Pedagogy versus performance in primary classroom music teaching: Lessons from a 'usable past' in Wales

PROFESSOR GARY BEAUCHAMP AND THOMAS BREEZE
Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University

ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

From the earliest days of music in the primary (elementary) schools of England and Wales there has been pressure to equip children with the ability to perform music. The early influence of the established Church, and the value attached to musical performance ability as part of cultural aspirations or perceived heritage, ensured that teachers were judged on their ability to perform music, and in turn teach their pupils to do the same. Indeed, throughout successive legislation and the rise to graduate status of the teaching profession primary school teachers have been judged on their perceived ability to perform music themselves rather than on their pedagogic ability to teach it. This resulted in a situation where other aspects of musicality were virtually ignored and opportunities to develop alternative pedagogies, based a broader range of musical skills and interests, were neglected by successive policy makers. It is argued that with a broader conceptualisation of music envisaged in the new Curriculum for Wales, lessons can be learned from a 'usable past' which may enable primary school teachers to develop new pedagogic approaches, which would allow them to respond to children in an informed, artistic and musically sensitive manner, rather than requiring specific musical 'skills'.

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PRACTICAL ABSTRACT

This article considers the history of music education in Wales from its earliest origins under the influence of the church, through the introduction of a national curriculum for music after 1988, to the present day and the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales. It outlines issues characteristic to the subject, including the disproportionate importance attached to singing performance in the early years of the 20th century, and the robust debate which accompanied the creation of the National Curriculum post-1988. The particular influence of Wales's musical heritage is considered, and, with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, the article provides a timely reminder to practitioners of the importance of separating out their ability as a musician from their ability as a music teacher. When embarking on major educational reform it is timely to consider the nature and history of a subject, and in doing so this article provides encouragement for primary practitioners especially to put aside doubts about their own musical abilities, and embrace the opportunities afforded by the Curriculum for Wales to create authentic and engaging musical experiences for their pupils.

Keywords: primary, Wales, music education

Whilst outlining a 'usable past for music education' Cox (1999) challenges readers to engage with real concerns in the music classroom. The low confidence of primary (elementary) school teachers in teaching music in England and Wales has long been one such concern (e.g., Mills, 1989; Gifford, 1993; Kneen et al., 2020) and the inability of policy makers to significantly improve this situation warrants close attention. This situation is rooted in the historical development of music as a school subject, resulting in a narrow official conceptualisation of music which focused on the ability of teachers and their pupils to learn and perform – for pupils until well into the twentieth century this performance was singing a limited range of repertoire – rather than a broader range of musical skills. Hence the judgement of teachers reflected this prevailing orthodoxy and they were judged not on their musical pedagogic ability (their ability to *teach* the subject), but on their own 'musical' ability (their ability to *perform* music), reflecting the dominance of the musical 'performance paradigm' (Ward, 1993, p. 25).

This dominance continued until the development of the first National Curriculum for England and Wales (which prescribed what should be

taught in all subjects) in the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988. These broader musical skills, such as the ability to compose, arrange and discuss music from a range of styles, cultures and periods of history in an informed manner – defined within the National Curricula of England (DFEE/QCA, 1999) and Wales (ACCAC, 2000) at the time as performing, composing and appraisal [as an informed discussion of music including the ability to identify and label the musical elements, such as pitch, timbre, texture and rhythm]). Even this achievement, however, was not without controversy and was challenged in England at the time by the 'cultural restorationists' (Ball, 1995), with the result that the English curriculum was amended to reflect a greater emphasis on *knowledge* of music. In Wales, the broader model of music as a practical subject was adopted, with additions to reflect its geographic context thus ensuring that Welsh musical culture was reflected in the document (Rainbow with Cox, 2006).

Prior to this divergence, facilitated by the eventual devolution of relevant powers, the synonymy of English and Welsh education throughout most of the twentieth century led to a specific Welsh educational dimension being 'synchromeshed … out of existence' (Jones, 1997, p. 2). As such, all discussions below prior to devolved powers in 1999 apply to both countries. This was despite the fact that in Wales, music has been, and continues to be, part of the national identity to such an extent that it has historically been regarded as the 'Third Language' of Wales (Walford Davies, 1923). Indeed, it is held in high esteem by both 'governors and governed', and the music curriculum was 'framed by and for the people' (Beauchamp, 2003, p. 134).

In order to see how this situation arose, it is necessary to trace the development of music in the education system and the training of primary school teachers. It is also essential to consider the geographical and social context, as Cox (1999) demonstrates that the influence of class and culture inevitably impacts upon the implementation and subsequent interpretation of events in the history of music education in the different countries that make up the UK. Indeed, any resultant curriculum must be examined in the context of the associated national identity (Lowe, 1999).

The beginning of primary education in Wales

In Wales, education for primary school age children had inauspicious beginnings. The official summary of education in Wales at the beginning

of the nineteenth century was that 'all in all … very little provision existed for educating the majority of the children in Wales in 1800, and such provision as existed was usually very poor in quality' (Welsh Department Ministry of Education, 1948, p. 6). This was followed, however, by a 'steady, insistent development of organised elementary education' (Watson, 1923, pp. 109). The growth of elementary schools educating children in England and Wales to 'meet the labour needs of the newly industrialised society of the early nineteenth century' (Thomas, 1990a, p. 1), also resulted in a move toward a systematic method of training teachers, which laid the foundations for a much later graduate route into teaching. Indeed, the first half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth in organised teacher education, with the dominant force in education at the time being religious, at a time when 'education and organised religion … [were].. irreparably linked together' (Williams, 1920, p. 61). The involvement of the established and non-conformist Church in England and Wales was to have a profound effect on the character of the education of both teachers and pupils in the nineteenth century, particularly on the introduction and evolution of music as a subject in the school curriculum. The involvement of the Church, perhaps more than any other body, ensured the subsequent dominance of musical performance over other facets of music. For the Church, music offered a tool for developing congregational psalmody (but also not ignoring its potential for moral improvement and control) and singing became the prime concern in the 'musical' education of children. This had long lasting consequences for the training of teachers, where musical performance became the yardstick by which both teachers and pupils were assessed.

The first government grant towards elementary education in England and Wales in 1833 signified an important development in attitudes towards education and influenced the appearance in the same year of the first English treatise to deal exclusively with the teaching of music, rather than purely with *instrumental* music, in schools. Although subtitled *Chiefly with a View to Psalmody*, John Turner's *Manual of Instruction in Vocal music*, and two other school music texts which followed it within three years, marked a move away from the perception of music being an enhancement of worship, towards a growing awareness of its wider use in popular education (Rainbow, 1967). Whilst still a long way from the modern perception of music education, a process had begun which established music in the curriculum of schools over the next thirty years. Nevertheless, despite a growing awareness of other facets of music, these texts reflected influential

contemporary social and cultural forces and perpetuated the aim of music teaching as being the inculcation of the ability to *perform* music, with inevitable consequences on the perceived requirements of teachers.

One of the first texts that advocated a possible change in this situation, which would accord more to the modern idea of education as being both essential and enjoyable, was the appearance in 1836 of Edward Hickson's *Singing Master.* This reflected the growing influence of Pestalozzian ideals in Britain, with the promotion of music for its own sake, together with the ideal that children were sent to school to be made both wiser and happier. This influence proved to be profound and just over fifty years later in an address to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion – described by Marchant Williams (1901, p. 38) as one of the 'two most powerful Welsh Educational Agencies of this Generation' – Miss E. P. Hughes (1896, p. 59) of the Cambridge Teachers' College went so far as to say that 'Pestalozzi, and others have preached the gospel of childhood until the world has heeded, and is bending in reverence at the feet of a little child'.

Despite such potentially positive developments, the performance paradigm (particularly singing) remained an established feature of education as government perceptions of music remained unchanged. This was consolidated with the introduction of the Revised Code by Robert Lowe in 1862, which was extended in 1867 to include singing, and resulted in a situation where

> In 1870 singing was made virtually a compulsory subject of elementary education in all Board schools, one-sixth of the annual grant being payable only if singing was included in the curriculum. To be eligible for this proportion of the grant the school had to prepare a dozen songs in the course of the year and sing to the inspector those he asked for. The Code of 1882 introduced a grant of sixpence a pupil if the singing was 'by rote' and a shilling if a successful attempt was made to teach the elements of notation. (Ministry of Education, 1960, p. 5)

In this context it is no surprise that an official policy of 'payments for results' would ensure that performance would dominate 'music' in elementary schools, leading to an extremely limited twelve-song curriculum. Hence, although specific musical activities became an established part of elementary school life, there was still no need for children to discuss their performances (as inspectors were the only ones allowed to judge) or even compose their own songs. Consequently, there was little need to revisit teaching pedagogy, unless of course it helped to teach singing more efficiently, which occurred with the Tonic Sol-fa movement. In this context,

even the positive influence of Pestalozzi outlined above, who alongside Froebel and Rousseau was credited by the Ministry of Education in 1960 with saving music 'for the schools' (Ministry of Education, 1960, p. 4), had little effect. Whilst stressing the importance of *enjoying* musical activities (in this case singing), there was still no expectation that children needed to understand, or even have opinions about, music.

Given this preoccupation with performing ability, it is hardly surprising that the first examining bodies in music developed at this time. In 1877, over 1,100 students took part in the first theory examinations organised by Trinity College of Music, with the first practical examinations held in the following year. This was closely followed by the establishment of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in 1889. Both of these examining organisations, and other subsequent bodies (including specialist Tonic Sol-fa examining boards which reflected its wide use in schools), fulfilled a need to recognise the *performance* ability that was so highly prized within contemporary society. More positively, however, the national, and indeed international, nature of these examinations allowed candidates to contextualise their ability. In the case of Wales, these developments 'did, perhaps, draw Welsh aspirants closer to a real appreciation of universal standards in performance and of the breadth and depth of European experience in music' (Allsobrook, 2000, p. 4).

Although such events demonstrate the stirrings of a broader music pedagogy, and Hickson's publication was the first to bring regular secular singing into elementary schools, it was by no means universally adopted and did little to change government policy. Hickson was, nevertheless, to have a profound influence on future developments, and gained some powerful allies for the place of music in the education of young children, which had the potential to impact on official policy makers. Indeed, in 1858 he addressed the Royal Society, and the result of this and other lectures, was the formation of a *Society for the Encouragement of Vocal music*. It is worth recording here that one of the subscribers to this society was Dr Kay, later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, a man who was to exert great influence on the future of music education and 'the man to whom the training of teachers owes a greater debt than to any other' (Rich, 1933, p. 50). In Wales he was hailed as 'the first great English fearless educational experimenter' (Watson, 1923, p. 110) and 'a very enlightened man, far ahead of his age' (Welsh Department Ministry of Education, 1948, p. 16) – although this latter judgement may also be influenced by his commitment to the Welsh language in schools.

Despite representing a limited conception of music, the need to equip children with performance skills should have resulted in music forming an important part of teacher training. But, although 'music was taken seriously and more time was allocated to it' (Lynch, 2010, p. 183), students being trained to teach singing, and by the end of the nineteenth century many colleges had facilities for instrumental practice, there were no college-trained music specialists. Indeed, until 1887 there were no specialist musical qualifications available for teachers – excepting the fledgling performance examinations offered by the examinations boards, as outlined above. The introduction of the Tonic Sol-fa College's School Teachers' Music Certificate helped, but a relatively small number of students took this certificate (in 1894 there were only 105 students from seven colleges who took the examination) (Dent, 1977) – which was itself restricted to the teaching of singing.

The dawn of a new century – new opportunities?

As the century drew to a close, there were calls to end the dominance of singing, but they merely perpetuated the performance paradigm in another direction, that of instrumental performance. One such call came, in 1895, when Miss E. P. Hughes of the Cambridge Teachers' College outlined a vision of *The Future of Welsh Education*, with 'a wisely ordered, all-round curriculum would have certain groups of study represented' in which

> Music will, of course, be a strong point in our schools, but it will be possible to develop not only vocal music, but instrumental music, and let us not follow England and teach chiefly the piano – an expensive instrument, which cannot easily be carried about, and is not the best for accompanying the human voice. Let us be wiser, and teach many instruments of different kinds. (Hughes, 1896, p. 52)

Although still advocating a performance model, this vision did at least move beyond the synonymity of singing and music, but still failed to learn lessons from a 'usable past' to extend the concept of music to include other musical skills such as composing and appraising.

One change in official policy which could have helped broaden music teaching was the demise of the pressure of 'payments by results' in 1900. The withdrawal of the specific grant for singing could have opened the way for a broader interpretation of music, or conversely the demise of the subject altogether as the pressure from the grant was withdrawn. In

reality, neither possibility prevailed but instead a new situation was created in the elementary schools around 1900 where 'music, in the form of singing' (*School Music Review*, 1900, p. 198) became part of the obligatory curriculum. Thus, if anything, the necessity of teaching children to perform had now increased as the optional financial incentive was strengthened by a legislative obligation. Whilst the grant had been an incentive to class teachers in its early years, the demise of the Code did lead to some changes in thinking. One was the realisation that the Code had been

> narrow in its outlook. Its very terminology reflects this. Singing is but a part of music education. By focusing exclusively on singing the Code restricted the development of music as a curriculum subject. (Lynch, 2001, p. 192)

Inherent in this restricted view of music was a concomitant limitation in the need to explore new teaching pedagogies. Yet again, with the abolition of the Code, the door of opportunity to develop a pedagogic review based on a revised conception of music was at once opened and closed.

In a broader context, the dawning of the new century also saw the numbers attending teacher training colleges rising considerably to keep pace with growing demand. The involvement of these colleges in teacher training offered the opportunity for new pedagogic thinking to be developed and disseminated. Yet, despite increasing the subsequent variety of training colleges, the Board of Education kept a firm grip on such institutions by exercising their control of funding. In this environment, they also maintained control over the content of the courses taught and, hence, the pedagogy of teaching music, should the need arise. Lest this be considered too negative an interpretation, one context in which this influence had a positive effect was in the growing acceptance of elementary school teaching as not only a profession, but as a *learned* profession. Unfortunately, such a move did not settle the debate over the balance of academic study and professional training which was to continue to be contentious, even within contemporary education. A typical example is represented by an anonymous 'A Director of Education' (1914, p. 480) writing in *The Welsh Outlook* in 1914, who suggested that

> In the past it is possible that too much emphasis was laid on practical experience at the expense of scholarship and broad culture, but there seems to be almost a consensus of opinion that at the present moment scholarship is unduly emphasised at the expense of professional skill, with the result that many who pass through our Secondary schools and from thence to the Normal Department of our University Colleges prove lamentable failures in their professional career.

This attack, however, was framed by the larger problem outlined by another contributor earlier in the year, who noted that 'every issue of *The Welsh Outlook* has drawn attention to the dearth of qualified elementary teachers, the inadequate salaries, and the lack of prospects' (Anon., 1914, p. 204). (This article is equally forthright in its summary of the position of university lecturers where 'on the present scales the alternatives are celibacy or a rich wife or hack examining work through the vacations and henceforth an occasional article to the Outlook!' pp. 204–5.)

The impact of the world wars

Soon after the First World War, an anonymous (S.H.W, 1920, pp. 20–1) article in *The Welsh Outlook* outlined

> the chaotic state of much of our educational system in Wales, the unnatural and disturbing differences between elementary and secondary and university education, the mistaken policy of attempting to repair the ravages of the past by patch-work designs that inevitably fail to cover our past mistakes.

Such views led to a realisation in Wales that 'the whole of our system [of education] has to be re-organised to meet new conditions and new requirements' (Williams, 1920, p. 61) – a call repeated recently in Wales resulting in fundamental change in the education system. One of the perceived strengths on which to build was the great progress made in Welsh music generally in the inter-war years. With the introduction of a Council for Music for Wales and the appointment of Walford Davies as first Director of the Council of Music for Wales, and to the Gregynog Chair of Music at Aberystwyth, the outlook for music in Wales was described as 'singularly bright and hopeful' (Roberts, 1920, p. 62). One facet of this judgement was the perception that 'in the elementary schools of Wales, singing has been for many years one of the best features of the work' (ibid.). Although the writer (an HMI) continued to recommend the use of a 'judicious selection of music' on the gramophone as 'an admirable means of cultivating musical taste', such an approach ignores the potential offered by broadening musical skills in other ways. The advent of 'music appreciation' (of a predefined corpus of work) as a teaching pedagogy, and the later use of radio broadcasts to support this (and, of course, more singing), were also redolent of such an attitude and failed to realise the pedagogic potential inherent in pupils being allowed to discuss their *own* 'musical taste', or indeed those of their teachers.

An opportunity for significant progress in developing new teaching pedagogy came in the 1920s as 'singing' on school timetables was retitled as 'music'. Unfortunately, this represented only a limited development, where 'children were now taught to write simple tunes as well as read them; to listen to music as well as sing'. (Rainbow, 1989, p. 196). Nevertheless, such a move effectively introduced the basic musical framework of composing, performing and appraising (although in an extremely limited form) and reflected musical life outside of schools. Yet again, this process could have provided the opportunity for a fundamental re-examination of the role and content of the school music curriculum, with greater consistency between schools and inevitable effects on the training of teachers. Unfortunately, however, 'disparity in practice and purpose were emerging, enabling new ideas to flourish, but also generating some confusion and the danger of unduly biased approaches resulting in strict adherence to one method' (Pitts, 2000, p. 23). In this context, a more radical move away from the performance tradition, which could also have signified an opportunity to allow other aspects of music (such as composing and appraising) to become more significant in the assessment and training of teachers, was unlikely. Unfortunately, the semantic change from singing to music proved to be just that, and, given the lack of centralised guidance and objectives, effectively perpetuated the extant performance tradition and associated pedagogies.

What complicated this situation was that alternatives *were* being propounded by influential sources. In a 1926 book, entitled 'The Musical Outlook in Wales' (in reality reprints from even earlier articles first published in *Welsh Outlook*), Walford Davies attempted to 'depict the musical hopes and defects of the time'. One chapter, entitled, 'Music in Training Colleges and Schools' concluded that

> It is said that most great causes can be put into three words; what three words shall we meet here? That children shall *hear*, *understand* and *make* good music is the practical sum of our aim. It is emphatically not enough to sing a daily hymn, to have a few weekly lessons in the mere act of singing or the mere act of reading, and to have an occasional concert. However perfectly these may be done they leave the main issue, namely, the understanding of music itself quite unapproached. (Walford Davies, 1926, p. 52)

It is hence doubly unfortunate that the coincidence of such views, and the change of title from 'singing', did not have a more profound effect on the pedagogy in music education in primary schools.

This situation was further complicated by the fact that influential contemporary sources, such as the Board of Education (1933), felt confident to assert in 1933 that 'the class teacher is to-day suffering from an *embarras de richesses*' as the 'pioneers in school music' (from 1850) had been able to 'experiment, to test theories, to abandon the generally accepted shibboleths masquerading as principles'. In the context of what has been discussed above, it is regrettable that two such unrecognised shibboleths were the narrow perception of music itself and the policies which perpetuated it.

An inter-war perspective on music in Welsh schools was given in 1936 with the publication of *Suggestions for the Teaching of Music*. Continuing a subtext running through all previous Welsh reports, it refers to unsatisfactory standards of attainment given the 'natural response of the Welsh child to music' (Board of Education, 1936, p. 3) – although the latter assumption has been effectively challenged by some in Wales (Allsobrook, 1987). The blame is placed on two main causes: a general impression that a repertoire of songs is all that is needed, leading to a consequent lack of progressive standards of attainment; and the lack of acquaintance with the basic facts of the Tonic Sol-fa method. It could be argued that the long-standing and largely unchallenged use of Sol-fa in schools in England and Wales both reflected and perpetuated the need for teachers to be performers in their own right. The method was largely a means to an end, that is the ability to read music at sight, and was judged on this criterion rather than its inherent musicality, and, more pertinently, the musicality it developed in others. As with all other performance pedagogies, however, it was very hard, or perhaps even impossible, to equip teachers without 'an existing musical background' with the requisite skills within the timescale of their initial training. It is perhaps surprising, given the level of dissatisfaction outlined above, that the opportunities offered by other potentially more achievable teaching pedagogies focusing on composing, discussing and listening (appraisal) were not explored. This important lesson continued to be ignored by policy makers as official report succeeded official report.

Shortly after the 1936 report, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 caused major disruptions to student teacher numbers and to the balance of the sexes. A 1945 Ministry of Education pamphlet (No. 2) stated that

> not only have 20,000 men teachers been withdrawn from the schools for war service, but during the war the number of men students entering each year upon a course of training has been greatly reduced, and those that have completed a

> course of training have then gone into the Forces rather than into the schools. The intake of men teachers from the universities has also practically stopped. (Ministry of Education, 1945, p. 37)

This state of affairs could again have prompted a serious reconsideration of current practice, but was hardly likely to be undertaken in a country under threat of invasion.

The post-war years – a fresh start?

Once this threat had passed, it was perhaps a logical consequence of the necessity to increase the number of teachers that the end of the war in Europe should signal a reassessment of values in music, society and education (Pitts, 2000). This process began with the McNair Report, published in May 1944 (three months before the landmark Education Act of the same year received the Royal Assent). The report dealt comprehensively with the recognition, supply and training of Primary, Secondary and Further Education teachers, as well as leaders for the Service of Youth. The demands of the Education Act resulted in a series of important recommendations by the McNair committee. Perhaps the most important single recommendation was that 'as soon as the present emergency is over the Board [of Education] should not recognise the appointment of any but qualified teachers' (Board of Education, 1944, p. 43) – no doubt influenced by the committee's damning verdict on existing arrangements for recognition, training and supply of teachers as being 'chaotic and ill-adjusted even to present needs' (Board of Education, 1944, p. 18). An important criticism was the lack of coherent training due to the disparate nature of the teacher training institutions. This was not helped by the fact that 'the training college has often to cope with students whose musical training is a distant memory – a form of indulgence ruthlessly discarded in pre-school certificate days. Until this gap is breached the task of the music tutors at the training colleges (and the more recently emergency training colleges) will remain unenviable' (Walters, 1948, p. 78). What is left unspoken in this text is that the requisite 'musical training' was in performance skills. It is typical of all that has preceded that attempts to bridge the 'gap' yet again did not include examining other musical skills that potential primary teachers might possess and how these might be adapted to enhance both pedagogy and teacher confidence.

A further complication came when the McNair committee was 'not all of one mind about the method of securing the integration, on an area basis, of the institutions which are to be responsible for the education and training of teachers' (Board of Education, 1944, p. 48). The outcome of this division over the solutions offered was the publication in 1946 of Circular 112, *Organisation of the Training of Teachers*. In this document universities were told that, provided in each case the co-operation of the individual training colleges and local education authorities was secured, some diversity of organisation would be accepted (Dent, 1977).

The consequence of this decision was that seventeen Area Training Organisations (ATOs) were established, four financed directly from the Ministry of Education, whilst the rest were integral parts of universities or university colleges. The purpose of the ATOs was to improve the quality of teacher education and to plan the provision for education on a regional basis (Thomas, 1990b). Eventually this number rose to twenty-three, with all but one belonging to universities. Against this, however, should be set the continued absence of centralised objectives which would have ensured consistency in training aims. This is important in terms of music, as it could have produced a more balanced set of requirements addressing a wider range of musical skills. Again, this could have led to a paradigm shift away from musical performance skills as a dominant requirement of both teachers and taught, to a reappraisal of other musical skills as the basis for the development of new pedagogies – which might in turn have allowed a greater number of teachers to be considered effective and confident music teachers. Such a reappraisal was unlikely to happen, however, in a situation where, judged against the extant conception of music, the teaching of music in schools was regarded as satisfactory.

The consequences of the McNair report were two 'main defects': the structure of the courses and the musical background of students (Simpson, 1962). In both training establishments Simpson (1962) highlighted the conflict, which may be recognised by initial teacher educators today, between musical and professional (pedagogical) studies. In some institutes 'no consideration of the teaching of music was allowed in the music courses' with the result that 'some students taking music as their personal subject had no official guidance from their music tutors on the teaching of the subject' (Simpson, 1962, p. 163). This circumstance was compounded by the findings of a survey undertaken in 1957 by the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education (ATCDE) which outlined a situation of 'bewilderingly varied inadequacy' (Simpson, 1962, p. 164).

The Handbook of Suggestions for the consideration of teachers and others concerned in the work of public elementary schools in 1946 confirmed this and summed up the post-war attitude to music in the primary stage. It asserts that the 'value of music in school life is now so well recognized that it is unnecessary to discuss it at length' (Board of Education, 1946, p. 174). In view of its previous dominance, it is interesting to note that singing is regarded as 'a means and not an end' (Board of Education, 1946, p. 175). The 'end' is now defined as the more achievable, but just as narrow, 'formation of a taste for, and an understanding of, music'. This is very redolent of the concern expressed by the Board of Education in 1926 (relating to 'The Education of the Adolescent') that the 'aim of music teaching considered as part of the school curriculum should be rather the cultivation of a taste than the acquirement of a proficiency' (Board of Education,1926, p. 238). Leaving aside the cultural and political implications of what constitutes 'taste' and who decides it, such an approach might, if explored further, have led to the realisation that no performing skill on the part of teachers was necessarily required to implement it. Although rather patrician, the reassessment of objectives inherent in such an approach represented yet another opportunity to reassess how teachers could have used other non-performing musical skills to teach music effectively. In view of contemporary curriculum developments in Wales (which we will return to later), it is interesting to note the potential for cross-curricular teaching in Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) identified in the claim that 'dancing, and especially folk dancing, has come to be recognised as a most important form of the apprehension and expression of music' (Board of Education, 1946, p. 205). But, yet again, such potential innovation was quashed in the 1946 Handbook by the caveat that 'the encroachment of any of the new aspects of musical training upon the proper proportion of time allotted to song singing and sight singing must be strongly condemned' (Board of Education, 1946, p. 175).

As part of a wider investigation into the arts in Welsh schools, the 1953 Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales) report *Music in the Schools of Wales* (Ministry of Education and CACE, 1953) provided another assessment of the position of music and the training of teachers. Chaired by Alun Oldfield Davies, the Council found themselves 'in complete agreement' with Appendix I of the 1944 McNair Report and 'warmly recommend[ed] its recommendations particularly as they affect Wales' (Ministry of Education and CACE, 1953, p. 14). However, of more interest here is the acknowledgement that 'some of the witnesses [teachers] interviewed, who

had been recommended for the excellent work in music they were doing in schools, were not music specialists' (Ministry of Education and CACE, 1953, p. 13). The report also claimed that 'specific training is needed both in music and in the ability to impart it clearly'(Ministry of Education and CACE, 1953, p. 13). This acknowledgement in an official report that pedagogy is of equal importance to musical 'ability' and knowledge again provided a context which could have led to a recognition that teachers do not need to be skilled musical performers to teach music effectively. But, following the trend of earlier reports, there was no legislative response, or even the development of alternative proposals. In this case, even though the potential for revisiting pedagogy derived from government bodies, there was no impact on official policy. The opportunity to explore new directions in training, and learn lessons from a 'usable past', was again missed.

It would seem thus far that there were few benefits for the teaching of music to be derived from the McNair Report. There were, however, some developments that helped to alleviate the problems outlined above. One of the most important came from the federation of the training colleges around the universities which led to a greater communal spirit in which college lecturers worked, which in turn allowed a sharing of ideas between institutions – a factor still important and possibly influential in a small nation like Wales. Combined with improved eligibility to serve on Boards of Study, lecturers were given a very real part to play in designing syllabi and examinations in their subjects, both in their own and other colleges, which could have resulted in new pedagogies for teaching music. Paradoxically, whilst offering many opportunities, this greater autonomy also perpetuated the possibility of national discontinuity in the training of teachers and possible damage to subjects, such as music, if perceived to be of low importance both at a national and local level.

The Plowden and Gittins reports (1967) – opportunities for new primary pedagogies in music come and go (again)

The next significant opportunity for change came in the *Plowden Report* (DES, 1967) in England. The advocacy of child-centred learning across the primary curriculum was very influential and could have had a fundamental impact on how music was taught in primary schools and, in turn, allowed teachers greater potential to develop new pedagogies. Until this time the

importance of children's views about music were little more valued than in Victorian times and were not part of existing pedagogic practice. The possibility of exploring music initiated by the views of children should have been a very real option in the post-Plowden primary school, but was not implemented in the curriculum. It also appeared that the performance paradigm still dominated, resulting in official recognition that 'the musical merits of teachers tend be judged on the basis of their capacity to direct, and accompany on the piano, such choral activities' (DES, 1967, p. 253).

Regrettably, this official recognition that assessing teachers by instrumental performance ability alone was not the best measure of their ability to teach music did not result in any change in policy in teacher education, even though the Plowden report stated clearly that 'it is the musical education of the non-specialist which, in our view, it is the key to the problem' (DES, 1967, p. 252). Yet again, an opportunity was presented for the authorities to advocate a 'musical education' of teachers (and pupils) which looked beyond performance capabilities. In terms of the training of teachers, the opportunity to develop existing musical skills and interests into a new musical pedagogy, rather than reinforce existing performance parameters, was yet again not taken – a situation simultaneously replicated in Wales. As Ward (1993, p. 25) asserts, 'it is as though Plowden passed music by'.

With identical terms of reference to Plowden, the Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales), chaired by Professor Charles Gittins, also reported in 1967 in Wales. In terms of music, the findings echoed those of the 1936 *Suggestions for the Teaching of Music* in their concern about the lack of a strong musical element in the teacher-training of many entrants to the profession (DES and CACE, 1967). The report highlighted the continuing dominance of the 'performance paradigm' by noting how 'music in Wales is set in the context of singing' (DES and CACE, 1967, p. 359), and that 'it is certainly an advantage to a teacher to be able to play an instrument' (p. 362). Encouragely, however, it also concluded that 'some of the best work on music appears to be done, not by specialist but by class teachers, enthusiasts who have acquired a knowledge and love of music' (DES and CACE, 1967, p. 365). This acknowledgement that performance capability (or specialism) alone should not be a judge of a teacher's potential to teach music seems again to have slipped by unnoticed. Also unnoticed, or at least unadopted, was the prescient suggestion (in view of what is happening in the curriculum in Wales today) that 'music, we conclude, should be as closely related as possible to the other areas of study' (DES and CACE, 1967. P. 365). Here, perhaps, was another missed opportunity for the report to reflect the 'special

circumstances of Wales' noted by Anthony Crosland (then Secretary of State for Education and Science) in the Foreword to the report.

This does not mean that music was not important in primary schools of Wales. Indeed, it is interesting to note that music was chosen as the first topic in a series of Education Surveys prepared in 1971 by the Welsh Education Office. Intended to cover specialised aspects of education, the *Wales Education Survey No. 1: Music* was the first official report on music in Wales since 1953. Unfortunately, however, the report continues to outline the many problems still remaining in teaching music in the primary school. Notably, the dominance of the now familiar performance paradigm in primary teachers where

> the more usual criterion applied in appointing a music specialist, even for a large school, is the ability to play the piano. Thus pianists, although their technical skill may be very limited … often find themselves "responsible" for teaching music throughout a large school. (Welsh Office, 1971, p. 10)

The report concludes, 'small wonder, then, that many teachers now taking music in our primary schools know little of modern methods of teaching the subject' (Welsh Office, 1971, p. 10). The report firmly attributes this to 'the duration of the professional course [which] is so brief and its content so slight that it cannot possibly give the students a firm basis for teaching the subject in class' (p. 10).

The only source of potential transformation of this situation at the time was the institutions training the teachers. The lack of centralised objectives in teacher training ensured that colleges had more freedom to develop fresh alternatives in graduate training. Unfortunately, this potential was negated in the years that followed by a 'divergence of practice between ATOs which seemed quite inappropriate in a national system' (Thomas, 1990b, p. 49). Allied to the mounting discontent of colleges, which wanted more equality and autonomy, and criticism from the schools that they served, teacher training colleges were again the subject of a Government enquiry. This report, under the chairmanship of Lord James of Rusholme, was to 'enquire into the present arrangements for the education, training and probation of teachers into England and Wales' (DES, 1972, p. 1). In a now familiar pattern, the lack of a settled training system ensured the continuation of existing pedagogy and policy at the expense of the exploration of new strategies. The position for music at the time is best characterised as chaotic, with even official reports demonstrating abjuration of responsibility on a grand scale. For instance, the Department of

Education and Science (DES, 1969, pp. 59–60) *Music in Schools – Education Pamphlet Number 27* stated that it was

> beyond the scope of this pamphlet to discuss in detail the training of music teachers. That is the responsibility of the colleges of music, the colleges of education, the area training organisations and universities and of some colleges of further education.

The James Report did, however, break the university monopoly of degree-giving, and in real terms it also paved the way for the demise of the ATOs, which were abolished in 1975. The result was that there was still no effective central guidance in place for training institutions to follow and no legal requirements in terms of course content or music teaching in schools. As such, the content of teacher training courses was still largely reliant on individual institutions, and their staff. While it may also be true for other subjects in the curriculum, it could be argued that without the motivation offered by legislation or a broader interpretation of music as a subject, music and music teaching, which had already been identified as problem areas, were bound to suffer more than most other subjects.

It was in this climate that the Government White Paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion* was published in December 1972. In this document there was an acceptance that there should be a progressive achievement of an all-graduate profession, helped in part by the establishment of 'major institutions of higher education' in the public sector, not just the university. To this end a new three-year course was suggested 'which are so designed that they will lead both to the award of BEd degree and to qualified teacher status' (White Paper, 1972, p. 21). The results of these changes, and the greater length of time spent in college could have ensured that music occupied a greater amount of time in training. Regrettably the result was that, except for a tiny minority of specialists, the time allocated to music decreased as course lengths increased (Simpson, 1962). Thus, with no legal requirement to teach music, and no defined curriculum to follow, there was still no perceived need, or motivation, to revisit existing pedagogy or practice.

The National Curriculum in England and Wales – the beginnings of divergence

In the late 1980s, a national curriculum for music in England and Wales was finally created as part of the Education Reform Act (*Education Reform*

Act, 1988) under the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Looking at the creation of this national curriculum more widely, it is notable that music was one of the subjects with a specific cultural flavour which opted out of adopting the English version and implemented a Wales-specific curriculum instead (Smith, 1992; Beauchamp, 1995). The robust debate, played out in the form of editorials, press releases and open letters, which accompanied the process of designing a national curriculum for music, and the differences which emerged between Wales and England, are summarised in Gammon (2006) and Rainbow with Cox (2006). Briefly, music educationalists in both Wales and England favoured a practical conception of the subject in which pupils learned music by doing it (defined as a holistic mix of performing, composing and appraising), a philosophy which was defined by Keith Swanwick (1979; 1988) and accepted without modification for the Welsh version of the curriculum (Beauchamp, 1995). Meanwhile, in England, conservative voices, labelled 'forces of darkness' by Mills (2005, p. 5), exemplified by the polemical writing of Roger Scruton, argued that such an approach reduced music to the status of a 'free-for-all play group, with … nothing required that could not be picked up in the street outside' (Scruton, 1991, p. 19). This controversial public debate, culminating in an intervention to the Government by Swanwick himself (Swanwick, 1992), led to something of an 'uneasy compromise' (Gammon, 2006, p. 140) between 'progressive' music educationalists in England, and the more conservative National Curriculum Council advising the then education secretary Kenneth Clarke. This compromise resulted in an English music curriculum document whose 'odd combining of discourses and uneasy combination of heterogeneous ideas bears witness to its troubled origins' (Gammon, 2006, p. 144).

Devolved power and a new Curriculum for Wales

Since the difficult birth of the National Curriculum for music in the early 1990s (which did embed composing, performing and appraisal in the curriculum in Wales), Wales has gained devolved powers over its education system. More recently, Wales embarked upon a significant round of education reform prompted by the 'PISA shock' (Waldow, 2009) of a series of poor results in the OECD's PISA tests of 2009 and 2012 (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Wheater et al., 2013). The new *Curriculum for Wales*, implementing the 68 recommendations of the *Successful Futures* report (Donaldson, 2015),

mirrors international trends characterised by Priestley and Biesta as a new 'curricular turn' (Priestley and Biesta, 2013). Defining curricula in terms of overarching 'transformative competences' (OECD, 2018), rather than prescribing specific subject content and skills, is perceived by proponents of this 'turn' to better cater for the demands of 'industry 4.0' (Marope, Griffin and Gallagher, 2017). In Donaldson's *Successful Futures* report (Donaldson, 2015) four central 'purposes' define the curriculum's core aspirations for learners. Teachers creating and delivering the new curriculum are encouraged to find 'powerful connections' between traditional subject disciplines, so as to 'improve and reinforce learning in the constituent disciplines', as well as to allow pupils to 'transfer knowledge and understanding across different contexts in order to address unfamiliar problems' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 68).

Within the Curriculum for Wales, subject disciplines are allocated to six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) with the aim of achieving these 'powerful connections'. The expressive arts AoLE contains music, along with drama, visual art, dance, and film and digital media (Welsh Government, 2020). Marope (2013) writing for IBE-UNESCO, calls for curricula to be co-designed, leaving 'space for curricula interpretation, contextualization, and creativity at the micro level of teachers and classrooms' (Marope, 2013, p. 22). In keeping with this philosophy, 'pioneer' teachers from primary, secondary and special school settings were funded by the Welsh Government to co-construct the framework document for the expressive arts from 2016 onwards (Welsh Government, 2015). During this process, the initial reaction of primary specialists to the idea of ranging across subject disciplines was to express a lack of confidence in their own subject knowledge, especially in music (Kneen et al., 2020, p. 268). The potential exists, then, for primary specialists to continue to lack confidence in the teaching of music, conflating their music *teaching* ability with their own artistic skills as musicians. In doing so, they risk developing the disposition of 'musicianism' (Regelski, 2012): 'a tendency to place *musical* choices and values before or above *educational* options and values' (Regelski, 2012, p. 21, italics in original).

Conclusion: 'Lessons from a usable past'

All that has preceded would suggest that both policy and practice in assessing teacher suitability to teach music failed to recognise the

important distinction between *music education* (the way an individual acquires an understanding of and about music) and *musical education* (which is highly concentrated and it may occur as the result of performing on an instrument) (Hoskyns, 2002). Both these concepts need their own specific pedagogies, but it seems apparent that in teacher education historically the approach for the latter has been applied to the former. While potential music 'specialists' and class teachers were judged on their musical technique (normally quantified by a performance examination success and not necessarily indicative of their musical understanding) rather than other musical skills, it seems unlikely that this situation will change.

Thus an essential lesson from the 'usable past' is that there is a need to fundamentally reassess the extent to which performance skills are needed by a primary teacher in music. It should be remembered that 'just as we can develop children's written language without being a novelist, it is perfectly possible to engage children in music without being a pianist' (Mills, 2009, p. 2).This does not mean that highly competent musicians are not able to teach music in primary schools. Indeed they have much to offer, both as individual teachers and working with colleagues in schools. Nevertheless, one lesson which is abundantly clear from the 'usable past' examined above is that such teachers have always been, and will continue to be, rare in the primary school.

Alternative models have been propounded, but are often considered in contemporary isolation and not set within an historical context. If we are to learn from the past, it is vital that the pedagogic potential of other facets of musicality are explored and developed. The 'performance paradigm' has not succeeded to date. Perhaps it is time to accept that teachers, and policy makers, need to assess the ability to teach music not on the basis of the musical 'skills' that a teacher possesses, but rather on the ability to respond to children in an informed, artistic and musically sensitive manner? Such a change would be especially timely in exploiting the new freedom in primary schools in Wales to break down barriers between subject domains and explore new pedagogies associated with different areas of learning. With this comes the potential for primary teachers to harness the idea of 'powerful connections' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 68) to break away from long-held subject-specific confidence issues about the teaching of music. Through doing so, they could create opportunities for their pupils to experience and understand music through the translation (Pruitt, Ingram and Weiss, 2014) of knowledge and experience to and from other subject domains, becoming 'recontextualising agents … [with] the potential to be

curriculum constructors in partnership with their students' (McPhail, 2016, p. 1163). Kneen et al. (2020) described such integrated approaches as 'a "glue" of aspiration and commitment for teachers of the arts' (Kneen et al., 2020, p. 272) but called for 'the time, resources and opportunity to understand the nature of curriculum integration and its impact on subject knowledge' (Kneen et al., 2020, p. 273).

This paper has detailed a number of transformational points in music education in Wales, and at many of these points opportunities were partially, or totally, missed to guarantee a broad, practical experience of all that music education can offer pupils by exploiting a teaching pedagogy which supplants the historic performance paradigm. As we stand at yet another inflection point in the history of Welsh music education, new and exciting opportunities present themselves to learn from the past to enrich the experience of music for pupils, raise the profile of music and the expressive arts in the primary curriculum, and empower primary teachers to find new and relevant opportunities for music teaching in their classrooms.

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