

**Report for Hong Kong Institute of Education
on the
BEd(P&S) Music Modules**

Prepared by

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1. Introduction

This report is based on a scrutiny of course documentation; presentations from team members and conversations with several staff members during my visit to the department at the end of May 2009.

I would like to thank Dr Cheung for the invitation and her kind hospitality; and Professor Leong for his welcome. I would also like to thank the staff who gave up their valuable time to explain the module content and programme structure to me, and answer my questions.

I was asked to consider the current programme in the context of a review and development process instigated by changes to the Secondary and HE structure (334) and the Institute's policy to introduce a learning outcomes approach to their programmes.

The focus of my work was to look for ways in which the current modules might be revised or adapted – and modules developed to address the concept of Integration. I identified three ways in which this might be done:

- i. A more integrated approach to the course design as a whole – to reflect a more holistic view of musical knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to becoming a music teacher;
- ii. To consider ways in which learning could be more integrated through links between different modules or through assessment requirements;
- iii. To consider ways in which extra curricular musical activities offered to students could be accredited, thus integrating students' musical interests and activities with their formal learning.

I was also asked to offer an 'outsider' view of trends in music education and music teacher education.

II. Trends in Music Education

From the perspective of my knowledge of research and practice in the UK, Europe and N. America I highlight the following ideas as having a strong influence on thinking and practice both in schools and in teacher training institutions. There are of course, social, economic and cultural differences between countries with many countries maintaining (in

practice if not in policy) traditions of music education which emphasise the learning of skills for musical performance: choral and instrumental skills, notation and history of western classical music remain strong features of German speaking countries; whilst creativity and learner centered approaches are more commonly found in Scandinavia, and the UK. N. America has a well developed research culture and a strong philosophical tradition which argues for creative and practical approaches to music education, however school music education remains dominated by band and choir programmes, and in several states, access to music education in primary schools has all but disappeared. The nature of the curriculum has, of course, a strong influence on pedagogy – thus, in school systems where musical performance traditions are prominent, there is an emphasis on teacher centered approaches (teacher as instructor, director). In curricula wher creative music making is emphasized, the teacher needs to develop skills as a facilitator, mediator, or co-creator.

Teacher education programmes need to prepare teachers for the current and future needs of schools. The question of how these needs are met and how to balance current practice with future practice is a key one for teacher educators. Future or innovative practices in music education focus on the following themes:

Context - Learning in music should be contextualized so that music is understood as carrying social and cultural meaning for both musician and audience.

Creativity - Learning through engaging directly with sound, musical ideas and structures; developing a musical imagination and musical understanding through experimenting, improvising and composing.

Personalisation – Teachers should aim to respond to the musical abilities and interests of individual learners through differentiating not only tasks and expectations, but also adopting a variety of roles according to need.

Formal and Informal Music Learning – Teachers need greater awareness of how and where pupils learn music and to seek ways to link in and out of school learning.

Diversity of musics (different styles and traditions) and ways of making music (in large or small groups, individually, using technology) as well as who can support learning (teachers, professional or community musicians, peers)

Inclusion and social justice – to promote equity through respect for and engagement with the musical worlds of learners and to enable all learners to have access to music education and to develop their capabilities in the direction they want to go.

Lifelong Learning – To view music education as reaching beyond school: lifelong and lifewide.

In whatever ways teacher training is organised it is hoped that programmes will include the following aims:

- To broaden and contextualise the musical knowledge and experiences of students
- To develop and model the aspirations, values and positive attitudes of the profession
- To develop students' personal and critical perspectives on music education in policy and practice
- To develop students' aspirations to quality in music and music learning through depth of knowledge, skills and experience

The tensions between depth and breadth is a challenge and needs to be constantly reviewed. Another tension is between reflecting the status quo and seeking to innovate and lead future practice.

III. Course structure

There are three strands to the Music programme: Discipline Studies (16 modules for secondary and 13 modules for primary); Professional Studies (2 modules) ; and Complementary Studies (4 modules for Secondary and 7 for primary).

For a degree in Music Education, as opposed to a Degree in Music, there seems to be a great imbalance between Discipline Studies and Modules focused on pedagogy. I would recommend that the restriction on 'methods' modules be reviewed so that a better balance can be achieved. This may be a particular issue for practical subjects but I imagine that greater flexibility within the overall curriculum structure would be a general benefit.

In concurrent models of teacher training there is potential to integrate the processes of becoming expert in a field or subject *and* learning to teach. This can be done through many aspects of the programme so that competences, or learning outcomes, are 'mapped' across all relevant modules; and, so that the models of teaching and learning that students are exposed to are appropriately applied throughout the course. Thus, for instance, in aural training or music history modules; and in composition classes and instrumental lessons, students are made aware of *how* they are learning (and being taught) as well as *what* they are learning. In this programme there is scope for such integration to be developed further.

IV. The Music Modules

In looking at this programme I have asked some questions:

- Is there a shared theoretical framework of teaching and learning promoted by the programme – either in the BAEd programme as a whole or within the Music area?
- Where/when do students lead, or take ownership of their learning (choices, negotiated tasks, self evaluation/assessment)
- How is creativity nurtured through all strands of the course (both musical and as a general mode of thinking)?
- How is critical thinking nurtured?

In the time available it would be impertinent of me to arrive at definitive answers but perhaps they are useful questions for the team to consider as part of the process of review.

The strengths of the Music programme in terms of module content are:

- The broad range of expertise within the team
- That both artistic and pedagogic knowledge and skills of students are developed
- That there are opportunities for students to develop their musicianship as performers, composers and directors
- That there is a focus on giving students knowledge and skills in theory, harmony and arranging
- That there is good coverage of W. Classical music through historical studies, analysis and opportunities to perform

Areas for development might be:

- More integration of artistic and pedagogic skills – and more opportunities for students to apply their music learning through coursework activities and assignments.
- Finding ways to model and demonstrate good teaching within taught sessions of the programme (not only in the Methods modules).
- Looking for ways to achieve a better balance of musical traditions and styles. Not surprisingly the dominant musical ‘language’ and culture is that of western classical music, not only in the history modules but in theory, aural, composing and performance studies. There are only 3 modules where non western classical traditions are explicitly the focus. This is may be difficult to address given the expertise and musical backgrounds of staff (the same challenge is faced in the UK!) – however if the music education of future teachers is to reflect the demands not only of the curriculum but also the socio- cultural context in which school students live then this cannot be ignored. If we do, then music in school will become increasingly a minority interest, irrelevant to the majority and perhaps irrelevant to the compulsory curriculum
- Encouraging – and giving credit for - students who want to establish their own musical groups or projects. As future teachers students need opportunities to learn the skills of setting up and managing music making groups, coaching and directing, choosing, composing and arranging music for different abilities etc. The extensive extra curricular activity that some students undertake, could be viewed as a ‘creative space’ where students can develop these skills. This might work both ways – freeing up module time for under represented aspects of the curriculum; and, at the same time diversifying the kinds of musics that students engage with.

V. Some comments on integration

- All modules which focus on integration are currently offered at level 1 . This is not a problem if the principles of integration are then threaded through higher level modules (for instance, assessment criteria might require students to show

evidence of integrating subject knowledge or skills; or for combining or drawing on other arts in creative work)

- Music Technology is generally under-developed. Students need to use technology in their own studies, in the preparation and development of their own teaching resources and to support and enhance the music learning of pupils in school. Its application could be raised through requirements in practical musical tasks and assignments.
- There could be possibilities for interdisciplinary learning with Visual Art (at least especially in relation to the history of music, and also in Chinese music studies (i.e. shared lectures and/or interdisciplinary tasks); composing modules; project work in schools. One way to solve the problem of finding time when students and staff from different subject areas can come together might be to block the timetable occasionally. An integrated project week might enable students to work on and off campus with school children and/ or community musicians/artists; to undertake more exploratory and creative activities.
- Tutors could gain more knowledge about content and teaching approaches shared across the different strands of the programme
- The Methods modules could draw more explicitly on the artistic knowledge and skills being developed in other modules - and vice versa
- Model appropriate and relevant practices in teaching and learning across the whole programme
- Review approaches to assessment to further integrate and apply knowledge and skills to promote independent learning (presentations; group problem solving or tasks; vivas; practical; online; research led)
- More co-teaching within and across modules could be promoted (not necessarily team teaching but shared planning and assessment)

VI. The use of Music Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Training (www.menet.info) are the first time that competencies for becoming a school music teacher have been attempted at this level viz. to be applicable to all forms of initial training and in a wide range of educational systems. The work was in response to the Bologna Process which seeks to 'harmonise' higher education in Europe to enable the mobility of students. Teacher training is a particularly challenging professional field to address such competencies, as national differences can appear very marked. However the published outcomes have received international scrutiny (at the ISME and RIME conferences) and have been developed to be relevant for any music teacher training institutions as a basis for review and development. The outcomes aim to articulate the integration of skills and knowledge in Music with those of teaching. The HKIED music team has begun to work with a draft version of these and there is evidence in some revised module descriptors of their application. However I would urge the team to interrogate the finished document as a whole and discuss the statements in terms of a) how relevant and meaningful they are in the HK context; and b) how the statements 'map' on to the existing content and aims of the programme c) how statements might need to be amended and d) how modules might need to be amended where the programme does not address certain statements adequately.

At the time of my visit several modules had been drafted with the new Module Intended Learning Outcomes. This is a useful exercise and clarifies the focus for students and staff. In some modules there needs to be more consistency in their wording and focus to make them amenable to assessment. In some cases there are several outcomes included under one MILO and sometimes the MILO is stated in terms of activity rather than learning. The MILO should state what the students will learn and the Content and Activities section should describe how this learning will be supported.

MILOs which have been drawn from the meNet document described above are overambitious and too large in scope to be addressed completely in one module. Such Learning Outcomes were conceived as being met at the end of a *whole* training programme (at the point when a student becomes qualified to teach) so for individual modules they need to be deconstructed and mapped across several different modules, and probably also at different levels so that there is a cumulative process in developing competence.

Considering the lists of MLOs in these modules it becomes clear that certain modules contain much more content, range of learning and activity than others. One aspect of modularisation and the credit system should be to ensure that modules of the same credit value demand similar amounts of contact time, independent study time and assessment requirements (i.e. credits equate to study hours). There are two possible solutions to this issue:

1. 1. To reduce the content of certain modules
2. 2. To allow for modules of different credit value (e.g. double or half modules).

In discussion with members of the team it would seem that there is a desire to explore the possibilities of varying the module size.

Conclusion

The changes to the HE structure in Hong Kong offer an opportunity for review and development which is both daunting and positive. I gained a strong sense that the Music team are motivated and interested to develop and improve their programme and have the expertise to do this successfully. Having been through similar processes in my own institution I have learned that the keys to success are time, and strong collegiality: time to review, discuss and plan changes within a supportive environment in which staff are keen to work together – to respect differences and negotiate outcomes. From my conversations at the Institute it appears that these precious resources and qualities exist.

Appendix

Some comments and questions on individual modules (some of these comments were discussed with Module leaders – as it was not possible to talk with every members of staff it may be that questions are already answered!)

1178 The content of this module is very rich and aims to cover a great deal of ground at an early stage of the course. A better balance between theory and application might be achieved with more emphasis on developing understanding of musical development, music learning theories and how these link to generic theories of learning that students meet outside of their Music studies (perhaps this could be relocated in a module focused on Music Psychology or 2172).

2179 Again this module includes a lot of content. There is value in bringing together primary and secondary students but also perhaps a loss of focus on the particular needs of each The leadership and advocacy element of this module could be strengthened by requiring a longer essay than the one currently described, on the role and value of music education for all; and within this task, to perhaps expect references to research and literature which provide evidence or arguments.

2172/2177 These two modules have the potential to provide a strong coverage of current issues in research; a more in depth look at theories of musical development and a place where students can develop their critical skills in investigating and discussing theoretical ideas.

3175 Is there a need to revisit Europe and China here? This module could focus on other, less familiar musics (with an opportunity for interdisciplinary approach with Visual Art) to give space for more depth (workshopping; singing; different cultural approaches to teaching and learning)

Musicianship Modules

1158 contains a lot of content –1st and 2nd study could be a ‘long and thin’ module (i.e. parts 1/2/3) culminating in the performance recital (3173) with other kinds of assessments along the way (small ensemble work; duos, accompanying; composing for self or others; interdisciplinary projects such as music theatre; or a sound recording task). Students could be responsible for developing a portfolio of their activity and achievements including recordings, and writing a reflective commentary on their progress throughout the whole course.

Repertoire links could be made more explicit (i.e. with History modules; and perhaps a requirement to include work of a living composer in the criteria for assessment)

Vivas and programme notes for performance assignments would link to History modules and development of self evaluation and critical reflection

1124 Aural training could be more integrated with 1158 leading to two modules: i. Musicianship (voice, recorder, keyboard, aural); ii Performance 1(1st and 2nd study plus conducting).

Theory and Composition

1160 how different is the aural content to 1124?

2162 – could there be active links between 1223 and 2163?

3176 is it possible that students could compose for students in other years with links to the performance module?

A link to students' development as teachers could be made through composing for school age students.

History

Aim for more equal balance between Chinese and W.Classical content

Are there active links to performance studies through choice of study repertoire?

Is there overlap between 1223 (Contemporary workshop) and 2163 (20c Music) – and if there is could more space be given to popular music in 1223?