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December 2007

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ABSTRACT

This Study Paper explores the topic of using music education activities as a way to address Social inclusion (SI) and Respect for diversity (RfD) with children. It is intended to inform the development of appropriate activities and indicators for the SI and RfD issue area, particularly those which address the use of music in projects with young children. The study provides an overview of the research literature and other documents on the significant processes and outcomes of music education activities aimed at bringing together children in divided contexts. It is apparent that cross-community development of music skills has been and continues to be an effective means of addressing prejudice with young people. The study includes the analysis of interviews with nine experienced practitioners in NI regarding integrated music projects and other ways in which music plays a part in facilitating RfD and SI with older children and concludes with recommendations for a Phase 2 study to bring this knowledge to the early childhood/lower primary school sector.

1. Introduction

This Study Paper is set out to explore the potential of music and music education activities to address SI and RfD with children. It reviews successful projects that have used music to address these issues in a variety of international contexts. It also looks in more detail at the realities and potential of using music with young people in post-conflict Northern Ireland (NI), through interviews with experienced practitioners involved in music activities in cross-community contexts. The ultimate aim of the paper is to draw recommendations for a Phase 2 study to bring this knowledge to the early childhood/lower primary school sector.

It is organised in seven sections. The next two explain the NI context and the theoretical background of the study in terms of music understanding, identity formation and prejudice. This is followed by a review of literature and the analysis and discussion of the interviews with key practitioners. The two final sections outline recommendations for practice and questions will be explored in Phase 2.

2. The NI context

Belfast Telegraph, August 11 2007:

Much was made during the week about claims by travel writer Simon Calder that the 'Troubles Murals' are world class tourist attractions...Better not tell [the tourists] about the 18-year-old Protestant motorcyclist who was knocked down by a hit and run driver on the Shankill [a notoriously Loyalist area] during the week. He managed to struggle to his feet in spite of a fractured leg and other injuries. He was approached by three people who wanted to know if he was Catholic or Protestant. They asked him to sing the Sash. He did not know the words. Notwithstanding his fractured leg and no doubt traumatised state, they attacked him. He managed to get away and, while running for his life on his fractured leg, he heard them shouting that they were going to wreck his bike. And if he had made it to an ambulance, it would probably have been attacked by nationalist youths because it had just left the Shankill. (Anderson, 2007)

The above extract was recently published on a Belfast newspaper and similar situations are regularly reported in the local media. Indeed, below the surface of normality and reconciliation after the peace process, NI remains a deeply segregated society: in 13 out of 26 local government districts, Protestants are the overwhelming majority (in six they make up more than three quarters of the population) whereas 11 districts are inhabited mostly by Catholics (Office for National Statistics, 2004). Segregation is most acute in areas which were so called 'hot spots' during 'the troubles', where prejudice remains and is coupled with internal violence exacerbated by socio-economic problems such as high unemployment (NISRA, 2005).

We must not forget that during the three decades of 'the troubles', from the late 1960s through to the late 1990s, over 3,700 people were killed and tens of thousands injured within a population of 1.6 million people, due to direct fighting between (and often within) Republican groupings, Loyalist groupings, the British army and the local police (McEvoy *et al.*, 2006; Muldoon, 2004). Understandably, the wounds of 'the troubles' are taking a long time to heal (Feeney, 2004; Gallagher, 2004b; McKittrick *et al.*, 2004; Myers, 2006).

The school system still reflects the segregation due to the recent conflict with approximately 94% of children attending schools that can be classified as Protestant or Catholic due to the homogeneity of staff and students. Only over 60 schools out of more than 1,000 Primary, Secondary and Grammar schools are currently classified as 'Integrated', balancing their intake between the two main communities, a movement that was started as early as 1981 as a response to the conflict (Gallagher, 2003, 2004a, 2007; Integrated Education Fund, 2007; Kilpatrick & Leitch, 2004; McClenahan *et al.*, 2003). The *de facto* segregation of the school system and other facets of society has been labelled as 'benign apartheid' (e.g. Cairns, 2007).

While some scholars argue that religious tensions reflected in the local media are not a feature of music education because all schools have to implement the same NI curriculum (Drummond, 1999), others discuss the 'politization of music' (Hastings, 2003: 77-78) observing that, over the years, 'the two communities have developed an attitude of alienation from part of their culture, and folk music has developed political overtones' (Jarvis, 1990: 276). In an earlier analysis of NI music teacher education, Jarvis (1990) noted that many teachers were simply not familiar with even one of the main traditional musics (*i.e.* the Irish folk music tradition, often associated with Catholics, and the flute band tradition, associated with Protestants). Local ethnomusicologists observe that, historically, music has been a forceful device for the expression of ethnic, national and transnational identities in NI, and that the perception of the co-existing diverse musical traditions has been used to create a sense of identity that is culturally exclusive (Forker, 2002; Ramsey, 2003; Reily, 2006).

3. Theoretical underpinnings of the study: music, identity, prejudice and young people

Recent research demonstrates that music is a defining element in the formation of young people's identities (*e.g.* Hargreaves *et al.*, 2006; MacDonald *et al.*, 2002). North *et al.* (2000) studied the questionnaire responses from 2,465 adolescents and found that music allowed them to satisfy their emotional needs, was preferred to other indoor activities and was listened to an average of 2.45 hours per day. Warwick (2006), in a consultation of 533 young people living in England, found that 'Music' was the third source of hope after 'Family' and 'Friends', and was more valued than 'Faith/religion', 'Television' or 'Sport'.

Music education research also shows how music is a powerful tool for individuals and communities (Hallam, 2001; Veblen & Olsson, 2002) and how schools can be successful spaces to develop music learning (Welch & Adams, 2003), hence contributing to the development of individuals' identities. Welch (2006) has identified infancy and early childhood as a critical period for the development of musical abilities and the formation of musical identity.

Children in NI, nevertheless, grow up in segregated neighbourhoods, developing prejudices against the cultural forms of the other half of the divide (flags, sports, songs and folklore). Several investigations highlight how this systematically happens with children aged 6 to 8, and that respect towards 'different' cultural forms such as sporting traditions and flags can be increased with early intervention (Connolly *et al.*,

2006; Connolly, 2007a; Connolly & Healy, 2004; Hayden & Odena, 2007). While the importance of early intervention is clearly highlighted in the literature (e.g. Connolly & Hayden, 2007) it is also observed that the influence of the adults involved in cross-community education is paramount. Cairns (2007) argues that without changing the adults' attitudes young children have little hope of succeeding changing theirs in the long term. Johnson and Johnson (2000: 239-240) observe that in order to reduce prejudice in schools, children must live and learn within a 'culture that promotes the development of caring, personal relationships among diverse individuals'. Such schools, they observe, are built around three 'Cs':

- Resolving conflicts Constructively;
- Internalizing Civic values;
- Establishing a Cooperative community.

The sensitive issues of 'inclusivity' and RfD needed for a cooperative community, were addressed by the educational authorities until August 2007 with a statutory cross-curricular theme peculiar to NI circumstances: Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). This theme was not a school subject, but rather a topic whose scope was defined by a series of objectives which were 'taught through the medium of the compulsory subjects of the Curriculum' (Department of Education, 2005a). The objectives of EMU were 'fostering self-respect, respect for others, and the improvement of relationships between people of differing cultural traditions' (Department of Education, 2005b: 4-6). In the Revised Curriculum currently being implemented, the EMU's objectives are reworded and included within the area of 'Personal Development & Mutual Understanding' (Department of Education, 2007). Nevertheless, how respect is promoted depends on the individual school (Smith, 2001).

In terms of appropriate approaches to dealing with issues of diversity with children, Connolly (2007a: 20) advocates for programmes that deal 'specifically and explicitly' with the issue of ethnicity. He observes that 'much can be gained from critically engaging with children directly and encouraging them to reflect' upon their attitudes more explicitly (see also Connolly, 1998; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

The social psychologist T. F. Pettigrew (1998) proposes a sequential model to reduce conflict between communities. He does not refer specifically to diversity in terms of different ethnicities but more in terms of communities in conflict generally and the salient characteristics of their members. The model contains three stages:

- First, the initial contact, where anxiety is likely to be more pronounced and where personal identity and inter-personal interaction are emphasised in an effort to 'de-categorise' the individual;
- Second, the stage when contact is well established, which affords an optimal situation with less anxiety in which the old salient categorization of belonging to a particular group is highlighted, resulting in weakened prejudices that are generalised beyond the activity;

- And a third and final stage in which, after extended contact, individuals begin to think of themselves as part of a redefined new larger group that comprises all communities (involves the development of the idea of a new community, or a ‘re-categorisation’ of the old ones).

4. Review of literature: using music education to reduce prejudice and promote inclusion

With the recent improvement of the political scenario since the Good Friday Agreement (1998), a few music educational projects are bringing together schools from both communities in a way that would have been unthinkable two decades ago – for instance the project *A Marvellous Medicine* (Ulster Orchestra, 2007), which brought together Primary school children for a big final concert in Belfast, or the activities of the self-explanatory named Cross-Border Orchestra (www.crossborderorchestra.ie). Musical experiences during childhood and adolescence appear to create lasting ‘bridges’ between communities thus diminishing prejudices. The main aim of these projects is often to bring young people to do musical activities together rather than to teach them a formulated set of civic values.

Music education activities have also been used successfully in other international contexts where there was an acute need for increasing inclusion and RfD. For example, in Spain, festivals comprising public music student performances have been used for promoting inclusion and reducing the absenteeism of Roma children (Almau, 2003)¹; in Holland, music workshops providing ‘Memorable Moments’ are being employed to promote RfD in nurseries with high percentage of migrant children (Brenman, 2007); and in Israel folklore is being used to bring Palestinian and Jewish pupils and their families together in activities undertaken during periodical cross-community school visits (Lichman 2006; Lichman & Sullivan, 2000).

In formal music education in Primary schools and nurseries across Western democracies, rhythms and songs are currently being introduced from a variety of developed and developing countries to promote intercultural music education (e.g. Bonal *et al.*, 2005; Kwami, 1998). Bonal *et al.* (2005) have used this type of resources to promote social inclusion amongst children in the *Raval* neighbourhood of Barcelona, Spain, populated by a majority of economic migrant families. In England, where the history of migration is longer than in other younger European democracies, the integration of different musical cultures in the music curriculum is required by statutory guidelines, which are supported by the publication of an increasing amount of books and resources (e.g. Kwami, 1995, 1998). This trend is advocated worldwide by the International Society for Music Education (ISME) and its publications (e.g. *International Journal of Music Education*) which aim to disseminate research and materials to help internationalize music curricula.

¹ The name generally accepted for this ethnic group differ slightly depending on the country. For instance, Spanish scholars use the word ‘*Gitanos*’ where British use ‘Travellers’ and EU policy makers often use ‘Roma’ (see for instance the website of the EU 6th Framework Programme Project ‘INCLUD-ED. Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education’ available at: www.ub.es/includ-ed).

Another area that addresses SI and which has a special commission within ISME is music therapy (see www.isme.org). There are a variety of music therapy research and practice approaches. Some studies deal with clinical applications, for instance to reduce anxiety in hospitals, while other studies explore the use of sound and music as therapy to develop the social and communication skills of children, e.g. children on the Autistic Spectrum (e.g. Bunt, 2006; Darnley-Smith & Patey, 2003; Welch *et al.*, 2001). The latter studies understand music therapy as a means to develop Inclusion and fall within the scope of this study. One of the techniques widely employed in this approach is the use of musical games involving sound exploration, free improvisation, question and answer, etc. with simple percussion instruments (which can be made by the students).

A collection of instruments hand-made by nursery student teachers at the University of Barcelona, Spain.



The use of self-made instruments is a technique that is also used in mainstream elementary music education because it facilitates the following aspects:

- It allows for direct manipulation of the object that produces the sound (string, membrane, sound box, etc.) thus facilitating the understanding of how it works to all students;
- It facilitates for participation and inclusion of all learners regardless of differing abilities, i.e. without labelling students;
- It promotes musical collaboration amongst equals.

This approach to inclusive education has also been employed with success in the initial music education of nursery teachers, who at the beginning of their training generally perceive themselves as non musical (Odena, in press) – see pictures below.

As exemplified in this review of literature, the terms SI and RfD have different interpretations comprising, at least:

- The inclusion of students with different abilities (in mainstream and special education);
- The respect for and inclusion of different cultures in activities in formal educational settings;

- The SI and respect towards different ethnicities.

A variety of terms are used in different areas of knowledge such as psychology, sociology and music education. It might be crucial for any project aimed at addressing SI and RfD to consider from the outset the meaning of the words used, and to try and agree a definition or common understanding between all agents involved: children, teachers, parents, project designers and any other practitioners.



Nursery student teachers without prior specialist music education² during a final performance using self-made instruments at the University of Barcelona.



5. Analysis of interviews with key practitioners in NI

The above review shows that in contexts where there are underlying tensions and lack of SI, there is potential for developing music projects to ameliorate the problems. With the recent political improvement in NI, important knowledge may be gained here with relevance for the design of cross-community projects in other post-conflict societies, as well as in more developed democracies.

However, there is a lack of information on what works, what are the keys for successful collaborative music education activities across the divide, and how to adapt

² In Spain formal music education in school finishes at the age of 15-16. Music can not be studied in schools afterwards as it is not an optional subject, neither in upper secondary/Grammar schools nor within the university entrance examinations. Any students wishing to continue their formal music education have to go to a music conservatoire, which is traditionally focussed on the training of instrumental performers.

the projects for young children – as RfD initiatives with younger children have been proven to maximise the intervention’s results (Connolly, 2007b; Hayden & Odena, 2007).

Therefore, one of the main aims of this study was to explore the keys of *how to develop music skills while bringing young children from Protestant and Catholic communities together* – thus addressing SI and RfD. In order to gather valuable first-hand information currently missing from the research literature, the task of interviewing key practitioners with cross-community music education experience seemed the logical step to follow.

5.1 Methodology

After the review of previous and current projects and relevant documents, a number of practitioners involved in music education activities with young people were approached and nine were finally interviewed. The sample was ‘purposive’, starting with music teacher educators from the main NI colleges, and was increased by asking all participants for more contacts. Interviewees were selected following a ‘maximum variation’ sampling approach, taking into account their potential as ‘key informants’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This sampling approach was employed to focus on the issue of young people working together regardless of the context. Participants included teachers with current or recent experience of College, Nursery, Primary and post-primary contexts, practitioners from the biggest School of Music in NI, and a composer/workshop leader. All interviewees had experience in at least two different contexts. They all had in common extended experience in cross-community educational activities. Two of them provided continuing development courses for school music teachers in the biggest Education and Library Board (the NI equivalent of the English ‘Local Education Authorities’), and visited Catholic, Protestant and Integrated schools on a regular basis. Another participant did her teacher education in England and, on her return, had worked in the denomination and integrated schools. The composer/workshop leader had a well-known reputation for designing and delivering music education projects with children from different socio-economic backgrounds across the divide.

Interviews were confidential and always set in a place chosen by the interviewee, and lasted between 25 and 65 minutes (with one exception which was shorter due to work commitments). In two instances participants were interviewed in pairs using a focus group format, allowing for interaction between them, which explains their extended length. Difficulties regarding ‘insiders’ researching mixed groups in NI, such as a tendency to relate to one community more than another (Donnelly, 2004) and the need to keep one’s own background undisclosed (Carlisle, 2007) were avoided due to the researcher’s ‘outsider’ Catalan/Spanish status.

The interviews explored the participants’ musical backgrounds, work and views, and advice on cross-community music education with young people in NI. Questions varied depending on the work and experiences of each interviewee (see examples of questions in Appendix I). In addition, further clarification of issues and ideas as they

appeared throughout the interviews were obtained, hence interviews developed into ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1988; Odena *et al.*, 2005).

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Full transcripts were analysed with the assistance of the specialist software for qualitative data analysis NVivo, using thematic/recursive comparative analysis (Leitch *et al.*, 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Odena, 2001, 2007a; Odena & Welch, 2007, in press). This process consisted of repeated readings of all transcripts, looking for commonalities and themes, which were tested with each new reading and evolved into thirty provisional categories. In successive analyses the provisional categories were compared with each other, which resulted in some re-organisation, merging and refining until settling into the final thirteen categories (see Appendix II for a full list of categories and subcategories). The final categorisation was discussed with a colleague researcher and a group of 17 local postgraduate students from the School of Education at Queen’s, and it was also shared with a dozen senior academics in a research seminar at the UK Economic and Social Research Council *Teaching and Learning Research Programme* Annual Conference 2007, which gives further reliability to the analysis.

Over one hundred and eighty pages of double spaced transcripts were analysed and thirteen categories emerged within and beyond the original research question, for instance, containing comments on the alienation towards the other’s culture, the intergenerational differences and the potential of music education for working together.

In the next sections the interviewees’ talk is presented, as much as possible, in indented quotations or inverted comas within the text. This reporting style is intended to provide the reader with rich descriptions of the participants’ experiences in their own words (Eisner, 1991; Cox, 1999).

6. Discussion of results

Following analyses the four more relevant categories to illustrate the topic of this study are *Stereotypes & alienation*, *Socio-economic factors*, *Project advice* and *Music education potential*. These will be discussed in the following four sections.

6.1 Cross community perceptions

The seven participants that grew up in NI felt that segregation was much more acute in previous decades. For them music education activities, often attended outside their denominational schools, had been a good way of addressing their own stereotypes:

Growing up here in NI you were either a Catholic or Protestant, it was very much a definition of who you were, and the first time that I met a Protestant was through the School of Music on Saturday mornings, and you suddenly realised they didn’t have two heads and their eyes weren’t closer together...it’s very funny, but we had an awful lot of banter and I think a real realisation that these people were not that different from us.

However, the same teacher was still encountering alienation between cultures in some of her school visits for her current work. She recalled an illustrative instance with a nine year old boy during one school visit:

I nearly dropped because his poem was about how he hated the Brits and I said, "Have you ever met a British person?" and he went, "No"...and it was along the lines of, "If I met one I would kill him and shoot him dead"...and I said, "But why?" and he said, "Because they're horrible" and I said, "But you've never met them so how would you know?" and he says, "Awk, well, everybody knows that!" and it was just this absolute, to him it was an absolute truth that all English people are bad and that's, no, there were no two ways round it, you know, and it struck me at how entrenched the views were... and it struck me that we have so far to go.

Different musical traditions are still very much alive and these are sometimes perceived as exclusive for one community. Two participants express this divide as follows:

The historical background of brass bands is in the British military system and following regimental bands from England...so that tends to attract more Protestants than Roman Catholics. And similarly Irish traditional music is part of the folk culture of the Catholics.

I would regard myself as quite an open person and I have experience of living in other areas, but still flute bands petrify me because to me they signify the Twelfth of July and marching and things like that. I also recognise that they're a fantastic opportunity for children to develop talent and for many that, it's a very appropriate way of being part of the community, but it still frightens me because it's an alien culture.

There was a general consensus amongst teachers for welcoming change, but segregation and stereotypes, particularly in poorer conflictive areas, was perceived as very much alive:

People are still scared, they have concerns and you only have to look at our politics and how it has gone to the two extremes...[we are] very much clinging to the extremes because that's what they know

Another participant put it this way:

Last year we did a project with ten Protestant primary schools, but there's, I mean, there was no attempt whatever to try and broaden their view of what Irish music is, because at the moment they don't want to know, their parents don't want to know... On the Shankill Road you wouldn't do that at all, it would be stupid to do that. So I think I would respect completely the Nationalist tradition in Catholic West Belfast, and we would do then something different in Protestant West Belfast.

The musical stereotypes imbedded in the two communities (*i.e.* Loyalist flute bands vs. Republican Irish traditional music sessions), which frightened some parents, were perceived as not totally divisive by the articulate participants:

In this country music can be used as a flag or an emblem...it's like gang mentality, it's like this tag or that tag, so, you know, as a classic stereotype, you have Protestants, you know, loyalist flute bands, Twelfth of July marching bands, all that stuff. As another stereotype you have Catholic, republicans, Irish traditional music sessions. And those

are the two stereotypes. Of course they, you see that, it's like any stereotype, once you start to dig into it, you see that that's not the case, but music has been used as a weapon to sort of define communities, define things.

Flute bands would be quite strong particularly in working class areas, housing estates and so forth, in the Protestant tradition, and that would recruit quite a number of males, and the kind of marching band tradition, and again that's a strong Unionist, Loyalist cultural identifier.

6.2 Views on social and economic factors

Participants acknowledged that their views were probably influenced by their particular upbringing. They felt 'fortunate' to have 'professional parents' or 'a middle class background where there was more tolerance', and also to have mixed with music students across the divide whose 'parents were professionals too':

If I had grown up on a housing estate here I might have had a different view.

The normalization and slow disappearance of segregation in more affluent areas brought with it a wealth of (*de facto* cross-community) music and music education activities:

Quite often people would have come together for operatic, you know, operatic societies and choral groups and, again from a variety of traditions, there would have been a pool of performers...I would have freely attended different churches to perform a particular musical work. But again, I suppose, I would be speaking from a very sort of middle class perspective.

It works on the professional level and the leafy green suburbs within education, I think it works to a certain extent in grammar schools.

But cultural alienation remained in poorer areas, where the sort of music which people identified with would reflect socio-economic differences:

There is a social element to classical music in that well-to-do families will identify with classical music and children from disadvantaged areas cannot identify with classical music at all, so there's a major problem there...And I'm genuinely worried that because the funding for music has been decreased, in the last three years in particular, that we have had to increase our fees significantly and therefore we are discouraging children from areas of social need...So the only division that I see on a regular basis is nothing to do with religion or politics, it's got to do with social status.

A teacher educator observed that the 'distinction between Catholic and Protestant' was over-simplistic:

I think the socio-economic differences are more problematic...The 11+ [comprehensive testing of students aged 10-11] which actually results in probably more affluent middle class children going to grammar school education and more working class children going towards vocational education has resulted in a divide that is much more profound than the religious and political divide and so probably exacerbates the divide.

6.3 What works and what doesn't

In terms of activities, singing and composing were regarded as ideal to engage young children. Specifically hands-on activities that children could easily relate to:

The kids love...practical activities, that's when they get interested...when they're getting involved in actually doing rather than listening or just watching.

A nursery teacher observed that this type of activities had to consider the attention span of children of this age. Nevertheless, she explained that children were totally immersed in musical activities whenever they had a music specialist visiting the school. During a cross-community project her school was paired with another nursery school from across the divide. The project included visits to each other's school, accompanied with the mothers, in which the children's learning activities would start with basic observation of similarities between buildings and classrooms and then they would move onto joint musical activities:

We just say, you know, "We're going to a different nursery today to make friends and play with some friends"...we always take a group of mothers with us, so they have the benefit of meeting [and] they always make it a very social occasion, have tea and coffee and scones.

Music is something that goes down so well with that age group...[When the music specialist came] we did quite a cross section of rhymes and songs and then she told a story...and then used the instruments for parts of the story... it was very good, they sat really well and listened and then she asked different ones to come up, we always put their names on them when a visitor comes in...and she did mix the children, they were sitting very informally on the floor together and she called up different ones to do different things and they just had such fun and laughed and she did some action rhymes, you know, large movements with them as well.

In terms of repertoire the general consensus was to ignore any type of music that could be related to one of the two main communities. The exception to the rule were Integrated schools (less than 1 in 10) where they would for instance teach Irish traditional music, or some denomination schools in affluent areas with an open ethos where religious differences were not an issue (in both cases parents would fully support the school activities). Everywhere else it was felt that the most appropriate way to run successful music education activities was 'to avoid anything that has a political overlay or what might be perceived as a political overlay':

The composer/workshop leader observed that 'all children are the same' and that he was just 'providing the opportunity for young people to be involved in something that they wouldn't necessarily have the opportunity to be involved with':

The important thing is that the young people have the experience that they enjoy, irrespective of where they're from. So we basically just ignore it [the musical traditions], just ignore all those differences.

Some participants were involved in a project that every year facilitated students from over forty schools the preparation of a few songs and a related new composition inspired on a given theme (this year it was 'Trains: to create a sound poem on a train

theme’). This project, called *Music Makers*, brings together in different days groups of six Catholic and Protestant schools, as well as non denominational SEN schools for a final performance – see picture below.

In this project, and in similar ones involving several schools, one of the keys for success was to make clear from the outset that it was not a competition:

We really stress the importance that it’s not competitive...it’s very much to give the children an opportunity to get up and to show off what they have done and it’s to encourage the children to be creative and to encourage the teachers not to be frightened of creativity.

A SEN school and five other schools form both main communities participate in a music workshop.



In fact, the Primary school teachers’ insecurities were listed as one of the obstacles for participation in cross-community music education activities, as well as the ‘extra work’ involved in this activities and the insufficient funding to pay for music coordinators or buses to transport children. An additional obstacle, apart from the obvious reluctance of parents observed in more polarised neighbourhoods, was the school principals:

Unfortunately...it's down to the value the principal puts on music, you know...I do think a number of principals do not understand the value of music [they] see it as getting in the way of teaching English, Maths and Science, you know, and it's holding the teachers back, they don't sort of understand the value that children will get out of it.

6.4 The potential of music education activities

Conversely, certain schools were described as having a good reputation for music and were known to attract parents regardless of their religious background. A clear

example of this was perceived to be the Methodist College, which is located in the university quarter and has a variety of choirs, orchestras, brass bands and Irish traditional groups:

Certain schools will have a strong musical tradition...a strongly led department or somebody with significant expertise in music, and quite often parents and other older children will elect to go regardless of denomination to the particular school for the sheer musical experience...Issues regarding identity quite often just fall by the wayside. You would find that in Belfast with 'Methody' [The Methodist College] for example, which has a very strong musical tradition, that Catholic children and particularly their parents, if they found that they have a particular leaning towards music, would want them to have the very best education in that and may send them [there] regardless of religion.

It could be argued again that these are not the parents that live in the polarised neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the potential to develop music skills while bringing children from both communities together regardless of their area was acknowledged by the participants' many positive experiences in their own education and current work with children:

Kids are equipped with the enthusiasm and passion and energy, they can inspire people like no other group of people can.

[Music] is a superb tool for encouraging children to work together, I think they get so much out of it and I think we totally underestimate what children can do with music, I think that...one of the greatest challenges we have is encouraging teachers to allow children to have a go...I've got to the stage now where I can see children not being aware of their cultural background and if you give them a task to do that involves percussion instruments and music and movement, they will throw themselves into it wholeheartedly and are quite prepared to work with other people in doing that.

7. Conclusions and recommendations for the design and implementation of integrated music projects for the early childhood/lower primary school sector

In the contexts described by participants there were different aims and approaches to cross-community activities. Variable interpretation of the approaches ranged from avoiding any potentially contentious issues to the study of the different musical traditions, for example in integrated schools and in contexts outside 'hot spots' and with recognised musical expertise. As observed earlier, Pettigrew (1998) proposes a sequential model to reduce conflict between communities containing three stages, which can help to understand the participants' experiences:

- (a) First, the initial contact, where inter-personal interaction is emphasised in an effort to 'de-categorise' the individual;
- (b) Second, the stage when contact is well established, which affords an optimal situation with less anxiety in which the old salient categorization of belonging to a particular group is highlighted;
- (c) And a third and final stage in which, after extended contact, individuals begin to think of themselves as part of a redefined new larger group.

Most music education activities recalled by participants would fall within the first stage, i.e. ignoring any type of music that could be related to one of the two main communities, hence de-categorising the individuals and the environment. Experiences of cross-community musical activities such as Saturday rehearsals of youth orchestras facilitated this 'neutral' environment in which young people could build friendships beyond their group (first stage). Meeting regularly would lead to a more relaxed context where group belonging was informally highlighted and prejudices weakened (second stage): *'we had an awful lot of banter and...a real realisation that these people were not that different from us'*. Some of the interviewees could be located within a redefined new larger group (third stage), arguably, thanks to the opportunities they had while growing up, but this stage could not be extended to all their students.

One of the recommendations outlined below is for new projects to focus on schools in deprived areas. In a study of inter-group contact in two Arab-Israeli schools, Hughes (2007b) found that although the school work facilitated prejudice reduction between children, there were countervailing forces including the social inequalities in the wider Israeli society. The challenge for the schools was how to develop attitudes that could then be generalised within a wider societal context that Arabs perceived as highly discriminatory towards them.

The situation in NI is clearly not the same, but the political and social baggage of many people living in polarised neighbourhoods could have a similar effect. Paraphrasing Hughes (2007b: 435), the challenge that some schools face is how cross-community music projects can improve attitudes that are generalisable beyond the educational setting within the wider context of the school's polarised Catholic or Protestant neighbourhood, where most people perceive the other community as a threat (e.g. *'On the Shankill Road you wouldn't do that at all, it would be stupid to do that'*). A recent ten year longitudinal study of social attitudes to community relations highlights that 73% of Catholics believe that Protestants are treated better and that Protestants have an increasing 'desire to live and work in isolation from the other community' (Hughes & Donnelly, 2001: 19).

Finally, a crucial recommendation is to focus potential projects on young children as this appears to maximise their impact. In a meta-analysis of previous research Kenworthy *et al.* (2005) observe that the inter-group anxiety, which stems from the anticipation of negative consequences of cross-community contact, is likely to be increased by minimal prior contact. Therefore, not doing anything during early childhood can be counterproductive: the sooner the contact is made the better.

7.1 Recommendations

From the key practitioners' experiences it seems that progress is being made in the breaking down of barriers, and this might bring more opportunities for cross-community music education. As noted, remaining prejudices combined with socio-economic factors in deprived areas do pose a challenge. Nevertheless, a number of educational implications and recommendations for practice can be elucidated from this study. These recommendations would apply to NI but also to the wider context of post-conflict societies.

- It is apparent that in successful cross-community activities, teachers, schools and students participate on a voluntary basis. If hesitant schools are to be involved in future projects, they may like to be involved in their design – as observed by Tausch *et al.* (2005) successful inter-group activity includes co-operative work towards a commonly agreed goal;
- Teachers would need to be provided with support in the form of training and development, especially nursery and generalist Primary school teachers who might feel insecure implementing creative musical activities;
- Cross-community contact should be sustained in order to develop greater attitudinal change (other key issues regarding the type of contact include the need to promote activities in a range of contexts to maximise generalization to other situations);
- There is a need for intervention programmes to be rigorously evaluated (Connolly, 2007b), including not only the assessment of attitudes but also the assessment of the ‘societal indicators of success’ (Hughes, 2007a) such as shifts in friendship patterns;
- It would appear that the methodology more appropriate to carry out such projects is a collaborative action research, where aims and activities are set and periodically reviewed through individual and collaborative group work and reflection (*e.g.* Cabrera, Lluna & Odena, 2006; Odena & Cabrera, 2006; Odena, 2007b, 2007c);
- Teachers need time and space to develop an understanding of their own values to avoid reinforcing ‘the psychological barriers which sustain division’ (Donnelly, 2004: 263) particularly as curriculum implementation is down to the individual teacher - as Smith (2001: 138) noted in his investigation of schools as institutions for peace, teachers are all product of the environment: it is ‘very easy to pass on preconceived social-political ideas’ that children are quick to pick up on;
- Schools in affluent areas seem to have less segregation and come together when they wish to do so. Therefore new projects would need to focus on schools in deprived areas.
- Potential projects would maximise their impact if focussed on younger children. This is supported by the literature (*e.g.* Connolly, 2007b) and the discussion of interviews (*e.g.* participants remember the first time they came across youngsters from across the divide in voluntary musical activities, which helped to dilute their own stereotypes).
- Lastly, projects would need to offer something that entices children (fun), parents (quality) and schools (status), focussing on quality musical experiences.

8. Questions for further research

This initial investigation will be employed to prepare a proposal for a Phase 2 study involving schools, practitioners and students from all communities across the divide in NI. Questions for further research include:

- The meaning attached to the words used in the project (e.g. SI, RfD, ethnicity) by children, teachers, researchers and any other individuals involved.
- The children's and teachers' knowledge, use and consumption of music
- The significance of music in the children's (and teacher's) lives and in the formation of their identities
- The participants' perceptions of cross-community activities
- The effectiveness of such activities (see for instance the instruments used for an evaluation of the effectiveness of a diversity programme in Connolly, 2007a)
- The effect of the teachers and student teachers involvement in cross-community musical activities on their professional development.

Acknowledgements

The author is most grateful to all key practitioners for their willingness to share their experiences, to Michelle Millar for her transcription skills, to Professor Joanne Hughes of the Queen's University Belfast for facilitating a list of relevant readings and to Professor Paul Connolly, Director of NFER at Queen's, for his advice throughout the different stages of the research project.

Special thanks to people working in the following institutions, which facilitated contact with potential interviewees and music education projects:

Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, The Netherlands
City of Belfast School of Music, Belfast
Education and Training Inspectorate NI
Forge Integrated Primary School, Belfast
Grove Nursery, Belfast
Methodist College, Belfast
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
Queen's University Belfast
Shima Integrated Secondary School, Newcastle, NI
St Mary's College, Belfast
St. Malachy's College, Belfast
Stiching Memorabele Momenten, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Stranmillis College, Belfast

Appendix I – Examples of questions

OWN MUSICAL BACKGROUND

- What is your own background, starting as a young music student...?

WORK

- Could you explain what education activities do you provide? (Age level, type of students, etc.)
- Do students have any prerequisites for enrolling? (If yes, what are they?)
- How would you describe the background of your average student?
- Do you work the cross-curricular theme of 'Education for Mutual Understanding' in Music? (If yes, how?) [only for school teachers]

MUSIC AND MUSIC EDUCATION IN NI

- In the past, did you feel that the two main school-communities were using music as a sign of identity? (How? Has it diminished?)

PROJECT ADVICE

- Could you provide some advice for successful music education activities where children from both communities participate?
- When preparing activities do you try to include music from both traditions or do you try to avoid anything to do with them?
- Would you like to add anything regarding any ideas you might have on cross-community activities/projects?
- Do you know of any other music education activities/projects that have brought together children from the two main communities?
- Could you suggest any other key practitioner?

Appendix II – Full list of categories and subcategories from the interviews

NVivo revision 2.0.161

Licensee: Oscar Odena

Project: Music & RfD

User: Administrator Date: 30/11/2007 - 12:52:13

NODE LISTING

Created: 18/10/2007 - 17:37:00

Modified: 30/11/2007 - 12:51:32

- (1) /teacher training provided
- (1 1) /teacher training provided/students going abroad
- (1 2) /teacher training provided/practicum organisation
- (1 3) /teacher training provided/student teachers background
- (2) /music education in NI
- (2 1) /music education in NI/NI size
- (2 2) /music education in NI/recent improvement
- (2 3) /music education in NI/past project not cross-community
- (3) /advice
- (3 1) /advice/difficulties of cross-community education
- (3 2) /advice/different activities in diff schools
- (4) /cross-community project
- (4 1) /cross-community project/Marvellous Medicine
- (4 2) /cross-community project/music at School A
- (4 2 4) /cross-community project/music at School A/students backgrounds
- (4 3) /cross-community project/music at School of M.
- (4 3 1) /cross-community project/music at School of M./students' background
- (4 3 2) /cross-community project/music at School of M./Music Makers
- (4 4) /cross-community project/Nursery EMU projects
- (5) /music potential for working together
- (5 1) /music potential for working together/children's' potential
- (5 2) /music potential for working together/music potential - memories
- (6) /stereotypes & alienation
- (6 1) /stereotypes & alienation/music as sign of identity
- 7 egalitarian concerns
- 8 EMU
- 9 intergenerational differences
- 10 more key practitioners
- 11 socio-economic factors
- 12 teachers' background
- 13 teachers' self-perception

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