Policy and practice in music education in New South Wales state primary schools

Deirdre Russell-Bowie
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses

Recommended Citation
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Policy and Practice in Music Education in New South Wales State Primary Schools

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Deirdre Russell-Bowie
B.Ed. (TCAE); Ass. Dip. Mus. (TCAE); Grad. Dip. Arts. (SCAE); Dalcroze Level 2; M.Ed. Hons. (Wollongong)

Faculty of Education
September 1993
Abstract

This project focuses primarily on the development and implementation of the New South Wales (K-6) Music Syllabus (1984), and the effectiveness of the curriculum development model which was intended to overcome repeatedly identified deficiencies and policy implications arising from these findings.

An examination of the events leading to the development of the syllabus revealed a series of reports on the arts in education which all identified key deficiencies in primary music education and recommended:

- that specialist teachers be used in primary schools;
- that improved resources and facilities be provided for all schools;
- that all children have the opportunity to learn an instrument;
- that teacher training institutions and professional development programs provide teachers with better music education skills and with appropriate knowledge and attitudes; and
- that a new music syllabus be developed, based on children's developmental stages.

Using a model which initially aimed to involve as many interest groups as possible but was finalised by a small group of music experts, the music syllabus was developed over seven years. This research project sought to evaluate the development of the syllabus and its implementation seven years after its launch in relation to how effectively it addressed these identified deficiencies, to identify key factors influencing primary music education and to develop some policy suggestions in response to the problems arising from these results.
Summary

This project focuses primarily on the development and implementation of the New South Wales (K-6) Music Syllabus (1984) and the effectiveness of the curriculum development model which was intended to overcome repeatedly identified problems associated with primary music education. The thesis is built around four key research questions.

Question 1: What were the perceived deficiencies in primary music education that the new syllabus was expected to address?

In the mid 1970s concerns emerged that the existing music syllabus, written more than a decade before, was no longer relevant to currently practised educational philosophies. A series of national and state reports was commissioned by respective governments and interested organisations to examine music education in primary schools and make recommendations on how it could be improved.

These reports all identified five key problem areas:
- the need for music specialist or resource teachers in schools;
- the need for improved music resources and specialist facilities;
- the need for instrumental tuition in primary schools;
- the need for better preservice and inservice teacher education; and
- the need for a developmental, child-based music curriculum.

Question 2: In what ways did the syllabus and the process of its development seek to address these perceived deficiencies.

In response to these concerns the Director-General of Education decided that a new music syllabus for primary schools should be developed. Each of these perceived deficiencies in primary music education was examined and recommendations were made over the years of the syllabus development in relation to them. In keeping with current interest in promoting greater awareness and involvement among teachers in general about curriculum changes, a new model of curriculum development was used. This model, termed the 'involvement model', used generalist primary teachers and representatives of various interest groups to develop the syllabus through a series of conferences. In practice, however, this approach did not prove to be effective. After a substantial amount of time and resources had been expended to produce few tangible outcomes, a small team of experts was used to complete
the document which was launched in 1985. However, this final document did not appear to specifically address the previously perceived deficiencies.

Question 3: After the syllabus had been in operation for several years, how effectively had these deficiencies been overcome, if at all?

Throughout the following three years a variety of central, regional and school-based strategies was used to implement the syllabus throughout the state. Initially teachers and school executive involved with the implementation perceived it to be successful. However as priorities for music education began to decrease so did resources, and by 1991 it again appeared that primary music education was not being effectively taught in state schools.

This project examined the current situation of music education in relation to the specified aims of the music syllabus as a way of gaining circumstantial evidence on the effectiveness of both the process and outcomes of the curriculum development model and the resultant syllabus. Relevant documents on the development and implementation of the syllabus were examined, principals were interviewed on aspects of current policy and practice in music education and a survey was conducted among 846 teachers in government primary schools from four regions of NSW. The selection of schools and profile of survey respondents indicated that they were broadly representative of the state as a whole.

The survey also sought to evaluate the influence of school location (rural/urban), and of language and socioeconomic background of pupils on the teaching of music in NSW primary schools, as well as to determine whether certain teacher characteristics or the grade level taught had any influence on music education in the school.

The results indicated that, in general, teachers and members of the school executive perceived that music education was not given the priority and regular practice in schools that most other subjects enjoyed. Classroom music was patchy in most schools; music resources as well as instrumental and choral groups were in significantly greater numbers in schools from higher socioeconomic areas and in those with lower proportions of non-English speaking background students. The school community's views of music education and its priority and practice in the schools was significantly influenced by the socioeconomic and language/cultural background of pupils.
and by the grade level taught. Children in younger grades, from schools in higher socioeconomic areas and/or with lower proportions of non-English speaking background pupils were significantly advantaged in the practice of music education.

As well as the influence of these factors, the pupils were considered by teachers to have experienced significantly more classroom music lessons if they had a female teacher, or a teacher aged 40 years and over or if they attended an urban rather than rural school. Their perceived achievement of set skill levels was significantly influenced by a combination of socioeconomic background and school location factors, with pupils from urban schools in high socioeconomic areas achieving significantly higher results than those in urban schools in lower socioeconomic areas, and higher results than those in rural schools regardless of their socioeconomic ranking. Also, as the grade level increased so the students' perceived achievement increased. However, there was no significant improvement in perceived skills between pupils in Years 3 to 6.

Question 4: What are the implications of this study for future curriculum policy and practice in primary music education?

Teachers also identified key issues relating to music education in general. These were very similar to the five broad problem areas arising from the reports on arts in education conducted twenty years earlier. The results of this study provide a sound basis of empirical evidence to support specific policy suggestions on how these problems in primary music education might be addressed. These include the provision of ongoing support through specialist or music advisory teachers to assist the generalist primary teachers; identification of a minimum set of equipment and resources in each school; the provision of continuing professional development opportunities in the area of music education; the opportunity for all pupils to receive instrumental tuition; the recognition and active response to the circumstantial differences in each school; and a balance of emphasis between the need for productive outcomes and the consultative process in the area of curriculum development. It is only if suggestions such as these are implemented that the children of the future may receive a more effective music education program than those in state primary schools today.
I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

.......................................................... Signature

v
Acknowledgements

This study has involved the assistance of a large number of people and I greatly appreciate their support, cooperation and contribution over the years.

I am enormously grateful for the support and practical assistance of my chief supervisor Professor Russell Linke, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong, for his objective clarity and rigorous, astute comments in reading the draft material and for his continued interest and insightful contribution to the study from its conceptualisation to its completion. I have also really appreciated the wealth of experience and knowledge which he brought to bear on the development of the thesis and his professional encouragement and interest throughout the project.

Deanna Hoermann, my external supervisor, displayed a keen interest in this study from our first meeting. Being very involved in the syllabus development over a decade ago she was able to offer clear insights and an accurate overview of the policy development process, as well as being an encouragement in her belief of the value of this study for future policy makers. I am grateful also to her for reading the draft thesis and raising thought-provoking issues about the content.

I shall always be grateful to Christine Brown for her tireless assistance, enthusiasm, advice and objectivity throughout the study, especially in the area of statistical analysis. Without her support this thesis would only be partially complete. In addition to this, her methodical and rigorous reading of the draft thesis produced valuable insights into areas which need further development.

Other members of the Faculty of Education at Wollongong University who were of great assistance were Dr John Patterson in his reading of, and comments on, the draft thesis, and Dr Ken Russell, who assisted me through some complicated statistical analysis, making it sound so easy! I am also grateful to Professor Carla Fasano for the clarity of her teaching on policy analysis in the early stages of my study, and to Jacqui Collins, secretary to Professor Linke, for her friendly, capable assistance in practical matters.
Employees of the Department of School Education have been very supportive of my work, and I am grateful to the teachers, school executive and regional office personnel from the North Coast and South Coast regions and from Metropolitan North and Metropolitan South West regions who have assisted me by granting permission to undertake a survey in their region or school, through completion of surveys and through their interest and cooperation during interviews.

To those who were involved in the development of the syllabus and shared their memories, opinions, insights and documents with me I am very grateful. I am especially appreciative of Graham Russell's interest and practical support in this area as well as of the assistance given to me by Dr Alf Colvin, Dr Doreen Bridges, Mal Hewitt, Dr Fenton Sharpe, Don Haddon, Phil Hobson, Dr Norm McCulla, Helen Pain, Graham Penn, Laura Solomon, Alan Suthers and Stan Warren. Because of their help I trust I am able to say that the story of the music syllabus development has been told with the integrity and accuracy it deserves.

I am grateful, too, to David White for the illustrations which bring to life the thesis content with a succinct freshness and have been used to share the content of this study with others at several conferences.

The University of Western Sydney, Macarthur has also been very supportive throughout the development and completion of this thesis in providing several internal grants to cover travel, teaching replacement and printing costs. The Faculty of Education has provided practical support though access to its computer software and hardware, etc, as well as enabling me to work on my thesis full time for six months during Staff Development Leave in Spring 1991. I am grateful, too, to my colleagues who have supported me in my alternating frustration and enthusiasm during my doctoral studies, and to Herb Marsh and Lawrence Roche for their expert assistance in the area of survey development and statistical analysis.

Finally I wish to express my gratitude to my husband, Vaughan, whose caring support and interest encouraged me to stay on the task until it was finished.
I can only express my most sincere and heartfelt thanks to all of the above people for their personal and professional support over the years I have been involved in this study.

Deirdre Russell-Bowie

viii
Contents

Chapter                                      Page

Abstract                                         i
Summary                                          ii
Acknowledgements                                  vi
Contents                                          ix
Tables                                           xiii
Figures                                          xv
Contents of Appendix                              xvi

1. Background to the NSW (K-6) Music Education
   Program                                         1
   1.1 Arts in education reports                   2
   1.2 New music education methodologies           12
   1.3 Changes within the Department               13
   1.4 The Involvement Model                       17
   1.5 Policy analysis : location of influence     21


   3.1 Music curriculum implementation coordinating group  56
   3.2 Other support for the implementation of the syllabus  62
   3.3 Implementation case studies                  66
       3.3.1 Metropolitan South West Region           67
       3.3.2 South Coast Region                       73
       3.3.3 Summary                                 77
   3.4 Evaluation of the music syllabus : 1986       78
   3.5 Summary                                     80

4. The Present State of NSW Primary Music Education:
   Methodology                                      82
   4.1 Data Collection for Historical Background    82
   4.2 A survey of current practice in primary school music  83
   4.3 The survey questionnaires                    85
       4.3.1 For teachers                           85
       4.3.2 For school principals                  91
   4.4 Characteristics of the survey sample         91
       4.4.1 Number and size of schools             91
       4.4.2 Location of schools                    92
       4.4.3 Socioeconomic status (SES)              93
       4.4.4 Language and cultural background (NESB) 96
4.4.5 Participation of sample schools
4.5 Distribution and return of questionnaire
4.6 Analysis of survey responses
4.7 Profile of respondents
4.7.1 Location of school
4.7.2 Language and cultural background
4.7.3 Socioeconomic status of sample schools
4.7.4 Age of respondents
4.7.5 Sex of respondents
4.7.6 Year level taught by respondents
4.8 Summary

5. Analysis of Survey Results on Teaching of Music Lessons
5.1 Item C1: Priority of music in school
5.1.1 Principals’ Views
5.1.2 Teachers’ Views
5.2 Items C2 and C3: Class music lessons on average: by own teacher or other
5.3 Item C4: Others who take music lessons in my class
5.3.1 Teachers’ Questionnaire
5.3.2 School Policy and Practice: Principals’ Questionnaire
5.4 Item C5: Time of day music lessons are taught
5.5 Item C6: For me, the most difficult problem in teaching music lessons
5.6 Item C7: What teachers find most helpful in improving their music teaching
5.7 Item C8: How often teachers have used the following resources in their music lessons
5.7.1 Item C8.1: *NSW (K-6) Music Syllabus*
5.7.2 Item C8.2: Regional support documents
5.7.3 Item C8.3: Ideas from other teachers
5.7.4 Item C8.4: *Upbeat*
5.7.5 Item C8.5: *Musikit*
5.7.6 Item C8.6: *Music Is ... series*
5.7.7 Item C8.7: ABC books, cassettes and records
5.7.8 Item C8.8: Silver Burdett series
5.7.9 Item C8.9: Teachers’ own personal resources
5.7.10 Item C8.10: The school’s resources
5.7.11 Item C8.11: Other
5.8 Item C9: Use of syllabus aims in music programs
5.8.1 Item C9.1: How often the children’s musical development is tested
5.8.2 Item C9.2: Setting specific development goals for children
5.8.3 Item C9.3: Inclusion of activities arising from children’s individual interests

χ
6. Analysis of Survey Results on the Context of Music Teaching

6.1 Extra-Curricular Activities
6.1.1 Item D : School musical activities
6.1.2 Item D2 : Pupils' performances
6.1.3 Item D3 : Teachers' musical activities
6.1.4 Item D4 : Membership of music education associations
6.1.5 Summary

6.2 Music education resources: range, condition, accessibility and use
6.2.1 Item E1 : Range of musical instruments in the school
6.2.2 Item E2 : Condition of the school's musical instruments
6.2.3 Item E3 : Access to full class sets of musical instruments
6.2.4 Item E4 : Work with music instruments in music lessons
6.2.5 Item E5 : Range of other music education resources in the school
6.2.6 Item E6 : Other music education resources are kept up-to-date
6.2.7 Item E7 : Personal copy of the NSW (K-6) Music Syllabus and Support Statements
6.2.8 Specific school policy: Principal's view
6.2.9 Summary

6.3 Views on Music Education
6.3.1 Item F1 : Most teachers in my school are enthusiastic about taking music lessons
6.3.2 Item F2 : The school executive are, in general, supportive of music teaching in the school
6.3.3 Item F3 : Staff often discuss music lessons with each other
6.3.4 Item F4 : The school executive encourage teachers to have their pupils perform musical items
6.3.5 Item F5 : I enjoy taking music lessons with my class
6.3.6 Item F6 : Someone on the staff is available to help me program and teach music lessons, if I need it
6.3.7 Item F7 : Pupils' enjoyment of aspects of music lessons
6.3.8 Item F8 : Children often make up music or songs in the playground
6.3.9 Item F9: My children's parents generally seem interested in formal music education for their children

6.3.10 Item F10: My children seem, in general, to have experienced a variety of music at home

6.3.11 Summary

7. **Analysis of Survey Results on the Development of Skills**
   7.1 Relationship of teacher and school characteristics to pupils' development of musical skills
   7.1.1 Teacher characteristics: sex, age and year taught
   7.1.2 School characteristics: SES area, NESB population and site of school
   7.2 Relationship of teacher and school characteristics to the perceived development of skills within the five musical concepts
   7.2.1 Teacher characteristics: sex, age and year taught
   7.2.2 School characteristics: SES area, NESB student populations and site
   7.3 Development of musical concepts by year and stage
   7.3.1 Influence of site and SES area of school on skill development in the specified concept area
   7.4 Summary

8. **Implications for Policy Makers**
   8.1 Evaluation of the Involvement Model
   8.2 Evaluation of content of curriculum policy
   8.2.1 Specialist teachers
   8.2.2 Resources and facilities
   8.2.3 Instrumental tuition
   8.2.4 Teacher training
   8.2.5 Curriculum
   8.3 External factors influencing music education in primary schools
   8.3.1 Social context
   8.3.2 The teaching workforce
   8.3.3 School curriculum issues
   8.4 Policy implications
   8.4.1 The use of the involvement model
   8.4.2 Issues relating specifically to primary music education
   8.4.3 External factors influencing music education

Bibliography

Appendixes
### Tables

1.1 Summary of recommendations from the Arts in Education Reports

2.1 Summary of conferences and workshops organised to develop the syllabus

3.1 Budget for music items, 1978 - 1984

3.2 Summary of implementation strategies in Metropolitan South West Region

3.3 Summary of implementation strategies in South Coast Region

4.1 Aims and objectives of the music syllabus as related to the questionnaire items

4.2 Relationship between individual questions and the musical concepts identified in the syllabus

4.3 Relationship between individual questions and the activity areas identified in the syllabus

4.4 Number of schools in the survey, by region and size

4.5 Number and location of sample schools and teachers

4.6 Summary of SES and NESB characteristics of sample population

4.7 Number of schools from each region in sample

4.8 Distributed and returned questionnaires, by region

4.9 School location of respondents

4.10 NESB population of sample schools

4.11 Postcode of SES sample schools by population quartiles

4.12 Age distribution of NSW public school teachers and of respondents

4.13 Sex distribution of NSW public school teachers and survey respondents

4.14 Distribution of respondents across year level taught

5.1 Influences on the teaching of music lessons (Section C)

6.1 Influence of school and teacher characteristics on the availability and condition of resources (Section E)

6.2 Influence of school and teacher characteristics on views of music education (Section F)
7.1 Possible responses to questions in Section G
7.2 Interaction effects of composite scores for teacher characteristics at each stage
7.3 Mean composite scores for students by year of schooling for each stage
7.4 Relationship of teacher sex to perceived development of skills
7.5 Interaction effects in composite scores for school characteristics at each stage
7.6 Influence of SES area and site of school on perceived development of skills at each stage
7.7 Influence of SES area and NESB populations of school on perceived development of skills at each stage
7.8 Interaction effects in composite scores for teacher characteristics for each musical concept
7.9 Interaction effects in composite scores for school characteristics for each musical concept
7.10 Perceived development of musical concepts by year level and stages
7.11 Influence of site and SES area of school on perceived skill development within each musical concept
8.1 Compulsory teaching hours of primary music education in preservice training programs: 1980, 1987 and 1992
Figures

4.1 Map of NSW showing Department of School Education regions and non-metropolitan sample schools 94
4.2 Map of metropolitan Sydney, showing sample metropolitan schools 95
7.1 Graph of influence of SES area and site of school and perceived development of skills at each stage 193
7.2 Graph of influence of SES area and NESB populations of school on perceived development of skills at each stage 194
7.3 Example of general pattern of interactions between school SES area and site of school in relation to a selected concept: Tone Colour 202
8.1 Five key issues for primary music education 212
8.2 Social characteristics influencing primary music education 224
8.2 Teacher characteristics influencing primary music education 226
## Contents of Appendixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire : Teachers</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire : Principals</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of participating schools</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB regional population, and proportion and cumulative proportion of NSW and selected schools</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES proportion and cumulative proportion of NSW postcodes and postcodes of selected schools</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of responses to questionnaire, by category</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of results from Section C of Questionnaire : Teaching music lessons</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of chi-squared tests for Sections C, E and F</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of principals' survey and interviews</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of results from Section D of Questionnaire : Extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of results from Section E of Questionnaire : Resources</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of results from Section F of Questionnaire : Views on music education</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of results from Section G of Questionnaire : Development of skills</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of people interviewed</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations : Teacher Characteristics and Stages</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations : School Characteristics and Stages</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of Teacher Characteristics for the Concept of Duration</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of Teacher Characteristics for the Concept of Pitch</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of Teacher Characteristics for the Concept of Dynamics</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of Teacher Characteristics for the Concept of Tone Colour</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of Teacher Characteristics for the Concept of Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of School Characteristics for the Concept of Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of School Characteristics for the Concept of Pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of School Characteristics for the Concept of Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of School Characteristics for the Concept of Tone Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mean and Standard Deviations of School Characteristics for the Concept of Structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>