

Sociocultural perspectives on multicultural music education: reappraising the content of music curricula in Ireland.

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Abstract

Changing social demographics in all parts of the world have brought about the need for changes in curriculum content in education and by extension, music education. In this paper I discuss sociocultural perspectives on multicultural music education with particular reference to a) tolerance and understanding, and b) multicultural awareness and open-mindedness as rationales for multicultural music education. Current provision for multicultural music education in second level curriculum documents and highlights from the Music Education National Debate (2004) is discussed in the light of recent sociocultural changes in Irish society. Findings from a survey and focus group discussion point to sociocultural rationale for multicultural music education in Ireland. Moreover, data from second level music teachers' experiences and attitudes of their training and music education practice suggest that content at both second and in higher music education in Ireland is due for reappraisal. To conclude, I propose Campbell's Concentric Circles Model (1996) as a way forward for music education practice in Ireland.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from research conducted by the author on multicultural music education in Ireland in 2005 and to readdress the relevance of this topic to contemporary Irish society and educational policy. I will conclude by suggesting a way forward for multicultural/intercultural music education in Ireland.

I begin with this quote from an address given by the current Minister for Education, Mr Batt O’Keeffe at the Intercultural Education Conference on 1 October 2008:

Within a relatively short space of time, Ireland has become a richly diverse society, with a new mix of languages, cultures and perspectives. It is important to acknowledge the very positive contribution that immigrants are making to our society and also our economy. The changes we have experienced in society generally over the last number of years provide the backdrop for the challenges now facing the education system in providing solutions for an increasing variety of needs. It is important to emphasise that migrant children in primary and post-primary education are entitled to the same education as Irish children and to the same additional supports...
(Batt O’Keeffe, Minister for Education)

Part of the problem with such discourse about cultural awareness is the way in which it appears to be explicitly addressed in a public manner and in Irish government publications but this is not always as explicit in the practice of education and more specifically in the practice of music education.

Definition of Terms

There are many different terms in the literature on this subject which discuss the relevance of terms such as multicultural, intercultural, non western, ethnic, and world music. Therefore, it is necessary at this juncture to explain my choice of the term ‘multicultural music education’

as it applies to this paper. Elliott (1995, p.207) maintains that music education should be multicultural in nature because it exists in a diversity of music cultures. Thus, he identifies a synonymous relationship between multicultural music and music education with no one musical practice inherently more valuable than another. However, I adopt the term 'multicultural' in this instance, because it denotes the inclusion of various musics other than western classical, folk, popular or Irish traditional. This is because these types of music are already represented in Irish second level music curricula at present, and although they ought to be considered 'multicultural' they tend not to be. Therefore, the term 'multicultural music' as it applies to this paper, includes musics other than the genres already established in Irish music education at secondary level.

Literature

Sociocultural Rationale for Multicultural Music Education

There have been many reasons for the inclusion of multicultural music in music education curricula in both the UK and the US, and many studies have indicated the importance of a multicultural approach in the teaching and learning of music (Campbell, 1991, 1996; Jordan, 1992; Elliott, 1995; Kwami, 1996; Volk, 1998). In addition, demographic changes and the notion of tolerance for all races and cultures have permeated multicultural education and multicultural music education since its conception.

Many music educators and philosophers suggest that tolerance and understanding, multicultural awareness and open-mindedness all contribute as rationales for the inclusion of other musics and cultures (Campbell, 1995; Elliott, 1995; Fung, 1995; Palmer, 1996; Anderson and Campbell, 1996; Jorgensen, 1997; Volk, 1998). Such rationales espouse that through the understanding of other cultures, one may come to an understanding of cultural

difference and appreciation that may assist in the promotion of anti-racist attitudes. Elliott (1989) also considers the notion of tolerance as rationale and suggests that ‘...if music education functions as culture... then it may have the potential to change prejudicial attitudes and behavior’ (Elliott, 1989, p.14). Jorgensen (1997) also subscribes to this emphasizing that commonalities and differences of music cultures can foster tolerance.

However, multicultural music education presents many challenges such as; which musics do we include/exclude? The issue of tokenism is problematic and as we shall see later, is evident in second level music curricula in Ireland. Authenticity and cultural context have been much debated in the literature on this topic and both pose significant challenges to secondary level music teachers. Moreover, in examining the history of formal music education in Ireland, it is evident that although Irish traditional music permeated communities, western classical music dominated second level curricula until the introduction of a new music syllabus for Junior Cycle in 1992. Therefore, the relatively recent inclusion of popular music, folk, and jazz in formal music education curricula signifies a gradual expansion of genres, thus making the inclusion of even more musics in a relatively new curricula an arduous and challenging task for teachers whose training is primarily that of the Western classical tradition.

Music Education in Ireland: Historical Perspectives and Current Curricula

McCarthy (1997) describes how the rationale for music in Irish education has always been political. She differentiates between primary school music, which was supportive of nationalist values and secondary school music, which was the custodian of colonial values through the importance it placed on Western classical music in the curriculum. This society led to the idea of two distinct and separate musical cultures namely, Irish traditional musical

culture and Western classical culture. In her account on the transmission of music in Ireland, McCarthy differentiates between two very distinct forms of music learning namely, music as canon and music as culture. Moreover, McCarthy, (1999) and O'Flynn (2005) describe Ireland as a bimusical culture, which creates a unique situation for the consideration of multicultural/intercultural music education in Ireland.

At secondary level, students partake in two national examination systems namely, the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate; the latter being compulsory for entry to higher education degree programmes. With a strong emphasis on performing, listening and composing, the Junior Certificate Music Syllabus (1991) and Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus (1994) prescribe that candidates must perform at both levels on any instrument as solo performer or in a group, and students have a range of genres to choose from.

In both syllabuses there are prescribed set works and songs from various categories such as folk, western classical and popular. There is a tiny mention of 'Ethnic Music' as an elective *listening* module at Junior and Leaving Certificate level.

In the curriculum guidelines at junior level, a representation of ethnic music (two pages) is contained in the textbooks *Tuned In* (O'Grady, 1999) and *Prelude* (Costelloe, 1998). In *Tuned In* this comprises flamenco music. This includes some background information along with a small section on the traditional instruments used in flamenco music. Excerpts from two dances, *Fandango* and *Sevillanas* are notated on both pages however; there is no audio material to accompany these. The other book *Prelude* also contains two pages of 'Ethnic Music', but this book contains some information on African Music. Again, some background information is provided and musical features of African music namely, call and response, polyrhythms, improvisation and pentatonic scales are included. Four pentatonic scales are notated as musical examples, and there is a short section on instruments.

There are some points to note here. Firstly, there is no audio material provided in the accompanying cassettes and compact discs that come with these textbooks, therefore if a teacher chooses this elective, it is incumbent on him/her to source appropriate audio examples. Musical features are illustrated with Western classical notation in both instances, which defies the whole idea of 'ethnic' music as vernacular form. Thirdly, the notion of this elective as a token gesture is well founded in the manner in which ethnic music is allocated a mere two pages in both books, and as we shall see shortly, none of the music teachers that were surveyed or interviewed in this study chose this elective.

The Music Education National Debate (MEND) comprised an international forum that took place in Dublin between 1995 and 1996 under the auspices of the Dublin Institute of Technology College of Music and written by Frank Heneghan, shortly after the conception of the new Junior and Leaving Certificate courses. This report highlighted many issues of contention within the music education system in Ireland, including the adoption of multicultural music education. Issues pertaining to the inclusion of multiculturalism and its place in Irish music education came to the forefront of the MEND debate and are of particular relevance to this study because it brought the international debates on multicultural music education to an Irish context.

Heneghan states: 'Multiculturalism as a component of Irish music education has to be considered under the headings of relevance, balance and time constraints; it is problematic under all three counts' (Heneghan, 2004: Document 355, p.292) In addition, musicologists and philosophers most notably Heneghan and Reimer contested the crux of a rationale for multicultural music education, with the socio-political ends of what 'multicultural' espouses.

Research Methods

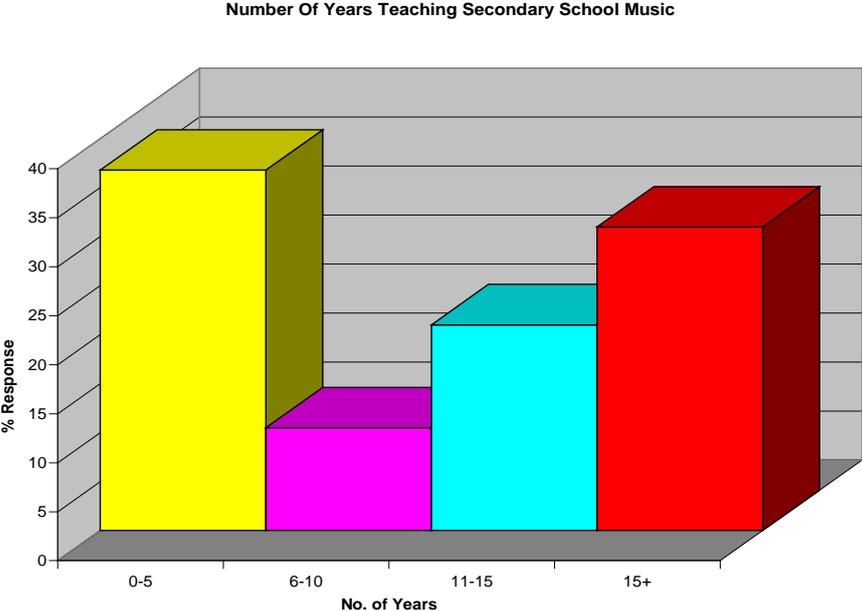
In order to provide comprehensive perspectives of teachers' attitudes, two distinct methods of data collection were selected: a survey/questionnaire method and a focus group discussion. Thirty-eight secondary music teachers participated in the survey and six music teachers participated in the focus group. The questionnaire and focus group study addressed the attitudes of secondary music teachers with questions categorized under the following themes: background information including music preferences, current secondary music syllabi, multiculturalism and Ireland, rationales for multicultural music education, and challenges to implementation. An overview of the response rate according to county is provided in Table 1.0.

Table 1.0. Geographical Location of Respondents

| County | N | Province |
|-----------|----|-----------|
| Dublin | 10 | Leinster |
| Kildare | 3 | |
| Offaly | 1 | |
| Westmeath | 1 | |
| Cork | 2 | Munster |
| Clare | 6 | |
| Limerick | 10 | |
| Kerry | 2 | Connaught |
| Galway | 1 | |
| Leitrim | 1 | |
| Donegal | 1 | Ulster |

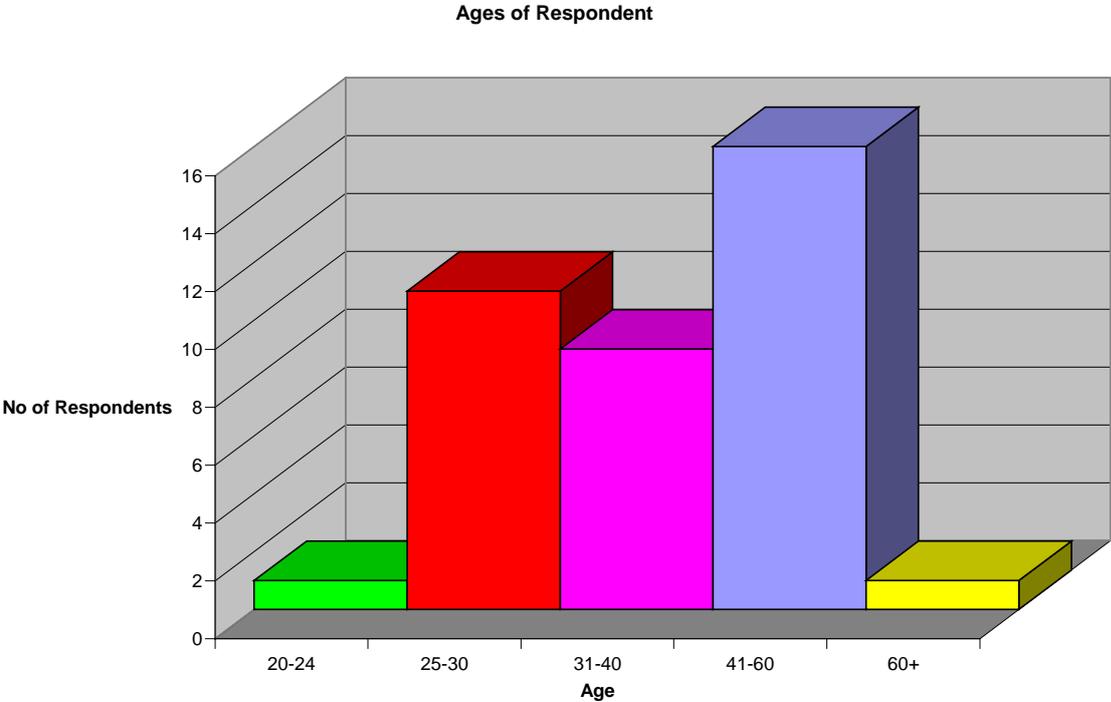
N = Number of Respondents

Fig 1.0. Number of Years Teaching Secondary School Music



Half of respondents have at least ten years experience as secondary school music teachers, however just over a third have below five years experience.

Fig. 1.1. Ages of Respondents



In this survey over half of respondents are between the ages of twenty and forty, and just under half of respondents are in the forty-one to sixty plus age bracket. What is relevant in this instance is the relationship between age and musical taste/preference and will be examined shortly.

Musical Preferences

As there is a multitude of music styles/genres, I posed an open-ended question and the following styles were accounted by respondents.

Table 1.1. Personal Musical Tastes/Styles listened to most frequently

| Music Style | N= 38 |
|---------------------|-------|
| Western Classical | 30 |
| Traditional Irish | 15 |
| Popular | 10 |
| Jazz | 9 |
| Rock | 5 |
| Folk | 4 |
| Country | 3 |
| All types | 3 |
| World Music | 1 |
| Latin American | 1 |
| Indian and Javanese | 1 |

N = Number of Respondents

Three respondents listen to world/non-Western music (including Latin American, Indian and Javanese) on a frequent basis, whereas thirty respondents indicated their preference for Western classical music. However, there were some interesting responses to this open question such as: ‘Baroque’, ‘Mozart’ and ‘Impressionist composers’, and one respondent specified ‘Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Contemporary’ as their personal preference, as if the question only pertained to Western classical music.

The next table illustrates the most preferred styles of music in the curriculum on a scale of 1-6. It should be noted that some respondents declined to rate their preferred style of music and merely ticked one or more categories, and some indicated that they liked all styles. Yet again, those who indicated that they enjoyed all styles of music fall into the under thirty-age category. Most respondents in this age category were specific in their answers, whereas in contrast, ten of those under the age of thirty stated ‘All styles’ or ‘Everything’, thus illustrating their openness to musical diversity. Interestingly, only one respondent in the age 41 – 60 category indicated a preference for all styles of music.

Table 1.2. Styles of music preferred by teachers in the curriculum on scale of 1-6
(1 = most preferable, 6 = least preferable) N = Number of respondents

| Styles of Music | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western Classical | 15 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Traditional Irish | 6 | 6 | 8 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| Folk | 0 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| Pop | 5 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| Jazz | 2 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Musicals | 0 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 |

Again, the predominance of Western classical music is very evident with over half (Scale 1-3) of music teachers deeming it preferable. However, three respondents gave it the lowest rating and regarded it least preferable. Interesting to note in this instance, is the fact that these respondents deemed Irish traditional music as most preferable and had attended University College Cork, which includes students with a background in Irish traditional music in the music degree courses. Here the traditional versus classical dichotomy raises its head, and further information gathered at the focus group discussion throws some light on this issue and will be discussed shortly. No doubt most respondents would have experienced mainly Western classical music in their music education, and this has possibly influenced their current musical taste.

Parallels with Lucy Green's Study (2002).

Green (2002) reports on significant changes in the views of teachers in their evaluations and uses of many different styles of music, including world music in two studies carried out in 1982 and again in 1998. The studies resonate with this study; however, the findings are not replicated. Using a survey method in different parts of England, results showed that the teachers' attitudes towards diverse musical styles had changes considerably over the sixteen-year period. Results from the survey in 1982 showed the supremacy of classical music in teachers' choice of importance and world music was not even mentioned. By 1998 popular music ranked highest in importance followed by world music. Green discovered that the teachers used world music, as they felt that it 'raised pupils' awareness of other cultures' (Green, 2002, p.26). It would appear that Irish secondary music teachers' music preferences correspond more closely with Green's study in 1982, perhaps suggesting that we are lagging behind our UK counterparts.

Multicultural

The term multicultural and the concept of multiculturalism were introduced at this point in the questionnaire. The majority of respondents agreed that Ireland is a multicultural country (see Figure 1.2), however when asked to define what they understood multicultural meant, the responses varied somewhat.

Fig.1.2. Is Ireland a Multicultural Country?

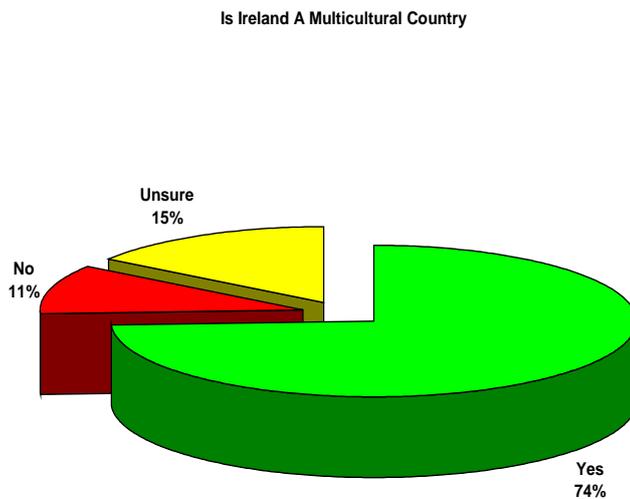
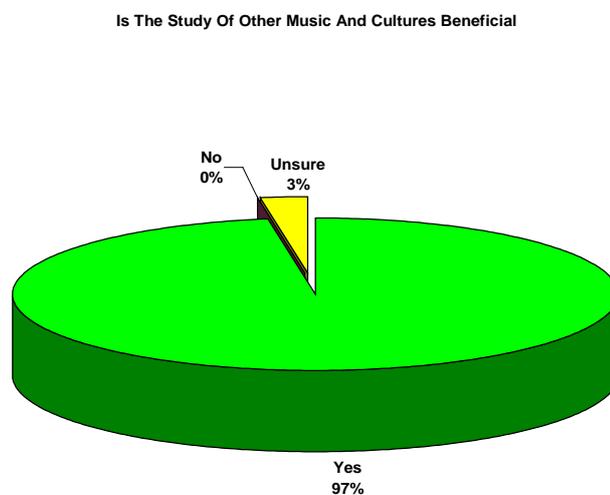


Fig.1.3. Is the Study of Other Musics and Cultures Beneficial?



The majority of respondents agree that the study of other musics and cultures is beneficial but I needed to ascertain why, therefore an open-ended question followed simply asking a reason for their answer to Figure 1.3. The following selection of answers to this open-ended question has recurring themes.

Sociocultural Rationale

‘It promotes understanding and tolerance of other cultures.’

‘Inclusion of non-nationals = broader musical experience, appreciation and tolerance of other cultures.’

‘An understanding of other cultures will lead to an acceptance of people of other nationalities.’

‘It is clear to me that tolerance and understanding go hand in hand with understanding another culture.’

‘Remove the stereotyping of people and nations. Broaden ones understanding and have tolerance.’

Here we can see that the word ‘tolerance’ prevails in four responses and is implied in all replies. Thus, music teachers in Ireland are already aware of this concept from a general point of view and have applied their understanding of it in this instance.

Although twenty-four respondents agree that multicultural music education would promote anti racist attitudes (Figure 1.4.), eight respondents remain undecided and four disagree with this statement. This could be because exotic presentation of certain musics makes anti-racist attitudes even more prevalent by reinforcing differences, or it could simply be that respondents don’t actually see music playing a role in such social issues. Figure 1.5 illustrates that the majority of secondary music teachers think that multicultural music education should be included on the curriculum.

Fig.1.4. Multicultural Music Education Would Promote Anti-Racist Attitudes

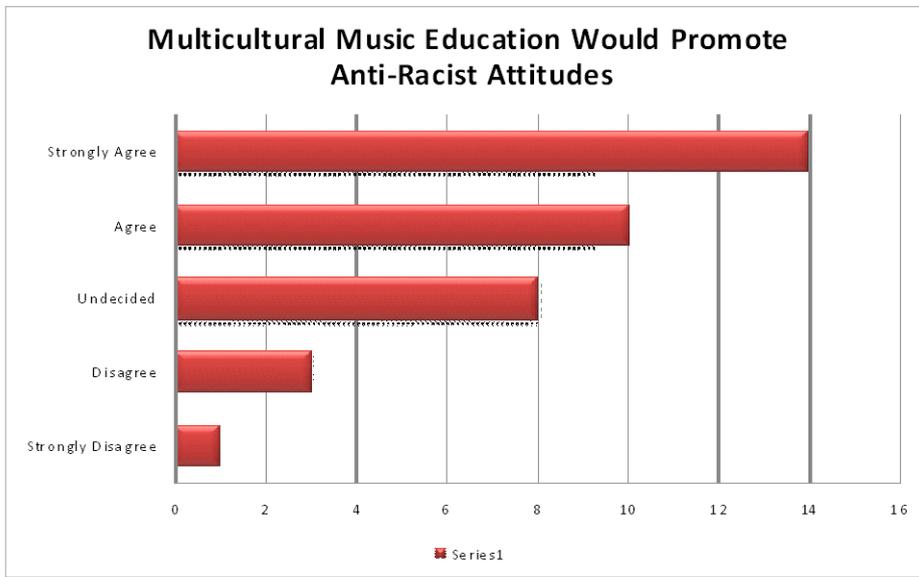
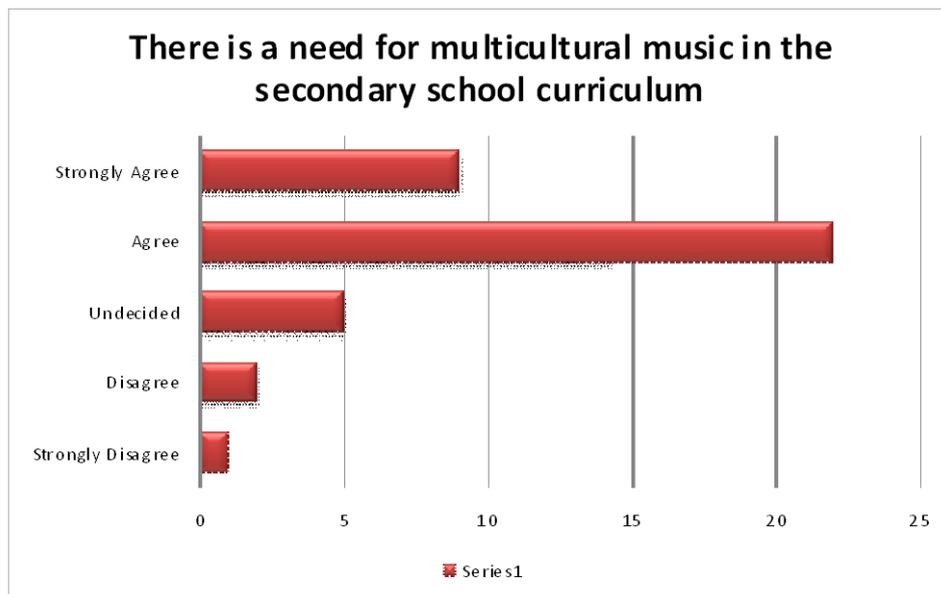


Figure 1.5. There is a need for multicultural music in the secondary school curriculum



Focus Group Analysis

Many findings from the survey have parallels in the focus group study. In total, six teachers participated. For anonymity teacher's real names were not used, therefore to distinguish teachers in certain extracts T1 refers to one teacher, T2 to another and so forth. M refers to moderator, which was my role in the focus group discussion.

Curricular Issues

I wished to ascertain if any of the teachers teach the *Ethnic Music* module in the Junior Certificate:

M: In the general listening category of the Junior Cert there is an option of Ethnic Music. Has anyone ever chosen this category?

T2: No, we always do jazz.

T4: I'm the same.

T3: *Tuned In*² doesn't have enough information on the Ethnic music so I do Jazz too.

M: What do you think then of the two pages on *Ethnic Music* in the book?

T1: I haven't even read it in the book!

T2: Well you're only talking about 20 marks out of 360, that's the reality.

M: Would you think its tokenistic then?

T2: If they've only allowed 20 marks then that says enough.

Racism and Multicultural Music Education

I wanted to explore teacher attitudes about racism and whether music had a role to play in anti-racist attitudes.

M: Do you think racism exists in Ireland?

T2: I think we were great to send money to the starving Africans but not when they come over here, everything is ok when it's far away. There is always trouble with something new. I've heard that Nigerians can't take the bus in Cork because of racist remarks...

M: Do you think then that education has a role to play in combating racism?

T4: Absolutely.

T5: It stems from ignorance, what people aren't used to, education has to change in order to accommodate them and unless people are educated their eyes won't be opened. But we can start teaching them things like world music and make time for it.

M: Does music have a role to play then?

T1: It all adds up.

T2: We can't cover every music but if you include a music then you are saying you are tolerant of it, for example that Nigerian music has as much value as Irish music, and in a way you are reaching across in that way.

As regards tolerance as rationale, the participants were in agreement that music inadvertently speaks of value judgments. In this instance the teacher used a comparison between the values of Nigerian music and Irish music. This comment displays this particular teacher's awareness of the fact that teachers' musical preferences have a direct consequence in classroom practice.

While participants in the focus group addressed the issue of racism and its increasing prevalence in Irish society, both focus group participants and almost two thirds of survey

respondents agreed that multicultural music in music education would promote anti-racist attitudes and heighten awareness of other cultures.

Teacher Training

The predominant challenge asserted by participants was the issue of adequate teacher training in musics they would feel unequipped to teach and the possible constraints of predominantly western classical teacher training:

T2: You would have to have training in it – it’s absolutely essential, yeah, because as classical musicians everything relates to the written note – for me, I stress reading from first year, we all throw the recorder at them, recorder is the most accessible for sight-reading. It’s not like you can just listen to Javanese Gamelan on a CD and then say come on now, let’s have a bit of a session!

T4: I love challenges, I think as music teachers we do look forward to positive changes. It’s like Irish music, the kids really love it and I think they would love Ethnic music too.

Policy and Documentation post 2005

Since my study of 2005, there have been a number of publications on the subject of intercultural education and I wish to bring this paper up to speed with guidelines issued by the NCCA¹ on Intercultural education in the post primary school in 2006. Among suggestions are the following:

“An inclusive music programme will:

- Include performance items from other cultures;
- Incorporate a background study of these cultures;
- Select pieces which offer opportunities encounter unfamiliar cultures;

- Expose students to a variety of notational systems (tonic solfa, numbering, non-western, tablature, graphic etc.)”

From the data elicited from both the survey and focus group discussion, it would appear that while secondary music teachers welcome the idea of including more musics in the curriculum, they feel unequipped to teach musics of the world's cultures adequately. These recommendations, while laudable in their recognition of the importance of cultural context (background study of these cultures), appear unrealistic to the music teacher whose musical training has predominantly comprised music of the classical canon, thus creating unrealistic objectives for the music teacher. In addition, they are rather vague and generic, for example, are the performance items from other cultures part of listening to music, or are they performing suggestions? This is a prime example of well-meaning suggestions on policy documentation which perhaps may never be realised in the context of the music curriculum or classroom. Another survey of secondary music teachers would ascertain if such recommendations are being implemented in the classroom.

Current Demographic Trends and Experiences of Racism

Most recent census figures from 2006 indicate a population of 4.2 million with non-Irish nationals now forming 10% of the resident population (Central Statistics Office 2007, p.24).

At the Fifth Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education in Newfoundland, O'Flynn (2008) noted that there are now more native Polish speakers than native Irish speakers living in Ireland and that non-Irish nationals in order of numerical significance include: Polish, Lithuanian, Nigerian, Latvian and Chinese.

A study by Mc Ginnity et al (2006) aimed to measure the experience of racism and discrimination affecting minority groups in Ireland. It sampled a range of non-Irish

nationalities and some of the findings revealed that: 35% of the sample had been harassed on the street or on public transport; 32% of work permit holders were harassed at work and 21.5% of the sample were denied access to work. Can music education alleviate problems such as these?

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) 'is an independent expert body that seeks to provide advice and to develop initiatives to combat racism and to move towards a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland'. However, the NCCRI was closed, effective from end of December 2008 as a result of government cutbacks in the budget. Thus, although Ireland has seen many demographic changes in the last decade and although policy and independent bodies are making strides in intercultural initiatives, it would appear in this instance issues such as anti-racism and interculturalism are not a high priority.

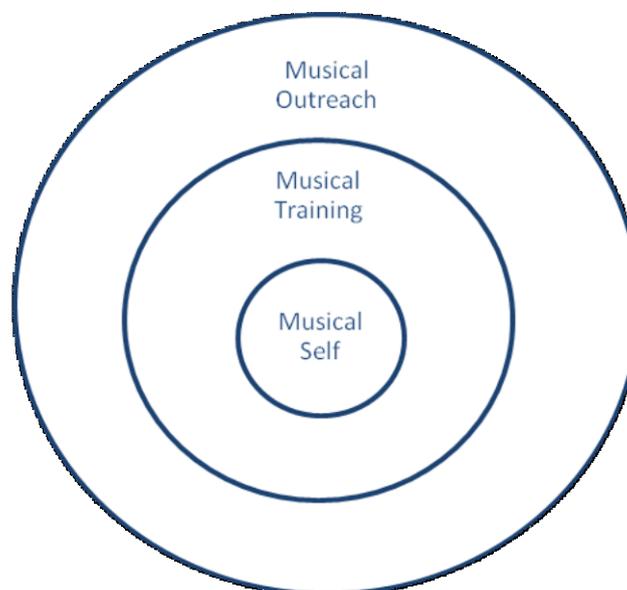
Music and the Community

The report *Local Authorities and Music: Knowing the Score* (2009) written by Ailbhe Kenny and directed by Patricia Flynn investigated the role of local government in music initiatives and music education in Ireland. One of the findings relates to the most frequent genres of music that Arts Officers engaged in and interesting to note is that 72% of arts officers engaged in world music. Therefore, while music in the community is embracing change, music curricula devised in the 1990s and implemented to this day at secondary level are not up to speed with societal changes.

A Way Forward?

O'Flynn (2005) proposes an application of 'intermusicality' whereby the musical background of teachers, students, and the community might enhance music education planning. Included in his suggestions are; plurality of musical content but also an understanding of the performance and transmission practices associated with each musical style/tradition. Perhaps as he suggests, bimusicality might provide the springboard for intermusicality in this regard. And it is with the idea of intermusical and intercultural that I now turn, with the following suggested model by Patricia Sheehan Campbell known as the *Concentric Circles Model* (1996). Three sets of concentric circles are identified thus:

Figure 2.2: Campbell's Concentric Circles Model



Musical Self: This concerns the teacher's own musical heritage with which he/she is most familiar but also values that of the student. Here Campbell recognizes that all individuals have their own unique musical identity (Campbell, 1996). McCarthy (1996) praises this position

maintaining that in the sharing of musical identities student-teacher relationships are strengthened.

Musical Training: Campbell describes this circle as the musical knowledge the teacher ‘...ought to know’ (Campbell, 1996, p.23).

Musical Outreach: The third circle involves communal musical practices that may be alien or unfamiliar to the teacher, and as such, recognizes the local community of the students. One of the benefits of this model is that students understand that school music and community music can both be appreciated and enjoyed. McCarthy clarifies it thus:

...students observe that the ‘musical universe’ of the school can overlap with music from their homes, their ethnic communities, or their community festivals. (McCarthy, 1996)

With this model, both teachers and students can share their musical heritage and in the acknowledgement of communal musical practices music education is not restricted by curriculum and classroom practice only. So for Ireland’s unique situation, instead of wondering about which musics to include or to exclude, starting with the local community might provide a realistic point from which to start thus facilitating perhaps an intermusical and intercultural approach.

At the MEND debate, Heneghan and Reimer contested the crux of a rationale for multicultural music education, with the socio-political ends of what ‘multicultural’ espouses. Reimer questions why Ireland, a relatively homogenous and small island should concern itself with multicultural music when it appears to already have problems with its commitment to Irish traditional music (Reimer quoted in Heneghan 2004: Document 204). This final quote by McCarthy (1997) succinctly justifies a multicultural music education in Ireland thus:

A comprehensive music education goes beyond the sphere of musical practices to include music of the world's cultures. World or multicultural music education is as appropriate and necessary for a small island of relatively homogenous population on the periphery of northern Europe as it is for countries such as the United States and Britain which have large multiethnic populations. (McCarthy, 1997, p.18)

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Endnotes

¹ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

² *Tuned In* is the textbook most commonly used for Junior Cycle Music.