

## INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON FORMAL AND INFORMAL MUSIC LEARNING<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper reviews some of the changes and developments that have occurred in music education over the last decade, following Hargreaves and North's (2001) international review. I describe some recent developments in England, in which change has been very rapid, and in which education has had a high political profile, and then consider the three main issues which emerged from our international review, namely curriculum issues; the aims and objectives of music education; and the relationship between music in and out of school. I go on to describe two theoretical models which were developed as a result of my work with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England: these are models of the different *opportunities* in music education, and of its intended *outcomes*. The first of these reveals the importance of the differences between formal and informal music learning, both of which can take place inside as well as outside schools. I conclude by reflecting on the power and ubiquity of music in young people's everyday lives, which mean that music education policy should reflect and capitalize upon this power.

**Keywords:** Music Education; Pop Music; informal learning; Intercultural Studies; curriculum; educational objectives

**Resumo:** Este artigo efetua uma revisão de algumas mudanças e desenvolvimentos que ocorreram na Educação Musical ao longo da última década, seguindo a revisão internacional efetuada por Hargreaves e North (2001). Descrevo alguns dos recentes desenvolvimentos em Inglaterra, em que a mudança foi muito rápida, e nas quais a educação teve um elevado estatuto político, e considero depois os três temas principais que emergiram da revisão internacional que efetuámos, nomeadamente os temas curriculares; as finalidades e os objetivos da Educação Musical; e a relação entre Música dentro e fora da Escola. Prossigo descrevendo dois modelos teóricos que foram desenvolvidos como resultado do meu trabalho com a Autoridade para as Qualificações e Currículo (AQC) em Inglaterra: são os modelos das diferentes *oportunidades* em Educação Musical e dos *resultados* pretendidos. O primeiro deles revela a importância das diferenças entre a aprendizagem formal e informal da Música, em que ambas podem ocupar o seu lugar tanto dentro como fora das escolas. Concluo refletindo acerca do poder e ubiquidade da Música na vida quotidiana dos jovens, o que significa que uma política da Educação Musical deve refletir e capitalizar esse poder.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Musical; Música Pop; aprendizagem informal; Estudos Interculturais; curriculum; objetivos educacionais

Adrian North and I carried out an international review of issues and practices in music education approximately 10 years ago (Hargreaves and North 2001), and this chapter follows some of the changes and developments that have occurred since then. I start by looking at some developments in my own country: the story of music education in England is one of continual change and development, which is often driven by political expediency as much as by educational concerns. I look next at three main issues which emerged from our review in all countries, namely curriculum issues; the aims and objectives of music education; and the relationship between music in and out of school.

I go on to review two theoretical models which were developed as a result of my work with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA – which, writing in 2010, was recently disbanded by the new coalition government in the UK). These are models of opportunities and outcomes in music education, and of its intended outcomes. The first of these highlights the importance of the differences between formal and informal music learning, both of which can take place inside as well as outside schools. How this works out in practice is possibly the biggest single issue in music education today. I conclude that since psychological research is increasingly revealing the immense power and ubiquity of music in young people's everyday lives, it is vital that music education should reflect and capitalize upon this power, and promote young people's musical activities accordingly.

### **Music education in England**

Over the last decade or so, official evidence and research reports suggested that a good deal of lower secondary school music in England was unimaginative, out of touch with pupils' interests, and unsuccessful (e. g. Harland; Kinder; Lord; Stott; Schagen; Haynes; Cusworth; White; Paola, 2000; Ryan; Boulton; O'Neill; Sloboda, 2000). The study by Harland and his associates at the National Foundation for Educational Research concluded that music was 'the most problematic and vulnerable art form' at ages 14-16 years, and that 'pupil enjoyment, relevance, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions were often absent' (p. 568).

This conclusion was widely reported in the media, and influenced public opinion, even though a closer look at the study's methodology reveals some severe limitations in the selection of evidence cited for the failure of music in particular. Leaving aside the

pros and cons of this study, it is nevertheless indisputably the case that only approximately 7% of all pupils opt for music at age 14, and that many teachers and pupils are unhappy with the teaching of music in the National Curriculum in England. This is very surprising given that listening to pop music is easily the most common leisure activity of most teenagers: surveys in the UK, in the Scandinavia and elsewhere consistently show that the typical 13 year-old listens for approximately 2/3 hours per day, far longer than time spent on any other leisure activity (e. g. Bjurström; Wennhall, 1991; North; Hargreaves; O'Neill, 2000).

There is an obvious difference in the importance to pupils of 'school music' and music *outside* school. Pop music not only plays a central role in the lifestyle of most teenagers, but also constitutes a 'badge of identity' for many of them (see e. g. Tarrant; North; Hargreaves, 2000). The distinction between 'home and 'school' music is undoubtedly important: and another influential idea is that of the 'third environment', which exists outside the school *and* the home. This refers to contexts in which musical learning takes place in the absence of parents or teachers (e. g. Heath, 2001). These could be places such as garages, youth clubs, or public places: but they could also be one's bedroom, or even a school classroom, if no formal activity or adult supervision is involved.

The *contexts* of music-making – school, home, or 'third environment' – may well determine its authenticity for young people, and two key factors which are closely associated with different contexts are the level of autonomy and control which they possess, and, to a lesser extent, the genres and styles which predominate in those contexts. There are three interrelated issues here. First, school music tends to involve the teacher's control of the curriculum, and of the direction of activity, whereas music out of school usually involves far more autonomy and ownership on the part of the learner. Second, Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) showed that 9-10 and 13-14 year-old pupils in the UK and Portugal associated school music listening with motivation for learning, being active, and the content of particular lessons, and home music listening with enjoyment, emotional mood and social relationships. Third, it may also be the case that school music is associated with 'serious' genres, typified by 'classical' music, and music out of school with pop and rock.

## **Intercultural perspectives**

International comparisons enable us to assess the 'big picture' of the main current issues in music education: in our comparative review of 15 different countries from around the world (Hargreaves; North, 2001), we asked eminent music educators in each country to contribute a chapter structured around three main themes: 'aims and objectives', 'contents and methods', and 'student issues', and also specified some topics within each of the three headings. Although our authors adopted a variety of approaches, it was nevertheless possible to identify several general issues of common concern, of which three 'big issues' are of particular interest to us here.

First are 'curriculum issues', the most central of which is the distinction between 'general' and 'specialist' music education. These form distinctive educational pathways in many countries, and a common concern is the way in which each should be provided in and out of school, and the balance that should be struck between them. In many countries 'specialist' music education refers to that in Western classical music, which was seen to be too dominant by some of our expert reviewers. This issue was also frequently mentioned in the context of striking a balance between Western classical music, the all-pervading influence of Anglo-American pop, and local traditional musics, which are being swamped in some countries.

The second 'big issue' is that of aims and objectives: what are arts and music education for? Is music an end in itself, such that music education presumably ought to promote musical and artistic skills, or does it have broader personal and cultural aims? There were clear East-West differences here. Arts educators in countries such as Korea, Japan and China, with a foundation in Confucian philosophy, place much greater emphasis on the moral and spiritual role of the arts than their Western counterparts: their primary aim is to develop the character of pupils, and to lay the foundations for a 'virtuous and joyful life'.

Closely related to this is the extent to which music education should be pupil- or teacher-centred. The Indian guru-shishya system, for example, is very heavily teacher-centred: it adopts an apprenticeship model in which the pupil (literally) sits at the feet of the teacher, and learns the philosophy, traditions, and techniques of the music over months and years. This contrasts sharply with the highly pupil-centred 'creativity' movements which exist in the UK, for

example, in which pupils' self-expression and originality are seen as far more important in the early stages of learning than technique or tradition.

The third 'big issue' to emerge from our review was the balance between musical learning in and out of school. In countries in South America and Africa, for example, music is something which is such a natural part of everyday life that the idea of going to school to learn it seems faintly ridiculous: informal music learning takes place from early infancy, and is embedded in everyday work and play. The relationship between informal and formal music-making is a complex one, as we shall see: it involves not only the locations and institutions within which learning occurs, but also the relationships between teachers and learners, as well as the ways in which learners view their own role in the process.

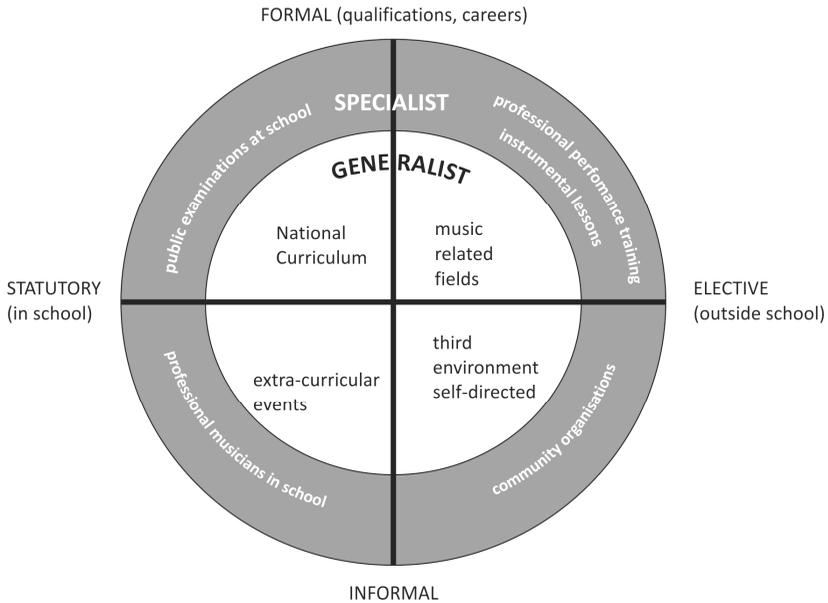
### **Models of opportunities and outcomes in music education**

These models arose from my involvement in the work of the Music Development Task Group of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the body responsible for music education policy in schools in England, in the early part of the last decade. The QCA formulated the following rationale for the study of music in schools:

'Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. As an integral part of culture, past and present, it helps pupils to understand themselves and relate to others, forging important links between the home, school and the wider world. The teaching of music develops pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality. It encourages active involvement in different forms of amateur music making, both individual and communal, developing a sense of group identity and togetherness. It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment' (QCA, 2002).

In order to pursue these ideals, and to delineate the potential scope and aims of music education in and out of school, I developed two models: Figure 1 shows a 'globe' model of the *opportunities* available to pupils across the broad spectrum of music education, listing the main areas of formal provision and informal participation. Its origins lie in music education in England, so that further elaborations and/or modifications may be necessary for wider

international application. Figure 2 takes a more psychological focus by conceptualising the potential *outcomes* of music and arts education for individual pupils, and some of the interrelationships between them.



**Fig. 1:** A “globe” model of opportunities in music education

The ‘globe’ model is based on three main bipolar dimensions. The vertical dimension of the globe distinguishes between formal and informal opportunities, with the ‘northern hemisphere’ representing institutional provision leading to qualification and careers, and the ‘southern hemisphere’ representing informal opportunities. This interacts with the horizontal dimension, which distinguishes between statutory and elective provision, so that the ‘western hemisphere’ refers to the given in-school provision in all its forms, and the ‘eastern hemisphere’ to all opportunities which are self-selected by pupils, and which are available outside school. The third dimension, ‘specialist-generalist’, derives from a model of teaching methods in music education (Hargreaves, 1996). The outer band shows ‘specialist’ activities in each of the original four quadrants, and the inner circle shows corresponding ‘generalist’ opportunities. This dimension is important

because 'formal-informal' cannot be equated with 'specialist-generalist'; an increasing number of school pupils now achieve very high levels of specialist performance in 'informal' activities (e.g. in folk or rock music).

One notable aspect of this model is its implication that the 'southern' and 'northern' hemispheres should receive equal status and attention: music education in England has traditionally focussed on the latter and the 'north-eastern' quadrant in particular.

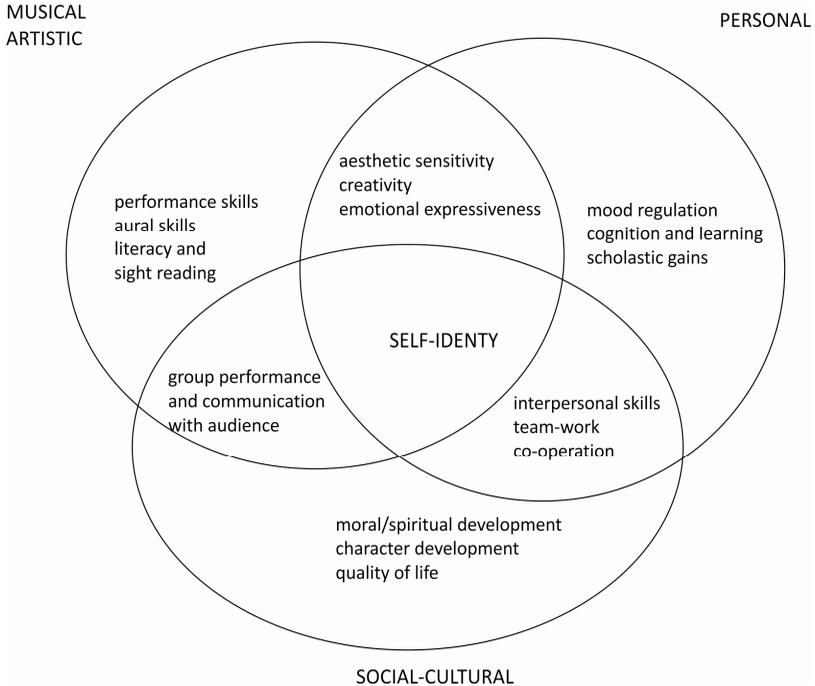
The 'north-eastern' quadrant refers to the traditional specialist route, which is likely to involve instrumental grade examinations, ensembles and orchestras provided by local education and music agencies, leading on to the conservatory, and to careers in professional music. The 'generalist' sector of this quadrant refers to those who achieve qualifications and go on to careers in music-related fields such as in sound recording, or music-related ICT.

The model's 'south-eastern' quadrant incorporates the 'third environment', which we described earlier, and its 'specialist' sector refers to those community organisations in which these skills can be developed to 'specialist' levels, though without formal qualifications, such as in local choirs, or the brass bands of northern England.

The model's 'north-western' quadrant indicates the different kinds of provision that take place in schools in England, and which need little further explanation. The National Curriculum has determined provision up to the age of 16 since it was introduced in 1988, and the main public examination to which the specialist sector of this quadrant is devoted is the Advanced level of the General Certificate of Secondary Education, which is usually taken at age 18. Different forms and levels of such examinations exist in other countries, of course. The 'south-western' quadrant refers to those forms of informal music education provision which are available in schools. This is represented by extra-curricular activities such as school concerts and plays at the 'generalist' level, and by 'specialist' activities such as composer-in-residence schemes, or other contact with professional musicians.

Figure 2 shows a conceptual model of the potential outcomes of music education: it arises in part from our international review of the appropriate purposes of music and arts education (see above), and also draws on our psychological analysis of the functions of music (Hargreaves; North, 1999). The model is based on a broad division between three main types of outcome, namely *musical-artistic*, *personal*, and *social-cultural* outcomes. All of these

are 'personal' in the sense that they describe the effects of music learning on the individual: but the 3-way typology affords more detail, and also enables us to specify outcomes representing interactions or overlaps between the three main types.



**Fig. 2:** Model of outcomes of music education

*Musical-artistic* skills such as performance, aural, literacy, sight reading, composition and improvisation skills are the staple diet of specialist conservatory training, and need little further comment. This leads on to more general 'personal' outcomes of music education that do not concern specific skills as such, but which nevertheless have a strong artistic component, such as creativity, aesthetic appreciation and emotional expressiveness.

The more general *personal* outcomes of music education are of two main types in the model. The first type relate to cognition, learning and scholastic gains: a considerable literature on the putative 'transfer effects' of music has developed over the last few years, stimulated in part by Rauscher et al's (1995) research on the effects of music listening on spatial-temporal reasoning, which was

subsequently dubbed the 'Mozart effect' and gained massive media attention. The second type relate to emotional development: we referred earlier to research which is beginning to show how people consciously use music to regulate their moods and emotional states.

The third broad group of *social-cultural* outcomes are particularly prized in Eastern countries, and involve the development of moral character, spiritual values, and 'quality of life' in the deepest sense: music and the arts are seen to transmit these cultural ideals and values from one generation to the next. These outcomes overlap with those *personal* outcomes based on social skills and cultural development. Most musical activity is carried out with and for other people - it is fundamentally social - and so can play an important part in promoting interpersonal skills, teamwork, and co-operation. They also overlap with more specifically *musical-artistic* outcomes, since a vital part of musical expressiveness is being able to communicate with one's audience, as well as with one's co-performers within a group. The centre of the model brings us back to the notion of identity: at its core is the belief that the ultimate outcome of music education is the development of individual self-identity.

### **Formal and informal music learning**

Our international review of music education also revealed wide variations between different countries with respect to this issue, and also to the related issue of music in and out of school. The related distinction between musical *development* as a natural result of enculturation, and music *education* as the product of specific schooling, or training, is also one with wide international variation.

Alda Oliveira's (2001) chapter in our edited book explains that the South American continent has an extremely rich and multicultural musical heritage, and that a good deal of this is transmitted in informal rather than in school settings. Oliveira describes the *bossa nova*, *tropicalia*, *marcho-rancho* and other musical forms as distinctively South American styles which tend to be created and propagated by key composers and performers within a very active yet informal musical community that exists outside rather than inside the schools. Oliveira suggests that music learning occurs in games, plays, in families, in inner city locations, bars, night clubs, and on beaches: this provides an interesting and provocative view of the future of music education.

The critical question is whether informal music-making, which occurs in all countries, complements or competes with school

music: once again, the answer varies internationally. In Africa and South America, the provision of school music is relatively scarce, so that informal music-making comes to the fore. In the UK, however, there is a very clear divergence and maybe even competition between music inside and music outside school, particularly at the secondary school level. School inspectors' reports suggest that whilst music is one of the best taught subjects at primary level, it is simultaneously one of the worst taught in the secondary school: the inspectors see music as being 'ossified and remote from pupils' interests'.

This is very probably because whereas music at primary school is well integrated into pupils' overall programme of study, teenagers typically develop very strong interests in certain styles of pop music that are typically associated with out of school activities and leisure interests. There is a growing body of evidence to show that pop music preferences are central to the developing identities of many teenagers. We have ourselves carried out a number of empirical investigations which explore the different functions fulfilled by teenage musical preferences, which constitute a 'badge' of social identity (see North; Hargreaves, 1999, 2008; Tarrant; Hargreaves; North, 2000).

This leaves the obvious question as to how secondary school music provision should approach this issue, and there was some heated debate in the UK. Ross (1995) argued that music was one of the least popular subjects in the secondary school because attempts to modernise the music curriculum had failed: music teachers had stuck to their traditional concerns rather than adapting to new challenges, such that it was unrealistic to teach music as a conventional school subject at secondary level. Our own survey of 2,465 British 13-14 year-olds (North; Hargreaves; O'Neill, 2000) showed that they perceived the benefits of playing and listening to pop music (including enjoyment, exercising creativity and imagination, relieving tension and stress) as being very different to those for classical music (to please parents and teachers).

On the other hand, many secondary pupils enjoy pop music outside school as well as performing and studying 'classical' as well as pop music within school: there is not necessarily a clear polarity between 'pop' and 'serious' music, nor an association with participation outside and inside school. Practices vary considerably in other countries. We have seen that pop music is also part of the school curriculum in Germany, Scandinavia, and even in Poland,

Russia, and India. In spite of this, different forms of popular music are not mentioned explicitly by several of our authors, and its study at higher levels of music education is marginal at best.

However, this is only one aspect of the informal - formal music issue. In many countries there exists a very healthy balance between the two, as well as strong traditions of community-based musical activities. There is a strong tradition of municipal music schools in Scandinavia, for example, which take pupils from all ages and levels of ability, and form an integral part of local communities. These have counterparts, in various respects, in the Japanese 'culture schools' described by Murao and Wilkins (2001), and to the German 'Volkshochschule'. Murao and Wilkins explain that opportunities for musical instruction are also available from private institutions like the national broadcasting station, and the Yamaha and Suzuki schools. As with the karaoke phenomenon, the initial motivation for these was primarily commercial, but they nevertheless now provide a service to the community as whole.

Yet another area of informal music-making which is integral to local communities is represented the *bandas* in Spain and Portugal (see Mota, 2001). Although these are essentially local amateur groups, the best can attain high standards of professionalism. One of their great strengths is that members are drawn from across generations: men and women of all ages form part of a musical tradition which is passed from grandparents, to parents, to children in a disciplined manner which can include weekly practice and regular regional competitions. Mota points out that the *bandas* enable many people to read and write music, play instruments, and take place in public events regardless of age, gender, or ability: they provide opportunities which may well not be open to people in the school system.

Returning to the topic of music education in England, I carried out a large-scale investigation of 'Young people's music in and out of school', also as part of the work of the Music Development Task Group of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, working my Roehampton colleague Nigel Marshall, and with Alexandra Lamont and Mark Tarrant of the University of Keele (Hargreaves; Lamont; Marshall; Tarrant, 2003). Phase 1 of the project investigated the attitudes of pupils aged between 8 and 14 years to music in and out of school using a questionnaire, and phase 2 involved focus group discussions which followed up the questionnaire data. As far as music outside school was concerned, we found that virtually all

pupils reported listening to music CDs, cassette tapes, cable and radio on a regular basis and for significant periods of time. Most of this involved popular styles such as dance, rock, drum and bass, and R&B: only around 10% of them listened to classical or jazz music overall, and this figure decreased with age.

We also found that over half of the pupils reported creating or playing music outside school for a significant length of time, and on average more than 4 times each week: and that of those who did not, almost half said that they would like to. Playing music outside school took place in a variety of contexts, often with parents or siblings in the home, and in choirs and bands in the community. Almost half of those not currently learning an instrument either in or outside of school expressed an interest in doing so.

In conclusion, what pupils seem to like most about music in or out of school is to develop the skills and confidence to 'do it for themselves': to gain ownership of and autonomy in their own music-making. Psychological research is increasingly revealing the immense power and ubiquity of music in young people's everyday lives (see North; Hargreaves, 2008): it is vital that contemporary music education should reflect and capitalize upon this power, and promote young people's musical activities accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> ***Perspectivas interculturais na aprendizagem formal e informal da Música***

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