

## **What does quality music education look like?**

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What does quality teaching in music education look like? What methodology and curriculum will achieve this quality? Wiggins (2001) outlines the goal of music education as a learning journey for students to become musically equipped for life after school. Many music educators, past and present have tried to define what constitutes a quality music program and what should subsequently be the goals of such a program. But why do individual teachers choose to teach music the way they do?

This paper investigates this statement through the eyes of practising primary music teachers. These teachers were involved in an email survey in an attempt to gather data on the influences that drive their choices of methodology and to ascertain the effect curriculum changes have had on the planning and delivery of their programs. Do the same methodologies function well in different school contexts and with a diverse range of learners?

As well, the impact of rapid technological advances over recent times is discussed. Lines (2005) believes that the world of music education is undergoing rapid technological, expressive and conceptual change. Does this change have an impact on what is happening in today's music classroom?

### **Introduction**

Change in education, in curriculum, in syllabus design is unavoidable in today's classroom. Governments and Education Departments are generally responsible for the introduction of these changes. It is then up to the school, its administration and the teachers to implement these changes. Music educators were motivated when the National Review into Music Education took place (Pascoe, 2005). Was this the beginning of a renewal and maybe Government funding for music education? In the time that has passed we have seen the introduction of music teacher awards, but unfortunately little else has occurred. We are also hearing discussions on National Curriculums. Where/how will music/the arts be recognised in such a document? To date music will not be represented in either phase 1 or phase 2 of the National Curriculum ([www.ncb.org.au](http://www.ncb.org.au)). All these happenings raise the question – what should quality music education look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

For Queensland music teachers, as well as National initiatives there has been the introduction of a new Arts Syllabus (2002) which covered all five strands of the arts: music, visual arts, dance, drama and media. This syllabus was introduced in line with all the key learning area documents and supported the outcomes based philosophy for students in years 1 to 10. Just when music teachers were coming to terms with this new syllabus, its core content and outcomes, a new document is introduced – The Essential Learnings (2008). This document identifies years 3, 5, 7, and 9 as the key indicators for student outcomes. It contains ways of working and knowledge and understanding as its key concepts for teachers to follow and be guided for the teaching of the five strands of

the arts. These headings are common to all key learning areas. Each strand has its own descriptors. The Essential Learnings describe what is important for all students to know and be able to do for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This paper investigates the thoughts of practising primary music teachers as they identify the effect that these changes have had on their planning and delivery of programs in their classrooms. It identifies their choices of methodology and the influences that have driven their choices as well as a look at the impact that technology has had on their classroom practice. The teachers also revealed what they believe are the essentials for music education in the primary school.

### **Philosophies and methodologies**

There have been many prominent writings that have contributed to the discussion and influenced music education. Abeles, Hoffer and Klotman (1994) believe that it is important that music be a part of one's education as it not only serves to unify the individual with contemporary culture, but it also gives insight into the cultural practices of the past; it enriches life and helps bring beauty into the daily existence of the individual. Further writings have included the works of people such as Reimer (1989); Swanwick (1988); Elliot (1995). Music teaching, according to Swanwick, can only be effective when the nature of music itself is understood and the development of students respected. Reimer believes the overall aim of music education is to develop every student's capacity to experience and create intrinsically expressive qualities of sounds. Elliott believes that using a praxial philosophy to teach children through authentic music making should be at the heart of the curriculum. Then Walker (1990) furthers the debate by reminding us that the importance of technology should not be overlooked and in fact its use should become mandatory in all classrooms of the 21st century. He suggests that a new music pedagogy utilising digital technology in all its forms is the only way forward.

The predominant methodology used in primary music in most states of Australia is a highly skills-based program using the Kodály philosophy (Choksy, 1974). The Orff (<http://www.aosa.org>) and Dalcroze (<http://www.dalcroze.org>) philosophies have also been to the fore in classroom music programs.

The Kodály philosophy was introduced into the music program in Queensland in the 1970's following work done in New South Wales by Doreen Bridges and Deanna Hoermann (Bridges, 1979). The Kodály influences have continued in Queensland and are especially evident in primary schools. Music syllabus documents up to the introduction of the Essential Learnings (2008) have favoured the Kodály influence. Although The Arts Syllabus (2002) is an outcomes based document, the core content recognises the Kodály sequence of musical elements. Following the introduction of this document interviews were held with music teachers (Hartwig & Barton, 2003), and most reported that although there was a new syllabus, nothing had changed in their music classrooms.

## Methodology

An email survey was sent to 12 primary music teachers. This web-based approach is now seen as a viable means of gathering survey data (Dillman, 1998). Six of these teachers were identified to be early career teachers, and the other six were experienced teachers with one teacher having 10 years of teaching experience, whilst the other five had more than 20 years of teaching. All teachers are currently working in a spread of schools across the metropolitan area.

### Questions:

1. How many years have you been teaching music?
2. What music methodologies were studied as part of your preservice training?
3. Have you done further study in particular methodologies? If yes, please list.
4. What was the reason/s you decided to do further study/courses?
5. What methodology/ies do you use in your music teaching at present?  
Why?
6. How have changes in the Queensland music syllabus impacted on your music teaching especially the Essential Learnings of 2008?
7. What place does technology play in your music classroom?
8. What should be included in a good quality music program?

## Results

<b>1. Years of music teaching</b>	
6 less than 2 years 1 10 years 5 more than 20 years	
<b>Early Career Teachers</b>	<b>Experienced Teachers</b>
<b>2. Preservice training methodologies studied</b>	
1 x Kodály 2 x None 3 x Kodály & Orff	4 x Kodály 1 x Orff and Kodály 1 x Orff/Kodály /Oxford School Music Program (South Africa)
<b>3. Further Study</b>	
2 x KMEIA workshop 1 x Orff workshop 3 x No further study <i>Too busy just coping with my own Teaching.</i>	2 x KMEIA 2 x Kodály & Orff 1 x Kodály /Orff,Dalcroze 1 x early years play based learning
<b>4. Why further study?</b>	

All teachers indicated that they chose to do further study for their own professional development and to expand their knowledge.

*My study was to broaden my teaching base in all three performing arts and therefore did not specialise in any particular method, but rather music, dance and drama as interconnected arts.*

## 5. Current methodologies used in music teaching

1 x of course Kodály 2 x varies all the time My own methodology 3 x mixtures of Kodály and Orff	1 x eclectic – a little many things depending on the class and context 1 x Kodály and Orff with an emphasis on recorder literacy 2 x Kodály and Orff 1 x Kodály 1 x K & O and contemporary music material with drama and dance as a large component
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### Why these methodologies?

Early career teachers reported – *This is what I know.*

### Comments from the experienced teachers included the following:

*I like to be eclectic.*

*I like the way Orff makes music accessible to all students and encourages them to be creative. I think the sequential Kodály program is an excellent grounding for all students. I think that the ability to read music is best developed through the recorder.*

*I think [the Kodály sequence] is a logical, sequential approach. I love that voice is the main instrument and the philosophy of ‘music for all’. It works!*

*In primary I think the Orff and Kodály methods work well with the young children but not with the older ones.*

## 6. How have changes impacted on your teaching?

Early Career teachers reported that *this is what we learnt at uni.*

Four of the experienced teachers stated that nothing had changed in their music classroom.

Others reported:

I allow time for students to reflect on their experiences – as this is a new emphasis of Essential Learnings.

*No, too many changes and in 30 minutes in primary school there is not a lot of room for movement outside of teaching the basics and behaviour management in the school*

<i>I am located.</i>
<b>7. Use of technology</b>
<p><b>Early career teachers indicated some use in their classrooms – but the use of various digital technologies was prominent in their own planning and preparation eg Sibelius worksheets, You Tube, downloading and printing of music from various internet sources.</b></p> <p><b>The experienced teachers had very minimal use of any technology sources in their classroom and also in their own planning.</b></p> <p><b>One commented – <i>I don't need technology, a tuning fork is all I need.</i></b></p>
<b>8. What should be included in a quality music program?</b>
<p><i>The experienced teachers were very keen to comment. Some of these comments included:</i></p> <p>We should just keep the sequences of elements that we have. This has worked for years – why change it?</p> <p>I will just keep on doing what I have been doing for years.</p> <p>In Queensland we must keep the same Kodály focus we have been doing.</p> <p>The Essential Learnings tell us nothing. I use the syllabus.</p> <p>The sequence we use works.</p>

### Discussion

Early career teachers virtually following the methodologies and ideas they had received in their pre service training. This is a strong indicator that universities need to be well informed and up-to-date with the programs they deliver.

The experienced teachers rely heavily on the Kodály and Orff methodologies in their current use and this was also the case in their preservice and further training. There is evidence of these experienced teachers moving into other ideas and ways to deliver music programs through their continued professional development however there is a strong desire to continue what they have been doing for many years. The use of technology was not so prominent in all these primary music teachers. This I believe was expected given the age of the experienced teachers, and their experiences with technologies and the fact that they are all primary teachers. I believe that in the secondary arena there is more use of technologies in the music classroom. The experienced teachers were very assertive in their views that the sequences of the elements they are currently using should be the basis of any quality music program with most favouring the Kodály sequences of music elements and concepts.

## Conclusion

How do we as a state/nation determine the make up of a quality music program that provides for today's child? How do we ensure that we have - 1. quality music education and 2. access to music education? The music educate debate has been brought to the fore with the Nation Review but have we been asking these same questions for many years?

John Paynter (1982) over 20 years ago was puzzled that as soon as young people walk outside the school gate they are listening to/engaged in music, but they do not like school music. Wooddell (1984, p. 46) also over 20 years ago was challenging music educators when she stated that "music education is in desperate need of a curriculum for the artistic imagination, an opportunity for individual students to explore themselves and their potential in this changing world." Wiggins (2001) believes that music instruction should empower students with musical understanding so that they can become musically proficient and, eventually, musically independent of their teachers. The debate continues. Is it time for music educators to take a stance and be assertive for the need for change or we will continue to teach the way we have done for many years.

I believe it is time for renewal. It is time to learn from the traditions of the past but include innovations of today. The question remains - will we as music educators embrace the technological age – will we embrace the child of today so that music education at school is important, relevant and authentic?

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