p. 84). *El Sistema* programmes in countries including England, Scotland and the USA have been considered successful, providing a basis for the initiation of SA in New Zealand.

SA was formed through a partnership between the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and Ministry of Culture and Heritage. Approximately 300 children aged between five and nine years attend after school and holiday programmes in Otara, a large South Auckland suburb with a high proportion of Māori and Pacific Island peoples, predominantly Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Niuean and Cook Islands families (AUT, 2012). According to the 2006 census, Otara has the second lowest median income in the Auckland region. The SA programme is based at the Otara Music Arts Centre (OMAC), which is situated in the heart of Otara, within walking distance from each of the seven schools involved. Children from these schools are invited to participate in the programme.

The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) carried out a large-scale evaluation of the transformative outcomes of SA in 2012. In the summary of key findings, it was reported: “Sistema Aotearoa is a high performing programme, that is making a difference in the lives of the children and the families participating in the programme” (AUT, p. 18). This was largely attributed to high quality programme design and implementation, and committed and capable leadership. The report also indicates that feedback from the community has been very positive and that parents and caregivers consider involvement in the SA programme to be a great opportunity for their children. During a discussion with family members, one parent said that she felt it was, “important for our children to be exposed to all kinds of music and to experience what other children are doing with music instruments” (Personal Communication, 24/08/11).

As well as the celebrated transformative outcomes of the programme, SA is a music programme based on a graduated system of instruction for classical orchestral music, different from other instrumental tuition programmes in that it is group-based and intensive (AUT, 2012). In 2012, a small research team from the Woolf Fisher Research Centre at the University of Auckland undertook a short-term contract to assess the music outcomes of SA for the purpose of providing feedback to APO (Trinick & McNaughton, 2012). As principal investigator for this evaluation, I had the opportunity to gain insight into the programme through observing sessions, attending rehearsals and performances, and talking with children, whānau, and staff involved in the programme.
In January 2013, I presented preliminary findings of the evaluation to an interested group of music educators at the Tuituia music education conference in Hamilton, New Zealand. As a result, a number of intriguing questions and issues emerged both during and following the presentation, particularly around the topic of the perceived suitability of the programme for children in the Otara community. There was some discussion about alternative music programmes considered to better meet the needs and interests of this culturally diverse community. Undoubtedly, there are music programmes in operation that are worthy of funding, many of them dependent on good will. Although this issue raises questions of equitable funding, it should be noted that SA was not selected from a line-up of other music education offerings in pursuit of contestable funding. It was an initiative of the APO, lead by programme director Dr Joseph Harrop, and funded primarily by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, and Creative New Zealand. The programme set out to offer children in the Otara community new music experiences which could be likened to looking through an open window.

‘Window and Mirror’ Learning

Emily Style’s (1996) notion of ‘window and mirror learning’ in education is not new, and it could be argued that this phrase is simply a metaphor for ‘the known and the unknown.’ However, the idea of looking in and through mirrors and windows invokes notions of images, reflections, outlooks, perspectives and views, which seem fitting in light of this discussion. I believe that learning should involve both clarification of what is already known, as well as illumination of the unknown, but should always, “insist upon the fresh air of windows into the experience of others” (Style, 1996, p. 38).

Style (1996) claims that a child makes meaning through seeing his or her own reality reflected, and by seeing reality of others’ through window frames. There is always a multiplicity of frames, and not everyone will see the same thing – what may be a mirror for one, could be a window for another. The dynamic nature of windows and mirrors is evident from an ethnomusicological perspective when generalisations are made about Pasifika children singing in church, Tongan children playing brass instruments and Māori children playing guitar. While there is always a need for caution when making assumptions, somewhere along the way, these stereotypical associations that were once windows have become mirrors, for some, at least. In the words of a Samoan parent: “My husband is Tongan, and a lot of his band music, and the music that I sing at church, comes from Palagi [non-Samoan] culture” (Personal Communication, 24/08/11).

The Mirrors and Windows of Sistema Aotearoa

If the children of SA were to look into their ‘musical mirrors’, what would they see? Each child’s reflection would reveal a unique collage of musical images, or overlaid snapshots. The children’s musical identities are embedded in socio-cultural contexts, and their images of their musical worlds may reflect themselves as being members of social communities of learners. SA is socially constructed, dynamic and multidimensional, factors that Neito (1999) considers essential in acknowledging the culture of the participants. This is evident in programme design and implementation. For example, when children from any of the seven schools, arrive at the Otara Music Arts Centre (OMAC), they are provided with drinks and snacks in a specially designated area for socializing. One of the tutors commented that this was a valuable part of the programme and allowed children to get to know each other and their tutors in
an informal setting (Trinick & McNaughton, 2013).

Music, in its bigger sense, is unlikely to be a whole new experience for the children in the programme. In fact, SA could be viewed as a continuation of a musical journey, rather than a starting point in a child’s musical life. All children have their own musical capital that may be rich and diverse, and this should be acknowledged and celebrated. It is widely accepted that music plays a major role in the lives of Māori and Pacific Islands people. Like all children, the songs that have been sung, and the music that has been heard and danced to, at gatherings such as church, festivals, or family celebrations, have contributed to who these children are and what they bring to SA.

While the children already have their own established music mirrors, the playing of orchestral instruments in an orchestral setting is likely to be a ‘window’ for the majority of children in the programme. ‘Windows’ may not be as comfortable as ‘mirrors’ and the unfamiliar may arouse some initial feelings of apprehension, but is also likely to invoke feelings of excitement and anticipation. As children look through the musical windows of others, they can, “enter a world full of musical fantasy that they can make their own” (Frazee, 2006, p. 24).

So, what is the Problem?

Considering the possibilities offered by SA, it is important to determine what the issues are and, perhaps more importantly, to determine who owns them. The programme is out of normal school hours, so the children, whānau and staff are there on a voluntary basis. Concerns about the socio-cultural implications of SA in Otara do not come from those directly involved with the programme, but rather from outsiders who make judgements that may be based on cultural assumptions and personal perspectives.

In response to these issues, Dr Joseph Harrop, programme director of SA, commented:

At the very beginning, the content the children are engaging with does not have an immediate cultural connection to them or their families. However, the children’s quick uptake of that content is due to the strong cultural familiarity of the manner in which it is taught and learnt. It’s what we call ‘whānau’ learning: children learn and perform in small and large groups, peer to peer instruction is encouraged, as is an open door policy for the child’s carers. This is combined with a strictly positive teaching vernacular and a sense of compassion and fun. (Personal Communication, 24/10/13).

From this statement, and from my own reflections and research, three key themes emerge that are worthy of further discussion: perceived elitism of the orchestra, repertoire, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Perceived Elitism of the Orchestra

Involvement with orchestral music, either as performers, or as viewers and listeners, conjures up what Jorgensen (2003, p.103) refers to as “a negative connotation as a bastion of elitism and privilege”. This has been largely attributed to the cost factor associated with instrumental tuition that may be a prohibitive factor. Some consider that
most children would be involved in music tuition, if their parents or care-givers had the means.

This ‘would if they could’ view is fundamental to the discussion and is to do with agency and capital. A deficit view of children in low socio-economic areas may inadvertently hamper learning and limit opportunities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and there is a danger of determining what is best, based on the different personal experiences of those making the judgement - or our own ‘mirrors’. If we view involvement in orchestras as the sole pinnacle of a child’s musical journey, we may be closing windows before they have been fully opened. However, in my view, if we keep the windows open, involvement with SA is a unique opportunity to experience orchestral music under the guidance of experts, with quality resources and a range of performance opportunities. The notion of ‘would if they could’ becomes ‘can if they choose to’ for children involved in the SA programme.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In education circles, there is currently much discussion about culturally responsive teaching based on constructivist theories of learning that view learning as dependent on social interactions and learners’ lived experiences (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching takes into account the role of culture in every aspect of teaching and learning so that student learning is made more relevant, meaningful, and effective (Ladson-Billings, 2009). To be culturally responsive, it is essential that teachers see and know their students both as individuals and as members of extended and overlapping social circles. The affirmation of students’ cultural backgrounds is far more complex than simply including content that originates from the cultures represented in any group. It also involves identifies key demonstrating cultural caring and building of learning communities, cross-curricular communications and cultural congruity in instruction (Gay, 2002).

SA is considered to demonstrate effectiveness in reflecting the cultural diversity of the community through both design and practice, according to the recent large-scale evaluation carried out by AUT researchers (AUT, 2012, p. 72). The tutors in SA are actively involved in the teaching and learning process, and work closely with individuals, groups and whānau members, all practices believed to contribute to feelings of trust and respect (Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993). The attention given to establishing a caring and nurturing learning environment was also described in Trinick and McNaughton’s report (2012), which reported evidence of practices that reflected the shared values of:

- whakawhanaumatanga – working together to reflect the community’s values
- manaakitanga – caring for and respecting each other
- atawhai – working together to nurture the students
- mahi ngātahi – working collaboratively
  (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2009, p.15)

While it could be argued that these values are not exclusive to the Otara community, cohesion is an aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy that may be taken for granted, or even overlooked. A sense of community is, according to Booth (2011), central to the spirit of El Sistema. Within the SA community, there are children from a
range of different cultures, and it is important not to view Māori and Pasifika to be one homogenous group. By opening windows for all the children and giving them all new experiences in music, there is a level playing field in terms of prior experience and recognition of their own cultural backgrounds. The flexible grouping and collaborative teaching in SA enables tutors to get to know each child and to ensure that he or she is a “visible member of the learning community” (MoE, 2007, p.34).

One of the principles of culturally responsive music teaching is clarifying for students the view that there are multiple viewpoints and perspectives in music. In SA, it is common practice for teachers to engage children in thinking about the meaning that certain songs and pieces hold for individuals or groups of people. For example, the children were clearly intrigued by the image of horses and sleighs that Dr Joe, programme director, portrayed when talking about “Jingle Bells’ and the particular bowing technique needed to convey this image to the audience through their playing. In this way, children see the relevance of what they are learning as they “infer general principles about the nature and substance of music and a world of sound unfolds that they can understand and manipulate” (Frazee, 2006, p. 21).

**Repertoire**

The repertoire of any music programme provides a useful framework for developing skills and understandings about music, and also informs opinions and shapes individual preferences. While the teaching of concepts and skills is highly valued in the SA programme, this does not take place in a cultural vacuum. Relevant stories and examples help children to connect with music from different times and places, to build a vibrant learning community in which children develop an understanding and appreciation of diverse music and artistic expression, and to form their own opinions about music, culture and communities.

The children of SA represent a range of ethnicities, predominantly Māori and Pasifika, and the singing component of the programme includes material that reflects the diversity of the group. Most music educators face similar challenges in choosing repertoire that is deemed appropriate for the learners, without being trivial or tokenistic. Children may not relate to songs just because they are sung in the native language of the learners or originate from their ethnic roots. As Abril (2013) points out, contrived songs or stereotypical music selections can be “as insidious as not considering culture at all” (p.7). Materials should be selected with integrity and sensitivity, no matter the style, genre, or tradition. “By exposing students to other cultures and particularly their musics, we also explore cross-cultural possibilities more fully, richly and critically than previously” (Joseph & Southcott, 2009, p. 458). It is the definition of ‘other cultures’ that varies. Where Joseph and Southcott were referring to the use of African indigenous music in three different learning contexts, in the SA context, ‘other’ cultures refers to repertoire that originates outside the Pacific community. One of the fundamental aims of the programme is to provide children with opportunities to experience a broad range of music, and to give children musical experiences outside the cultural contexts in which they have been socialised, in what Swanwick (1991) refers to as the “space between”.

The repertoire in the SA programme is carefully selected to serve a range of purposes, including material suited to specific pedagogical goals and interest levels of the children, as well as materials selected to provide opportunities to practise particular
technical skills. Consideration is given to both process and product. The programme, like other music education programmes, is not solely concerned with “training students for performance” rather than “providing them with truly creative experiences with music” (Hart, 1973, p.27).

On an international level, El Sistema draws its repertoire predominantly, but not exclusively, from what is loosely referred to as ‘western classical music’, a term Jorgensen (2003) claims is a misnomer, and is, in fact, referring to “a multi-cultural and international tradition forged by musicians around the world” (p.134). Booth (2011) describes El Sistema as a “many-kinds-of-music programme” and claims “the truly radical promise of El Sistema is that it invites a rediscovery of the purposes and processes of classical music” (p.17). Children are given interesting background information about pieces and songs, enabling them to make meaning out of what they are learning. For example, prior to playing an excerpt from the William Tell overture, students were told the story of William Tell, and how he legendarily evaded punishment by proving his marksmanship by shooting an apple from his son’s head. By making the relevance of particular pieces of music transparent to students in this way, “classical music is demystified for children” (AUT, 2012, p. 27).

Green (2006) also argues that stylistic familiarity may develop through repeated listenings, which in turn may promote positive experiences of inherent meaning. In this way, windows become mirrors: “In so doing we could also make available a new wealth of responses not only to music, but to the social, cultural, political and ideological meanings that music carries” (Green, 2006, p. 115).

**Conclusion**

Concerns about the suitability of SA in Otara continue to be discussed and debated. Three areas of concern have been touched on in this paper – perceived elitism of the orchestra, cultural responsive pedagogy, and repertoire. It will be interesting to see how these issues are addressed in the new SA programmes that are currently being established in other parts of the country. While repertoire and pedagogy can be addressed through planning and programme delivery, issues relating to the perceived elitism associated with APO will take time, as communities become more familiar with the notion of ‘orchestra’, as windows merge into mirrors.

SA is about filling children with musical inspiration and personal fulfilment, opening windows and challenging existing ideas about music. Children are expanding concepts of their musical selves and others in a caring, inclusive and cohesive learning community. Research suggests that SA is having a positive effect on social cohesion in the Otara community by bringing people together, promoting inter-cultural understanding, and strengthening social ties. The positive socio-cultural outcomes of the programme was the basis of key findings of the 2012 programme evaluation carried out by AUT: “The Sistema Aotearoa philosophy encompasses the inclusion of all key social environments within the children’s lives, that is, families, schools, peers and community. The networks and relationships formed between families, schools, the programme and the community underpin the system that is Sistema” (AUT, 2012, p.16).

While I believe there is much to celebrate, there is a need for caution in pre-empting the long-term outcomes for children in the programme. Although Booth (2009, p.77) claims “little students (in El Sistema) see themselves performing as one of the best
orchestras in the world”, we should view involvement in SA as one experience that could take children along a number of musical pathways. It is not our role, as music educators, to assume where these pathways might lead. Rather, the windows should be kept wide open, with fresh air circulating, allowing children’s own musical stories to unfold, as they “reflect and reveal” (Style, 1996) their own musical choices.

Ultimately, music educators are working towards common goals, and interested parties need to keep conservations flowing, continue to ask questions and explore collaborations. Considering the demands for community music funding in New Zealand, it is no wonder that questions are being asked about SA. There is also a need for further research to determine the long-term outcomes of the programme.

SA is a special and unique programme that is up and running, and has children “firing on all cylinders – confident, creative, in their element, full of possibilities and full of hope” (Robinson, 2005, p.10). SA is a story in progress and I am privileged to be part of this story in my role as researcher. The children are seemingly oblivious to the political undercurrents that continue to ripple below the surface. This, I believe, is how it should be. These children simply want to be left to get on with what they know and love – making music.
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Creating a Space and Place for Culture Bearers Within Tertiary Institutions: Experiencing East African Dance Songs in South Africa

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Abstract

This paper highlights the intersections between formal and informal African music and dance within a tertiary setting. Reflective practice, journaling and survey data within case study methodology provide a snapshot of the teaching and learning that took place at North West University in South Africa in October 2012. I argue for the inclusion of informal pedagogy of indigenous musics within the formal context of university courses. The experience provided a pathway to connect local community and university to celebrate the rich diversity of African music and culture. The teaching and learning experiences served as onsite professional development for tertiary students, music staff and myself.

Keywords: African music, Ugandan dance songs, culture, informal pedagogies, tertiary education

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Creating a Space and Place for Culture Bearers Within Tertiary Institutions: Experiencing East African Dance Songs in South Africa

Setting the Scene: South Africa

Since the introduction of democracy in 1994, there has been much social, economic, political and educational change in South Africa. An aspect of that change in schools and universities is to be inclusive of multicultural education and practice. In a diverse and post-apartheid South Africa, Vandeyar (2003) claims, “an ideal form of multicultural education is one that not only recognizes and acknowledges diversity, practices tolerance and respect of human rights, but works to liberate cultures that have been subjugated” (p. 193). Prior to 1994, African music and culture was marginalized in education settings, it now plays a vital role in shaping the nation’s identity.

South Africa is a country that boasts eleven official languages, many ethnicities and religions, so there is no one specific culture or music. Hence “it is impossible to speak of culture in South Africa as if it was a unitary, stable all-embracing umbrella term” (Dos Santos, 2005). In post-apartheid South Africa, the recognition of formal and informal teaching and learning is part of the social fabric of the country thus strengthening the inclusion of African music as part of multicultural content (Fredericks, 2008).

Prior to democracy, African music and culture were not readily included in the mainstream curriculum at schools or tertiary institutions, still such “musical practices were successfully carried on in informal musical life” (Thorsén, 1997). Universities are now more inclusive in promoting pathways for students to learn about African music and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). According to Nompula (2011) “South African music educators have come to realize that indigenous music is as valuable as western music” (p. 369).

IKS is concerned with knowledge that belongs to, and is transmitted by, a specific ethnic group, and is also concerned with common practices that are indigenous to a specific area in which a designated population lives (Joseph, 2005). The World Bank (2003) identifies IKS as a multi-faceted concept incorporating “traditional or local knowledge”. Ntuli (2001) refers to IKS as representing organizational and cultural leadership systems, institutions, relationships, patterns and processes for decision-making and participation that have been identified by indigenous people. Given the complexity of this multifaceted phenomenon it is difficult to isolate a single, commonly-held definition of how IKS might apply to music. Indigenous knowledge is generally passed down from one generation to the next. Similarly, music and dance are usually learned through oral and aural traditions incorporating cultural rituals and story telling. Nompula (2011) “confirms indigenous music is an oral tradition that aims to transmit culture, values, beliefs and history from generation to generation” (p. 372). Music is prevalent in all African countries as part of day-to-day living. Africa is the second largest continent with 54 countries (World Population Review, 2013). Due to the diversity of language and culture over this large area, there is no particular model of
IKS for music although commonalities do exist between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. The wealth of knowledge and skills of indigenous culture bearers in informal settings in African communities plays an important role in the transmission of IKS.

This paper focuses on the importance of including culture bearers within tertiary institutions as their knowledge, skills and understandings contribute to the teaching and learning of African music within music tertiary courses. In October 2012, a space was created for a culture bearer to teach indigenous East African music and dance onsite within a music unit for the Diploma of Music and the Bachelor of Arts at North West University (NWU), South Africa. African music at this university was introduced under the leadership of Professor Kruger and Dr Petersen in the School of Music where it continues to thrive. Over the years, they have taken their students on field trips to Vendaland to learn from local people about Venda music and culture.

I regularly re-visit South Africa, my country of birth, to undertake research and professional development in African music to inform my teaching practice in Australia. I have introduced African music into my teaching units at Deakin University (DU) in Melbourne since 2001. As a tertiary music educator, I employ a pedagogy that connects culture, society and history to the musical arts of Africa. Time restraints prevent in-depth teaching in all types of African music, so students only experience a limited range of music and dance of the African continent in my teaching units.

African Music

Music permeates every aspect of African life and plays a definite role in the life of the people. Music and dance are inseparable and form a partnership in African culture. Music-making in African society has a social function; unlike western culture, people in Africa perform music with each other, rather than for each other. Music is used to entertain, to accompany dances, plays, religious ceremonies, traditional rites and to mark special events such as birth, death, marriage and puberty (Warren, 1970; Agawu, 2003). African music is closely associated with language and the same word can have a number of meanings depending on its pitch. Tone languages permit music to be used as a form of communication. For example, the talking drum relays messages through different pitches. The music of Africa may be classified into traditional, that is, passed down orally and aurally and often requiring percussion instruments; and contemporary, that is sharing many of the characteristics of western popular music in the mid-twentieth –century (Agawu, 2003; Prouty, 2006).

In African societies, song and dance are the medium through which children and young people receive instruction about traditional customs and practices, obligations and responsibilities. Dance, drama and music co-exist as equal partners in African culture. Green (2011) firmly upholds “there is no dance in Africa that is without some form of music, even if it is the voice or simple hand clapping” (p. 230). Through music and dance, a sense of community forms bringing together dancer, musician and audience. According to Miya (2003) “no one can claim to know everything about music in Africa. African cultures are so diverse and so is their music” (p. 2).

In this paper I argue that there is a place for culture bearers within educational settings. Belz (2006) points out that if non-western music is to be learned and studied, it should be “with a member from that culture” (p. 42). Hence the employment of Julius
Kyakuwa, originally from Uganda, was timely for students at NWU to experience, engage and explore indigenous East African music and dance. Kyakuwa is an authentic culture bearer, performer, teacher, composer and choreographer who presented four workshops at NWU during the time of my visit in 2012.

**Background: North West University**

With a footprint across two provinces, approximately 112km drive from Johannesburg, NWU is a multi-campus university that is one of the largest and oldest universities in South Africa. NWU has a strong focus on indigenous music. The School of Music has an ongoing policy to invite culture bearers to share skills and expertise with students and academics, and offers a short-term residency in order to enculturate students and lecturers about indigenous East African cultural practices, values and principles. Such sharing provides culture bearers the opportunity to transmit much needed skills that are not often offered by academics. UNESCO (2012) identifies scarce knowledge and skills as an intangible heritage. The initiative to include Ugandan music as part of the teaching and learning workshops on African music at the School of Music was funded by the South African Music Rights Organization.

The aim for undertaking research at NWU was to observe and experience the intense focus on indigenous music in the School of Music. Firstly, I wanted to extend my understanding of African cultures and musics, and secondly, I sought new strategies on how to teach my students at Deakin University. My visit to NWU in October 2012 was timely as at that time it was employing a visiting artist/culture bearer from Uganda to undertake four workshops with the Diploma in Music and Bachelor of Arts students (18 students in the class). I attended three of the two-hour workshops (14-18th October 2012) and the concert performance. These workshops culminated on the 18th October with a public performance where the students showcased what they had learned in the workshops. The performance and participation at the workshops formed part of their music assessment on African music.

The culture bearer (Julius) shared his passion, enthusiasm, expertise, skills and knowledge with tertiary students and lecturers. Julius is a qualified teacher with eighteen years experience as a performer, music educator, master African drummer, African dance instructor and choreographer. This authentic artistic experience is important and necessary when teaching musics and culture that are different from or unrelated to the students’ world of experience (Seidel, Eppel & Martiniello, 2001; Titon et al. 1992). According to Gordon et al. (2002), professional development should be based on the ideas and knowledge from outsiders to enhance new pedagogies that are site-based (Lieberman, 1995). The pedagogy of teaching from the culture bearer and teacher was based on the informal pedagogy of observation, imitation and emulation (Petersen, 2004).

The workshops, with Julius as artist and expert, provided “an authentic and effective learning experience for students and also for teachers to learn from” (Nethsinghe, 2012, p. 68). The teaching and learning of African music requires an understanding of the cultural system, the creative principles of the music and the method by which that music is transferred from one person to another. This way of teaching and learning is best experienced onsite. Although the students were all black South Africans with the exception of one white student, they were not familiar with
East African music and dances nor was I. Learning indigenous East African music and dance was new, different and challenging for all of us. A culture bearer allows “students to have access to quality music education” (Sinsabaugh, 2006, p. 176), and an immersion into a different music and society. Clements (2009) suggests that the culture bearer is the best option as s/he has the necessary knowledge and skills to provide an authentic experience that is tied to cultural knowledge. The culture bearer has “an insider’s view of the culture” (Erwin et al., 2003, p. 135).

Methodology

As part of a wider ongoing study that commenced in 2010 (Attitudes and Perceptions of Arts Education Students: Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers Across Two Continents (Australia and South Africa)), I used reflective practice, a personal journal and a questionnaire to inform my case study. At the end of the fourth workshop, students were invited to complete a 10-minute questionnaire regarding the East African indigenous music and dance workshops. There were six open-ended questions (for example: Why did you enjoy the workshops? What did you learn? What aspects of the teaching/pedagogy were new or different or hard to do? What were some of the challenges?) Out of 18 participants, 13 students completed the anonymous questionnaire. I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a qualitative methodology to analyse the questionnaires. IPA is inductive and has no pre-existing hypothesis (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006). As the researcher, I was responsible for the data gathered, making sense of the “stories and experiences in a meaningful way with a view of learning more about humankind” (Shaw, 2010, p. 233). The case study provides a snapshot of African music teaching and learning that took place during the October 2012 workshops at NWU. I used IPA to interpret the data in order to “illuminate the meanings and experiences of the participant” (Pignato, 2013, p. 23). In a case study, Atherton (2013) argues that one is able to reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (having done it) through keeping a journal. As a tertiary music educator, I see myself as an “agent of social change” (Katz, 2008, p. 42) and am exhorted to reflect on ways to improve my African music teaching for students in Australia. Banoobhai (2012, p. 177), writing specifically about South African teachers, makes the point that it is important to know what we do and why we do it. Loughran (2002) similarly holds the view that we need to be reflective about what we do and see our “practice through the other’s eyes” (p. 33) in order to make our teaching meaningful.

Workshops: Indigenous East African Music and Dance

The culture bearer (Julius) expressed the view that indigenous music and dancing in East Africa showcase the diversity of traditional folklore in art forms like poetry, games, storytelling, ritual singing, dancing and playing instruments. Through these practices one is able to have some understanding of the people and their way of life. Music and dance are passed down from generation to generation through oral and aural traditions. During the four music workshops students learned five songs and dances.

Each dance told a story, which was initially explained by Julius before he taught the moves of the dance and words of the song. His mode of instruction was through imitation and call and response, typical of African music teaching. Julius had an amazing way with words to motivate and engage the students; he was passionate,
extremely fit and energetic and loved what he was doing. He was fun and exciting as a presenter. Students commented after the workshops that his sessions “were exciting”, “fun and different”, and “it was interesting and it took us out of our comfort zones”. I was amazed at how quickly he got the students to perform five dances and songs in public. The pressure was certainly on him and his students.

Each song was taught in tandem with the dance and with instrumental accompaniment. Not all students danced for each of the songs: some played on instruments (drum, bells and shakers) though all students learned the songs and sang when they were performing. Having taught predominantly white Australian students, I observed just how much easier it was for these students to learn these Ugandan songs and dances, as some of the moves were similar to local indigenous dances of South Africa. They were eager to learn something new and different and keen to perform their five dances and songs.

**Dances**

The first dance, called Agwara was from the Kebu people in the West Nile region in Uganda. This area borders Congo and the southern part of Sudan. Agwara is a procession folk dance of the Lugbara people that is used for mobilisation, community celebrations and ordinary entertainment on many occasions at local or state functions. In Sudan both men and women perform this dance. Agwara derives its name from the wooden trumpets that mainly take the lead of the music accompaniment. However, in the absence of the magwara, other accompaniment forms are used that include songs, ululations and chants, playing on shakers, drums and log xylophones.

The second dance, called Larakaraka, was a courtship dance performed during wedding ceremonies by the Luo, Acholi people of northern Uganda and parts of the Southern Sudan. Different villages organise important ceremonies to help young people court and prepare for marriage. It would seem that the best dancers find the best partners, hence a competitive, show-off dance in order to attract young ladies. In the Acholi culture, if a male dances poorly, he is most likely to remain unmarried. In this particular dance, the calabash symbolises the fragility of marriage. If held and played well, it cannot break but if handled carelessly, it easily breaks. The male holds and dances with the calabash and if the female accepts the calabash, it is a good sign that she is willing to accept his proposal for marriage.

The third dance called Mwaga was an initiation dance of the Bagisu people. The Bamasaba tribe lives around the border of the eastern region of Uganda and the western region of Kenya. In Uganda this dance is called Mwaga, and in Kenya the Luhya people call it Tiriki. In both traditions when boys become men, there is the practice of male circumcision.

The fourth dance, Kimandwa was a traditional worship dance for the god Okubandwa of the Bahiru people of South Western Uganda. The locals believe this dance places the god at the centre of good relationships and the community. Whilst some members of these communities still perform the dance and its songs in its original context, it is also performed outside this environment in schools, festivals and for entertainment.
The fifth dance, Gaze, can be categorised under the contemporary dances of Africa. Originating from the Lingala speaking people of the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is now performed by various tribes around the border areas of northwestern Uganda, Southern Sudan and the eastern Congo. Gaze is mainly a waist dance and the harmonious singing is part of the accompaniment and intricate drumming. This dance requires much flexibility in its rhythms and body movements and is mainly performed by young people.

**Discussion and Findings**

From my observations, questionnaire data and anecdotal discussion, Julius brought much freshness to the teaching unit. He was new, passionate, exciting, humorous and encouraging. He taught something different and generated excitement. The purpose for inviting an artist was to “provide students with experiences from which they can construct their own understandings of music, education, and music education” (Wiggins, 2007, p. 36). As a tertiary educator, this aspect was crucial for my own learning: “good teachers are also learners, and they recognize that they need to keep learning throughout their careers if they are to improve” (Nieto, 2003, p. 76). As a learner in this situation, I was challenged through the teaching and learning experiences in which I was involved (Loughran, 1996, p. 27). Learning a new language and movement is not easy, yet students quickly learned the songs and dances. The students seemed to want to impress Julius. They did not want to let him down as was evident in their long hours of practice after the workshops. They also seemed competitive and wanted to impress me, the Australian visitor. They were happy, excited to be in the class, energised and keen to learn the new songs and dances. Getting them to move and sing at the same time did not seem an onerous task. Comments like “the tutor was patient with us” and “though the choreography was a bit hard we ended up catching it” summarised the students’ willingness to participate.

Part of the rationale for employing Julius was to give students hands-on opportunity to “develop an initial repertoire of teaching competencies, comprehend the various dimensions of music experience and understand student learning” (Campbell & Brummett, 2007, p. 52). Although African music is taught in the School of Music, East African songs and dances were new and different for all. The four workshops as short-term professional development, were one of the keys to learning to teach because they allowed pre-service teachers to learn from each other and offered an environment where changes in belief about music teaching might occur (Conkling, 2007, p. 48). When students were learning their dance moves and/or rhythmic accompaniment to the songs, they taught and helped each other through imitation and rote learning. They also conversed in their local African language to explain what was to be done, though the medium of instruction was English. With the incentive of a public performance, where children from the local Ikageng community would also perform, the students learned quickly.

During the concert, it was enriching to see both tertiary students and school children perform to an audience, where the local community and university had initiated a space and place for the interchange of indigenous music, dance and culture. This partnership, which had been present for many years, formed an important aspect of the teaching and learning of indigenous music. The university students commented on the excellent standard of the performance by the school children and, in a similar vein, the
children were also impressed and inspired by the songs and dances performed by the university students. This exchange of recognition was evident in the long applause and ululation received at the end of each dance. To the surprise of the audience and tertiary students, the culture bearer at the end of each dance called out a few students and questioned them about their learning and performance. This may have been a way he assessed and self evaluated the outcomes of the workshops.

Although the teaching and learning took place in a formal setting, students informally experienced the teaching processes of the culture bearer. Comments from students such as “it was totally different from the dances we have done in South Africa” and “learning new things about indigenous music and dance was different”, suggested students learned ‘hands-on’ about a new country and its music, dance and culture. The activities in the workshop aligned with features of informal learning in the sense that they were activity based, organic and collaborative (Beckett & Hager, 2002). The hands on practical activity engaged students in a very real way that they would not have experienced had they learned from a textbook or a video. Students commented, “learning the dances and performing it together was fun”, “we learnt how to do the dances by watching the instructor”, “we learnt by rote and imitation and by doing it” suggest an informal way of teaching and learning within a formal setting. The students added “it was challenging to learn different movements and remember the dances” and “he taught us about his culture”. The teaching aspect, though, was still formal in the sense that it considered the ends and means. This happens according to Jenkins (2011) when the teacher has a particular outcome in mind and “applies instruction strategies designed to effect a change in the learner; whereas in informal learning the learner engages in some activities for the sake of the experience itself” (p. 184). In a similar sense the children from Ikageng who performed on the day learned in an informal way (out of school) from their teacher. A student commented, “by learning from culture bearers like Julius we learn about other countries and we share the spirit of being African”. This exchange fosters the opportunity for community and tertiary students to share their experiences when learning about new music and culture (Koopman, 2007). Having spoken to the community teacher at the end of the concert, as I was most impressed with the children’s skills, he said “they have a strong sense of commitment and to want to learn and aspire to perform so that they one day can go places and study at the university”. He further added that the pathway with the university gives “the children the opportunity to perform in front of university students and audience, it motivates and encourages his work with them and helps to keep the children off the street”.

Conclusions

The inclusion of a visiting artist can be seen as an agent of social change to encourage students to learn of another music and culture like that of East African and the university prides itself on partnerships with the local community where authentic teaching and learning takes place. Although the majority of the students were indigenous (Black South African), the engagement with music and culture of East Africa was a novel experience for them as well as academic staff. The interaction promoted diversity, respect, and understanding and fostered intercultural and cross-cultural dialogue. Whilst the focus was largely on Ugandan dance songs with instrumental accompaniment, the teaching and learning pedagogy is similar to that of indigenous South African music (Dargie 1996). I contend that the inclusion of culture
bearers within tertiary courses have an important role and place in the transmission of IKS in tertiary institutions. The success of the four-day workshop on another music and culture proved a worthy, successful experiment and experience for all.

As music cultures are never static, culture bearers serve as a pathway to connect local community and pedagogy, bringing the informal into formal educational settings. I argue that the inclusion of cultural activity, that is, the informal pedagogy of indigenous musics, within the formal context of university courses provides opportunities to connect local community and tertiary institutions to celebrate the rich diversity of African music. Involving knowledgeable, authentic, indigenous culture bearers, like Julius, within formal institutions, proved to be an effective outcome for students, tertiary educators and audience. It is hoped that lessons learnt from NWU can be replicated elsewhere.

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Dawn Joseph – Creating a Space and Place for Culture Bearers Within Tertiary Institutions: Experiencing East African Dance Songs in South Africa


Abstract

After decades of discovery and experimentation, the first public radio broadcast in New Zealand was in 1925, just five years after the USA, and one year after Great Britain. It took only two further years for the education and broadcasting authorities in New Zealand to recognise the potential of radio to reach the schools of its small, scattered population. From the beginning, music was the most consistently successful subject in New Zealand educational broadcasts. In this article the origins and influence on education and the community of broadcasts to schools in New Zealand are described and critically assessed. The reasons given by one leading music educator in 1937 for opposing schools broadcasts are examined in the light of music educational attitudes and practices seventy years later; and the influences in school music of the Broadcasts to Schools Songbooks in the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond are considered.

Keywords: Music education; radio broadcasts; history; community music; New Zealand.

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From Air to Ear – the Beginnings of Music Broadcasts to Schools in New Zealand

Introduction

In some form, music has been a required subject in the public education system in New Zealand primary schools since the passing of the 1877 Education Act which provided a national system of education that was free, secular and compulsory. Based on the British education system and syllabus, music meant singing, with a complementary touch of tonic sol-fa. That music should be an activity rather than a repository of musical knowledge was periodically stated in inspectors’ reports as well as syllabus descriptions. Nevertheless, in the early part of the twentieth century the syllabus suffered from the rigidity that had afflicted education in general since the 1877 Act, reflecting “the Victorian pre-occupation with intellectual analysis to the neglect of emotional and aesthetic values …” (Campbell p. 96). The advent of public broadcasting in 1925 alerted educationists to radio’s possibilities as a participatory teaching media, with music as one of its most viable subjects. It may be, and was, argued that educational broadcasting was a panacea for deficiencies in the practical education system of the early 1920s, and would merely cloud the realities of the classroom rather than provide enhancement.

Bring in the enthusiasm of a newly appointed Supervisor of School Music, who had been recommended by no less than Sir Walford Davies1, and the scene was set for music broadcasts to schools to be not only activity-based, but an example to other subject areas as to how radio could initiate and stimulate much needed change in classroom teaching.

This article sets out to describe the advent of music broadcasts to schools in a country that was at the time sparsely populated and, despite its growing independence and cultural diversity, still followed, the attitudes and systems that prevailed in Britain, the source of a majority of its immigrants. It was therefore to be expected that in contemplating change, New Zealand tended to look to the “home country” for guidance.

New approaches to education were being pioneered in some Continental European countries, such as Switzerland and in the USA by Dewey and James, but Britain and therefore New Zealand were slow to embrace change.2 In music education, certain informed and experienced Englishmen were appointed to key positions between 1925 and 1928, and the BBC was used as a model for the introduction of broadcasts to schools.

The introduction of music broadcasts to schools in the late 1920s is more than an interesting story. It is an illustration of how music can be instrumental in opening doors

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1 Sir Walford Davies (1869 – 1941) was a distinguished Welsh/English musician who was active in the early days of gramophone recording and broadcasting. As early as 1922 Davies made some sound recordings directed to teaching music in schools, and in 1924 pioneered schools broadcasts for the BBC. He had a strong belief in music as an activity for all. See Cox (1997).

2 Sir James Parr, Minister of Education between 1920 and 1926, stated that “New Zealanders were living in an age of experiment and he appealed to teachers to apply modern methods” (Cumming and Cumming, p. 220).
to new ways of learning, not only in its own subject area, but also for others. The Gramophone Company, and later the BBC referred to Walford Davies’ recordings and broadcast lessons as “lectures”. This was the accepted term at the time, and the sessions themselves followed the expectation of the term ‘lecture’. In New Zealand, circumstances, both practical and social, led E. Douglas Tayler, and later, Ernest Jenner and others, to seek a more colloquial and interactive approach. Necessity was then, as it is now, the driving force of innovation.

The Beginnings

In its issue of 12 January 1927, the New Zealand Education Gazette carried this announcement:

In order to test the possibilities of broadcasting lessons by wireless, the Department [of Education] has arranged with the Radio Broadcasting Co., in conjunction with several firms of radio dealers, to broadcast a special programme from the Wellington Station, 2YA, between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Tuesday, 13th December. Receiving sets are being installed in a number of selected schools, so that the nature of the reception may be ascertained.

New Zealand is a long, somewhat narrow and mountainous country, and in 1927 especially, when the total population of the whole country was less than 1.5 million, its communities were small, sparse and scattered. The advent of radio in 1919 and public broadcasting in 1925 was seen by the New Zealand Department of Education as an ideal opportunity to bring education to remote communities, and by the newly founded Radio Broadcasting Company as a promising extension of its services. Day (p. 85) quotes from a memo of July 1926 from the Assistant Director of Education to the chief telegraph engineer that educational broadcasting would be useful for “… the general broadcasting of lessons on Music and Musical Appreciation by the Director of Musical Training”.

The tests on 13 December 1927 were assessed by both the Radio Broadcasting Company and the Department of Education, and reported as having been uneven in quality of signal, but overall, successful. According to the Education Gazette of February 1 1928, “Timaru reported the results to have been very fair, but considerably interfered with by a local electric machine.” Two Southland schools reported that nothing was heard, and a thunderstorm caused much static for schools in the Bay of Islands. It is significant that there were just four speakers in the 1927 test broadcast, one of whom was the Supervisor of School Music, E. Douglas Tayler, who gave “a lecture on “Rhythm” and illustrated his remarks by various passages played on the piano.” (Education Gazette 12 January 1927 p. 17). National recognition of the possibilities for music education followed. Tayler had been to Britain and Europe in 1929, and returned enthused by his experiences, writing in an article, “Some Experiences in England”, “All over England musical taste seems to be rising by leaps

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3 The Education Gazette was, and still is the main vehicle of information from the Department (now Ministry) of Education to members of the New Zealand teaching profession.
4 E. Douglas Tayler was appointed “Supervisor of School Music” in April 1926. Although “Supervisor of School Music” appears to have been his official designation, he was sometimes referred to as “Supervisor of Musical Education”.

and bounds, and the broadcast programmes bear testimony to this, as having done much
to cause it.” (*Education Gazette* 1 May 1930).

Even before the Radio Broadcasting Company was set up in 1925 and the concept
of educational broadcasting was considered, there were a number of technical, social,
economic, and political hurdles to be overcome. The main technical problems related to
achieving adequate coverage over the whole country, especially when the expressed
purpose was to help children living in isolated communities. The earliest radio stations
were numerous, with limited local coverage. By 1931, station 2YA Wellington, with the
help of a network of relay stations, was of sufficient strength (10 kilowatts) to cover the
whole country. Not only radio, but the concept of a wireless media was new, taking
many years for people, especially those in isolated areas, who would most benefit from
it, to accept. So it wasn’t until 1931 that educational broadcasts began. In May that year
it was announced that the Radio Broadcasting Co. of New Zealand, Ltd., “had placed its
[Wellington] station 2YA at the disposal of the [Education] Department for one hour,
from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., every Tuesday afternoon for the purpose of broadcasting lessons
to school-children” (*Education Gazette* May 1 1931 p. 82). From then, broadcasting to
schools became a regular feature of the radio and educational timetables. In the same
issue it was reported that “At all but two or three schools the reception was excellent;
the voices came through clearly and strongly, and the pupils were interested for the
whole period.”

Music was part of the radio curriculum from the beginning. Included in the initial
one-hour broadcast was a talk to children on music by Douglas Tayler who, with the
help of his son, illustrated his remarks. Once under way, the music broadcasts to
schools gained greatly in popularity, as Roger Hollinrake describes in his biography of
his father, Horace Hollinrake, who was one of the earliest of the music broadcasters,
“… the following years of weekly programmes, ‘Music in the Schools’, would be
recalled as something of a revelation in the history of local radio” (Holinrake pp. 7- 8).

Despite the relatively poor sound quality of early broadcast music, its importance
in the new technology was manifest. Prior to the first formal educational broadcast in
1931, a number of musical events by and for schoolchildren were broadcast. The first,
“from the Wellington Town Hall on 7 March 1929, featured an orchestra of 56 musician
pupils from Hawera Main Primary School and Hawera Technical School, while in 1931
Clitheroe5 organised a series of six concerts specifically for school-children which were
held in the Dunedin Town Hall, and broadcast through [radio station] 4YA” (Braatvedt

There is little evidence of any active involvement by children in Tayler’s early
instructional broadcasts, which, like those of Walford Davies in Britain, were
predominately about music, rather than making music. This may appear to be contrary
to the convictions of both musicians who, in their respective writings, were resolute that
the musical experience was paramount. The ethos of early broadcasting was that the
person at the microphone informed those within range of the receiver. The use of the
term “lecture” in the broadcast presentations of both Davies and Tayler illustrates
attitudes to educational broadcasting in the 1920s. Performances by children were

5 J. Crossley Clitheroe was one of four British musicians appointed in 1927 and 1928 to develop music
studies at the Teacher Training Colleges in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.
included, as noted previously but it was some years before children took part in the educational process, such as in the studio to lead the learning of a new song. Nevertheless, Tayler’s main concern was to develop broadcasting techniques that led to the active participation of children in the classroom. In the 1920s music was, of course, singing. This statement, made in 1928, soon after the test broadcast of the previous year, is typical:

It has recently been demonstrated in Scotland that musical instruction, including actual class-singing lessons can be effectively given to the schools by radio. If in the future radio should become part of the equipment of the Dominion schools, it will be possible to give actual singing instruction to remote schools from the studio at Wellington. (AJHR 1928 pp. 54-55)

So in the months leading up to the beginning of regular educational broadcasts in May 1931, Douglas Tayler worked towards including active singing instruction and the Education Department published details of forthcoming educational broadcasts in the Education Gazette. The programme for his session on 5 May was described in the 1 May Gazette as:


The Department of Education was committed to the value of music, the Director himself writing in the Education Gazette of 1 July 1931, under the heading “School Singing” that he had “taken the opportunity to ascertain to what extent Mr. Douglas Tayler’s untiring efforts to improve the standard of school music in New Zealand have been seconded by the regular teaching staff.” His observation continued in more detail with the admonition, “It surely indicates a lamentable lack of appreciation of the importance of music in the life of the community when, in school after school, I found that even the senior classes had little or no knowledge even of the tonic sol-fa notes of the major scale.” Although the Director was referring to music education in general, and not the means through which it was delivered, there is little doubt that the educational broadcasts were seen as a panacea for the many familiar difficulties of reconciling music in schools with its pursuit as a discipline, as well as the recreation for the young.

Douglas Tayler had only partly succeeded in making music an active pursuit through the broadcast programmes when he left New Zealand early in September 1931, but he had set it well on its way to be continued in mid-September by Ernest Jenner. After two sessions in which recordings of Sir Walford Davies’ popular BBC talks on music were played, Jenner began with a session on 15 September which, despite its unpromising description was to herald an important era in school broadcasts. Jenner was a brilliant communicator, a musician of the highest order, and he used a studio group of his third-year students to provide the human touch to the teaching process.

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6 Ernest Jenner was Lecturer in Music at Wellington Training College, having been appointed from England for that position in 1927.
7 The Education Gazette of September the 1st described Jenner’s session as: Music (a) “Character of Te, (b) Introduction of letter-names for notes, together with the teaching of G clef.”
The potency and, for its time, versatility of radio, led to the development of techniques for the teaching of other practical aspects of music education. One of these was music and movement and included some Dalcroze-based activities. The challenge of creating a sense of involvement on the part of children listening in from distant classrooms tested the ingenuity of the presenter, not the least being the pretence that the presenter knows what is happening in the classroom.\(^8\) There was also the matter of overcoming the reality of which most of the children would have been aware, that many teachers were content to switch on the radio and then take a period of relaxation.

Not surprisingly, the educational possibilities of radio were recognised in its earliest days in many other parts of the world. The Radio Corporation of America was founded in 1919, and acted as a stimulus for the new media. According to the Madison Press Bulletin, Professor Edgar Gordon began a series of regular Friday evening broadcasts in musical appreciation on Wisconsin radio station WXA in January 1921. (Barresi 1987). In England, Sir Walford Davies gave the first experimental school broadcast on 4 April 1924 with a talk on music, the beginning of a series that was well established by 1926. Australia presented a particular problem because of its size and relatively widely spread-out population, and did not initiate regular school broadcasts until 1933. Even then, the programmes were restricted to musical appreciation. (Mackay 1957). Canada was similar, so broadcasts started on a regional basis, in most provinces between 1927 and 1930.

New Zealand may have been behind other countries in the early days of broadcasting, but a few factors allowed it to lead the way in respect of music broadcasts in schools. The chief of these was the relationship of presenter to pupils and teachers. In Britain, even Sir Walford Davies, an acknowledged brilliant communicator, was not immune from criticism when his talks were taken into the school classroom, a teacher writing in Teachers' World (24 December 1924) commented: “They are not related to the ordinary school work, and they lack the human touch, the personality and appeal of the teacher.” The ‘Kent Experiment’ of 1926 to 1928 set out to investigate how well children in schools would learn through talks on various subjects. Its final report concluded that “…broadcast lessons effectively imparted a knowledge of facts, stimulated interest in ways which could be definitely observed, created impressions as durable as those produced by ordinary classroom lessons, and were particularly interesting to clever children.” (Briggs p. 191). It was a little while before the BBC realised that for educational broadcasting to have a future, it had to evaluate it from the receiving end as well as its transmission. Sir Walford Davies was a key influence, adapting his broadcasting style when he was “given an observer in a Kent school whom he affectionately called his ‘watchdog’” (Briggs p. 195).

Less than a year after the beginning of Broadcasts to Schools in New Zealand, a message appeared inconspicuously in the Education Gazette of March 1 1932, simply headed “Broadcasting”. It read:

The Department regrets that owing to depletion of Head Office staff and pressure of work it will be unable this year to continue the weekly broadcast lessons. It

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\(^8\) In one of the few extant sound recordings of early schools music broadcasts heard by the author, the studio presenter, having explained a particular singing exercise, said “Now you try it”, and after a short period of silence, said “That was very good; but you must be careful to keep a good head tone on that high note near the end.”
wishes to thank all who so generously helped in filling the programmes last year, and hopes at some future time to be able to resume this method of instruction.

In the next issue, of 15 March, another message was published, this time on the front page of the *Education Gazette*, and again headed “Broadcasting”. It read,

Owing to the urgent representations that have been made to the Department to continue the weekly broadcasts, arrangements are being made to resume the lessons on Tuesday, 5th April, at 2 p.m. The month’s programme will be published in the April issue of the Education Gazette.

The great depression had struck, but the place of the Broadcasts to Schools was assured, as it happened, and throughout World War II and beyond.

**Printed Support Material**

Another area in which music in schools was at the forefront of the shift from broadcasts that talked to children to those that worked with children was in the use of accompanying printed material. In 1926 the BBC started publishing and distributing illustrated pamphlets, the first of which was Sir Walford Davies’s *Melody Book No.1*, in September 1926. In New Zealand, the production of printed material to back-up the broadcasts was consistent with the principles of Tayler that music should be active. His belief was that in music education, creating music is “the first step towards a natural and wholesome enjoyment of singing and playing.” By 26 May, 1931 it was advertised in advance that a song should be prepared (“Bergerette”, *Dominion Song-book* p. 14)

This became a regular practice, and from November 1931 most issues of the *Education Gazette* to April 1934 included the music notation of a song to be learned in the forthcoming week. Initially, most of the music was printed in the *Education Gazette* in tonic sol-fa. New Zealand may have been some years behind the UK in the quality of its accompanying publications, but it was ahead in these aiming to reinforce the interaction between the presenter at the microphone and the children at the radio receiver.

In both countries funding issues during the great depression of the thirties, as well as resources and materials during World War II and its aftermath interrupted publishing relating to educational broadcasts. In New Zealand, near the end of World War II, when the wartime paper shortage eased, the National Broadcasting Service began the publication of the Broadcasts to Schools Song Books, production of which continued for nearly forty years. Such a tangible resource reinforced the work of the broadcasters to a degree that could not have been contemplated, even by Douglas Tayler in 1931. “A major part of the success of the Broadcasts to Schools programme was its linkage with booklets, prepared within the NZBC and printed and distributed by the Department of Education. Excellent productions in their own right, the booklets tied in well with the broadcasts and increased their influence on teachers and pupils.” (Day, p. 149). More than 120 issues of Broadcasts to Schools music booklets were published between 1943 and 1979, at their peak, in the 1960s, printings numbering in excess of 80,000 in any

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9 The *Dominion Song Books* were initiated by Tayler in 1928 through the then leading New Zealand publishers, Whitcombe & Tombs Limited, and eventually went to fifteen issues. They were widely used in schools from 1930 to well into the 1950s when they were gradually superseded by the Broadcasts to Schools songbooks.
single year. In all, almost two thousand songs were published, many of which are still used in some schools.

The booklets also provide an interesting catalogue of changing musical taste. Few New Zealand songs found their way into the books. The staple repertoire was of songs as found in conservative England, one complete issue, in 1948, being “composed, selected, arranged and edited by the English composer Alec Rowley, who dedicated it to ‘the children of New Zealand’”. Considering New Zealand’s British background, this is not surprising. Lip service was given to the music of the indigenous New Zealand Maori people, their songs being inevitably arranged with piano accompaniment in an idiom typical of the English composers of music for children of the time. American musicals seldom featured, and certainly the “popular” or jazz repertoires were unrepresented. Indeed, the jazz repertoire was actively excluded. Not only was it not present in the songbooks, but the attitudes of the music education leaders of the time precluded any likelihood that jazz could be acceptable.10

Attitudes and Involvement

In New Zealand, as in Britain, the introduction of national broadcasting was accompanied by debate on what it should offer, and what its listeners wanted to hear. Having experienced nearly a decade of such debates, Lord Reith, legendary long-time head of the BBC, asked in 1931, “When a critic complains that there is too much education and too little entertainment in broadcast programmes, where does he draw the line? Is it to the left or the right of Sir Walford Davies, Sir James Jeans and the like?” (quoted in Briggs, p. 185). Similar questions were being asked in New Zealand, and opinions were correspondingly diverse. Few music educators opposed the introduction and use of music broadcasts in schools, especially as their timing coincided with one of the most active periods of development in music education that New Zealand has seen.

Of the five English musicians who were brought to New Zealand in the mid-twenties to lead the development of music in schools, only one resisted the introduction of music broadcasts. Vernon Griffiths taught at the Christchurch Teachers’ Training College, developed and directed a successful scheme of music at secondary level in Dunedin, and subsequently became Professor of Music at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. In 1937 he wrote:

Having been an interested witness of the rapid development of broadcasting during the last fifteen years, I can say with truth that I have never connected its activities with the word “Education” in any sense other than that in which “Tit-bits” might be described as educative. I believe that, even in the sphere of music, future historians will see that it did more harm than good. (Hawkey p. 250)

Griffiths’ stated aversion to educational broadcasting may well have stemmed from his awareness of the New Zealand political climate at the time, which was further to the left than in the UK of Reith’s time and influence. Griffiths was always a champion of music in the community and believed that music was an active pursuit of people. Consequently he viewed the growth of public broadcasting with suspicion, and

10 A comment from J. Crossley Clitheroe, who was Chairman of Dunedin’s 4YA Music and Dramatic Committee at a meeting in 1932, made his position quite clear: “I think far too much prominence is given to those people who like jazz – the people who don’t count.” (quoted in Day, Vol. 1 p.155)
a threat to the sanctity of family and communal life. A man of firm and unequivocal opinions, his reasons though unrealistic to people today, were probably more bewildering than convincing to most of his contemporaries.

1. It encourages people to hear rather than to listen. Music becomes a background noise.
2. It stifles the growth of local musical societies.
3. It increases professionalism in music.
4. It creates false impressions by giving authority to people of no musical standing.
5. In technical terms, the standard of broadcasting is often very poor.
6. The programmes themselves may be of a disappointing quality. (Hawkey p. 250).

There is no evidence that Griffiths’ comments were debated at the time, though their uncompromising wording offers plenty of room for dispute. For example, Griffiths’ admiration for the musicianship and educational skills of Ernest Jenner was well known, so his lack of circumspection in his fourth reason in particular would have disappointed the thousands of adults as well as children who listened regularly over many years to Jenner’s broadcast talks on “Musical Appreciation”. Ernest Jenner was one of the longest serving and most popular of the musical broadcasts to schools presenters. From 1931 until 1956 he broadcast hundreds of singing and music appreciation sessions. The latter, especially, “Although directed at children, attracted a wide adult audience.” (Sell).

Griffiths’ uncompromising stance was certainly not shared by his English colleagues who came to New Zealand in the mid-1920s. Tayler shared his belief that music is for all, but was open to any means of promoting it, embracing the start of broadcasts to schools with enthusiasm and, as described above, was instrumental in initiating them. It was appreciated at the time that public broadcasting was destined to become a powerful force of persuasion, and that leaders in education had an obligation to ensure that its force must be for the good. The biggest problem was trying to decide what was good.

Listeners to school broadcasts often extended well beyond those for whom they were designed. In their early days the novelty of radio attracted many adult listeners, while for many years in the 1940s and 1950s, Ernest Jenner’s talks on music appreciation from 1-30 to 1-45 were essential listening for thousands of New Zealand mothers. We cannot know what these earliest broadcasts sounded like, because they were all broadcast live, and recording processes were not faithful enough for pre-recording and archiving until after the Ampex 200 professional reel tape recorder appeared in 1948.

Regardless of the criticisms of Griffiths and others, most teachers, especially those who lacked musical competence or confidence, regarded the broadcast programmes as a valuable aid, never intended as a substitute for the teacher. “There is one person who holds the key to success in all radio lessons, and that is the teacher in the classroom”, wrote Tom Young, a broadcaster to schools. (Young 1948). A substantial article in the Education Gazette (Jones p. 32), although dealing with the place of the teacher in school broadcasts in general, referred generously to music broadcasts, especially in the “brief summary of some suggested methods by means of
which the teacher can co-operate with the broadcast teacher™. A few excerpts illustrate the common-sense advice offered by Jones, a staff member at Auckland Training College:

_A Before the Broadcast Lesson._ If the children are to look forward to the talk with expectation, it is necessary to relate the subject-matter to previous instruction, or to previous knowledge. … Thus, in music, a revision of a song already learned in a previous wireless lesson will enable the class to sing it more effectively and to enjoy it during the coming broadcast. …

_B During the Broadcast Lesson._ … During the music lesson the teacher may beat time to the songs, and lead the singing of the class. …

_C After the Broadcast Lesson or Talk._ … The teacher may relate the new material to his ordinary classroom lessons – e.g., new songs or poems – by making further use of pictures or diagrams in the wireless booklet, and so on.

In 1934 _The Teachers’ World_ in England conducted an inquiry into the effects of broadcasting for schools, a summary of its findings being published in the *Education Gazette* on 2 July 1934. One of the more positive of the eleven findings was that “Many parents are listening to these talks and discussing the topics with their children at home.” Others referred to dangers as well as advantages, such as the familiar danger of passive listening, stating that “The talks are probably training the pupils to listen”, but then going on to say that “Unfortunately, in too many homes “the tap is always left running,” and people are learning rather how to divert attention than to concentrate it.” An early concern about school broadcasts was that the broadcaster might determine the syllabus, just as the author of an educational textbook, or in more modern times, the designer of a website, might do. Yet one of the findings of _The Teachers’ World_ inquiry was that “There appears no danger of the broadcaster dictating the syllabus in any subject, nor is it desirable that he should.” (p. 104)¹¹ In New Zealand, too, there is no doubt that the schools’ broadcasts had a significant influence on the content of the school music curriculum over generations of children, teachers and parents. There is no need to attempt to tease out the reasons for this, although three factors stand out that make such an influence likely –

- the small population of the country, which meant that most of those engaged in the profession knew and communicated with each other;
- those conducting the broadcasts to schools were those closely involved in constructing the music syllabus and training teachers;
- the lack of confidence of a large proportion of teachers to conduct music in their schools, so that they were strongly reliant on the broadcasts and accompanying song books for professional guidance.

The generations of people who grew up with school broadcasts are well into parent and grandparent age by now. Many will themselves be teachers who, experienced as they may now be, would welcome the help that the broadcasts offered to musically secure as well as insecure teachers. One of the points made by the 1934 English inquiry into the effects of broadcasting for schools was that it “does not make the teacher’s work easier; but it helps to make him a more effective teacher.” In the

¹¹ However, Gordon Cox appears to reach a contrary conclusion when he wrote in 1996 that “… in conjunction with the government *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers*, the broadcasts provided a national model for the music curriculum” (Cox 1996)
twenty first century the prominent and growing place accorded the use of technology in schools, and in the training of teachers, is an outcome of careful study and research into its value and effects. Certainly, the development of technology has profoundly changed society, and educational approaches and methods have reflected this, as they have always reflected the societies that they serve. The use of radio in schools in the 1930s was part of the same inevitable educational process as the use of pen and ink in the 1920s and of computers in the 2000s.

**Retrospect and Change**

There is little doubt that musical broadcasts to schools imposed a restriction on the repertoire of children’s musical experience and learning. Even in 1935, when school broadcasts had been running for four years, radio-receiving licences were held by fewer than ten per cent of the population, so the listening experience of most children was restricted to what they heard at school. The sharp rise in radio listening took place first, at the start of World War II, and then with the advent of the transistor radio in the 1950s. The transistor radio’s popularity exploded by the 1960s as the baby boom population moved into its teens and the economy experienced a new prosperity. Consequently, school broadcasts not only lost their novelty, but school-age children were able to determine their own musical experiences and preferences that were often at variance with those of their teachers. With the media increasingly central to the culture of our young people, many consider that it is the popular media that determines children’s practical musical education more effectively and realistically than the formal school music curriculum.

During the early period of broadcasts to schools the imported British musical culture prevailed and was little questioned. In schools this included the culture of “educational” music that was often far removed from the social culture of which the children were a part. In the twenty-first century technology has opened our culture to the world more than ever before, mainly as a result of computer music programmes. Despite the claims of these that they open the classroom to “creative” musical enterprises, the realities are that the people who design the programmes are simply using a different media to achieve similar outcomes as those to whom, in the mid-twentieth century, sound radio and printed songbooks were the resources of their classrooms.

**Acknowledgement**

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Froebel’s Gifts to Early Childhood Music Education

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Abstract

The importance of a sound theoretical basis for early childhood educational practice is undeniable. This article discusses the application of Froebel’s approaches and materials to early childhood music education by two nineteenth century music educators steeped in the tonic sol-fa method of class music instruction, Daniel Batchellor of Philadelphia and Samuel McBurney of Victoria, Australia. Both were experienced, committed class music teachers who combined kindergarten and tonic sol-fa approaches to create engaging, developmentally sound programs for teaching music to young children. Both educators utilised Froebel’s First and Eighth Gifts, the colour theories of earlier philosophers and bird images in their methods. Both educators worked independently but devised remarkably similar approaches. At a time when most kindergarten music was thematically related by text to learning activities, Batchellor and McBurney devised programs in which children could play and discover in music, thus applying Froebel’s practices to early childhood music education. Recently there has been renewed interest in the ideas and materials of Friedrich Froebel. This description of the efficacious blending of ideas suggests both a past model and current strategy for contemporary educators.

Key words: Early childhood music education, Froebel, tonic solfa, music education history

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Froebel’s Gifts to Early Childhood Music Education

Introduction

Early childhood educators are often so occupied by the here and now that they rarely have the opportunity to step back and reflect on their practice, its theoretical underpinning and its history. The importance of reflection is undeniable, as is the importance of knowing how current practices have evolved. Early childhood educators readily acknowledge their debt to Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). He valued music in education but was not a music educator. In 1844 Froebel published his most influential book, *Mother-, Play- and Nursery-Songs (Mutter-, Spiel- und Koselieder)*, and in 1845 he published his developed theory of toys, or ‘gifts’ (Spielgaben) (Weston, 2000) that were subsequently utilised by two tonic solfa music educators who, although worlds apart both geographically and regarding their philosophical underpinnings, made connections between two of the gifts and class music education. Froebel’s influential collection of songs demonstrated his perceived role for music in education mainly as the carrier of instructive texts. Early American kindergartners quickly replaced the original melodies with ones they considered more appropriate for children (Blow, 1910). Appropriate thematically related teaching songs became a staple of early childhood education. Kindergarten teachers were advised to have a repertoire of suitable songs but generally no particular method of teaching these songs was advocated. Songs were not taught formally rather instruction was by rote and the teacher was advised “not to insist on strict accuracy all at once” (Parr, 1959, p. 9). In these early adaptations music was the medium not the message. It was not until music educators adapted the underlying pedagogical principles of play that music education *per se* became possible. This article focuses on the early childhood educational practices and specific apparatus developed by Froebel and their adaptation by two experienced tonic solfa music educators. Other music educators had also adapted general pedagogic principles to music teaching, for example Michael Traugott Pfeiffer (1771-1849) and Hans Georg Nägeli (1773-1836) adapted and methodised the pedagogical approach of Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) (Efland, 1984; Rainbow, 1989). Froebel’s educational work is often linked to the contemporary ideas of Pestalozzi and Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) but the commonalities and divergences of their philosophies are not the focus of this discussion, particularly as none of these innovators incorporated music education in their programs beyond the singing of appropriate songs to encourage camaraderie amongst their pupils (Hughes, 1903). This paper focuses on the confluence of Froebel’s gifts and the tonic solfa method in the hands of two skilled music educators.

This discussion traces one of the first direct applications of Froebel’s principles specifically two of his Gifts to early childhood music education. Interestingly, two independent tonic solfa music educators reached effectively the same conclusions and developed strikingly parallel approaches that may suggest the inherent logic and appeal in taking two of the physically manipulable Gifts and using them in a pedagogical approach that already used hand signs as an essential part of music education. Their use of theory to drive practice offers a model for educators and resulted in the development of interactive, engaging learning strategies for early childhood music education. Daniel Batchellor (1845-1934) of London and Philadelphia and Samuel McBurney (1847-1909) of Victoria, Australia, were experienced and committed teachers of John Curwen’s Tonic Sol-fa method. Batchellor and McBurney combined Froebel’s
kindergarten principles and the tonic sol-fa practices to create an engaging and developmental approach to the teaching of music to young children. Batchellor and McBurney made particular use of two of the gifts designed by Froebel for use with children. However, use of the gifts became less frequent in the twentieth century but recently there appears to have been a recent resurgence in interest in Froebel’s gifts which are again being commercially produced and are readily available. Manning (2005) argues that it might be useful for early childhood educators to re-examine Froebel’s gifts and occupations as “We might have ‘thrown out the baby with the bath water,’ when we disregarded his ‘gifts and occupations’ with his arcane philosophy. It is time to re-examine Froebel and his gifts and occupations” (Manning, 2005, p. 376) and how they might be used in music teaching and learning.

Froebel’s First and Eighth Gift

Froebel based his philosophy of education on the idea that preliminary education should be based on natural play through which children could be lead to learning (Wilson, 1967).

Froebel considered play the natural activity of children and his innovative focus on self-activity changed the landscape of early childhood education (Hughes, 1903). Educatative play should follow a well-organised developmental sequence in which all educational experience should begin with the known and proceed to the new. Froebel believed in a natural, developmental model of education illustrated by the metaphor of the unfolding plant (Bowen, 1903). This metaphor for the nurture of children was pervasive and influenced the very name of the educational institutions devised by Froebel – the kindergarten that can mean either “garden of children or garden for children” (Weston, 2000, p. 15). In 1837 at Blankenburg in Germany Froebel established the first kindergarten that catered for young children between three and seven years of age. The term kindergarten “hints at Froebel’s philosophy of educating body, mind, and soul through play, outdoor experiences, music, movement, spontaneity, creativity, and independence” (Bryant & Clifford, 1992, p. 148).

Froebel wrote music, plays, stories, riddles, and games for his teachers and, after lengthy experience and observation, developed the first kindergarten curriculum that consisted primarily of a series of ten objects and exercises, that he called ‘gifts’ (Bryant & Clifford, 1992). Wilson (1967) suggests that the gifts took fifteen years (1835-1850) to develop, although there were subsequent alterations. The gifts were a series of didactic play materials of “increasing complexity, which encouraged a developmental elaboration of form pattern and symbolism, were presented to the child” (Wilson, 1967, p. 238). The carefully designed gifts and the related activities, the hands-on occupations, were associated with detailed step-by-step procedures (Manning, 2005). The occupations were intended to develop, guide and enhance learning derived from the gifts. Froebel used the “three tenets of unity, respect, and play to create these gifts and occupations as the cornerstones of his educational philosophy” (Manning, 2005, p. 373). Froebel included singing, dancing and gardening in his curriculum to “develop the whole child, although much of the curriculum highlighted the learning of mathematical concepts and symbolic relationships through manipulative objects such as blocks, spheres, and cylinders” (Lim & Genishi, 2010, p. 514).

The First Gift was originally a sphere or ball that was initially intended for the nursery. The ball was provided with a string to assist in showing motion.
In the kindergarten, the first gift was altered to add colour. Froebel chose the three primary colours (red, yellow and blue) and the three secondary colours (orange, green and purple) (Kraus-Bölte & Kraus, 1886, pp. 1-2). Play with the balls offered opportunities to explore number, shape, colour, texture, movement and position (Wiggin & Smith, 1896). The ball being round suggested movement, was of a size that it could be used by children, was safe and popular, and could “readily be used to symbolise other objects, and thus satisfy the child’s imagination” (Gurney, 1877, p. 5). Concepts could also be explored such as similarity and difference, discrimination, and observation and perception (Wilson, 1967; Bryant & Clifford, 1992). Froebel went further, suggesting that the balls embodied unity and could engender “subliminal awareness of being, having, and becoming, and of present, past, and future – in other words self-awareness and concepts of unity and difference” (Weston, 2000, p. 18). As the round ball possesses the ability to be moved in different ways – it can rest, move,
roll, swing, revolve, be pushed, pulled, hop, rotate (Kraus-Bölte & Kraus, 1886, p. 2). Due to its easy activation in either random or disciplined movements, Froebel considered it to be an active shape (Wilson, 1967) and it could be manipulated to teach mobility and develop hand strength, dexterity, fine motor skills and eye-to-hand coordination (Manning, 2005, p. 374).

Froebel considered the ball or sphere to be a symbol of unity that could represent other objects, such as the sun, moon, bubbles, fruit, shells, flowers and many other natural forms (Wiggin & Smith, 1896). Thus the ball could suggest a range of symbolic meanings and “Denotative words could be mastered and speech stimulated by the use of the toy as it was made to perform various movements. The gift was not merely a simple physical object but also a proto-linguistic element” (Wilson, 1967, p. 239). Wiggin and Smith (1896) explained the use of the ball in the late nineteenth century kindergarten:

> With this dainty colored plaything we begin our first bit of education, not instruction, mere pouring in, but true education, drawing out, developing. The balls should be kept in a pretty basket, as the beautiful should be cultivated in every way in the true kindergarten; and when they are given to the class, it should be with some little song sung by the kindergartner or one of the older children. At the close of the lesson, as the basket is passed, each child may gently drop his ball into it, saying simply, “Thank you for my ball,” or naming its color. At other times they may be called by the names of fruits or flowers, the child saying, “I will give you a cherry,” or, “I will give you a violet” (Wiggin & Smith, 1896, p. 12).

The ‘little song’ is not included but can be imagined from the numerous collections that were available (for example, Rooper, n.d.). Apparently Froebel himself wrote one hundred ball songs although few were translated into English as their texts would appear “forced and far-fetched” (Heerwart, 1877, p. xviii) and there is no indication that all these had music, they may have been only texts. Wiebé (1899) suggested that the child’s knowledge of colour can be developed by asking what other things are similar and developing their responses into activities and rhymes. Many subsequent musical kindergartners wrote songs for ball play that mentioned the colours and linked them to familiar objects. For example Jenks and Rust (1896) included a song by Mabel Hurd in which the ball was passed between children and the words mentioned the clear blue sky, a green meadow, a red rose, the golden sun, an orange, and a violet. Eleanor Smith (1894) used the names of flowers (blue-bell, salvia, jonquil, violet, marigold and clover-leaf). Some used the names of differently coloured birds in other songs. Smith used red birds, blue birds, canaries, green parrots, orioles, and humming birds and Hurd used robin redbreast, blue birds, canaries, pigeons, orioles and parrots. Wiebé also suggested pinning coloured paper to balls of matching colour to make wings so the ‘birds’ could fly as the children sing songs ‘Up, up in the sky as the little birds fly’. A wide range of range of songs and activities were possible. Froebel's gifts were an integral part of the exploratory learning experience of children, and although this included songs it was as a textual, thematic link. There was no inclusion of a sound pedagogical approach to music education and no one linked the colour or a representative bird to a degree of the musical scale. When this did occur, the pedagogical music approach was the Tonic Sol-fa method.

Before progressing to the discussion of music education it is important to explain the eighth gift that was also employed in the approaches that will be explored. The
eighth gift was a set of wooden sticks of varying lengths initially ranging from one to six inches long. Each stick (or slat) was square, the diameter measuring about one-tenth of an inch. This gift introduced the straight line and emphasized the concept of length, the other dimensions of all the sticks being the same. Patterns and the perimeters of shapes could be explored and this could lead to mathematical concepts. The sticks could be of natural polished wood or colour-dyed in primary colours (Wiggin & Smith, 1896; Wilson, 1967; Manning, 2005).

**The Tonic Sol-fa system**

In developing the Tonic Sol-fa system, Englishman John Curwen (1816-1880) drew on a range of earlier music education practices, primarily those of Sarah Anna Glover (1786-1867), and contemporary educational thinking to devise an extensive system for teaching music that followed a meticulously structured developmental learning sequence. Curwen's method was unusual at that time in that it stressed the training of the ear before the eye – children were to learn musical concepts aurally before music notation was to be introduced. The name of the method, the Tonic Sol-fa system, acknowledged the syllables used for the tones of the scale - *doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah* and *te*. A hand sign was chosen to represent each of the tones and each tone was said to possess an individual character or 'mental effect' (Rainbow, 1989). Curwen noted that a mental effect was heard when the tones were sung slowly and singly. To him *Doh* was strong or firm, *ray* hopeful, *me* calm, *fah* desolate, *soh* grand, *lah* sad, and *te* piercing or sensitive. Awareness of the mental effects was an integral part of the Tonic Sol-fa method (Curwen, 1892).

![Figure 3 Tonic sol-fa hand signs for each degree of the scale with mental affect arranged in first, second and third steps which was the order in which the notes were introduced (Curwen, 1892, p. viii).](image-url)
The Tonic Sol-fa Method spread rapidly throughout all countries colonised and influenced by the British empire. The approach was promulgated with almost missionary zeal by its advocates who include the music educators discussed below.

**Daniel Batchellor**

Daniel Batchellor (1845-1934), an English tonic solfa-ist, migrated to America in 1877 and spent most of his career in Philadelphia where he published a *Musical Kindergarten Method* with Charles Landon in 1909 (Batchellor & Landon, 1909). However his ideas had been propounded as early as 1875 when he addressed the Tonic Sol-fa College Christmas Convention in London (*Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, 1876, July, p. 199). He showed a modulator (a tonic sol-fa chart in which the tones of the scale were positioned one atop each other) with the tones variously coloured to demonstrate their mental effects. Batchellor had selected colours for effects by their common usage – it was not until later in America that he discovered a theoretical basis for such decisions. In Boston Batchellor was introduced to kindergarten teaching. He visited one of the Boston free kindergartens where the first lesson he observed coincidentally dealt with colour (Southcott, 1995). Batchellor noted, “the contrast between the orderly development of the various games and occupations, and the haphazard way in which the singing was carried on” (*Tonic Sol-fa Advocate*, 1881, September, p. 11). He was pleased by the children’s harmonious groupings of colours but when asked to sing they did so by rote, mechanically, with a poor vocal tone, poor pronunciation, and no expression. Batchellor saw the possibility for great improvement. He introduced a course of singing into the Kindergarten Training School and devised a system of music teaching that was introduced into the free kindergartens of Boston (Southcott, 1995).

Ten years later Batchellor discussed his ideas more extensively and referred to the theories that now informed his practice. He stated that he had taught the tonic sol-fa principles to ‘little children’ using colour notation for some years (*Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, September 1885, p. 167). He included both the first and eighth Gifts of Froebel in his teaching method. He stated that although Froebel had not given ‘much attention to the systematic teaching of music, [he] had spoken of the possibility of training the tone and colour senses by mutual sympathy’. In teaching young children, he argued, it was essential to begin with something that they could see, hear and handle, and it was also vital to pay attention to their aural and vocal training. Batchellor began his demonstration with rhythm activities. He suggested using small sticks, about two inches long, to represent *taa*. He held one stick horizontally, ran his finger along it and sang *taa*. A second stick was shown of the same length, but thicker to represent an accented pulse. Various patterns of sticks were shown to represent different time signatures. Divided pulses were introduced by breaking a one-pulse stick. Later the children would be provided with sticks of different lengths for single-pulse, two-pulse and half-pulse notes. Pitch was introduced by simple call and response patterns using *doh*, *soh* and *me* in that order. To emphasise the tones Batchellor held up the coloured balls of the first Gift, calling them little birds. *Doh* was a red ball and Batchellor called it ‘little robin’. Soon a bluebird singing *soh* joined the robin and then a canary arrived to complete the triad with *me*. Batchellor only allocated birds to the notes *doh*, *me* and *soh* as these were the first three notes taught in the tonic sol-fa curriculum. Further, Batchellor advised teachers to invent their own “original methods of illustration, always keeping the end in view, i.e., the perception of tones and the power to produce tones” (Batchellor, 1882, p. 107).
Colours could be added to the varying length rhythm sticks to produce a set of manipulable materials. Batchellor (1897) explained that once musical games had been played, the children could place the balls on a colour scale and then:

the transition is easy to colored notes upon the staff. The children like to play that the lines of the staff are telegraph wires upon which the little birds sit and sing. It is as easy for them to sing in one key as another, for the color gives a distinct individuality to every tone of the scale ... Children get their ears perfectly attuned; their time sense is well developed; they can sing simple melodies at sight, and tell instinctively the tones which they hear (p. 111).

Batchellor chose a colour to match each degree of the tonic sol-fa scale. He based his choices on Curwen's ascriptions of mental effects to each individual tone and on François Delsarte's theories of colour symbolism.

François Delsarte

François Delsarte (1811-1871), a French dramatic artist, aesthetician and philosopher, attempted to discover the underlying principles of artistic expression. He was an influential, respected lecturer. His unpublished theories were spread by his disciples particularly in America where they fell on fertile ground. In attempting to define how people really moved Delsarte observed human behaviour and identified three basic categories of movement and expression: ‘excentric’ or reaching outwards, ‘normal’ or centred and ‘concentric’ or reaching inwards. Delsarte believed in the eternal truth of trinities and formulated ninefold patterns which combined the three elements of selected trinities in every possible combination. He combined the trinity of primary colours (red, yellow and blue) with the trinity of expressive actions (concentric, normal and excentric) and the trinity of reason, will and vital essence. From this he ascribed meanings to the primary and secondary colours. Batchellor matched these meanings to the mental effects of the individual tones (Shawn, 1974).

Strong doh was vital red, hopeful ray was seeking orange, calm me was peaceful yellow, desolate fah was introspective green, grand soh was cerebral blue, sad lah was restless violet and piercing te was aspiring crimson. The sequence of colours fortuitously matched the spectrum, six elements of which were readily available in every kindergarten equipped with Froebel's first Gift. Batchellor took advantage of this in his teaching program and in the materials he designed for use in schools which were presented in detail in his Musical Kindergarten Method. Froebel was acknowledged
when Batchellor cited the educational maxim ‘the thing before its sign’ and introduced the coloured balls as the ‘first gift’ (Batchellor & Landon, 1909).

**Samuel McBurney**

Samuel McBurney (1847-1910) emigrated to Victoria, Australia in 1870 from Scotland where he had early been trained in the Tonic Sol-fa system of which he was an enthusiastic and respected advocate. McBurney's *Bird Songs and Kindergarten Musical Training* was published about 1894. In it he acknowledged the work of Mr. Batchellor of Philadelphia (McBurney, ca. 1894). McBurney presented a well-considered, effective program for teaching music to young children (Stevens, 1986). He was aware of contemporary early childhood education practices, referring to teachers as 'practical kindergartners' (McBurney, ca. 1894). The sixty-six songs McBurney included in his *Bird Songs and Kindergarten Musical Training* were carefully sequenced. They introduced the tones via simple songs, some with actions. Of the sixty-six songs twenty-three used bird imagery. The remaining songs were on topics appropriate to the child's world. McBurney designed a practical, appealing simplified modulator in which a colour and a bird were ascribed to each degree of the tonic sol-fa scale.

McBurney's choices of colours were based on the theories of a different philosopher Johann Goethe (1749-1842), who ascribed sensual-moral effects to single colours. He suggested that every colour produced a distinct impression on the mind and therefore on the feelings. Goethe defined certain colours as active, others as passive. Pure colours had clearly defined effects but combinations of colours naturally had modified effects (Mathaei, 1971). McBurney combined the tonic sol-fa mental effects and Goethe's sensual-moral effects and allocated colours to the tones of the scale.

Goethe identified only the six primary and secondary colours that left one tone unallocated. McBurney chose black for strong *doh*, aspiring orange for hopeful *ray*, restful green for calm *me*, melancholic blue for desolate *fah*, dignified red for grand *soh*, restless violet for sad *lah* and aspiring yellow for piercing *te*.

McBurney chose birds either by their colour, for example, a black crow, green love birds (or budgerigars), an orange humming bird, a yellow canary and a red parrot, or by their literary character, for example, the 'desolate’ owl and ‘mournful’ dove. He prepared a simplified modulator with each tone illustrated by the appropriate bird. The positions of the birds echoed the hand signs. For example, the upward position of the hand for ray was mimicked by the upward flight of the humming bird and the strong, stable hand position for doh was shown by a large black crow securely seated on a branch.
Figure 5 McBurney’s birds and Curwen’s handsigns (Bird images copied by author from chart held in the Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne)

The overall sequence of the song collection was repeated in a smaller set of ball songs included at the end, suggesting that the songs could be interpolated into the program if the equipment was available. McBurney suggested that by adding a black ball all of the notes could be represented by the kindergarten coloured balls. A smaller black ball or one with a white thread could represent upper doh. All of the songs in McBurney's collection were printed in the specialised music notation devised by Curwen to overcome the problems of initial music notation reading and to make the music easy and cheap to print and thus to disseminate the method. The tonic sol-fa notation employed the initials of the names of the tones (e.g. d for doh). A small number after the letter indicated the octave above or below by its position (e.g. d' for doh the octave higher). Punctuation marks gave the time by subdividing bars (e.g., m .m :d .d represented even notes, two notes me followed by two notes doh). McBurney's songs often included directions for actions to accompany and reinforce the
musical concepts. For example, ‘We now can have a game’ used doh, me, soh, and upper doh. Children held up the appropriate balls as indicated in the second and third lines - a black ball for doh, a green ball for me, a red ball for soh, and a smaller black ball for upper doh.

Figure 6 Two ball songs (‘We now can have a game’ and ‘Old crow’) (McBurney, ca1894, pp. 57 and 59)

McBurney acknowledged Batchellor, citing his use of the kindergarten sticks for rhythmic work. McBurney increased the dimensions for the teacher's set for better visibility. He added his chosen colours to the cards so that pitch activities could be undertaken. Upper and lower octaves could be represented by a white mark at the top or the bottom of the card for the upper or lower note respectively. He made the back of all cards black so they could still be used for solely rhythmic exercises.

In Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa notation:
{ | d : d | m . m : m . m | s : s | m : - }
Birds are sing-ing in the morning light,
{ | s : s | d¹ : d¹ : d¹ | s : s | m : - ||
Gay and joy-ous as the sunshine bright.

In McBurney's colour notation:

![Figure 7 ‘Birds are singing’ (McBurney, ca.1894, p. 34)](image)

It was not only in their use of the first and eighth Gifts that Batchellor and McBurney were indebted to Froebel who stressed that the materials and topics of learning should be firmly based in the child's world. Both Batchellor and McBurney chose song topics that would be interesting and appropriate for the children. Two topics were used by all three educators – the swinging pendulum of a clock and the finger plays of the nursery – again acknowledging their links to Froebel.

**Conclusions**

Batchellor and McBurney both employed Froebel’s first and eighth gifts to enhance their early childhood music education programs and practices. Both were inventive in their design of materials, combining the gifts with Curwen’s mental effects and the handsigns that represented the various degrees of the scale. Both used established but different colour theories to underpin their decisions and both used birds as symbols of both note and colour. The differences and similarities in their approaches can be summarised in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curwen</th>
<th>Batchellor</th>
<th>McBurney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te</td>
<td>Piercing/sensitive</td>
<td>Violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lah</td>
<td>Sad/weeping</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soh</td>
<td>Grand/bright</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fah</td>
<td>Desolate/awe</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Steady/calm</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Rousing/hopeful</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doh</td>
<td>Strong/firm</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both music educators created developmentally sound carefully sequenced materials that took advantage of available equipment to enhance learning in music. Both were well versed in contemporary educational theory and applied their understanding and experience to the development of music programs that were appealing to the ears, eyes and minds of children.

This exploration of past practice is intended to demonstrate the importance of a strong educational theoretical underpinning the design of materials and programs for children and the importance of skilled music educators taking educational principles and practices and applying them to teaching music in early childhood settings. The idea of connecting colour and music for teaching purposes has frequently occurred since the time of the two educators mentioned here, but rarely has the association been so carefully based on educational and philosophical theory. Similarly, the identification of birds with music is not uncommon, but it is usually far less specific. This article chronicles a remarkable confluence of ideas that resulted in engaging, effective early childhood music education. While not necessarily recommending a return to the methods outlined above, the demonstrated application of careful, preparatory thought to the design of teaching programs is a model worthy of emulation by educators. It is also important to recognise how effective past practice has been and that many ideas are worthy of adaptation and application today. Given that the tonic solfa method is the origin of many of the principles and practices of the widely used Kodály approach, the use of objects such as the gifts extend the kinaesthetic reinforcement of music learning as is already available via the use of the hand signs.

References


*Tonic Sol-fa Reporter* (1876). July 1, 199.


Abstract

Since 2007, there has been added tension within the Australian schooling system from what can be called a performative culture resulting from the influences of neoliberalism and globalisation. This culture of performativity is characterised and driven by standardisation and accountability in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. In Australia, as in many nations, this practice has been established through the introduction of national testing, a prescriptive national curriculum, and a focus on that which can be measured. This culture influences parental understandings and expectations of schooling in terms of what is valued, and in turn has wider implication for arts education. As part of a wider doctoral study, this paper uses the findings from parent data collected through a school-wide survey and semi-structured interviews to determine to what extent music and arts education are valued in a climate of accountability. The findings also provide an understanding of the nature of schooling in terms of how parents see the role of the school in delivering a diverse, rich and engaging curriculum.

Keywords: Primary school curriculum. Australia, music and arts education, parental perceptions

The author

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The Parental Voice in Primary School Education Policy: 
Do the Arts have a Place?

Introduction

In Australia, schooling is a constitutional responsibility of the state governments, not the federal government, and there are a number of co-existing relationships within the system. Public and independent schools operate under the instruction of six state and two territory governments as well as direct and indirect contributions from the federal government. However, it is widely agreed that all government authorities in Australia view the principle purpose of schooling as the threshold for employment and training opportunities that will help to guarantee Australia’s economic stability and future success (Peters, 2006). This encompasses the individual success of each student as well as the collective success of the nation; henceforth education reform is a key priority of both state and federal governments.

There is considerable debate about how to achieve school reform through education policy enactment (Peters, 2006; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Ball, 2010; Lingard, 2010; Luke, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Ball, 2012; Caldwell & Vaughn, 2013). Arts education policy and practice have ebbed and flowed in and out of this debate in what appears to be a constant struggle for legitimacy, as the arts compete with the apparently preferred learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history. Part of this struggle involves the perceptions individuals hold regarding the purpose of primary schooling. These perceptions, influenced by external forces such as globalisation, neo-liberalism, politics, policy and media, vacillate between schooling as a social democratic vehicle and schooling as a training institution (Greene, 2001; Kenway, 2007; Egan, 2008;). In addition, there is now a policy agenda that promotes statistical information as the most effective means of achieving school reform. Increased political intervention in education means that governments require tangible measures to appear to be improving educational results - now a key feature of the education system in Australia (Lingard, 2010).

The current research has taken place in a time of challenge and uncertainty with the release of many new policies designed to reform education at both a state and federal level. In 2007, the federal Labour Government introduced its Education Revolution policy. Partly a fiscal response to the global financial crisis, it invested in nation building projects and included Information and Communication Technology (ICT) packages for schools (Digital Education Revolution), as well as a proposal to align the states’ and territories’ schools in terms of curriculum, assessment and reporting. Two of the resulting policies were a new national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum, and the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), with the addition of the MySchool website that publishes NAPLAN results. NAPLAN involves annual standardised testing in literacy and numeracy at years three, five, seven and nine in all schools across Australia. Ironically, Reid (2009) notes, “just as Australia is gearing up to adopt them, such schemes have been abandoned in many countries… and are being strongly questioned in the UK and a number of American states” (p. 22). Furthermore, when considering follow-on developments like MySchool, he argues, “more broadly, the whole approach is consistent with the philosophy of organising education systems through markets…at the heart of this approach to
accountability is competition – the belief that the best way to encourage quality is to get individuals and institutions to compete”. Arguments against standardised testing and curriculum do not naively dismiss the need for accountability, but rather direct concern at “forms of accountability that reduce quality and widen inequality” (Reid, 2009, p. 21). They also reduce the curriculum to subjects that are tested, and exclude those that are not, such as the arts.

The researcher’s professional experience, supported by current research, suggests that while the arts appeared to be valued by Australians (Costantoura, Saatchi and Saatchi, 2002), arts practice in schools is becoming marginalised as the subject area struggles for legitimacy. This situation has been partly a result of global, national and local government policy that has instilled a neo-liberal, “input-output” model for education (Lytard, 1984; Marshall, 1999; Jeffrey, 2002; Lingard, 2010). A disproportionate amount of time is now spent on the preferred subjects, which potentially reduces teacher professionalism and discourages and reduces alternative ways of teaching and learning. (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Hursh, 2010; Lingard, 2010; Maguire, Perryman, Ball & Braun, 2012; Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012). This paper explores the perceptions of one group of parents from a metropolitan primary school about the value of education and the place of the arts, at a time when a national policy of measurable outcomes appears to dominate.

These new interpretations of schooling change the way parents understand their role and influences and aims and hopes they have for their children. These perceptions are shaped by the way policy is enacted, and there are clear implications for arts educators and arts education.

Literature

There have been some recent significant alterations in schools, most notably in technology and information processing, together with a shift in educational purpose (Abbs, 2003; Rotte, 2006; Kenway, 2007, Lingard, 2010; Moutsios, 2010). The focus has moved from education as a personal opportunity for advancement, enrichment and individual economic security, to a means by which nations can harness economic growth on a broader global scale (Rotte, 2006; Luke, 2011). Neo-liberalism, performativity and globalisation are three key features of the current global educational landscape, and all three have exerted pressure on schools (Hursh, 2008; Ball, 2012). This has been disseminated in national and local policy that has embraced accountability and measurement as the most important method for judging school performance, that is, good results suggest good schools (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Maguire, Perryman, Ball & Braun, 2011). This model ignores the complexity of the educational process, devalues schools and teachers, narrows the curriculum and ultimately does not improve student outcomes in the long term (Ball, 2006; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2011; Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012).

Underpinning this position is a paradoxical understanding of the purpose of schooling. Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) state, “there is no firm agreement among stakeholders about the core purposes of primary schools…the consequence of this is that there is a tendency for primary schools to acquire new responsibilities without shedding the old ones” (p. 7). However, Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) note current discourse is mostly concerned about school improvement through models of accountability, accompanied by “increasing pressure to improve test scores rather than
to take account of children's stages of development and readiness to learn” (p. 9). In addition to the new focus on high stakes testing, Stoll, Fink and Earl (2005), predict that governments and society in general have “become unconscious to their need to participate and have lost contact with their responsibilities and their knowledge of the society in which they live…” (p. 12). They argue, that this has opened the way for “governments to set the agenda for education…do more mathematics, more science and more computers. If money is needed to finance these areas, then what gets cut are the arts, music and humanities because they are perceived to be of little utilitarian use…” (p. 12).

The Australian Policy Context

Historically, following the Hobart Declaration (1989), the Adelaide Declaration – Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century (MCEETYA, 1999) first presented school subjects as a group of eight key learning areas (KLAs) that all Australian schools should teach as part of their curricula. The eight KLAs were originally presented as follows:

In terms of curriculum, students should have: attained high standards of knowledge,
skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:
• the arts;
• English;
• health and physical education;
• languages other than English;
• mathematics;
• science;
• studies of society and environment;
• technology.
(MCEETYA, 1999, para. 2.1)

In this policy the KLAs were represented in a manner that suggested equity in time allocation, funding and value, supported by wording which stated, “in terms of curriculum, students should have attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas” (MCEETYA, 1999, para. 2). There was a foundation laid for any future national curriculum to include all the eight key learning areas. Conversely, there has never been a time in Australian schools where subjects other than the “core” subjects have held the majority of time and resources (Angus, Olney and Ainley, 2007). This contradiction is noted by Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) who maintain:

The eight KLA’s were defined in such a way that they appeared to be of equal status, an outcome that did not reflect the circumstances of primary schools, where English and Mathematics have always had a higher priority than other subjects. Furthermore, the frameworks provided no guidance as to the relative importance of other subjects in the primary curriculum. (p. 22)
However, no clarity was given to schools about the KLAs in the form of policy to guide implementation and there was a perception that each of the KLAs were equally valued.

The *Melbourne Declaration*, that superseded the Adelaide accord, was a more rhetorical and visionary policy, and dealt with a broad agenda of general capabilities serving as umbrella statements that encompassed collective national goals, with the broader aim of creating a more prosperous Australia. The statements include for example, “promoting equity and excellence and successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens…” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7). Yet Reid (2008) notes:

Although the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) contains a far more expansive view of the purposes of education, the public rhetoric…limit(s) the vision of the educational revolution to seeing students as (potential) human capital to be enlisted in the cause of economic recovery and growth. Such a stance marginalises the cultural, social, political and relational aspects of education. It understands students as potential workers and consumers, rather than as local and global citizens. It is hardly revolutionary. (p. 8)

The new *Australian Curriculum* and NAPLAN were policy consequences of the *Melbourne Declaration* that stipulated the need for a more articulated understanding of educational outcomes (MCEETYA, 2008). The *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) provided some clarity about the subject hierarchy stating, “the learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels. English and mathematics are of fundamental importance in all” (p. 14). Yet the policy still included all eight key learning areas, henceforth there was an expectation that they would be maintained in any proposed national curriculum (Gattenhoff, 2009; O’Toole, 2009). Yet in 2008 when the federal government announced a new national curriculum it only included four subjects – English, mathematics, science and history, with little information about curriculum, assessment and reporting, and no information about pedagogy. At the time, Reid (2011) observed that it was:

Hard to believe that at that stage the Government seriously believed that a national curriculum could comprise four subjects, but there it was – no sense of whether other learning areas were to follow, no argument about why these four subjects were chosen, no overall curriculum plan. (p. 33)

With the release of the draft *Australian Curriculum* it appeared there was a narrowing of the *Adelaide Declaration* to four learning areas, which consequently devalued the other KLAs. Known as Phase One subjects, this public release of a curriculum sent a clear message to the public, more particularly teachers, parents and students, about what was to be valued. After the Phase One release, Phase Two and Phase Three subjects were acknowledged, but not drafted, but the arts were not included at all (Gattenhoff, 2009) despite the understanding based on the *Adelaide Declaration*.

After public and professional unrest, and robust consultation between the then education minister Peter Garrett and a number of key arts advocacy groups, the arts were included as part of Phase Two (Gattenhoff, 2009; Meiners & Dyson, 2010). In light of the developments for a national curriculum, Reid (2008 & 2011), and O’Toole (2009) commented at the time that with the initial drafting, writing and trialing of only
four key learning areas as Phase One subjects, there was a perceived failure to begin on an even playing field. O’Toole (2009) stated:

There’s no logic in leaving a key subject out of education planning. Bafflingly, arts education remains excluded from the Federal Government’s proposed national curriculum…despite the fact that ‘the arts’ is now one of the eight compulsory learning areas. (para. 1)

In selecting only four subjects for inclusion, Reid (2008) argued, “those subjects run the risk of downgrading other important areas of the curriculum such as the arts…It’s hard to believe that a curriculum for the 21st century could be developed without these areas of knowledge” (p. 10).

In 2014, the Australian Curriculum now stands at full implementation of English, mathematics, science and history. With the recent change of federal government and a pledge to reduce spending, there are real concerns that Phase Two and Phase Three subjects will remain unfinished. This research set out to determine whether or not the parent participants from one school community shared the view that subjects like the arts are of “little use” and if not, what purpose they serve.

**Method**

Data collection involved 30 hours of interview material recorded and transcribed with participants discussing their views of education. In addition, a whole-school survey was issued as a baseline information gathering exercise for seeking anonymous viewpoints from the school community. The survey was delivered to the school community via classroom teachers on a voluntary basis and consisted of the following four sections:

1. Your education experience;
2. NAPLAN;
3. MySchool, and
4. The proposed national curriculum.

The survey was distributed in April 2010, just prior to the May NAPLAN tests. The survey was used as an introduction to the future data collection. The focus was on the qualitative semi-structured interview material that was conducted with fifteen male and female parents who belonged to the school community with children currently attending the school.

This paper focuses specifically on the question – “to what extent music and arts education are valued in a pervasive climate of accountability?”
Findings

The Survey

In the early stages of data collection, partly as an introduction for participants to the project, a parent survey was administered to provide baseline data about the school. Sixty-seven parents, representing over 11% of the school population, responded anonymously to the survey. Contextual information revealed that 56% of these attended primary school in Queensland, 27% outside of Queensland and 22% outside of Australia. Attendance at a Queensland secondary school was 60% Queensland, with 20% surveyed educated outside of Queensland and 22% overseas. It can be deduced that approximately 75% of the survey participants had some understanding of the schooling structure and process within the Queensland/Australia school system. 37% indicated they were ‘moderately’ involved in voluntary school activities and a further 24% were ‘highly’ involved suggesting that volunteers are an important part of school life. Given their motivation to complete and return this survey, the high results in terms of participation is not surprising and for this reason is undoubtedly not reflective of parent participation across the entire parent population.

All parents supported the need for a national education policy because of the perceived transient nature of the Australian population. Some respondents were concerned about inadequate implementation and the political motivation. There were similar concerns about NAPLAN and the political, rather than educational purposes the testing process appeared to be serving. In terms of national curriculum subjects, when asked within the survey to comment on the comparative importance of subjects, there was unanimous agreement that English and mathematics were the most important subjects for primary school students. The subjects were listed in the survey according to the way they are listed in the Melbourne Declaration. The results indicate that second to English and mathematics, were the arts and science, as opposed to science and history represented in Phase One. The arts and science were not differentiated; they were placed on a scale with equal weight given to both areas and the need for them to be included in the curriculum. Technology followed the arts and science and rated only just above Health and Physical Education, history and geography. Language (LOTE) was the one area the survey participants could see the least value in for a primary school education:
Within the arts disciplines, preferences indicated music as being the most important arts subject to parents. After music, drama and media were ranked equally, followed by visual art, with the least important aspect identified as dance. (See Figure 2 below). The high level of support for music might also be attributed to the fact that in Queensland, there are classroom music specialists in schools as well as the Instrumental Music Program which featured as a highly valued and important part of the case study school program by many parents.

The Instrumental Music Program is a stand-alone program in Queensland state primary and secondary schools. The program offers students from year three, the opportunity to learn a stringed instrument, and from year five the opportunity to learn a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument. This enables the student to play in a school ensemble. The program which has been an outstanding feature of the Queensland state school system for many decades, provides tuition and hire of an instrument for 12 months, financed by a school-based levy. The program is highly popular in both primary and secondary schools across the entire State.

The policies of NAPLAN and MySchool were familiar to survey participants with 90% indicating they knew of NAPLAN and all parents except one, had children being tested or previously tested. 71.7% were in favour of the tests. In terms of MySchool, 82% knew about the website, but only 39% had actually accessed it of whom half
(51%) had used it to compare schools. Of the 61% who had not looked at the site, 55% indicated they were too busy to do so and 34% indicated they were not interested. 56% of the participants indicated they knew about the link between NAPLAN and the website. One survey participant stated that she was completely opposed to NAPLAN, but more particularly the MySchool website, and refused to look at it “as it served no educational purpose whatsoever”.

The Interviews

The parents who participated in this study were invited to talk about the effects of school policy and practices on their own child/ren in terms of general education, NAPLAN, arts education, policy and any other areas they raised during the interview process. Philosophy or the purpose of schooling; curriculum and pedagogy, or learning experiences and teacher quality; assessment and politics emerged as the dominant themes and key findings can be drawn about the parents’ perceptions of arts education from the data. This paper presents only the findings that pertain to the data on the arts.

Firstly, these parents acknowledged that primary education was there to foster talent and to expose children to a diverse range of educational experiences, often unattainable outside school. The ultimate purpose was as preparation for secondary school and eventually work and life. The parents felt that the case study school was doing its best to achieve what they believed to be the purpose of education. The data revealed that as a bare minimum, these parents expected school to provide the 3Rs. In addition to this, the data revealed that schooling should also provide a well-rounded education that included the eight key learning areas that parents understood in terms of policy, as agreed upon in the Melbourne Declaration. Music education was a key part of this understanding. The school was there to provide multiple opportunities to find and foster talent, and to provide multiple opportunities to develop social, cultural and academic skills.

Parent Evelyn for example stated that primary schooling was a “necessity” and like Clayton argued that the “basics” were “a given”. In the earlier primary years, parents advocated a thorough understanding of “how to write sentences, spell and do their mathematics…and all the rest” could follow in the later primary years. Additionally, Evelyn had completed research in the area of brain development and argued that school should provide opportunities in key learning areas like music to “develop all…aspects in the child, especially if that’s their strength. I think it develops another part of the brain that’s really important”. She went further to add:

I believe that human beings need to be well rounded and you know yourself if you’ve just sat and written for an hour as an adult it’s quite draining. For a child that could be challenging, even 30 minutes of - so then I would suggest that then that would be an opportunity to do something which uses a different part of the brain, whether it be dance or art, so that the day is mixed up so that the child is developing different parts of their brain to complement one another. To sit and do mathematics and English all day do you think kids are going to want to come to school? (Evelyn, parent)

Other parental comments reflected the belief that the arts also served a pedagogical purpose, teaching in a way only appropriate to the arts.

In the case of the arts as a key learning area, the parents felt that the subject served a special purpose in their child’s education, fostering creativity, and engagement
and “something different” that made “kids want to come to school”. Many of the
parents believed that it was a school’s responsibility to offer multiple opportunities
across the key learning areas in order to meet the needs of the diverse range of children.
In terms of the arts, this opportunity was noted by one parent (George):

I think the arts immerse the students in things they wouldn't naturally do in their
normal lives I think. I think everybody should have a feel of it because it might, it
normally takes one child maybe just one visit to an art gallery or look forward to
an artist or see a concert or see music. They know basically straight away if they
like that sort of stuff. You know what I mean. So they can see that, that's when
the teachers should take those children and keep fostering.

Parents also commented that it was imperative that good quality professional
experiences, as well as good quality in-class learning experiences in the arts, were
provided to engage the children in what the arts really meant. This modelling was
considered important by a number of the parents. All parents appreciated the arts as a
valuable part of the school curriculum. They felt that at this school teachers had found
the right balance between the “basics”, preparation for NAPLAN and incorporating the
arts and creative pedagogical practices. They supported the inclusion of music,
instrumental music and the arts, noting that the school had offered many experiences
beyond the classroom that they considered highlights of the school year. Balance, for
this small group of parents was achieved by offering a rich and diverse curriculum,
whilst maintaining high standards in the preferred learning areas. They were not in
favour of any change to this practice.

The data also demonstrated that parental priority lay with English, maths and
science, but value was still placed on the arts and their place in the curriculum. In terms
of the purpose of primary schooling, the arts were not preferred above the key learning
areas of English and mathematics but at the same time, the arts were considered
essential to the primary curriculum. Only one parent, (Audrey) stated that upon entry to
secondary school “if (her children) were getting behind in mathematics and
English…and music and sport would be the first to go. Until they picked themselves up”.

All parents commented and understood the concept of the crowded curriculum
and wondered how it was possible for schools to fulfill the ever-increasing list of
demands placed upon teachers. One father (George) commented:

As a parent I'd like my child to be immersed in all the different things. But
logically speaking I can't see how they're (teachers) going to do two hours a week
in the arts. Especially when you're supposed to do an hour of physical education
over a week. There’s so much time spent on maths and English and you've only
got five hours in the day. So I can't really see it happening to tell you the truth.

Conclusions

The findings reveal support for polices such as the national curriculum providing
they continue to offer the eight key learning areas that have traditionally been taught in
Queensland. The survey data confirmed the importance of English and mathematics,
but not at the expense of the arts. In fact, both the survey data and the interviews
suggest that parents appreciate the place of the arts within the national curriculum. With
regards to NAPLAN, the findings suggest that the parents are not concerned about the
test, but rather they viewed testing as part of life preparation. However, the parents did not support teaching to the test at the expense of key learning areas like the arts. All parents hoped that the years of primary schooling would “open doors” for their children and allow them to grasp every opportunity, supported at home by the network of parental responsibility. In the words of one parent (Simone):

Education is essential for a population with a vision for the future, who think beyond the next pay cheque. And creativity and the arts need to be supported to provide balance, so we’re not raising generations of nerds but generations who understand and see beauty and therefore see a world worth saving.

These parents are not representative of the whole school but from a single case study using a small sample of parents, it is not possible to generalise results. However, it is important to acknowledge that the parental voice has an essential role to play in the way education policy is shaped. Although not representative of the whole school, the data from all of the parents in the study revealed that music and the arts were highly valued and a great deal of emphasis was placed on them as part of a “good education”.

The parents supported the arts as a way of teaching, as a way of encouraging creativity, as a means of personal expression and most significantly as a way of experiencing something different that would otherwise be unavailable. Many of the parents acknowledged music and the arts as a “different way” of learning and in the absence of the arts, many students would not have the opportunities outside the school. This was certainly the case with the instrumental music program. The removal or marginalisation of this learning area from the curriculum would be seen as a retrograde step in the eyes of this group of parents. Conversely, the parents acknowledged the time constraints of the school day and the consequent difficulty in teaching the 3Rs, the arts, languages, sport, extra-curricular, and the provision of a diverse range of experiences. The findings point to the need for clearer, more rigorous articulation and enactment of arts education policies and programs in schools, accompanied by a more public declaration of their value and academic worth. This should include a closer allegiance with professional arts organisations, and the provision of relevant pre-service teacher education programs. Whilst the data provided evidence that the hierarchy of subjects holds some validity, there is a need for more extensive research to determine the value teachers, parents and students place on key learning areas like the arts, whether or not literacy and numeracy are being taught at the expense of other KLAs, and what teachers, parents and students would do if the arts were dropped from the curriculum.

Postscript

Since this data was collected, the Queensland state government policy response to the national curriculum has been enacted in the form of the *Curriculum to Classroom* (C2C) policy. This is a prescriptive, standardized curriculum for state schools with a strong focus on English, maths and science, and assessment tasks from the preparatory year to year seven. It would be interesting to see changes in arts education as a result of this new policy at the case study school.
References


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