MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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The Early Stages
In broad terms, primary education in Wales has developed in parallel with England, except where cultural and language differences have called for separate attention. Music was such a case. In the early curricula of the mid-19th century music played an important role despite not having subject status. The Education Act of 1870 officially established music’s importance within school education. At first, the singing of songs was taught mechanically and was dependent on learning by ear. Choral singing, an important communal activity, also had its place in school teaching despite being taught by rote and, in the eyes of later critics, children remained 'receivers' rather than becoming 'explorers' (Shaw, 1944: 13). The practice of teaching 'singing by rote' became officially established. Standards were set by the 'Music Grant', a grant to schools of 'sixpence' per pupil for teaching singing by rote and a 'shilling' if notation was taught. In his report of 1863, the HMI Matthew Arnold suggested that is was easier to arouse children's interest through music than through literature (Connell, 1952).

For some time thereafter, elementary schools gave music more systematic attention. It was recommended that all teaching of music in schools should be considered under two headings: 'class teaching' and 'individual teaching'. The former should include:

- the singing of good songs in unison and in parts
- breathing exercises
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- voice production
- sight-singing
- ear training
- listening to good music.

The latter should include:

- the teaching of instruments or solo singing
- theory.

The Board of Education also recommended the use of 'tonic-solfa'. John Curwen, a Congregational minister in England, had succeeded in the second half of the 19th century in popularising his method of reading music by hand signs. This method improved singing across the whole of Wales, a development that contributed significantly to the nation's reputation for choral singing. His scheme of aural training could be handled by any competent teacher with a minimum knowledge of music. As a result children learnt to sing better and in tune.

Percussion had been experimented with since 1909 by Marie Salt and was increasingly used in the form of small percussion instruments, recorders or bamboo pipes, adding simple accompaniments to music making. In the early years percussion playing in schools was of a very crude nature (Moore, 1959: 2). Poor instruments were used and written arrangements were not available. However, between 1920 and 1930 Ernest Read arranged short works by well-known composers for percussion playing which started the first serious experiments with this form of music-making. His approach led to the reading of parts, resulting in proper control of the instruments. The experiments showed that simpler arrangements were required for infants of five to six years and a simpler form of reading medium was needed such as wall charts with coloured note heads. For eight-year olds and over, individual part reading was practicable. Out of this grew the present system of grading.
In 1937 Edgar Hunt and Carl Dolmetsch founded the Society of Recorder Players and it was at this point that recorder playing spread to schools. At first, it was confined to older children but in time elementary school pupils of six to seven years began to master it equally well.

During the latter part of the 19th century issues of national identity influenced popular music education in Britain. National folk songs from each home country became the basis of school song books (Cox, 1992). Stanford (1908), a conductor and influential teacher in the early part of the 20th century, thought that music had a defined purpose in representing the character of a nation which inspired him to collect British folk songs. He believed in two 'distinct schools', namely Saxon and Celtic, and four 'distinct styles':

- English - strong, solid and straightforward
- Welsh - full of dash and 'go'
- Scots - a mixture of humour and poetry
- Irish - with the most remarkable literature of folk music in the world.

He recommended that schools should use national songs as the basis of their teaching, starting with music indigenous to each ethnic group - the English should only learn English folk songs, the Scots Scottish songs and so on. Only later should they explore traditions of neighbouring groups.

The discovery and collection of national folksongs was booming all over Europe. Out of this movement emerged the Kodaly method which was based primarily on the singing of Hungarian folk songs and on the 'movable Do' or 'Lancashire' Solfa system of hand signs, on which Curwen too had based his 'tonic solfa'. The Kodaly method which, amongst others, used singing games
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in which children moved to songs, was originally developed for schools in Hungary and adopted for their National School Curriculum. As its influence crossed national boundaries, changes occurred, such as the modification of hand signs and the use of the national folk songs of the countries concerned. The Kodaly concept led to greater understanding of music and music teaching.

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), a Swiss educationist and composer, developed a different approach. He evolved a system of co-ordinating music and bodily movement. In 1910 he organized an institute for teaching rhythmical training. Three years later schools of Dalcroze Eurythmics were founded in Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden and USA. The method aimed at developing a sense of rhythm in students of music as well as in ordinary children, based on the notion that it quickens mental responsiveness and individual powers of self-expression. ‘Solfege’ was his method of emphasising singing and aural imagination. Many music teachers have since acquired knowledge of Eurythmics and Solfege in order to apply it in primary schools.

During the period of 1918 to 1941 Welsh primary schools benefited from an unexpected outside source. Both the University and the Welsh National Council of Music promoted hundreds of concerts throughout Wales in collaboration with colleges, schools, religious institutions and the Eisteddfod. During the Great Depression the Council provided music-making and musical education for the unemployed of the coal-mining industry. The lasting influence of the latter on the life of ordinary schools was immense (Allsobrook, 1992).
Another outside influence on music in the primary school, of particular significance in Wales, was the founding of the Welsh youth movement, *Urdd Gobaith Cymru*. Its promotion of Welsh music and language had a great influence on primary school Music education.

By 1944, music in primary schools in England and Wales had been improved and encompassed listening to music, music and movement as well as musical tuition. The 1944 Act also introduced the practice of collective worship, in the form of morning assembly. By 1953, the Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales), was able to report that further significant improvements in music education in Wales had taken place. The report acknowledged the positive influence of the Welsh Folksong Society and the Eisteddfodau on the teaching of music in Wales, and specifically recommended the application of the Curwen and Dalcroze methods in primary schools. However it was criticised for looking backwards rather than forwards in its recommendations (DES, 1967b: 210).

The introduction to schools of the Percussion Band Movement did much to make children familiar with 'art' music. Many of the arrangements were excerpts from operas and famous marches. Children were taught to read note values and rhythms and to play in time. However, there were still no opportunities to create their own music or to play music from cultures other than those which comprised the European 'classical' tradition. Schools' radio programmes on appreciation during this period were also aligned with the classical tradition. In the 1960s the 'Singing Together' and 'Time and Tune' radio programmes introduced children to some 'ethnic' music in the form of singing calypsos.
The Non-Western Dimension

The music curriculum in most schools in Wales had been associated with the traditional and 'art' musics of Western European culture. Schools were more inclined to teach children vocal, choral and instrumental music that was Germanic rather than African, and French rather than Asian-Indian.

This changed markedly in the 1960s and early 70s when the Orff-Schulwerk approach to music education took root in Britain. The method was first developed in the 20s and by the 1950s had established itself in many European countries, especially Austria and Germany. Through a series of books 'Music for Children', translated into many languages, including Welsh (Welsh Office, 1972: 15), Orff Schulwerk became very popular worldwide. Its philosophy was to combine the love of sound, music-making and its appreciation in such a manner that children could participate in their own musical education by stimulating their imagination and musical expression. Children were encouraged to create their own music to dance to, rather than rely on established accompaniments, such as the piano. The ideal of enriching pupils' lives by developing their inherent musicality was, of course, not unique (see, for example, the work of Kodaly and Dalcroze). What differentiated Orff's approach from others was the way this was achieved, namely by creating, listening and performing, and through speech, rhythm and movement. Participation was the key to Orff's concept.

Orff turned to Africa and Asia for percussion instruments and adapted them in such a manner that pupils were able to take part in performances whatever their level of ability. What made his approach to music education unique was that it introduced World Music to teaching through a series of Orff-Schulwerk books, specialising in Brazilian, African (Ghanaian) and Greek music. In the
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view of one African educationalist (Amoaku, 1982: 118), the Orff Schulwerk approach to music education sought to fuse the principles of Western and African traditions.

The proposed changes attracted some notes of dissent. For example, Burton (1986: 111) thought that problems were caused by primary schools performing songs from diverse cultures without having sufficient background information concerning the material. This lack of background knowledge, in Burton’s view, arose because the teachers themselves had not been trained to teach such material.

In tune with the times, the Plowden Report (DES, 1967a) recommended the adoption of two aspects of musical creativity which were an official recognition of the direction in which music education was going. These aspects were:

- the making of original patterns in sound (extemporisation, composition)
- the re-creation of patterns already devised by a composer (performance, interpretation).

In retrospect, one might regard it as a forerunner to the National Curriculum of 1992.

Later in 1967, the Gittins Report (DES, 1967b) covered the same ground for Wales. The purpose of learning music in the primary school, it stated, was not to produce trained musicians but to give pleasure, stimulate emotional response and help the child to develop awareness, sensitivity and understanding of music. It criticised the teaching of music in schools for lack of variety and recommended the application of the Kodaly method and the Orff-Schulwerk approach.
The decade of the Plowden and Gittins reports and the following decade, culminating 25 years later in the National Curriculum Document for Music in Wales (Welsh Office, 1992), were times of expansion and consolidation. New possibilities were discovered. It was suggested that, by moving away from the customary Western style of music to that of other cultures, mutual tolerance and respect might be fostered. This would find expression in relationships with people of other races and cultures (Dobbs, 1982: 45). An UNESCO commission recommended that people should commit themselves to a 'culture of tolerance' of other people's traditions and cultures. Cultural diversity in music education became the goal for all schools, not just for those in mostly urban conurbations with a concentration of pupils from non-Western cultures.

The musical experiences of all cultures have many things in common, especially in musical processes. These include listeners, composers and performers, evaluators, analysers, arrangers and conductors. There are also common themes, such as lullabies, love songs and ceremonial (ritual) music. Understanding the musical processes employed by different cultures helps to pinpoint the shared experience.

Whereas in the 1970s, teachers had been anxious to learn about Orff-Schulwerk and improvisation, the interest during the following decade shifted towards simple percussion instruments, often of non-Western origin, and 'home-made' instruments, graphic scores and creative music making in the classroom. Schools were encouraged to acquire some small 'ethnic' instruments such as claves, cabassas, maracas, guiros, rattles and vibra-slaps. Up until then most schools had only purchased drums, triangles,
tambourines and various rhythm sticks, the stock-in-trade of educational suppliers at the time.

With the influx of ethnic-minority pupils into primary schools, many education authorities introduced community projects which involved pupils working with professional musicians. Popular choices included:

- Indian sitar and tabla players
- Ghanaian dancers and drummers
- samba musicians from Brazil
- West Indian steel band musicians,

all engaged as 'Artistes in Residence'.

The National Curriculum And Music Education

Pre 1988, in the absence of a National Curriculum, a pamphlet from the Schools Music Association, Resources for Music in Schools: The Teachers (1983), which precipitated the HMI discussion document Music from 5 to 16, Curriculum Matters 4 two years later (DES, 1985), urged that every school should have a curriculum in Music as in all other subjects. The 1985 document, one in a series on curriculum matters, set out a framework within which each school might develop a music programme appropriate to its own pupils.

Music was designated a foundation subject in the National Curriculum in 1988. Two years later, the summarised comments and suggestions of experts and practitioners were published (DES, 1990) which were to have a significant influence on the debates over the introduction of Music as a National Curriculum subject. An area of particular interest in the National
Curriculum document, under 'Specific Issues', was the appearance of the term 'World Music'. This was the first time that this term had appeared in an official curriculum document. Much of the groundwork for this had been laid by the 'Music Working Party of the Arts Education for a Multicultural Society' (AEMS), based at the Arts Council in London. Their 1989 report dealt with curriculum development in music education and suggested ways of giving effect to existing policies of multicultural education in the arts curriculum. The working party suggested that a multi-music curriculum might include the understanding of the development of a range of musical traditions and styles from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Caribbean (AEMS, 1989: 5).

When the first interim report of the Working Group for Music in the National Curriculum (DES and Welsh Office, 1991) was published, drawing heavily on the experiences of HMI and the work of AEMS, two profile components with two attainment targets (AT) each were proposed, a system that had already been tested in GCSE music courses in England (Ward and Glover, 1993:35):

- Music Making: AT1 Performing and AT2 Composing
- Understanding Music: AT3 Listening and AT4 Knowing.

In order to encourage pupils to participate in active music making, the first two attainment targets were separated from the last two. The latter relied almost exclusively on the Western 'classical' tradition, a view criticised by leading musicians such as the conductor Simon Rattle and the composer Pierre Boulez. The interim report was widely discussed and responded to. When the revised proposals appeared the attainment targets had been reduced to three, and the Secretary of State demanded further simplifications. The Working Group was at serious odds with intended government policies and the National Curriculum Council.
At this juncture the Curriculum Council for Wales broke ranks and threw its weight behind the Working Group. It produced a separate set of drafts and final orders, which were identical to those of the Working Group. No other subject in the National Curriculum had gone through such upheavals. The Welsh claim to a different curriculum was based on historical and cultural differences in Music between the two countries. Wales needed an active Music curriculum, which specifically included Welsh music. In AT3 the Working Group had provided a target that would develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the history and tradition of music. The Curriculum Council for Wales insisted on including a specific stipulation in the final document that pupils should be taught the music of Wales.

When the National Curriculum for Music finally became statutory in 1992, England and Wales had different sets of attainment targets. The new National Curriculum also made Music a compulsory subject for children between the ages of five and fourteen. Government legislation required that one of the activities in Music which children should be taught was to listen attentively and respond to music of different styles, times and culture, and relate it to its historical and cultural background. This presented an enormous challenge to teachers.

The National Curriculum for Music in Wales for primary schools now contains the following attainment targets at Key Stages 1 and 2:

- Attainment Target 1 (AT1): Performing
- Attainment target 2 (AT2): Composing
- Attainment Target 3 (AT3): Appraising

The Attainment Targets specify the expected standards of pupils' performance, including that pupils should be taught to listen attentively to music of different styles, times and cultures, and identify its main
characteristics. They should recognise and respond to the characteristic rhythms and instrumental sounds of music from Africa, South America, India and the West Indies.

In the section on 'Perspectives on Music Education' the document states that it is important that all pupils, wherever they live in Wales and whatever their ethnic or cultural roots, should experience music from a variety of cultures. In schools, where pupils come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, an extra dimension may be developed by drawing on the pupils' own experiences or on those of their relatives and friends. The operative word here was 'may' in case the sentence be mis-interpreted and schools concentrated on a dominant ethnicity to the exclusion of all others. In fact, the 1992 document gives examples of how to set about arranging intercultural lessons, such as a 'Plan for developing Units of Work' for music from around the world and one specifically for Chinese music.

The inclusion of Music as a foundation subject led to an increased awareness of its educational significance. Invariably, this provoked new questions, for instance how the requirements in their published form could be translated into expected practices? Some assessed the situation by stating that the short-term effect of the National Curriculum in Music was in the considerable upgrading of interest in and commitment to music education in the classroom, especially in primary schools. Its long-term success, it was thought, would depend on how much teachers were prepared to make the system their own (Odam, 1995: 5).

In the 1994 review of the National Curriculum the overall content was reduced. However, it was recommended that Music should continue to be assessed through end of Key Stage statements, on a par with Art and Physical
Education. Furthermore, in the primary school all subjects of the National Curriculum should continue to be studied at Key Stages 1 and 2 because they provided a broad and balanced entitlement for all pupils.

In revising the subject orders further at the end of the century it was hoped that the curriculum would be more manageable so that a common structure will help schools to plan across the whole curriculum. A focus statement is included for each subject at each key stage which advises what pupils should be taught at that key stage. Instead of having end-of-key-stage descriptions for music, they are replaced by level descriptions in order that a consistent method of assessment can be attained across all subjects. With these new initiatives, the standard of achievement in music by pupils in schools throughout Wales should be greatly improved.

These opportunities should enable pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 not only to develop their musical skills but also to develop their communication skills through the use and application of information technology and through personal and social education. This added dimension to their music education should give pupils a sound foundation on which to build for their future development.

Music is an integral part of young children's intellectual, cultural, emotional and spiritual development and should not be treated in isolation from the rest of the curriculum. To include music across that curriculum will provide pupils with experiences that will broaden their thinking and facilitate a deeper understanding of the world in which they live. Every pupil in the classroom should be involved in some form of music making. Music is not just for the 'musically gifted' or 'able performers' but needs to be differentiated. It is part of our lives and enriches our everyday experiences in thinking and feeling.
The challenge for teachers is to motivate pupils in order to engage them in tasks which interest and enthuse their curiosity. Teachers too are learners and they need to establish a keen sense of exploration, which must be activated, maintained and directed as part of the learning process. Both teachers and pupils will continue to learn because this is part of the human condition. Together they can grow in their understanding of music and gain pleasure in it.

**Questions for discussion**

1. What problems did specialist music teachers and non-specialists alike face with the implementation of the National Curriculum Document for Music in Wales?
2. Why was it important to include music from other cultures in the curriculum?
3. What problems face non-Welsh speaking teachers with having to teach Welsh music, for example Cerdd Dant?
4. Do the assessment procedures lead to higher standards of achievement?
5. Can the work in music be made appropriate for everybody in the class?
6. Can music lessons be challenging and differentiated?
7. Can the music chosen by teachers motivate and enthuse pupils?
8. What constitutes a broad and balanced music curriculum that covers a range of styles and traditions, reflecting the National Curriculum programmes of study?
9. Does musical notation impede or stifle the development of musical skills?
10. Various forms of notation are means of communication, not ends in themselves. Can they cause barriers to progress in music?
Recommended reading


Bibliography