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The teaching of music in the primary school by the non-music specialist

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This article reports on an investigation of the teaching of music by non-music specialists in the primary school. In particular, it examines attitudes to teaching music, factors affecting teachers' confidence, the relationship between confidence and training, support for music teaching, teaching experience and musical background. The non-specialist teachers taking part in this survey were chosen from twelve schools across one Local Education Authority (LEA). The attitudes and views on teaching music of 71 teachers were obtained through a questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews. The findings of this survey show that there is much work still to be done in providing non-specialists with effective long-term training and support to increase their music skills, subject knowledge, and confidence, to enable them to make a more marked difference to children's musical education.

Introduction

Since the introduction of the Education Reform Act (1988) and the National Curriculum in the UK, it is now expected that all children in England and Wales will be taught music by their class teacher or a music specialist. This statutory requirement has placed enormous demands upon teachers, many of whom were initially trained as generalists. These generalist teachers are now required to teach music to specific levels which demand skills of a very high order, irrespective of their inadequate training in music and lack of confidence. Furthermore, societal expectations today demand that a teacher's classroom practice, in all subject areas of the National Curriculum, is now publicly verifiable (Carre, 1993). This public accountability led to concerns about the state of music in English and Welsh primary schools. These concerns brought into focus an on-going debate which first emerged in the early 1980s, of whether or not music should be taught by a specialist (music co-ordinator) or non-specialist (the class teacher with little or no musical skills). A range of views have been presented, all seeking to determine the relative importance of the specialist or non-specialist in teaching music at primary level.

However, since the introduction of the National Curriculum for Music, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) have argued that, as with other subjects, the development of primary music largely depends on the 'level of expertise and quality of teaching available' (OFSTED, 1995: 17). More recently, it has been accepted that there are not enough music specialists in primary schools today, capable of providing a high quality music education (DFEE, 1998; Milliband, 2004). Consequently, the role of the non-specialist is crucial,

and the question remains – is it reasonable to expect the non-specialist teacher to teach music given its specific subject status? Does the non-specialist teacher have the subject knowledge, confidence and expertise to develop and promote music to the ‘high standard’ required by the National Curriculum?

These questions have relevance for the new primary strategy, *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003), a report designed to develop programmes for modern foreign languages, physical education, music, the arts and information and communication technology (ICT), develop schools’ and teachers’ own professional ability, and develop assessment for learning. This document places more emphasis on these foundation subjects and, in particular, the development of children’s self-esteem, motivation, achievement, life skills, and the fostering of the individual’s talent through creativity (DfEE, 2003: 31). These questions are also significant to the musical development of *all* children and relevant to school organisation.

To appreciate the on-going debate of music specialist versus non-specialist and to place the current research in context, it is important to consider the research evidence and reports that have accumulated on this subject over the last 25 years.

Historical context

The first reference to support fully some form of curriculum co-ordination by a specialist teacher was the Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) survey *Primary Education in England* (DES, 1978). This survey reported a high correlation between standards at primary level and the effective use of the curriculum co-ordinator, noting that this effectiveness depends on both the strengths of the co-ordinator and receptiveness to suggestions and change by staff. At the same time, the report accepted that the class teacher was perhaps in a better position to ensure that the curriculum ‘matched’ each child’s intellectual ability (Allen, 1988: 217). As a result of this publication, the idea of the curriculum co-ordinator began to gain momentum, as a series of reports and recommendations ensued: the *Gulbenkian Report* (1982), *Education 5–9* (DES, 1982) and *9–13 Middle Schools* (DES, 1983). These reports all recommended that curriculum specialist teachers should be appointed and these specialists should share their expertise and knowledge with their colleagues. Moreover, they acknowledged that few teachers could be expected to be an expert in all areas of the curriculum.

These views were further reinforced by a number of government initiatives: the *Primary Schools Research and Development Group* (1983), the *Education 8–12: Combined and Middle Schools Report* (DES, 1985), the *Curriculum 5–16: Curriculum Matters* (DES, 1985), *Better Schools* (DES, 1985) and the Inner London Education Authority’s survey *Improving Primary Schools* (ILEA, 1985), and culminated in *Curriculum Matters 4: Music From 5–16* (DES, 1985). This latter document emphasised the importance of practical music activities and recommended specialised music teaching from the age of eight by the class teacher or with the support of the music co-ordinator.

Alexander *et al.* (1992) argued that it was the introduction of the National Curriculum that brought the question of subject expertise to the fore, and that primary teachers now faced ‘a demand which may well be unreasonable and unrealistic, as with the broadening

curriculum, many teachers may compromise the quality of teaching in order to cope with the quantity' (p. 42). At the same time, Alexander *et al.* also recommended that the existing role of class teacher and consultant be strengthened by introducing semi-specialist and specialist teaching to primary schools and suggested concentrating specialist teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2 (p. 42).

After the introduction of the National Curriculum a number of reports and reviews were instigated by the Department for Education and Science, including *Music for Ages 5–14* (1991), in which it was noted that schools without a teacher with sufficient expertise in music to give curriculum leadership had difficulty in teaching an appropriate range of musical activities consistently. Music was more often taught by specialist teachers at primary level than any other subject, and where such teaching was well planned and managed, it was found to result in high standards of musical work. HMI also observed that the presence of a specialist teacher, whether or not they are mainly employed in specialist teaching, is usually associated with good quality work in music. But the report accepted that support was necessary, noting that 'the availability of a teacher with expertise in music to help those colleagues who are less skilled... is a crucial factor in achieving success' (p. 27).

Similarly, the HMI report, *Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum* (1995), commented that while standards of music were uniformly high, the highest standards were often found 'in lessons taught jointly by a music specialist and the class teacher, or when teachers who work for part of the time as music specialists taught their own class' (p. 18). Furthermore, the report acknowledged the mismatch between the subject matter to be taught and the teacher's subject knowledge.

Consequently, after the implementation of the National Curriculum, three different views emerged with regard to the teaching of music in the primary school:

- (1) Schools should have a music co-ordinator/consultant on the staff to teach music to each class;
- (2) Music education should be the responsibility of the generalist class teacher;
- (3) Music co-ordinators should support the class teacher.

Arguments supporting each of these views can be found in the research literature. Tillman (1998) and Glover and Ward (1993) suggested that music should be taught by a single class teacher, arguing that the teacher's own skills, as well as their general teaching ability, can be 'sufficient to enable children to learn' (Glover & Ward, 1993: 17). Similarly, Davies (1994), observing the way children can assimilate musical concepts without formal teaching at a very young age, claimed that the necessary demands could be met by the non-specialist teacher. The research which supports this point is Moog's study of *The Musical Experiences of the Pre-School Child* (1968). He concluded that musical ability is not special, but is acquired like 'understanding speech'; in other words, musicality is the application of the teacher's general ability. However, Plummeridge claims that a non-specialist teacher would be better advised to improve their own musical ability as a 'pre-requisite to music teaching' (Plummeridge, 1991: 89).

Mills (1989: 126) makes the important point that music taught by the class teacher helps children to appreciate music as part of the whole curriculum, and enables greater opportunities to be provided for music. Mills also stresses the importance of the teacher's

knowledge of individual children, so they can observe the children's musical development, ascertain their capabilities, and plan with this in mind. Additionally, Mills believes that 'music is for all children' and as such, should be taught 'by all teachers'. This can be achieved, she argues, given appropriate preparation and support. Mills promotes this view in order to eschew music becoming something separatist and elitist; a view shared by Glover and Ward (1993), Hennessy (1994), Struthers (1994) and Stocks (1998).

However, Lawson *et al.* (1994) express concern that 'there may be insufficient teachers in primary schools with the necessary confidence and expertise to implement fully the music programme' (p. 3). They also point out the need for different teaching roles, suggesting those of musical model, music critic and curriculum developer. Lawson *et al.* argue that in order to function in these roles, primary teachers of music need a sound basis of both musical experience and teaching expertise (p. 8). Similarly, Rainbow (1996) argued that the acquisition of techniques such as singing and aural perception are essential before introducing them to children (p. 10).

Glover and Ward (1993) take a different view. They argue that music is an important part of life both at a personal level and from an educational point of view. As we use music in everyday life for various purposes such as dancing and relaxation, they suggest, we all hear and respond to structures in music even if not trained to do so. Glover and Ward believe all trained teachers possess the ability to teach basic musical skills to all children, but they do concede that a lack of training in music education may lower the non-specialists' confidence. They suggest that although everyone has the capacity to achieve in music, non-specialists may see unrealistic aims as the ideal, fostering the view that music is a subject to be taught by specialists. Hennessy (2000) argues that this is a deeply entrenched view as many teachers believe that music requires 'gifts that are only attainable by, or given to, a chosen few' (pp. 183–184).

Likewise, Binns (1994: 2) and Flash (1993: 67) believe that every teacher can teach music, and note that while assistance from a specialist is useful, teachers should not be inhibited by the absence of this support. Suzuki (1969) endorsed this viewpoint. He relates the learning of violin playing to language acquisition, stating that any teacher can become comfortable with music as with handwriting or basic numeracy (p. 14). Furthermore, Gilbert (1981) avers that just as teachers can teach art by developing their skills, teachers can similarly provide interesting and varied musical activities (p. 6), but adds that the shortage of a good music specialist can result in music being neglected in some schools, a consequence of underfunding (Hennessy, 2000). Stocks (1998) concurs, accepting that the number of primary music specialists is limited, but if non-specialists are helped to find confidence through in-service training, have appropriate access to resources, are provided with professional in-class support then music can be taught effectively by the non-specialist. Moreover, support from the music specialist would allow enhanced opportunities for the professional development of the class teacher (Allen, 1989: 144).

These different views are important as they have implications, not only for schools, but for Initial Teacher Training Institutions since the introduction of the Teacher Training National Curricula in England and Wales (DfEE, 1998). This document sets out a number of statutory requirements that must be met before entering the teaching profession: an essential core of knowledge, understanding and skills which include effective teaching and assessment methods, pedagogical content knowledge and understanding, and

subject knowledge and understanding, if standards in teaching are to be raised (Parker, 2000: 89).

Against this background, the following study was instigated to provide a useful update, at the mid-decade point, on the views of non-specialist music teachers, in order to ascertain if it is realistic to expect them to teach music and meet quality assurance standards. In so doing, it provides insight into a group of qualified teachers' perspectives on their ability to teach music. It also attempts to identify those issues, other than music knowledge, which may influence non-specialist teachers' reluctance to teach music.

Method

The research focuses on non-specialist teachers' levels of confidence in teaching music, their musical training and their qualifications. It considers non-specialist teachers' attitudes towards music and the development of their musical pedagogy. These areas are explored through two research questions:

- (1) To what extent do non-specialist teachers feel able to teach music to children?
 - (i) Is there a correlation between confidence and musical experience and training?
 - (ii) Is there a correlation between confidence and key stage taught?
- (2) What support do non-specialist teachers receive in music?

The non-probability sample was chosen from the teaching population of one Local Education Authority (LEA). Twelve schools were included in the sample and all class teachers within these schools (141 teachers) were asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition, 23% of these teachers (16 teachers) were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview.

Research instruments

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data was thought to best address the research questions. The questionnaire was limited to six main questions and these focused on:

- (1) confidence in music teaching;
- (2) support for music teaching;
- (3) training;
- (4) teaching experience;
- (5) musical background;
- (6) attitude towards music.

The responses were indicated by ticking boxes or rating by a numbering system. The questionnaire was piloted by four teachers from one school in the same LEA in order to maximise reliability. A small number of minor amendments were made to the questionnaire after the pilot. A total of 141 questionnaires were then distributed to class teachers. Seventy-one of the questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 50%. The questionnaires

had been coded in order to identify the response rate from each school and no school had a 100% response rate.

The semi-structured interview

At the end of the questionnaire a paragraph was added asking if respondents would be prepared to be interviewed. Sixteen class teachers, 23% of the survey sample, agreed to be interviewed. The questions were grouped into the same six sections as for the questionnaire above. The interview schedule was introduced by a preamble which included prompts and probes designed to guarantee consistency of treatment across the series of interviews. The responses to questions were written down by the interviewer and then read back to the interviewee in order to verify the information recorded and give the respondent the opportunity to expand on their answer. The purpose of the interviews was firstly to expand upon information provided by the questionnaire, by investigating respondents' motives and feelings more fully, and secondly to maximise reliability and validity of the study.

Analysis: summary of results

The initial analysis of data involved an examination of the questionnaire responses which was done in three stages. First, all the responses from all class teachers were counted for each question. Second, responses from Key Stage 1 (ages 4–7) and Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11) teachers were compared. Third, the questionnaires were analysed for evidence of correlation between responses to two questions, through the use of a chi-squared significance test. In applying this test, the following precautions were observed: categories used in the contingency table were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. However, non-responses have not been used, and totals amended accordingly; the sum of each column has been checked in each case to ensure that it equals the number of cases in the study (after non-responses have been removed); if an expected value was below 5, categories were combined as appropriate to give sufficiently large classes of data. (Where the number of independent variables is 1, Yates' correction for continuity has been applied to decrease the error caused by the grouping.)

Background information on respondents

The sample was shown to include teachers with a range of teaching experience (Table 1).

The responses of teachers from different key stages and with different lengths of teaching experience are examined at a later stage in order to identify any notable differences in their responses to the questions.

Table 1 *Teaching experience*

| Number of years teaching experience | 0–5 | 6–10 | 11–15 | 16–20 | 21 or more |
|-------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|------------|
| Number of respondents | 19 | 19 | 11 | 7 | 15 |
| Percentage | 27% | 27% | 15% | 10% | 21% |

Of the 71 respondents, 54 were responsible for one or more subject areas, and of these seven were responsible for music. Sixty-six teachers (93% of the sample), taught music to their own class. In addition, 11 had a colleague, a co-ordinator or a specialist to teach music for them, although two specified that this was for small group instrumental teaching rather than class music lessons. This raises the interesting point that an instrumental lesson may be seen by some to take the place of a class lesson. The remaining five respondents (7% of the sample) had music taught to their class by an external music specialist. However of these five, four indicated by their responses to other questions that they did in fact teach some music themselves. To summarise, only one teacher from a sample of 71 taught no music.

Confidence of the non-music specialist

Respondents were asked to rank the ten National Curriculum subjects on a scale of one to ten, one indicating that they felt most confident to teach a subject, through to ten indicating that a subject was the one they felt least confident to teach. On this scale music was given the lowest ranking of confidence; an average of 7.35%. When interviewed about their confidence in teaching music there was a lot of uncertainty about the subject. Not being able to read music made respondents feel very vulnerable. They viewed music as a 'specialist area' unlike other subjects. Other key factors which could explain the low ranking of music on the confidence scale were mentioned during interview: a lack of musical knowledge, time and teaching environment, resources and age group taught. In a comparison of the responses to this latter point, the survey showed, generally speaking, a higher proportion of KS2 teachers felt less confident in teaching music (38%) than those in KS1 (33%). Although this does show a higher proportion of KS2 teachers who are not confident in teaching music and a higher proportion of KS1 who are reasonably confident, the difference was not found to be a significant one when statistically tested.

Musical experience and training

In response to the question on musical training, 69% of the sample surveyed had received some musical education as part of their initial teacher training. Although the content of music courses in initial teacher training was not investigated, it was noted that a higher proportion of more recent entrants to the profession have received initial teacher training in music than those teachers who had been teaching for more than 21 years or more.

These responses were examined further to determine whether any correlation existed between initial teacher training in music and level of confidence to teach it. A chi-squared test was applied to these data and the calculations show a significant link between these two points ($p = 0.04$).

As it had been noted that more recent entrants to teaching were more likely to have received initial training in music, and that those who received this training were more likely to feel confident to teach music, it was important to investigate any possible link between confidence and number of years' teaching experience (Table 2).

When the chi-squared test was applied to these data, a marginally significant link ($p = 0.18$) between number of years teaching experience in primary schools and level of

Table 2 *Confidence, by experience*

| Level of confidence | Number of years teaching in primary schools | | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------|---------|---------|------------|
| | 0–5 | 6–10 | 11–15 | 16–20 | 21 or more |
| Very confident | 4 (21%) | 1 (5%) | 1 (9%) | 2(29%) | 1(7%) |
| Reasonably confident | 10 (53%) | 13 (68%) | 4 (36%) | 1 (14%) | 7 (47%) |
| Not confident | 4 (21%) | 5 (26%) | 6 (55%) | 3 (43%) | 7 (47%) |
| No response | 1 (5%) | 0 | 0 | 1(14%) | 0 |
| Total | 19 | 19 | 11 | 7 | 15 |

confidence was discovered, suggesting that a higher proportion of more recent entrants to the profession felt confident to teach music.

In response to the question on musical qualifications, 75% had none, 20% had up to and including grade five Associated Board practical/theory and/or GCSE in music. None had qualifications in grades 6–8 and or A level music, 2% had a degree in music and 3% did not respond. These responses were examined further to determine whether there was any correlation between musical qualifications (musical knowledge) and level of confidence to teach. Responses from teachers with no musical qualifications were compared with responses from teachers who did have qualifications in music (Table 3).

Table 3 *Confidence, by qualifications*

| | No qualifications in music | Qualifications in music | No response |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Very confident | 1 | 7 | 1 |
| Reasonably confident | 23 | 12 | 0 |
| Not confident | 23 | 1 | 1 |
| No response | 1 | 1 | 0 |

A chi-squared test was applied to these data and a significant link ($p=0.010$) was found between musical qualifications and confidence to teach music.

Teachers' attitudes towards music

This section of the questionnaire concentrated on whether teachers participated in musical activities, and whether they were able to promote music as an enjoyable subject. Respondents were asked to indicate if they participated in music by ticking one of the following: none, listen to music, sing, sing in a choir, play an instrument, play with a group/band/orchestra, or any other activity. For the purpose of data analysis and application of statistical procedures, respondents were divided into discrete categories: those who did not participate, those who listened to music but did not participate, those who listened to music but did participate in any other way, those who played an instrument and or sang, without indicating listening to music and those who listened to music in addition to playing an instrument or singing. These were then divided into categories of 'low' and 'high' participation. The total of low participation was 37 and the high 38. These data

were then examined in relation to the level of confidence respondents felt to teach music (Table 4).

Table 4 *Confidence, by participation in musical activities*

| | Low activities | High activities |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Very confident | 0 | 9 |
| Reasonably confident | 17 | 18 |
| Not confident | 19 | 6 |
| No response | 1 | 1 |

A chi-squared test was then applied to these data to determine whether musical activities and level of confidence were independent variables, or whether there was a significant link between the two sets of numerical data. A connection between the responses to each question was found to be highly significant ($p = 0.010$).

With regard to the question on whether respondents were able to promote music as an enjoyable subject, 77% said yes, 20% said no, and 3% did not respond. Further links between participating in musical activities, and feeling able to promote music were examined, but no significant link was discovered.

Support in music teaching

In this part of the questionnaire respondents were asked about the forms of support they received in music teaching and whether the support received enabled them to teach music independently. They were then asked what kind of support they would like to receive. There were some multiple responses to this question, as teachers often used more than one form of support in their teaching (Table 5).

Table 5 *Forms of support used or received by respondents*

| Form of support | Non-specialists |
|--|-----------------|
| Text books and teacher guides | 30 (47%) |
| School scheme of work | 40 (63%) |
| Respondent's own knowledge and ideas | 20 (31%) |
| A published music scheme | 44 (69%) |
| Support in own classroom by a music specialist | 6 (9%) |
| In-service training (INSET) in music | 22 (34%) |
| Advice/assistance in planning from music coordinator | 18 (28%) |
| Television programmes and radio broadcasts | 12 (19%) |
| None of the above | 0 |
| No response | 3 |

Although the categories stating forms of support are not mutually exclusive, direct comparisons can be made between percentages linked to KS1 and KS2. Respondents in

KS2 indicated a higher usage of all forms of support with the exception of INSET and use of own knowledge and ideas. The response to the latter from KS1 teachers indicates that twice as many of them felt more able to use their own knowledge and ideas to support their music teaching than KS2 teachers.

Responses from interviewees give some insight into the forms of support found most valuable by teachers. Where in-class support from music specialists was received, it was generally found very helpful. Non-specialists were attracted to music schemes because they liked the support of the tape when teaching singing and they felt the scheme gave them some direction. But they preferred simple schemes or teaching packs with learning outcomes for each year group; schemes that were teacher- and child-friendly, and that provided time-saving activities.

Teaching different aspects of music

This section was designed to investigate whether teachers felt more confident teaching some aspects of music than others, and the areas they taught most often. When asked how frequently respondents sang songs with their class, 9 responded every day, 17 more than one each week, 18 once each week, 16 very rarely and 4 never. The interview data revealed the inadequacy a number of respondents felt in teaching singing. Some found it difficult to sing in tune, others felt frustrated at not being able to sing well and a number felt very insecure when teaching older children.

When responses from KS1 and KS2 were compared, it was noted that KS1 teachers sang more frequently than those in KS2. A chi-squared test was applied to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the two sets of variables, and this was confirmed at the 1% level of significance ($p = 0.010$).

In respect to respondents being asked if they taught one area of music more often than others (singing, rhythm, listening, exploration of instruments notation and composition) 46% responded 'yes' and 17% said no, with 1% no response. Singing was the aspect taught most frequently, followed by rhythm and listening. We found this surprising given the inadequacy felt by so many respondents. However, respondents found composition and musical notation very difficult to teach.

When asked if they linked music with other subjects, 66% responded 'yes' and 34% said 'no.' Moreover, 52% felt more confident teaching music when linked with other subjects and 26% did not. Twenty-one per cent did not respond. To determine whether the difference in responses between KS1 and KS2 were significant, a chi-squared test was applied with the no-response and not applicable categories removed, and a significant agreement was established ($p = 0.08$).

Discussions and conclusion

Do non-specialists feel confident to teach music?

Of the non-specialist teachers, 6% were found to feel very confident to teach music, 52% reasonably confident and 39% not confident, while 3% did not respond. Although this amounts to 58% of non-specialists having some degree of confidence to teach music,

music was found to be the subject which most teachers ranked last on the confidence scale of subjects and the lowest mean score when subjects were ranked in order of confidence. Several reasons may account for this. Teachers were daunted by the idea of singing, especially if unsure of their own voice and their ability to stay in tune. Respondents found singing much harder when working with older children which undermined teachers' confidence; a consequence of their low musical ability and lack of subject knowledge.

The survey also indicated a significant link between initial teacher training and teachers' levels of confidence ($p = 0.18$). Given this relationship it was found that a higher proportion of teachers who had entered the profession up to 10 years ago received initial teacher training in music than those who had been teaching for 11 years or more. Any relationship assumed between initial training and confidence could therefore include length of teaching experience. In addition, a marginal link was discovered between the number of years teaching and confidence to teach music, implying that those teachers with ten years primary experience or less, were likely to feel more confident to teach music than those who had been teaching longer.

This implies that newer entrants to the profession are likely to feel more confident in teaching music due to the receipt of initial teacher training in music. But the interviews revealed that, in their view, respondents felt this training did not equip them to teach music effectively. Additional causes for greater confidence could be enthusiasm and a readiness to increase subject knowledge or experiment with new ideas and teaching methods. Furthermore, a highly significant link ($p = 0.010$) was found between musical qualifications and confidence to teach music. This does not prove causality, but suggests the possibility that those teachers with practical musical qualifications are more likely to feel confident to teach it. Not surprisingly, those teachers with musical qualifications are more likely to have a personal interest in music and therefore, a greater understanding of the subject.

The possibility of personal interest in music affecting confidence is supported by the highly significant link discovered between participation in musical activities and confidence to teach music. This suggests that those teachers who participate in musical activities are more likely to feel confident to teach it. Again, higher confidence levels could also be caused by the greater personal interest and increased knowledge and understanding of the subject brought about by personal participation.

Teachers' attitudes towards music

Of the sample studied, all but seven participated in some form of musical activity. Thirty listened to music for pleasure, but did not take a more active form of participation. The remaining 34 sang or played a musical instrument and thirty of these also listened to music for pleasure. It can therefore be seen that a high proportion do enjoy some form of music. Seventy-seven per cent also felt able to promote music as an enjoyable subject, although statistically no significant link was established between participating in musical activities and feeling able to promote music. It was also acknowledged by respondents that sound subject knowledge enabled teachers to convey their enthusiasm for music to children and gave them credibility in the teaching situation.

Support in music teaching

The survey findings indicate that 56% of non-specialist teachers did rely on instructions provided by a scheme or text in order to teach music. The schemes identified were quite prescriptive, with tapes and lesson plans. They were followed religiously but without proper interpretation. The interviewees commented that the reason for this was their inadequate background knowledge.

There is evidence to show that teachers generally felt most confident teaching rhythm or listening, and 72% of non-specialists were found to feel more confident teaching activities such as clapping games, musical appreciation and the historical aspects of music, than with teaching music theory. They commented that the historical aspects could be researched, presumably more easily than aspects of musical content.

Respondents were concerned about so-called tone deafness, ability to pitch notes and an inability to read musical notation and the difficulty of teaching it – a consequence of low confidence and inadequate input at teacher training level. Several interviewees commented that even with curriculum support they found notation difficult to understand and teach.

Evidence from the present survey suggests that non-specialist teachers of music received the following forms of support, in descending order of frequency of response: published schemes, use of school schemes of work, text books on music, INSET, teacher guides, own knowledge and ideas, school music co-ordinator, television programmes and radio broadcasts. The least frequent form of support available was support in the classroom from a specialist musician.

Fifty-two percent of KS1 respondents felt more able to use their own knowledge and ideas compared with 26% of KS2 teachers. A higher use of all other forms of support by KS2 teachers is suggested, with the exception of INSET. Clearly, this suggests that KS2 teachers require greater support than KS1 teachers in meeting the National Curriculum requirements and to reliance on instructions in order to teach music. Sixty-one per cent of KS2 respondents rely on instructions compared with KS1 respondents, although this was discovered to be only marginally significant ($p=0.20$). Teachers used schemes as a prop choosing aspects of the scheme they felt comfortable with, as these compensated for a lack of teacher knowledge.

Responses were also examined in connection with confidence levels, and it was noted that those teachers who used their own knowledge and ideas, 33% felt very confident to teach music – a higher proportion of ‘very confident’ respondents than any other form of support. However, this does not prove causality. It could be argued that teachers who are able to use their own knowledge and ideas feel more confident to teach music, or that those teachers with more confidence are more likely to use their own knowledge and ideas. Similarly, low confidence levels are suggested by those respondents using television programmes and radio broadcasts, (69% of those using this kind of support did not feel confident to teach music – a higher proportion than for any other form of support), but the response does not clarify whether it is because television and radio programmes do not build teachers’ confidence or that teachers with low confidence levels tend to use television and radio broadcasts to support their teaching.

Responses were also examined in connection with teachers’ ability to teach music independently. The data here are perhaps not reliable due to the high non-response to the

question on independent teaching, but it is interesting to note that the highest independent levels (89%) arose from those respondents who received advice and assistance from their school music co-ordinators. One of the lowest independence levels was that of respondents who used their own knowledge and ideas, which is surprising as one would expect this to enable independence of teaching. Eighty three percent of those teachers receiving in-class support felt able to teach music independently. It is possible that this is due to another teacher teaching music to their class, although arguably this is not independent teaching on the part of the class teacher, or that class teachers are gaining independence through working with, or observing a specialist. The lowest independence levels (69%), as with confidence levels, arose from the group of respondents using television and radio broadcasts.

What kind of support would the non-specialist like to receive?

The survey response indicates a strong preference (58%) for in-class support by a music specialist. Following this in order of preference were INSET sessions (41%), in-class training from tape, or video or television lessons (25%), personal training at home or in teachers' own time (14%).

Class teachers interviewed spoke in favour of in-class support, describing a difference in children's music since receiving this form of assistance, and how a different teacher can stimulate activity. Clearly, this suggests that regular support over the academic year might be helpful in order to provide an opportunity for class teachers to follow up input on their own before some different input from a specialist. This may give time for any problem areas to be identified by the class teacher, before meeting the music co-ordinator. Partnership teaching is a way of working together, sharing ideas and encouraging teacher confidence. Although in-class support from a music co-ordinator was the least frequently received, this was identified as the preferred resource above other forms of training. In addition, packs for teaching with learning outcomes for each year group, teacher and child friendly lesson plans, tapes or videos, would be helpful. But these schemes need to be more comprehensive than those suggested by class teachers. Since the completion of this study schemes have been published to support the National Curriculum and the new QCA Scheme of Work for Music, notably Music Express and the Language Centre Publications, Music Resource Files.

It might be helpful for teachers if schemes of work are linked with the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, allowing progression and continuity from term to term. These schemes could then identify the key skills to be taught, how they relate to each other and linked to time allocation in order to create a balance between each aspect of music taught. Teaching strategies and activities, which children will be engaged in, should also be identified. In addition, assessment opportunities, resource allocation and possibilities for differentiation may also need highlighting for quality learning to take place.

In our view, this kind of scheme may be more effective if it emerges from staff discussions and agreement. Participation by class teachers in developing the music curriculum creates a sense of identity, fosters more commitment in meeting aims and objectives and dissipates resistance to change. We argue that the teaching of music in

the primary school may not develop unless there is an opportunity for class teachers' professional development and that may include experience of making music. Teachers require the opportunity and support to explore new approaches to teaching music in the context of their own classroom with the active support of a specialist teacher.

Conclusion

The survey indicates that class teachers are keen to maintain a classroom working environment for all curriculum subjects, but comments were made on the importance of a specialist teacher for musical expertise. It was agreed that greater subject knowledge would increase confidence to teach music and that this may best be developed by working with specialist teachers in the classroom. The implication is that while teachers are confident in their own pedagogical skills, they are less secure with music subject matter, content and knowledge. It is suggested that senior management consider instigating a collegial strategy, to allow collaboration, co-operation and communication to be improved between the music and non-music specialist. We believe an approach of this kind may foster mutual trust and lead to the professional growth of the non-music specialist. However, this assumes that a music specialist is available in each school, which we know is not always true. In these cases, there is perhaps a need for music consultants to support teachers in musical pedagogy and practical ideas.

This study confirms that there is a lower teacher confidence in music compared to other subjects. It highlights that KS2 teachers are generally less confident in their ability to teach music and less likely to feel they are meeting the National Curriculum requirements for music. It observes that many non-specialists feel more comfortable leading musical activities than with teaching music theory and suggests that teachers can be deterred by composition and musical notation. Data also suggest that where teachers do link music with other subjects, a high proportion of KS2 teachers find music easier to teach. Moreover, a significant relationship was established between initial teacher training in music, musical qualifications, personal interest in music and confidence to teach it.

Comments made at interview indicate that music is still perceived as a specialist subject, requiring expertise and performing ability. One implication of this for teaching is a need to increase teacher confidence in music, through developing subject knowledge and demonstrating to teachers musical activities which do not require a high level of musical performance on their part.

As a way forward it is suggested that a long-term staff development programme is required to enhance learning and teaching of music by the non-specialist. Such a programme might take account of active learning experiences by modelling skills and teaching strategies. The teachers require the opportunity to trial ideas and demonstrate the skills that have been assimilated through INSET and CPD if they are going to make a long-term impact on classroom music. This might be achieved through workshops on skills-training under 'simulated conditions' (Weatherley, 2000: 21), creating the opportunity to resolve difficulties, and reflecting and reviewing practice through feedback. These new skills could then be transferred and realised into effective teaching, with the support of the music co-ordinator in a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. In our opinion, this may minimise the threat to the teacher's self-esteem, promote a positive self-image, improve

subject knowledge and raise their level of confidence. Developing teachers' practical musical skills and increasing access to support from music specialists seems crucial if teachers and children are to fulfil their musical potential.

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